

IMPROVING INFERENTIAL SKILLS

IMPROVING INFERENTIAL SKILLS THROUGH READING PRACTICES IN AN EFL PRE-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM AT NARIÑO UNIVERSITY

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NOTA DE RESPONSABILIDAD

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RESUMEN

Los aprendices de una lengua extranjera; en este caso Inglés, necesitan desarrollar las cuatro habilidades del lenguaje para poder comunicarse en Inglés. Este proyecto se enfoca en expresar las razones por las cuales desarrollar habilidades inferenciales en lectura juega un rol importante en el desarrollo y dominio de las habilidades de comprensión, las cuales permiten a los aprendices a mejorar las habilidades comunicativas. Además, en este proyecto de investigación son tratadas, la forma en como el material y las prácticas de enseñanza deberían ser desarrolladas al enseñar lectura inferencial. Este proyecto de investigación también discute los criterios a tener en cuenta para seleccionar los textos y las prácticas de enseñanza más convenientes para mejorar las habilidades inferenciales. Finalmente, se propone una serie de actividades para ser aplicadas en los salones.

ABSTRACT

Learners need to develop the four languages skills to be able to communicate in English. This paper stresses the reasons why inferential reading plays an important role in the development and mastery of comprehension skills, which allow students to improve communicative skills.

Moreover, the way on how material and teaching practices should be developed out the inferential comprehension skills are addressed in this paper. This paper also discusses the criteria for selecting suitable texts and suggested practices to perform inferential tasks. Finally, it proposes a suggested set of activities in order to apply them in classrooms.

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**IMPROVING INFERENCE SKILLS THROUGH READING PRACTICES IN AN EFL
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Teaching English today is focused on the development of comprehension and communicative skills to help learners for examinations and academic purposes, secure jobs, promotion of business, and many other reasons (Brumfit, 1991). The purposes of learning English language adjust differently from one student to another, but they mainly need to communicate. Hence, as teachers, the principal concern should be to develop students' language skills so that they facilitate the communication with others using the English language.

According to Lopera (2012) one of the language skills to be acquired and mastered in ESL students is reading because it is a requirement in any proficiency test, academic contents, and international standards for EFL students. Richards (2002) claims that the importance of developing reading skills in students lies in the facts that reading allows students to approach to authentic sources of grammar use, vocabulary, and real contexts, moreover reading also allows students to develop comprehension skills which are meaningfully necessary to master language skills. In Colombia students are expected to introduce to the globalized world by learning English, according to Bilingual Program of the Ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educacion Nacional or MEN), students must acquire a certain level of proficiency in spoken and written English language. However, Pruebas Saber 11 tests which assess the students' proficiency are designed in reading comprehension formats. In addition to this, in language teachers training programs of Universities such as University of Nariño, students of English and French program are trained in different subjects such as Reading and Writing and Listening and speaking which allow them to perform well the English Language. Nevertheless, Richards (2005) states that the

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levels of English proficiency reached in the world context are considerably low. The assumption was made by applying language proficiency tests in some public and private institutions from Latin-America that demonstrate the low levels in English Language. Likewise, Carter and Long (1991) and Savvidou (2004) claims that the problem resides in the fact that some students show lacks of comprehension in reading practices, consequently communicative skills are not well performed. According to Marzano (2000), a possible cause is that some teachers might focus teaching practices based on grammar and vocabulary, which develops literal skills, disregarding the importance of inferential skills being central to acquire the comprehension abilities so that students' communication in English performs well.

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To understand the importance of reading skills in EFL backgrounds and the challenge that teaching reading, specifically inferential reading might stand for, at time of providing and selecting material in order to accomplish some inferential reading tasks successfully, it is necessary to expose some suitable learning theories such as, the constructivist approach that takes students as active participants of a society, and the demands of the 21st century skills claimed by Marzano (2009) which proposes the new educative tendencies for the upcoming students generations. Some other important concepts to be dealt with in this paper are the reading skill acquisition process and its importance in EFL courses, besides the strategies of reading such as bottom-up and top-down strategies which allow the student to develop their process of reading. Moreover, the inferential comprehension level which is the process where the reader use background knowledge and experience to reach a rational conclusion.

LANGUAGE LEARNING THEORIES

To propose some materials and strategies that might facilitate the successful acquisition and development of inferential reading skills, it is important to bear in mind how students' language learning may take place. Furthermore, how they may acquire the reading skill in order to focus the materials and teaching practices that may help the development of inferential reading comprehension level. As a matter of fact, it is possible to suggest some suitable learning theories such as, the social constructivism contributions that deal with learners as active members inside a context. Moreover, some suggestions proposed by 21st century skills approach for actual educational requirements.

Social constructivism

One of the main contributors in social constructivism is Vigotsky. In this section the characteristics of his theory are explained, his contributions in education for second language learning; besides and how it is implemented in the development of reading skills within the classroom environment.

Social constructivism theory. This approach emphasizes that learning may take place when individuals interact in a sociocultural environment and when learners act as active builders of their own learning environment (Vigotsky, 1981). Human beings never learn as isolated individuals, but as members of a society. Then, everything students learn depends on where and when it is learnt. In other words, everything that is learnt and expressed depends on the social context that surrounds them.

In fact, Vigotsky (1981) asserts that learning occurs through dialogue; this dialogue could not befall in an isolated individual. Instead, it occurs when there is an interaction between individuals and their expressions, concepts, and thoughts, namely when dialogues are constructed by two or more individuals.

The dialogues could be interpsychological or intrapsychological. Interpsychological dialogue is the process whereby individuals acquire knowledge by interacting and relationships between individuals in social settings. On the other hand, intrapsychological dialogue is the process that takes place in individuals' own mind, which implies all the functions of brain and the processing and storing of the information acquired in interpsychological dialogue.

Under those circumstances, this dialogue is at the beginning interpsychological. It means that meaning takes place when the interaction occurs between teacher and student, between students, or even between text and reader or other sources (Wilson, 1999, p. 172). These sources are external stimuli, such as communication among individuals, reading texts, and visual items.

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On the other hand, intrapsychological dialogue happens when the stimuli received leads the individuals to construct their own knowledge and are able to express it intentionally based on the concepts previously acquired through interpsychological dialogues.

Moreover, Vigotsky (1978) assures that individuals make sense of what is said or written through interpsychological dialogue. Thus, learning is an interactive activity, because individuals must interact with several sources of ideas in social settings, they must also take an active part in reconstructing ideas or knowledge within their own minds.

In a similar manner, intrapsychological dialogue occurs when students are aware of the utterances made by others inside their mental functions. Therefore, when individuals intentionally understand and produce utterances and meaningful speech taking as a reference what others produce then, learning is reached (Vigotsky, 1978, p.78).

In this sense, social constructivism claims that people construct their own knowledge of the world and reality through experiences; moreover it is necessary that the individuals reflect on those experiences. For instance, each time an individual encounters something new, he or she needs to reconcile it with previous ideas and experiences (Vigotsky, 1981). It is said that the individual needs to interact with such new event based on the previous experiences about the matter. In this way, the individual maybe has to change his or her beliefs about the concept or maybe he or she has to discard the new information as irrelevant. Then, individuals are creators of their own knowledge by means of questioning themselves, exploring new concepts, and assessing the knowledge.

In short, according to Vigotsky (1981), learning happens when individual interact with external factors and knowledge previously acquired. Moreover, the interaction with new knowledge may happen among individuals or other sources such as, reading texts or visual

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stimuli. Then, the individuals make interpsychological dialogue acquiring concepts and ideas using them in intrapsychological dialogue in order to express their own ideas and concepts.

It is important to take into account some current aspects in education and social constructivism. Marzano (2009) proposes a constructivist approach for the 21st century educative trends. The approach deals with how academic knowledge is constructed and addressed by students in order to solve problems in academic settings.

Social constructivism in 21st century skills and education.

According to Carrera (2001), social constructivism has been applied for educational purposes for many years. Due to its contribution to this field several approaches have been designed under its principles in order to be applied in educative fields and ESL teaching such as, CLL, CLT, or 21st century skills.

Husen and Postlethwaite (1989) assert that social constructivism view in education is revolutionary in the sense that, knowledge does not need to be true but must be viable. That is to say, it needs to fit within the experiential constraints that may limit the cognitive system's possibilities of acting and thinking in academic activities.

According to Husen and Postlethwaite (1989), social constructivism sets two principles in education realms. First, knowledge is not passively received but it is actively built up by the cognizing subject. Second, the function of cognition is adaptive and serves the organization of the experiential world.

Under those circumstances, Marzano (2009) in his 21st century approach proposes that, cognition and knowledge interacts in the learning process by analysing, utilising, and addressing information to complex problems. Students may find the necessary information to analyse and utilize in order to address it to solve a problem or develop any task in a successful manner.

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In the same way, the analysis and utilization of information made by students may lead them to focus on understanding how a cause is determined, recognizing and criticizing assumptions, analysing means-goals relationships, giving reasons to support a conclusion, assessing degrees of likelihood and uncertainty, incorporating isolated data into a wider framework, and using analogies to solve a problem (Halpern, 1998, p. 25).

Moreover, according to Marzano (2009) the cognition of the student is building up ideas interacting intrapsychologically with others' ideas about a fact or concept using their cognitive system, inside classrooms. Then, that cognitive system is adapted to the context allowing them to construct their ideas in order to understand the fact or concept dealt.

In short, social constructivism in 21st century skills approach deals with how the knowledge is created and acquired by students in classrooms. Students construct knowledge according to the data and sources given by the teacher, they also contrast the new information exposed with previous knowledge and built their own complex concepts.

Many constructivist principles have been designed to be applied in any educative setting by scholars, such as Schmidt (1983), Elkaim (1983), Keeney (1983). Although the following is not an exhaustive list, it provides an overview of principles that are implemented in educative fields and play an important role in 21st century skills approach.

1. It is necessary to distinguish between teaching and training. The first action aim generating understanding and the second merely aim at the repetition of behaviours.
2. The interests of educators should focus on what can be inferred to be going inside the students' head, rather than overt responses.

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3. Teachers need to notice that knowledge cannot be transferred to the student by linguistic communication but language may be used as a tool to guide the student's construction.
4. Teachers should be interested in students' errors and, indeed, in every instance where students deviate from the teachers' expected path because those deviations throw light on how students acquire knowledge, at that point in their development, are organizing their experiential world.
5. Teaching practices aim not only at inferring the students' conceptual structures but also at finding ways and means to modify them.

Then, social constructivism theory and 21st century skills approach focuses on how the knowledge constructed in students mind should be used to understand a situation or fact presented in their process of learning. According to Marzano (2009), it is necessary that students develop higher levels of comprehension in order to reach critical thinking. It is important to mention that 21st century skills focus on the development of the levels of comprehension in reading skill. Critical thinking is reached when students are exposed to an amount of relevant information or contexts related to a specific topic. Then students may infer information in order to make proper assumptions and take a critical position about the topics dealt.

In the same manner, "critical thinking is necessary to education for a free society. "It is a systematic way to form and shape one's thinking. It functions purposefully and exactly. it is though that is disciplined, comprehensive, based on intellectual standards, and, as a result, well-reasoned (Paul, 1993, p. 20).

Social constructivism and 21st century skills implications in ESL learning

Social constructivism is a learning theory. Nevertheless, the theory has influenced the field of education and EFL settings as well. In context of EFL classroom learning, social constructivism emphasizes how students construct their personal meaning and understanding. Phye (1997) claims that inside classrooms, this approach is designed to construct academic knowledge through the use of language as a tool to guide the construction process.

The construction of knowledge process involves two relevant aspects in ESL according to the social constructivism approach. First, the recognition and acquisition of the English language grammar and vocabulary is fostered by the interaction between students and sources of information. Second, the interaction between students in English language leads to construct ideas and concepts about facts and theories.

In this sense, in EFL contexts, students should work cooperatively interacting between teachers, classmates and material. Students interacting receive the input and share information that they already know, as well as experiences and concepts 'previously constructed. Thus, students become actively involved in the process of learning a second language (Flynn, Mesibov, Vermette, & Smith, 2004).

Another aspect in social constructivism is the role of instruction. It should be the process that supports the knowledge construction by learners rather than the mere communication of it. It means that the instructor or teacher should offer an EFL setting that facilitates real-world situations that emphasize a context in which learning is relevant. Constructivist teachers should also suggest strategies to understand a situation or concept and how the context affects or modifies it.

Meanwhile constructivism goes on the acquisition of knowledge, 21st century skills deals with how that knowledge is approached to solve problems. One of the requirements for students

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in educative contexts is to think critically (Marzano, 2009). 21st century skills approach proposes that new English learners should master the language in order to understand, contextualize, and analyse the ideas and concepts taught in class. As mentioned before, 21st century skills emphasize the importance of reading and the development of its comprehension levels. In this sense, students should develop the three levels of reading comprehension, that is to say literal that implies to understand patterns and recognize words, inferential which requires contrasting information with background knowledge, and critical that is the goal to achieve. Critical level implies to compare, analyse, and assess the information read.

READING

In this section, I discuss what reading is and its implications in EFL settings, the importance of background knowledge in the reading process, the strategies to be used in its development, moreover the cognitive process and its categories as literal, inferential and critical.

Goodman (1999) describes reading as a psycholinguistic process. It starts with a linguistic surface representation encoded by the writer and ends with meaning which the readers construct. Then, there is a link between thought and language in reading, since the writer encodes thought as language and the reader decodes language to thought. For instance, author expresses feelings, thoughts, assumptions, beliefs and so on, those features are written by means of language, then the reader could easily decode them by means of the language itself and understand what the author wants to communicate..

Likewise, reading also implies the recognition of words in which the reader uses his/her prior knowledge to make an understanding of them, ending as a result in a comprehension process. By identifying and making sense of the words presented in the texts, meaning reaches fluency as well.

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According to May (1998), reading is not only eating words as popcorn on a string, but it is to allow the words to stimulate and stir up a brew of the reader's memories. Therefore, the reading process means to interact with the author by thinking about past experiences. In brief, it is hitting the ball back to your communication partner, the writer. Thus, reading is a means to acquire knowledge about several concepts and authors' background as well. It is evidenced when readers could easily understand the feelings of the author about any fact by reading hi/her work. For instance, readers could easily what Marx thinks about the bureaucracy or currency.

On the other hand, Suleiman (2005) adds that in the process of reading readers interact dynamically with the text as they try to elicit meaning and where various sorts of knowledge are being used, such as linguistic or systematic knowledge as well as schematic knowledge. Then, reading is not a process where students acquire knowledge but also it is a process in which they use the knowledge acquired. When students read they are dealing with information which could be acquired in the process but in order to understand or make sense of what they read, they need to master the linguistic patterns to process the codes, then the same patterns allow the reader to understand other texts.

Then, reading is a mental process where students need to analyse data and facts using their mental comprehension system. In this sense, Grave (1991) proposes the explanation of this process by analysing a set of component skills and knowledge areas such as:

1. *Automatic recognition skills.* Carter and Nunan (2001) refers to it as the condition of recognizing lexical and grammar patterns automatically. It occurs under certain conditions like deliberate attention and generative use of a word in a context (Nation, 2005). Reading foster this conditions in certain types of material where learners are interested in

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2. *Vocabulary and structural knowledge*. It refers to the cognitive structure, in other words it is the pattern of relationships among concepts in memory (Preece, 1976). It also implies the organization of the relationships in the long-term memory. The pattern not only refers to the vocabulary but also to the specific contexts learnt in some reading tasks (Shavelson, 1972).
3. *Formal discourse structure knowledge*. Huang (2009) asserts that it encompasses the previously acquired knowledge or world knowledge and one's special knowledge on a certain subject, creating a more complex knowledge in students mind.
4. *Content/world background knowledge*. According to Nation (2005) this is the process in which the reader connects the literature in three levels; text to text, text to self, and self to the world, what implies the use of concepts in the long-term memory to understand.
5. *Metacognitive knowledge and skills monitoring*. This item is an important skill in reading since they organise all of the tasks the learner performs. "These skills allow the learner to set goals, initiate work, sustain future-oriented problem solving activities, monitor and manage progress on tasks to notice and improve errors, and keep track of the effect of one's behaviour" (Preece, 1976, p. 98).

Thus, the process of reading entails a set of mental sub-processes in order to comprehend a text including the recognition of the words and sentences, the knowledge of the backgrounds, besides it is necessary to use some strategies and skills to organize ideas and solve problems. In addition of the features previously described, Lunzer and Gardner (1979) have described other skills that might also play a relevant role in the reading process such as:

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1. *Word meaning in context.* It deals with finding out the meaning of a word by context and the implication of the word in the whole idea of the text depending on the author's year, nationality, social status, beliefs, among other facts.
2. *Literal comprehension.* Goodman (1999) describes it as the process of decoding structures and recognizing meaning of the words. In this way, students use their structural knowledge of the language.
3. *Drawing inferences.* Inference is the means that connects the world knowledge to the new knowledge to guess properly author's assumptions between lines and demands a clear understand of the temporal, historical, and social context of them.
4. *Finding main ideas.* It implies to use scanning skills to find out them among the text. Furthermore, students need to focus not only on specific sections of the text but also in the whole idea of the text.
5. *Forming judgments.* At the end of any reading tasks students have acquired some events or phenomena to make judgments about, taking into account all the facts and the background concepts implied in the ideas expressed in the text.

Marzano (2009) argues that it is also important to have an outlook of reading and its importance in SLA because it is indeed, one principal skill to learn in ESL courses, moreover it is a source of acquisition of language and knowledge to implement the processes of learning and master the second or foreign language.

Reading in Second Language Acquisition

According to Rivers (1981), reading is one of the means to expose learners to the foreign or second language grammar and vocabulary. Moreover, reading is one of the tools to build in habits, saturation and practice to use the language in creative forms using the thinking and the perception. In this sense it is proposed the learning of the language by the exposure to the language context. According to Wittgenstein “Context is generally found in written texts, which expose the reality of the writer and his/her own bias” (p. 153).

Furthermore, language is used to communicate with the community speaking the language to be learnt, “written texts clearly express the way in which the community interact in the context and how words make sense in such context, in this way is how learners acquire meaningful language” (Kumaravadivelu, 1995, p. 45).

In other words, in the moment when students notice consciously that, this meaningful language serves as the means of expression and they feel the need to materialize thinking in words using their knowledge, then learning may surely take place in learners mind.

According to Carrera (1994), language is a means of individuals’ expression, human beings express feelings and emotions moreover influence the activities or behaviours of others using the language. In this sense, in written texts the emotions and feelings are clearly described at the point of making the reader to feel those emotions, as reading texts are one of the human expressions, then texts could lead the student to learn from emotions for its meaningful value.

On the other hand, language is transmitted culturally (Chomsky, 1978). Language relates words and concepts between individuals, besides language is culturally transmitted among individuals of the same context. In the process of learning a second or foreign language, the exposure to the context and language has to be given in ESL/EFL classrooms; one of the ways to

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expose the students to the context is found in reading texts as it has been previously claimed. Besides, reading shows which culture is transmitted and under which conditions is constructed as a perfect representation of the context.

Thus, it could be possibly assured that the knowledge of the context and the interaction between reader-writer is evidently necessary. Reading is a process in which the learner has to use the prior knowledge, the recognition of the context and make comprehension within his/her own knowledge, so that the mastery of the reading skill in English takes place.

Coupled with it, Knowledge and background knowledge definitely play an important role among reading understanding processes in second language acquisition. Marzano & Kendall (2007) describe knowledge in four types, such as:

- *Factual knowledge*. It is the basic elements students must know to master the language and solve problems about the discipline such as, the different meanings of a word and the rules of the language grammar.
- *Conceptual knowledge*. It refers to the interrelationships among the basic elements within a complex structure that allows working together to reach meaning.
- *Procedural knowledge*. This aspect allows students to know how to use the skills, the strategies, and the methods to comprehend a text.
- *Metacognitive knowledge*. Metacognitive refers to the knowledge of cognition in general. Furthermore, it is the awareness of the appropriate contextual and conditional knowledge.

The previous types of knowledge play a relevant role at time of learning and master a second or foreign language. The importance of these types of knowledge in reading is that, if

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there is no knowledge then there is no clear comprehension of the text, moreover the unawareness of the specific context features in the texts leads students to misunderstand the real message of the author.

In this sense, the four types of knowledge may be easily found and acquired by means of reading written resources. In other words, at time of reading it is necessary to resort to other sources leading students to acquire, practice, or remember factual, procedural, conceptual, and metacognitive knowledge previously or recently acquired.

Another important concept in the development of the reading skills is the idea of background knowledge, because it entails the necessary historical, social, economic, political facts, and the literature trends that allow students to comprehend general and specific assumptions made in the text.

Background Knowledge. The idea of background knowledge has been dealt for centuries. Kant (1781) stated that new information, concepts, and ideas can be related to something that the reader has already acquired. This background knowledge can be about the facts in the text, knowledge about the world, and about the organization of the text itself (Resnick, 1984 as cited in Nassaji, 2002).

However, according to Lewis and Slade (1994) the comprehension of a text could be definitely difficult for students, because comprehension does not mean just to read the words as stated before, but readers must add their own experiences and prior knowledge in the process of reading to help them to make sense of the text.

Furthermore, The readers prior knowledge and background could affect or enable the ability of comprehend. Carrell and Eisterhold (1988) assure that cultural background is a major factor that effects how readers interact with a text, and if learners do not have the necessary

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schemata they will not be able to obtain meaning from the text. Therefore, lacks of background knowledge directly affects the ability of comprehend.

Evidently, learners are expected to comprehend texts with little background knowledge on standardized tests and in classrooms activities as well, but it may result in the fail or learners may not perform well the task or the test assigned. However, if teachers give the enough background knowledge and the suitable instruction, comprehension will take place properly (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1988).

Besides, another aspect in Carrell and Eisterhold (1988) is focused on cultural background that affects how readers interact with the text, and ESL learners cannot obtain meaning from the text since the difference between contexts are based with different patterns, these patterns may cause misunderstandings and misconceptions. Then, cultural background must be provided by teachers in classrooms and it may be found in reading sources.

Henceupon, background knowledge is the link to reach comprehension in the texts presented. Moreover, the sources of the acquisition of this knowledge may be found in reading texts. Thus, reading and background knowledge play an important role in second language learning as well as in the accomplish of the comprehension by acquiring knowledge from the texts.

Bearing in mind, the previous facts in SLA, there may be also put out some concepts that should be taken into account from the cognitive process to the strategies that could be engaged in the development of reading skill.

Cognitive Process of Reading. Carrel and Eisterhold (1983) put out that the reading process comes up when both bottom-up and top-down processing happen simultaneously at any level. Bottom-up processing fills out the schemata and top-down processing exerts the

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assimilation under the condition that they are consistent with the reader's conceptual expectations. It means that the material read by students should fill the expectations of them; the material then should be accordingly selected with the knowledge and interests of the student. Bottom-up processing makes the reader sensible to information that does not fit their hypotheses about the content of the text. On the other hand, top-down helps the readers to resolve ambiguities or interpret the incoming data.

Thus, in this process the student would use his/her prior knowledge connecting with the new information presented in the text. Thus, the cognitive process implies the bottom-up and top-down strategies, these strategies have been dealt by scholars in SLA, these strategies could be explained as follows.

Reading Strategies. According to Brown and Palincsar (1982), there are four reading strategies: summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting, and they also refers to some aspects at time the reader face a text. Some of them could be how readers conceive a task, what textual cues they attend to, how they make sense of what they read, and what they do when a word is not understood or recognized (Block, 1986), Gardner (1987), Pressley (1992), Brown (1992) found that, good readers are better at monitoring their comprehension than poor readers since, good readers use strategies flexibly and efficiently. Hence, Good readers use several strategies proficiently and adequately, moreover they use those strategies in different ways (Song, 1998).

In addition to this, for decades a great deal of research (Carrel, 1985; Brown, 1989; Pearson, 1981) have been conducted on reading strategies, finding that the success in learning depends on appropriate strategy use and learners with lower master of the language could improve it by learning to use the strategies. Readers go from simply strategies like reread to

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more complex strategies such as summarizing or relating what is being read to the reader's background knowledge and writer background knowledge (Janzen, 1996).

Moreover, there is a distinction between the strategies dealt in reading skill. They can be distinguished in cognitive and metacognitive strategies that will help students to make sense of what they read and also to monitor their learning process.

Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies. The strategies in reading could be divided into metacognitive strategies and cognitive strategies as clarified before. Wenden (1998) defined metacognitive strategies as a learner's beliefs and knowledge about his/her own processes. In metacognitive strategies are some skills that learners acquire and then use them to direct and regulate their learning (Brown; Bransford; Ferrara & Campione, 1983). These strategies include planning, monitoring, and evaluating.

On the other hand, according to Williams (1994), cognitive strategies refer to the mental process of obtaining information in order to learn, store, and use it. Brown (1994) says that these strategies are limited to develop specific tasks and the direct manipulation of the learning material.

In that sense, cognitive strategies are divided in two models of strategies as bottom up and top-down. Goodman (1986) refers to the bottom-up as the common sense notion, which implies that the reader decodes, identifies a letter, word, phrase, and sentences so they have meaning. Similarly, Carrel (1998) assures that top-down strategies deal with the schema theory, which puts out the importance of the reader background knowledge in the process of reading. Efficient reading demands the use of top-down and bottom-up strategies such as background knowledge, predictions about the text, getting the gist of the text, skimming, scanning, and so on.

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In consequence, reading strategies help students to comprehend reading texts and monitor their learning. In this sense, students take responsibility of their learning and also know what strategies apply when reading.

As the cognitive process and the facts that play an important role in the process of reading in SLA, it is necessary to describe the types of reading being used in ESL/EFL classrooms such as intensive and extensive reading, moreover the categories of comprehension in reading.

Types of Reading. Grellet (1981) and Nuttall (1982) proposed two sorts of reading as extensive and intensive. Intensive reading is used to teach or practice particular reading strategies or skills and the close linguistic study of the text (Brown, 1994). The text in this type of reading is treated as an end in itself. On the other hand, extensive reading is defined as reading a large amount of text; it is a priority in this kind of reading the fluency and confidence. Brown (1994) asserts that the text is a means to an end in this type of reading.

Further, extensive reading implies to read for pleasure or reading technical, scientific or professional material. By reading these kinds of materials, reader involves two types of specific reading, as scanning for key details, and skimming for essential meaning (Brown, 1994). Krashen (2004) asserts that when scanning and skimming practices are well performed, students accomplish a global or general meaning of the texts read. Reading material may vary regarding the purpose of the write and the reader preferences; they could be scientific, informative, entertainment, historical, technical, and so forth.

Therefore, material to be used depends on the purpose and the strategy or skill to be performed in the activity. Most of the time ESL teachers use these two types of reading and the sub-types in order to foster the strategies wanted to be learnt and mastered.

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In the same way, it is also possible to put out the categories of reading comprehension in which the reading activities are supposed to be performed. It is also necessary to take into account that just good readers develop properly the next three categories.

Categories of Reading Comprehension. According to Barret (1978) there are three categories at reading process such as, literal, inferential, and critical reading. The accomplishment of the first stage allows students to reach the second stage. At reaching the second stage the third level is easily acquired. Then, these categories are described as follows.

Literal reading. refers to locate facts that are directly stated in the text. The use of the factual and conceptual knowledge are evidenced in this stage. Students need to decipher word by word and recognize grammar structures to get the general idea of the text.

Inferential reading. This is a deeply process in which the informaion is not written in the text itself or it requires more information which is not in the text. The procedural knowledge should be applied in the process of inference, it needs to resort to other concepts and ideas that involves the author background and the context of the text. Then, the information that is not in the text is properly inferred.

Evaluative or critical reading. This stage occurs when the inferential and literal levels are well performed, since it needs previous reading experience, their life experience, and their opinions that are relevant to the text. Evidently, the metacognitive knowldege is necessary in this stage. Students need to monitor their learning and the use of the strategies in order to become critical readers.

Moreover, Barrett (1978) describes some skills in each category for instance, in literal skills it is important that the student can select the topic in the sentence of a paragraph, identify the main idea of a passage, identify the supporting detail of the passage, and determine the

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meaning of the words by context. Inferential reading implies to understand the intonation of the characters and their relationships, to connect prior knowledge with the new information, to recognize historical, cultural, and social facts of the text and the author related with the text itself. Evaluative includes to analyze what was read and then be able to make judgments.

Thus, as seen before one of the goals to the new educational approaches is to teach students to think critically (Wagner, 2008). So, when students use the strategies previously cited and are exposed to the different types of reading, moreover when they acquire knowledge from different disciplines from different reading sources; they may possibly accomplish the critical thinking.

In order to reach this goal it is necessary to teach comprehension levels in ESL/EFL courses. These levels may be fostered from reading activities. However, to reach the critical comprehension level, it is important to clarify that students first need to develop inferential reading in order to link literal level with critical. In other words, it is necessary to master the inferential level to take it as a bridge to accomplish the critical level. So, it is important to describe what inferential reading implies, and how it is developed in ESL/EFL students.

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Keene and Zimmermann (1997) define inferential reading as the ability of reading between the lines. It is compared to mathematical processes because the answer is not given but implicit. Students have to figure out the correct answer from the information given. So, inferring in reading –and in life as well- is to figure out answers from the facts to which readers have access (Barrett, 1978). Hartmann (2006) also explained that the background information and inferential skills that the reader activates in the reading practice determine the meaning of any communication the author intended.

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Inferential reading requires to use personal experience, background knowledge, background schema, along with the information in the text in order to make assumptions about what is not written in the text but it does exist on it. As a matter of fact, several scholars (Trabasso, 1981; McIntosh, 1985; Johnston, 1983) have put out the importance of inferential reading comprehension as one of the levels to be developed in any ESL course, since it may be involved in almost all reading tasks, such as, interpreting words with context-related meanings, identification of a story context, filling in missing information, and so forth. In other words, to infer is the ability of using two or more pieces of information from a text in order to get a third piece of information that is implicit.

Marzano (2009) assures that capability of inferring is one of the skills that learners are asked to acquire and perform successfully in the new educational approaches. It is seen as the ability of generate patterns by relating new material with previously learned knowledge. According to Willis (2006), whenever new material is presented learners see relationships then learners generate greater brain cell activity and achieve a successful long-term memory storage and retrieval. In this sense inferential reading is a skill asked to be developed in English learning classrooms and a category of the reading comprehension levels asked also to be acquired.

So, as a skill it is the ability of relating information with the prior knowledge and as a strategy is the capability of achieving long-term storage for using it in any reading task that requires it.

In this sense, the proper interpretation of reading materials could be reached efficiently, since every time learners deliberate on events or on their own experience they are interpreting correctly, and that is what the most of the reading tasks are focused on (O'Shaughnessy, 2009), thus, inferential may be used as a strategy to gain knowledge and then as a skill to develop

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reading complex tasks or question in the case of the tests. O' Shaughnessy (2009) put out the fact that when the students can easily infer, they might easily accomplish the third comprehension category of comprehension, since it requires the mastery of literal and inferential comprehension levels, thus the mastery of both could necessary make to develop the critical or evaluative level.

Similarly, O' Shaughnessy (2009) assumes that, this is perhaps one of the most important comprehension levels that students have to acquire for three reasons. First, inferential reading comprehension is what links the literal comprehension and evaluative comprehension. Second, the fostering of this level helps to the student to develop the reading interpretation tasks taking into account that interpretation is fundamental, because how things are interpreted determines what actions the learner consider. Third, the most of proficiency reading tests have inferential questions and the success or fail depend on the level of inference and interpretation that the learners have acquired.

Besides, Psycholinguistic model of reading comprehension assures that inferential reading comprehension involves a deep interaction among the prior knowledge and background knowledge of the reader and the background knowledge of the writer (Spiro, 1980; Sanford, 1981). This means that it is necessary to foster in learners, the acquisition of context knowledge and background knowledge to make proper inferences, since making proper inferences becomes possible when the knowledge of the learner interacts with the text, it evidently happens, if the knowledge previously acquired by the learner could be useful for facing the text. It may involve the historical knowledge and the recognition of the author's background.

The relevance of background knowledge in inferential reading. As seen before background knowledge play an important role in reading but especially in inferential reading, because it is

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the base of inferences made by the reader it is necessary to have a broad knowledge of the context and language.

As a matter of fact, the lack of background knowledge do not allow to make proper inferences since the process of inference combines the background knowledge and clues getting from the text. Moreover, Pressley & Afflerbach (1995) assures that it is necessary to use a combination of reading skills and reader's background knowledge to aim inferences.

In addition, Anderson and Pearson (1984) demonstrated that learners with greater background on the topic usually comprehend stories better than learners with little background knowledge. Moreover, Readers with greater knowledge are also more motivated making the reading process more fun (Walqui, 2000). Then, if the comprehension is motivated and fun, inferences may definitely be true and easy to get for students.

Thus, It is important that students knows the background of the author or have clues at least. So, the background should be given by teachers who master the topic dealt and in this way to avoid misconceptions of the text read.

Another aspect at inferring is the kind of inferences that could be make by students. Inferences may vary among simple inferences from associating a pronoun with a mentioned character, to a more complex as understanding a subtle implicit message, conveyed through the choise of particular vocabulary by the writer and drawing on the reader own background knowledge (Kispaal, 2008). Some researchers also have included some types of inference because to infer is not an isolated strategy or skill as previously seen but it is a component of the levels of reading comprehension.

Types of inference. The cognitive model of Chikilanga (1992) proposes some important types of reading inferences. They may be text connecting and gap filling. Text connecting

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inferences require the reader to find out connection from the text while in Gap filling, students are required to fill in by activating his background knowledge.

Chikilanga (1992) claims that there is a distinction between the previous kind of inferences and refers to them as Propositional and Pragmatic inferences. Propositional inferences are logical because they must be necessary true based on demonstrated facts in the text. Whereas Pragmatic inferences are not necessary true, but plausible. Then, there are two important aspects in pragmatic inferences. First, the reader suppose they are true based on his previous knowledge. And second, the writer suggest so.

Based on the previous facts, a categorization has been designed to apply for teaching purposes in order to develop inferential skills through literature. That categorization sets some practices to foster the inferring skills.

1. Lexical Inferences. Involves inferring the meaning of ambiguous lexical items through clues. Some words challenges the reader to reflect on the meaning of themselves and their use in the context of the theme. This information may sometimes be dependent on background knowledge and sometimes on information from the text itself.
2. Logical Inferences. These types of inferring can be logically derived from the semantic context of the text. There are two subcategories of logical inferences
 - a. Logical Informational. These involve specific people instruments and objects.
 - b. Logical Explanatory. They involve motivation of characters, causes, consequences of actions and conditions that allow events to happen in the text.
3. Pragmatic Inferences. These kind of inferences are based on information outside the text but stated in itself and are made by the readers' prior knowledge or schemata.

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- a. Elaborative Informational. The reader has to have read similar text and this knowledge is expected to be a part of his schemata.
- b. Elaborative Explanatory. Those in which the reader assume by a specific event on the text.
- c. Evaluative. These inferences are related to the significance, morality, and validity of events and characters' actions and are based on the readers' beliefs.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

After reviewing some bibliographical sources, it was found that, inferring is an essential skill component of the reading process and is considered central to reading comprehension (Burke & Brumfit, 1991). By developing and teaching inferential comprehension reading and inferring strategies, ESL learners create a link between the first and the third comprehension levels, which is the goal when teaching reading. It is said, to create the link to reach the critical level by developing reading practices focused on inferring with evidence and identifying author bias. It is important to clarify that students need necessarily to analyze, question, and assess the concepts and experiences that they acquire by reading. Marzano (2000) states when students make the analysis and the assessment of the concepts inferred and contrast them with their own background information, they necessarily develop critical thinking required for the new educational trends (Marzano, 2000).

In addition, some scholars (Brumfit & Carter, 1991; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Lazar, 1993) assert that a text may never be totally explicit. In this sense, the development of inferential skills in English learners becomes essential to understand those statements that are implicit in the text itself and it is necessary to infer and comprehend to make possibly judgments, this process implies to use some strategies or in some specific cases it is necessary that students resort to past experiences and/or prior knowledge about the topic dealt.

Inferences made by students can be both simple and complex. Simple inferences are drawn for example when two words are associated to derive a literal meaning (Cain, 2004). Chikalanga (1991) illustrates an example, the students should infer the gender of the person dealt in texts with the simple use of He or She pronouns. Complex inferences may be drawn when

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subtle implicit messages need to be understood, conveyed through the choice of specific vocabulary by the writer and drawing on the readers' own background knowledge. The process of inferring is an empowering process because at making inferences, students produce their own meanings.

The interaction giving in the reading process is interpsychological dialogue, because students acquire and store knowledge by reading. Then, intrapsychological dialogue may be evidenced by understanding the context, relating ideas between texts previously read and the text being read, moreover, the facts already known and drawing inferences (Kylene, 2003), while students read they acquire experiences and concepts constructing their own knowledge. It becomes stronger each time students face a new reading task.

It is also necessary to take into account that, teaching inferential reading implies to apply some specific principles. First, according to Elkaim (1982), reading practices aim to generate understanding. Students should use experiences and concepts previously acquired that allow them to analyze, contextualize, and infer any information in order to understand any reading text (Kylene, 2010).

Second, Kenney (1983) suggested that knowledge is not transferred by linguistic communication but it is a tool to guide the students' construction. As a matter of fact, in reading practices teachers provide material and guide the process, in some cases teachers can model some practices, but the process of reading is interpsychological. Then, it is an individual process that is connected to intrapsychological processes when students contrast and analyze the concepts in order to make inferences. So, linguistic communication is a tool, for teachers to guide, model, and assess the interpsychological and intrapsychological processes.

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Third, teaching practices aim to find ways to modify the conceptual structures of the students (Elkaim, 1982). Teaching practices should focus on providing the required sources in order to develop the conceptual structures in order to modify those that might not have proper foundations or are conceptually weak, the wider background knowledge is the stronger concepts are founded.

According to Trabasso and Bouchard (2002), when teachers provide students with suitable and reliable material referred to a concept or fact, they provide with the elements to construct the knowledge that is required to infer information from texts. Since, the most of the time to infer is to figure out information that is not explicitly stated in the text, and then the elements given by teachers help students to reach those inferences that cannot be found through the text itself.

So, in order to teach inferential reading it is important to take into account three specific aspects or factors such as teacher, material, and strategy. Having a clear idea of what role plays each aspect at developing inferential skill in learners; it would be possible to suggest some useful practices.

First, teachers should acquire a specific profile with certain characteristics. Teachers should be an active reader with the capability of linking several knowledge realms and disciplines with new topics. Then, teacher should have reached the critical comprehension level in order to model the strategies and explained how connections between prior and new knowledge should be linked.

Second, the literature has produced a division for teachers who look for texts that generate prolific inference. Material could be narrative or expository. Graesser (1994) stated that

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inferences can happen automatically in narratives because they have a narrow correspondence to everyday life. Both narrative texts and everyday experiences involve people performing actions in pursuits of goals. “The inference mechanisms and world knowledge structures that are tapped during the comprehension of everyday experiences are also likely to be tapped during the comprehension of narratives (Graesser et al, 1994, p. 372). On the other hand, authors go on to say that expository texts are pedagogically used inference training. These texts usually inform the reader about new concepts, generic truths and technical material. Then, this kind of material is more useful at time of conducting more conscious inferences.

Singer *et al.* (1997) assert in their study that, readers produce casual inferences in narrative text while on expository, readers need derive meaning from semantic relationships and abstract rhetorical structure of the text. However, Noordmann *et al.* (1991) put out that not all the readers instinctively know how to use this knowledge to take advantage of it. Then they will require explicit teaching of how apply strategies to interpret both expository and narrative texts.

Likewise, Narvaez (2002) notes that narrative texts conduct to infer, because narrative elicit more interest, prompt more explanations and predictions. On the other hand, expository texts evoke more associative inferences, repetitions, evaluations that could lead the students to think critically and discuss about any topic, generating production of contextualized language. The inferences made as in narrative and expository depends on the questions posed by teachers.

Those questions should be related to elements of the text, predictions, and explanations in order to activate the prior knowledge of the students about the background and bias of the author and allowing them to understand and comprehend the real idea to be expressed.

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According to Gardner (1979), teachers of English are engaged in the search of texts that capture the imagination of their students. This statement supports the idea that the text should generate the student's willingness to reflect, that is a prerequisite to reading and inference.

Another important issue that Gardner (1979) clarify is the fact that, texts with textual problems and higher difficult should be discuss with the teacher guidance.

Finally, to choose the right text is quite challenging. Lunzer and Gardner (1979), Singer *et al* (2005) and Hannon and Daneman (2001) seem to warn against choosing hard texts but Gilbert *et al* (2005) assert that easy texts have several disadvantages. The text should be balanced with elements that challenge the knowledge of students but it is not necessary that the content of a text frustrates students. Texts rich in inference possibilities may be useful when teacher models the thinking process. In conclusion texts chosen should promote mental activity by allowing inference.

Then, the importance to provide and select reliable material to develop the inferential skill in EFL/ESL students is relevant (Keer & Verhaeghe, 2005), in the sense that; material should be reliable and narrowly related to the topic dealt. Moreover, the instruction should be applied accordingly with the aims of 21st century skills, that is, to develop inferential and critical skills in order to construct reliable prior knowledge that facilitates the comprehension of texts.

Developing inferential comprehension level is a difficult task. Therefore, teachers should acquire and master the concepts to be taught. Material and teaching are relevant at fostering inferential reading comprehension in students, because teachers should select and provide clues about the topics dealt.

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Another important aspect to take into account in the process of developing inferring skills is the strategy to develop material. Little research has been made about isolated strategies but there are two models that are mentioned and associated with inference teaching.

- Reciprocal teaching deals with predictions, questions, clarification, and summarization.
- Think aloud encompasses some pre-requisites. First, pupils see the teacher model and understand the meaning of thinking aloud (speak freely, not well-structured / sequenced, reflect their thoughts). Second, practice. Third, activate comprehension strategies while thinking aloud: students identify where comprehension lacks and correct it. Then Israel and Massey (2005) propose six strategies to be taught.
 - a. Before reading, activate prior knowledge: hypothesis/prediction about the text. Teachers search for existing schemas being activated during meaning construction.
 - b. During reading, related text to text: relate important points (story grammar elements cause and reflect, points of comparison and contrast). Relate text to prior knowledge. Infer information critical to interpret the text.
 - c. After reading, utilize strategies such as, summarize, predict, question, and paraphrase. Reflect, this may be evident if students voices acceptance / rejection of their understanding of the text or fitting parts of the text together.

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Indeed, as Pearson and Duke (2002) point out, “Comprehension improves when teachers provide explicit instruction in the use of comprehension strategies. Comprehension improves when teachers implement activities that support the understanding of the text that students will read in their classes” (p. 247). So, some suitable material and strategies to activate the inferential comprehension skills should be conceptually related and provide students with the necessary concepts in order to get clear inferences.

In short, low levels of proficiency in English language and lacks of comprehension could be overcome by learning or improving inferential comprehension skills. Therefore, students may learn or improve inferential comprehension by applying activities that deal with related topics and applying modeled and guided instruction allowing students to understand the language in an authentic context and use it in the same manner. To solve the problem hereto dealt it is suggested the next set of activities.

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Suggested Inferential Comprehension Activities for Teachers

The next set of activities is designed following the suggestions made by scholars (Burke & Brumfit, 1991; Harver & Goudvis, 2007; Chikalanga, 1991; Kyle, 2003; Elkaim, 1982; Trabasso and Bouchard, 2002). It contains related topics to activate background knowledge, a written section where students will perform and practice as writing skills as inferential comprehension tasks, moreover it includes instructions for teachers how to develop the activities in class. It is important to clarify that the topics could be adapted to the students and teachers' needs, and this is a suggested set of activities which could improve inferential comprehension skills. Another important clarification is that some material below has been adapted from books or/and books trying to design the most suitable and reliable practices.

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Activities Objectives.

- Use supporting details and examples to infer.
- Cite evidence to support the inferences drawn.
- Provide an analysis of the text read.

Skills development.

- Identify main and secondary ideas.
- Identify supporting details.
- Understand which information in text is not directly stated.

Activate students' prior knowledge

- Tell students that they will work in a lesson about inferring. Ask students what is an inference. (an informed guess)
- Ask students what they would think if they pass by a park where there were several musical instruments and people were setting an stage. (there will be a concert). Point out the fact that nobody told them that there would have a concert. How they used clues and own experiences to figure it out.
- Next, ask how students use their prior knowledge in a text to figure out something that is not directly stated. Discuss how prior knowledge helps them understand what they read. For instance, if the text refers to cycling, they use their own experiences to understand the terms. Ask them to give more examples.
- Finally ask students what "text evidence" is (facts, feelings, examples, dates, and so on). Explain the use of quotation and its use. (quotation makes stronger the inference, because it is the evidence that support the inference, that quote taken from the text should be between quotation marks).

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Activity 1 MAKING INFERENCES

Introduction.

Through a short definition of Mermaids, students are introduced to the idea of making inferences and activate prior knowledge. They learn that citing evidence may help them make inferences about text's messages.

Step By Step

- Read the definition of inference. Ask students to read the text about Mermaids, and ask them to draw evidence, or clues, that helps them to figure out what it is about, did they love humans, did they like eating other sea creatures?
- Explain that the chart shows the process of making inferences. Read the first column and ask students to compare the evidence they marked. Then read the second column and discuss how their own knowledge of Greek culture helped them answer the questions. Finally, review the entire strategy and discuss why the inference is correct or not.
- Ask students to tell the class about real-life situations in which they have made inferences.
- Explain why making inferences is a valuable strategy and it is the center of the reading comprehension tasks which are focused to develop critical thinking. Share an inference you have made in a book. Explain how the inference helped you determine the text's message.

Activity 1

Making Inferences

Making Inferences: support with evidence what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text

Strange creatures

Sometimes writers do not spell out all the facts about a situation for you, so it depends on you to use what you know to pull all the puzzle pieces together. An inference is a reasonable guess based on textual and contextual evidence, or supporting details in a text, and what you know from your own experiences.

Ancient Greeks used to talk about a creature that was human above the waist and fish below, they used to bewitch sailors in the sea with her beauty and singing which tells them about prophetic and better worlds in order to eat them.

What is this paragraph telling you? Draw arrows pointing to evidence or clues, which help you figure out it tells about. Read the chart below to see how you can make an inference.

Text Evidence	What I already know	Inference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The text is about a creature described by ancient Greeks. • The creature is beautiful and sings. • The creature is half woman and half fish. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancient Greeks used to tell myths to explain the nature events. • There are several sea creatures in Greek mythology. • There are only two fish shaped creatures in Greek mythology. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mermaids were creatures that do not like fish. • Mermaids do not love people.

Texts often tell you more than they say directly. By searching for textual evidence and applying it to what you already know, you can guess inferences about text's messages. Then you can make judgments to believe or not in them.

Activity 2 Modeled Instruction.

Students read an article about mermaids and use text evidence to support their inference.

Step By Step

- Remind students that they just made an inference about a text on evidence and their own knowledge.
- Tell students that in this lesson they will learn how to make inferences from reading texts.
- Read aloud the article about sightings of Mermaids.
- Then read the question: “does the author believe in mermaids?”
- Now tell the students you will perform a Think Aloud to demonstrate a way of answering the question.

Think aloud: the extract does not say directly if the author believes or not in the existence of mermaids. I need to look for evidence to help me figure this out (make an inference). In the last sentences I read that **mermaids, like the Lock Ness Monster, may just be a case of mistaken identity.** I know that Lock Ness Monster existence has not been proved.

- Direct student to the chart and ask where they have seen a similar chart before. Reminds them that it shows the process of making inferences, and point out the first piece of text evidence.

Think aloud: I know that something that is mistaken is something that is wrong, and then which is the position of the author, the evidence supports the existence of mermaids or it is against it?

- Ask students to suggest words to fill in the blanks in the third column (believe, does not believe, has doubts)
- Finally, make the students to answer the question and invite them to share their answers with the class.

Part 2. Modeled instruction

Are mermaids real?

Throughout history, various explorers have reported sightings of mermaids, the most famous of which was Christopher Columbus.

Columbus claimed to have spotted mermaids near Haiti in 1493, which he described as being "not as pretty as they are depicted, for somehow in the face they look like men," according to the American Museum of Natural History.

Experts believe Columbus, Smith and other mermaid-spotting explorers really caught glimpses of human-sized marine mammals called manatees and dugongs.

Indeed, despite past and recent "sightings" of the mythical sea creatures, mermaids, like the Loch Ness Monster, may just be a case of mistaken identity.

Read the first part of an article about mermaids. Then answer the questions.

Does the author believe in the existence of mermaids?

The text does not directly stipulate if the author does believe or does not in the existence of mermaids.

Search evidence that tells what the author thinks about the existence of mermaids. One fact is listed below. Write more evidence on the lines provided and complete the inference statement.

Text evidence	What I already know	Inference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experts believe Columbus caught glimpses of human sized marine mammals called manatees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no scientific evidence that probes the existence of mermaids. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author _____ Because he assumes that _____.

Explain how the evidence you listed supports your inference.

Activity 3. Guided Instruction

Students continue reading about Mermaids. They answer multiple-choice question and analyze the evidence that helped them select the correct answer.

Step By Step

- Tell students that they will continue reading about Mermaids.
- Close reading will help students identify and remember important evidence. The Hint will help them to look for specific evidence in each answer choice in order to select the best option.
- Have students read the article and underline the evidence that could support the existence of mermaids as the close reading indicates.
- Ask the students to share the sentence they underlined. Discuss which evidences show the author's feelings about Mermaids.
- Ask students to use the Hint in order to circle the right answer. Then have them answer the question in Show your Thinking. Encourage students to add evidence they have known before in past experiences or texts previously read.

Answer Analysis.

Choice A is correct. It gives the proper evidence why people could believe in the documentary. Scientific proofs are what make the most of the time to take something as true.

Choice B is incorrect. Even though the picture painted could be really convincing it continues being just a "movie".

Choice C is incorrect. It is not related with the idea of the existence of mermaids nowadays.

Choice D is incorrect. It does not offer any support to the answer. Any program could have this nature.

Activity 3. Guided instruction.

Continue reading the text about mermaids. Use the close reading and the hint to help you answer the question.

Close Reading

Why was the show convincing? **Underline** the sentence(s) that provide evidence.

Hint

Which choice gives you specific details why people fooled watching it.

In 2012, a TV special called "[Mermaids: The Body Found](#)" renewed interest in mermaids. It presented the story of scientists finding proof of real mermaids in the oceans. It was fiction but was presented in a fake-documentary format that seemed realistic. If the program fooled people, it's because it was intended to. As the show's website noted, the movie "paints a wildly convincing picture of the existence of mermaids, what they may look like and why they've stayed hidden ... until now."

The show was so convincing that the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#), represented in the film, received enough inquiries following the TV special that the agency issued a statement officially denying the existence of mermaids. In a June 27 post, NOAA noted, "The belief in mermaids may have arisen at the very dawn of our species

Circle the correct answer.

Which sentence from the article best support the idea that the documentary fooled people?

- Scientists found proof of real mermaids in the oceans.
- The movie paints a wildly convincing picture of the existence of mermaids.
- The belief of mermaids may have arisen at the very dawn of our species
- If the program fooled people, it's because it was intended to.

Show your thinking...

Look at the answers you chose above. Explain how the evidence in the answer helped show that people could be easily influenced by documentaries even if they are supported in false evidence.

Activity 4 guided practice.

Students read a passage about Mermaids twice. After the first reading, you will ask three questions to check your students' comprehension of the passage.

Step By Step

- Have students read the text.
- Ask the following questions to ensure the comprehension of the text.
 - a. What is the difference between Mermaids and Sirens? (mermaids are beautiful and kind women, sirens are not. They are used to conquer sailors with their singing, idea that seems to shape the descriptions of Mermaids).
 - b. Do reports of sighting agree in the appearance of Mermaids? How do you know? (No, some say that they are more like men. Columbus affirmed to have seen three in Haiti).
 - c. What have most creatures that were thought to be Mermaids turned out to be? (Most have been Manatees)
- Then ask students to reread the title and look at the study buddy think aloud. What does the buddy help them think about?

TIP. Points out that, authors do not always state their point of view about the topic. Students need to infer the authors' feelings based on text evidence. This will help them better understand the text overall message and recognize an author's bias.

- Have students read the rest of the passage. Tell them to follow directions in the Close reading.

TIP. Close reading helps students identify explanations and examples that can be used as text evidence to support inferences. Learning to identify and analyze text evidence will help students infer author's opinions and beliefs in any text read.
- Finally, have students answer the questions. Discuss the correct and incorrect ones.
- Have students answer the questions using the hint to help them.

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- Discuss the answers.

Answer analysis.

1. A is correct. It supports the idea why the author thinks mermaids are not real but a mistaken creature. B is not correct. Tells how the idea of their existence has strengthen passing the years. C is incorrect. It gives a support to the statement but it is just referred to Columbus sights not in general. D is incorrect. It mentions when was mermaids first mentioned.
2. A is incorrect. It refers to one of mistaken sights but it does not express the feelings of the author. B is correct. Here the author states why Mermaids are not real from this point of view and brings evidence. C is incorrect. Even though it describes the idea people have about mermaids. D is incorrect. It tells how the idea of mermaids has changed in later times.
3. Sample response. This evidence could not support the existence of mermaids because all of them have been mistaken sights. Then, even in the actuality people have kept the idea of their existence everything has been false proofs. (Here the student could bring evidence from their own to support their responses).

Reteaching.

Use a chart to verify the correct answer to question 1. Draw the graphic organizer below, leaving the boxes blank. Work with students to fill in the boxes, using information from the passage.

Text evidence	What I know...	Inference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most sightings by sailors were probably normal marine creatures, such as manatees, dugongs, or sea-cows (now extinct) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manatees and dugongs have similar bodies and are closer to human shapes more than sea creatures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author believe that Mermaids are not real, he is pointing out evidence why those sightings could be mistaken.

Activity 4. Guided practice

Read the text. Use the Study buddy and close reading to guide your reading.



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While reading I am going to underline the statements that help me to infer the author's point of view.

Close Reading

According to the author's claim why people think that Mermaids are real?

Underline the sentence that shows the author explanation.

What examples of mermaid discoveries does the author mention? Underline the evidence that proves Mermaids could exist.

Legends of half-human and half-fish creatures go back thousands of years. Everyone has seen pictures of mermaids. Sightings were made by the early Arabs and the Greek Pliny in 586 A.D. Many medieval sailors claimed to have seen them and such reports continued right into the 1900's.

Most sightings by sailors were probably normal marine creatures, such as manatees, dugongs, or sea-cows (now extinct). These appear to cradle their young much as a human would carry a baby. It is possible that sailors, seeing these unfamiliar beasts, would assume that they had stumbled across some sort of humanoid species. Mermaids described by the famous explorer, Christopher Columbus, were almost certainly manatees. He reported seeing three mermaids in the ocean off Haiti, in January of 1493. He said they "came quite high out of the water", but were "not as pretty as they are depicted, for somehow in the face they look like men."

However such descriptions are very different from the usual portrayal of a mermaid and the idea, of a beautiful but dangerous creature, probably arose from the earlier stories of the Sirens of the Aegean Sea. The Sirens were sea-nymphs who had the power to charm by their song all who heard them, so that the unhappy mariners were irresistibly impelled to cast themselves into the sea to their destruction. The Sirens were first mentioned in Homer's Odyssey. This may have shaped the portrayal of mermaids from medieval times onwards. The modern view of mermaids has also been influenced by Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale, The Little Mermaid, written in 1836.

Hints

Think about the word choice in each sentence. Which choice helps you infer what the author actually thinks about mermaids?

Which sentence offers support for why people hope mermaids are real.

How many discoveries of mermaids have been reported in the history? What is the author purpose of including this evidence?

Look at your marked-up text. Then use the Hints on this page to help you answer the questions.

1. A student makes the following claim about the author of the article about mermaids.

“The author believes that the mermaids are unreal even though he brings evidence of their existence.”

Which sentence from the text support best this claim?

- a. Most sightings by sailors were probably normal marine creatures, such as manatees, dugongs, or sea-cows (now extinct).
 - b. Many medieval sailors claimed to have seen them and such reports continued right into the 1900's.
 - c. Mermaids described by the famous explorer, Christopher Columbus, were almost certainly manatees.
 - d. The Sirens were first mentioned in Homer's Odyssey. This may have shaped the portrayal of mermaids from medieval times onwards.
2. Which sentence from the text best supports why the author does not think mermaids are real?
 - a. He reported seeing three mermaids in the ocean off Haiti, in January of 1493.
 - b. It is possible that sailors, seeing these unfamiliar beasts, would assume that they had stumbled across some sort of humanoid species
 - c. However such descriptions are very different from the usual portrayal of a mermaid and the idea, of a beautiful but dangerous creature, probably arose from the earlier stories of the Sirens of the Aegean Sea
 - d. The portrayal of mermaids from medieval times onwards. The modern view of mermaids has also been influenced by Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale, The Little Mermaid, written in 1836.

Explain how the evidence of discoveries of mermaids could not support the existence of mermaids.

Activity 5. Common core practice.

Read the extract of an internet article about UFOs then answer the questions

Many Internet claims of encounters between NASA astronauts and alien spacecraft are based on quotes from “secret communications” between flight crews and Houston. It is true that there are such private conversations, concerning crew health for example. But the Internet stories of overheard conversations are never documented and often attributed to leaks from unnamed NASA workers whose jobs (or even lives) would allegedly be at risk if they were identified. Many of these stories involve the Apollo 11 flight, and they include claims that alien spaceships accompanied the NASA craft during its Moon landing and that a row of alien spacecraft along a crater rim monitored the astronauts’ spacewalk on the lunar surface. (Incidentally, Apollo 11 landed on a flat plain where there were no hills or crater rims to provide such a viewpoint.)

To my knowledge, no NASA astronaut has ever reported seeing a UFO in space, let alone having a confrontation with aliens. However, this is not to say that no astronaut believes that alien visitations to Earth might be happening. Recently there were news reports that Apollo 14 astronaut Edgar Mitchell believes in the reality of some reports of UFOs. He has attended a number of meetings of UFO believers, and he asserts that some of these reports are true, and that the U.S. government and military are aware of these alien visits. However, Mitchell does not claim to have seen aliens himself. His astronaut colleagues tell me that he has always had an interest in the occult, and he even tried to conduct a parapsychology experiment on the way to and from the Moon. It is easy for a journalist to ignore Mitchell’s caveats about most UFO reports being untrue, or about not encountering an alien himself, to give the impression that he and other astronauts have had frequent encounters with beings from other worlds.

1. According to the article, what is one reason many people would not believe UFOs do not exist?
 - a. No astronaut believes that aliens visitations to Earth might be happening
 - b. No NASA astronaut has ever reported seeing UFO in space
 - c. It is easy for a journalist ignore Mitchell’s caveats about UFOs being untrue.
 - d. Other astronauts had frequent encounters with beings from other worlds.
2. Which detail provides evidence that Apollo 11 could not have being monitored by aliens?
 - a. Alien spacecraft along a crater rim monitored the astronauts
 - b. There were no hills where the Apollo 11 landed
 - c. Apollo 11 never landed on the moon surface
 - d. There are false claims that a spacecraft could have accompanied the Apollo 11 mission.
3. Which statement is BEST supported by the article?

Activity 6 common core practice 2

Read the poem and answer the questions.

The prettiest sea creature

I dream of sea creatures and fishes
Just as Lovecraft did in a lost land
No one knows my secret and pleases
But I'll find my love far way the sand

A marvelous ship takes me to the deep
Where my lover girl is waiting for me
With her mirror, comb and sleep
She combs my soul and calms down the sea

She shows me the immensity of the giant blue
Cthulu remains in R'lyeh the underwater city
There, everything is peace, is like a strange brew
'Cause beings there feel, no jealous, no sad, no pity

Just love, passion, and justice reign in the ocean
My wife will be widow tomorrow!
Oh, she gave me her musical love potion
But it's too late my wife provides me again just sorrow!

1. What does the words "giant blue" refers to?
 - a. The sky
 - b. The sea
 - c. The monster
 - d. The underwater city
2. In the line "just love, passion, and justice reign in the ocean" what does the author want to explain?
 - a. Sea creatures and Cthulu live in peace.
 - b. All kind of beings could exist in harmony under the sea.
 - c. There are certain hierarchies under the sea.
 - d. R'lyeh is a republic.
3. It is possible to infer from the author, except.

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