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Major Paper

Title:A system of reading texts and tasks dealing with health education as cross-curricular content for tenth graders.

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First of all, it´s a pleasure for me to say thanks to:

My mommy: without her support I would not have been able to get up to this point.

My daddy: forbeing so comprehensive

My husband: for supporting me in every moment.

My grandmothers: thanks for trusting me; even in the darkest of my days.

My family: for being the light in the darkness.

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Mis padres: por decirme siempre "tú puedes", guiarme y apoyarme en los momentos más difíciles y por darme siempre su voto de confianza.

Mi hijo Adam Ernesto: por ser lo más importante de mi vida .

Abstract

This paper offers a system of reading texts and communicative tasks dealing with health education, in order to develop reading comprehension skills in senior high students and a responsible attitude towards their health care, which has been conceived through a process that included needs analysis, partial application and evaluation of a preliminary proposal through specialist criteria.

The proposal responds to the demands of the senior high school which aims at achieving the integrated formation of the students in terms of their feelings, thinking and acting within the context of their school, the family and the surrounding community. It intends to make a contribution to the improvement of the teaching learning process in this level, particularly in terms of helping students become interested in reading in English and being able to interpret and summarize what they read, which proved deficient during the diagnosis stage of this research.

The proposal is grounded on communicative ideas about the teaching of reading, and is substantiated on humanistic and socio-cultural views of pedagogy.

The research has been conducted following these methods: the historical-logical, analysis-synthesis, the inductive-deductive, analysis of documents, Interview, survey, pedagogical test, teacher diaries and reflections and specialist criteria

1. Introduction

Foreign language learning has always been a necessity for humanity. How could communication among the people of the world ever be possible if some of them did not know the language of the others?

The need to learn other languages in our country has gained importance nowadays for many reasons: (1) the ongoing process of globalization, (2) the fast advance of science and technology impels us to be trained to assimilate the new technologies as soon as possible,(3) the impetuous development of the tourist industry (4) the ambitious governmental program for developing a general-integrated culture in the population cannot be conceived without the implementation of strategies for massive teaching of foreign languages.

In almost all countries the teaching of foreign languages is a common practice, nevertheless, English is the most widely taught and learned. In this XXI century, knowing English is indispensable since this language has become the universal way people use to communicate. 1,400 million people live in countries were English is the official language; one out of five people all over the world speaks English; approximately 85% of emails around the world are written in English. It is said that the character of English as international language will keep until 2050 (Hasman 2000: 2 – 5).

The teaching of English in the Cuban national educational system is included from primary schools to universities, and the development of reading abilities are specified for each grade.

Knowing how to read is essential to people's life. Reading is important to acquire cultural information. By means of reading people learn about a language, because reading is an important tool to increase vocabulary, reinforce grammar and spelling. It has been said that reading is one of the most important means of communication, as most of the information and knowledge at the disposal of mankind comes through reading. Reading has also been defined as one of the most important instruments in work and everyday study since it is used by professionals to deepen in their field of work and research.

The educative process in senior high school in Cuba aims at achieving the integrated formation of the students in terms of their feelings, thinking and acting within the context of their school, the family and the surrounding community. This goal of education at this level includes the development of a

general, political and pre-professional culture, which guarantees active and unconditional participation in the construction and defense of the Cuban socialist project, and the conscious election of future studies, the election of territorially prioritized university courses.

The integrated goals of senior high school in Cuba include health education, particularly the promotion of healthy lifestyles such as responsible sexual behavior, as well as the rejection of drug consumption. This dimension of education in senior high school is cross curricular content, which means that this is content that should be dealt with by all subjects in school.

Health education as cross curricular content may be a theme for the selection of texts in the teaching of reading skills in English in senior high school in Cuba. Topics derived from this theme may be meaningful for our students provided that: the texts do not prove too difficult for them; the topics connect with the students' interests, worries, preferences and experiences; and the texts deal with a variety of topics within a larger theme.

An analysis of the aims of English in tenth grade showed that they not only address the learning of this foreign language but also the strengthening of students' attitudes through the study of the different linguistic contents and topics. However, these topics have not been clearly stated in the aims of the subject in tenth grade.

This research began during the 2012-2013 school year. At the time, a revision of the tenth grade workbook showed that just one of the reading texts deals with health education. In order to find out whether the teachers of English at "Eduardo R. Chibás¨ senior high school in Placetas have adapted this workbook in any ways, three of them were interviewed. These teachers stated that they usually adapt the materials they use at this level, including the reading texts; however, these adaptations are not available at this school.

With respect to students´ opinions about the topics dealt with through reading in English, a group discussion with the whole class showed that the majority of them stated that the texts are not appealing to them, because they deal with topics that are not meaningful for them and sometimes because the texts are too difficult for them to understand.

The analysis of the report on the needs assessment carried out by the head teacher revealed that there are a good number of students in Tenth grade 1

that need special attention by all the teachers in terms of their health styles, such as unhealthy habits (drinking and smoking), carelessness in terms of their cleanliness and the lack of good manners when relating to their peers, and even the use of obscene and violent language. This need calls for coordinated work among all the teachers working with this particular class, otherwise, this situation will probably not change easily.

Particularly the contribution of the English teacher to addressing this educative need in this class may be most easily made through reading, by selecting themes that deal with health education. However, at the beginning of this research it wasn`t clear for the author of this paper what topics within the health education theme and what types of texts would be motivating and attainable for these students.

The topic of reading in English, in preuniversity and secondary school, has been researched by a number of student teachers from the English program at "Félix Varela" Pedagogical University (Hernández R., 2006; Cruz R., 2008; Pérez Pérez M., 2010; Pérez Ortuño M., 2010; Pérez Companioni, 2010; León Martín, Y., 2010; Chea B., 2010; Madero González Y., 2011; De Gracia Domínguez Y., 2011; Rojas Hernández L., Arteaga R. and Fumero A., 2013; and Bello Y., Castro J., Sánchez J., 2013).

Most of these papers have centered their attention in the development of reading comprehension skills in secondary and preuniversity students in Villa Clara. Their proposals stress on the need to make reading classes meaningful for students, both in terms of attainability of the reading texts and in terms of the topics and their potential to arouse interest in students and thus contribute to their education. Some of the reading themes that these papers propose are vocational education, environmental education, world culture in general, the culture of the English-speaking countries in particular, and topics related to the school curriculum. They also highlight the need to design tasks that are in line with the communicative teaching of reading, particularly tasks that prepare students to have a command of the reading process just as it occurs in real life. However, only two term papers have dealt with the teaching of reading in preuniversity through texts and tasks dealing with health education (Rojas Hernández L., Arteaga R. and Fumero A., 2013; and Bello Y., Castro J., Sánchez J., 2013), with two different proposals including a small number of

texts selected on the basis of different criteria and not forming a system when put together to be used with the class of tenth graders that were the subjects of this research.

This problematic situation led the author to formulate the following **scientific problem**: How can the teaching of reading in English in senior high school be improved?

In order to solve this problem our research will focus on the following **object**: The teaching-learning process of reading comprehension in English, in senior high school.

Field of action: The treatment of health education as cross curricular content through the teaching learning process of reading comprehension in English in senior high school.

Aim: To propose a system of reading texts and tasks dealing with health education, in order to develop reading comprehension skills in students and a responsible attitude towards their health care.

In order to guide the research process the following **scientific questions** were formulated:

1. What theoretical and methodological rationale may support the selection of reading texts and tasks in senior high school?
2. What needs to be improved in the teaching learning process of reading in English for tenth graders at Eduardo R. Chibás senior high school?
3. What results are obtained in evaluating the proposal through a partial application and specialist criteria? What characteristics must be present in a proposal of reading texts and tasks for the teaching of reading to senior high school students?
4. What characteristics must be present in a proposal of reading texts and tasks for the teaching of reading to senior high school students?

In order to answer these scientific questions the following **scientific tasks** were designed:

1. Determination of the theoretical and methodological rationale that may support the selection of reading texts and tasks in senior high school,

through bibliographical revision.

2. Needs assessment in the teaching-learning process of reading in English, in tenth grade at Eduardo R. Chibás senior high school.
3. Evaluation of the proposal through partial application and specialist criteria.
4. Identification of the characteristics that must be present in a proposal of reading texts and tasks for the teaching of reading in senior high school.

This research went through two phases. The first phase consisted in a preliminary proposal of reading texts and tasks that was partially implemented in 10 Grade 1 at Eduardo R. Chibás senior high school, during the 2012 -13 school year, which allowed the author to identify what worked well and what did not work so well in practice. The second phase consisted in submitting the preliminary proposal to evaluation by specialists in the teaching of English. The two phases together resulted in an improved proposal of a system of reading texts and tasks for the teaching of reading in tenth grade.

The solution found to the scientific problem formulated in this research, and the practical conditions in which the authoress carried out this research, demanded an inductive logic and the integration of qualitative and quantitative research methods and techniques:

From the theoretical level the following methods were used:

Historical-Logical: This method was used in order to elaborate the theoretical and methodological framework of our research, which included the definition of key concepts, the adoption of a broad conception about reading and health education.

Analysis-synthesis: This method was used with the objective of analyzing the existing bibliography on the topic, as well during the analysis of empirical data.

Inductive-Deductive: It was used in the establishment of general and particular theoretical considerations expressed by different specialists on the topic object of research and in the analysis and interpretation of the data obtained through the different instruments applied.

Systemic approach: to explain the integral structure of the elements of the system of reading texts and tasks.

From the empirical level the following methods and techniques were used :

Analysis of documents: It was used in order to obtain information about the goals for reading in English in tenth grade, in terms of skills, attitudes and values, and, in order to obtain information about the cross curricular that is identified in the senior high school curriculum for all the school subjects.

Survey: It was given to the students in order to determine their interests with relation to the reading themes in English.

Pedagogical test: It was given to the students in order to obtain information about their level of reading skills in English.

Teacher diaries and reflections: It was used during the partial application of the preliminary proposal of reading texts and tasks, with the purpose of extracting some learning with relation to what works and what doesn't work when teaching reading with health education as cross curricular content in the study group.

Interview: It was given to the teachers in order to know how they adapt the workbooks for the reading lessons.

Participant observation: This method was used in order to obtain information about students' progress in reading and their interest in class, as well as with the purpose of finding out about what worked well and what didn`t when applying the preliminary proposal.

Specialist criteria: This method was used in order to evaluate the proposal.

From the mathematical statistical level:
- Percentage analysis: It allowed the processing of the information obtained by means of the application of different research tools.
- Bar graphs: It was used in order to show the results before and after the implementation of the preliminary proposal.

The subjects that participated in this research were 32 students from Tenth Grade 1 at "Eduardo R. Chibás". This class was made up 4 boys and 28 girls, ranging from 15 to 16 years of age, all of them coming from Placetas town.

This paper is structured in six parts: introduction, main part, conclusion, recommendations, bibliography and appendixes.

2. Theoretical and methodological rationale for the selection of reading texts and tasks in senior high school

2.1. Contextualization and historical antecedents of the teaching of reading in senior high school

Reading has been present in the English programs in preuniversity during the last three decades. In fact, for many years, in general education in Cuba prevailed the idea that only reading could be taught at school, since most classes were very large and most teachers of English were not ready to teach this language for communication (Antich, 1975). However, the treatment of this macro skill was traditional until the coming of materials and programs based the communicative approach, at the beginning of the 21 century (Enriquez O´Farrill I. et al, 2000)

The traditional teaching of reading was characterized by the use of product-oriented teaching strategies, which consisted in teaching the new grammatical structures and vocabulary orally before the students actually read the text, and evaluating students´ comprehension rather than focusing on the reading process. A unit devoted to reading in preuniversity would include a stage in which the new grammar and vocabulary would be dealt with orally and another stage devoted to reading a text without a reading purpose or real-life task, and asking the students to answer a series of comprehension questions, in order to evaluate the students.

The topic of reading in English, in pre-university and secondary school, has been researched by a number of student teachers from the English program at "Félix Varela" Pedagogical University (Hernández R., 2006; Cruz R., 2008; Pérez Pérez M., 2010; Pérez Ortuño M., 2010; Pérez Companioni, 2010; León Martín, Y., 2010; Chea B., 2010; Madero González Y., 2011; De Gracia Dominguez Y., 2011; Rojas Hernández L., Arteaga R. and Fumero A., 2013; and Bello Y., Castro J., Sánchez J., 2013;it also has been treated by some graduated teachers such as Veitía M.,2005 and García S.,2005.

Most of these papers have centered their attention in the development of reading comprehension skills in secondary and pre-university students in Villa Clara. Their proposals stress on the need to make reading classes meaningful for students, both in terms of attainability of the reading texts and in terms of the topics and their potential to arouse interest in students and thus contribute to their education. However, only two term papers have dealt with the teaching of

reading in preuniversity through texts and tasks dealing with health education. That is why the authoress decided to propose a system of reading texts and tasks dealing with health education as cross-curricular content.

According to the program of the subject these basic abilities are reading goals for tenth grade: to extract information from texts of medium complexity, adapted and authentic on diverse topics; to summarize the information obtained from oral and written texts, and to understand the social character of language and its relation with thought and, by means of the study of the linguistic contents and the themes presented through reading. In other words, the development of this macro ability in tenth grade has as fundamental objective that the students understand oral texts in relation to their needs, interests and linguistic level, so that they become efficient readers in English. (Enríquez O´Farril I., 2005)

2.2. The teaching-learning process of reading comprehension in English in senior high school: basic concepts, types of reading and the reading skills

It has been said that reading is one of the most important means of communication as most of the information and knowledge at the disposal of mankind come through reading. This process has also been defined as one of the most important instruments in work and everyday study since it is used by professionals to deepen in their field of work and investigation.

As Celcie Murcia has said (2000, 118) "... even in this modern age of multimedia and high –tech environments, it is still the case that most of us rely on our reading ability in order to gain information or expand our knowledge. Whether it is the sports fan who rushes to the sports page on the newspaper, the investor who checks the financial page or the tennis instructor who needs to know the weather forecast, information is available to all of them in print and it has to be processed via reading. In a literate society skill in reading is imperative since so much of what one needs to know is communicated via written text: instructions on how to get the out of an underground parking area, instructions on how to operate the pump in a self-service gas station, or the precautions one needs to take when trying out a new drug or ointment .We could not function in a modern society without reading. Yet for some people this is not an easily accessible skill..."

She also states that in a second or foreign language, reading carries even greater potential importance than in the first language. A learner of another language will be able to retain some of the knowledge gained in a course of a study by continuing to read in that language for many years graduating from the course. For anyone learning the language of a remote country, reading opens up a world of literature and culture representing that country in a manner that would not otherwise be possible.

Greenwood also argues that reading is a receptive ability since it permits to get the message of a written text. He also states that receptive does not mean passive because readers are involved in the process of interpreting and negotiating meaning.

On the other hand, Francoise Grellet states that reading is a constant process of guessing (1981). She points out that what one brings to a text is often more important than what one finds in it. She also states that it is an active skill involving guessing, predicting, checking and asking one self's questions.

Both authors have said that it is a silent and independent activity. Independent because the reader interacts with the written material and if someone interrupts the communication between the reader and the author, via the text, the process of interaction is broken. Silent because, they argue, when reading aloud people concentrate on pronunciation disregarding meaning.

Andrew S. Cohen points out that reading is seen as a dynamic interaction between the writer and the reader in which the latter creates meaning for the text. He argues that the activities of the reader include retaining newly acquired knowledge, accessing recorded and stored knowledge, and attending to the writer's clues as to the meaning intended for the text.

According to Penny Ur (1996:138), reading means 'reading and understanding'. He argues that if someone can read the words but does not know what they mean, the person is not reading, he is merely decoding (i.e., translating symbols into corresponding words)

To J. Richards (1992:306) the understanding that results of reading is called

reading comprehension.

Celce Murcia (2000:119) has stated that in the process of trying to understand a written text the reader has to perform a number of simultaneous tasks: decode the message by recognizing the written signs, interpret the message by assigning meaning to the string of words, and finally, understand what the author's intention was. In this process there are at least three participants: the write, the text and the reader. The writer may be distant in time and space from the particular reader of the text, and from the act of reading; nonetheless, it was at the time of writing that the author produced the text with the intention of transmitting a message to a potential reader, and therefore, the dialog between reader and writer via the text can take place at any time after that. Reading is, therefore, inherently interactive, involving the three participants.

So, comprehension is not recognizing and recalling the meanings of words. Comprehension is what the reader does to integrate the text into their real world and make sense of it within their own knowledge, interests and needs.

Reading is a medium of communication, the power to get Information from written language; it is an active, thought- getting, and problem-solving process. In this process, the reader must make an active contribution by drawing upon and using concurrently various abilities that he has acquired. Grellet (1981) puts that reading is a constant process of guessing, and what one brings to the text is often more important than what one finds in it. This is why, from the very beginning, the students should be taught to use what they know to understand unknown elements, whether these are ideas or simple words .Reading is more than an interaction between a reader and a text.

Reading is not only an aim in itself; it is also a means of learning a language. When reading a text the learner reviews sounds and letters, vocabulary and grammar, spelling and meaning. The more the student reads, the better his retention of the linguistic material is.

Reading is also a way to improve listening, speaking and writing. The introduction of reading permits to bring in carefully controlled writing exercises. These two reinforce each other and consolidate the aural-oral learning. The oral

language is the constant factor in the reading process, and it is the teacher's primary task to ensure mastery of related audio-lingual exercises as a prerequisite to the introduction of reading. This aural-oral mastery will aid students in learning to recognize the written forms. Through the perception of the visual forms via the eye, the student must establish a relationship of meaning based on auditory signals.

For every visual symbol the students see, they should be able to recall the pronunciation of the word for which it stands and to recognize its concept as expressed in the arrangement of the sentence pattern. They need a great deal of organized and intensive oral practice to sharpen their visual perception and discrimination in order to build up the high-speed recognition necessary to develop efficient reading habits

The way people read contributes to successful reading comprehension. It has to do with the type of reading that is also called reading tactics or reading strategies. F. Grellet (1981) states four types of reading which are:

  Skimming: The eyes run quickly over the text to get the gist of it (what it is about, to discover its main ideas, etc.).E.g., the reader looks quickly at the content on the page of a book, or at the chapter headings, sub-headings, etc., or when someone glances quickly through a newspaper to see the main items of the day.

   Scanning: Quickly going through a text to find a piece of information (rejecting irrelevant information), e.g., finding a telephone number in a telephone directory.

Extensive reading: Fluency reading for global understanding. It is used with longer texts usually for pleasure.

 Intensive reading: Reading shorter texts to extract specific information. This is more an accuracy activity involving reading for details.

On the other hand J. Richards (1997:133 & 322) also defines what skimming, scanning, intensive and extensive reading are. For him, scanning is a type of speed reading technique which is used when the reader wants to locate a

particular piece of information without necessarily understanding the rest of the text or passage. For example, the reader may read through a chapter of a book as rapidly as possible in order to find out information about a particular data, such as when someone was born. Richards states that scanning may be contrasted with skimming or skim reading. Skimming is a type of rapid reading which is used when the reader wants to get the main idea or ideas from a passage. For example a reader may skim-read a chapter to find out if the writer approves or disapproves something. This author asserts that extensive reading means reading in quality and in order to gain a general understanding of what is read. It is intended to develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary and structure to encourage a liking reading. And finally, he affirms that intensive reading is generally at a slow speed, and requires a higher degree of understanding than extensive reading. Both authors have stated four types of reading and they defined them almost equal.

As it was stated before, reading as a macro linguistic skill involves some sub-skills for it to be developed. Those sub-skills are the actions resulting from the breaking down of the macro-skill: reading. In this paper they are going to be called reading skills.

F. Grellet (1989) refers to nineteen reading skills that are listed below:

a. Recognizing the script of the language.
b.   Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items.
c. Understanding explicitly stated information.
d. Understanding information when not explicitly stated
e. Understanding conceptual meaning.
f. Understanding the communication value (function) of a sentence and utterances.
g. Understanding relations within a sentence.
h. Understanding relations between the parts of a text though lexical cohesive device.
i. Understanding cohesion between parts of the text through grammatical cohesive devices.
j. Interpreting the text by going outside it

k. Recognizing indicators in discourse.

l. Identifying the main points or important information in a piece of discourse.

m. Distinguishing the main ideas from supporting details.

n. Extracting salient points to summarize (a text, an idea, etc.)

o. Selective extraction of relevant points from a text.

p. Basic reference skills.

q. Skimming.

r. Scanning to locate specifically required information.

s. Transcoding information to diagrammatic display.

J. Greenwood, on the other hand, states only eight cognitive skills, which are:

a. to anticipate both the form and the content

b. to identify the main idea(s)

c. to recognize and recall specific details

d. to recognize the relationship between the main idea(s) and their expansions (examples, etc.)

e. to follow a sequence e.g., events, instructions, stages of an argument

f. to infer from a text (read between the lines)

g. to draw conclusions

h. to recognize the writer's purpose and attitude

It can be concluded that Greenwood condensed Grellet's classification of reading skills. Nevertheless, the author of this study would follow Greenwood's classification to design a system of texts and its corresponding tasks for the development of reading skills.

2.3. Approaches for the teaching of reading, stages of the reading lesson, types of texts and types of reading tasks

Guy Cook (1989) states that there are two approaches to process discourse:

- a bottom-up approach or atomistic approach. (It goes from the most detailed features of discourse to the most general ones).

- a top-down approach or holistic approach. (It goes from the most general features of language to the details).

Cooks argues that the former may be a very fruitful way of trying to understand

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what language is, and how it works. But, it does not mean that it is the best way to teach a language or that it is the way people use the language.

He also points out that the top-down approach starts with the general ideas of discourse and filling in details later (like difficult word meaning). To ask about details before establishing the general context, is to approach from the wrong direction, which can cause panic and despair.

A top-down approach to language regards all levels of language as a whole, working together. Cook demonstrates the ways learning and teaching discourse should be approached.

Celce Murcia's way of explaining these two approaches is very clear. She says that historically, these two approaches developed in the literature and research. Bottom-up approaches view reading as 'a series of stages that proceed in a fixed order from sensory input to comprehension' (quoting Hudson,1998:;46).On the other hand, top-down approaches view the interpretation process as a continuum of changing hypotheses about the incoming information. More recently approaches that take an interactive view of reading require an integration and combination of both top-down and bottom-up approaches to describe the reading process.

This author also says that the interactive nature of the reading process has been described and studied for the past two decades by many researches in this field (Rumelhart and McClelland, 1982; Stanovich 1986). Some of the studies have focused on the writer (writer-based approach), rather than on the features of the text (text-based approach); others have focused on the strategies of interpretation employed by the reader (strategy-based approach)

Nevertheless Celce Murcia thinks that bottom up and top-down approaches take place simultaneously, that is why she argues that the reader needs to recruit his/her prior knowledge and prior reading experience, apply knowledge of writing conventions, and consider the purpose of reading in order to engage in top-down processing.

During the 80's a strongly communicative view of reading assigned more attention to top-down processing, which at the time was new and less familiar to teachers and learners than bottom-up techniques, which had long been commonly practiced in the language classroom. In the late 80's and the beginning of the 1990's we see increasing arguments for viewing the two types

of processing as a complementary and interactive in nature.It can be concluded then that this communicative principle applies to reading when we follow a top-down-approach that is, going from global comprehension to details. But depending on the students' difficulties teachers may use bottom-up processing in combination with top-down.

A. Cohen, on the other hand, offers two approaches to understanding in the reading process: The text-based approach: the reader's emphasis is on what the writer intended to write and on how it was actually written .This is what M. Lucas in his article `Four Important Factors in Reading' defines as submissive reading: The reader may accept the writer's framework and follows the way the writer has arranged the content; the reader-based approach: the reading process is focused on what the reader brings and gets out of the text. This is what M. Lucas calls assertive reading: the reader may disregard the writer's framework and simply takes what she/he needs from the text.

There are three stages in a reading lesson:

Before reading, the fundamental objectives of this stage are:

- Motivating the students towards the reading materials.
- Activating their prior knowledge of the topic as well as the language related to it.
- Anticipating the form and/or the content of the text.
- While- reading, the tasks of this stage should be aimed at:
- Focusing the students' attention towards the relevant information, to develop particular skills and strategies.

After-reading, the main goals of this stage are:

- To check the results of the reading tasks.
- To make some other language work (like writing).
- To know the students' reactions towards the reading material (e.g., importance and up-datedness of the information, prestige of the publication and/or the author, validity of his/ her viewpoints, etc.).That is, to evaluate critically the information.

The three stages of the class present their respective activities, which will be

mentioned next:

In the first stage:

- Discussion about the topic
- Brainstorming
- Games.
- Guiding questions
- Write
- Work with vocabulary

In the second stage:

- checking of predictions
- organization of ideas in hierarchical / chronological order,
- information search
- filling in the blanks
- matching
- comparing
- filling in gaps
- true, false, I don't know
- multiple choices
- information transferring (to diagrams, charts, outlines, etc.)
- making up paragraphs
- timed-reading
- answering of questions
- integration of skills, (writing, listening, speaking)

In the third stage:

- projects
- writing using the text read as a model
- speaking about a similar or opposite topic
- giving opinions
- description of similar process, object, person, etc.
- evaluation of reading material.
- comparison of texts, points of view, etc.

While designing reading tasks teachers must **bear in mind** some remarks:

- Variety of activities is required mainly if different skills are to be covered.
- Reading tasks should be never imposed to a text. The structure and characteristics of the text should be considered as the starting point to design the activities.
- Too many activities can spoil the pleasure of reading.
- Reading tasks should be graded rather than texts so as to create a balance between the reading activities and the linguistic complexity of the text.
- The objective(s) of the tasks, the reading skill(s) they develop, and how the activities are going to be performed should be clearly defined in the lesson plan and ,of course, in each task.

We also should take into account what types of texts we usually come across, some authors' classifications of texts are offered below: Francoise Grellet (1981) classifies them as follows:

- Novels, short stories, tales, other literary texts and passages (essays, diaries, anecdotes, biographies)
- Plays
- Letters, postcards, telegrams, notes.
- Poems, limericks, nursery rhymes.
- Newspapers and magazines (headlines, articles, editorials, letters to the editors, stop press, classified ads, weather forecasts radio /t.v/ theater programs).
- Specialized articles, reports, reviews, essays, business letters, summaries, accounts, pamphlets (political and others)
- Handbooks, textbooks, guidebooks.
- Recipes.
- Comic strips, cartoons, legends of maps, pictures.
- Advertisements, travel brochures and catalogues.
- Puzzle problems, rules for games.
- Instructions (e.g. warnings), directions (e.g. How to use...), notices, rules and regulations, posters, signs (e.g. road signs), forms (application forms, landing cards), graffiti, menus, price lists, tickets.

- Stylistics, diagrams, charts, maps.
- Telephone directory, dictionaries, etc.

A. Lucas, from Talca University, classifies texts according to **field** (like in libraries), **medium, register**, or, **writer's purpose**. According to the medium, he states that texts may be:
- Artistic: novel, short stories, essays, poetry, and drama.
- Functional: casual, reference, personal, pedagogical, transactional, academic

He offers examples of the texts classified as functional:
1. Casual: newspapers, magazines, non-fiction books for the layman.
2. Personal: letters, diaries.
3. Transactional: business letters, memoranda, legal documents, reports, instructions.
4. Reference: dictionaries, catalogues, directories, inventories.
5. Pedagogical: textbooks, encyclopedias.
6. Academic: research papers, thesis, specialist books, and journals.

2.4 The treatment of health education as cross curricular content through the teaching learning process of reading comprehension in English in senior high school

English as a subject in senior high school in Cuba may deal with different topics through reading, provided the reading texts and tasks are attainable and meaningful for the students. That is why for the selection of reading text the teacher must take into account certain text selection criteria Richard R. Day on his article "Selecting a passage for the EFL reading class", published in January Forum (1999: 20; cited on Veitía Rodríguez 2006: 27),mention the following factors: Students' needs, authenticity, background knowledge, linguistic complexity, information gap, up-datedness.

Evidently, to determine the students' needs is not so simple. It presupposes a careful, individual and collective analysis since needs, wishes and preferences may vary from one student to another. Accordingly, a survey may be carried out to know the content-type they prefer to read about.

This criterion is the most important one because it enables teachers to

appreciate and value not only the students' needs but their interests as well.

The use of authentic materials in the classroom is a very controversial topic. Some authors like R.R. Jordan (1997), are in favor of using materials prepared for the classroom in the first stages mainly.

In Cuba this criterion is not valid in lower educational levels such as elementary and high schools, where materials are graded according to the students' language level. Nevertheless, university and polytechnic students should read authentic English information related to their major because`...In the most straightforward interpretation, we can say that an authentic text will be that which is normally used in the students' specialist subject area, written by specialists for specialists; it is not written for language teaching purposes...' (Jordan, 1997)

Another reason why it is advisable to use of authentic texts in these levels is that they are considered a bridge between the classroom and the outdoor world.

So, the use of authentic texts in the last school years will contribute to connect the students with the kind of materials they are going to face in their professional and investigation fields.

On the other hand, F. Grellet stated in 1981 that `authenticity' means that nothing of the text should be changed, and that its presentation and design should also be kept. It means that a reproduction of a text will be never completely authentic.

In our schools there are not enough original and updated sources of information .published in English. So, it is very difficult to offer authentic bibliography to the students. Thus, teachers have to reproduce the texts. But they should bear in mind that authenticity has to be maintained as much as possible since typographical indicators (i.e., drawings, graphics, charts, tables, pictures, subtitles, bold letters, underlining, etc.) carry out a message to the reader, and at the same time help anticipate meaning.

The content of a text should not be totally new for the students so as to facilitate comprehension.

The ability of understanding a text is not only based on the linguistic knowledge of the reader, but also on the general knowledge of the world and the way in which it is activated during the reading process.

Jan H. Hulstin and Johan F. Matters (1991) state that cognitive psychologists

view reading as a complex psychological activity, involving various mechanisms. They point out that reading comprehension includes drawing upon prior knowledge and integrating the information in the text with such knowledge. So, the new information integrates with prior knowledge in reading comprehension.

In 1983 Patricia L. Carrel proved the positive effect background knowledge has in non-native's reading comprehension who can read and understand better those texts in which familiar aspects were treated than those having not well-known contents. She also stated that reading comprehension is given by the interaction produced between the reader's background knowledge and the information of the text.

Linguistic complexity is closely related to the amount of unknown words in a text and to the grammatical structures used to state and relate the different elements of the text as well.

Andrew S. Cohen (1990, p. 74) stated: `... it has been thought that readers decrease their use of strategies (the ones acquired in L1) in target language reading once the level of language is beyond their language proficiency. It now appears that readers may read drawing on their reading strategies, but possibly with little or no comprehension because of the excessive linguistic demands. In other words, rather than giving up reading a passage, if it makes demands beyond their level of language, non-native readers may well continue reading, drawing on their reading strategies to compensate for the lack of proficiency...'

It is a mistaken notion to think that someone cannot understand a text with a number of unknown words in it. Readers may find that it is possible to understand a text without using those unknown words and by guessing reasonably well the other words on the basis of the context and possibly through the analysis of the words themselves. What is important is to know the strategies to do it.

It is obvious that when reading in a target language, readers are usually confronted with more unknown words than when do it in the native language. Sentence structures may also pose as an obstacle, though perhaps less than might be expected. That is why there must be a balance between the linguistic complexity of the text and the students' linguistic knowledge. So teachers should be wise to discard those texts with lots of new words and difficult

grammatical structures. But, if there is no other choice than selecting a linguistically complex one, it is the teacher's task to grade reading activities to favor comprehension, keeping in mind that exercises may be graded rather than texts.

In real life communication takes place between two or more people. One of them knows something that is unknown to the other(s); and the purpose of the communications is to bridge that information gap.

This term means to tell another something he does not already know. This concept of information gap seems to be one of the most fundamental areas of communicative teaching. One of the main jobs for the teacher can be seen as setting up situations where information gap exits (Keith Morrow, 1981).

In spite of being the last criterion proposed in this paper, it is one of the most important ones for it provides the students with the state-of-the-arts information. It is set at the end because the bibliography existing in the school is not always updated.

It is the teachers' task to seek as much new and fresh information as they can, so as to bring to the students the latest scientific results on their major published in English.

Text-type was not considered among the criteria for the selection of texts since the students should be train in reading every text-type.

Text structure was not included as a criterion either because as there are different schemes in which information can be presented, it is not recommended that the students get familiar with just one of them. On the contrary, it is better to train the students in identifying the different conventional forms in which ideas are presented since the text structure helps anticipate what comes next and enhance understanding

This criterion claims for the need of bringing the students some fresh information in the text so as to motivate them in learning something new. To widen the students' knowledge on the topics they read is of great importance, otherwise texts are a mere repetition of what they have already learned in the classes or through life and as a consequence the students do not feel the necessity of reading.

Cross-curricular teaching involves a conscious effort to apply knowledge, principles, and/or values to more than one academic discipline simultaneously.

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The disciplines may be related through a central theme, issue, problem, process, topic, or experience (Jacobs, 1989). The organizational structure of cross-curricular teaching is called a theme, thematic unit, or unit, which is a framework with goals/outcomes that specify what students are expected to learn as the result of the experiences and lessons that are a part of the unit.

There seem to be two levels of integration that schools go through: The first is integration of the language arts (listening, speaking, reading, writing, thinking) (Fogarty, 1991; Pappas, Kiefer, & Levstik, 1990); the second involves a much broader kind of integration, one in which a theme begins to encompass all curricular areas.

Cross-curricular teaching is often seen as a way to address some of the recurring problems in education, such as fragmentation and isolated skill instruction. It is seen as a way to support goals such as transfer of learning, teaching students to think and reason, and providing a curriculum more relevant to students (Marzano, 1991; Perkins, 1991).

Finally, when creating the reading tasks teachers should also take into consideration if the content of the text they are going to work with meets the application of any of the following global issues:

- The environmental education,
- The moral values education,
- The national saving program (P.A.E.M.E.) application,
- Sexual and health education,
- The vernacular language leading program application, etc.

These global issues are among the cores of attention of the Cuban Ministry of Education at present since they guarantee the integral formation of the future generations. That is, the ones who are going to live in the twenty- first century. Therefore, it is necessary for all teachers to find out ways of inserting these issues in classes

Health education is the profession of educating people about health. Areas within this profession encompass environmental health, physical health, social

health, emotional health, intellectual health, and spiritual health. It can be defined as the principle by which individuals and groups of people learn to behave in a manner conducive to the promotion, maintenance, or restoration of health. However, as there are multiple definitions of health, there are also multiple definitions of health education. The Joint Committee on Health Education and Promotion Terminology of 2001 defined Health Education as "any combination of planned learning experiences based on sound theories that provide individuals, groups, and communities the opportunity to acquire information and the skills needed to make quality health decisions." [3] The World Health Organization defined Health Education as "comprising of consciously constructed opportunities for learning involving some form of communication designed to improve health literacy, including improving knowledge, and developing life skills, which are conducive to individual and community health.

The goal of health education is to promote healthy lifestyles. Thus, health education has a preventive character.

For people to improve their health care they need physical, psychological and social well-being. They need preventive education to control risk situations which may bring about negative health consequences for their lives. And they need to learn about and adopt healthy lifestyles. This entails, in the first place, making people responsible for their own lifestyles.

Health education must occur at home, at school, at the community level and in general through the media. It is concerned with strengthening people´s character and will by providing them with knowledge and skills and by influencing on their feelings, attitudes and values.

In Cuban schools it is considered as cross curricular content, and thus it must be dealt with by all the subjects in the school curriculum and through curricular and extracurricular school activities.

Health education currently in Cuba must address the following health issues:
- Tobacco addiction
- Alcoholism
- Irresponsible sexual behaviour
- Lack of knowledge concerning traditional medicine
- Violence

- Lack of healthy hygiene habits

Health education includes the following areas:

1. Personal and collective hygiene
2. Sexual education
3. Nutritional education and food hygiene
4. Anti-tobacco, anti-alcohol and antidrug education
5. Pedestrian education for accident prevention
6. Traditional and natural medicine
7. Communication and living together

2.5. Evaluation of the proposal through partial application and specialist criteria

This research went through two phases. The first phase consisted in a preliminary proposal of reading texts and tasks that was partially implemented in 10 Grade 1 at Eduardo R. Chibás senior high school, during the 2012 -13 school year, which allowed the author to identify what worked well and what did not work so well in practice. The second phase consisted in submitting the preliminary proposal to evaluation by specialists in the teaching of English. The two phases together resulted in an improved proposal of a system of reading texts and tasks for the teaching of reading in tenth grade.

Phase1: Conceiving and evaluating a preliminary proposal of reading texts and tasks by applying it partially

Needs assessment

The following methodology was used in order to assess the needs in the teaching learning process of reading in English for tenth graders at "Eduardo R. Chibás" senior high school":

- Elaboration of the target situation in terms of the goals that are established for the learning of reading in English in tenth grade and the major methodological guidelines that are suggested in the program for this level.

- Diagnosis of students´ learning with respect to reading.

- Diagnosis of the quality of the teaching materials that are being used, specifically the materials that are available for the reading classes.

With respect to the target situation in terms of the goals that are established for the learning of reading in English in tenth grade and the major methodological guidelines that are suggested in the program for this level, the method used was analysis of documents, for which a number of aspects were determined in order to guide our analysis: (Appendix 3)

- Objectives established in terms of reading comprehension skills
- Objectives established in terms of the processing of the information in the text
- Objectives established in terms of attitudes and values to be attained in the students
- System of reading enabling skills that is listed in the program.
- The major methodological guidelines that are suggested in the program for this level.

Results obtained

The integrated goals of senior high school in Cuba include health education, particularly the promotion of healthy lifestyles such as responsible sexual behavior, as well as the rejection of drug consumption. This dimension of education in senior high school is cross curricular content, which means that this is content that should be dealt with by all subjects in school.

A revision of the tenth grade workbook showed that only one of the reading texts in this material deals with environmental education, out of seven reading texts, which is another prioritized theme in our schools, and none deals with health education.

An analysis of the aims of English in tenth grade showed that they not only address the learning of this foreign language but also the strengthening of student's convictions and feelings through the study of the different linguistic contents and topics. However, these topics have not been clearly stated in the aims of the subject in tenth grade.

Diagnosis of the development of reading skills in a sample of tenth grade students from Eduardo R. Chibás senior high school in Placetas

The following dimensions were established for the diagnosis:

A. Cognitive dimension:

- Students´ level of reading skill in English

B. Affective motivational dimension:

- Students 'opinions about the topics of the reading texts in the tenth grade English Workbook
- Students´ preferences in terms of reading topics

A sample of 32 tenth-grade students was chosen intentionally taking into account the following criteria:

- Access: This group was being taught by one of the authors of this reseach.
- Level of ability of the students: out of three groups that were being taught by the authors of this paper this group stood in the middle.

Partial conclusions

The diagnosis carried out has allowed us to identify the following needs in the teaching learning process of reading in English for tenth graders at "Eduardo R. Chibás" senior high school":

- The students have problems interpreting information from the text;
- They show lack of interest in the themes that appear in their workbook;
- There is a need for the teachers to take into account the topics that the students prefer to work with in the lessons;
- The workbook needs to be complemented with other texts and activities that match the students´ preferences in terms of topics.

Evaluation a preliminary proposal of reading texts and tasks by applying it partially

This partial evaluation was carried out through observation and teacher diaries

Fragments from the diaries (Appendix 4)

From text 1: Safe sex

The class lasted about 45 minutes; first, I gave some clues for the students to guess what the text would be about, 5 minutes later they showed that they had understood the text. Then I gave them the first exercise that consisted in finding the main idea. This took them a few minutes, then I moved on to next exercise that was a true or false one, which included justifying the false items, then I

assigned the last exercise in which they had to write a message telling what they knew about this theme. This exercise took them more time and some of the students asked me for help because it was a little difficult, but eventually they could do it

Partial conclusion

In general students showed interest in the themes that the reading texts deal with. All the students from the group were able to solve all the activities that were assigned, but some of them needed help, which shows that they have a potential to make progress in reading in English if they are provided with more practice in and out of class. At the same time, some of the reading tasks need revision so as to make them more attainable for the students.

We may conclude them that this version of our proposal had strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- The topics of the reading selection prove interesting for our students ; and
- Most of the reading tasks functioned well in practice.

Weaknesses

- The reading texts and tasks are not enough to fulfill the goals of tenth grade.
- Some of the tasks need revision so that they become attainable for the students.

Phase 2: Submitting the preliminary proposal to evaluation by specialists in the teaching of English

The following criteria were established in order to select a number of specialists to participate in the evaluation of the preliminary proposal: professional expertise, experience in the teaching of foreign languages and experience in materials development. On this basis, a holistic rating scale of three bands was designed with the purpose of determining the level of specialization of the specialist candidates.

With this purpose the following scales were built:

Scale used to determine the level of professional expertise

High: Doctor in Pedagogical Sciences or Master´s in Education

Medium: Bachelor in Education Degree

Low: No higher education qualification

Scale used to determine the level of experience in the teaching of foreign languages

High: 10 to 20 years, or more, of experience

Medium: 5 to 10 years of experience

Low: 1 to 5 years of experience

On the basis of the previous scales a holistic rating was designed and used in order to determine the level of specialization of the candidate teachers (Appendix 6).

All 6 candidate teachers were chosen to participate in the evaluation of the preliminary proposal since they all obtained high or medium ranks of specialization (Appendix 6).

Results of the evaluation of the preliminary proposal made by the six specialists that were chosen

In order to submit our preliminary proposal to the scrutiny of teacher specialists, an evaluation tool was designed in which a number of parameters were identified to guide the evaluation of the text selection and of the quality of the tasks, and on this basis the specialists were asked to rank their evaluation under one of five categories (*muy adecuado*, *bastante adecuado*, *adecuado*, *poco adecuado* y *no adecuado*). The tool also contained open questions which allowed for clarification quantitative evaluation and additional ideas and suggestions (Appendix 5).

For the evaluation of the text selection these parameters were established: pertinence, up-to-datedness, theme variety, text length, linguistic complexity, and on this basis an overall evaluation was requested. Three (3) specialists rated the text proposal as very adequate (50 %), 1 of them as fairly adequate (16.6 %) and 2 as adequate (33 %). These are the suggestions that they offered:

- Citar la fuente de donde fueron tomados los textos: 2 profesores (33 %) (Identify text source)

- Incluir otras temáticas correspondientes a otras estrategias curriculares: 3 profesores (50 %) (Include texts dealing with other cross curricular themes)
- Tener en cuenta los intereses de los alumnos: 2 profesores (33 %) (Take into account students´ interests)

For the evaluation of the reading tasks these parameters were established: clarity of instructions, quality of English, attainability, variety, sufficiency, coverage of different comprehension levels, attention to reading strategies, logical ordering, and focus on values education. The data included in the chart below shows that the tasks need improvement in terms of variety, sufficiency, coverage of different comprehension levels, attention to reading strategies, logical ordering and values education focus. (Appendix 5)

These are the suggestions that the specialists offered for task improvement:
- Integrar las otras habilidades, como la comunicación oral y escrita: 2 profesores (33 %) (Skill integration)
- Incluir tareas para los tres momentos de la enseñanza de la lectura: 5 profesores (83, 3 %) (Design tasks to cover the three phases of the reading lesson: before-reading, while-reading and after-reading)
- Incrementar el número de tareas docentes: 2 profesores (33 %) (Number of tasks)
- Dirigir algunas tareas a desarrollar el pensamiento lingüístico de los alumnos: 1 profesor (16, 6 %) (Include vocabulary tasks)
- Enfocar los objetivos en función de resultados de aprendizaje: 1 profesor (16, 6 %) (Design goals in terms of learning outcomes)

About the possibilities of the text selection and the tasks designed to better the teaching of reading in tenth grade all specialists responded affirmatively, on the basis of these reasons:
- Los textos están seleccionados siguiendo criterios de selección definidos: 3 (50 %) (Text selection criteria have been established)

- Las temáticas son de importancia y actualidad: 3 (50 %) (Text themes are pertinent)
- Las temáticas de los textos tributan a estrategias curriculares: 2 (33 %) (Text themes are cross curricular)
- Las tareas docentes son variadas: 2 (33 %) (Tasks are varied)
- Las tareas docentes están diseñadas en base a los tres momentos del tratamiento de la lectura: 3 (50 %) (Reading tasks cover the three stages of the Reading lesson)

About the systemic character of the text selection and tasks the specialists responded that:
- Los textos y las actividades integran contenidos (conocimientos, habilidades, actitudes): 1 (16.6 %) (The texts and tasks promote content integration)
- Falta declarar los elementos que constituyen el sistema: 1 (16, 6 %) (Identify the system components)
- El sistema debería comenzar por el texto Family y a partir de ese desarrollar los demás: 2 (33 %) (Begin the units with the Family text)
- Las tareas docentes pudieran perfeccionarse para agotar el contenido del texto: 2 (33 %) (Tasks need improvement in terms of text content coverage)

Taking into account the results of the partial application of the preliminary proposal and the specialist evaluation, the following proposal was designed.

2.6. A system of reading texts and tasks dealing with health education as cross-curricular content for tenth graders (Appendix 8)

Description of the system of reading text and tasks

In order to facilitate the development of reading skillls in our students, teachers need to conceive this subject component systemically. A system is a group of parts working together as a whole. (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 1992:1212).

According to Grijalbo Dictionary (s.a:874) a system is defined as an arranged and coherent whole of rules, norms or principles related to certain matter. It is an organized whole of things, means, and ideas that contribute to a same goal.

Webster's Dictionary (1983:895), on the other hand, defines system as a regularly interacting or interdependent group of items forming a unified whole. Conceiving the teaching of reading systemically implies the specification of general and specific objectives, the selection of texts on the basis of certain criteria, and the planning of suitable tasks to facilitate student learning.

<u>Characterization of the system of reading texts and tasks</u>

- It is centered on the students` needs and preferences
- It is a communicative system of texts and tasks
- It is a values-rich system of texts and tasks
- The texts are chosen on the basis of pre- established criteria, such as linguistic complexity, text length, theme complexity and students` needs with relation to school priorities

<u>Rationale behind the proposal</u>

Philosophical perspective

From the philosophical point of view the proposal is based on the dialectical-materialistic conception which supports a theory of the knowledge that considers the practice is the beginning and the end of cognitive activity; that learning is a process and that subjects (men and women) take an active role in interacting with objects from the real world, and as they do so, they judge or value what they are doing, and in this process they change reality and transform themselves. This process of subject-object interaction occurs in a socio-cultural context which mediates all interactions: subject-object and subject-subject.

Sociological perspective

We are living in a society that has undertaken the road of building socialism, which embraces values such as patriotism, solidarity, responsibility, dignity or integrity, anti-imperialism, and responsibility (towards other people, with respect to our lifestyles and with relation to the environment). This process of building an alternative society occurs in a globalized world which is characterized by the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few rich people, and the exclusion of millions of human beings who are condemned to starvation and diseases, such as Aids, drugs and vices. Concentration of wealth is connected to consumerism

and material growth at the macro level of capitalist societies, which is having a very negative effect on our mother Earth.

In this context our socialist society needs to grant education which prepares our children and citizens in general to deal with these issues of postmodern, globalized societies, and to act on the basis of accepted principles and values, for them to be able struggle to change the place where we are living into a better place. That is why, the school curricula in Cuba and elsewhere in the world identify cross curricular themes such as health education and environmental education, which help globalize the curriculum.

Pedagogical perspective

The following pedagogical principles are embraced (Addine Fernández F., 2002: 80):

1. The principle of the integration of science and ideology in the teaching-learning process

The teaching learning process of reading should not only be concerned with developing in our students reading skills and strategies, but also with fostering values through reading which are the basis of our socialist society.

2. The principle of preparing for life, in connection with the sociocultural context in which education takes place

The teaching and learning of reading should not only be concerned with enlarging vocabulary and grammar in the students, but with helping them to become efficient readers in a foreign language, which implies that they have a command of the process of reading, as they develop reading skills and strategies. This process should take into account what types of texts and what themes are pertinent for our students in the sociocultural context in which they are living.

3. The principle of the individual and collective nature of the education of personality, and of respect for our students´ personal characteristics

Students learn to read better and to value critically what they read, as a result of working individually and of interacting with their peers and teacher. During this process every student learns at his/her pace, and makes mistakes as something natural when learning, in which case the role of the teacher is to be respectful and to encourage respect and collaborative work among peers.

4. The principle of fostering in our students, in unison, both instruction, education and development

Instruction is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and the development of reading skills, whereas as education entails a concern for values. Education occurs through instruction, that is why in making a proposal of reading texts and tasks it is important to carry out a careful selection of topics and texts that are values-rich, and a careful design of tasks that promote deep thinking in order to try to understand not only explicit information in the text, but also other deeper layers of meaning in it. At the same time the tasks should encourage individual and collective work, as well as reflection on the reading process, so that our students develop reading strategies which allow them become continue developing on their own as efficient independent readers.

5. The principle of considering our students personality as the unity of the affective-motivational and the cognitive-instrumental dimensions

In designing a proposal of reading texts and activities for tenth grade students it is important to take into account our students interests, since the learning of reading skills and strategies occurs only when students find this selection meaningful.

6. The principle of educating personality by promoting interpersonal communication and an active role of students in the teaching-learning process

Reading is normally a silent and individual activity. However, in a reading class it is important for the teacher to facilitate pair work and small group work, because learning is always mediated by other people, by communication and by resources such as dictionaries, glossaries, etc. This way of organizing our reading classes helps to promote cooperation among our students which is desirable in terms of the values that we are trying to foster in them.

Promoting an active role in our students during the reading process implies four requisites: 1) that they are motivated to read; 2) that they have a task to read; 3) that the task encourages them to think, and 4) that some tasks encourage them to judge what they are reading, and to reflect on how they have read.

Psychological perspective

Learning to read is a mediated process. We learn to read better when we have access to a methodology that draws on studies of how efficient readers deal with the reading process. We learn to read better when we interact and are helped by other people. We improve our learning of reading when we have access to resources that may help us during the learning process, such as dictionaries, and other materials.

Teaching our students to read in a foreign language should be done in the zone of proximal development, which is the distance between what our students can do on their own and what they can do with the help of other people. This implies that the reading tasks should be encouraging so that they create new learning needs in our students and the need to work collaboratively.

The teaching-learning process is thus viewed as a systemic school process of mediation of the appropriation of culture by individuals, responding to social and learner needs, which is organized and conducted on the basis of students´ current and potential state of development, leads to higher levels of student development and aims at an integrated and self-determined education of personality, with a capacity to carry on developing on their own, and to change reality in a concrete socio-historical context. (Dr. C. Doris Castellanos Simons, 2001)

From this perspective learning must lead to the development of higher order thinking skills and to the appropriation of a scientific method; it must be integrated, including knowledge, skills and strategies, as well as values and positive attitudes, feelings and interests; learning must be productive, participatory and meaningful, leading to responsible attitudes.

Didactic perspective

The proposal is methodologically supported by the communicative approach for the teaching of the foreign languages, which defines communicative competence as goal of teaching a foreign language.

Conceiving our proposal communicatively implies that we should be concerned with helping our students to process and to operate with stretches of language at the text level, by relying on contextual clues and background knowledge. At the same time, this view of language leads us to assume the reading process as our object of teaching.

<u>Example of the proposal</u>

Text 1: **Safe sex**

Objective: To understand the definition of safe sex and what practices are really safe,aimed at protecting their health.

Before reading tasks

<u>Task 1</u>

Discuss these questions around the class:

a. What precautions should we take into in order to prevent sexual infections?

b. Do you think that the practice of safe sex is a method to prevent sexual infections?

<u>Task 2</u>

Work individually first, and then around the class. According to the title of the text, think about as many words as you can relate to it.

Safe sex

> Safe sex is sexual activity engaged in by people who have taken precautions to protect themselves against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as HIV/AIDS. Some sources prefer the term *safer sex* to more precisely reflect the fact that these practices reduce, but do not completely eliminate, the risk of disease transmission. Safe sex practices became more prominent in the late 1980s because of the AIDS epidemic. Promoting safe sex is now one of the aims of sexual education. Safe sex is regarded as a harm reduction strategy aimed at reducing risks. The risk reduction of safe sex is not absolute; for example the reduced risk to the receptive partner of acquiring HIV from HIV seropositive partners not wearing condoms compared to when they wear them is estimated to be about a four- to fivefold. Some safe sex practices, like partner selection and low risk sexual behaviour, are not effective forms of contraception.

While reading tasks

<u>Task 3</u>

Work individually first, and then in pairs.Read the text and say if the following statements are true or false. Correct the false ones.

- Safe sex is sexual activity engaged in by people who take precautions to protect themselves.
- Promoting safe sex is now one of the aims of sexual education.
- This practice eliminates the risk of disease transmission.
- Safe sex practices are not effective forms of contraception.
- Wearing a condom is the safest sex practice there is.

Task 4

Discuss these in groups of three

What is the purpose of this text?

- To list some safe sex practice
- To warn about the danger of not having a steady partner
- To define what safe sex is
- To give information about AIDS

Task 5

a. Work in pairs and find in the text the English equivalent to:

- Riesgo
- Precaución
- Epidemia
- Comportamiento sexual
- Educación sexual

b. Translate into Spanish the definition of safe sex. Work individually first and then share the definition with your classmates.

After reading tasks

Task 6

Write a message to a friend telling him/her what you know about safe sex. Work in groups of three.

3**. Conclusion**

The objective of this research has been fully accomplished through the completion of the reasearch tasks.

The teaching of reading in preuniversity in Cuba, particularly in tenth grade, may be substantiated on a top-down, task-based and process-oriented approach. This approach should be concerned not only with the development of reading skills but also with the fostering of attitudes and values. For this reason, a careful selection of reading themes should be made so that the texts are meaningful for the students and at the same time respond to school priorities, one of which is heath education.

 In the teaching learning process of reading in English for tenth graders at Eduardo R. Chibás senior high school the following needs were identified:

- The students show problems interpreting information from the text;
- They show lack of interest in the themes that appear in their workbook;
- There is a need for the teachers to take into account the topics that the students prefer to work with in the lessons;
- The workbook needs to be complemented with other text and tasks that match the students´ preferences in terms of topics .

During the partial application of the preliminary proposal the students show interest in the themes that the reading texts deal with. All the students from the group were able to solve all the activities that were assigned, but some of them needed help, which shows that they have a potential to make progress in reading in English if they are provided with more practice in and out of class. At the same time, some of the reading tasks need revision so as to make them more attainable for the students.

The criteria given by specialist in the teaching of English contributed to the improvement of our proposal, with respect to its systemic character, the nature and number of reading tasks as well as text variety

A proposal of reading texts and tasks for the teaching of reading to senior high school students must be centered on the students` needs and preferences; it must be communicative and systemic; it must be values- rich in terms of themes

and tasks and the texts should be chosen on the basis of sound pre-established criteria.

4. **Recommendation**

The author of this research recommends:

- To design multimedia resources with this texts and tasks, accompanied by visuals, sound if possible, and access to elctronic dictionaries, glossaries and so forth.
- To integrate systemically this proposal of texts and tasks with similar proposals made by students-teachers in previous school years.