



Departamento de Lenguas  
Extranjeras

## TRABAJO DE DIPLOMA

**Título del trabajo:** Propuesta de un sistema de actividades para contribuir al desarrollo de la habilidad de lectura en 9no grado de la Escuela Secundaria Básica "José de la Luz y Caballero"

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Foreign Languages  
Department

## DIPLOMA THESIS

**Title:** A proposal of a system of activities to contribute to the development of the reading skill in English in 9th grade at "José de la Luz y Caballero" Junior High School.

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## **Abstract**

This paper offers a system of activities dealing with reading comprehension in English in order to develop this skill in 9<sup>th</sup> graders from Carlos Manuel de Céspedes High School, which has been conceived through a process that included needs assessment, elaboration of the proposal and its partial implementation. The elaboration of the proposal of reading texts and their correspondent activities and preliminary evaluation was done through specialist criteria.

The proposal responds to the demands of the Junior High School Level. 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 comprehension 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, and specialist criteria.

## **Resumen**

El presente trabajo de diploma ofrece un sistema de ejercicios para el trabajo con el desarrollo de la comprensión de lectura en inglés para desarrollar esta habilidad en los estudiantes de 9no grado de la Escuela Secundaria Básica “Carlos Manuel de Céspedes.” El mismo fue concebido a través de un proceso que incluyó evaluación de necesidades, elaboración de la propuesta y su implementación parcial.

La elaboración de la propuesta de textos de lectura con sus correspondientes ejercicios y valoración preliminar fue hecha a través de evaluación de criterio de especialistas.

La propuesta responde a las necesidades del nivel secundario y tiene la intención de hacer una contribución al mejoramiento del proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje en este nivel, particularmente en cuanto a lograr el interés y la motivación de los estudiantes hacia el desarrollo de la habilidad de comprensión de lectura en inglés y que sean capaces de interpretar y resumir lo que leen, algo que demostró deficiencias durante el proceso de diagnóstico de esta investigación.

La propuesta está basada en las ideas comunicativas para la enseñanza de la lectura y está apoyada en los puntos de vista pedagógicos humanísticos y socio-culturales.

La investigación se desarrolló siguiendo métodos tales como histórico-lógico, análisis-síntesis, inductivo-deductivo, análisis de documentos, entrevistas, encuestas, prueba pedagógica y criterio de especialistas.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The English language is included in all the study programs of the different subsystems of Education in Cuba, from primary education university. The main objective in teaching English as a foreign language is to prepare children, the youth and elder people for the modern world since English is considered a lingua franca and the most used language worldwide.

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 where 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).

The teaching of English in the Cuban national educational system is included from primary schools to universities, and the development of reading comprehension 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 junior 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.

Taking into account all previously mentioned and considering that one of the objectives of 9th graders is to read texts in English showing general comprehension, a set of thorough participant observations were carried out by the author of this research in group 9<sup>th</sup> A, at “José de la Luz y Caballeros” junior high school. After administering an initial diagnosis test, the following issues were detected: there are difficulties in reading comprehension in English; there are not enough readings available to develop reading comprehension in English; there is a lack of bibliography and articles to develop reading comprehension in English; in video lessons, there is not enough work based on reading and the activities to develop it, the lessons to practice are used to review what has been taught and work with reading is not included. In general, students in group 9<sup>th</sup> A, at “José de la Luz y Caballeros” Junior High School have shown difficulties in some of the reading enabling skills. Despite the teachers’ efforts and dedication to teach this ability effectively, most of the students do not seem to achieve the desired level of proficiency in reading comprehension.

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; SLigmey 2013; Cruz Glez, Yunier 2017; Santana Roja, Maria J. 2018; Roja Diana 2018. ;

Taking into consideration all the previously mentioned, these issues led the author of this research to state the following

**Scientific problem:**

How to contribute to the development of the reading comprehension skill in English in 9th grade, class A, at “José de la Luz y Caballero” Junior High Shool?

**Object of Study:**

The development of reading comprehension in English in 9th grade, class A at “José de la Luz y Caballero” Junior High Shool.

**Objective:**

To propose a system of reading activities to contribute to the development of the reading skill in English in students from 9<sup>th</sup> grade, Class A at “Carlos Manuel de Céspedes” Junior High School.

**Scientific questions:**

1. What theoretical and methodological foundations support the development of the reading skill?
2. What is the current situation of the development of the reading skill in students from 9<sup>th</sup> grade, class A, at “José de la Luz y Caballero” Junior High School?
3. What reading activities should be designed to develop the reading skill in 9th grade, Class A, at “José de la Luz y Caballero” Junior High School” ?
4. What is the specialists’ criteria about the proposal of the system of activities to develop the reading skill in 9th grade, at “José de la Luz y Caballero” Junior High School?
5. What are the results obtained after the partial implementation of the proposal of the system of activities in 9th grade, class A at “José de la Luz y Caballero” Junior High School?

**Scientific Tasks:**

1. Determination of the theoretical and methodological foundations that support the development of the reading skill.
2. Diagnosis of the current situation of the development of the reading skill in students from 9th grade, class A, at “José de la Luz y Caballero” Junior High School.
3. Selection of reading texts and elaboration of activities to develop the reading skill in 9th grade, class A, at “José de la Luz y Caballero” Junior High School.
4. Evaluation of the proposal of the system of activities to develop the reading skill in 9th grade, class A, at “José de la Luz y Caballero” Junior High School by specialists’ criteria.
5. Evaluation of the results obtained after the partial implementation of the system of activities to develop the reading skill in 9th grade, class A, at “José de la Luz y Caballero” Junior High School.

**Scientific Methods:****From the theoretical level:**

- Historical-Logical: It made possible to study the phenomenon and events in the course of this research related to reading skill in English.
- Analytic-Synthetic: It was employed during the whole research process, but mainly theoretical and methodological information from different primary sources consulted to back up the scientific problem described.
- Inductive-Deductive: It was applied for the analysis of data obtained through the application of the different instruments derived from empirical methods and in that way, the regularities were identified.
- System Approach: It was used to provide coherence and the unity between the different moments of the research, moreover in the planning of the ten reading activities for the proposal to enhance reading skill in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students.

**From the empirical level:**

- Analysis of documents.
- Participant observation.
- Survey to teachers .
- Interview to students.

- Pedagogical test.
- Analysis of the students' outcome.
- Specialists' criteria.
- Triangulation.

#### **From the mathematical level:**

- Percentage analysis: This method was used to process the data obtained from the instruments administered during the research.

#### **Population:**

One hundred twenty six students from 9th grade at "José de la Luz y Caballero" school.

#### **Sample:**

Thirty six students from 9th grade, class A, were taken as the sample of this research since it was the class with lower results in the diagnostic test.

#### **Practical contributions**

The practical contribution of the Major Paper consists on the proposal of reading texts with their corresponding activities aimed at developing the reading skill within the teaching - learning process of English in 9th graders, class A at " José de la Luz y Caballero " Junior High School.

#### **Structure of the Major Paper**

The Major Paper is structured in six parts: Introduction, Main Part, Conclusions, Recommendations, Bibliography and Appendixes.

## **II. MAIN PART**

### **2.1. Theoretical and methodological foundations that support the development of reading skill.**

Reading is a communication skill aimed at understanding information as efficiently as possible. The reading process is by nature an independent and silent activity. It is also an active process of communication in which there are two participants interacting: the writer and the reader who use a written text as channel of communication. Reading is characterized by being personal due to the fact that each reader has his own interpretation of the written material using his background knowledge giving his personal style. It is an essential skill in language learning

Reader perceives a written text in order to understand its contents. It can be done silently (silent reading), or by saying a written text aloud (oral reading), with or without comprehension, several topics based on the needs and linguistic level they have, helping them to acquire knowledge and culture at the same time. In this way, it is a challenge to raise students' needs towards reading in order to widen their spectrum of awareness, interest and to develop their general integrated cultural information.

For Antich, R (1986), to read is to perceive the message contained in a written form; it is a complex process in which psycho-physiological mechanisms related to the intellectual aspect of the comprehension of what is read, since it has to do with recognition of the word in form of graphic signs. For Grellet, F (1981), reading means extracting the information contained of a printed text, as efficiently as possible. It is a constant process of supposition and guessing. Morales, Antonio, (1989) and Grellet, F (1981) agrees with Antich, R (1986) since they reflect on the importance that teachers must give to the psychological aspect in students' learning since there are many mental processes that take part in the process of reading as previous activity of the understanding of what's been shown in a given text. These operations are analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction and comparison.

After what's been indicated before in reading concepts it can be assured that there is unity of opinions in each definition.

Therefore to read is a process in which a reader uses different sources to perceive the meaning of a text in the mother tongue or in a foreign language.

According to Antich, R (1986), reading texts can be used for:

- general information.
- study or observation.
- for specific information.
- recreation.

Other authors assert that the reader's purpose is headed by searching information or pleasure. Brown, G. (1989) asserts that while the student acquires the understanding of a written text in a foreign language he is practicing the art of producing sentences in that language. Grellet (1981) affirms 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.

Comprehension is the capability or facility that a human being has to understand or to perceive something. According to Angelina Romero and García Alzola, the total understanding of a text is the result of an integration of different meanings.

Reading is more than an interaction between a reader and a text. Johnston (Mikulecky 1990:2) defines this as "a complex behavior which involves conscious and unconscious use of various strategies, including problem-solving strategies, to build a model of the meaning which the writer is assumed to have intended".

Interpretation is the ability to solve the problem of unlocking meanings by adding together a number of associations. These skills let the reader recognize the script of the language and understand its meaning. They are the first reading skills to teach in the elementary level in what Wallace (1983) calls the two stages of reading: that of relating the graphic symbols to the sounds in the spoken language, and that of extracting meaning from these graphic symbols.

"To get maximum benefit from their reading, students need to be involved in both extensive and intensive reading" (Harmer, 2010: 110)

The same author above stated that most reading sequences involve more than one reading skill, and continued saying that we may start by having students read for gist and then get them to read the text again for detailed comprehension. They may start by identifying the topic of a text before scanning it quickly to recover specific information; they may read for specific information before going back to the text to identify features of text construction.

Other approaches of reading comprehension were asserted as follow:

"... 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 the 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...”  
Murcia,C.(2000: 118)

Whereas 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 (Greenwood 1998).

On the other hand, Francoise Grellet states that reading is an active skill involving guessing, predicting, checking and asking one self's questions.

The last two authors mentioned above agree considering reading as 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 disrupted. Silent because, they argue, when reading aloud people concentrate on pronunciation disregarding meaning.

Moreover, 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 (Cohen A, 2000).

Referring to bottom up process Penny Ur argues that reading means “reading and understanding” because 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) (Penny Ur (1996:138).

Pointing out the process of understanding the written text, Celce Murcia (2000) has stated that, 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 writer, 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, hence, inherently interactive, involving the three participants.(Murcia,C, 2000)

Reading is a communication skill in order to understand information as efficiently as possible. The reading process is independent and silent. It is also an active process in which there are two participants interacting: the writer and the reader who use a written text as channel of communication. The main characteristic of reading is that is personal , because each reader has his own point of view of interpretation the written material using his or her background knowledge . It is a essential skill in language learning. (Garcia, Sirelda :2010).

Reading comprehension is the result of interaction between the readers and the text. (Garcia, Sirelda :2010).

In short, 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.

### **The Communicative Language Teaching Principles.**

The Classroom Language Teaching approach is determined by some principles that guide the classroom practice. These principles have been defined by specialists such as Keith Morrow and Neil Naiman(1989), and redefined by PhD. Alfredo Camacho(2003). In the present paper, the researcher follows the CLT principles restated by Camacho, for they are contextualized considering the educative needs of Cuban students (Camacho, A. 2003)

1. Classes should be active and centered on student's educative needs, interests and experiences.
2. Materials, tasks, activities and resources should be chosen on the basis of educative and linguistic criteria, and should be provide for learning and acquisition.
3. Practice should be carried out through meaningful tasks, which engage students in thinking and activity.
4. Practice should provide for strategy development.
5. Students should be engaged in monitoring, self-correction and self-evaluation tasks; they must be as well asked to question and reflect on what they have learned and how they have learned it.

6. Opportunities should be given to learn content from other areas of the curriculum through the medium of English.
7. Practice should engage students in cross-cultural comparison.
8. Classes should foster an atmosphere of co-operation and open communication among students and teacher.

### **How do you select reading materials?**

To select the materials the students will read, the teachers have to bare in mind the following criteria:

1. Students' needs, interests, expectations and age
2. Linguistic complexity of the text (according to their level of language development)
3. Background knowledge (Topic / theme / content)
4. Information gap (learning of something new)
5. Authenticity of the reading material (taken from original sources) or adapted for pedagogical purposes
6. Up-datedness
7. Type of text
8. Length

### **How do people read?**

There are four types of reading which were stated by F. Grellet : 1981.:

Skimming: 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 agreeing with Grellet.

### **What does the reading skill mean?**

Reading as a macro linguistic skill comprises some micro-skills for it to be developed; these have been stated by a set of authors as follow:

J. Greenwood 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: persuade, explain, inform, describe, argue
- i. Transcode information to diagrammatical display
- j. To infer the meaning of words: through cognate words, word formation or context.
- k. To summarize and take down notes (relevant points)
- l. To use the dictionary effectively

The last four have been included by other authors like F. Grellet.

In the text Fundamentals for language teaching , Garcia Sirelda, concluded that Greenwood condensed Grellet's classification of reading skills.

In this research, the author took into consideration the clasification refered above as guidelines to design a system of reading texts and activities.

At the same time we plan to teach the students the sub-skills for reading comprehension, it is also important to provide them with strategies, that let them train and raise their level of proficiency in the development of this macro skill.

### **Reading as a Strategy Developing Process.**

A **reading strategy** is defined by several specialists as the procedures, actions, or

personal modes or ways each person may combine of the different skills while reading a text.

Today the teaching of reading has been one area where strategy training is seen, teachable, particularly with less proficient readers.

Current thinking on the teaching of foreign language reading strategies suggests that:

- The teaching of strategies should be contextualized.
- Strategies should be taught explicitly through direct explanation modeling and feedback.
- There should be a constant recycling of strategies over new texts and tasks.
- Strategies should be taught over a long period of time.

What we want to add is that reading strategies are closely related to cognitive styles and of course to learning strategies, since they are personal, that is to say, each person has his own. In the author of this research's opinion, many of the strategies overlap with sub-skills, that is why some have been stated by several authors as enabling skills.

As a whole they are mostly considered as the following:

1. Recognise words quickly.
2. Use text features (i.e. headings, subheadings, pictures) to predict the content of a text.
3. Deduce the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items by using contextual clues.
4. Read at different speeds for different purposes.
5. Understand information when not explicitly stated.
6. Distinguish main ideas from minor ones.
7. Identify the salient points in a text to summarize.
8. Distinguish between fact and opinion.
9. Use prior knowledge to work out the meanings within a text.
10. Understand the relationships between parts of the text from the use of connectives.
11. Skimming
12. Scanning
13. Identify the main point in a piece of discourse.
14. Use a dictionary well and understand its limitations.
15. Use context to build meaning and aid comprehension.

16. Continue reading even when unsuccessful, at least for a while.

17. Adjust strategies to the purpose of reading.

Summing up, teachers should develop micro – skills first and then reading strategies so as to form efficient and effective readers. (as mentioned by Garcia, S. in Fundamentals for Foreign Language Teaching where she adapted from Munby, 1978, and Aebbersold and Field, 1997)

### **How should the teaching of reading be approached?**

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).
- interactive approach: reading comprehension is a process of understanding the information of the text in bottom-up and top-down interaction according to the reader's needs.

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

**Top-down**



**Bottom-up**

Whereas 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 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. Depending on the students' difficulties teachers may use bottom-up processing in combination with top-down.

### **Stages in the communicative methodological treatment of reading.**

#### **Pre / Before-reading activities.**

##### **Aims:**

- Getting the students interested in the topic,
- Finding out what the students already know about the topic (i.e. to activate their prior knowledge of the topic)
- Having the students share their knowledge,
- Having them predict, guess what they are going to read about.

**Skills:**

- Anticipating
- Predicting

**Types of Activities:**

- Elicitation /discussion about the topic (based on visuals, title, table of content, italics, underlining, accompanying pictures and the like).
- Brainstorming, games, guiding questions, writing, speaking, vocabulary work ,key words.

**While / during-reading activities:****Aims:**

- To develop particular skill(s) / strategy (ies).
- To focus the students' attention towards the relevant information.

**Skills:**

- Anticipating or/and previewing form/content.
- Identifying the main idea(s).
- Recognizing and recalling specific details.
- Recognizing the relationship between the main idea(s) and their expansions (examples, etc).
- Following a sequence, e.g. events, instructions, stages of an argument.
- Deducing the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items (inferring vocabulary through analogy, word-formation, context).
- Inferring from the text (read between the lines).
- Using the dictionary efficiently.
- Transcoding information to diagrammatic display.
- Recognizing the writer's purpose and attitude.

**Types of Activities:**

1. Checking of predictions.
2. Organization of ideas in hierarchical / chronological order.
3. Information search.
4. Filling in the blanks.
5. Matching.
6. Cloze-reading.
7. Scanning.

8. Skimming.
9. Jigsaw reading.
10. Unscrambling of text.
11. Comparing.
12. Obeying / following instructions.
13. Filling in gaps.
14. Ticking items.
15. True, false, I don't know.

### **Post / after-reading activities.**

Aims:

- To check the results of the reading tasks.
- To make some other language work (writing, speaking, etc.).
- To know the students reactions towards the reading (content, up-datedness prestige of author and/or publication, etc.).
- To round off the reading activity.

**Skills:**

- Drawing conclusions.
- Evaluating reading materials.
- Extracting salient points to summarize (the text, an idea, etc) and take down notes.

### **Types of Activities:**

1. Projects.
2. Writing using the text read as a model.
3. Speaking about a similar or opposite topic.
4. Giving opinions.
5. Description of similar process, object, person, etc.
6. Evaluation of reading material.
7. Comparison of texts, points of view, etc.

### **Types of texts**

When working with the reading skill, it is very important to be aware of which types of texts we can usually come across in real life, so they can be taken into consideration

for text selection. 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.

It is every teacher's task when dealing with reading to take into account what type of text students are going to read and at the same time be aware of whether they are developing the skill of reading comprehension or examining the students actual development of reading comprehension .

## **2.2. Needs' assessment**

### **2.2.1 Characterization of the subjects of study**

The group was composed of : 32 students / 14 girls / 18 boys

Students' results and participation in English are not good.

Students show little interest and motivation towards the English subject because they are more concerned in Maths, History and Spanish.

**Methods for the needs' assessment:**

They were administered to gather the necessary data to confirm the first findings stated in the introduction of this research, and to continue analyzing and inferring the results and data needed for the topic under study.

The instruments used were the following:

- Document Analysis: this method gave the possibility of analyzing the management of the reading skill by the official documents of 9th grade.
- Participant observation: It was administered to assess the students' levels of knowledge and sub-skills concerning reading comprehension activities, in addition to students' motivation towards the English lesson.
- Interview: to assess the students' opinions about strengths and weaknesses concerning the teaching learning process of the the reading skill in English.
- Interview: to know the students' interest related to the English subject specifically to the reading lessons, its importance for their professional future and the topics they would like to be reading about.
- Pedagogical test: It was administered to verify the students' level of proficiency they may have regarding the reading skill.
- Analysis of students' outcomes: to assess the students' reading skill activities in their notebooks.
- Specialists' Criteria: It provided an evaluation of the quality, pertinence, and value of the proposal before its practical implementation.
- Triangulation: It was used in order to identify the regularities about the assessment process, using the data obtained through the administration of the different empirical methods before the proposal was designed in order to meet students' needs.

**2.2.2 Indicators for the assessment process:**

- Objectives and contents considered in the syllabus for the development of the reading skill in 9<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Level of development of the reading skill in students.



- Level of motivation of the students for the reading skill.
- Interests and topics preferred by the students

### **2.2.3 Instruments used in gathering the information.**

The process of diagnosis was directed to determine the current situation of the teaching learning- process of reading comprehension in English, with the aim of elaborating a proposal of complementary reading texts and activities that goes through the following stages:

- The stage of empirical exploration to determine the scientific problem of the current research.
- The stage of historical backgrounds in order to determine how the teaching-learning process of reading comprehension has evolved and how the teaching-learning process is conceived in 9th grade, the objectives of 9th grade and the objectives of the English subject in 9th grade.
- The stage of the elaboration of a proposal of complementary texts and activities to contribute to the development of reading comprehension in English in Junior High School 9th graders.
- The stage of partial implementation of the proposal of reading texts and activities.

This stage is integrated by the empirical exploration, the stage of historical backgrounds, and the diagnosis stage strictly speaking.

### **2.2.4. The Stage of Empirical Exploration.**

#### Analysis of documents (Annex #1)

The first method was the analysis of documents used to know the priority given to the reading skill in the program of the subject and the students' workbook. Through this method the official documents of the English subject in 9th grade were analyzed.

The English syllabus has seven units with the following distribution: unit one and four with 8 hours each and the rest, units 2,3,5,6,7 with 12 hours each. The time devoted to the reading skill per unit is two hours, except the unit which does not include any planned reading text. The total number of hours devoted are 72 hours, but only 12

are dedicated to the reading skill that represent 15,78 % . The methodology that is suggested is the communicative following mainly a top-down approach.

The student's workbook has 7 exercises devoted to improve the reading skill. The syllabus specifies the sub-skills that have to be developed : understanding general ideas, identifying key words, skimming, scanning.

Most of the exercises in the workbook, though, are designed for developing grammar and writing; the rest are aimed at practicing the speaking skill and expanding vocabulary. The contents are appropriate for students' ages and interests and are organized based on the communicative functions for every unit.

#### The pedagogical test:

It was administered before the design of the proposal to assess the students' reading skill. The test assessed the basic abilities that the students should have developed in reading in 9th grade. The analysis of the indicators led to the following results.

The main difficulties according to the indicators revealed that students faced problems in the three main stages of the reading lesson. Eight students did not do well in the first stage, 17 in the second , and 25% in the third which means that the students had not developed the necessary skills to achieve the aims of the test in terms of the development of the reading skill. (See annex 5)

#### Participant observation.

Four reading lessons were observed and in all of them, the researcher noticed that the teacher followed a logical plan, though the exercises and activities that were carried out, did not always meet the needs for the development of the reading skills, as well as students needs in terms of preferences. On the students' side, it can be stated that they were able to accomplish the tasks up to a certain extent, though were not always successful in terms of comprehension.

It can be stated that in all the lessons observed, only 10 students, representing 27,77% were motivated. The rest of the class , did not show an interest to participate in the lessons voluntarily. (Annex # 2)

Survey to teachers: It was administered to three English teachers from this junior high school in order to obtain their opinions about the teaching-learning process of English (annex 3). All the teachers considered that there are difficulties in reading comprehension in English, that there are not enough readings available to develop reading comprehension in English and enough original and up dated sources of information available in order to be offered to the students ; 2 teachers (66,6%) share the opinion that the causes for the difficulties in reading comprehension are: the lack of bibliography and articles to develop reading comprehension in English in classes; that there is not enough work based on reading or activities to develop it; the practice lessons are used to review what's been taught on video classes while working with reading is not included; there are difficulties in extracting main ideas, in predicting and previewing the topic of the reading and guessing the meaning of unknown words.

Interview to students:

Students affirmed that they could not understand English texts very well and that these hapened due to their lack of vocabulary to deduce unfamiliar lexical items. They also stated that they cannot understand key words easily. They showed less interest towards the English Subject and said that most of the time they became bored as a result of the type and charateristics of the texts. Most of the students were not aware of how important it is to know English for their professional lives and future. They also showed other interests to read texts in English. (Annex # 4)

### **2.2.5. Regularities**

According to the results previously obtained and analyzed in relation to the application of different methods and instruments in this major paper, the following **regularities** were found:

- The syllabus has not enough reading texts that meet students'needs to develop the reading skill in 9th grade.
- Extra readings are not used in class.
- Students face difficulties when reading in English mainly when extracting main ideas and finding details in the text, when guessing the meaning of unknown words.

- In the 9<sup>th</sup> grade English Workbook there are 9 reading lessons from unit 2 to unit 10 but unfortunately few of the reading texts deal with topics related to the students' interests.
- The texts and activities are not always motivating for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students

Finally, the regularities corroborated the problematic situation in 9th grade class A, at “José de la Luz y Caballeros” Junior High School which supported the need to select new reading texts and the design of their corresponding activities to transform the reality of the classroom regarding reading skills.

### **2.3. Proposal of Reading Texts and their activities to contribute to the Development of Reading Comprehension in English in 9th Grade, Class A at “José de la Luz y Caballeros” Junior High School**

#### **2.3.1. Characterization of proposal:**

- It is centered on the students' needs and preferences.
- It is a communicative system of texts and activities.
- It is a values-rich system of texts and activities.
- 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.

The proposal comprises ten complementary original reading texts that have been taken from different sources. There is a reading text for 9 units with their corresponding activities which are related to the contents of the units in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade program. The texts may be used in the last discussion session of each unit, though it is flexible in case a teacher would like to include it in any other section of the program.

The general objective of the proposal is to develop reading comprehension in English, mainly through skimming, scanning and intensive reading.

#### **2.3.2. A system of reading comprehension texts and activities for 9th graders (Annex 7)**

### Description of the system of reading comprehension activities

In order to facilitate the development of reading skills 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 activities to facilitate student learning.

The current proposal of activities to develop reading comprehension in English in Junior High School is characterized by:

- The development of reading skills.
- The acquisition of a general integral culture in present-day and future generations due to the diversity of topics presented in each text.

The proposal is based on the use of the communicative approach and the activities are in line with its principles. The general objective of the proposal is to develop reading comprehension in English, mainly through skimming, scanning and intensive reading.

The students' achievement during the implementation of this proposal of the system of activities should be evaluated through systematic activities and observation.

The current research is done for the first time in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, class A at "José de la Luz y Caballeros" Junior High School in Cienfuegos province and contains a proposal of a system of activities to develop reading comprehension in English, which had been based on a diagnosis test put into practice with students from this educational level and directed potentially towards the development of reading comprehension in English.

### **2.3.3 Rationale behind the proposal**

#### **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 that 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 to 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.

The following pedagogical principles are embraced (AddineFernández F., 2002)

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 to 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 9th grade students it is important to take into account 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. (Castellanos,D 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.

### **Pedagogical and Didactical 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 this proposal communicatively implies that we should be concerned with helping 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.

### **2.3.4 Example of the proposal**

#### **Unit #1: Summer Vacation**

**Objective:**The students should be able to understand the main idea and get specific information from the text.

#### **Varadero: The Sun's Favorite Beach**

Varadero Beach is a master piece of nature. It is located in the northern coast of Matanzas province. Its beach forms a long narrow strip of 23km of fine white sand lapped by clear warm waters; it is the ideal place to get a glorious tan. It's a complete tourist complex with a great number of recreational options. There are more than 3000 rooms at Varadero Beach. The best known hotels are: The International, Bella Mar, Las Palmas, Paradiso, Kawuama, Tortugas, Arenas Blancas and Punta Blanca. The rapid development of tourism here is giving rise to a steady increase in hotel capacities. Varadero Beach is a vacation paradise in Cuba.

### **BEFORE READING ACTIVITIES**

1. The teacher activates background knowledge and motivates students for reading by asking the following questions:

- a) Where do you go on vacation?
- b) Do you ever go to the beach?
- c) What do you do there?
- d) What's your favourite beach?

2. Look at the title of the text. What do you expect to read about?

### WHILE READING ACTIVITIES

- 3. Read quickly to check if your predictions were right.
- 4. Read the text again and determine what the main idea is.
- 5. Read the text in order to get the following information about Varadero Beach:

Location	
Length of the beach	
Characteristics of the waters	
Number of rooms	
Some of the best known hotels	

### AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

6. A Canadian friend wants to visit a Cuban Beach next vacation and is looking for information. Write down some information of Varadero or any other beach in Cuba that you can give him.

### 2.4. Evaluation of the proposal by specialists

In this section, there is a summary of suggestions, ideas and opinions given by specialists in their assessment of the proposal (annex 8)

All specialists evaluate the proposal as Very Adequate. Only two aspects were evaluated as Adequate: Accuracy of the English language and Linguistic complexity,

taking into account some minor mistakes in some texts and activities and the fact that most texts have been designed for classroom use, thus, they lack the authenticity of a text taken from a foreign real-life source. This does not affect the quality of the proposal since the topics of these texts have proven to be interesting for most students. The mentioned texts had been designed by experienced and highly ranked professionals from the Province of Cienfuegos who have designed materials for the different levels of education in this province and at the national level.

The positive comments given by specialists relate to the following strengths:

Strengths of the Proposal:

- A proposal of good texts and types of activities
- Important topics for young learners
- Well-structured proposal
- Appropriate criteria for the selection of texts
- Variety of activities and topics
- Good integration with other skills
- The development of tasks of different levels of difficulty
- The extension of the criteria used in terms of textual aspects that need to be taken into consideration when choosing reading texts for classes.

As Weaknesses of the Proposal, they stated:

- There are some spelling mistakes, may be due to hurriness
- Some activities do not demand much from students.
- A few texts use too many simple sentences

They suggested the following areas for improvement:

- To reinforce some of the areas of vocabulary and grammar.
- To give students choices in some of the tasks
- To change some questions where students can find the answer literally as stated in the text.

Suggestions or Recommendations:

- To carry actions in line with the areas for improvement which reinforce the ideas of working with some areas of vocabulary and grammar and to change two of the proposed activities that are not very demanding.

- To consider the use of visuals to give students some support in some of the reading texts and activities

The criteria given by specialists have been very useful for the development of the present work for future follow up of the proposal, either by the present authors or by any other professional or student teacher who decides to use it in any other educational context.

### **III. CONCLUSIONS**

1. The theoretical and methodological foundations that support the development of the reading skill in the students from 9th grade, Class A at “José de la luz y Caballero” Junior High School are based on concepts and precepts for the teaching of the reading skill.
2. The needs’ assessment demonstrated that students from 9th grade, Class A, at “José de la luz y Caballero” Junior High School have difficulties regarding the reading skill, most of the students struggle when facing a text, and are not motivated to read in English.
3. The proposal includes ten reading texts with their corresponding activities related to different topics to develop the reading skill taking into consideration the results of the needs’ assessment, the criteria to select the reading texts, the reading strategies, the approaches to the teaching of reading, the stages of the reading lesson, the types of reading activities for each stage and the enabling sub-skills.
4. The specialists evaluate the proposal as very adequate in most aspects. However, two aspects related to linguistic complexity and accuracy of the English language are evaluated as adequate, so the author took into account these suggestions for further improvement.
5. After the partial implementation of the proposal , it was proven that students had developed their reading comprehension skills in English, and that further work on the topic can help the improvement of the whole design of this skill for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade syllabus.

#### **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. To improve the proposal of activities taking into consideration suggestions given by specialists.
2. To implement the whole proposal in other nine grade classes.

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## VI. ANNEXES

### Annex 1 Document analysis

**Objective: To analyze how the reading skill is treated in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade program and workbook**

Aspects to evaluate:

1. Mapping of the grade and the place of reading in it
2. Suggested methodology for reading lessons
3. Topics for reading texts
4. Types of activities for reading comprehension

### 1. Course Plan

#### Subject

Unit and Title	Objectives	Grammar	Vocabulary	Reading
1 Summer vacation	Giving personal information expressing comparison, talking about activities in the present	Verb BE, simple present and present continuous comparatives	Related to different activities	
2 Travel Time	Asking and giving information about places Describing places Giving directions Understanding oral and written information.	Adjectives, preposition of places and directions	Expression and adjectives used to describe places and to give directions	Understanding general ideas Identifying key words

	Writing simples texts to describe places.			
3 The News	Asking and giving information about current events Understanding oral and written information. Writing simples texts to narrate events	WH- Questions Simple tense	Vocabulary Related to news items and current events	Identifying main ideas Skimming
4 Hobbies	Expressing likes, dislikes and preferences Understanding oral and written information. Writing simples texts to narrate activities One does as preferences	The gerund	Vocabulary Expression such as: I'd rather ... I prefer ...	Scanning Reading for specific information
5 The English Language (Review)	Expressing preferences Asking Questions Talking about	Review of the contents from units 2-4 Connectors (Therefore,	Vocabulary related to learning a language	Comparing and contrasting information Understanding tone

	<p>the English language</p> <p>Giving opinions</p> <p>Understanding oral and written information.</p> <p>Writing simple texts to give opinions</p>	<p>besides, moreover)</p>		
<p>6</p> <p>Past Time</p>	<p>Giving intrusions</p> <p>Talking about hobbies and activities in the past</p> <p>Understanding oral and written information</p> <p>Writing simple texts to describe a sequence of actions or process</p>	<p>Used to ...</p> <p>First ...</p> <p>Next ...</p> <p>Then ...</p>	<p>Instructions related to handling a camera</p> <p>Vocabulary related to different activities people do</p>	<p>Understanding instructions in a how-to text</p>
<p>7</p> <p>Important Personalities</p>	<p>Asking and giving information about personalities</p> <p>Understanding</p>	<p>Relative clauses with, who, that and which</p> <p>Question pattern How is</p>	<p>Personality traits</p>	<p>Identifying main ideas</p> <p>Scanning</p>

	<p>oral and written information</p> <p>Writing different simple texts to describe personalities</p>	X like?		
8 Environment	<p>Talking about environment</p> <p>Expressing concern about environment</p> <p>Understanding oral and written information</p> <p>Write simple texts to express concern about environment or to give advice</p>	Modal verb (should, must, can, Etc.)	Vocabulary related to environmental problems	<p>Understanding main ideas</p> <p>Making inferences and predictions</p>
9 A Trip Around the Country	<p>Talking about Cuban history</p> <p>Describing places</p> <p>Understanding oral and written information</p> <p>Write a simple article</p>	Simple past and passive voice	Vocabulary useful to describe places	<p>Scanning</p> <p>Identifying main ideas</p>

10 Review	Giving basic information about secondary school life Asking and giving information about future plans and activities Understanding oral and writing information Writing simple texts to explain future plans and intentions	<b>Unit 2-9</b> Future tense Will vs. Going to	Vocabulary related to daily activities, careers	Predictions skimming
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## Annex 2

### *Participant Observation*

**Objective:** To verify the teaching learning process of reading in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, class A

Aspects to evaluate:

- Motivation
- Students' interests for the English lessons.
- Level of participations in the lesson
- Students performance during reading comprehension lessons
- Reading texts used in class

## **Annex 3**

### ***Survey to teachers***

**Objective:** To know their opinions about what's affecting reading comprehension in English in 9th graders

In order to solve difficulties in reading comprehension in English we ask you to answer the following questions.

1-Are there enough readings available in the syllabus for 9<sup>th</sup> graders to develop reading comprehension?

Yes\_\_\_\_\_

No\_\_\_\_\_

2- Are extra readings used in your class?

Yes\_\_\_\_\_

No\_\_\_\_\_

3- Which reason do consider is affecting reading comprehension in English in 9<sup>th</sup> graders?

4- Do you consider that a proposal of exercises will solve the difficulties in reading comprehension in English in 9<sup>th</sup> graders?

Yes\_\_\_\_\_

No\_\_\_\_\_

## **Annex 4**

### **Interview to Students**

Objective: To gather some information about the English reading lessons from a the students to develop reading skills in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, class A at “Jesus de la Luz y Caballeros” Junior High School.

1. Establishment of the rapport

## 2. Guide for the interview:

- Is learning English important for your future ?
- How much do you like English?
- How do you feel during reading lessons in English?
- What is your opinion about the importance of reading texts in English?
- Are the topics of the reading texts interesting for you? What topics would you prefer to read in English lessons?

## Annex 5

### Initial diagnosis test

**Objective:** To verify the students' skills in reading comprehension in English by means of written exercises in order to elaborate the proposal of exercises

**Reading:** At the Camping Site

One sunny morning at the camping site Peñas Blancas, María and Teresa were swimming while Andy and Paolo were looking for some insects for their Anatomy teacher. They were resting under a tree when Paolo said "don't move Andy, you are in danger, there's a big snake near your arm".

When the snake touched Andy's arm, he closed his eyes. While the snake was going over his body, Andy wasn't breathing at all. He opened his eyes and saw that ugly head near his face.

Finally, the snake moved away. Then Paolo told Andy that everything was all right, but Andy didn't move and said "I think I need an ambulance".

1. –According to the title what do you think the reading is about?

2. - Say right (R) or wrong (W)

- a) \_\_\_\_\_ Maria and Teresa were in school.
- b) \_\_\_\_\_ the students were at the camping site.
- c) \_\_\_\_\_ Maria and Teresa were talking about nature.
- d) \_\_\_\_\_ Andy and Paolo were looking for insects.

e) \_\_\_\_\_ when Andy and Paolo were resting under a tree.

3.-Find in the reading

a) A common noun

c) A verb

b) A proper noun

4.-Answer these questions

a) What were María and Teresa doing?

b) What were Andy and Paolo doing?

c) Who needed an ambulance?

5-Select the main idea

6-Write a paragraph about any experience of your own with a wild animal

## Annex 6

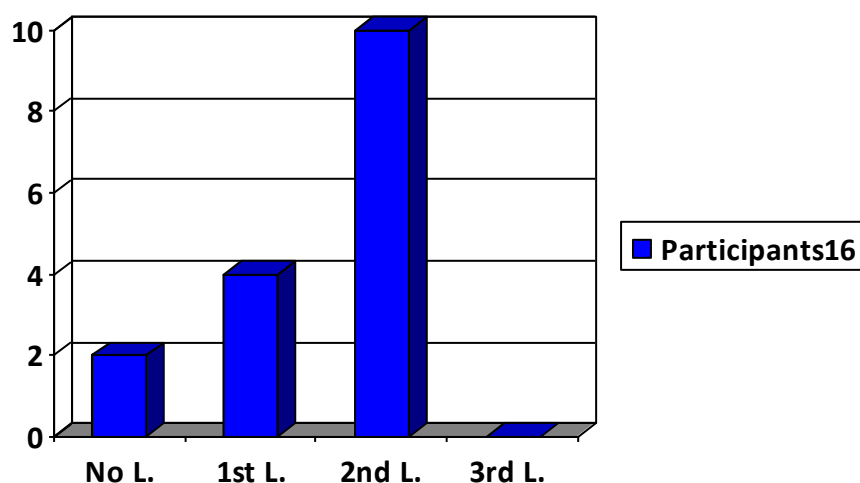
### Results of the initial diagnosis test.

An initial diagnosis to assess the current status of reading comprehension in English with sixteen seventh graders students revealed that:

\_\_\_ 2 student didn't pass the test (no level) that represents the 12.5 %.

\_\_\_ 4 students (I level) that represents the 25 %.

\_\_\_ 10 students (II level) that represents the 62.5 %.





## **Annex 7:**

### **PROPOSAL OF A SYSTEM OF READING TEXTS AND THEIR ACTIVITIES TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING COMPREHENSION IN ENGLISH IN NINTH GRADE CLASS A AT “JOSÉ DE LA LUZ Y CABALLEROS” JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

#### **1. Characterization of proposal:**

- It is centered on the students` needs and preferences.
- It is a communicative system of texts and activities.
- It is a values-rich system of texts and activities.
- 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.

The proposal comprises nine complementary original reading texts that have been taken from different sources. There is a reading text for 9 units with their corresponding exercises which are related to the contents of the units in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade program. The texts may be used in the last discussion session of each unit, though it is flexible in case a teacher would like to include it in any other section of the program.

The general objective of the proposal is to develop reading comprehension in English, mainly through skimming, scanning and intensive reading.

#### **OVERVIEW OF THE TEXTS FOR THE PROPOSAL:**

UNIT	TITLE OF THE TEXT
1	Varadero: the Sun's Favorite Beach
2	A Tour
3	A Cultural News
4	Jane and Ronald
6	A School Party

7	Edgard Allan Poe
8	Sustainable Farming & Environment
9	Beautiful Cities & Places in Cuba
10	Iris' Birthday

## 2. The texts with their corresponding activities

### Unit #1: Summer Vacation

**Objective:** The students should be able to understand the main idea and get specific information from the text.

#### Varadero: The Sun's Favorite Beach

Varadero Beach is a master piece of nature. It is located in the northern coast of Matanzas province. Its beach forms a long narrow strip of 23 km of fine white sand lapped by clear warm waters; it is the ideal place to get a glorious tan. It's a complete tourist complex with a great number of recreational options. There are more than 3000 rooms at Varadero Beach. The best known hotels are: The International, Bella Mar, Las Palmas, Paradiso, Kawuama, Tortugas, Arenas Blancas and Punta Blanca. The rapid development of tourism here is giving rise to a steady increase in hotel capacities. Varadero Beach is a vacation paradise in Cuba.

### BEFORE READING ACTIVITIES

2. The teacher activates background knowledge and motivates students for reading by asking the following questions:
  - e) Where do you go on vacation?
  - f) Do you ever go to the beach?
  - g) What do you do there?
  - h) What's your favourite beach?
2. Look at the title of the text. What do you expect to read about?

### WHILE READING ACTIVITIES

3. Read quickly to check if your predictions were right.
4. Read the text again and determine what the main idea is.

5. Read the text in order to get the following information about Varadero Beach:

Location	
Length of the beach	
Characteristics of the waters	
Number of rooms	
Some of the best known hotels	

#### AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

6. A Canadian friend wants to visit a Cuban Beach next vacation and is looking for information. Write down some information of Varadero or any other beach in Cuba that you can give him.

#### Unit #2: Travel Time

**Objective:** The students should be able to understand general ideas and get specific information.

##### A Tour

The English teacher and a group of students are preparing a tour. They are going to visit Soroa. Soroa is a wonderful vacation resort in Pinar del Rio. Jim is the organizer of the trip. He is going to get the tickets at the INIT agency. Edith is a member of the group. She is going to prepare some sandwiches and hot dogs, and Rose and Sarah are going to help her. They are going to be very busy tonight.

Arthur, their classmate, is going to the tour too. He likes to swim in the pool.

Arthur is describing Soroa to his friends, because he goes there every year, and he knows the place very well. Everybody is very enthusiastic about the trip.

#### BEFORE READING ACTIVITIES

1. The teacher motivates the students and elicits information by asking the following questions:

- a) Do you like to go on an excursion with your friends?
- b) What activities do you do there?

#### WHILE READING ACTIVITIES

2 .Read the text and select the main idea.

- a. Preparing a trip to Soroa
- b. Talking about the last trip to Soroa
- c. Comparing Soroa to other resorts in Pinar del Rio

3. Answer these questions about the text

- a) Are the students and the teacher preparing a trip?
- b) Are they going to ViñalesValley?
- c) Is Arthur going to the tour?
- d) Does Arthur speak to his classmates about Soroa?

#### AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

4. In the text, find the following:

- a) A personal pronoun
- b) A proper noun
- c) A sentence in future tense

5. What vacation resorts do you know? Make a brief description of one of them

#### **Unit #3:**The News

**Objective:** The students should be able to identify the main idea and recognize and recall specific details from the text.

##### A Cultural News

The Greenwood boys are a group of popular singers. At present, they are visiting all parts of the country. They arrived here yesterday. They came by bus and most of the young people in town met them at the bus station. Tomorrow evening they will sing at the workers club.

The Greenwood boys will stay for five days. During this time they will give five performances. As usual the police will have a difficult time. They will try to keep order. It is always the same in this occasion. Do you want to hear good music? Tomorrow, with Greenwood Boys you will have a lot of fun.

#### BEFORE READING ACTIVITIES

1. Have students predict the content by answering the following questions:

- a) Do you like music?
- b) What kind of music do you like?
- c) Based on the title, what do you think the text is about?

#### WHILE READING ACTIVITIES

2. Read the text and say what the main idea of the text is.

3. Say true, false or I can't tell

- a) \_\_\_\_\_ The Greenwood Boys are a group of popular actors.
- b) \_\_\_\_\_ They came by bus.
- c) \_\_\_\_\_ The Greenwood Boys will stay for five days.
- d) \_\_\_\_\_ The police will have an easy time.
- e) \_\_\_\_\_ The Greenwood Boys are from London.

#### AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

4. The school is having a writing competition about students' music preferences.

You should answer the following questions in a brief paragraph:

- Who is your favorite singer?
- Where is he/she from?
- What kind of music does he/she play?
- How often do you see him/her play?
- How popular are they?

#### Unit #4: Hobbies

**Objective:** The students should be able to extract the main idea and get some specific information.

### Jane and Ronald

Jane and Ronald are good friends since primary school. They are in junior high school now. Jane doesn't like watching TV. She is afraid of the sea, for that reason she can't swim when she goes to the beach. She likes dancing with her friends; she prefers to dance salsa music. She loves ice-cream, her favorite flavor is chocolate. She hates people that hurt animals.

Ronald likes watching TV. His favorite kind of film is science fiction. He doesn't like reading; he prefers listening to rock music. He likes the sea, for that reason he is a good swimmer. He doesn't like dancing; he doesn't know how to do it. He loves ice-cream, and his favorite flavor is strawberry. He also hates people that hurt animals.

### BEFORE READING ACTIVITIES

1. Activate background knowledge and motivate students through the following questions:

- a) Tell me about your likes and dislikes
- b) Do you know the meaning of the word hobby?

### WHILE READING ACTIVITIES

2. Read the text and say what the text is about.

3. Read the text again and find two things they both like and one thing they both dislike.

4. Write *true*, *false* or *I can't tell*

- a) \_\_\_\_\_ Jane and Ronald are in the University now.
- b) \_\_\_\_\_ Jane likes watching TV.
- c) \_\_\_\_\_ Jane prefers to dance salsa music.
- d) \_\_\_\_\_ Jane and Ronald are living in Cienfuegos.
- e) \_\_\_\_\_ Ronald prefers listening to rock music.
- f) \_\_\_\_\_ Jane and Ronald like people that hurt animals.

### AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

5. In a few sentences, write what you like to do and what you don't like to do.

Compare your ideas with a classmate.

## Unit # 6

### Past Times

**Objective:** The students should be able to recognize and recall specific details.

#### A School Party

My name is Olivia Jones. My school's students and I had a party last month. All the students prepared the school for the party, a group of girls swept the floor, cleaned the classroom and the yard in the morning and a group of boys decorated the school's yard at noon.

Our parents and the teachers went to party too. We ate cake, bread with Mayonnaise, cookies and candies and drank delicious lemonade. The boys danced with the girls, listen to music, sang pretty songs and read beautiful poems.

My teacher Sofia is a great teacher, my classmates and I said beautiful words about her and Marcos gave her a bouquet of red roses and a gift as a souvenir to remember our group. That was an unforgettable time.

#### BEFORE READING ACTIVITIES

1. Anticipate the content of the text by answering the following questions:

- Do you like parties?
- Do you have parties at your school?
- What do you do when preparing a school party?
- What do you expect the text will be about?

#### WHILE READING ACTIVITIES

- Read the text and check your predictions.
- Complete the chart with information from the text:

What did they do?	Before the party	At the party
The girls		
The boys		
Parents and	xxxxxxxxxxxx	

teachers		
----------	--	--

## AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

4. In groups discuss the things you like to do in a school party. Also refer to the last party you went.

## Unit # 7

### Important Personalities

**Objectives:** The students should be able to identify main ideas and recognize specific information in the text.

### Edgar Allan Poe

Edgar Allan Poe was born in 1809 and died in 1849; he was an outstanding and successful American writer, Poet and critic, better known as the first master of short stories, specially horror and mystery. He was born in Boston on January 19. His parents were actors and died when Edgar was still a child. He grows up by John Allan a rich business man from Richmond, Virginia who was probably his godfather. He studied in England in a private school, he went to Virginia's University for a year, but in 1827 his foster father angry by Edgar's attraction to drink and gambling, refused to pay his debts and forced him to work as an employee. Edgar abandon his job and travelled to Boston where he published anonymously his first book: (Tamerlan and other poems), in 1829 he published his second book of poems (Al Aaraf).

In 1832 he won a contest with a short story, in 1836 he married his young niece and during the following decade he works as an editor and writer for several publications. In 1847 his young wife died and he himself got sick, but his addition to drugs and alcohol contributed to his early death on July, 1849.

## BEFORE READING ACTIVITIES

1. The teacher motivates the reading and activates background knowledge

a) Do you like reading?

b) What kind of books do you prefer?



c) Do you know who Edgar Allan Poe was? How much do you know about his life?  
(The teacher elicits information and writes students ideas on the board)

#### WHILE READING ACTIVITIES

2. Read the text and check if your ideas were right.

3. Match column A with B

A	B
a) Edgar A. Poe was born in	_____ 1849
b) He published his second book in	_____ 1847
c) He won a contest in	_____ 1836
d) He got married in	_____ 1832
	----- 1880

4. Answer these questions in your notebook

- a) Who was Edgar Allan Poe?
- b) When was he born?
- c) When did he get married?
- d) When did he die?
- e) How was he like?

#### AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

5. Select another writer and discuss with your partner some aspects of his/her Life. (For e.g. name, date and place of birth, family, books he/she wrote, if he is famous or not, etc.

### Unit # 8

#### The Environment

**Objectives:** The students should be able to make inferences and predictions and to become familiar with the vocabulary related to the environment.

#### Sustainable Farming and Environment

In the future farming is expected to increasingly emphasize sustainable agriculture, not only to increase productivity. Eco-agriculture experts say this will also protect the environment. It is predicted that industrialized countries such as the United States will reach the goal of sustainable agriculture sooner than developing nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America mostly due to greater resources and more advanced technologies.

Currently the poorest countries around the world have up to 80% of their population dedicated to agriculture. In these areas it is now common for half of a family budget to be spent in food. Poverty often forces farmers to gamble with the environment by using cheap chemicals to combat insects and weeds. While a several pesticides have been taken off the market in industrialized nations because of their hazardous effects, quite a few of these banned chemical are still used by farmers in developing nations.

Fortunately a wide variety of alternatives of non-toxic pest control are gradually being introduced around the world.

#### BEFORE READING ACTIVITIES

1. According to the title, what do you think the reading is about?
2. What words related to the environment do you know in English

(The teacher can do a brain storming and introduce some key words if needed)

#### WHILE READING ACTIVITIES

3. Say right, wrong or I don't know.

- a) \_\_\_\_\_ the eco-agriculture will not protect the environment.
- b) \_\_\_\_\_ the poorest countries around the world have up to 20% of their population dedicated to agriculture.
- c) \_\_\_\_\_ Poverty often forces farmers to gamble with the environment by using cheap chemicals to combat insects and weeds.
- d) \_\_\_\_\_ Agriculture is very important for Mexican people

4. In the text, find the phrases that are used to express the ideas below:

- a) \_\_\_\_\_ Many people in third world countries work in agriculture.
- b) \_\_\_\_\_ Poor families use more than 50% of their money for buying food
- c) \_\_\_\_\_ Some farmers in poor countries still use dangerous pesticides.

d)\_\_\_\_ Nowadays, other options which are not are risky are introduced in agriculture in many countries worldwide.

#### AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

5. Write three things we should do to protect the environment in our country. Share answers with your peers.

### Unit # 9

#### A trip Around the Country

**Objectives:** The students should be able to identify main ideas and infer the meaning of words.

#### Beautiful Cities and Places in Cuba

Cuba is divided into fourteen provinces and a special municipality. In all these provinces there are many beautiful places and cities that anyone would like to visit. Among those beautiful cities is Cienfuegos which is 336 kilometers far from Havana. Cienfuegos has the third largest bay in the country, and nowadays it is undergoing a significant economic growth. Some of Cienfuegos' tourist attractions are the Jagua Castle, a colonial building; Rancho Luna beach; the Botanical Garden, and the Valley Palace.

Another beautiful city is Pinar del Rio. It is famous for its vast tobacco plantations, the leaves used in making one of the world most famous cigars. Two other famous places in Pinar del Rio are Viñales Valley and Soroa which are visited by many tourists for their beauty and exuberant flora.

In Sancti Spiritus province, there is a beautiful colonial place: Trinidad. This city is considered a living museum. Its architecture has remained untouched over the years. Balconies, churches, and mansions display the baroque and neoclassical styles of the colonial period. There are many caves and the Ancon Beach covers about 16 kilometers of white sand and clear waters.

#### BEFORE READING ACTIVITIES

The teacher will interact with students to anticipate the content of the text.

a) Do you know many places in Cuba? What places have you visited?

b) Locate in a map some of those places and the ones you would like to visit.

## WHILE READING ACTIVITIES

2. Organize the sentences below in the order they appear in the text. Later decide which the main idea for the whole text is.

- a) Many people visit SantiSpiritus Province to admire colonial places like Trinidad.
- b) Pinar del Rio produces one of the world's most famous cigars
- c) Cienfuegos has one of the largest bays in Cuba.
- d) Ancón Beach has clear waters and very fine sand.
- e) There are many beautiful places in Cuba that many people are attracted to visit.

3. Find in the text:

- a) a phrase that means: *it is experiencing a great development*
- b) Two adjectives that describe places.
- c) The antonym of *east*.
- d) A synonym for *majestic*

## AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

4. Answer

- a) What is your favorite city or place in Cuba?
- b) Write a brief paragraph describing it.

## Unit #10

### All in All

**Objectives:** The students should be able to understand relevant points in order to summarize the text.

### Iris' Birthday

Iris is eleven today and for the first time in her life her parents are taking her to a restaurant .She is very pleased .What a lovely big room! The waiter asks them if they'd like to sit by the window, but Iris' mother prefers to sit at the table near the corner.

The waiter shows them the menu, but Iris is very embarrassed. There is a big choice and she'd like to have everything, but she can't of course. She would like to have a beer, but her father says it wouldn't be good for her. There is alcohol in it and she is

too young for that, so she is going to have a fruit juice, but she can have a cup of coffee after the meal if she likes.

They order veal cutlets with potatoes and French beans, and for dessert cheese with biscuits. This afternoon at the party she is going to have a birthday cake with eleven candles on the top.

### BEFORE READING ACTIVITIES

1. The teacher motivates the reading by asking the following questions:
  - a) What do you normally do on your birthdays? Did you have fun on your last birthday?
  - b) Read the title of the text and say what you think it will be about.

### WHILE READING ACTIVITIES

3. Check your predictions
4. Answer the following questions about the reading.
  - a) Why is Iris pleased?
  - b) Is the restaurant big or small?
  - c) Does she want any beer?
  - d) How old is Iris today?
5. Complete the ideas below with information from the text:
  - a) Iris is embarrassed when\_\_\_\_\_.
  - b) Iris's father says she is too young to\_\_\_\_\_.
  - c) If she likes, after the meal \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d) In the afternoon, Iris\_\_\_\_\_.

### AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

6. Summarize the text in 4 or 5 sentences.

## **Annex 8**

### **Specialist's criteria**

Dear professor,

In the present major paper regarding the development of the reading skill in secondary school, a proposal of texts and the corresponding activities to develop this skill in 9<sup>th</sup> grade at José de la Luz y Caballero Secondary School in the municipality of Cruces, Cienfuegos have been proposed. It would be of vital importance in order to improve this proposal, if we could count with your invaluable help in its evaluation as a specialist. Thus, we are requesting your participation in the process of evaluation by answering the following questions.

Thank you very much beforehand for all your help.

### ***GENERAL DATA OF THE SPECIALIST***

Full name:

Institution / Department:

Academic / Scientific Title:

Teaching Rank:

Teaching experience:

### ***CRITERIA ABOUT THE PROPOSAL***

I. Please, express your opinions about the reading texts and their corresponding activities by using the qualitative measuring rubrics below:

Very adequate (VA)

Adequate (A)

Not Adequate (NA)

- **About the reading texts:**

	VA	A	NA
Suitability of the topics for 9 <sup>th</sup> grade			
Variety of the topics			
Length of the texts			
Linguistic complexity			
General Evaluation			

- **About reading lessons:**

	VA	A	NA
Appropriate design of the lesson			
Variety of activities			
Number of activities per text			
Logical structure of activities			
Logical organization of activities			
Match between activities and sub-skills			
Activities for vocabulary practice			

## **II. General Evaluation:**

1. Strengths of the Proposal:
2. Weaknesses of the Proposal:
3. Areas for improvement:
4. Suggestions or Recommendations:

THANKS FOR YOUR TIME AND OPINIONS!