

## **L2 Reading During Higher Education in Colombia**

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*The results of a diagnostic L2 reading test applied to first-semester students at a higher education institution in Colombia demonstrated that most of the population entered the university with a lower reading comprehension level than the required for the entrance to tertiary education. According to MEN. The results gathered were categorized taking into account the CEFR levels (B2, B1, A2, A1, and –A1). This test's results revealed that the 85% of the evaluated population was classified at level A1; the 35% was placed at level A2; and the last 8% was classified at level –A1; on the other hand, there were no students placed in the higher levels (B1, B2). It is observed that most of the participants were placed in level A1, according to the CEFR, which means that these students lack the required standards to start college studies, regarding L2 reading skills. In order to face this situation, some university professors in this context were also observed with the intention of identifying the positive practices in terms of reading comprehension and the chances to improve.*

*Keywords: L2, tertiary education, L2 reading levels*

### **INTRODUCTION**

L2 reading in higher education within this study is focused on reading comprehension teaching and evaluation practices. The current chapter defines the following key concepts for the holistic understanding of the study: the concept of reading and reading instruction; approaches to teaching reading; Genre-Based Pedagogy, reading evaluation, and DARTs.

Reading is one of the most important skills and one of the hardest to develop in the academic field, since it involves more than merely understanding of vocabulary and covering basic grammar patterns. Reading comprehension is defined by Cain, Oakhill, & Bryant (2004, as cited in Rodríguez, 2017, p. 38) as “an interactive process, rather than a particular outcome or product, through which a reader interacts

with a text to construct meaning”. Likewise, Rodríguez (2017) stated that a text is meaningful to a reader if it shows relationship with the reader’s knowledge, experience, and purpose for reading which, afterwards, will lead him to reading fluency and comprehension. In other words, reading comprehension must be analyzed as the process in which readers interact with the text through their previous experiences and knowledge to get its full understanding.

Regarding the approaches to teach reading, throughout history, a variety of approaches have been proposed for teaching reading in EFL contexts. In the pursuit of employing the most appropriate mechanisms to teach reading comprehension. According to Masuhara (as cited in Tomlinson 2011), the four best known approaches for teaching reading since the 1960s are: Reading Comprehension –Based Approaches, The Language –Based Approach, The Skill/Strategy-Based Approach, and The Schema-based Approach, and other authors such as Williams, et al (1983), Widdowson (1980), Urquhart (1978), have discussed about it, as well. In this regard, the followings are the strategies, methods and approaches through which the observations were analyzed.

Teaching learners to read and write texts fluently is the basis of the Genre-Based Approach instruction. It is expected that after the instructions, learners can be able to identify the structure and the language features of different types of texts by themselves, which will allow them to understand the text in an easier and better way.

The core of this approach that was first presented by Rothery and Stenglin (1994), and later by researchers from the Sydney School (Christie & Martin, 1997; Martin & Rose, 2007, 2008; Rose & Martin, 2012) lies in its cycle because it provides the teacher with a path to follow along the course to be taught. During the stages of the genre orientation, the teacher guides learners through the stages of deconstruction, joint construction, and independent construction. In the first stage, the teacher and students work jointly to deconstruct a type of text genre, to make sure learners have an adequate understanding of text structure, content, and social purpose. During the second one a process of jointly work also takes place, but this time both, teacher and students construct other similar text taking into account the instruction given before. Finally, at the independent construction stage, learners are able to write their own text of the same genre, based on the fact all necessary input was given by the teacher in the previous stages.

This methodology emphasizes on reading as the basis for writing texts of a specific genre. However, over the years it has had some adaptations to suit the needs of the contexts in which it has been applied. For instance, R2L methodology is an intensive program to scaffolding students’ learning processes that also makes emphasis on teaching reading to write texts. Rose and Acevedo’s cycle (2007).

The first aims at inducing learners to do the task appropriately, usually works modelling in order to show them how to do it; this section can be recognized as teachers-centered. The second one, which is recognized as the follow-up move, is intended to provide feedback or comments on learners’ performance, however it must be coherently pre-established to share viewpoints about the text features; this section can be identified as learners-centered. And the third one, mostly depends on the successful performance learners had in the last stage. This section aims at developing the learning activity goals and it can include discussions, debates or applying new knowledge somehow.

Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs) refers to reading scaffolding, Darts play a prominent role. These activities were first developed by Gardner and Lunzer in 1980. DARTs encourage learners from all levels to learn more independent and actively; they engage learners not only to understand the text meaning per se, but visually organize it in graphs helping them to remember more and increase their learning motivation. Since its beginning DARTs aim at encouraging learners to read texts closely, enhancing learners’ reading comprehension level while they become aware of their own reading process at schools, among others. They are classified in two different categories; Reconstruction and Analysis activities as illustrated in table 1. (Pamelasari & Khusniati 2013). As illustrated in the following table:

**TABLE 1**  
**APPROACHES, METHODS, STRATEGIES REGARDING READING COMPREHENSION**

<b>Approaches &amp; Methods</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Reading Comprehension–Based Approaches</b></li> <li>– <b>The Language –Based Approach</b></li> <li>– <b>The Strategy-Based Approach</b></li> <li>– <b>The Schema-Based Approach</b></li> <li>– <b>The Genre Based Pedagogy (GBP)</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Guessing the meaning of unknown words strategy.</li> <li>– Identifying parts of speech of the word.</li> <li>– Analyzing morphological components of the word.</li> <li>– Making use of any related phrases or relative clauses in context strategy.</li> <li>– Grammar related strategies</li> <li>– Discourse-related strategies</li> <li>– Strategies solving ambiguity by inferencing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Building a Large Recognition Vocabulary.</li> <li>– Building Awareness of Discourse Structure.</li> <li>– Developing Strategic Reading.</li> <li>– Practice reading fluency.</li> <li>– Promoting Extensive Reading.</li> <li>– Promoting Motivation for Reading.</li> <li>– Combining Language and Content Learning.</li> </ul>

**FIGURE 1**  
**R2L CYCLE**



Scaffolding plays an essential role in GBP, especially during the stages of detailed reading, and preparation for the writing process. The scaffolding interaction cycle will be illustrated in figure 2. According to Martin and Rose (2005) the scaffolding cycle allows all learners to answer correctly 100% of times, regardless of their starting points. The three scaffolding stages within the cycle are: prepare, identify, and elaborate.

In other words, regarding the Reconstruction DARTs learners must work with modified or disorganized texts, by filling in missing words and phrases or sequencing a text previously disorganized. While in Analysis DARTs, learners will focus on classify, categorize, label the information presented in an original text in graphs or diagrams. On the other hand, Lunzer et al, (1984) identified the most suitable DARTs for the most common text types as shown in table 3.

**TABLE 2**  
**DARTS CLASSIFICATION**

TYPES OF DARTS	
Reconstruction	Analysis
<b>Text completion:</b> fill in missing words, sentences or phrases.	<b>Underlining or highlighting:</b> Search for target words.
<b>Diagram completion:</b> fill in missing parts	<b>Labelling:</b> Label segments of text
<b>Table completion:</b> fill in missing parts as a table is a diagram.	<b>Segmenting:</b> Cut up units of text.
<b>Ordering text:</b> Sequence or categorize disordered text.	<b>Diagrammatic representation:</b> Construct diagrams
<b>Prediction:</b> Predict the next part of a text.	<b>Tabular representation:</b> Extract information from text, and put it in a table.

Source: Pamelasari and Khusniati, 2013

**TABLE 3**  
**SUGGESTED DARTS TO TEXTS**

TEXT TYPE	SUGGESTED DARTS
<b>NARRATIVE</b>	Underlining, labelling, diagram completion, sociogram, graphs, prediction, sequencing, question generation, washing lines, transformations.
<b>STRUCTURE OR MECHANISM</b>	Underlining, completion, diagram labelling, flow chart, sequencing.
<b>PROCESS</b>	Segmenting, tabulation, Flow diagram, sequencing, prediction, question generation.
<b>PRINCIPLE</b>	Tabulation, hierarchical diagrams, completion.
<b>THEORY</b>	Tabulation, underlining
<b>PROBLEM-SOLUTION</b>	Segmenting, labelling, Completion, prediction, Diagram completion.
<b>HISTORICAL SITUATION</b>	Underlining, listing, flow diagram, diagram completion, Prediction.
<b>CLASSIFICATION</b>	Labelling, tree diagrams, segmenting, card sorts, tabulation
<b>INSTRUCTIONS</b>	Flow diagram, tabulation, Sequencing
<b>THEME</b>	Listing, diagrams

Source: Lunzer et al, 1984

DARTs implementation has many advantages and points to carefully revise. They can be successfully used at the beginning or at the end of a class to introduce a new topic or to conclude one. They can also help teachers to foster learners' reading comprehension level at the same time they become conscious of such process; notwithstanding, the process of preparing learners for the text, can be a time-consuming procedure during the planning, implementation, and even in the feedback stage; there are some other strategies that could be mixed with the use of these Directed Activities to make them more powerful to achieve the teaching/learning goals, even in the revising stage, where is advisable to involve learners in

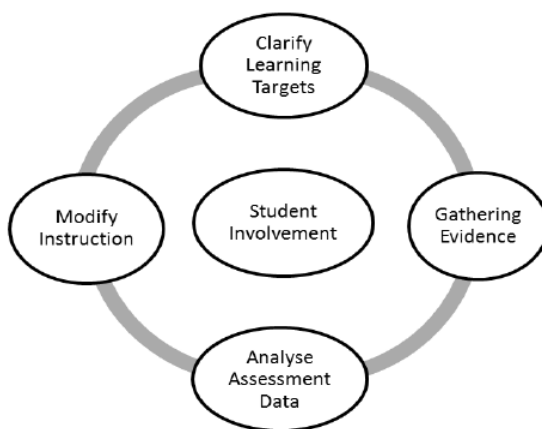
their own assessment process. Regarding reading scaffolding, teachers can track how even the weakest students move forward in the levels of reading comprehension to achieve their own understanding and consciousness of the text meaning.

The exercise of assessing reading, especially, deciding on the best method for assessing has triggered a series of discussions in the academic field. First, is essential to differentiate both systems of collecting information from the teaching-learning process. Assessment is a classroom activity whose aim is to understand and analyze the ongoing students' process in order to adjust, improve or correct the pedagogical praxis for students to enhance their learning process (Habib 2016). While evaluation is just the system through which information is gathered without immediate impact neither on students nor on teachers. This study focuses more on assessment than on evaluation since it aims at revising and suggesting practices that let teachers check their own praxis and adjust them to learners' needs, strengths, and weaknesses.

On the L2 reading field, reading assessment has evolved a lot from evaluation, passing through the scaffolding until the mediation in data collection that allows improving the teaching praxis involving students as it will be seen in the classroom assessment cycle later on. According to Muñoz, et al (2009) there are two types of reading assessment. The traditional and the six alternative ones. The former is testing which consists of grading students' performance. And the latter ones are: 1. Journals, Portfolios, homework, observations, Self and peer-assessment.

It is necessary to keep in mind that there is no single effective method or strategy that meets all the requirements of reading comprehension assessment in all contexts and for all populations. Therefore, it is imperative to make a review of all those techniques for assessing this specific ability and make it clear that each one is subject to several different items such as: level, interests, demographic location, socio-economic context, teaching goals, amongst others. According to Fiene and McMahon (2007), the exercise of evaluating reading comprehension should be carried out through constant monitoring of the subject's ability instead of using standardized tests to obtain these results; that real-time monitoring will allow teachers to adjust their teaching methodology to the subjects' real needs at that exact moment. The following graphic shows the classroom assessment cycle.

**FIGURE 2**  
**CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT CYCLE**



Susan et al, 2005. P, 3.

The most used assessment strategy throughout education history has been the **Quiz or test**, applied mostly to measure learners' levels quantitatively. They are usually applied as post-reading exercises and they can involve all levels of understanding (literal, inferential, and critical). According to Habib (2016) using tests, exams or quizzes in the process of evaluating aims at judging, grading, or ranking summatively students' performance.

Another of the most-known techniques to assess reading comprehension are **standardized tests**. Bales (2018) states that “These assessments focus on identifying the main idea of a passage, understanding vocabulary in context, making inferences, and identifying the author’s purpose”. Grabe (2008) argues that forms of assessment depend on the purpose they pursue; standardized tests are also known as: proficiency, achievement, placement, and diagnostic ones. (p.2)

Some other tools for assessing reading are Directed Activities Related to Texts (**DARTS**), as was explained earlier in this paper. In other words, they are used to graphically represent the information presented in a text. These activities must be chosen depending on texts’ genres, because of their structures (Pamelasari y Khusniati 2013).

Finally, one of the techniques that gather more data from the learners is the text reconstruction. As stated by Habib (2016) Reading comprehension must be seen as the process in which the reader is able to accurately reconstruct the text message with his/her own words. This strategy helps teachers to know more about learners since answers are not offered; furthermore, the risk of random marking is avoided.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The purpose of this literature revision is to identify and analyze the studies that have been carried out in the area of L2 reading in EFL tertiary education. L2 Reading in EFL contexts has been widely investigated. However, little is still known about the development of L2 reading in EFL contexts within tertiary education. The books (articles and chapters) revised here were collected from online data bases. The adepts presented below have developed different strategies to improve learners’ reading comprehension in EFL contexts, among them are: Song (1998), Seng and Hashim (2006), Phakiti (2006), Hamra and Syatriana (2012), Peart (2017). For a better understanding of this information, these studies were classified into two different categories, the ones that are descriptive in nature and those that are interventionist, while drawing a timeline that clarifies through history how these investigations took place in the area.

The research on L2 reading in EFL contexts within tertiary education has been led by Song (1998), who investigated about Teaching Reading Strategies in an ongoing EFL University Reading Classroom, its objective was to prove the applicability and effectiveness of Palincsar and Brown’s approach (1984) in a tertiary EFL reading course. which amidst its more significant results, In this study the less able readers were the most benefitted, it suggests that prior to the training low and intermediate learners might not be aware of reading strategies types and application. Regarding the research conclusions, the author suggests that in the EFL field, especially for adults, must contain explicit and direct strategy teaching. He also concluded that students’ ability to grasp main idea and making inferences was highly improved. They finally concluded that these strategies could help EFL university learners to enhance their reading comprehension skill. Based on the lack of L2 reading research in tertiary education there is an imminent need to prove the effectiveness of existent theories, approaches, and literature in this University context.

Another study was carried out by Seng and Hashim (2006) about The Use of L1 in L2 Reading Comprehension among Tertiary ESL Learners, it aimed at looking for reasons why the L1 is used when comprehending texts in L2, they found that L1 was used to support their L2 understanding, which they consider also supports Vygotsky’s theory about verbalization, which emphasizes on the need to use the inner speech to gain control of the situation or task. This study was carried out with four undergraduates from second semester of a Bachelor in Education. They were given training in thinking aloud prior to data collection stage; after the training they worked in groups where they were asked to verbalize their thoughts while reading. The authors reached to the conclusion that learners switched from L1 to L2 in a fluid manner as they read and verbalized their thoughts. However, there was a recurrent tendency to resort to L1 when they had language difficulties in the L2.

Later on during 2012, Hamra and Syatriana’s research was developed at the languages and literature faculty for University EFL students in Indonesia. The objective was to design a teaching reading model while implementing the Team-Based learning. A needs’ analysis was carried out to know learners’ reading proficiency, after that they designed a reading-Teaching model; then instructional material was applied, and

the process was evaluated formative and summatively. This study had many significant results, as their three stages teaching model called MTR, which means Model of Teaching Reading and its effectiveness in promoting learning and class interactions in the form of discussion. This research also made an important contribution for further studies about the excellent disposition of students towards small group discussions, actively participating and showing a particular interest in teaching/learning strategies.

Phakiti (2006) who researched about The Theoretical and Pedagogical issues in ESL/EFL Teaching of Strategic Reading, whose aim was providing theoretical and practical suggestions for EFL/ESL teachers when teaching strategic reading; it stands for the complex process of reading in L2, however they emphasize on the importance of feedback during this process, not only to assist their reading processes but to help them mastering learners' strategic reading comprehension. One of the most significant results was that feedback must improve learners' quality of self-monitoring within the language classroom. To conclude their study, the understanding of contexts when applying a research its essential, that is the reason why Phakiti (2006, p. 40) concludes his research affirming that there isn't perfect method to teach, since there is no possibility a method can fits all contexts, due to each uniqueness.

With a broader view on the field of reading strategies, Peart (2017), in her article entitled L2 Reading: Strategies and gender Preferences in the Foreign Language Classroom.

This is an extensive study that supports explicit reading comprehension instruction. she aimed at discussing the current and emerging trends on the use of specific reading strategies as they belong to gender biases, and she provided pedagogical recommendations to address their specific needs and interests; at the end of the study, she points out some essential suggestions as the one that trainings should last the whole semester for learners to become more conscious of strategies implementation. She also suggested the use of self and peer-assessment during the process. Among the most significant results, teachers must track learners progress and evaluate frequently to make the necessary adjustments to improve the teaching reading comprehension. According to this study conclusions, females use to use more reading strategies than men; even more in problem-solving and supporting strategies. Besides, females do not mind the time they last in using time-consuming strategies but men do. By the other hand, regarding school administrators and instructors, they must plan and design more reading comprehension workshops to help learners improving their ability.

Considering what has been investigated about L2 Reading in EFL university contexts, it is possible to affirm that much more needs to be studied in the field yet. However, it would be essential to recall the significant items presented and explained above, as the one that emphasizes on the importance to prove different strategies based on the learners' contexts and needs, since there is not a single method or strategy that fits all contexts, due to setting's particularities; or the descriptive studies above that provide detailed information about what is going on so far in the field; another significant issue is the fact that although many methods, approaches and strategies have been tried in the academic field as was described before, little is still known about their effectiveness in tertiary education and further interventionist research should be carried out, centered specially, on reading strategies effectiveness in EFL university contexts.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This section aims at describing the type of research taking place, then the techniques used to gather the data, besides the participant and the context under study. This chapter also aims at presenting the route to answer the research question: How is L2 reading taught and evaluated at tertiary education's EFL courses?

Qualitative research describes as a flexible procedure in which the researcher's perspective counts and many external factors can influence on the results. According to Merriam and Clark (2006) this research paradigm requires data collection tools that take into account meaning when collecting and analyzing the data. On the other hand, according to Creswell (2014) argues that qualitative research is for understanding the social or human problems named by communities or individuals. This data is collected from the individuals' environment and its analysis goes from particular to general items found.

This study will be outlined as a case study. According to Cohen, *et al* (2007), case studies are highly sensitive to context, since it serves as a reference for both effects and causes. This type of study consists of using a case or phenomenon to research about, within a small group or with few subjects involved.

More specifically in the educational field, Yin (2003) supports that case study designs seek to:

1. Explain and describe the causes of real-life events within a particular group.
2. Describe the intervention and the surroundings where it occurred. The intention is to analyze the different dimensions the research altered. The previous description corresponds to the action research case study.
3. Evaluate a particular case, such as the impact of the implementation on a new curriculum at a school.

This research will be set out as a case study due to its type of population and the setting where it will take place; the subjects under study will be observed, and the analysis from that observation process will be part of the data gathered. This case study as such will be merely descriptive; it means that any detail, result or event found that results important for the current research must be described and explained in-depth. Descriptive case studies are useful to explain the incidence of a phenomenon in a real context; it can be identified by questions as: What, who, where, How many or How much (Yin, 2009). Besides, regarding case studies; there are two different types; multiple and single ones. This study will be outlined as a Single-case study. According to Cohen and Manion (2007) Single case studies can be defined as a study that takes place in a limited setting like a child, a house, a neighborhood, a class, a Community or a University, the subjects are usually observed in their real environments to explain the phenomena rather than just presenting theory about it.

This study will take place at a private middle-class university in the city of Sincelejo-Sucre, which offers a wide variety of professional careers, also some technical and technological programs, at tertiary education. This institution offers a mandatory three-level EFL course requirement (English I, English II, and English III), in which learners from all careers must be enrolled before the completion of their academic process. After these basic levels, there are other three advanced levels, which students can take later on, or validate through a proficiency English test or developed in an intensive course at the languages center. This study focuses on the three mandatory courses (English I, II and III).

The course follows a skill-based approach. Each course consists of 48 hours, which are developed in a weekly three- hour class. It is distributed in 6 units, which are divided into 4 lessons (A, B, C, D), corresponding to the main skills Grammar, Vocabulary, Speaking, and Reading. One unit is developed in 6 hours of class, so each lesson corresponds to 1.5 hours per unit, for a total of 9 hours per lesson per semester.

Three teachers (a teacher from each English course) were chosen to participate in the study. The sample was taken to have a reference of what happens in the normal development of English classes through these mandatory courses.

The techniques used to collect the data from the context under study were: Non-participant observations, semi-structured interviews, surveys, and document analysis. According to Sharan and Merriam (2016, p. 26) "Humans are best suited for this task, especially because interviewing, observing, and analyzing are activities central to qualitative research". Furthermore, considering this relevant quote, each instrument chosen answers to a particular objective within this study.

According to Cohen, *et al* (2007, p. 258) there are two types of observations, *the participant observation*, in which observer is part of the group observed, performing the same activities, in some cases participants think this person is, somehow, part of the group. While in the other, *non-participant observation*, the observer is almost invisible to the group or participants under study. For instance, in a classroom this non-participant observer is usually sat at the back or observing the recordings out of the class; the idea is not influence on students' performance or not causing anything that could change their normal behavior. Regarding the characteristics mentioned above, the latter was chosen for the current study. Field notes were used to delimit the required information acquired from this stage. The type of observation chosen for this project is non-participant. A thematic unit per teacher was observed to analyze the role of reading and the way it is taught and evaluated in the target courses.



According to Cohen, *et al* (2007, p. 349) “Qualitative interview...enables respondents to project their own ways of defining the world”. This quote seeks to show the flexibility of qualitative interviews, whose ultimate goal is collecting the participants insights free of limits or pressure. Along this study, the interviews objective is to obtain teachers’ insights about teaching and assessing L2 reading practice within their English classes at tertiary education.

Interviews enable researchers to explore phenomena that are not evident within a context, as well as being interactive, allowing them to find additional information as deeply into a topic as the interviewee allows it. They are characterized to be flexible instead of rigorous. (Mackey and Gass, 2005). The most-known types of interviews are the unstructured, semi-structured, and structured ones. *The unstructured interview* is the less polite type since usually, it does not have pre-established questions but a defined objective, and it aims at building rapport with the interviewee since it is mostly used with sensitive topics. According to Jamshed (2014) “...unstructured interview resembles a conversation more than an interview and is always thought to be a “controlled conversation,” which is skewed towards the interests of the interviewer”. The second type is *the semi-structured*, it is mostly a guided conversation between the researcher and participants. Although it keeps a structure, it is flexible, thus the researcher does not have to worry of applying various interviews since this one can be guided to obtain all the extra details that emerge from participants’ answers and that are considered important for the data analysis. Jamshed (2014) claims that interviews can be applied to a person or a to a community. They are conducted once only and generally cover about 30 minutes”. Finally, the third type is *the structured one*, it is the most rigid since it follows in detail a pre-established set of questions and it does not leave space for exploring extra details that emerge from the interviewee answers. Hannan (2007, p. 2) points out that the simplest form of a structured interview is almost like an oral questionnaire used to obtain the closest answers to the objectives. Regarding the characteristics of this study, three semi-structured interviews were carried out to collect data, since it looks for following a pre-established set of questions while exploring for extra details which emerge from participants’ answers that can be also essential in the field of qualitative data analysis.

Brown (2001) defined surveys as the written format in which respondents have to choose or write their answers. They are a useful tool for researchers to gather information from the participants as beliefs, insights from themselves or from the classroom practices; information that usually cannot be collected in the research data per se. The current research will use surveys in the form of questionnaires, although surveys mainly belong to quantitative research approaches, this technique will be used to gather information from the students who couldn’t be reached through the interviews. These surveys will provide with data on perceptions and opinions from a large group of participants allowing the researcher to find out information that participants can report about the reading classes. Taking into account the learners’ English level, and avoiding language barriers to obtain reliable, clear and concise data, the surveys will be applied in Spanish. The type of survey applied in this study was the structure-close one, which provides with a set of possible answers since they do not allow respondents to answer in the way they see fit, as it is explained by Mackey & Gass (2005) “close-item questionnaires typically involve a greater uniformity of measurement and therefore greater reliability.” This leads to an easier way of analyzing the data and henceforth in a less unexpected and subjective information.

The documentary analysis is defined by Yin (2003, p, 85) as an essential tool to almost all case studies; there are many types of documents which can be the sources of important literal data collection such as: letters, agendas, among others. Throughout this study, the lesson plans known at the institution as *plan de aula* and the texts provided in classes by professors will be revised and analyzed in order to obtain information about the text genres they use most, and to show their intention. According to Yin (2003, p. 85), “...no single source has a complete advantage over all the others. In fact, the various sources are highly complementary, and a good case study will therefore want to use as many sources as possible” Consequently, in addition to observations and interviews, in this qualitative study the documentary analysis will be another data collection tool to be used. The documents collected to gather the data were: reading texts used in the classes, the diagnostic test applied by the university to know students’ starting level, and teachers’ English lesson plans.

## Data Analysis

This chapter aims at exposing the analysis of all data collected in this study, in order to answer the leading research question and objectives. Flick (2014) describes the process of data analysis as “the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it” (p. 5). In this study, the results and analysis lie on the **triangulation** of the different data collection sources (class observation, teacher’s interview, students’ surveys, and documents analysis) in order to provide a more objective answer to the research question.

The information gathered was examined and organized into five macro-categories, as suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), who consider categories as main excerpts from the data obtained in order to carry out a deep and organized analysis. Each macro category was subdivided into micro categories to facilitate the research analysis.

### *Reading Role at Tertiary Education*

This first category refers to the importance provided by teachers and administrators to the teaching of the reading skill, based on teachers’ pedagogical practices and what they and administrators verbalize about the importance of reading in the target context.

### *Teacher’s Pedagogical Practices for Teaching L2 Reading*

The second category is related to teachers’ pedagogical actions in EFL courses to teach reading comprehension. The sub-categories related to this macro-category were organized into the three class stages teachers follow in their EFL classes:

- *Before-reading the text*
- *While reading*
- *After Reading*

### *Teacher’s L2 Reading Assessment Practices*

The third category involves all activities, exercises, tasks, and strategies that are carried out by teachers from the three contexts while assessing students’ reading comprehension. The sub-categories attached to this one are:

- *Assessment types*
- *Post reading questions*
- *Types of questions*
- *Quizzes*

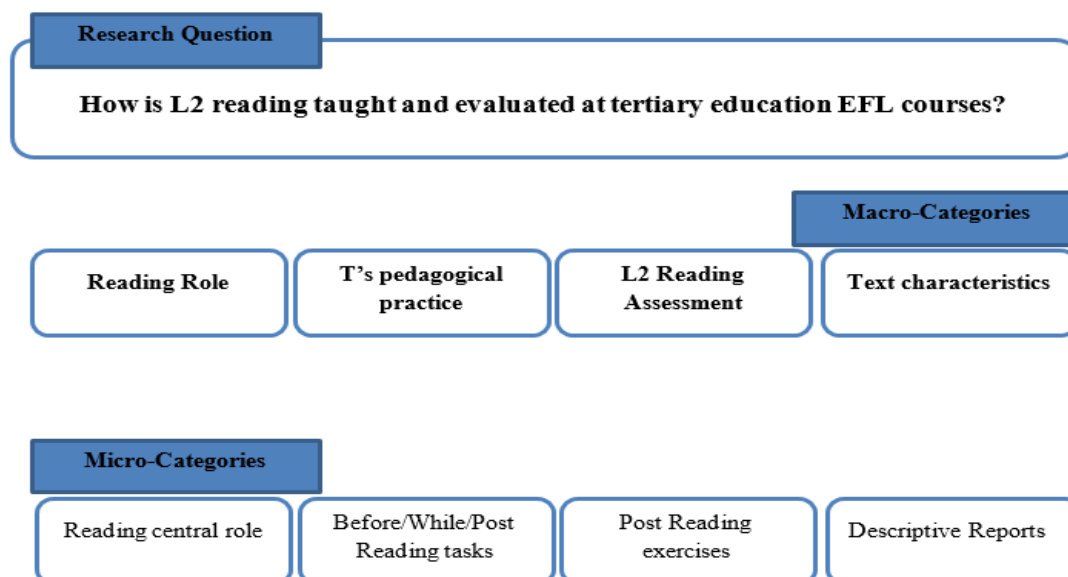
### *Text Characteristics*

This category refers to the type of texts teachers use to teach and evaluate reading comprehension in the target context. The sub-categories related to this category are:

- *Types of Texts*
- *Descriptive Reports*
- *Linguistic Characteristics of Texts*

The categories and subcategories of this study are summarized in figure 3.

**FIGURE 3  
CATEGORIES OF THE STUDY**



*Source: Own elaboration*

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents and discusses the results found in the current study, aiming at answering the question: How is L2 taught and evaluated at tertiary education EFL courses? For a better comprehension, the results obtained in each category will be presented, evidenced and discussed.

### Reading Role at Tertiary Education

According to teachers, reading is an important skill, and it is necessary to be taught. This is demonstrated in the following excerpts taken from teachers' interviews.

*Context 2 Interview. Example [1]*

“Si claro que lo considero necesario porque la lectura forma parte de las cuatro habilidades comunicativas del idioma, y es importante que el estudiante aprenda a leer”.

Likewise, administrators are quite interested in developing this skill throughout the curriculum, as evidenced in the following excerpts:

*Context 1 Interview. Example [2]*

“y ese objetivo se está buscando desde 2016 que comencé a trabajar allá, lo que buscan que los docentes de otras asignaturas que pongan a los chicos a leer este tipo de textos así sea por más mínimo que sea, así sea acompañado de un traductor, pero incluir el inglés en todas las asignaturas, se habla de transversalidad, entonces, el objetivo está... porque se entiende que la universidad les está exigiendo a esos docentes de que lo hagan”.

However, data taken from class observations evidences a dichotomy between what teachers verbalize in the interviews and what they actually do in their classes. As mentioned before, classes at tertiary education EFL courses follow a skill-based pattern in which units are divided in four lessons (A, B, C, and

D), so each skill is taught separately, as follows: Grammar, Vocabulary, Speaking, and Reading/Writing. It was observed that a considerable part of instructional time in every lesson is devoted to grammar and vocabulary development, which demonstrates the centrality of these skills in the EFL courses at tertiary education. Even in the lessons devoted to the development of the reading skill (lesson D), teachers use the text as an excuse to reinforce the grammatical pattern of the unit, as confirmed in the following excerpts from class observation and in the one from teachers' interview (See excerpts 3, 4, and 5).

*Context 1 Observation. Example [3]*

“La idea es hacer una lectura, que tiene un poco de relación con el contexto que estamos trabajando en esta unidad, cierto?...lo que te *gusta like to*, quieres *want to*, lo que necesitas: *need to* y lo que debes o tienes que hacer, lo que tienes que vestir *have to*”

*Context 2 Observation. Example [4]*

“So guys, lets' start with before the reading, **antes de la lectura**, nos vamos a este temita que está por aquí. Estos “indirect **objects pronoun**”.

*Context 3 Interview. Example [5]*

“...si nos referimos más que todo a las habilidades que desarrollo en la clase sería más que todo la parte gramatical, el uso de las oraciones en un contexto dado para que ellos se puedan enfrentar a un texto dado ya sea que se encuentre en la plataforma que ellos están utilizando para realizar las actividades que es la plataforma de Cambridge, y también los ejercicios que nosotros realizamos en clase...”

This phenomenon may be due to several reasons. One may be the institutional requirement of developing the language skills across the curriculum, which might have been interpreted by teachers as the need to develop communication skills, for which students need to develop grammatical and vocabulary knowledge, as supported by Tomlinson et al, (2001) who manifests that “reading sections often start with vocabulary activities related to the texts and many reading units feature short texts used mainly for teaching grammar”. Another reason could be the reliance on a coursebook for the development of the classes in these courses, and the distribution of the units in the coursebooks. Each unit starts with the identification of the vocabulary and grammatical patterns that will be developed, as illustrated in figure 4.

**FIGURE 4**  
**BOOK SKILLS ORGANIZATION**



Source: Touchstone 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

Reliance on books to develop the curriculum is a very common practice in ELT. However, coursebooks should not be considered the curriculum unique source since there is a need to offer and receive a great variety of authors, sources, forms, structures in order that the knowledge can be diversified and reliable which produces in the learner the desire to contrast, discuss, and create their own based on the knowledge of all the resources they possess by observing different patterns. This is supported by Richards (1993), who affirms that the tight use of coursebooks as the unique source of materials can unqualify teachers.

Notwithstanding, administrators are looking for a wide instruction on reading skills at all levels, there are some issues that must be considered to improve their plan. For instance, the number of hours devoted in each course to develop this skill. This dynamic contrasts with Grabe's (2009) position, who stands that reading fluency is not developed in a short time, extensive practice must be carried out as repeated reading texts. Also, it can be inferred from data that, contrary to what teachers expressed, the role of reading in tertiary education is not central, and it has been relegated to a second place after grammar and vocabulary.

### *Teachers' Pedagogical Practices*

Data evidences that the teachers in the target context divide the reading classes in three different sections: Before reading, while reading and post reading. In each of the abovementioned class sections, they displayed different teaching reading strategies. According to the book: *Improving EFL Teaching Methodology*, active methodologies are a great alternative to motivate students, although are a demanding strategy for teachers, since they feel more involved in the class and that their interests and needs are taken into account. Restrepo (2022, p.30).

#### *Before Reading*

During the pre-reading section, some **contextualization** activities were identified.

Teachers also try to activate students' previous knowledge about the content by reading the text title and reminding them about related vocabulary and grammar studied in previous lessons. However, this anticipation concentrates on grammar and vocabulary, as evidenced in excerpt 8.

#### *While Reading*

During the second-class section, while-reading, teachers fostered reading and comprehension of the text. One of the strategies implemented by teachers to achieve this goal was reading aloud the whole text or parts of it while fostering learners' mental reading or repetition.

“Lives in, ok so where lives in, de pronto where no tanto porque tú sabes que where es parte de la pregunta, dónde, bueno si donde pregunta por lugar, entonces tenemos que buscar lugar, ¿pero lugar de qué? De lives in, busquemos el verbo en el texto, los que están en la presentación pueden irse ellos solitos”

#### *Post Reading*

Finally, during the after/post-reading section, teachers' strategies point at wrapping up the content of the text and confirming comprehension. One of these strategies is summarizing the main idea of the whole text.

#### *Context 3. Observation.*

“So, this is like telling you the reasons for admiring Laura, why the writer of this text admires Laura, este texto te está dando las diferentes cualidades que hacen que la persona que lo escribió admire a su prima Laura ”

At this stage, teachers also ask post-reading questions for assessing comprehension. Most of these questions are mainly literal type; however, this category will be described and discussed in detail in the section related to assessment practices.

Based on the abovementioned results, class stages at tertiary education are compatible with Batista and Ballesteros' (2015) proposal of an effective curriculum implemented in three class moments. Besides, teachers' actions in the first-class stage resemble the first step of the Genre-Based cycle for teaching reading, which starts by a contextualization step before a detailed reading of the text under study. This contextualization step is quite important in the process of teaching reading in order to familiarize learners with the text in their first encounter by modelling, activating previous knowledge, among others (Moss, 2016). However, based on the data collected, it is not frequently developed in these EFL courses, since not all the participant teachers apply this strategy in their classes, as was demonstrated above. Besides, there is another essential step in the before reading stage, as suggested in the Universidad del Norte's Genre Based Pedagogical reading cycle, which was not widely used applied by the tertiary education participant teachers, observed which is the identification of text's structure and purpose second step in UniNorte's reading cycle, which consists of socializing text anticipating text's genre, its schematic structure and purpose, and the main idea of every stage. its linguistic features and the identification of subtitles, macro-theme, hyper-theme, macro-new, hyper-new, among other text characteristics. (Moss 2016).

Regarding reading strategies, it is possible to state that teachers foster the use of a few reading strategies. However, this cannot be conceived as a planned process within the curriculum, since not all the teachers ask for the use of strategies in their classes. Furthermore, strategy instruction is another issue that should be considered in this institution, because teachers assume the use of reading strategies, but they do not invest time for teaching them.

Regarding the while reading stage, some of the pedagogical practices applied by teachers are compatible with scaffolding strategies. Activities such as translation into L1, modeling before doing, and questioning are suitable for scaffolding students' L2 learning (Walqui, 2008). Likewise, asking questions while reading is coherent with the scaffolding interaction cycle proposed by Martin and Rose (2005 p, 48), in which the types of questions asked "let all learners to answer correctly 100% of times, regardless of their starting points". However, regarding the data in the different contexts, there is a predominance of literal question types with an evident absence of inferential, and critical questions. According to Rose (2016, p. 6), reading tasks should point at 4 different levels: decoding, literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, and interpretive comprehension (critical). Thus, the evidence gathered in this study contravenes with Rose's (2016) conception of reading tasks, since he establishes that these four levels of comprehension and levels of language in context must be taught sequentially.

Furthermore, according to PISA (2018), achieving higher levels of comprehension is the aim of reading literacy, since "higher levels of reading literacy allow people to contribute to society and literate people have greater access to employment, emancipation, and empowerment". Therefore, tertiary education EFL courses need to place a stronger emphasis on scaffolding students' reading at different comprehension levels in order to track their process and obtain better results with the help of an experienced person (teacher) on the area as stated by Rose (2016).

Likewise, in both while and post reading stages, teachers missed scaffolding on monitoring and evaluating text comprehension, which could be done through the *Representation of text ideas*, a step suggested in the pedagogical reading cycle proposed by Moss (2016). Therefore, all comprehension levels must be worked within a sequence not in isolated sessions.

It is evident that teachers in the target context missed a consistent and planned scaffolding to foster different levels of reading comprehension and recognition of main characteristics of the texts for further independent reading. It would be important to bring out a methodology for teaching reading, for example, a Genre Based Pedagogy, in order to illuminate the process of teaching/learning reading in the classroom, the selection of appropriate reading materials for the levels, the scaffolding needed to ensure comprehension, and the strategies that can be used to track and assess learners' progress in the three reading comprehension levels proposed by PISA (2018).

However, it is necessary to clarify that this study was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic situation, which forced teachers to embark on a virtual/remote teaching modality, thus changing abruptly the conventional face-to face style of these reading classes. This posed a challenge for them because they had to adapt their conventional methodology to one that allowed them to finish the semester successfully. Since

teachers and students were not sufficiently prepared for the change, this could have affected the development of the classes, evidenced in less students' participation and shorter time for developing the reading unit, among others.

#### *Teacher's L2 Reading Assessment Practices*

Data revealed that the types of assessment carried out in the target context are mostly summative assessment practices, specifically post-reading questions at the end of the reading process, and a reading test at the end of the unit.

#### *Post Reading Questions*

As mentioned above, every reading ends with a set of questions to evaluate students' comprehension of the text. Data reveals that most of these post-reading questions were literal that means, assessing comprehension at the surface of the text. Very few questions assessed inferential comprehension, and none of them tested critical reading. Question types varied among multiple selection, true-false and filling gaps.

Afterwards, how different is each one from the other and what each one means is explained; and finally, at the end of the text, despite of explaining many differences among each event, the author uses a macro-new to synthesize the similarities they all have. It uses a constitutive language, although there is a light use of nominal groups.

In this vein, the text used in Context 3 is also a descriptive report. Subdivided into classification and description stages as the two ones described above; this particular text has four phases: Laura's background information, Laura as a dancer, Laura as a photographer, and the evaluative perspective. The topic of the text is related to the content words that stand out in it more than once. For instance: dancer, her dance school, dancing, photography at University, photographer, taken lots of photos, among other synonyms. According to the linguistic characteristics; In spite of the fact that the text channel is written, there is a non-specialized language (informal), it can be seen in the contractions used. It uses a simple language which should minimize comprehension problems in students; in addition to this text is explicit and constitutive; - it means that all the information learners need to understand the text is in it, since there is no use of exophoric references.

Based on the evidence gathered, teachers should be extra careful with the type of texts they are choosing for their reading classes (non-authentic texts). On the one hand, this selection of texts is currently supported on the fact that teachers believe their students are not prepared enough to manage the complex language contained in authentic and academic texts. They consider their students have a very low proficiency level that would not allow them to handle the complex structures of these texts. On the other hand, teachers must have a complete understanding about text characteristics they assign to read and the methodology for teaching them to ensure the development of the reading comprehension. These learners are university students, who will be exposed to complex texts during their professional careers, which are most of the time macrogenres (Rose & Martin, 2012); that is the reason why teachers should expose them to these types of texts types in order to prepare them beforehand for the academic authentic texts in English they will face in their specific areas. Therefore, teachers must master learners with higher reading comprehension levels for them to be able to achieve the text communicative purposes.

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