

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA

READING ABILITY OF BRAZILIAN UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA
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POR

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sob a orientação do
Professor Hilário I. Bohn

Dissertação para a obtenção do grau de Mestre em Letras
- Opção Inglês e Literatura Correspondente.

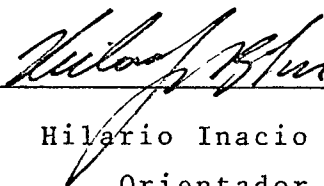
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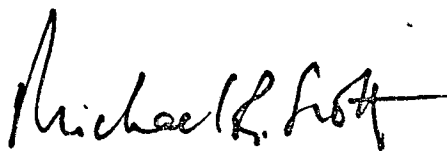


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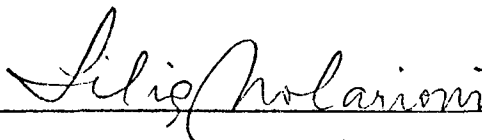
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Lilia Maria de Oliveira Carioni

A Wilians de Souza, meu marido, pelo
incentivo e ajuda constantes.

A Fernando Corrêa Dias de Souza,
meu filho.

À minha família e, muito especialmente,
ã Amélia - minha mãe - e Maria Amélia -
minha irmã - as segundas mães do Fernando.

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RESUMO

O objetivo da presente dissertação é determinar a competência em leitura em língua materna, medida através de habilidades selecionadas, de alunos do primeiro ano da universidade brasileira.

Os resultados obtidos através da aplicação de testes possibilitam à pesquisadora estabelecer as possíveis implicações da competência lingüística em língua materna no ensino de línguas estrangeiras para fins de leitura. Mais especificamente, a análise dos resultados mostra ampla variações, inter e intra grupos, no desempenho das habilidades testadas.

São apresentadas conclusões e diversas sugestões para pesquisas futuras.

ABSTRACT

The object of the present study is to determine mother tongue reading competence, as measured by abilities, of first year Brazilian university students.

The results obtained from the applications of the tests enable the researcher to establish possible implications of linguistic competence in the mother tongue for the teaching of foreign languages for reading purposes. More specifically the analysis of the results show wide inter and intra group variations in performance in the abilities tested.

Conclusions are presented and several recommendations for further research are suggested.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 - The Problem

One of the issues of foreign language teaching has been the problem of transfer. How much of the training in and acquisition of the mother tongue can be directly transferred to foreign language learning? In a narrower sense, to what degree can the reading skills in the mother tongue be immediately used in reading the foreign language? This dissertation will try to assess mother tongue Reading abilities of Brazilian first-year university students and relate the results of this assessment to the questions asked.

This main problem raises several sub-problems. We will need a clear definition of the reading process, and we must attempt to factorize the comprehension construct so that certain factors can be objectively assessed in terms of the students' competence.

Assessment is by itself a complex area in reading. We make the assumption here that, in spite of the difficulties, basic statements on the acquisition of particular reading abilities can be made.

1.2 - Justifying the Work

In a recent regional and national seminar, it was stated that students in courses of English for Academic Purposes generally have little time to devote to the study of English. They have at best a rudimentary knowledge of the language, and yet have an immediate need to understand texts in their fields of study. Nowadays, the need of university students to be able to extract information from foreign language texts in their academic work cannot be denied. Surveys and needs analyses carried out accross the country clearly demonstrate this fact. Moreover, students enter the University with little or no skill in performing such a task. Secondary teaching is a long way from preparing students to face their university studies and many times the students' academic performance will depend heavily on their ability to look for information which is found in recent foreign language publications. The result is what we often see in university libraries: frustrated students, all by themselves, struggling against a piece of written language in an effort to assimilate the author's ideas, without the benefit of an ESP teacher, whose role would be to develop efficient strategies to approach foreign language texts.

Reading in a foreign language has long ceased to be a necessity only for students of specific areas such as language and literature. Nowadays students from almost every academic field need access to information conveyed in a foreign language.

A generally observed opinion among university teachers is that students are poor mother tongue readers and in this respect we assume that such "lack of ability" is due to three main factors: 1. lack of ability in reading; 2. lack of pertinent reading strategies; 3. lack of knowledge of the subject matter, as well as the ability "to contextualize" the reading material within the reader's experiential background.

This dissertation will consider whether given reading abilities are present in the student's mother tongue, and if so, how these skills can be transferred to the learning of foreign language reading.

Research in the field of language teaching is relevant, since the definition of the problem and attempts to detect its causes may be first steps towards its solution. In this respect, perhaps the poor performance of our students/readers in a foreign language is not due merely to the absence of specific foreign language knowledge but rather to a more complex interaction of factors such as the lack of reading strategies, an inadequate knowledge of the subject matter, poor overall grammatical knowledge, lack of knowledge of the cohesive devices of discourse in the mother tongue etc.

The study developed in this dissertation aims not only at providing answers to such questions, but also at fostering an awareness among teachers interested in the subject.

The more we got involved in our study, talking to teachers and gathering different opinions based on their professional experience, the more we got motivated by it. We

realized, for example, that teachers are busy people who usually do not have enough time available to conduct careful, pertinent research. One positive aspect of the present study is its value as an example of what can be done by any teacher, or group of teachers, interested in knowing more about their work, and what to expect from the students, as well as what skills should be developed in them.

Our students, the professionals-to-be of tomorrow, need help in overcoming specific reading difficulties. Our role, as teachers and researchers, is to search for answers that will facilitate the process.

1.3 - Limitations of the Study

From the very beginning of this study and throughout its development, we tried to maintain a very open-minded attitude in terms of the theoretical difficulties of defining the learning process in the teaching of foreign language reading, in the methodology and in the interpretation of the results. Our enthusiasm towards the work, however, did not keep us from being honest enough to admit its possible limitations.

For example, the population tested is restricted to the first semester of 1981. Maybe a study carried out over a longer period would provide researchers with information not available to us. Also, we had no control over the population, insofar as the students' age, socio-economic level, educational background, parents' level of education, etc., were concerned.

The sample was taken from among entering university freshmen from all sorts of backgrounds, in much the same way that teachers must face their new students.

We dealt with whomever needed help in coping with foreign language texts, so we are aware of the uncontrolled variables such as age, experience, intellectual level, socio-economic factors, schooling, etc. that might change the results of a study like ours.

The range of the abilities tested was also limited. We had to start from something and this is what we refer to as a limited range of abilities. Other researchers, doing similar work, would probably choose to assess a different set of abilities or even give a different focus to their work.

One's focus on the assessment may itself in some way contradict the whole issue of the present work. Theoretically, reading is viewed as a psycholinguistic guessing-game. Based on the reasons presented in the section on Assessment, however, in our testing instrument the reading comprehension construct has been factorized.

Moreover, the very design of the instrument of assessment may create severe restrictions in terms of the study's validity and reliability. Nevertheless, while on one hand standardized tests could possibly solve the immediate problems of validity and reliability, on the other, they would not suit our specific purposes and needs.

A further limitation could be detected in the

analysis of the results since our attention was mainly focused on the observation of the performance of the various groups of students tested, as well as in the inter-group relationships. However, we present no data concerning the performance of particular students/testees.

Finally, the data and the discussions here presented were not submitted to any special treatment for statistical significance.

In short, we hope not to be misunderstood in so far as the nature of our work is concerned. Although it was carried out with maximum effort and seriousness, we are conscious of its possible shortcomings imposed by its author's own limited nature.

CHAPTER II

THE READING PROCESS

In this section we will discuss the reading process. First reading will be viewed in its mechanistic stage, typical of the beginning reader, and then we will consider its psycholinguistic interaction, which is characteristic of the fluent reader. Finally reading is equated with comprehension.

2.1 - Distinction between learning to read and fluent reading

Reading is just one of the various skills human beings are capable of acquiring in life. Walking, speaking manual dexterity and accurate visual perception, are just a few of the others. Human beings are born with an inner propensity for acquiring and mastering these skills. As any other human skill, reading is not learned and mastered at once, but rather, it obeys a natural pace. This is so, because every living organism has to undergo a certain maturational process. In Lenneberg's view, "maturation may be characterized as a sequence of states. At each state, the growing organism is capable of accepting some specific input: this it breaks down and resynthesizes in such a way that it makes itself develop to a new state. This new state makes the organism sensitive to new and different types of input, whose acceptance transforms

it into yet a further state, which opens the way to still different inputs and so on" (1970:18-20).

The "resynthesis" process mentioned by Lenneberg could be equated to Piaget's notion of equilibrium which "implies a balance, a harmonious adjustment between at least two factors: the person's mental actions (the cognitive structures) and his environment. Although the environment may disturb the equilibrium, the individual can perform mental actions to restore the balance" (Wright, 1969:14).

Having such a paradigm, it is easy to understand why what seems extremely difficult for a beginner presents no problem for a skilled reader. In fact, "life seems particularly hard for the beginning reader - so many necessary things are difficult for him at the outset that will be easier when his reading skills develop" (Smith, 1978:3).

What could be, then, such "necessary things" which are mentioned by Smith?

When a child starts learning to read, his initial task is to find out equivalences. He has already mastered a system of oral signals for communicating in a meaningful fashion with other people. The child can make himself understood as well as understand others for his specific needs. He already has a good knowledge of the complex structure of language. "While there are some features of this system which he has not yet mastered by the age of five or six, he can still communicate effectively with both his peers and adults" (Lenneberg, 1967:39). Even unconsciously, the child knows that the verbal configurations he hears spoken to

him stand for given meanings, and that the words he systematically puts together in order to form utterances stand for ideas. The child's task when learning to read is to discover that the spoken language may be represented graphically. "It seems unlikely that in learning to read, a child acquires meanings, new syntax or a new morphology. Rather, the problem can be viewed as the learning of an alternate representational scheme for an existing system" (Gunderson, 1970:39).

During the process of learning to read, the beginner has to pay attention to the distinctive features of letters (eg. b, d; p,q); he must learn to distinguish one word from another, as, for example, "hat" and "rat", in which only the initial phonemes are responsible for indicating two different meanings. For beginners, this sort of task may be rather difficult while reading a complete construction such as "The cat caught the rat". A skilled reader, relying on his ability to distinguish "cat" from "rat", as well as on his previous experience, would quickly pick up the information of a "rat being caught by the cat".

But exactly how does the reader get the meaning of what he reads?

It is widely accepted that meaning is attained after letter and word recognition is accomplished (cf., Guthrie, 1981:173-7). This may be true for beginners who have to rely mostly on the printed material while reading. They are still breaking the written code; every word, or even every syllable, may present a surprise either in its written form or in the concept which is expressed in it. For example, when a

Brazilian child reads the syllable "ca", he would possibly associate it with "cachorro" or "cama" or "casa", since those words are probably quite common to him. When faced with "camarada", however, his initial task is to sound out every syllable; then, he will try to read it at once. Only when he can pronounce it thoroughly, when word identification is accomplished, will he ask someone else: "What does camarada mean?"

It is necessary to observe that a child learning to read uses the "sounding out" system to identify letters, words and meanings. According to Goodman, "in the early reading stages, oral and silent reading are probably quite comparable as processes" (1970:18). "Though the beginning reader obviously needs more graphic information in the decoding and, therefore, needs to be more precise than skilled readers, evidence from a study of first graders by Yetta Goodman (5) indicates that they begin to sample and draw on syntactic and semantic information almost from the beginning" (Goodman, 1970:114). In the conclusion of his article "Linguistics and Materials for Beginning Reading Instruction", Olsen reaffirms such evidences, saying, "It should be remembered that reading is part of a communicative process and that meaning is an expectation of all who are involved, including beginning readers" (1968:286).

As the reader becomes more experienced, he relies progressively less on graphic cues and projects more of himself on the text. A fluent reader does not pay close attention to individual letters or words, because he is busy

in his search for meaning. What the fluent reader does is to run his eyes over, say, a sentence. He is not looking at words but, instead, wants to have his expectations either confirmed or rejected. Only when bewildered or confused will the fluent reader go back and read specific words. Intuitively he will ask himself: "Was my hypothesis wrong, or did I misread something?" To sum up, "reading is a rapid series of guesses, tentative information processing. The less available information the reader uses, the more rapid and efficient is his reading" (Goodman, 1978:19).

Consider the following: "I had c ----- and m --- for breakfast, this morning".

Everyone who is able to read this page fluently is also able to understand the previous sentence, without having to read letter by letter. The initial "c" and "m" give us the cues for the complete words; the context, and our experience as well, help us to go straight to the meaning. Stated differently, we could say that the meaning of the sentence gave us the hints for the incomplete words. So, fluent reading is no longer a matter of letter or word identification in order to get meaning but rather a process in which we go from meaning to the identification of individual words, phrases and sentences.

The difference between a beginner and a fluent reader is one of familiarity with the reading process itself. What is extremely difficult for the former may present no difficulty at all for the latter. "Skill in reading involves not greater precision but more accurate first guesses

based on better sampling techniques, greater control over language structure, broadened experiences, and increased conceptual development. As the child develops reading skills and speed, he uses increasingly fewer graphic cues" (Goodman, 1970:114).

Stated in another way, the fluent reader is an experienced reader "who does not expend attention on the task of decoding" (LaBerge and Samuels, 1974:173). He knows already what the significant differences are and pays attention only to that information which is most relevant. As Smith states, "the fluent readers in all aspects are those who pay attention to that information in the print that is most relevant to their purposes" (1978:105).

The fluent reader relies on the graphic input merely as a starting point, "automatically processing words and their meanings, thus releasing attention for comprehension" (LaBerge and Samuels, *ibid*). Semantic and syntactic cues will provide him with the means to "predict and anticipate on the basis of this information, sampling from the print just enough to confirm his guess of what is coming, to cue more semantic and syntactic information" (Goodman, 1970:114). According to Bohn, "the more advanced the reader, the less he has to rely on graphophonic cues and the more he uses semantic and syntactic cues" (1977:43).

Reading comprehension depends mainly on one's ability to rely on semantic and syntactic information. Hence, at all stages, learning must be approached by meaning-directed activities.

Based on these observations, learning to read must not mean merely the process of becoming literate but also the process by which we get meaning from written or printed messages. Accordingly, Silva points out that "dentro do contexto brasileiro, aquilo que se chama leitura nada mais é do que um processo limitado de alfabetização, isto é, identifica-se o aluno leitor com o aluno que supostamente aprendeu a ler na 1ª série do 1º grau, e é só!" (1979:19). As can be noticed, our students are not prepared to read but to identify letters, and such is not reading!

What, then, is meant by the term "reading?" we hope to answer this question in the following pages.

2.1.1 - What is Reading?

In the previous section we have emphasized that letter identification is not reading, and that the reading process does not result from precise perception and

identification of all elements. Rather it is a "selective

process. It involves partial use of available minimal language cues selected from perceptual input on the basis of the reader's expectations. As this partial information is processed, tentative decisions are made, to be confirmed, rejected or refined as reading progresses" (Goodman, 1970:108).

The decisions referred to above are made in the reader's mind. The reader uses all the previous knowledge stored in his brain in order to confirm, select or refine. The brain, consequently, may be said to be responsible for much of

one's reading. In fact, "the brain - our prior knowledge of the world - contributes more information to reading than the visual symbols on the printed page" (Smith, 1978).

When reading, the print marks on the page are used as references. They are the starting point of the reading process. "It is of course necessary for some information from print to reach your brain. But visual information is not enough for reading" (Smith, 1978:12). Most of the effectiveness of our reading is due to the nonvisual information we bring with us to the act of reading. By nonvisual information we mean the knowledge of the world we have stored in our brain during every moment of our lives.

Smith develops this idea, saying, "there are other kinds of information that you also need, including an understanding of the relevant language, familiarity with the subject matter and some general ability in reading. All these kinds of information can be lumped together and called nonvisual information" (1978:13).

In the opening paragraph of his article "The Psycholinguistic Nature of the Reading Process", Goodman reaffirms what was just stated: "The reader does not merely pass his eyes over written language and receive and record a stream of visual perceptual images. He must actively bring to bear his knowledge of language, his past experience, his conceptual attainment on the processing of language information encoded in the form of graphic symbols in order to decode the written language" (1968:29).

"Basically, reading is a meaningful interaction

between the reader's language and the language of the writer" (Bohn, 1977:41), and therefore, one cannot expect to understand a text which is not readable for him. For example, a language student is not likely to understand a paper on "Real-Time Control of Electrical Power Systems". Of course, he will be able to recognize the surface structure of the language presented in it. Also, at certain points of his "reading", he will find some clues which will occasionally enable him to grasp the meaning of what his eyes pick up from the text. And that is all! Comprehension of the whole message is not possible, since the prior knowledge he brings with him to the act of reading does not help him to ask the right kinds of questions for this special kind of text. In order to read effectively, one must be able to ask questions and look for the information which will answer those questions in the printed text. In fact, "the reader does not only record and reproduce the author's meaning, but rather his whole linguistic and life experience is activated" (Bohn, 1977:42).

Everyone who reads this page does so, whether consciously or not, for a reason, since "reading has many purposes and written words, as well as spoken ones, contain many kinds of information. The reader, depending on his task, may adopt many different strategies, he may want to scan down a page looking for a telephone number, or a word in a dictionary that he has forgotten how to spell. He may be whiling away the time in a dreary airport with a detective story. His purpose in reading is not to remember the story a few hours later but only to engage his mind and escape from boredom. He may be reading a poem, slowly savoring its rhythm, rhyme and

metaphor. He may be studying a lesson, reading difficult material and doing his best to comprehend it. He may be reading as an editor, not so much concerned with the semantic aspects of the information before him, but chiefly with punctuation, spelling and style" (Gibson, 1972:17).

Although it is not Gibson's intention, the description of the various purposes in reading given above may lead one to think of the whole reading process as much simpler than it really is; furthermore, adult readers are so used to reading that they just take it as an activity as natural as speaking, breathing, walking or listening. Reading, however, is a complex process in which language and thought are closely related. In this sense, the written language is the starting point of a process which will actually take place in cognitive fields. In other words, as soon as the visual information is picked up, reading becomes a game of guesses and anticipations; hypotheses are raised to be confirmed or rejected. In Goodman's words, "reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game. It

involves interaction between thought and language. Efficient reading does not result from precise perception and identification of all elements but from skill in selecting the finest, most productive cues necessary to produce guesses which are right at first. The ability to anticipate that which has not been seen, of course, is vital in reading, just as the ability to anticipate what has not yet been heard is vital in listening" (1968:260).

This conception of reading demands a very specific view of the human being itself. In Smith we find

that "the cognitive picture of a man is of an active and selective information gathering individual who acquires and interprets new knowledge on the basis of rules already stored in the brain" (1971:81). But how the human brain, "a biochemical machine", in Lenneberg's conception, (1970:25), is able to handle all the information that comes to be processed in it remains, up to this day, one of the ultimate frontiers of human knowledge.

The idea we attempted to convey in the previous pages was that reading and comprehension should be equated and that, in fact, there is no reading unless some degree of comprehension is attained. In the following section, we will provide a more detailed view of the factors involved in the so-called "comprehension construct".

2.2 - Reading Comprehension

In the following pages, comprehension is viewed as a human-inherent feature of equilibrium between the individual and his environment; reading comprehension is then fitted into this broad construct as one of its various factors.

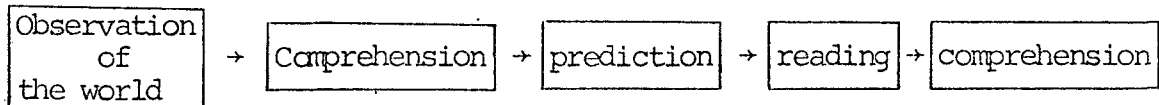
This section will comment on the core of the reading act: comprehension. After scanning a variety of pertinent bibliography on the subject, we realized that there is no such thing as a one-line definition of the comprehension construct. Also, it became clear that comprehension is not restricted to the reading process. Rather, it is present in every human activity, at all ages. In

Marshall's words, "comprehension is the process of dealing with meaning" (1979). To substantiate this claim we may contrast comprehension with bewilderment. Every activity we undertake is governed by comprehension. We are so used to making sense out of the things which surround us that we no longer pay attention to them in terms of what they mean, i.e., we have learned to comprehend our environment, an idea which is corroborated by Chomsky (1973:25). Only when we are faced with a given situation which does not make sense do we stop and think: "I don't understand it! It doesn't make sense! It's confusing". This is what we call bewilderment. No one can live in permanent bewilderment. On the other hand, we constantly comprehend what goes on around us, and that is perfectly ordinary for any normal human being. Our brain is endowed with the very special capacity of reasoning and digesting information, i.e., of transforming the "raw material" we get from the world around us into meaningful information which will become part of our "vision" of the world and the things in it. Based on such assumptions about our knowledge of the world, we can make sense of the various situations that face us throughout our lives. In fact, "we can only make sense of the world in terms of what we know already" (Smith,1978:81). Such a knowledge, which may be said to be unconscious, forms part of a latent cognitive structure and as such, is responsible for the solution or comprehension of the next problem the individual is faced with.

As mentioned above, comprehension is not a goal exclusive to the reading process but, rather, reading is one

type of activity that leads to the human state of comprehension. According to Smith, "comprehension is not a quantity, it is a state - a state of not having any unanswered questions" (1978:86). Put another way, we do not comprehend because we read, but what motivates us to read is our inherent human necessity of comprehending the world which surrounds us. So we may view comprehension as both the incitement to, and objective of the reading act.

The following display illustrates the point:



The comprehension of the world in which we live makes it possible for us to build up a theory which governs and synthesizes all our previous experiences. Such knowledge makes it possible for us to make sense of the world and makes prediction possible. In fact, we live in a constant state of anticipation of which we are unaware (cf., Smith, 1978:82). This state of anticipation, which corresponds to Piaget's notion of equilibrium (Wright, 1969), is the essential equipment every reader must bring to the act of reading. We may say that we comprehend a text when those questions we have brought to the act of reading, even without being aware of them, have been satisfactorily answered. In this sense, according to Bohn, reading is a confirmation process (personal communication). If we have no expectations about what we are going to read, then reading with comprehension will not take place. By the same token, if we happen to read something without asking any

questions, we are just passing our eyes over the pages: again, comprehension will not take place. According to Smith, "the act of comprehension or learning involves a situation very much akin to the scientific method, in which hypotheses are tested against internal and external reality. The process necessitates a degree of risk taking and involves a certain amount of failure" (1975). Similarly, we find in MacGinitie that "un buen lector constantemente se forma hipótesis sobre los significados y propósitos y hace predicciones. Estas hipótesis y predicciones se relacionan con los modelos del texto que va desarrollando el lector mientras lee y se basan en sus esquemas, es decir, se basan en conjuntos de conocimientos estructurados al tópico del texto ...El buen lector también usa datos específicos del texto para probar y modificar las hipótesis" (1981).

In exactly what way does the reader raise those hypotheses and predictions? What aspects of language make this possible? Kenneth Goodman begins to answer these questions when he says that "fortunately, language is redundant. It provides multiple clues to the same bits of information. If a reader misses a cue, he can still get the message. If his responses to language cues in reading seem inconsistent, he can check back and find his error" (1978:23).

Palmer makes the same point: "to reduce uncertainty and obtain meaning, readers do not need to make use of all the information available to them. Instead, they use the most direct route and as few cues as necessary to reach their goal: comprehension. An understanding of language structures and the fact that every bit of information may be conveyed by

several cues, make it possible for readers to predict and analyse the printed grammatical patterns on the basis of identifying a few elements within" (Palmer, 1979:11). This identification, then, is eased by the redundancy features of a text. According to George redundancy is "protection of communication" (1972:9) and so, readers should be able to take advantage of it and use redundancy of language as a valuable tool for their ultimate goal in reading: comprehension.

In an attempt to summarize what happens in the comprehension construct, in reading, Mackay clarifies the whole issue by distinguishing three areas of knowledge. According to him, the reader uses his (1) knowledge of spelling rules, (2) knowledge of the grammatical system, and (3) semantic knowledge, in order to make sense out of written language.

These factors will interact in such a way as to facilitate comprehension, i.e., the reader will activate his knowledge of the referred factors simultaneously and interdependently in order to understand a passage. When the clues provided by (1) and (2) are not clarifying, the reader still has (3) to rely on, and so forth (cf. Mackay, 1979:81).

In the previous pages we have tried to fit the reading comprehension process into an anthropological perspective. The expository line was kept on a quite theoretical level. For the purposes of our project, however, we must approach the comprehension construct using more tangible factors.

2.3 - Reading Comprehension Assessment

Reading assessment and as such comprehension assessment are very controversial topics. The main constraints for such assessments are discussed, and then the author makes an effort to approach the comprehension factor in its more tangible parts which are assumed to be measurable.

Concurring with Smith's point of view, we stated elsewhere (p. 18) that the brain is responsible for much of the "comprehending" in reading, contributing all our previous experience and the conceptual framework developed through the years. Such a "storing house" is one of the boundaries of human knowledge. If a physician were asked to describe and explain the anatomy of the human brain, he might be able to show diagrams, X-rays, and pictures in which he could single out the main parts and structures of the brain. On the other hand, if a psychologist were asked to explain the nature of human thought, he would surely run into problems, for there is no such thing as a full and detailed description of human thought. Our "thinking machine" is in fact the most complex intricate and perfect "computer" ever devised.

Accordingly, when we try to reach a definition of what goes on in the reader's brain when he "understands" his reading, or measure how much he comprehends, our task is mainly to describe the various components of the comprehension construct and to see if a certain ability, or factor of the construct, is present. The task is far from simple and it would be pretentious to give a succinct definition of what

comprehension is, especially since the present study is based on the premise that reading is a meaningful interaction between thought and language. The individual factors which enable any reader to examine words for a meaning which resides beyond, in a deeper level of language, cannot be depicted with precision. For the classroom practitioner who must deal with the question "What is comprehension?", one possible answer is offered by Bohn: "What is meant by comprehension depends on specific programs and courses" (1979:10). Put this way, the ghost of comprehension starts to become tangible, providing teachers with aims to attain. Thus, for example, students who need to read a foreign language for academic purposes will be faced with tasks such as reading certain passages for general comprehension, understanding instructions, reading specific information, etc. To perform those tasks, students will need various abilities, such as distinguishing the central idea from secondary ones, understanding relationships in a text, following a logical progression and so on. Readers activate several, rather than just one ability, at the same time.

This sort of schematic approach is highly artificial; i.e., one cannot exactly establish "divisory" lines for the comprehension construct. However, the factors which form such a "whole" must be defined if assessment and instruction are the aims, since it is easier to provide the remedy when one better understands the nature of the illness. For this reason the highly abstract construct of comprehension

has been tentatively broken into its component parts.

As an example, Burkart proposes that "reading is not a single act but a complex activity made up of at least 214 separate abilities" (1945). It is very possible that on a deeper investigation a still larger number of abilities could be reached. Whatever be the exact number of these abilities, what are the implications as far as the classroom environment is concerned?

Presumably, no teacher would be able to handle all these factors at once since they are too many and the instructional time short. The solution seems to be in the simplification or grouping of abilities. By the same token, in measurement reading abilities cannot be assessed "individually", and researchers of measurement tend to conclude that not all of the reading factors can be reliably measured. If teachers plan to use the results of reading research for classroom purposes, they would need to come up with at most from two to five abilities which could be reliably assessed (cf. Lennon, 1962; Davis, 1968; Schreiner, Hieronymus, and Forsyth, 1969).

Meanwhile, teachers are still faced with the problem of measurement. Where standardized tests are not suitable and pertinent research does not provide adequate answers, teachers will find themselves without a means to measure reading ability, and to cross arms and wait is not an adequate policy.

In this respect, Farr seems to suggest the most reasonable alternative, saying that teachers "need more

carefully define their teaching objectives and then select and construct a test which matches those program objectives"

(1969:71). Thus, teachers themselves could provide answers to their own questions.

As an example, one could specifically delineate the communicative needs of students of foreign language for reading purposes. Based on the data gathered from works by Goodman (1968), Smith (1970 - 1978), Mackay and Mountford (1978), Munby (1978), Stroud (1969), Barret (1968), Davis (1944), Hunt (1957), and Farr (1969), among others, as well as on a teachers' survey (Appendix), we could compile a list of reading abilities such as the following:

- Recognition of the logical sequence in the development of the text
- Identification of explicitly stated causes of the events in the text.
- Identification of the most suitable heading for a text
- Discrimination of the kind of text
- Comprehension of the whole
- Identification of the main idea
- Identification of the best summary for a text
- Detection of false statements
- Contextual reference
- Ability to predict language items appropriate for a particular context
- Detection of vocabulary meaning based on context
- Identification of the writer's mood

- Recognition of details
- Inference
- Ability to follow instructions
- Visualization of what is being described
- Reading for specific information
- Identification of functions of the language presented

A closer analysis of those factors would reveal that most of them are interrelated. For example, the ability to distinguish the central idea from the secondary ones is related to the ability to understand the relationship among ideas and the ability to follow a logical sequence. The ability to predict language items appropriate for a particular context is similar to the ability to find out the most suitable item according to a given input. Likewise, the ability to give answers which are not explicitly stated in the text can easily be related to inference. What makes the abilities differ from each other may be their actual implementation in a test or in an instructional activity, when different tasks are to be performed.

Moreover, a selection of reading abilities is always susceptible to criticism since, as mentioned above, such a listing apparently denies the very conception of the construct which those abilities constitute. Thus, not only are the referred to abilities interrelated, but also the particular selection above is bound to be incomplete and, in terms of the reading process as a whole, artificial and reduced.

One possible reply to such a criticism is found in the citation from Bohn, at the beginning of the present section and which is corroborated by Farr's (1969) idea that instructional aims and assessment devices have much in common. In theoretical terms the reading ability selection recorded above may be rightly classified as incomplete since it does not offer a comprehensive account of the comprehension construct. Operationally speaking however, the selection may provide classroom practitioners with hints as to how assessment can be used to foster the development of skills, matching instructional programmes.

The table of abilities here listed does not invalidate the procedure of only listing several abilities, since assessment procedures would otherwise become very complex, i.e., a single test could not be devised to assess all the so-called reading abilities simultaneously.

As argued elsewhere, comprehension is not a trait unique to the reading act; rather, it is an inherent human factor. As an example, when a reading testee does not provide the right answers, his failure may stem from factors other than the one the researcher is trying to assess. Making our example more specific, when measuring the ability to complete a statement with a missing word (as in a cloze test) one is actually measuring a group of abilities rather than just one. Depending on the kind of material being read, readers may deal with inferencing and associating or with activating their ability to follow a reasoning, or with establishing samenesses, or a dozen of like processes. The

range of possibilities indicates that researchers cannot be certain of the actual limits of thinking processes. Rather, the processes seem to be interrelated in such a way that memory is needed in order to infer, associations are also made in a kind of inferential procedure, and the recall itself requires associations and inferences. These and possibly many other factors end up forming a kind of circle in which, on the one hand, various elements take part to form the whole while, on the other hand, each of these elements is interdependent.

Anyone involved in measuring the subcomponents of the comprehension construct cannot be sure as to what exactly is being measured. That is to say, these factors cannot be depicted with precision.

In a discussion introduced by Carver (1973) it is argued that nowadays reading tests are more likely to be measuring reasoning than just reading. Research has not developed sufficiently so as to provide definitive answers to this problem.

While waiting for precise data on the subject, reading instructors should not be too much concerned with such a discussion since, for instructional purposes, testing devices should be in accord with instructional objectives (cf. Farr 1969). If teachers want to know whether or not a given reading ability is present—the ability to answer questions not explicitly formulated in the text, for example—and if such an ability may be considered a reasoning factor as well, it does not much matter so long as the objective is attained. In other words, if a teacher wants his students to be able to

extract the message from a text and use such information to broaden their knowledge of the world then reading and reasoning are aimed at.

Theoretical discussions on the subject are valuable. For immediate classroom purposes, however, it is important that teachers have a clear understanding of the reading process and, with that as a starting point, that they plan and develop activities which will contribute to reach the aims of the course.

As we have seen, reading comprehension assessment is a task far from simple. Testing devices with instructional aims demand the consideration of various factors as well as a clear understanding of the objectives to be reached. Because of the nature of the questions posed in this study, however, we do assume that the reading comprehension construct can be factorized and that these different factors can be assessed at least as to their presence or absence in the subjects tested.

Once the aims of testing are adequately described, questions concerning the nature of the testing procedures become relevant. Although this question has features in common with assessment problems, we have preferred to leave this discussion to a separate section analyzing the methodology of testing.

Before we enter on the discussion of methodology, however, the following section will provide readers with some insights into the problem of linguistic transfer from the mother tongue to a second, or foreign language.

2.4 - Mother tongue and foreign language reading

Having analysed reading, reading comprehension and the problems involved in the assessment of the so-called reading abilities, it would be worthwhile to examine the question of how mother tongue competence can be transferred in the task of learning to read a foreign language.

Language transfer is a controversial problem. One of the most frequent questions researchers pose themselves is whether strategies of first language acquisition are used on second language learning. How can reading strategies from the first language be transferred to second language learning?

With these questions as a starting point, we will here discuss some points related to language acquisition and strategies of learning, how such strategies are related to learning to read the first language and, finally, how those strategies relate to reading in a foreign language.

What does it mean to learn a language?

Carol Chomsky addresses herself to this question in her studies, saying that to learn a language is "to acquire the means for making sentences by constructing a rule system that enables children to produce and understand new sentences that have never been uttered before" (1979:116). The child acquiring the language of his environment is internalizing an implicit system of rules that will enable him to distinguish sentences from non-sentences.

Who teaches the child such a system?

No one, of course. What actually happens is that he constructs his own set of language rules by observing the language of his environment. The child's rule system ends up matching the system of those around him. In Lenneberg's words, "the child abstracts regularities or relations from the language he hears, which he then applies to building up a language for himself as an apparatus of principles" (1970:13).

Langacker gives a further explanation, saying that "the child learning to talk is in the same situation of a linguist investigating a language. The child must, in a manner of speaking, deduce the structure of the language spoken around him. Like the linguist, he is unable to observe this structure directly. He can only base his deductions on the linguistic performance that he monitors...The linguistic system that the child constructs for himself thus constitutes a hypothesis as to the structure of the language that the people around him use" (1968:233).

The discovery of the linguistic universe that every human child appropriates leads to a stage in which the child has mastered the structure of the language so that he can talk naturally and effortlessly. "When the child has learned to talk, when he has mastered his native tongue, he is in possession of an abstract system of rules that specifies an unbounded class of well-formed sentences" (idem, *ibid*:234).

The process just described implies a high degree of participation of the child who is learning to speak. Experimental evidence shows that "by the time the average child

is five years of age, he unmistakably qualifies as a native speaker of his first language, having mastered what I refer to as the 'primary' components of linguistic competence" (Neufeld, 1978).

Carol Chomsky, in her article "Language and Reading", states that "in order to learn a language the child must take an active role" (1979). This is so, because no one "teaches" a child how to speak, i.e., one cannot teach a child the underlying system of rules which governs every language. Provided there is adequate exposure, learning will take place, for it is a skill which children are prepared to acquire by their human language propensity. As a matter of fact, research shows that all over the world "the child's inclination to use language is strong, and he approaches the task in very much the same way as would a child of similar age in another country, where a different language is spoken" (Neufeld, 1978). Accordingly, language learning requires no organized instruction, developing instead spontaneously. In other words, "native children...acquire their first language 'informally' - they pick it up without specifically being taught it" (Cook, 1977).

Having pointed out some pertinent considerations about first language learning, we are ready to discuss how it relates to learning to read. First we will consider reading in the mother tongue and, subsequently, in a foreign language.

Forester (1979) characterizes language learning as a natural process and opposes it to learning to read, an "artificial" process.

In learning a language mere exposure to a language environment seems to be enough, but in learning to read, exposure must be accompanied by some specific instruction.

However, "one does not teach children to read anymore than one teaches them how to speak. One gives them tools with which to teach themselves and provides means for them to learn" (Chomsky, Carol, 1979). By the same token, we cannot expect to teach someone to read, insofar as we view reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game. Perhaps what can be taught is the alternate representational system for an already existing system. However, to teach language processing is a rather difficult enterprise. For example, no one teaches a child that a Dalmation dog belongs together with a Dachshund within the category "bow-wow". Nevertheless, any normal child is aware of the relationship, since "in the realm of semantics, understanding involves seeing the basis on which objects are categorized, thus enabling a child to name an object correctly that he has never seen before" (Lenneberg, 1970:13). Accordingly,

"a child who had not developed to a stage in which he used certain grammatical rules spontaneously, who is still missing the syntactic foundations and prerequisites, could not be taught to repeat a sentence that was formed by such high rules. This was true even in sentences of very few words" (idem *ibid*).*

* In this respect, Chomsky (1969:68) says that "it must be recognized that one does not learn the grammatical structure of a second language through explanation and instruction beyond the most elementary rudiments, for the simple reasons that no one has enough explicit knowledge about this structure to provide explanation and instruction".

Nevertheless, the most striking characteristic common to both language learning and learning to read is the fact that, in order to acquire one's language, one must make sense of the things which happen around him as well as understand the language environment to which he is exposed.

Accordingly, in learning to read, making sense of the universe expressed through written symbols is vital. "Reading must be meaningful. From the beginning, reading must be a comprehension centered activity" (Sims, 1979:101).

Oral language mastery depends not only on the knowledge of a particular system of communication but on conceptual development and background experience as well, since in learning a language the individual is integrating himself with the 'universe' of his environment. When faced with the task of learning to read, the individual must be able to adapt the strategies used to understand oral language to the strategies necessary to comprehend written language; i.e., "children who know oral language should be able to use this knowledge in learning to comprehend written language" (Goodman, 1971:141).

Now that we have explored some of the characteristics common to both language learning and learning to read, it would be worthwhile to ask one more question: In what way do the similarities discussed help or hinder teachers and students of reading in a foreign language?

As a starting point we can take Cook's statement that "the child acquiring his first language has to find out what language itself is - that it uses symbolic representation,

that it has grammatical and phonological structure, and so on" (1977). This task would not have to be undertaken by the foreign language learner, since he already has mastery of his mother tongue and, therefore, using Halliday's expression, he already knows "how to mean" (1975). L1 speakers and readers know already, even unconsciously, that many of the underlying or deep structures of written and oral language are the same, and they are quite capable of inferring the deep structure as they listen/read so that they may arrive at meaning (cf. Goodman, 1971).

In addition, the life experience and linguistic background which students have as Portuguese "users", for example, would help them get half way toward their final aim of understanding written English. As Wode states, "in naturalistic L2 acquisition and in FLT children/students do rely on their prior L1." (Wode, 1979). In other words, the learner "brings to learning his second language a larger stock of more sophisticated concepts than he brought to acquiring his first" (Prator, 1971).

Since learning a language and learning to read have some characteristics in common, and because our FL students are mother tongue users already, assuming that adequate reading practice is provided, the target task of a student learning to read a foreign language will be more a matter of adaptation to another code than actually learning a foreign language. Goodman corroborates this position saying that "learning to read a second language should be easier for someone already literate in another language, regardless how similar or dissimilar it is" (1971). Accordingly, we found in

Coady's words that "it has been the experience of a number of ESL teachers that such is, in fact, the case. The more mechanical aspects of reading transfer automatically to reading in a new language" (1979). Furthermore, the semantic aspects of language already known to adult learners will compensate the lack of knowledge of specific grammatical points given the fact that the "semantic aspects of the reading process cannot vary to any extent from one language to another since the key question is how much background the reader brings to the specific reading" (Goodman, 1971:140). Thus, in more general terms, a weakness in one area can be compensated by a strength in another (cf., Coady op.cit. 9). In accordance with this viewpoint, Goodman states that "the reading process will be much the same for all languages with minor variations to accommodate the specific characteristics of the orthography used and the grammatical structure of the language" (1971:140). Experimental support may be found in Groebel's study among university students in Israel in which a significant positive correlation between a student's level of reading comprehension in his native language and his level of reading comprehension in English is hypothesized. The study concludes that "where the higher levels of reading comprehension are involved, there is a correlation between the level of the student's reading comprehension in his native language and the level of reading comprehension in the target language" (1980).

According to Warwick, "first language learners who are prepared to guess, to hypothesize and confirm are now (i.e., in the lights of recent psycholinguistic theories of

reading) considered the best language learners" (1981:238). Furthermore, if we consider reading as a "sample, predict, test, confirm, correct-when-necessary approach" (cf. Goodman, 1976:238), it seems inaccurate to consider the second or foreign language learner - where reading is the objective - a beginner.

In an experimental study among children in Hawaii and California, Joan Rubin has isolated some of the strategies characteristic of good second language learners. At the top of her list is the guessing strategy. "The good guesser uses his feel for grammatical structures, clues from the lexical items he recognizes, clues from redundancy in the message. He uses nonverbal cues, word association clues, outside knowledge (his general knowledge of society, of similarities to his native language). He makes inferences as to the purpose, intent, point of view of the message" (1975).

Rubin sees no difference between first and second language learners in these respects. Nor does Twadell (1973) or Vivian Cook (1969).

Lenneberg has suggested that human beings obey a natural maturational process in which given skills are developed after a certain degree of maturity is reached. If indeed man obeys a given maturational process of which language constitutes no exception, it seems unlikely that one should return to the first stage of language acquisition when faced with the task of learning to read a foreign language.

Smith's words endorse this view: "the cognitive picture of a man is of an active and selective information gathering individual who acquires and interprets new knowledge

on the basis of rules already stored in the brain" (1978:81). Would our English reading learners "erase" the knowledge which has been steadily stored throughout their lives?

Finally, if we take a second look at Goodman's concept of reading as a "guessing game", we find support for the assumption that adults who come to the task of learning to read a foreign language are not starting all over from the beginning. On the contrary, they are quite advanced language "connaisseurs", and their knowledge will be used in the new task of foreign language reading.

This chapter has addressed the nature of the reading process. We have seen that there is no actual reading without some degree of comprehension. With that in mind, we conducted an investigation in which we tried to demonstrate that reading is part of what Piaget has termed "equilibrium". Man must understand his environment to place himself in the world, and reading is viewed as no exception to this complex framework labeled "comprehension".

Given the complex nature of the reading comprehension construct, one can easily imagine the various difficulties researchers who deal with reading comprehension assessment are faced with. Based on the evidence in this chapter, however, we will take it as a fairly reliable assumption that the experience an adult native user has as a first language reader will be useful in the task of reading a foreign language.

C H A P T E R I I I

M E T H O D O L O G Y

In the following pages we will discuss some of the practical details of the assessment instrument devised. We will characterize the University in which the study was carried out as well as the specific population tested. Criteria for correction and for mastery are also defined.

3.1 - Introduction

Assessment measures provide classroom practitioners with some indication of what students are actually able to perform and what points need further development.

In this study, the main objective is to assess the students' reading abilities in the mother tongue. We know beforehand, that the students are able to read Portuguese, i.e., they are able to combine several of the different reading abilities discussed in the previous pages, in actual reading. We are not so much concerned, in this study, to measure or establish reading levels for the population tested but, rather, to see if the students have mastery of specific reading abilities of factors of the comprehension construct, and, based on

these findings, to establish possible methodological implications.

It became quickly obvious that the standardized tests available did not suit the specific testing objectives of our project. Stated explicitly, we wanted to know whether given reading abilities in the mother tongue were present in the sample population, so as to establish some of the possible implications of mother tongue competence in the teaching of foreign languages for reading purposes. Consequently, we had to devise our own test, tailored to our specific questions.

3.2 - Choice of abilities

Taking as our premises the ideas established in the previous pages, we were faced with the test designing task. Although we conceived reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game, and therefore very inferential, practical contingencies forced us to prepare an assessment instrument based on a taxonomic classification of abilities. In spite of the limitations of such an approach, since it is an artificial way of dealing with the highly abstract comprehension construct, we needed to gather data which could be quantified; we needed test-items similar to the ones students were already acquainted with, and we wanted to specify exactly what we were assessing. One of the first tasks, then, was to make decisions on the abilities, or factors, we wished to study. Since we did not want to rely solely on the review of the literature in order to define the reading comprehension construct, and based on the assumption that reading objectives

depend on specific courses, we asked the reading professionals themselves what the reading objectives should be, and what factors make up the reading comprehension construct.

A review of the pertinent literature on the subject, as well as our personal professional experience, enabled us to elaborate a list of reading abilities. Furthermore, we sought the opinions of other reading professionals by means of a "teachers' questionnaire", which was given to 50 English and Portuguese teachers of UFSC. Since we were going to be testing university freshmen, only teachers of first semester subjects were invited to answer the questionnaire.

We devised two kinds of questionnaires, called "free" and "controlled", respectively. Of the 50 questionnaires distributed, 25 went to English teachers (13 free and 12 controlled) and 25 to Portuguese teachers (13 free and 12 controlled). Twenty-three of the 50 questionnaires were returned completed.

The free questionnaire was intended to leave the teachers free to think and express themselves in their own terms about the reading objectives of their courses. The controlled questionnaire presented teachers with a list of abilities from which to choose.

In both questionnaires, the teachers were asked to point out the five, or more, essential abilities students would have to master in order to succeed in their academic reading. We found no basic differences between the responses to the free and the controlled questionnaires; abilities not mentioned in the former were also not mentioned in the latter.

Analysis of the teacher survey yielded the following data:

3.2.1 - "Specific" reading abilities which both English and Portuguese teachers listed as essential:

- Knowledge of a specific vocabulary
- Identification of word meanings based on context
- Perception of text's organization
- Identification of the main and secondary ideas
- Summarizing
- Critical reading
- Contextual reference
- Identification of the author's purpose
- Distinguishing between the general and the particular
- Relating synonyms and antonyms
- Use of grammatical clues
- Recognition of language functions
- Following a logical sequence
- Deduction based on the text
- Reading for specific information

3.2.2 - Besides those abilities just mentioned, we were also faced with very "broad" statements about the component factors of the comprehension construct. These statements show the difficulty as well as necessity reading professionals have of clearly defining their course objectives and aims. The "broad" reading abilities

mentioned as essential to reading are listed below.

3.2.2.1 - Portuguese Teachers

- Attention
- Integration
- Experience
- Mental acuity
- Comprehension
- Logical reasoning
- Conviction of reading importance as a means to enlarge ideas
- Linguistic intuition - Proceeding from one's knowledge of the mother tongue - important for comprehending foreign language texts
- Reading knowledge and practice of intonation
- Ability to abstract, literary sensibility and training
- Learning a text's meanings

3.2.2.2 - English Teachers

- to transfer (from a previously acquired competence)
- to relate
- to conclude
- to compare and contrast
- to extrapolate
- to identify

Next, we compared the list of reading abilities drawn from the review of literature with the data collected through the teachers' survey. We were thus able to select the basic reading abilities which university freshmen would have to master in order to approach their academic readings efficiently. They are organized in ten groups according to the testing instrument devised:

- 1 - Recognition of the logical sequence in the development of the text
 1. Discrimination of the kind of text
- 2 - 2. Identification of the most suitable heading for a text
 3. Overall comprehension
- 3 - 1.
 2. Identification of the main idea
 3. Detection of false statements
- 4 - Contextual Reference
- 5 - Ability to predict language items appropriate for a particular context
- 6 - Detection of vocabulary meaning based on context
- 7 - Inference
 1. Ability to follow instructions
- 8 - 2. Visualization of descriptions
 3. Reading for specific information
- 9 - To Infer the logical sequence of ideas
- 10 - Identification of language functions

3.3 - Justifying the test

After having gathered a considerable amount of information about reading, reading comprehension and reading abilities, we were faced with the practical problem of how to test the students. We had to consider, first of all, that we knew little about the population we would be testing and, secondly, the amount of research in the subject is extremely limited. Standardized tests abound in the literature from abroad. We could not rely solely on ready-made tests, however, since they were devised for students who belong to different social, educational and economic environments and, furthermore, they do not test the same abilities we propose. We needed something suitable for our purposes and most adequate to our students' needs and level. We therefore devised our own instrument to test our sample population. (cf., Appendix:2)

3.4 - The Test

The reading comprehension test was developed for first year university students, to be applied during their regular Portuguese classes. We chose Portuguese classes as our test was developed in the students' mother tongue. Since our main concern was to detect whether specific reading abilities were present in the sample population, all other variables had to be kept out of the test. If the English language were used, not only would we be assessing the students' reading abilities

but their knowledge of the target language as well. Even though our final objective was to consider the teaching of English for reading purposes, we did not bind ourselves to the kinds of texts most frequently used in such courses. The texts were intended to be "neutral", in that they were not specific to any subject. They were neither technical nor difficult.

3.5 - Level of Difficulty

In order to determine the level of difficulty of the language to be used in the test, we analyzed the texts used in the ESP courses at UFSC.

The level of syntactic complexity was determined by applying the Syntactic Complexity Formula proposed by Botel et Alii. (1973). An analysis of the syntactic complexity of ten units of ESP material showed an average syntactical complexity of about 5.2. The average syntactic complexity was obtained by the arithmetical average of the scores of the texts. We observed that the averages of each of the ten units analysed ranged between 3,6 and 7,7 according to what is showed in Table 1.

The ten units analysed were used as a starting point in our choice of Portuguese texts.

Table 1 - Presents the syntactic complexity of each of the then units analysed.

text	scores									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1							7,7			
2						6,6				
3						6,4				
4						6,0				
5					5,0					
6					5,0					
7				4,5						
8				4,2						
9			3,7							
10			3,6							

The average syntactic complexity is slightly above elementary school level (cf., Botel et alii: 1973:86).

Since we had no experimental evidence indicating that this formula could be applied to the Portuguese language, we depended on our linguistic background to select Portuguese texts whose lexical items and syntax would not increase the level of difficulty.

3.6 - The items of the test

The test consisted of 10 questions in which 16 abilities were distributed for evaluation.

In test-item 1, we used the text "A Lenda do Diamante" from Nossas Lendas, by Nair Startling. The original

text was used, but the sequence of ideas was inverted, i.e., we "disorganized" the next. Students were asked to "number" sentences from 1 to 5, putting the text into its correct order.

The ability tested was:

- 1 - Recognition of the logical sequence in the development of the text.

A multiple-choice question is used in test-item

2. The students are asked to identify the most suitable heading for the text presented in test-item 1. The abilities assessed were:

1. Discrimination of the kind of text
- 2- 2. Identification of the most suitable heading for a text
3. Overall comprehension

Test-item 3: presents a multiple choice question based on the text used in test-item 1 in which testees are asked to select the best characterization of the central idea of the text. Abilities assessed:

1. Identification of the best summary for a text
- 3 - 2. Identification of the main idea
3. Detection of false statements

Test-item 4: Based on the text presented in test-item 1, students are asked to relate the referent to its antecedents. Ability assessed:

- 4 - Contextual reference

Test-item 5: Based on a text from Confesso que Vivi, by Pablo Neruda, a cloze test was devised. The main concern in this item was to activate the testees' linguistic awareness. Twenty-three words were deleted, including 1 article, 3 pronouns, 4 prepositions, 1 adjective, 9 nouns, 3 verbs and 1 adverb. The sentences of the text vary, in length, from 2 to 20 words. A basic rule was observed for the deletions: if the sentence length was under 15 words there would be only one deletion, otherwise two deletions would be made, in one case, three. According to the basic rules of cloze testing, such a procedure would keep the text at a low readability level. The words were deleted in such a way that the context plus linguistic and experiential background would be sufficient clues to select the right replacements. As can be noticed, a highly modified cloze test was used. The ability to predict language items appropriate for a particular context was tested (5).

Test-item 6: Synonym-association test. Using the text from test-item 5, students are asked to find the correspondents. The ability assessed was:

6 - Detection of vocabulary meaning based on context

Test-item 7: True or False exercise based on the the text used in test-item 5. The ability assessed was:

7 - Inference

Test-item 8: A text translated and adapted by the researcher from the original Test in English (Overseas) by Patricia McEldowney, which consists of a description of a

University Campus. Three maps are presented and testees are asked to choose the drawing which matches the description and say why the other two were incorrect. The abilities assessed were:

1. Ability to follow instructions
- 8 - 2. Visualization of descriptions
3. Reading for specific information

Test-item 9: Half of a telephone conversation is presented to the testees, who must create the other half. The ability tested was:

- 9 - To Infer the logical sequence of ideas

Test-item 10: A "matching columns" exercise in which testees have to identify language functions (10).

3.7 - The Pre-test and the Test

In October of 1980, we applied a preliminary form of the test to two groups: Medicine and Library Science.

The results from these two groups indicated that the test was adequate to the purposes of our work, since it seemed to be neither too difficult nor too easy. The students understood the instructions perfectly and they took about 80 minutes to complete the test, which exactly matched the time allotted to its application.

3.8 - Sample Tested

The sample tested is from the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC). This University is estimated to have about 12,000 students in at least 10 study areas. It is a rather new institution and most of the work done is at the undergraduate level. Among the 10 study areas there are one Ph.D and 15 Master's programmes. The students of UFSC come not only from Santa Catarina but also from other Brazilian states and from abroad.

The test was applied to 301 first year, first semester students, in nine different courses from five study areas at UFSC:

1. Agricultural Sciences	Agronomy
2. Health Sciences	Dentistry Nutrition
3. Physical Sciences	Mechanical Engineering Physics
4. Humanities	Education Social Science Library Science
5. Arts and Communications	Letters

From this initial sample we made a random selection of 25 students from each group, getting a total of 225 students, 125 women and 100 men, distributed as follows:

	Men	Women
Agronomy	19	6
Dentistry	14	11
Nutrition	7	18
Physics	17	8

Mechanical Engineering	24	1
Social Science	5	20
Library Science	4	21
Education	1	24
Letters	<u>9</u>	<u>16</u>
TOTAL	100	125

For reference purposes we designated Agronomy, Dentistry, Nutrition, Physics and Mechanical Engineering as belonging to Set 1, Social Science, Library Science and Education, and Letters as Set 2.

We had no control over the students' age. Our personal observation, however, enabled us to conclude that most students fell into the 17 to 25 age bracket.

The presence of the teacher of each group was required during the test's application since the students were given the test as if it were a unit of study for which they would be graded. It was assumed that the teacher's presence would make the students feel more comfortable as well as pay more attention to the task at hand. The researcher was also present. She handed the tests out, explained its purpose, and asked the testees to read with close attention the instructions given for each test-item. No further explanation was provided.

Although we do believe guessing to be an essential strategy in reading, students were warned not to

guess in the sense of "chutar". We wanted to avoid random guessing. When the students finished doing the test, the researcher asked, one at a time, whether they have pre-read or not the text on test-item 5 and marked each answer on the respective test.

As it was not our aim to measure the students' reading speed, we did not place a time limit on the test but left students free to think and answer at their own pace. The time allotted for the test's application was the equivalent of a two-hour class, about 80 minutes, and no group required more than that to respond to all items of the test.

In general, the students were very receptive to the test. Most of them were interested in knowing what the test would be used for, as well as the nature of the research for which the assessment instrument was necessary.

As we asked for their names and class group, most of them asked whether we would let them know their respective grades. We subsequently gave them this information.

3.9 - Grading Criteria

Test-item 1: The test consisted of 5 interrelated answers of which one wrong answer would, consequently, result in at least two mistakes. Thus one mistake was interpreted as absence of the ability.

Test-item 2 and 3: From four alternatives, there was only one right choice. Thus, either the testee chose the right answer, and had the ability, or he failed to choose the right one, and consequently, for evaluation purposes, he did not have the ability.

Test-item 4: From among the six sub-questions, only two mistakes were allowed. One more mistake was interpreted as absence of the ability tested.

Test-item 5: From the 23 answers for this test, 16 wrong answers indicated lack of the ability. We considered as right answers not only literal replacements but rather any word which replaced the deleted item acceptably within the context surrounding the deletion and which made sense within the larger context of the paragraph and text (cf., Sampson, 1980)

Test-item 6: The total number of answers was 8. If the student missed one of them he was considered lacking the ability.

Test-item 7: From a total of 12 answers, four mistakes indicated the absence of the ability.

Test-item 8: The answer was divided into three parts. One mistake was allowed.

Test-item 9: The answer for this test, consisted of five sub-answers. Given the sequential nature of the exercise, only one mistake was allowed.

Test-item 10: In this item, there were eleven sub-items. One mistake would actually result in two wrong answers, which was the limit of mistakes allowed.

3.10 - The criteria for mastery

The present study distinguished among three levels of mastery of reading abilities. The following Table

illustrates the criteria adopted.

Level	Percentage
	100
Independent	↓ 95
	94
Teaching	↓ 80
	79
Frustration	↓

c.f., Bormuth (1969)

According to these criteria, a class group is considered at the independent level when, out of 25 students, up to 2 do not master the ability. If more students failed to master the ability (less than 95%), then the group would need some teaching in the ability. Finally, if more than 6 students, do not master the ability being tested then very close attention should be given to the skill in order to avoid frustrating the students.

3.11 - The Results

The results obtained through the application of the assessment instrument will be presented in chapter IV. There we will consider the presence/absence of reading abilities; comparison of individual groups' performances; comparison between Set 1 and Set 2 performances; intersex performance variations; and the performance of the population tested in particular reading abilities as a predictor of general reading ability.

C H A P T E R IV

RESULTS

4.1 - Introduction

The main questions of this study had to do with the performance of Brazilian students in particular reading abilities. More specifically, the study concerned itself with the presence of certain reading abilities in the mother tongue of the sample population, as well as how those abilities could be transferred to the act of reading foreign language texts.

In this chapter, we will present the results of the reading abilities assessment procedures, as outlined in the Methodology section. Such results must be seen in the light of the limitations proposed by the study itself.

For the sake of convenience, the results will be first summarized in Tables in a very general fashion, after which explanations and specific observations will follow. Remarks will be organized according to the sub-problems posed in our work, as for example: 1. how the different groups compare in the mastery of the abilities; 2. whether the strategies students use in reading affect the results in terms of performance; 3. whether the cloze test can be used as a predictor of reading performance; 4. whether there were differences in male and female population performance.

4.2 - Presentation of Results

Table 2 presents a general overview of the abilities tested and how the subjects performed overall.

TABLE 2 - Overview of presence of abilities given in percentages and rankings.

N = 225		
A B I L I T Y:	Presence of ability: %	Ranking
1. Recognition of the logical sequence in the development of the text	92.9	3 rd
- Discrimination of the kind of text		
2. - Identification of the most suitable reading for a text - Overall comprehension	81.8	7 th
- Identification of the the best summary ...		
3. - Identification of the main idea - Detection of false statements	95.6	1 st
4. Contextual Reference	79.1	8 th
5. Ability to predict language items appropriate for a particular context	65.8	10 th
6. Detection of vocabulary meaning based on context	91.6	5 th
7. Inference	92.9	3 rd
- Ability to follow instructions		
8. - Visualization of descriptions - Reading for specific information	88.4	6 th
9. To Infer the logical sequence of ideas	74.7	9 th
10. Identification of language functions	95.6	1 st

Taking into consideration the three levels of reading proposed in the Methodology section-independent, teaching and frustration we may observe that we have two independent abilities, (3) and (10); five abilities in which students demonstrated a high teaching performance, (1), (2), (6), (7), and (8); and three abilities, (4), (5), and (9), in which the group as a whole had a low performance, corresponding to what we have denominated the frustration level.

Considering that the researcher was quite lenient in her correction criteria as well as in her determination of the presence or absence of abilities, we could characterize the performances in the abilities of "contextual reference" (4), "to predict language items appropriate for a particular context" (5), and "to infer the logical sequence of ideas" (9), as quite low. The low percentages possibly indicate that, on the average, 6 to 9 students in each class group need specific instruction in these three abilities.

It may be observed that rankings were tied in the two first classifications. The first slots were occupied by ability (3), "identification of the best summary for a text", "to find the main idea", "to reject false statements"; and (10), the ability "to identify the functions of the language presented."

The other abilities, both in ranking and in percentage appeared in a more linear fashion thus leading us to conclude that the abilities were progressively more difficult. These very general observations are based on the performance of the tested population as a whole. A closer look at the individual groups' results may offer more meaningful

information in terms of mastery of the abilities tested as well as point to other differences.

Table 3 gives us interesting information about the performance of the students as divided into two sets, sciences and humanities.

The division into these two sets was based on the common sense notion that human knowledge can be subdivided into humanities and the technical fields.

TABLE 3 - Performance of the tested population divided into Science (Set 1) and Humanities (Set 2), given in percentages, with their respective rankings.

ABILITY	PERFORMANCE/RANKING %		N = 225		N = 125		N = 100	
	Overall Average	Ranking	Science Set 1 Average	Ranking	Humanities Set 2 Average	Ranking	Overall Average	Ranking
1. Recognition of the logical sequence in the development of the text	92.9	3rd	96.0	2nd	89.0	4th		
- Discrimination of the kind of text								
2.- Identification of the most suitable heading for a text	81.8	7th	79.2	8th	85.0	6th		
- Overall comprehension								
- Identification of the best summary ...								
3.- Identification of the main idea	95.6	1st	94.4	2nd	97.0	1st		
- Detection of false statements								
4. Contextual Reference	79.1	8th	81.6	7th	76.0	9th		
5. Ability to predict language items appropriate for a particular context	65.8	10th	72.8	9th	57.0	10th		
6. Detection of vocabulary meaning based on context	91.6	5th	92.8	5th	90.0	3rd		
7. Inference	92.9	3rd	97.6	1st	87.0	5th		
- Ability to follow instructions								
8. - Visualization of descriptions	88.4	6th	92.0	6th	84.0	7th		
- Reading for specific information								
9. To Infer the logical sequence of ideas	74.7	9th	72.8	9th	77.0	8th		
10. Identification of language functions	95.6	1st	94.4	2nd	97.0	1st		
Overall Average			87.3		83.9			

The percentages in Table 3 seem to indicate similarities and discrepancies in the performance of the two sets of students in the different abilities. In terms of similarities, there is a group of abilities - (3), (6), and (10), in which both sets fall into the 90th percentile; on the other hand, there are several abilities - (5) and (9) - in which both sets demonstrate low performance percentages.

A performance slightly below the mean was achieved by both sets in ability (8). Although the ranking of the ability in the two sets of students differed by only 1, there were 8 percent more students in Set 1 than in Set 2 who mastered it.

The differences are also quite obvious if we analyse the percentages on abilities (5) and (7), respectively. In ability (5), the ranking is very close but the difference in terms of percentage is around 15%. A large difference shows up in terms of ranking in ability (7), which is first for the science groups and 5th for the humanities students.

Table 3 also shows that in most abilities the science set has higher percentages in terms of the number of students who master the different abilities, an overall percentage of 87.2 against 84% for Set 2. Nevertheless, the humanities set slightly surpasses the science students in four abilities - (2), (3), (9), and (10).

The analysis of Table 3 gives the reader more specific information than the general overview of Table 2. This suggests that a more detailed analysis of the performance of the different class groups in the two sets will possibly give further insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the

students on the abilities tested.

Table 4 and 5 provide more detailed information on the performance of the science and the humanities class groups. Again some differences and similarities can be pointed out.

TABLE 4.- Comparison of performance among the class groups of Set 1, given in percentages, followed by the average percentages and rankings within Set 1.

ABILITY	Set 1/%						N=125 Average	Ranking
	N = 25 Agronomy	N = 25 Dentistry	N = 25 Nutrition	N = 25 Physics	N = 25 Mech.Eng.	N = 125 Average		
1. Recognition of the logical sequence in the development of the text	92	100	96	96	88	94.4	2 nd	
- Discrimination of the kind of text								
2 - Identification of the most suitable reading for a text	72	84	92	72	76	80	8 th	
- Overall comprehension								
- Identification of the best summary ...								
3 - Identification of the main idea	96	96	84	96	100	94.4	2 nd	
- Detection of false statements								
4. Contextual Reference	88	84	76	76	84	81.6	7 th	
5. Ability to predict language items appropriate for a particular context	92	72	64	56	80	72.8	9 th	
6. Detection of vocabulary meaning based on context	96	92	88	92	96	92.8	5 th	
7. Inference	100	100	96	96	96	97.6	1 st	
- Ability to follow instructions								
8 - Visualization of descriptions	100	88	92	96	84	92.	6 th	
- Reading for specific information								
9. To Infer the logical sequence of ideas	64	76	80	72	72	72.8	9 th	
10. Identification of language functions	92	96	96	92	96	94.4	2 nd	

TABLE 5 - Comparison of performances among the class groups of Set 2, given in percentages, followed by the average percentages and rankings within Set 2.

ABILITY:	Set 2/%				Average	Ranking
	N = 25 Education	N = 25 Soc. Sciences	N = 25 Letters	N = 25 Library Sc.		
1. Recognition of the logical sequence in development of the text	96	88	84	88	88	4 th
- Discrimination of the kind of text						
2 - Identification of the most suitable heading for a text	88	92	80	80	85	6 th
- Overall comprehension						
- Identification of the best summary ...						
3 - Identification of the main idea	100	100	96	92	99.5	1 st
- Detection of false statements						
4. Contextual Reference	88	64	76	76	76	9 th
5. Ability to predict language items appropriate for a particular context	56	56	64	52	57	10 th
6. Detection of vocabulary meaning based on context	92	92	100	76	90	3 rd
7. Inference	96	84	88	80	87	5 th
- Ability to follow instructions						
8 - Visualization of descriptions	88	80	84	84	84	7 th
- Reading for specific information						
9. To Infer the logical sequence of ideas	84	68	76	80	77	8 th
10. Identification of language functions	100	96	96	96	97	2 nd

As expected, the data as distributed in Tables 4 and 5 allow us to make more accurate statements about how the various abilities are mastered by the different groups of students. It also seems to indicate the discrepancies and similarities in the performance levels among the various groups.

The performance of the sciences and humanities Sets were quite similar in abilities (3), (6), and (10). A closer look into the specific class groups performance shows a remarkable homogeneity.

In ability (9), the two sets' performances were similar: both sets achieved low scores and the rankings presented a variation of only 1.

A further similarity is observable in (5), the ability "to predict language items appropriate for a particular context." Although both sets demonstrated low performances, the individual class groups within humanities consistently demonstrate low mastery of the ability.

In all other abilities - (1), (2), (4), (7) and (8) - both sets had quite different results in average and in ranking, and it may be noticed that there seems to be a general tendency for the science set to perform better than the humanities.

These differences can be further specified by looking at the deviations of the differences in the various abilities in which the two sets did better.

Tables of deviations;

TABLE 6 - Deviation of scores of Set 1 and Set 2 in the abilities in which Set 1 performed better.

ABILITY	Set 1/%	Set 2/%	d
1	96.0	89.0	7.0
4	81.6	76.0	5.6
5	72.8	57.0	15.8
6	92.8	90.0	2.8
7	97.6	87.0	10.6
8	92.0	84.0	8.0,
T O T A L:			49.8
Mean Deviation:			8.3

TABLE 7 - Deviation of scores of Set 1 and Set 2 in the abilities in which Set 2 performed better.

ABILITY	Set 2/%	Set 1/%	d
2	85.0	79.2	5.8
3	97.0	94.4	5.1
9	77.0	72.8	4.2
10	97.0	94.4	2.6
T O T A L:			15.2
Mean Deviation:			3.8

As may be observed, the level of mastery of Set 1 is noticeably higher than that of Set 2.

Regarding our basic question concerning the presence or absence of reading abilities, a clear pattern seems to emerge from Tables 4 and 5.

One group of abilities, (3) and (4) in Set 2 and (7) in Set 1, is rather well established, none of them being at the full independent level, although some abilities come very close to the 100% level of mastery in the different class groups.

On the other hand, there is a group of abilities, (5) and (9), in Set 1, in which 7 students, on the average, need help.

In Set 2, the lowest performances were in abilities (4), (5) and (9), which stand under the 80% level of mastery in the various class groups. In ability (5), indeed, the percentage came very close to 50% of mastery.

As could be noticed, the more specifically the information is analysed, the more insightful it becomes in terms of the performance of the different class groups of students.

In a further step of our investigation, pursuing this specificity we compared the performances of groups with extreme classifications. In Table 8, Agronomy, which achieved the highest overall performance is opposed to Library Science, the group with the lowest overall performance.

TABLE 8 - Comparison of performances between Agronomy, the highest scoring class group, and Library Science, the lowest scoring class group, given in percentages and rankings.

A B I L I T Y		Agronomy Average % N = 25	Ranking	Library Science Average % N = 25	Ranking
1.	Recognition of the logical sequence in the development of the text	92	5 th	88	3 rd
2.	- Discrimination of the kind of text - Identification of the most suitable heading for a text - Overall comprehension	72	9 th	80	5 th
3.	- Identification of the best summary for a text - Identification of the main idea - Detection of false statements	96	3 rd	92	2 nd
4.	Contextual Reference	88	8 th	76	8 th
5.	Ability to predict language items appropriate for a particular context	92	5 th	52	10 th
6.	Detection of vocabulary meaning based on context	96	3 rd	76	8 th
7.	Inference	100	1 st	80	5 th
8.	- Ability to follow instructions - Visualization of descriptions - Reading for specific information	100	1 st	84	4 th
9.	To Infer the logical sequence of ideas	64	10 th	80	5 th
10.	Identification of language functions	92	5 th	96	1 st

The Agronomy class group has a higher percentage of students who master most skills. The only exceptions are abilities (2) and (9). It is also important to point out that the Science Set masters four abilities, numbers (3), (6), (7) and (8) at the independent level, while the Library Science class group only reaches this level in ability (10).

The analysis of rankings demonstrates the discrepancies between the two class groups as, for example, abilities (5), (7), (9) and (10). The highest score of Library Science was in ability (9) - 96% -, which corresponds to the 3rd highest score of the Agronomy class group - ability (6). The 10th ranking score of the Library Science class group-ability (5) - is 40% lower than the 5th of Agronomy. On the other hand, the 10th ranking score of the Agronomy students - ability 9 - is only 16% lower than the 5th of the Library Science class group.

Since wide discrepancies are observable in the analysis of the two class groups just presented, it would be worthwhile investigating whether such differences would also show up in other class groups tested. Table 9 compares the performances of Dentistry (the 2nd strongest showing) and Social Science (the 2nd weakest showing).

TABLE 9 - Comparison of performances between Dentistry (the 2nd strongest class group) and Social Sciences (the 2nd weakest class group) given in percentages and rankings.

ABILITY	GROUPS - % RANKING	Dentistry N = 25	Ranking Soc. Sciences N = 25	Ranking
1. Recognition of the logical sequence in the development of the text		100	88	1 st 5 th
- Discrimination of the kind of text				
2 - Identification of the most suitable heading for a text		84	92	7 th 3 rd
- Overall comprehension				
- Identification of the best summary for a text				
3 - Identification of the main idea		96	100	3 rd 1 st
- Detection of false statements				
4. Contextual Reference		84	64	7 th 9 th
5. Ability to predict language items appropriate for a particular context		72	56	10 th 10 th
6. Detection of vocabulary meaning based on context		92	92	5 th 3 rd
7. Inference		100	84	1 st 6 th
- Ability to follow instructions				
8 - Visualization of descriptions		88	76	6 th 7 th
- Reading for specific information				
9. To Infer the logical sequence of ideas		76	68	9 th 8 th
10. Identification of language functions		96	96	3 rd 2 nd

Table 9 allows us to conclude that although the differences do not seem to be as striking as those observed in Table 8, there still exist some discrepancies between the class groups, particularly in abilities (1), (4), (5), (7), and (8).

Closer scores may be observed in abilities (2), (3), (6), (9) and (10).

Very low performances are recorded for abilities (4), (5) and (9), in the Social Science group, where 8 to 11 students failed to master the abilities. In this group, these three abilities would deserve very close attention on the part of the teachers.

Although the lowest performance for both groups is in ability (5), it may be noticed that the difference between the two groups is of 16%.

With regard to the four groups observed so far, it seems that the performance in ability (5), considered as a "general" ability, actually correlated well with the performance in the other abilities. In other words, the higher the performance in this ability, the better the overall performance of the group.

The analysis of Table 10 allows the researcher to make further observations about the mastery of the different groups.

TABLE 10 - Comparison of performances between Education (the strongest class group of Set 2) and Physics (the weakest class group of Set 1).

ABILITY	GROUPS - % RANKING	Physics N = 25	Ranking	Education N = 25	Ranking
1. Recognition of the logical sequence in the development of the text		96	1st	96	3rd
- Discrimination of the kind of text					
2 - Identification of the most suitable heading for a text		72	9th	88	6th
- Overall comprehension					
- Identification of the best summary for a text					
3 - Identification of the main idea		96	1st	100	1st
- Detection of false statements					
4. Contextual Reference		76	8th	88	6th
5. Ability to predict language items appropriate for a particular context		56	10th	56	10th
6. Detection of vocabulary meaning based on context		92	4th	92	5rd
7. Inference		92	4rd	96	3rd
- Ability to follow instructions					
8 - Visualization of descriptions		96	1rd	88	6th
- Reading for specific information					
9. To Infer the logical sequence of ideas		72	9th	84	9th
10. Identification of language functions		92	4th	100	1st

This time, the differences between the two sets are less striking as, for example, in abilities (3), (5), (6), (7), and (9), where the rankings and averages of both groups are quite similar.

Abilities (2), (4), (8) and (10) display the most noticeable differences, but they are less striking than those observed in TABLE 8.

Very significant, however, are the performances of both groups in ability (5), leading us to establish the correlation between the performance in this ability and the overall performance of the group.

Since it appears that the class groups had quite different scores in the various abilities and that ability (5) was the common indicator of their respective overall performance, it seems worthwhile to observe in closer detail the performances of the group in ability (5).

TABLE 11 provides the necessary information for analysis.

TABLE 11 - Performance of each class group, in test-item (5), given in percentages, taking previous reading into consideration.

GROUPS / N=25	Abilities' absence/presence direct/pre-reading %		Reading		Presence of abilities		Absence of abilities	
	Pre-Read	Direct	Pre-Read	Direct	Pre-Read	Direct	Pre-Read	Direct
AGRONOMY	40	60	36	56	4	4		
DENTISTRY	40	60	28	44	12	16		
NUTRITION	44	56	36	28	8	28		
PHYSICS	52	48	40	16	12	32		
MECHANICAL ENGINEERING	40	60	32	48	8	12		
SOCIAL SCIENCE	44	56	20	32	24	24		
EDUCATION	40	60	20	36	20	24		
LIBRARY SCIENCE	44	56	28	24	16	32		
LETTERS	48	52	36	28	12	24		
TOTAL %	43.5	56.4	30.7	34.7	12.8	21.7		

According to the definition of reading on which the present work is based, it would follow that guessing, as well as previous knowledge, might be crucial factors in reading. Consequently, we could expect to find a better performance in ability (5) - the cloze test - for the students who pre-read the text, before doing the exercise, in opposition to the students who decided to fill the cloze slots without pre-reading the text.

We could notice that the majority of students did not give a general look at the text before doing the exercise. We expected to find a high correlation between the previous reading and good performance on the test. However, observing the data found in Table 11, we realized that the presence of the ability is not necessarily associated with the previous reading of the text.

On the other hand, the absence of the ability is noticeably higher among students who have not pre-read the text (cf., columns 6 and 7).

Based on these observations we were inclined to establish a correlation between the lack of necessity of a previous reading and the better performance. In other words, efficient readers do not need to give a first look at the text.

Let us compare these findings with the data presented in Table 12, which offers a comparison of performances in test-item (5) and the overall performance of each group.

TABLE 12 - Comparison of performance in test-item 5 and the overall performance of each class group.

Performances/ Ranking % GROUPS /N=25	Item (5)	Ranking	Overall by group, (5) not included	Ranking	Overall by group, (5) included	Ranking
AGRONOMY	92.0	1st	80.0	3rd	89.2	1st
DENTISTRY	72.0	3rd	81.6	2nd	88.9	2nd
NUTRITION	64.0	4th	80.0	3rd	86.4	5th
PHYSICS	56.0	6th	78.4	6th	84.0	7th
MECHANICAL ENGINEERING	80.0	2nd	80.0	3rd	88.0	4th
SOCIAL SCIENCE	56.0	6th	76.0	8th	81.6	8th
EDUCATION	56.0	6th	83.2	1st	88.8	3rd
LIBRARY SCIENCE	52.0	9th	75.2	9th	80.4	9th
LETTERS	64.0	4th	78.0	7th	84.4	6th

TABLE 12 provides us with insights as to whether the cloze test - ability (5) - would be a good predictor of reading ability as assessed in our work. If such an assumption were true, the groups which demonstrated performance above 75% , in the other abilities, should present a similar performance in ability (5).

Observing the ranking columns of TABLE 12, however, we find that only Physics and Library Science behaved according to such a pattern. This leads us to conclude that there is not enough evidence to support such a claim. Perhaps the lack of positive correlation is due to the fact that the ability is being contrasted with general results and not with specific reading abilities, thereby diluting the results somewhat.

So far, we have analysed the results of our assessment in terms of overall performance, individual performances and the relationship among specific reading abilities. Having noted intergroup variations, it would be interesting to observe whether there are also variations in the sample population tested.

Table 13 compares the performance of men and women. Twenty women and twenty men were randomly selected. The average performance difference between women and men was around 10%. Test-item (5) showed the largest difference, in favor of the masculine sex. In all other items, the difference was smaller, with a general tendency for men to perform better.

As we had no control whatsoever as to the socio-economic and educational level of the students, nor as

to their academic background, it would be presumptuous to try to explain the result. There is evidence that the majority of men belonged to Set 1 (an area of higher concentration of the masculine sex), which scored higher than Set 2.

TABLE 13 - Comparison of Men's and Women's performances for given abilities, expressed in percentages and rankings.

ABILITY	MEN/WOMEN %	MEN N = 20	RANKING	WOMEN N = 20	RANKING
1. Recognition of the logical sequence in the development of the text		100	1st	85	5th
- Discrimination of the kind of text					
- Indentification of the most suitable heading for a text		70	10th	85	5th
- Overall comprehension					
- Identification of the best summary for a text		100	1st	100	1st
- Identification of the main idea					
- Detection of false statements		80	8th	70	9th
4. Contextual Reference					
5. Ability to predict language items appropriate for a particular context		85	6th	55	10th
6. Detection of vocabulary meaning based on context		90	5th	90	3rd
7. Inference		95	3rd	90	3rd
- Ability to follow instructions					
- Visualization of descriptions		95	3rd	80	8th
- Reading for specific information					
9. To Infer the logical sequence of ideas		75	9th	85	5th
10. Identification of language functions		85	6th	100	1st

We observed that our sample had the following distribution:

Total number of men in Set 1: 16

Total number of men in Set 2: 4

Total number of women in Set 1: 5

Total number of women in Set 2: 15

This clearly shows the pattern of our sample in terms of sex distribution in the different professions. However, the control we had over the male/female population was insufficient to enable us to explain the differences in performance. If we concluded that the difference was due to sex variation, rather than to educational background or to the social-economic level, then we would be forced to conclude that Set 1 scored higher than Set 2 mainly given the fact that the former was mostly composed of men.

Another explanation could be related to sampling procedure. As we said above, 20 men and 20 women were taken randomly from the whole population tested. Maybe if another sampling technique were applied, different results would have been obtained.

As we needed to get to more definitive results, we decided to analyse the performance of men/women taking the whole population into consideration.

We observed the performance of each of the students tested. An interesting finding is that the highest marks in the Sets belonged to women. Next, we compared the averages of male and female populations, in each class group.

We arrived at the results showed in TABLE 14

TABLE 14 - Comparison of the average performances of Men and Women, given in percentages, for each class group.

GROUP	AVERAGES %	
	MEN N = 100	WOMEN N = 125
AGRONOMY	62.15	82.7
DENTISTRY	66.2	67.1
NUTRITION	64.6	64.8
PHYSICS	63.1	65.5
MECHANICAL ENGINEERING	65.2	64.5
SOCIAL SCIENCE	58.0	60.6
EDUCATION	61.0	61.4
LIBRARY SCIENCE	74.0	64.9
LETTERS	65.0	62.5
TOTAL AVERAGE:	64.0	66.0

So far we have presented the results obtained through the assessment of reading abilities. First we presented a very general overview of the performance of the tested population. Secondly, we made a more detailed analysis of intergroup performance, which offered us interesting information in terms of differences and similarities. Thirdly, we compared the high/low class groups' performances and observed interesting differences among these class groups; we also looked at ability (5) as predictor of general reading performance and considered the factor of "pre-reading" the text as determining the performance in test-item (5). Finally, we observed intersex variations in performance among the tested population.

In the next section, we will discuss the outcomes of the results presented in the previous pages.

C H A P T E R V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Discussion

In the previous section we analyzed the results of our assessment. In this section, we will discuss our results in light of our study's main question, concerning the presence/absence of reading abilities in the mother tongue, and second, we will present some consideration about how these abilities may relate to learning to read foreign language texts.

The works of Groebel (1980) and Alderson (1977) are closely related to these questions.

In Alderson's study, carried out in Mexico, the correlation between L1 and L2 reading competence is investigated. The results showed a low positive correlation for reading ability in Spanish and reading ability in English. Furthermore, the author concluded that the best predictor of reading ability in English was not reading ability in Spanish - the mother tongue - but proficiency in the foreign language.

This conclusion seems to indicate that success in reading a FL may be related to variables other than MT competence. It is important to point out that, although it is low, the study does indicate a positive correlation between reading ability in the MT and in the FL.

Groebel's study, developed in Israel, raised the question of whether a significant positive correlation exists between a student's level of reading comprehension in his native language and his level of reading comprehension in the target language. The researcher found a high positive correlation.

These studies seem to present quite contradictory results. On the one hand, Groebel's study corroborates the point of view on which the present work is based, i.e., good command of an ability in the M.T. is an indicator of probable success in the target language. On the other hand, Alderson's study seems to be in opposition to the very conception of this work and Groebel's finding as well. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that Alderson did find a correlation, although low, between mother tongue and foreign language reading comprehension. Thus, at the moment, there is no evidence invalidating the premise of our work.

According to the theory of reading and the definition of the fluent MT reader on which our study is based, we contend that mother tongue competence is an important pre-requisite for the successful reading of foreign language texts. We also assume that language transfer does occur and that we can expect adult learners who are already literate in L1 to make use of their previous language knowledge as well as their experiential background (cf., Goodman, 1968-1971; Smith, 1971-1978; Wode, 1979; Groebel, 1980; Sandberg, 1976; Mackay, 1979; among others).

Having these premises in mind we can refer back to the results of our assessment and see which abilities are best mastered by the different groups, and what implications such mastery may have for teaching these groups reading in a foreign language. We can likewise note which abilities show the lowest performance in the different groups as well as draw the pedagogical implications.

Our results showed, in a broad analysis, that two abilities - (3) and (10) - are the only ones in which all class groups proved to be at the independent level and thus no special pedagogical attention is needed in these areas. According to the assumptions made about reading and the characterization of the fluent reader, we could possibly expect students to make use, through a transfer process, of such abilities in reading foreign language texts. Of course, the task of reading in a foreign language obviously involves some variables which make this process more complex than reading in the mother tongue. The foreign language teacher should be prepared to offer additional instructional training even in those skills in which students performed well. Grauberg's study (1971) presents evidence to support this viewpoint. According to his study, educators have found that students learn those instructional or content items that are emphasized in the classroom, while having a natural tendency to forget and not internalize matters which have not the same degree of emphasis in the teaching process.

Thus, attention is needed even for the abilities which are mastered by a larger number of students. In abilities such as (1), (3), (6), (8) and (10), in Set 1, and (1), (2), (7) and (8), in Set 2, in which the students' performance may be classified at the "teaching" level, teachers should be concerned to provide students with exercises which would give more practice in the skill. Abilities ranked at the "frustration" level - (2), (4), (5) and (9), in Set 1, and (4), (5) and (9), in Set 2 - would need even more careful consideration on the part of teachers in order to adequately train students.

The discrepancies observed between the two Sets' performances become more marked when we compare the performances of individual class groups as, for example, Agronomy and Library Science. These class groups earned the first and last classifications, respectively, in our analysis. As a preliminary observation we would again point out that the results of these two class groups should not be interpreted to mean that Agronomy students would deserve no attention on specific reading skills, because of their good performance, and students of Library Science should be treated as "not being able to read". Rather, the discrepancies seem to indicate the need for different pedagogical approaches as well as signal problems that students will probably face in their academic and/or professional activities. Perhaps one class group would need more specific practice in the abilities tested while the other group could spend time on other learning topics.

We could also observe that, although Set 1 may be said to have achieved better overall performance as compared to Set 2, not all the class groups of Set 1 were uniformly strong, nor were all class groups from Set 2 consistently weak. We may cite the specific cases of Physics, in Set 1, and Education, in Set 2.

Each class group has its own particular strengths and weaknesses, which would seem to confirm the importance of orienting the teaching activities of reading courses according to the specific students' needs and levels.

The variation in performance among students belonging to the same area of studies and, in some cases, to the same class group and possibly having similar intellectual capacities, seems to reflect the "state of the art" of the Brazilian educational system, in which we have some very demanding schools where the teaching profession is taken seriously, in contrast with very weak school systems where students have not good opportunities for learning. Nevertheless, while research is needed to determine the actual source of the discrepancies in the students' levels in the primary and secondary school systems, university teachers are still faced with very heterogeneous class groups, as our results seem to indicate.

A short-term solution, for teaching purposes, might be the individual diagnosis of students' strengths and weaknesses at the beginning of the course. An analysis of those diagnoses will enable the teacher to better establish the objectives, choose materials and select methodological procedures to develop the proposed areas of linguistic competence.

One of the problems immediately raised by diagnosis is how to assess the abilities that the particular course is proposing. Although the testing instruments devised for our study could be used for diagnostic purposes, it might not be as practical an instrument as the classroom practitioner would need. Specific suggestions as to what might be used for diagnostic purposes fall outside of the scope of this dissertation. In the results of our study, however, it seems that the cloze test did not prove to be a good overall predictor of general reading ability. Thus, the cloze technique may not be considered an optimal device for diagnostic purposes, at least not in the way "comprehension" was factored in this study. Moreover, recent literature on language testing research has been critical of the cloze procedure as an overall comprehension predictor and as such a good measure for reading ability (cf., Oller, 1980).

Our findings also contradicted somewhat the commonly accepted principle that pre-reading is a requisite for good understanding. Our study does not entirely support this claim. Our analysis reveals that good performance on the test is not necessarily associated with pre-reading. In other words, efficient readers need not give a first look at the text in order to provide adequate substitutions. Our finding possibly indicates that while less skillful readers need to give a general look at the text and thus use context to help them play the "guessing-game", efficient readers are already acquainted with the "sampling, predicting, rejecting/confirming" technique of extracting meaning from written language,

projecting much of themselves towards the text, and bringing to reading the most pertinent "questions". For teaching purposes, the varied strategies employed by the less skillfull/efficient readers seem to indicate that different pedagogical treatment should be given to the difficulties which different students, or groups of students, are faced with. Weak students might need specific instruction where the strong ones would not , and we can expect students from different educational backgrounds to perform differently.

In our analysis of the results, the inter and intragroup variations in performance could be regarded as quite meaningful in so far as pedagogical implications are concerned.

By the same token, the slight difference detected in the performance of the male and female populations tested might indicate that no pedagogical discrimination should be made in this respect.

We have assumed in this study that the human being is a very active character in the reading process and that prior knowledge and experiential background are vital factors of this process. We see the mental structures of the reader as an important variable in learning. We also assumed that previous knowledge is used to solve new problems and answer new questions. Such assumptions can lead us to conclude that reading a foreign language is very much a transfer process, not only in the sense that very specific abilities are transferred from one language to the other, but in a more general and global perspective of learning.

Another point of view to consider is Alderson's proposal that certain language knowledge may be a good prerequisite in learning to read a FL, an idea corroborated by Swan. If we take this viewpoint to the extreme, we could say that our findings, at least in their broad outlines, suggest that teaching reading might not be the main task in foreign language reading classes. Teaching the language would be the priority, and competence in reading would come as a natural consequence of language learning.

Far from proposing such a radical teaching procedure, we would like to propose a compromise: teaching both reading strategies and the language. Our compromise position does not mean that we deny the importance Scott (1979) places on reading strategies. On the contrary, his emphasis seems to be a valid approach, especially for the Brazilian educational system, in which students are not given training in specific language strategies. An analysis of the students' performance in the test applied in this study indicates that most students are not aware of reading strategies as proposed by Scott. We would therefore conclude that reading courses should provide instruction in the reading strategies used by the fluent reader.

By "instruction" we mean "providing the means for learning". We cannot expect to "teach" students highly inferential skills such as ability (7), for example. Maybe what can be taught are skills related to the grammatical aspects, for example, (4) "contextual reference". Nevertheless, both abilities - (4) and (7) - may be seen as common to both Portuguese and English, rather than as idiosyncratic aspects

of one particular language. In other words, it is not language peculiarities but thinking processes which are mastered by cognitively mature individuals.

Reading teachers have to face the theoretical problems of how to define the reading process as well as understand its psycholinguistic nature, and, based on these foundations, clearly delineate the objectives of reading courses.

In the teachers' survey referred to in this work, we noticed that among professionals of the area there is not a common view on what exactly is meant by reading comprehension. Perhaps this is not so much their fault as of the reading research itself, which has not yet developed sufficiently to provide them with insightful answers.

For classroom practitioners, what implications could be drawn from such conclusions?

Possibly, that we should make the sort of compromise between the transfer of L1 reading skills and knowledge of the foreign language referred to above and, at the same time, look for more satisfying answers. In other words, if we need to know more precisely what our students' reading problems are, then we should turn our classrooms into insightful laboratories of the subject we are "teaching" and of the students we are "dealing" with.

5.2. Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusions to be presented in this section must be considered in light of the limitations recognized by the study itself. Far from being the last word on the matter, they are rather first steps toward understanding how linguistic competence in the mother tongue can be transferred to the foreign language.

Based on the analysis and discussion of the assessment results, we were able to reach the following conclusions:

1 - The overall results in terms of abilities were rather positive; i.e., quite a few of the abilities tested come very close to the "independent" level of mastery, while other abilities were ranked at the "teaching" level, and only a few of them at the "frustration" level.

2 - There were inter and intragroup variations in the levels of mastery reached.

3 - Certain study areas demonstrated a higher performance level than other areas. There seems to be a clear pattern of intergroup variations as to presence/absence of particular reading abilities.

4 - There are indications that some abilities presented students with more difficulty than others.

5 - It became clear from the analysis of results and discussion that even when an ability is mastered by a high percentage of students in the group, there should still be

some teaching activity related to that ability.

6 - Because of intragroup variations it seems quite obvious that personalized reading programmes would be pedagogically advisable.

7 - Intersex score variations apparently showed a slightly higher performance for women. This was not showned significant enough to justify an special treatment for either sex.

8 - The inter and intragroup variations observed led us to conclude that diagnostic procedures are necessary.

9 - Some of the assessed abilities are almost entirely, and others partially, mastered by the subjects tested. But it is not clear exactly how these abilities can be transferred to the foreign language reading process. Therefore, comparative studies like Alderson's and Groebel's are highly recommended.

10 - Research is needed to determine how much time should be spent in teaching reading strategies and how much in teaching language in the foreign language classroom.

11 - Foreign language reading teachers have not a clear idea of what reading is and what abilities underly the reading comprehension construct.

12 - The students' different experiential and academic backgrounds seem to affect their level of performance in the reading process.

13 - We could notice that it is not always easy to determine whether a test actually assesses what it is

intended to.

14 - From the problems faced during the elaboration of the study, we became aware of the need to train English language professionals in basic research design and project.

15 - By observing subjects who did or not pre-read the "cloze text", we learned that efficient and non-efficient readers use different strategies to solve reading problems.

16 - In spite of the commonly accepted notion that certain testing techniques would be good measures for the comprehension construct, the cloze test might not be a good overall predictor for general reading ability as presented in our study.

17 - In spite of our results, the question of how much linguistic competence in the mother tongue can be transferred to reading a foreign language remains basically unanswered because of the transfer process itself, of which we still know little. More projects with very specific questions are necessary to explore this theme.

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APPENDIX

The Reading Comprehension Test

Esta apostila em que você irá trabalhar, trata-se de um instrumento de pesquisa. Os exercícios, aqui incluídos, têm por finalidade determinar o seu desempenho em leitura. O que você tem a fazer é ler, com atenção, as instruções dadas e executar as diferentes tarefas.

Caso você não saiba alguma resposta, não responda, isto é, procure não chutar.

OBS: O número de acertos de cada aluno será fornecido, no tempo devido, por seu (sua) professor (a). Por isso, não esqueça de colocar o seu nome e turma.

NOME:

TURMA:

1. O texto que você lerá está desorganizado. Numere, de 1 a 5, as sentenças, na ordem correta, de acordo com o sentido do texto.

() Doze luas passaram-se sem que o moço guerreiro voltasse.

() E aí está a origem dessa pedra preciosa. Proveio de lágrimas de amor.

() Foi nessa época que o índio Oiti, valente entre os mais valentes, se despediu de Potira, sua esposa e desceu o rio para dar combate a uma tribo inimiga.

() E quando lhe veio a certeza de que não o veria mais, Potira chorou de saudades. Suas lágrimas

misturaram-se com a areia da praia e Tupã transformou-as em diamantes.

- () Antes muito antes do ano de 1500, o Brasil chamava-se Pindorama e vivia à sombra de mil palmeiras.

Ability assessed: 1 - Recognition of the logical sequence in the development of the text

2. Ao seu ver, qual seria o título mais adequado para esse texto?

- a) Lágrimas de Amor.
- b) Aventuras na Terra de Pindorama.
- c) A Lenda do Diamante.
- d) O Valente Oiti.

- A.A: 1. Discrimination of the kind of text
2. Identification of the most suitable heading for a text
3. Overall comprehension
-

3. Escolha, abaixo, a afirmativa que melhor caracterize a idéia central do texto.

- a) O diamante é a pedra preciosa de maior valor.
- b) Lágrimas, quando caem na areia, transformam-se em diamantes.
- c) O verdadeiro amor é tão precioso e raro como um diamante.
- d) No século XVI é que descobriu-se diamantes em território brasileiro.

- A.A. 1. Identification of the best summary for a text
- 2. Identification of the main idea
- 3. Detection of false statements

4. Localize, no texto, a que se referem as seguintes palavras:

- a) os
- b) lhe
- c) o
- d) as

1.4 - Nas frases:

- a) dessa pedra preciosa; dessa refere-se a
-
- b) foi nessa época; nessa refere-se a
-

A.A: 4 - Contextual reference

5. Leia o texto com atenção. Você irá notar que, em cada sentença, uma (só uma) palavra foi omitida. Preencha os espaços em branco, de acordo com o sentido do texto. Lembre-se, cada espaço em branco corresponde a uma palavra que foi omitida.

"Faz três dias que voltei a entrar, depois uma longa ausência, em minha casa em Valparaíso. (2) Grandes gretas feriam paredes. (3) Os cristais formavam um doloroso tapete sobre o chão dos apósentos. (4) Os relógios, também no mar cavam teimosamente a hora do terremoto. (5) Quantas coisas belas Matilde varria agora com uma (6) Quantos objetos raros que o abalo da transformou em lixo.

(7) Temos que limpar, pôr em e começar tudo de novo. (8) Custa encontrar o papel em meio à e depois é difícil ordenar os pensamentos.

(9) Meus últimos trabalhos f tradução de Romeu e Julieta e um longo poema de, poema que inconcluso.

(10) Vamos, poema de amor, levanta- dentre os vidros partidos que chegou a de cantar.

(11) Ajuda-me, poema de, a restabelecer a integridade, a cantar sobre a dor.

(12) É verdade que o mundo não se limpa de guer

ras, não se lava sangue, não
 corrige do ódio. (13) verdade.

(14) Mas é igualmente que nos aproximamos
mos de uma evidência: os violentos refletem
 no espelho do mundo e seu rosto não é bonito
 para eles mesmos.

(15) E continuo acreditando possibilidade
 do amor.

(16) Tenho certeza do entendimento os
 seres humanos, logrado sobre o sofrimento, sobre
 sangue e os cristais quebrados."

Pablo Neruda

A.A: 5 - Ability to predict language items appropriate
 for a particular context.

6. Preencha as lacunas da direita com o número correspon
 dente da esquerda.

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----|-------------|
| 1. integridade | () | acercar |
| 2. greta | () | conseguido |
| 3. logrado | () | estremecido |
| 4. entendimento | () | inteireza |
| 5. abalo | () | cômodos |
| 6. aposentos | () | organizar |
| 7. aproximar | () | compreensão |
| 8. ordenar | () | fenda |

A.A: 6 - Detection of vocabulary meaning based on
context

7. Marque (C) ou (E), de acordo com o texto:

- () Mesmo em meio à destruição, há sempre uma maneira de recomeçar.
- () A casa do autor era acarpetada.
- () O autor demonstra seu otimismo quando escreve:
"Temos que limpar, pôr em ordem, começar tudo de novo."
- () O autor parece ser indiferente aos objetos quebra
dos.
- () O poeta não terminou a tradução de Romeu e Julie
ta.
- () Na sentença 8, o "papel" que está perdido "em meio à desordem" é um poema de amor.
- () O autor vem com bastante frequência a Valparaíso.
- () O texto nos transmite uma mensagem de otimismo alia
da a um profundo realismo.
- () O autor acredita no entendimento entre os seres hu
manos, mesmo sabendo que o ódio e a violência não serão facilmente apagados da face da terra.
- () Os relógios, apesar de estarem no chão, ainda fun

cionavam.

- () Através da desordem descrita no texto, o autor nos quer transmitir o total pessimismo com que vê o mundo.
- () O poeta acredita no amor sem dor.

A.A: 7 - Inference

8. O que você lerá a seguir é a descrição de um mapa imaginário de uma cidade universitária. Você terá de fazer o seguinte: leia o texto com atenção. A seguir, compare a informação que lhe foi dada no texto com cada um dos mapas abaixo. Somente um é correto. Identifique-o com um (x). Nos outros dois, marque com uma seta (†) onde não está de acordo com a descrição e explique porque não está correto.

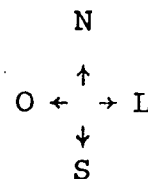
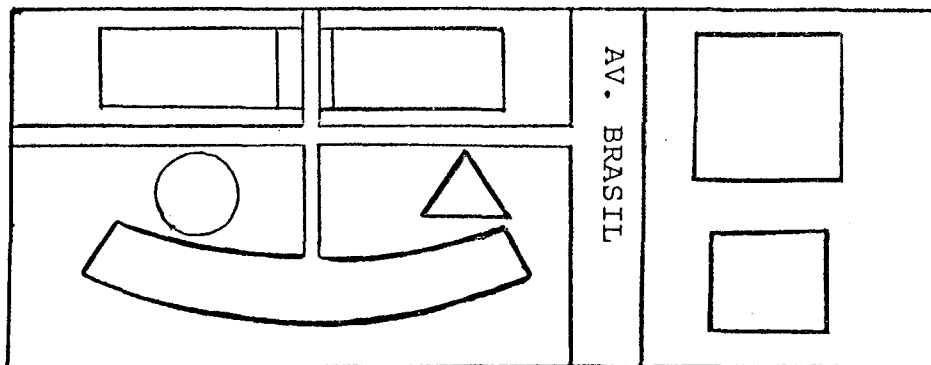
"O campus universitário é pequeno e compacto. Ele situa-se ao sul da cidade, ocupando uma área relativamente pequena. O formato do campus é o de um retângulo, mais ou menos. Um terço da área do campus fica a leste da Avenida Brasil. Na semana passada, três estudantes foram atropelados ao atravessar a avenida e, por isso, o conselho universitário está pensando em fechá-lo ao tráfego. A leste da avenida, ficam os prédios da Reitoria e o da Biblioteca. Ambos são quadrados porém o da Reitoria fica ao sul e é um pouco maior que o da

Biblioteca.

Os dois terços restantes da área do campus ficam a oeste da avenida Brasil. O prédio do Centro de Convivência tem o formato de uma lua crescente e fica localizado ao sul. A área restante é dividida, em quatro, por caminhos para pedestres. Exatamente acima da ponta direita do Centro de Convivência, foi construído um belíssimo teatro de Arena. O arquiteto que o projetou é apaixonado por teatro e por futebol.

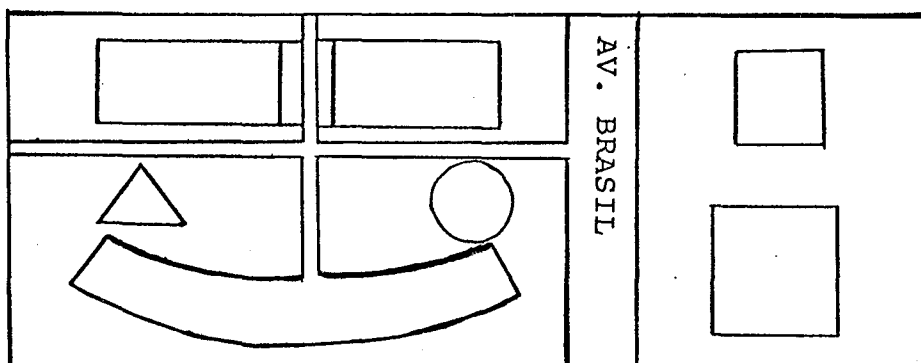
O Prédio de Ciências Humanas fica a oeste do Teatro de Arena e tem a forma de pirâmide.

Estudantes e professores do Centro Tecnológico vivem protestando contra o cheiro de comida que vem do Restaurante Universitário. Nesse detalhe, o Campus foi mau projetado pois, esses dois prédios fazem parte de um só bloco, retangular, situado ao norte do Centro de Convivência, divididos internamente por um pequeno pátio aberto e pelo caminho de pedestres."



1.

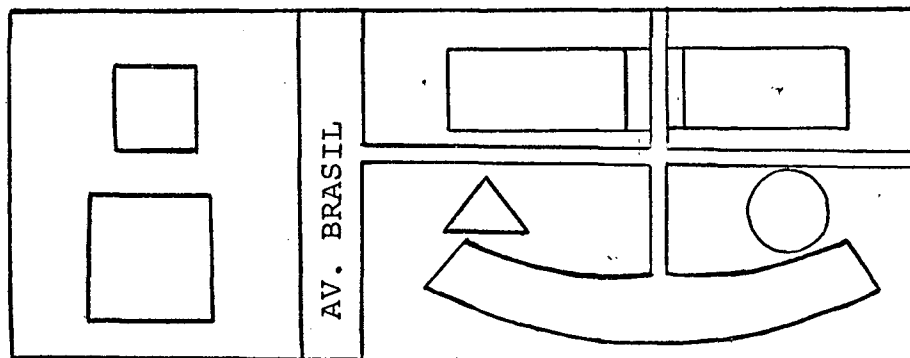
Porque:



2.

Porque:

.....



3.

Porque:

.....

- Ability to follow instructions

A.A: 8 - Visualization of descriptions

- Reading for specific information

9. Você está ao lado de alguém que está conversando ao telefone. Você só consegue ouvir "metade" da conversa. Imagine o que a pessoa do "outro lado do fio" está dizendo, combinando com as sentenças abaixo:

Exemplo:

- Você tem visto a Regina? - Sim, eu a vi no mercado.
-
.....?
- Faz, mais ou menos, dois dias.
-
.....
- Isso é verdade! E muito esforçado também. Simpático.
.....
-
.....
- Eu também acho. A conta do mês passado veio altíssima. A gente conversa amanhã na escola, tá?
-
.....
- Para você também. Tchau!

A.A: 9 - To Infer the logical sequence of ideas

10. Preencha a coluna da direita de acordo com a da esquerda.

- a) Porque você não janta conosco? () desculpas
- b) Eu gosto mais de torta de chocolate () informação
- c) Claro que você pode levar o livro! () ajuda
- d) Sabe me dizer onde fica o Teatro Álvaro de Carvalho? () convite
- e) Sinto muito! Eu realmente não o vi () obrigação
- f) Posso fazer alguma coisa por você? () permissão
- g) Ela tem que terminar o trabalho hoje () preferência
- h) Ladrões adoram multidões. Tome cuidado com a sua bolsa () agradecimento
- i) Não alimente os animais () instrução
- j) Foi muita gentileza sua emprestar-me este livro () proibição
- l) Bata as claras em neve; adicione o açúcar; misture bem. Distribua uniformemente sobre a massa. () advertência

A.A: 10 - Identification of language functions

The "Free" Questionnaire

Professor,

O objetivo deste Questionário é fazer um levantamento das habilidades de leitura dos alunos da 1ª fase dos diversos Cursos de nossa Universidade. Os dados, por esse meio obtido farão parte de uma pesquisa onde tentar-se-á definir os fatores responsáveis pela compreensão, no ato da leitura. Através dessa pesquisa, esperamos apresentar contribuições relevantes aos Professores de Línguas, que fazem do texto um instrumento de trabalho.

Por favor, queira responder o Questionário por completo pois a sua opinião é muito valiosa para o nosso trabalho. Desde já, muito obrigada por sua atenção.

ÁREA:

FASE:

1. Para ser bem sucedido em sua disciplina, quais habilidades de leitura o aluno precisa possuir? Enumere as seis, dez ou mais habilidades que você julgue importantes. Indique com um (x) as 3 ou 4 que você considere essenciais.

2. O que você lerá a seguir é um texto de Pablo Neruda. Leia-o com atenção, como se fosse prepará-lo para ser lido e trabalhado por seus alunos.

"Faz três dias que voltei a entrar, depois de uma

longa ausência, em minha casa em Valparaíso. Grandes gretas feriam as paredes. Os cristais estilhaçados formavam um doloroso tapete sobre o chão dos aposentos. Os relógios, também no solo, marcavam teimosamente a hora do terremoto. Quantas coisas belas Matilde varria com uma vassoura. Quantos objetos raros que o abalo de terra transformou em lixo.

Temos que limpar, pôr em ordem e começar tudo de novo. Custa encontrar o papel em meio à desordem e depois é difícil ordenar os pensamentos.

Meus últimos trabalhos foram uma tradução de Romeu e Julieta e um longo poema de amor em ritmo antiquado, poema que ficou incluso.

Vamos, poema de amor, levanta-te dentre os vidros partidos que chegou a hora de cantar.

Ajuda-me, poema de amor, a restabelecer a integridade, a cantar sobre a dor.

É verdade que o mundo não se limpa de guerras, não se lava de sangue, não se corrige do ódio. É verdade.

Mas é igualmente verdade que nos aproximamos de uma evidência: os violentos se refletem no espelho do mundo e seu rosto não é bonito nem para eles mesmos.

E continuo acreditando na possibilidade do amor. Tenho a certeza do entendimento entre os seres humanos, logrado sobre o sofrimento, sobre o

sangue e sobre os cristais quebrados.

Confesso que vivi, p.277.

3. Se você quisesse certificar-se de que seus alunos compreenderam esse texto, quais as perguntas que você faria?

4. Que tipo de teste você tem usado recentemente (por exemplo, esse ano) para verificar a compreensão de textos?

Uma vez mais, grata por sua colaboração

Maria Beatriz P.C.Dias e Souza

The "Controlled" Questionnaire

Professor,

O objetivo deste Questionário é fazer um levantamento das habilidades de leitura dos Alunos da 1ª fase dos diversos Cursos de nossa Universidade. Os dados, por esse meio obtidos, farão parte de uma pesquisa onde tentar-se-á definir os fatores responsáveis pela compreensão, no ato da leitura. Através dessa pesquisa, esperamos apresentar contribuições relevantes aos Professores de Línguas, que fazem do texto um instrumento de trabalho.

Por favor, queira responder o Questionário por completo pois a sua opinião é muito valiosa para o nosso trabalho. Desde já, muito obrigada por sua atenção.

ÁREA:

FASE:

1. Para ser bem sucedido em sua disciplina, quais habilidades de leitura o aluno precisa possuir? Assinale com X as dez (10) mais importantes, e dentre essas dez, circule aquelas habilidades que você considere realmente essenciais.

a) Dominar um vocabulário específico ()

b) Perceber o significado de palavras, baseando-se no contexto ()

c) Perceber a organização geral do texto ()

vire

- d) Perceber a idéia principal e as secundárias ()
- e) Perceber relações de causa e efeito ()
- f) Entender e/ou visualizar instruções dadas ()
- g) Entender linguagem figurativa ()
- h) Sumarizar um texto ()
- i) Sintetizar as idéias do texto ()
- j) Deduzir a partir do texto ()
- l) Comportar-se criticamente diante do texto ()
- m) Capacidade de antecipar resultados ()
- n) Determinar os referentes com clareza ()
- o) Identificar o propósito do autor ()
- p) Reconhecer paráfrases ()
- q) Ter noção do geral e o particular ()
- r) Relacionar itens antônimos e sinônimos ()
- s) Buscar, no texto, uma informação específica ()
- t) Fazer usos de indícios gramaticais ()
- u) Identificar as funções da linguagem ()
- v) Habilidade de seguir um raciocínio ()
- x) Cite outros que considere importantes ()

2. O que você lerá a seguir é um texto de Pablo Neru da. Leia-o com atenção, como se fosse prepará-lo para ser lido e trabalhado por seus alunos.

vire

"Faz três dias que voltei a entrar, depois de uma longa ausência, em minha casa em Valparaíso. Grandes gretas feriam as paredes. Os cristais estilhaçados formavam um doloroso rapete sobre o chão dos aposentos. Os relógios, também no solo, marcavam teimosamente a hora do terremoto. Quantas coisas belas Matilde varria agora com uma vassoura. Quantos objetos raros que o abalo de terra transformou em lixo.

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E continuo acreditando na possibilidade do

amor. Tenho a certeza do entendimento entre os seres humanos, logrado sobre o sofrimento, sobre o sangue e sobre os cristais quebrados.

Confesso que vivi, p.277.

3. Você que certificar-se de que seus alunos compreendem esse texto. Baseando-se nas habilidades listadas anteriormente, de A a X, que tipo de perguntas você faria visando testar a compreensão do texto lido?
4. Que tipo de testes você tem feito recentemente (por exemplo, esse ano) para verificar a compreensão de textos? Assinale, somente os que você tenha usado.
- a) Verbalização através de exposição oral ()
 - b) Questionário oral acerca do texto ()
 - c) Relatórios de leitura ()
 - d) Fazer plano do texto ()
 - e) Teste "certo ou errado" ()
 - f) Teste de múltipla escolha ()
 - g) Discussão em grupo ()
 - h) Teste de correção ()
 - i) Teste cloze ()
 - j) Teste de completação (tabelas, sentenças, etc.) ()
 - l) Teste "combine coluna A com B" ()
 - m) Teste "igual ou diferente" ()
 - n) Cite outros que considere relevantes ()

n) Cite outros que considere relevantes

()

.....
.....

Uma vez mais, grata por sua colaboração

Maria Beatriz P.C. Dias e Souza