Polo del Conocimiento

The think-pair-share strategy and the development of reading skills in the English as a Foreign Language classroom

La estrategia pensar-pareja-compartir y el desarrollo de habilidades lectoras en el aula de inglés como lengua extranjera

A estratégia think-pair-share e o desenvolvimento de habilidades de leitura na sala de aula de inglês como língua estrangeira

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Abstract

This research work is a bibliographic review with the purpose of investigating the characteristics of the think-pair-share strategy for the development of reading skills in English as a foreign language. This research allowed us to explore the characteristics, benefits and advantages of the think-pair-share strategy and its applicability in reading comprehension activities. The level of the research is descriptive and reflective as the researchers not only collected, organized and presented the information, but also discussed about it so that the findings can be useful and noteworthy for future research. Data collection was carried out from bibliographic sources, publications and studies that present reliable and valuable information that helped researchers to explore and understand the features of the think-pair-share strategy in the EFL classroom, taking into account that the information provided must come from documents that have gone through a thorough review process, such as blind review and peer review. With the information collected, a worksheet was organized chronologically and individual analysis was used for this purpose. This research concludes that applying think-pair-share as an appropriate alternative learning technique, if it helps students to develop their critical thinking skills, improve listening and reading comprehension; along with collaboration and presentation skills.

Keywords: literature review; think-pair-share; reading comprehension; strategy; learning technique.

Resumen

Este trabajo de investigación es de revisión bibliográfica con el propósito de investigar las características de la estratégica think-pair-share para el desarrollo de las habilidades de lectura en el inglés como lengua extranjera. Esta investigación permitió explorar las características, beneficios y ventajas de la estrategia think-pair-share y su aplicabilidad en actividades de comprensión lectora. El nivel de la investigación es descriptivo y de reflexión ya que los investigadores no solo recopilaron, organizaron y presentaron la información, sino que también discutieron sobre la misma para que los hallazgos puedan ser útiles y notables para futuras investigaciones. La recolección de datos se realizó de fuentes bibliográficas, publicaciones y estudios que presentan información confiable y valiosa que ayudó a los investigadores a explorar y comprender los rasgos de la estrategia think-pair-share en el aula de inglés como lengua extranjera, teniendo en cuenta que la información proporcionada debe provenir de documentos que hayan pasado por un proceso de revisión exhaustivo, como la revisión a ciegas y la revisión por pares. Con la información recopilada se organizó cronológicamente una hoja de trabajo y se utilizó de análisis individual para este propósito. Esta investigación concluye que

aplicando think-pair-share como una técnica de aprendizaje alternativo adecuado, si ayuda a los estudiantes a desarrollar sus habilidades de pensamiento crítico, mejorar la comprensión auditiva y de lectura; conjuntamente con las habilidades de colaboración y presentación.

Palabras claves: revisión bibliográfica; pensar-emparejar-compartir; comprensión lectora; estrategia; técnica de aprendizaje.

Resumo

A estratégia think-pair-share e o desenvolvimento de habilidades de leitura na sala de aula de inglês como língua estrangeira Inglês como uma língua estrangeira. Esta pesquisa permitiu explorar as características, benefícios e vantagens da estratégia think-pair-share e sua aplicabilidade em atividades de compreensão leitora. O nível da pesquisa é descritivo e reflexivo, pois os pesquisadores não apenas coletaram, organizaram e apresentaram as informações, mas também discutiram sobre elas para que os achados possam ser úteis e dignos de nota para pesquisas futuras. A coleta de dados foi realizada a partir de fontes bibliográficas, publicações e estudos que apresentam informações confiáveis e valiosas que ajudaram os pesquisadores a explorar e compreender as características da estratégia think-pair-share na sala de aula de EFL, levando em consideração que as informações fornecidas devem vir de documentos que passaram por um processo de revisão completo, como revisão cega e revisão por pares. De posse das informações coletadas, organizou-se uma planilha cronologicamente e utilizou-se para tanto a análise individual. Esta pesquisa conclui que a aplicação do pensar-par-compartilhar como uma técnica de aprendizagem alternativa adequada, se ajudar os alunos a desenvolver suas habilidades de pensamento crítico, melhorar a compreensão auditiva e de leitura; juntamente com habilidades de colaboração e apresentação.

Palavras-chave: revisão bibliográfica; pensar-combinar-compartilhar; compreensão de leitura; estratégia; técnica de aprendizagem.

Introduction

Reading skills as well as the other skills of the English language are developed progressively throughought the learning process; therefore, teachers must provide students with practical and effective strategies and techniques which can significatively contribute not only to students

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obtaining good grades, but also to a real learning by foster a genuine desire and curiosity to discover and increase their knowledge in students; regardless their level.

Reading unmodified, ungraded, authentic written texts such as newspaper, magazines, stories, novels, public signs, and notices is counted as a way through which learners can learn a foreign language since such type of reading means having direct exposure to authentic use of language (Arikan, 2015).

Developing reading skills must go beyond the more mechanical meaning-preserving activities like repetition, dictation, reading aloud, and phonetic transcription, which are currently out of favor in communication-oriented language teaching (Harmer, 2012). According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the connection of strategies, tasks, and text, depend on the nature of the task (The Concil of Europe, 2018).

Reading is not a mere information gathering or comprehension exercises; the activities have to be productive, receptive, and interactive. These activities must include reading imaginative texts, production, reception, and performance of literary texts such as short stories, novels, and poetry (Al-Jawi, 2010).

In view of the above mentioned, this paper is a literature review with the purpose to investigate the characteristics ok the think-pair-share strategy, its advantages, and benefits in the development of reading skills.

Methodology

This paper is a literature review to explore the characteristics, benefits, and advantages of the think-pair-share strategy and its applicability in reading comprehension activities in the English as a Foreign Language Classroom.

The publications and studies included in this paper present reliable and valuable information which helped the researchers explore and understand the traits of the think-pair-share strategy in the English as a Foreign Language classroom.

The collected information was organized chronologically, and an individual analysis worksheet was used for this purpose. The instrument included the methodological approach, research methods, data collection techniques, the variables, and the findings (Arias, 2012).

The main data collection sources were Google scholar, Dspace, digital repositories, Science Direct, and the web. Considering that, the provided information must come from documents which have gone through an exhaustive revision process such as blind review and peer review.

The level of the research is descriptive; however, the reflection also plays a meaningful role in this study. The researchers not only collect, organize, present information, but also discuss and reflect on it so that the findings could be useful and remarkable for future investigations (Hernández-Sampieri, Metodología de la investigación: las rutas cuantivativa, cualitativa y mixta, 2018).

Think-pair-share strategy

Think-pair-share is a collaborative learning strategy where students work together to solve a problem or answer a question about an assigned reading. This strategy requires students to think individually about a topic or answer to a question; and share ideas with classmates. Discussing with a partner maximizes participation, focuses attention, and engages students in comprehending the reading material (Doyle, 2019).

Additionally, this strategy helps students think independently, pair up, and discuss with a classmate or in small groups, and share their knowledge with the class. The teacher asks open-ended questions and students think quietly about it for a minute or two. Then every student pairs up with a partner and they discuss the question for two to five minutes. After that, the whole class engages in a discussion where students raise their hands and share all the thoughts and ideas they have gathered. It is important that the teacher models the technique with a volunteer, so the class knows what to do and make sure to emphasize the rules of this exercise with the students (Cowling, 2019).

The think-pair-share strategy is designed to differentiate instruction by providing students time and structure for thinking on a given topic, enabling them to formulate individual ideas and share these ideas with a peer. This learning strategy promotes classroom participation by encouraging a high degree of pupil response, rather than using basic methods in which a teacher poses a question and one student offers a response. Moreover, this strategy provides an opportunity for all students to share their thinking with at least one other student which, in turn, increases their sense of involvement in the classroom learning process (Allen, 2018).

Furthermore, this strategy is easy to use within a planned lesson, it can be used for a wide variety of daily classroom activities such as concept reviews, discussion questions, partner reading, brainstorming, quiz reviews, and topic development. Think-pair-share helps students to develop

conceptual understanding of a topic, develop the ability to filter information and draw conclusions, and develop the ability to consider other points of view (Wright, 2017).

Think-pair-share is also described as an active-learning in which students are motived to participate even if they have a little intrinsic interest in the topic. Students not only process the topic but practice their communication and problem-solving skill; as well as increasing students' engagement and improving learning outcomes across learning environments. Questions posed are typically related to higher order thinking skills. The key to successful think-pair-share activity is alignment; the question posed must be challenging and align with the instructional goal of the day or week (Lightner & Tomaswick, 2017).

Before introducing the think-pair-share strategy to the students, teachers have to decide on the target for the lesson and the new text the class will be reading. Next, teachers must describe the strategy and its purpose, provide guidelines for discussion, and explain students the steps to follow.

Step 1. Think. – begin with a specific question and give students time to individually think about an answer, and document their responses on their own, either written or in pictures. Students can be given one to three minutes for this part of the exercise.

Step 2: Pair. – students now get into pairs. Decide beforehand whether to assign pairs or let students choose their own partners. When pairing remember to think of students' strengths and personalities. Ask students to share what they came up with and discuss. You can provide questions for the students to ask one another. This part of the activity can take at least 5 minutes.

Step 3. Share. – for this part, students come back together as a class and have a whole class discussion. You can either choose to have one person from each pair share with the class, or the discussion can be more open. Students can also share with the class what their partner said.

Think-pair-share is a simple technique that enhances students' critical thinking skills, improves listening and reading comprehension, and helps with collaboration and presentation skills (Fraser, 2021).

Reading skills

Reading is not a natural part of human development. Unlike spoken language, reading does not follow from observation and imitation of other people. Specific regions of the brain are devoted to processing oral communication, but there are no specific regions of the brain dedicated to reading. The complexity of reading requires multiple areas of the brain to operate together through networks of neurons. Considering all the cognitive tasks required to go from connecting symbols to sounds,

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sounds to words, words to meaning, meaning to memory, and memory to thoughtful information processing, it is not surprising than an estimated twenty percent of American elementary through high school students experience significant reading difficulties. Therefore, struggling with developing reading skills is not only a situation that occurs in the English as a Foreign Language classroom (Williams, 2008).

Understanding a written text means extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible. We practice our reading skills when we look for specific information in advertisements or articles; locating what we are searching demonstrates that the reading purpose has been successfully fulfilled.

The most usual text-types we come across are novels, short stories, tales, passages, post cards, biographies, and journals. There are two main reasons for reading: reading for pleasure and reading for specific information (Grellet, 2000).

Reading involves a variety of skills. The main ones are recognizing the script of a language, deducting the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items, understanding explicitly stated information, understanding information when not explicitly stated, understanding the communicative value of sentences and utterances, understanding relations within a the parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices, understanding cohesion between parts of a text through grammatical cohesion devices, interpreting text by going outside it, recognizing indicators in discourse, identifying the main point or important information in a piece of discourse, distinguishing the main idea from supporting details, extracting salient points to summarize, scanning and skimming to locate specifically required points form a text. In order to develop these skills, several types of exercises could be used. These could be about the function of the passage, the general organization, the rhetorical organization, the cohesive devices, and questions to clarify the content of a passage (Chesla, 2009).

Reading is a constant process of guessing and what one brings to the text is often more important that what one finds in it. This is why, from the very beginning, the students should be taught to use what they know to understand unknown elements, whether these are ideas or simple words (Watkins, 2017).

The goal of reading is comprehension, extracting meaning from what we read. The process of reading comprehension is both interactive and strategic. Rather than passively reading text, reading must analyze it, internalize it, and make it their own. In order to read with comprehension,

developing readers must be able to read with some proficiency and then receive explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies; therefore, modeling, practice, and feedback are essential (Diamong & Gutlohn, 2013).

Students must start by previewing the text, so that they could tap into what they already know that will help them to understand the text they are about to read. This first stage provides a framework for any new information.

Next, students have to make predictions about the text, this sets up expectations based on their prior knowledge about similar topics. As they read, they may mentally revise their predictions as they gain more information.

After that, students identify the main idea to determine what is important and then put it in their own words by summarizing. Implicit in this stage is to understand the author's purpose.

To continue, the teacher has to elicit questions and answers about the text to help students focus on the meaning of the text. Teachers can model both, the process of asking good questions and strategies for finding the answers in the text.

Another strategy is making inferences, to find something that is not explicitly stated in the text, students must learn to draw on prior knowledge and recognize clues in the text.

Finally, a useful strategy is visualizing. Students who visualize while reading have better recall than those who do not. Readers can take advantage of illustrations that are embedded in the text or create their own mental images or drawings when reading a text without illustrations (Ho, 2021).

When starting to teach a new text, it is recommended to approach it in three stages: pre-reading, reading for gist, and reading for details.

The pre-reading stage is about looking for clues to help students piece together the meaning of the text. This includes looking at pictures and text style to guess what type of text it is and what it is likely to be about. When reading for gist, students do not need to be able to read every word independently but be able to read carefully enough to understand the gist. In the reading for details stage, students go onto the comprehension activities, they read the text and look for specific information; they read the text twice in order to find the answers (Thompson, 2009).

Concerning strategies for reading comprehension according to the text type, we can list: story maps, retelling, K-W-L chart, graphic organizers, compare and contrast tables, flow charts, among others; nevertheless, this study focuses on the think-pair-share strategy (Sauerteig, 2005).

For this reason, the three more relevant studies are analyzed to support the target of this study.

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The first background study entitled Investigating the influence of think-pair-share approach toward students' reading achievement took place in a public secondary school in the Region of Yogyakarta. The objective of this research dealt with investigating the influence of think-pair-share learning approach through the performance of ninth-grade students' reading behavior.

The research uses a purposive sample of 35 students, the reading material is based on the curriculum, and the standard competence has accommodated the social function, text structure, and linguistic features. The topics address fairy tales and short stores as documented in the teaching syllabus.

All participants were equally given an opportunity to take part in the reading activities based on genders, a term of study, academic performance to provide maximum insight, and understanding of what they naturally involve in reading class. The intervention stages lasted four weeks.

The method included teacher's introductory explanation and small group-based discussions. In applying think-pair-share, the teacher firstly posed a question; secondly, the activity turned to pairs, and the members finally shared their responses to the questions with the peers. In this study, data collection was set in the naturalistic observation in which the researcher observed the situations, frequencies, patterns, and trends in the reading class. This situation corresponds with the cyclical procedures, continuously refined methods, an interpretation based on cycles' understandings.

Data analysis used the conditionally mixed-design analysis of the cyclical spiral of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting; in addition, the non-parametric statistics that analyze the frequencies, descriptive, and chi-square test upon students0 first and second cycle in reading achievements were applied.

This research addressed the implementation, participation, and performance of night-grade students' reading class as they constructed the think-pair-share learning approach in an analytic, comparative, and experimental evaluation. The results demonstrated that the think-pair-share approach lead a positive engagement, in which most of the group learners have a sense of self-awareness and confidence to solve problems and effective guidance to find the authentic learning circumstances. This stimulates the broad-mindedness, propensity, and cognitive maturity among students. When implementing the think-pair-share approach, the students were able to precede information, clarify their ideas or thinking, and discuss the substance of reading materials within the verbal interaction focus. However, students' reading achievement upon twenty multiple-choice tests has not increasingly indicated a satisfactory result (Sumekto, 2018).

This first background study demonstrated the effectiveness of the think-pair-share approach as for the learning process; nevertheless, the grades of the sample did not significatively improve; which demonstrate that this approach can not be generalized.

The second background study named the use of think-pair-share in teaching reading comprehension conducted in the English Department in the Universitas Negeri Semarang in Indonesia sought to describe the implementation of the think-pair-share strategy for teaching reading comprehension by English teachers.

The research was a case study which is essentially heuristic, as it reflects in the events portrayed feature which may be construed as a manifestation of some general, abstract theoretical principle. The data were taken from the interview, class observation, and document analysis. Thus, data display was provided in the descriptive form, the findings were descriptively explained according to what happened in the field.

Once the data was organized and analyzed, the researcher concluded that the use of the think-pair-share strategy in reading comprehension was relatively easy to be implemented which demonstrated that this technique was appropriate to teach reading comprehension. The English teachers mentioned that this technique was interesting and helpful. Nonetheless, there were some difficulties. The first problem was the lack of teachers' preparation; secondly, students did not have a good mastery of English vocabulary (Maulida, 2017).

In this second background study, we can observe that lack of teachers' training and low level of students' vocabulary could interfere in the implementation and effectiveness of the think-pair strategy, whereas, teachers must prioritize these aspects in their teaching-learning process.

Finally, the third study corresponds to the implementation of the think-pair-share model to improve students' ability in reading narrative texts. The objective of this research was to improve the students' ability in reading narrative texts by using the think-pair-share model.

The research methodology was Classroom Action Research (CAR) since the purpose was to improve the quality of the teaching-learning process. The study consisted of two cycles, and each cycle was divided into four steps: planning, action, observation, and reflection.

The participants of the research were 38 students who belonged to a public school in Negeri. The technique was a reading test which was applied at the end of the cycle, the students reading comprehension skills were analyzed by using the analysis-evaluation technique.

Based on the data collected, the researcher presented the most relevant findings. Students were not familiar with this model, and even though the teacher provided clear instructions, students felt confused which made it complicated for students to finish their work, answer the questions, and discuss in pairs. Moreover, students presented difficulties in delivering their ideas and opinions; therefore, the discussion was dominated only by some students.

However, even though, there were some problems during the research, the results were successful. The data demonstrated that the students' score improved since they passed the minimum mastery criteria. The main factor which made the think-pair-share model succeed in improving students' achievement was its complexity. Students worked not only individually, but also as a team. By following the stages of the model, students could explore their knowledge, and they were able to answer every question related to the given topic; as a result, their ability in reading improved rapidly (Sugiarto & Sumarsono, 2014).

The researchers indicated that the benefits of this model were not only beneficial for students, but also for teachers since this model promoted speaking development as well as collaborative work, considering that classes in this school of Indonesia are large.

Discussion

This literature review work reveals that the think-pair-share technique through reading comprehension activities allows the development of reading skills in learning the English language. Specifically, the 3 background studies analyzed in this paper were conducted in various settings: internationally, nationally, and locally. Nonetheless, all of them have a close relationship with the variables: the think-pair-share strategy and the development of the reading skill in an English as a Foreign Language classroom.

For this work there were three most relevant studies which were analyzed to support the objective of this study:

The first study took place in a public secondary school in the Yogyakarta region, where the sample was 35 students and the objective of this research was focused on investigating the influence of the learning approach of thinking in pairs and sharing through the performance of the reading behavior of ninth graders; demonstrating the effectiveness of the think-pair-share technique.

The second study, took place in the Department of English at Universitas Negeri Semarang in Indonesia to describe the implementation of the think-pair-share strategy for teaching reading comprehension by English teachers; the data was taken from the interview, the class observation and the analysis of documents. After analyzing the data, it was concluded that the use of the think-pair-share strategy in reading comprehension was relatively easy to implement, which showed that this technique was appropriate for teaching reading comprehension.

The third study was for the implementation of the think-pair-share technique to improve students' ability to read narrative texts through the use of the think-pair-share model. The research participants were 38 students who belonged to a public school in Negeri. The students' reading comprehension skills were not familiar with this model, and although the teacher provided clear instructions, the students felt confused, which made it difficult for the students to finish their work, but even though there were some problems during the investigation, the results were successful.

Based on the research, we could see that the use of the Think-Pair-Share technique is a suitable alternative learning technique, which helps students develop their critical thinking skills, improve listening and reading comprehension; along with collaboration and presentation skills for learning the English language. In addition, this strategy is easy to use within planned lessons, can be used for a wide variety of daily classroom activities, such as concept reviews, discussion questions, partner reading, brainstorming, quiz reviews, and development. of themes.

On the other hand, the Think-Pair-Share strategy had limitations since reading requires multiple areas of the brain to operate together through networks of neurons and connecting at the same time with symbols, sounds, meanings and a reflexive process of reading information; experiencing significant reading difficulties due to the lack of practice that occurs in the English classroom for the development of reading skills by students.

From the explanation above, it could be stated that this literature review and data collection is a set of naturalistic observation in which researchers look at situations, frequencies, patterns, and trends in the reading class.

Conclusions

The objective of this research is to improve the development of reading skills in English as a foreign language through the Think-Pair-Share technique, for which it was concluded that:

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Think-Pair-Share is an appropriate alternative learning technique, which helps students to develop their critical thinking skills, improve listening and reading comprehension; along with collaboration and presentation skills.

Think-pair-share is a collaborative learning strategy in which students work together to solve a problem or answer a question about assigned reading.

Think-Pair-Share provides teachers and students with strategies, practical and effective techniques that can significantly contribute not only to students getting good grades, but also to real learning.

Finally, according to the collected findings, it is recommended to familiarize teachers and students with this Think-Pair-Share technique so that they do not encounter difficulties when applying the technique.

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