



Pontificia Universidad
Católica del Ecuador | Sede
Ambato

CENTRO DE POSGRADOS

Topic:

**EFFECTIVE STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING LITERACY
LEARNING IN CHILDREN AGED 6-7**

**Research project before obtaining the Master of English Pedagogy as a
Foreign Language**

Line of research:

INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES – METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGIES

Author:

Gabriela Alejandra Jácome Cortez

Director:

Mg. Elizabeth Auxiliadora Ortiz Lozada

Ambato – Ecuador

Agosto 2024

STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Yo: **GABRIELA ALEJANDRA JÁCOME CORTEZ**, con cédula de ciudadanía **1803389541**, autora del trabajo de graduación intitulado: "EFFECTIVE STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING LITERACY LEARNING IN CHILDREN AGED 6-7", previa a la obtención del título profesional de **MAGÍSTER EN PEDAGOGÍA EN INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA** en el centro de **POSGRADOS**.

1. Declaro tener pleno conocimiento de la obligación que tiene la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, de conformidad con el artículo 144 de la Ley orgánica de Educación superior, de entregar a la SENESCYT en formato digital una copia del referido trabajo de graduación para que sea integrado al Sistema Nacional de Información de la Educación Superior del Ecuador para su difusión pública respetando los derechos de autor.
2. Autorizo a la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador a difundir a través del sitio web de la Biblioteca de la PUCE Ambato, el referido trabajo de graduación, respetando las políticas de propiedad intelectual de la Universidad.

Ambato, agosto 2024



Gabriela Alejandra Jácome Cortez

CC. 1803389541

PONTIFICIA UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA DEL ECUADOR
SEDE AMBATO
APPROVAL SHEET

Topic:

**EFFECTIVE STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING LITERACY
LEARNING IN CHILDREN AGED 6-7**

Line of research:

INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES – METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGIES

Author:

Gabriela Alejandra Jácome Cortez

Elizabeth Auxiliadora Ortiz Lozada, Mg.

CC. 0910752948

CALIFICADOR

f. 
Firmado digitalmente por
ELIZABETH
AUXILIADORA ORTIZ
LOZADA

Alexandra Elizabeth Galarza Guevara, Mg.

CALIFICADOR

f. 
Firmado digitalmente por
ALEXANDRA ELIZABETH
GALARZA GUEVARA
Firmado digitalmente por
ALEXANDRA ELIZABETH
GALARZA GUEVARA
Fecha: 2024.07.29 15:29:35
09:00

Marco Danilo Núñez García, Mg.

CALIFICADOR

f. MARCO
DANILO
NUÑEZ
GARCIA
Digitally signed by
MARCO DANILO
NUÑEZ GARCIA
Date: 2024.07.31
14:03:07 -05'00'

Teresa Milena Freire Aillón, Mg.

DIRECTORA CENTRO DE POSGRADOS

f. TERESA
MILENA
FREIRE AILLON
Firmado digitalmente
por TERESA MILENA
FREIRE AILLON
Fecha: 2024.08.06
10:46:50 -05'00'

Diego Gonzalo Coca Chanalata, Dr.

SECRETARIO GENERAL PUCESA

f. DIEGO
GONZALO
COCA
CHANALATA
Firmado
digitalmente por
DIEGO GONZALO
COCA CHANALATA
Fecha: 2024.07.30
12:32:09 -05'00'

Ambato – Ecuador

Agosto 2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my gratitude to Pontifical Catholic University of Ambato and all professors who contribute positively during this educational journey.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God and my family.

RESUMEN

La enseñanza de la lecto-escritura a niños, frecuentemente utiliza métodos tradicionales, los cuales no permiten un desarrollo eficiente de las habilidades lectoras. Debido a esta situación, la presente investigación propone una estrategia efectiva para el aprendizaje de la lecto-escritura con énfasis en lectura para niños de 6 a 7 años. Para alcanzar este objetivo, se aplicó una investigación de tipo quasi-experimental, la cual combina la parte teórica, la experimental y la práctica. La información fue recopilada de: a) una fuente cualitativa (literatura, perspectivas de maestros de escuela) y b) una fuente cuantitativa (trabajo de campo aplicado a 40 estudiantes de 6 a 7 años).

Un método didáctico fue desarrollado usando una combinación de estrategias entre la instrucción fonética, las palabras de alta frecuencia y lectura en voz alta. Los pre y post-tests fueron aplicados a la población elegida para el estudio. La mitad de la población que corresponde al grupo experimental de 20 estudiantes mejoró su puntaje en un 50% de la muestra, después de utilizar el método didáctico. De este porcentaje: el 15% avanzó del nivel intermedio al de buen desempeño, el 20% pasó del nivel inferior al intermedio. Mientras que el grupo denominado control que recibió instrucción tradicional no demostró cambios significativos. Como resultado del estudio, los hallazgos demuestran que la experiencia didáctica funcionó como un método eficaz para el desarrollo de la lecto-escritura en niños de 6 a 7 años.

Palabras claves: lecto-escritura, palabras de uso frecuente, instrucción fonética, lectura en voz alta, narración, estrategias de enseñanza.

ABSTRACT

Teaching reading literacy to children uses traditional methods, which frequently do not allow the effective development of reading skills. As a result, the current research demonstrates an effective strategy for literacy learning with a focus on reading skills in children aged 6 -7 years old. To accomplish that goal, a quasi-experimental study was employed, combining theory, research, and practice. The data came from a) qualitative sources (literature, perspectives gathered from schoolteachers) and b) quantitative sources (fieldwork applied to 40 students aged 6-7).

A didactic method was developed using a combination of phonics instruction, sight words, and reading out-loud strategies. Literacy pre and post-tests were applied to the population. After employing the didactic method, the 20 participants in the experimental group improved in scores by 50% of the sample. From this 50%: 15% advanced from intermediate to good performance, 20% advanced from poor to intermediate level, while the other half of students remained in the same range (only 5% of the sample fell within the category of poor development of literacy skills). In contrast, the control group that received conventional training showed no perceivable improvements. As a result of the findings, the didactic experience was found to be an effective strategy for literacy development in children aged 6-7.

Keywords: *literacy, high-frequency words, phonics instruction, reading out loud, storytelling, teaching strategies.*

INDEX

STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY AND RESPONSIBILITY	ii
APPROVAL SHEET	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
DEDICATION	v
RESUMEN	vi
ABSTRACT	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I. STATE OF ART AND PRACTICE	5
1.1. Acquisition/learning of a foreign language and the importance of Individual differences in teaching.....	5
1.2. Language developmental milestones and the importance of developing literacy in kids.....	9
1.3. Teaching literacy methods and key factors in effective literacy	16
CHAPTER II. METHODOLOGY DESIGN	26
2.1. Type of research.....	26
2.2. Population, sample, and type of data collection	26
2.3. Research proposal	36
CHAPTER III. ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS	46
3.1. Analysis, interpretation, and validity of the results.....	46
3.2. Results discussion.....	47
CONCLUSIONS	52
RECOMMENDATIONS	53
BIBLIOGRAPHY	54
ANNEXES	61

INTRODUCTION

Since English is one of the most widely spoken languages around the world and the different advantages referred to business, marketing, academic, traveling, or discovering new cultural practices: learning English from early age has become a key element in the curricula. Therefore, some countries have included learning policies in English education, and EFL environments are common ground nowadays.

Literacy learning requires extra effort for children aged 6-7, especially when they are learning the alphabet in both Spanish and English. Literacy in children has been extensively correlated to students' academic achievement. Reading comprehension is a determinant factor in all subjects to obtain a successful record in everyone's life.

This is basically because each academic subject will use texts to convey ideas, hence the importance of reading comprehension from the beginning. Additionally, in early childhood, reading is one of the most crucial skills to be developed to ensure further academic accomplishments in every other subject (Wright, 2010).

In EFL institutions, children learn English from early age, and they become familiar with reading before entering elementary school in most cases. This is the primary reason why this study is important. Because improving the reading skills of second graders, who are ready to begin literacy, avoids struggling and reluctance. This can also have a major impact in the improvement of the literacy methodology used by the institution.

The goal of this study is to develop an effective strategy for the development of reading literacy learning in kids by combining the most appropriate aspects of various approaches, methods, and other studies conducted around the world.

The methodology uses a quasi - experimental research that combines theory, research, and practice. Two groups of students will be involved in this study: the control and the experimental group. This design contains a pre-test to determine the

kid's reading skills level. Then an intervention will be set for the experimental group which consists of learning literacy by applying a balanced reading program. After, both groups will take a post-test to measure the results. The study will be enhanced with a highly descriptive and analytical level.

Hypothesis/Idea to be defended is:

An effective strategy helps to improve Literacy Learning with a focus on reading skills in children aged 6-7.

Research problem

Nowadays, teaching reading literacy to little children uses traditional methods, which frequently do not allow for the most effective development of reading skills. This issue is commonly linked when reading skills development is assumed to be normal in EFL settings.

Although there aren't as many studies on reading development in EFL classrooms, some of them have been useful in motivating researchers to investigate the effects of traditional literacy teaching in EFL environments. Additionally, the benefits of developing new and effective teaching strategies to improve literacy learning are discussed.

In this sense, much research in ESL can easily be applied in EFL areas, as different authors suggest. As it is mentioned by Cambridge Papers (2020):

Helping L2 learners on the journey towards literacy in English requires age-appropriate and sensitive instruction which does not stop at rudimentary adaptations of L1 phonics teaching but considers and builds on the L2 learners' oral language skills, as well as their existing L1 literacy skills. (Cambridge, 2020, p.18)

In this sense, the study proposes as a scientific problem: How to implement a strategy to improve the reading literacy learning in kids aged 6-7, in the EFL area?

In order to answer this question, a bibliographic review will be performed to sustain the theoretical background of reading literacy, taking into account distinct points of view of different authors. This theoretical information will be combined with the author's experience teaching literacy in EFL classrooms, as well as semi-structured interviews with other teachers, parents, and children about effective strategies for the development of reading literacy learning in children between the ages 6-7.

General objective of the research

- To design an effective strategy for Literacy Learning with a focus on reading skills in children between the ages 6-7.

Specific objectives of the research

- To sustain the theoretical basis of reading literacy learning from different authors' criteria.
- To diagnose the level of reading comprehension skills in second graders.
- To identify the meaningful strategies that affect the reading literacy learning in EFL.
- To design an effective strategy for developing reading literacy learning in students between ages 6-7.

According to Shin and Crandall (2014), a balanced approach to reading literacy in EFL environments is used to get the educational goals. Furthermore, children in second grade confront the need to be accurate when learning sounds, letters, phonemes, words, phrases, expressions and more in Spanish (L1) and English (L2). Consequently, a balanced program combining bottom-up and top-down skills serve as the desired strategy to conduct this study and meaningfully promote a path to follow for teachers and create a pleasant experience in this first stage of reading literacy for children.

JUSTIFICATION

This study is justified because of the following reasons:

- The students aged 6-7 years old are in second grade, where they start learning literacy. It is a crucial part of the teacher's development to choose the best strategies to enhance and motivate the students in the reading journey.
- An effective strategy based on a balanced reading program improves the way students process information and acquire the basic requirements for literacy. It means that significant scaffolding may lay the groundwork for future readers to succeed.
- A well-balanced reading program that includes phonics instruction, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension would help the natural child's development by considering age, background knowledge, and learning styles. Students would be able to learn more effectively and enjoyably.

CHAPTER I. STATE OF ART AND PRACTICE

1.1. Acquisition/learning of a foreign language and the importance of individual differences in teaching

It is important to mention the most common definitions used for native language (L1), second language (L2), and foreign language (FL) terms. First, native language (also mother tongue or basis language) refers to each language learned by the individual due to a natural and spontaneous process of linguistic acquisition, regardless of any education. Possible additional definitions are based on origin (the first language learned), self-identification (the language that the person identifies as their language), hetero-identification (the language that others attribute as their language to the subject), competence (the best-known language) and function (the language most used by the subject) (Gabunia, 2014).

Second language (SL) refers to the language acquired later than the mother tongue. It is the language learning in the country in which it is spoken or the language of the school, that students learn both guided and spontaneously through daily interaction with others and the different stimuli present in the environment (Gabunia, 2014). Foreign language (FL) refers to a non-mother tongue, generally studied at school in a territory where it is not usually spoken and the linguistic input comes mainly from the teacher, though there are many sources available today (Gabunia, 2014). Also, at this point, it is convenient to establish the differences between the acquisition and learning process, considering that both terms could be confused with each other for practical applications. Hoque (2017) mentions that people acquire their language skills in an unconscious fashion in which they do not consciously consider -or learn- grammar rules or any language rule whatsoever.

This is especially true when the person is acquiring their native language, which frequently comes from a natural source associated with the immediate caregivers in contact with the child while growing up: mainly the father and the mother, brothers, and sisters. On the other hand, language learning is the direct intention and resolve of a student to acquire a new language and its rules to make use of it proficiently.

Based on this statement, the author distinguishes the learning and acquisition processes mainly because the acquisition is an unconscious process, controlled by the learners; while learning is an intentional process, controlled by the stimulus which is given by teachers.

In addition, Hoque (2017) mentions that to compare the acquisition of the first and second language in groups of different ages, it is necessary to consider the differences between children and adults learning skills, because the ability to acquire language has been linked to age (the critical period hypothesis). There are differences in learning a foreign language in childhood and adulthood. Therefore, age is another factor to consider in order to adapt teaching and to be aware of the student's potential and cognitive-affective maturity level. In addition to the age factor, there are many other favorable or impeding factors that contribute to either strengthening or weakening the learning and language acquisition processes, among those is possible to mention: cognitive, linguistic, affective, and socioeconomic factors.

According to Khatib & Taie (2016), if the child does not have age-appropriate linguistic skills in one language, no other language will be helpful for cognitive growth. However, being proficient in both languages would effectively aid in the development of the cognitive system. In that sense, Krashen (1982) mentioned four conditions to learn a new language: exposition to the language to be learned, opportunities for language use, motivation for the use of language in different activities or contexts, and teaching with a focus on form. Exposition to the language to be learned forcibly requires that the information be understandable (Krashen, 1982), quantitatively, and qualitatively rich. Opportunities for language use refer to the routine needs to speak and interact verbally on frequent basis. In this way, syntactic structures are developed (Krashen, 1982).

Therefore, it is essential to create contexts in which students have reasons to use language to express their ideas and opinions and to encourage them to engage in increasingly complex language activities. Motivation for the use of language in different activities or contexts calls for several sources. One of them is related to

intrinsic factors and depends on the student's pleasure or interest in the activity that is performed. There is also a type of motivation derived from academic achievement or success, which is influenced by external stimuli and interventions (rewards / punishments). Motivation depends to some extent on the quality of teaching (Krashen, 1982). If from the student's point of view, the activity does not make sense to him from the start, then he will hardly feel motivated and encouraged to learn. If, on the other hand, the proposed activities are fun and close to the reality of the student, the interest and curiosity, as well as the motivation to learn, will increase.

Teaching focused on form refers to task-based teaching that combines the advantages of spontaneous language acquisition and those of guided learning. From Krashen's "monitor theory", a distinction is made between language acquisition, which occurs spontaneously through use and practice, and language learning, that takes place through the formal presentation of rules and structures. Both mechanisms involve separate mental capacities (Krashen, 1982). In addition, Hoque (2017) mentions that cognitive factors of second language acquisition are: intelligence, language aptitude, and language learning strategies. On the intelligence factor, the author asserts that "There is clear evidence that L2 students who are above average on formal measures of intelligence tend to do well in L2 learning" (p.9) because of the direct relationship between intelligence and learning processes.

On language, aptitude is generally believed that several secondary skills are manifested for L2 learning success, such as "phonetic coding ability, grammatical sensitivity, memory abilities, and inductive language ability" (Hoque, 2017, p.9). According to Hoque (2017) about language learning strategies: "more proficient learners do indeed employ strategies that are different from those used by the less proficient. However, whether the strategies cause the learning, or the learning itself enables different strategies to be used, has not been fully clarified" (p.9). Experts in second language acquisition (SLA) have coincidental and diverging ideas to establish which are the different aspects that, according to them, determine how students learn a language.

It is expected that different combinations of characteristics in these factors will result in distinct learning experiences for everyone. As a result, acquiring a foreign language is a complex process in which several factors play different roles, making for the differences between some people learning faster and better than others. Figure 1 shows a summary of individual differences from the point of view of different authors:

Figure 1

Individual Differences that affect teaching/learning processes as defined by different researchers

Author	Learning Differences
Ellis (1985)	personal factors and general factors
Gardner (1985)	language aptitude, personality, attitudes, motivation, and orientation
Cook (1991)	motivation, aptitude, learning strategies, age, personality, and other individual variation
Larsen-Freeman and Long (1994)	age, aptitude, socio-psychological factors, personality, cognitive style, hemisphere specialization, learning strategies, and other
Williams and Burden (1997)	intelligence, cognitive style, motivation, anxiety, aptitude, and learning strategies
Brown (2000)	styles and strategies, personality factors, sociocultural factors, age, aptitude, and intelligence
Ehrman & Leaver (2003)	learning styles, learning strategies, and affective variables
Dörnyei and Skehan (2003)	aptitude, cognitive and learning styles, learner strategies, and motivation
Ellis (2004)	abilities, propensities, learner cognitions about L2 learning, and learner actions
Dörnyei (2006)	personality, aptitude, motivation, learning styles, and learning strategies
Johnson (2008)	cognitive variables, affective variables, personality variables, and learning strategies
Pawlak (2009)	age, intelligence, aptitude, cognitive and learning styles/strategies, motivation, anxiety, beliefs, and willingness to communicate
Manchón (2009)	Learner's self-efficacy beliefs, beliefs about the nature of the language that the student holds, and their opinions about the teacher
Cohen (2010)	characteristics outside the teacher's control and characteristics that can be shaped during the process of second language learning
Zafar & Meenakshi (2012)	Age, sex, aptitude, motivation, learning styles, learning strategies, and personality
Dörnyei & Ryan (2015)	Personality, aptitudes, motivation, learning and cognitive styles, learning strategies, self-regulation, and other learner characteristics (creativity, anxiety, willingness to communicate, self-esteem, learner beliefs and emotions)

Source: modified from Olejarczuk (2015).

While authors and experts on the teaching and learning of second languages slightly differ on the classification of factors that affect the learning of a second language, some of them consider in average, the same aspects. Age, motivation, learning styles, learning strategies, aptitudes, attitudes, intelligence; prior knowledge of the

target language L2, willingness to be proficient on the language, social networking, personal beliefs of the learner, management of anxiety, risk-taking, self-esteem; among other factors that are of importance when learning a foreign language. The teacher must take into consideration, always, the individual differences of the students inside the classroom and try to use as many teaching strategies as possible to account for those differences and be able to reach all students attention equally.

1.2. Language developmental milestones and the importance of developing literacy in kids

Skills, according to Alfares (2017) are defined as the possibility of doing something effectively. In this sense, there are natural or organic skills, while there are others that are acquired through practice and study. Language is a skill and not a subject with substantial content such mathematics, history, geography, etc. Since it is a means through which a person can express their own experiences in the outside world, feelings, opinions, and thoughts. For the aim of this study, the teaching of reading has prior importance, the author said that the reading skill has two conceptions: a) it is a set of skills that the student should master to decode a text and thus understand its meaning and b) reading as an active process in which the student, based on his or her previous knowledge, constructs new knowledge with the information provided by the text.

Thus, the process of literacy is associated with each, and all processes needed for the student to be able to use written language, which is coded in graphemes, to take advantage of the knowledge and experience that the author of the text transpired. To accomplish this goal, readers must recur to their previous knowledge and experiences to relate to the text in front of them and make use of distinct strategies to decode words, sentences, and paragraphs, and make sense of their joint meaning (Ramírez & Aguilar, 2018).

For Rivers (2008), an EFL learner must go through six phases before reaching "independence" and facing autonomously the reading of a text:

(1) Introduction to reading: during the first phase, it is intended that the trainee becomes familiar with how the new phonemes are represented graphically.

(2) Familiarization: the learner reads texts previously used orally, only recombining them in various ways. However, it is possible to introduce some new words and structures so that the student can deduce the meaning from the context.

(3) Acquisition of reading techniques: in the third phase, it is possible to start reading more extensive texts with the teacher's supervision. At this point, the teaching will be most effective if the learner is familiar with most words and structures, except a few new ones that can be introduced.

(4) Practice: the fourth phase is where intensive reading can begin to clarify grammatical difficulties and increase vocabulary, as well as extensive reading, whose objective is, as we have already indicated, to develop a taste for reading. For this stage, teachers must take care of the material selection and the guidance they give to encourage learners to keep pushing themselves toward better reading comprehension practice (Rivers, 2008).

(5) Expansion: the fifth phase is a further step in achieving the student's total independence from the teacher's control by learning more complex lexical and structural content. Teachers during this fifth stage must explain complex structures and encourage learners to seek by themselves the meaning of the words they do not understand.

(6) Autonomy: in the sixth phase, the student can face the text alone without the teacher's help and use the dictionary occasionally. In this final stage, the teacher may collaborate with learners in the interpretation of complex texts, idioms use, or cultural references (Rivers, 2008).

For several academics, literacy is a significant factor in achieving foreign language learning. According to Pishghadam, Noghani & Zabihi (2011), literacy is considered a social practice that can be accomplished individually, as well as achieved in

schools, in the workplace, in families, and many other places and situations. Acquiring and developing literacy since the early stages of learning for EFL learners is fundamental for them to gain proficiency and further effective communication of their own ideas, considering that good reading comprehension is directly linked to an integral developing of language skills.

In the words of Gutiérrez, Luengo & Sandoval (2019), good reading comprehension is beneficial to the intellect and provides for a liberating experience for students who get the stimulus and joy that comes from the unique experience of sharing and connecting with authors of all currents of knowledge and their experiences.

Readers connect not only with authors' ideas but with their characters, their testimonies, and their lives (whether history or fictional). Stories which students could not be able to know or connect with if they did not learn how to read. To read is the most powerful experience to acquire unexpected knowledge and to participate in culture in all forms, not to mention its importance in each stage of the scholar experience, which is a must in order to progress within the system.

Typically, there are several stages in the language developmental process of children. In this respect, they acquire oral skills and vocabulary before understanding words on paper. And even though the acquisition of reading skills and literacy does not happen the same way for all children, there are stages which are followed by most of them (Lee, 2005). According to Chall (1983), the stages are:

- Stage 0 goes from 6 months to 6 years old, and during this phase, the kid may start to recognize signs, codes, words, and some other aspects from stories familiar to them.
- During stage 1, from 6 to 7 years old, children develop the required skills for interpreting the relationship between written and spoken words.
- Stage 2 extends from 7-8 years old and the strengthening of word decoding and context recognition distinguishes it.

- Stage 3, from 9-13 years old, literacy is the means to acquire new knowledge.
- Stage 4, from 15-17 (stage 4), multiple viewpoints and subjects are explored while reading.
- Stage 5 includes adults from 18 years old and up; during this stage, literacy is part of the individual, who reads in accordance to his own habits (Chall, 1983).

On the same matter, Piaget (1956), in his cognitivist theory, is focused on understanding the process in which the human-mind thinks and learns and the stages it involves. He considers that children first construct their own understanding of the world through their interactions with their environment before they acquiring the language to express it. According to Goodluck (1991), once language does emerge, it is usually within certain stages, and children go through these stages in a fixed order that is universal in all children. The cognitive theory of Piaget states four stages developed by Piaget regarding the cognitive development theory:

- Sensorimotor Stage (Birth to 2 Years Old): The infant builds an understanding of himself or herself and reality (and how things work) through interactions with the environment. It is able to differentiate between itself and other objects. Learning takes place via assimilation (the organization of information and absorbing it into existing schema), and accommodation (when an object cannot be assimilated and the schemata have to be modified to include the object).
- Preoperational stage (ages 2 to 4): The child is not yet able to conceptualize abstractly and needs concrete physical situations. Objects are classified in simple ways, especially by important features.
- Concrete Operations (Ages 7 To 11): As physical experience accumulates, accommodation is increased. The child begins to think abstractly and

conceptualize, creating logical structures that explain their physical experiences.

- Formal operations (beginning at ages 11 to 15): Cognition reaches its final form. By this stage, the person no longer requires concrete objects to make rational judgments. They are capable of deductive and hypothetical reasoning. Their ability for abstract thinking is very similar to an adult.

This study focuses on stage 1 (6-7 years old), particularly in cases of children immersed in an EFL environment. Commonly, children between 6 and 7 years old are able to learn 5-10 written words per day, accommodating meanings and their proper use. But for children within an EFL environment, the development of literacy may be harder because they are trying to absorb codes from 2 different languages with distinct sets of rules in the same frame time (Auleear, 2014).

In order to face the limitations of EFL students, teaching early literacy is of utmost importance, because well-developed language and reading skills are the basis for all cognitive activities during life at school. When teaching literacy in an EFL environment, it is mandatory to provide initial experiences and oral language background to children who come from families with low literacy in English. It is important as well to grant them plenty of opportunities to talk about the reading material and compare it to their previous experiences, giving them the chance to understand meanings and include reasoning in the literacy process from early stages (UNICEF, 2019).

In case of early literacy in EFL environments, Zulaiha, Mulyono y Herri (2020), conducted a study in six public EFL schools to explore teachers' perceptions of literacy practices. A semi-structured interview was practiced on twenty-two Indonesian teachers, the findings showed acceptable knowledge among teachers on the planning of lessons and evaluation but deficiencies in school policies respecting attendance and students' attitudes toward EFL learning.

Among the conclusions, the authors highlighted the importance of parents' involvement in their children's education. Children that were more motivated and supported by their tutors learned the lessons better and obtained higher scores on the tests. On the same venue, Salwa (2015) in her research on literacy highlighted the importance of tutors in the learning of children in EFL environments, as well as the value of a proper selection of reading material that should encourage the students to read in their second language for pleasure.

In the author's words, children at age of 6 – 7 years old are exposed to grammar and punctuation rules, new vocabulary, and the acquisition of several cognitive skills that will be of benefit in the literacy process. They become familiar with phonetics and the written codes for words that they may have heard, yet did not know how to write. Furthermore, it is crucial to motivate them by encouraging their exploration of new ideas in exciting and creative ways.

Lindahl & Sayer (2018) went deeper into the subject with their research. The authors studied the effects of primary English language teaching (PELT) and how early literacy in L2 affected simultaneous literacy in L1. Their findings showed that:

Studying PELT did not hinder L1 literacy development and may in fact, provide a slight boost for children in L1 literacy development. These findings suggest that the linguistic interdependence hypothesis, which research has shown holds from L1→L2, likely also has positive effects related to literacy development in the other direction, from L2→L1 (at least for alphabetic languages sharing a similar orthography like English and Spanish). (Lindahl & Sayer, 2018, p. 192)

It is very important that teachers assess the English level of each student in the class when starting the teaching of literacy in L2. It is expected that the classroom will contain a variety of situations because specific cases are prompted to happen whenever people are immersed in EFL environments. Children with little to no English proficiency and others with a certain level of proficiency are just a few examples of possible scenarios. Their ability would depend on their access to an

English-speaking care center before entering school, or their parents'/family'/caregivers' level of proficiency in the language (Flynn, 2017). According to the Department for Education in England, proficiency for English language learners (ELL) could be classified as it is shown in figure 2.

Figure 2

ELL proficiency classifications according to the Department for Education in England

Code	Description
A	New to English May use the first language for learning and other purposes. May remain completely silent in the classroom. May be copying/repeating some words or phrases. May understand some everyday expressions in English but may have minimal or no literacy in English. Needs a considerable amount of ELL support.
B	Early acquisition May follow day-to-day social communication in English and participate in learning activities with support. Beginning to use spoken English for social purposes. May understand simple instructions and can follow narrative/accounts with visual support. May have developed some skills in reading and writing. May have become familiar with some subject-specific vocabulary.
C	Developing competence May participate in learning activities with increasing independence. Able to express self orally in English, but structural inaccuracies are still apparent. Literacy will require ongoing support, particularly for understanding text and writing. May be able to follow abstract concepts and more complex written English.
D	Competent Oral English will be developing well, enabling successful engagement in activities across the curriculum. Can read and understand a wide variety of texts. Written English may lack complexity and contain occasional evidence of errors in structure. Needs some support to access subtle nuances of meaning, to refine English usage, and develop abstract vocabulary.
E	Fluent Can operate across the curriculum to a level of competence equivalent to that of a pupil who uses English as his/her first language. Operates without ELL support across the curriculum.

Source: taken from Flynn (2017)

In EFL classrooms for children aged 6-7, since they are just starting to understand literacy in both L1 and L2, it is expected to have a variety of situations mentioned in phases A, B, and C in the chart above. According to Harris & Hodges (1995), learning to read is one of the most complex activities for children, since they have to coordinate several cognitive processes. In order to successfully accomplish this task, children must learn to recognize letters and words, as well as to construct meanings from the sentences, paragraphs, and texts; while also practicing their memory to retain the information. The process is generally started with alphabetization: learning the basic letters, their sounds, and their proper use;

following theoretical notions and the use of the phonemic awareness and phonics instruction in the literacy process.

1.3. Teaching literacy methods and key factors in effective literacy

Alphabetization is the process by which preordered written symbols, graphemes (letters), and character strings are given meaning; due to their use in the representation of phonemes used in different languages to form syllables, words, sentences, and so on. In that sense, phonology is a branch of linguistics devoted to studying sounds in distinct languages, their syntax, morphology, and vocabulary. And phonetics is the branch of linguistics which deals with how humans perceive and produce sounds (Caffrey, 2017).

Alphabetics. Phonemic awareness instruction

Phonological awareness is related to aspects of sounds, such: a) alliteration (similar ending in words), b) rhyming (similar beginning of words), c) segmentation of syllables, words, and sentences, and d) individual sounds or phonemes. Instead, phonemic awareness (PA) is linked to an individual's capacity to detect, segment, blend, and manipulate phonemes. In English, there are forty-one possible phonemes -or sounds- that can be combined to form words and syllables. Phonemes are the smallest particles in speech (Lane & Pullen, 2004). Regarding phonemes, the National Reading Panel (2000) establishes the following:

English consists of about 41 phonemes. Phonemes combine to form syllables and words. A few words have only one phoneme, such as a or oh. Most words consist of a blend of phonemes, such as go with two phonemes, or check with three phonemes, or stop with four phonemes (...) Phonemes are different from graphemes. Graphemes may consist of one letter, for example, P, T, K, A, N, or multiple letters, CH, SH, TH, -CK, EA, -IGH, each symbolizing one phoneme (...) PA refers to the ability to focus on and manipulate phonemes in spoken words. (NRP, 2000, p. 2-10)

It is believed by some researchers that PA coupled with letter recognition are two of the best predictors of future reading proficiency for children in their early literacy training, and that illiterate individuals are prompted to show troubles in phonemic awareness (Morais et al., 1987). In phonemic awareness instruction, teachers exercise abilities such as:

- a) Phoneme isolation: they ask for students to isolate specific sounds from a pre-selected word;
- b) Phoneme identity: they request students to recognize the same sound from a list of pre-selected words;
- c) Phoneme categorization: children are required to rule out one word that doesn't have a specific sound from a list;
- d) Phoneme blending: some sounds are given to the student, asking to form words considering those same sounds;
- e) Phoneme segmentation: based on the splitting of words into the smallest sounds or phonemes; and
- f) Phoneme deletion: it is asked to remove one phoneme and pronounce the remaining of word (Lukatela, et al., 1995).

Alphabets. Phonics instruction

To follow up, the relevance of teaching reading by phonics instruction to children is referred in sources such as the one made by the National Reading Panel (2000), mentioning Phonics Instruction as: "An essential part of the process for beginners involves learning the alphabetic system, that is, letter-sound correspondences and spelling patterns" (p. 2-89).

Systematic phonics relates to the alphabet teaching through the use of the sounds of the letters and their correspondences in spelling patterns. In that sense, phonics instruction resorts to the use of the sound of letters and the fact that some letters may sound similar in L1 and L2 while others may vary. Understanding those

similarities and dissimilarities in EFL is of utmost important in phonics instruction to enhance the teaching/learning process in reading for the students by the use of letter-sounds and how they are used in words (Harris & Hodges, 1995).

The main difference between phonemic awareness (PA) and phonics instruction is that the first focuses on the sounds of words alone, while the second relates the sounds to the letters and the way they are used in words. Making out of phonics instruction a powerful tool while teaching literacy (Daud & Salamah, 2016).

Although many studies are officially made for ESL learners, researchers find that theories can be applied in EFL environments too. In this respect, Huanhuan (2017) mentioned that educators and researchers have resorted to phonics instruction not only to teach native speakers but that EFL young students have been rewarded by the experience as well and that it has been proven as an effective strategy to teach reading in EFL learners.

And the findings explained by Shanahan & Beck (2006) sustained that phonics instruction helps EFL students to enhance their reading comprehension skills. Moreover, there is a proficient program developed by Narda Pitkethly, called Nardagani (2015) in the USA, This program -although it is a novel model- in the effort to provide help to new, struggling readers and ESL learners, has a series of signs that go with phonemes and graphemes simultaneously. Thus, reducing anxiety and improving the process of reading learning. In general, when practicing phonics instruction, teachers use strategies such as:

- a) Synthetic phonics: children are requested to transform letter -or letter combinations- into phonemes and then to combine phonemes into words;
- b) Analytic phonics: phonemes and letter sounds are related and used in words that are already familiar to students;
- c) Analogy-based phonics: children use segments of words they know to recognize words they do not know yet;
- d) Phonics with spelling: based on words segmentation into phonemes;

- e) Embedded phonics: phonemes are identified while reading a text; and
- f) Onset-rime phonics instruction: students are asked to recognize the phoneme of the previous letter to the first vowel - which is called the onset- and the phoneme of the remaining part of the word, known as the rime (Primary National Strategy, 2006).

As it has been reviewed by some of these studies, phonics instruction is a powerful tool to be used in EFL classrooms, and according to my personal experience working with children aged 6-7, phonics instruction can be crucial to integrate and adapt to the sound-letter correspondence, meaningful strategies like the high-frequency words, the story telling and reading out loud, which can support and enhance the reading literacy in a suitable program related to our EFL context.

High frequency words

High-frequency or sight words are words that teachers ask to be memorized because of their frequent use. According to the National Reading Panel (2000), whenever talking about high-frequency words, it is possible to refer to one of two meanings conveyed, regarding both a “methods meaning” and a “process meaning”. In the sense of the “methods meaning” high-frequency words are taught to students by sight in flash cards or big posters inside the classroom.

The “process meaning” takes place once the words are stored in the memory of the readers, who can easily access them at any time while reading and whenever they see them. In the second case, not only high-frequency words are considered to be sight words, instead, all words that each reader knows by heart and is able to recognize and automatically decode are considered to be part of his sight-vocabulary.

Considering the fact that in English, there are many differences between the sounds (phonemes) and the symbols (graphemes), it is important to consider didactic methods of literacy teaching that could be useful to transcend limitations in that sense. Some authors suggest that the best way to teach literacy is to start developing from the level of phonemes and continue with phonic awareness, while

other researchers consider that it is best to start by working on long-term memory with sight words.

For Seidenberg (2017), working with sight words brings about some distinct problems related to the intensive concentration and repetition that it is required to learn words (their sounds and spelling) by heart and the difficulty for the students to acquire word recognition skills without phonics instruction.

Two teaching approaches: a phonographic approach versus a sight word approach (Meadows, 2006). In that sense, Cambridge (2020) established a table of comparisons between the two approaches:

Figure 3

Phonographic-based vs. sight-based teaching approaches

Phonographic Approach	Sight Word Approach
Involves the teaching of sound, e.g., sound picture relationships in a certain order	Involves the teaching of commonly used high-frequency words that young children are encouraged to memorize in their entirety by sight
Believes that key skills are reversible and deal with encoding and decoding at the same time	Believes that children will automatically recognize these words in print without having to use any strategies to decode
May complemented with sight word reading for early access to meaning in texts	Adopts a whole word look and say a method

Source: taken from Cambridge (2020), p. 5.

According to the author's experience, the use of phonics instruction is mandatory in literacy teaching. Nonetheless, it is useful to include techniques of sight words as well, in order to reinforce notions and help children to acquire vocabulary. Moreover, the combination of several techniques renders better results in students and the development of their reading skills. Furthermore, to work gently with the appropriate capacities that the child has according to their age.

Storytelling and reading out-loud

The use of reading aloud in rounds during English classes is of common use inside the classroom to develop oral fluency. The more frequent method asks students to read parts of a text, alternating from one student to the next. The National Reading

Pannel (2000) established that for reading aloud to be successful, some key features must be checked, namely:

- It is necessary that students can read several times the same text until a pre-set level of proficiency is reached by each student. Otherwise, there is the risk of losing the sole purpose of the literacy teaching technique, which is to acquire oral fluency and confidence.
- It is important to supply strategies for students to follow up in their reading practices. It is obvious that it is impossible to provide individual attention to each student to read once and again during class because of how limiting is time. To deal with this situation, special schedules to work with small group of students and one instructor may be set, the use of tutors, audiotapes, peer couplings, homework with parents/caregivers assistance, or any other strategy that could be of use to allow for students to practice several repetitions of texts reading out-loud.

According to the Reading Rockets method, reading out-loud, and the power of stories have no price in literacy learning. Stories are memorable because their usage help to touch emotions in the reader -specially in case of children- inspiring them, helping them to connect with the teaching experience, and motivating them to curiously dive deeper to know more and more. Reading aloud and storytelling should be directed in such a way that children are able to: a) connect the stories to their own experience, b) connect the stories to previous stories children are familiar with and are being used previously to teach literacy, c) connect the stories to universal concepts (Gold & Gibson, 2001).

In that sense, The National Council of Teachers of English (1992) reinforces the importance of storytelling activities and their inclusion into literacy programs for young children starting in the teaching system. All of it because reading out-loud is basic to provide fluency in reading for children. Because only with practice will they acquire the necessary skills to face all that literacy learning entails. In the same way, Bredekamp, Copple & Neuman (2000) wrote about the importance of listening to

others read as well. According to these authors listening to others while they read is helpful because the fact that they are in the position of practicing their listening comprehension skills, if they are provided with texts to follow through the reading, they can exercise phonics, learning proper pronunciation, pace, and rhythm from their teachers' example.

There are plenty of research studying the importance of including reading aloud and storytelling sessions while teaching literacy, which makes for this a proven strategy of common use within classrooms for teaching literacy in any language (Miller & Pennycuff, 2008). Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer & Lowrance (2004) conducted a research on children aged 3-5 years old comparing reading out-loud and storytelling in a split sample of students. The authors concluded that students that experienced reading aloud from books sessions were able to perform better in the details of retelling stories, while students who experienced storytelling performed better in identifying the moral of the story, and recalling the setting.

Both groups benefited from the experience in terms of literacy learning in different manners, highlighting that storytelling brought about a somehow more emotional experience for students, according to the students' testimonies in which they said they felt connected to the story.

In that same regard, Wallace (2000) considers that storytelling is a powerful tool to establish meaningful communication between the storyteller and the listener, making it easier for the latter to relate to what is being told, due to the eye contact, voice inflections, among other resources that make this technique an advantageous one in the teaching of literacy. While Cliatt & Shaw (1988) counted among storytelling pros, the fact that this method of teaching literacy allows for more dynamic participation of students who are willing to contribute with their interpretations to follow the example of the storyteller, going to the extent of portraying a positive attitude towards instruction.

The research from Mello (2001) also shows good storytelling results. The author concluded that this tool for teaching literacy was an excellent pedagogical strategy

considering the results that teachers may gather in terms of stories comprehension, and in the measuring of fluency while the students exercise their oral skills (tell the story, re-tell the story, answer questions, or contribute with their experience on the topic discussed). According to her own findings and analysis, students felt better after storytelling sessions, their learning experience became enhanced by the use of the technique in academic areas such as vocabulary learning, fluency, listening comprehension, and recall of the main idea, and morals, while improving at the same time their self-awareness, cultural knowledge, and visual imagery.

Key factors in effective literacy pedagogy for EFL students

As was previously stated, children will arrive at schools coming from different environments. Because of this, they will have different levels, skills, and habits regarding their own learning, as well as different cultural backgrounds, motivations, and beliefs. This is known as individual differences (ID), and it will have a cost in the learning experience for each individual. Moreover, ID represents an important aspect of teaching, and several researches are devoted to their study in the branch of language teaching (Paradis, 2011).

Accounting for individual differences and other factors, EFL learners would take of advantage of teaching strategies suitable for each of them. But in reality, it is necessary to adapt general models that may afford universal truths to the classroom in order to enhance the teaching/learning process. According to authors like Lucas et al. (2008), Conteh (2015), and Flynn (2017), it is safe to assume that when it comes to literacy, children may benefit from oral rehearsal and writing, as well as the following considerations:

- a) A safe environment in which participation is welcome is of utmost importance to minimize anxiety among students and to ensure they are practicing,
- b) It is necessary to attach meaning to the material being taught. Children need to understand the importance and the purposes of learning,

- c) Splitting the group into the smallest cells in which more proficient and less proficient students gather and share experiences has proven to be beneficial for learning,
- d) Encouraging participation, conversations, and discussions by establishing turns in an orderly fashion helps students to take an interest in the class, improving their motivation in the process,
- e) The use of L1 mixed with L2 is helpful under teachers' moderation,
- f) Instructions from the teacher have to be explicit and clear for children to follow up,
- g) It is important to encourage homework and parents/family/caregivers' participation at home in order to solidify the knowledge partaken inside the classroom,
- h) To activate prior knowledge is a common strategy that is worthy and helpful when teaching literacy, making the material relevant by recalling previous classes or relatable experiences to the student.
- i) It is advisable to construct mental images, ask questions, make associations, and correct mistakes in the middle of classes to help not only the student who asked but also the peers who may have had the same question, among other general strategies that may apply to all students with no regard towards their differences.

Another essential factor when teaching literacy is to ensure a proper selection of teaching material, texts, and books. This is one of the most meaningful aspects in terms of motivation and diversity. The selection of the proper material, books and books to use in literacy teaching classes within EFL classrooms is of utmost importance to keep the motivation going and help students relate and acquire new knowledge and new vocabulary in order to express new concepts and notions which trap their interest.

According to Barton & Booth (1990), it is necessary to expose children to a wide variety of stories in order for them to be able to relate to different people, cultures, and subjects. They get the benefit of learning new ways to face fears and problems by knowing new characters and their struggles and incorporating those new tools

into their experiential bags of knowledge. Because of this, it is important to select books, texts, and stories from a wide range of cultures, especially in cases of EFL teaching. In that way, it is possible to introduce them to new words they cannot even comprehend yet, but also it is possible to encounter texts written in English that are relatable to their own experiences and culture.

Because of this, well-chosen material will encourage children to learn things from other cultures, to learn from their own, as well as to ask and answer questions they did not pose before. The plot, the vocabulary, the level of difficulty, words pronunciation, the response to previous readings, interesting characters, colorful literary resources, and other criteria are critical when choosing new texts.

As explained by Reading Rockets, when selecting new reading material to give students, there are interesting questions to ask oneself as a teacher. Questions such as: is it a good plot? Is it memorable? Is it understandable according to their current level of knowledge? Does it have interesting words in terms of pronunciation, meaning, and use of high-frequency words? Will students relate to the story? Will they be excited to read or listen to it? Will the text raise interesting answers and comments among children? Will it be inspiring to embrace new reading material with similar characteristics shortly? Will students want to listen to the story several times?

To have an appropriate learning literacy program, teachers must follow a combination of significant strategies that enhance the teaching labor with little children. According to Shin (2014), teachers should try to embed phonics instruction within a realistic context to help young learners use these bottom-up skills in conjunction with top-down reading strategies. This strategy will allow teachers to make sense of printed texts and motivate and encourage children during the learning process.

CHAPTER II. METHODOLOGY DESIGN

2.1. Type of research

The present study uses a mixed approach, including qualitative and quantitative characteristics. Mixed approaches have been frequently used to give new solutions to old problems of real life, proven to be of particular significance in teaching/learning research. This study offers meaningful solutions by using a diversity of analysis strategies extracted from the combined approaches: qualitative-quantitative (Hamui, 2013).

In terms of its design, the study is transversal quasi-experimental, combining theory, research and practice. Quasi-experimental studies are characterized by the observation of phenomena within prefigured groups or samples (Hernández-Sampieri, 2014). In the current research, the model selected for the fieldwork is subdivided into a sample of students aged 6-7 years old, and a sample of EFL teachers.

2.2. Population, sample, and type of data collection

This study takes place in a private school. It is an institution located in Ambato, Ecuador. It expects to achieve a bilingual status soon. For this reason, the school has an English Teaching Program of 12 hours or more in a week in each grade. But the COVID-19 pandemic forced all the school schedules to change 5 hours per week. Second graders connect to their online classes daily through the Learning Management System (LMS) in this virtual modality.

The sample selected for the research is constituted by two different subgroups:

- a) A sample of six (6) children' teachers aged 6-7 years old who have been working for more than 5 years within EFL environments, and
- b) A sample of twenty (40) students aged 6-7.

In terms of its design, the study is transversal quasi-experimental, combining the theory, research and practice. Quasi-experimental studies are characterized by observing phenomena within prefigured groups or samples (Hernández-Sampieri, 2014). The data collected for this research came from qualitative (literature, perspectives gathered from 6 experienced teachers, and own author's experience), and quantitative (fieldwork applied onto 40 students aged 6-7) sources. The fieldwork applied to the sample of 40 students was inspired by the author's observations collected as a result of her literacy teaching experience over the years.

The sample of 40 children was subdivided into two different groups:

- Control group (CG): 20 students received traditional teaching from the sample of 40. They did not change their teaching process to use this group as a control. Thus, comparing their performance against the experimental group. The application of literacy tests measured the improvement in performance: pre and post-didactic experience.
- Experimental group (EG): 20 students from the sample of 40 were included in the didactic experience. This group was trained with the continued practice of a) phonics instruction from the beginning of b) reading out loud, c) high-frequency word learning, and d) use of story-telling techniques.

As far as the procedure that was applied for the English intervention, it is interesting to highlight the steps that were followed:

- 1st step - Diagnosis: this portion of the process took place at the very beginning. During the early stages, the need and justification for the study were established, taking into account the importance of proper teaching of literacy for children aged 6-7 years old.
- 2nd step – Pre-test: Once selected, the subject of the research and the educational institution, a pre-test was applied to the sample before the experimental phase to determine the English level in literacy for the 40 students. This was performed by

making use of the test portrayed in Appendix A. The test was designed considering examples and recommendations from a selection of previous studies that rendered positive results in English literacy teaching. In that regard, the investigation from Bredekamp, Copple & Neuman (2000); Caffrey (2017); Cambridge (2020) and, many other authors were very useful. Recommendations given by these literary sources were analyzed, as well as all tests' examples (whenever available) to build an adequate enough test to evaluate literacy in children aged 6-7.

- 3rd step – Didactic intervention: The sample was split into 2 groups: (i) Experimental Group and (ii) Control Group. The experimental group followed through the didactic experience developed for this research (explained in the other section titled: 2.4. Didactic experience applied to the experimental group). In contrast the control group was taught literacy following regular methods.

- 4th step – Semi-structured interviews to learn about teachers' perceptions on literacy teaching/learning: professionals of teaching were interviewed following the form presented in Appendix C in order to take advantage of their knowledge and experience in teaching literacy over the years.

- 5th step – Post-test and results from analysis: After applying the didactic experience for the experimental group, the whole sample (both the control and the experimental group) took the post-test portrayed in Appendix B (which was developed following the same procedure as the pre-test design). Afterward, results were analyzed to measure changes in students' proficiency levels and the effect of using the pedagogical tools recommended for the didactic experience. The results of the analysis are shown in Chapter III.

Quantitative data

As far as the quantitative portion of the research goes, it constitutes the analysis of the results obtained after the pre and post-tests application to the sample.

1. Literacy pre-test (appendix A): specially designed to diagnose the level of reading comprehension skills to the selected sample and before the intervention phase. The literacy pre-test was designed considering previous research and is structured in three different sections. The first section of the test was designed to evaluate phonics instruction by asking three different questions related to synthetic phonics, analytic phonics, and onset-rime phonics assessment. The second section of the test contains two questions asked to practice letters and word recognition which is an important aspect of literacy. The third section has three parts (with 5 postulates each) to assess the semantics and comprehension of words/short sentences in EFL.

2. Literacy post-test (appendix B): The post-test was designed as a modification from the pre-test to evaluate the evolution and differences between the experimental group and the control group (after the didactic experience was applied) in order to assess the effectiveness of the strategy of teaching literacy in children aged 6-7 years old (applied during this fieldwork).

Qualitative data

The qualitative component of the research contains the author's analysis of three significant information sources that were considered to take advantage of knowledge from specialized literature as well as the experience of colleagues who have been teaching literacy to children for a long time.

Thus, the first source of qualitative data is posed by the literature review discussed in chapter I: state of art and practice. The second source is represented by the teachers' perceptions on the subject (gathered via semi-structured interviews applied to 6 teachers of literacy in EFL. See appendix D). The third source comes from the author's own experience in teaching literacy within EFL environments for children aged 6-7.

Regarding the semi-structured interview applied to the sample of 6 teachers, three questions were asked to the professionals in order to know how many years of experience they had, which is the most difficult aspect when teaching literacy within

EFL environments to young children aged 6-7 years old, and the strategies recommended by them (based on their teaching experience) to effectively develop literacy in EFL for children between 6 and 7 years old.

The combination of all quantitative and qualitative information gives a rounded compound of data from the point of view of teachers and students in the literacy process, which will be analyzed in the following section.

Research Limitations

This research aims to find the best strategy to teach reading literacy to children aged 6-7. Because of COVID-19, it was not possible to set more treatment experiments. There was an irregular sequence during the scholar year, and the working time was limited.

Procedure and analysis of information

This section includes three sections as follows:

- Phase one included an interview with six primary teachers who have worked in second grade. The aim is to collect information about how they teach literacy skills. In this period, the pretest took place to determine the level of reading comprehension by students.
- Phase two had to do with the intervention where students from the experimental group participated without being aware of the current investigation to ensure the reliability of the results.
- Phase three consisted of the post-test that was applied to both groups, the control and the experimental, to determine a comparison between the use of an effective strategy and traditional methods in literacy training.

Teacher's Interview and Pre-test

This section will start by analyzing the feedback attained as a result of the semi-structured interviews with the six literacy teachers who work with kids aged 6-7. The analysis of this information is relevant in order to partially fulfill specific objectives number 3 and 4, namely: “to identify the meaningful strategies that affect the reading literacy learning in EFL” and “to design an effective strategy for the development of reading literacy learning in children aged 6-7”.

The following questions were included in the semi-interviews for teachers to share their experiences within EFL environments teaching literacy: years of experience teaching English, the most difficult part of teaching literacy to young children, and teaching strategies recommended to teach literacy in second grade.

Pre-testing

The diagnosis on the level of reading comprehension -within the sample of 40 students- was significant to fulfill the second specific objective set from the start of the research, mentioned: “to diagnose the level of reading comprehension skills in children aged 6-7”.

The Reading Rockets (2022) states five essential components to reading literacy: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension. For this reason, due to the age of students, the pretest was structured in three sections which include the five components mentioned on these lines:

- Section I: Phonics instruction (questions 1-3)
- Section II: Letters & words recognition (questions 4 and 5)
- Section III: Semantics & comprehension (questions 6-8)

The pretest was set as follows in table 1, where the questions, items, and scores are distributed to be applied to the experimental and control group.

Table 1
Sections distribution and scores in the Literacy Pre Test

	Question #	Items #	Score c/u	Total Points
Section I	Q1	2	0.75	4.5
	Q2	3	0.5	
	Q3	3	0.5	
Section III	Q4	1	0.5	1
	Q5	5	0.1	
Section III	Q6	5	0.3	4.5
	Q7	5	0.3	
	Q8	5	0.3	
Total Score				10

Source: Jácome, G. (2021)

For the distribution in the control and experimental group, the scores are taken into consideration with the following parameters:

- **Good Development of Literacy Skills** : 7-10 points
- **Intermediate Development of Literacy Skills** : 5-7 points
- **Poor Development of Literacy Skills** : 0-5 points

Due to the quasi-experimental study, the nonrandomized control group, the pre-posttest design is one of the most widely used in educational research. The nonrandomized group occurs when the school situation and schedules cannot be disrupted. In such a case, one uses groups already organized into classes or other preexisting intact groups. The pretest, the design's most important feature, provides a way to deal with threatening internal validity when working with nonrandomized groups. It allows checking the equivalence of the groups on the dependent variable before the experiment begins. If there are no significant differences on the pretest, you can discount selection bias as a serious threat to internal validity and proceed with the study. Ary, D., Jacon, L., Sorensen, C. & Walker, D. (2019)

It was meaningful to distribute the students in their established groups, both of them are second graders divided into two different classes with the same teacher as Ary,

D., Jacon, L., Sorensen, C. & Walker, D. (2019) mentioned that "the same person teach both English classes would be recommended". Furthermore, the sample was classified as having good, intermediate, or poor development skills based on the results of the Literacy pretest, as shown in table 2.

Table 2

Results obtained in the Literacy Pre-Test

Points	Level	No. Students	% Sample
[7 - 10]	Good Development of Literacy Skills	15	37.5%
[5 - 7]	Intermediate Development of Literacy Skills	16	40,0%
[0 - 5]	Poor Development of Literacy Skills	9	22,5%

Source: Jacome, G. (2021)

As it can be observed, 40% of the sample of students attained scores of intermediate, 37.5%: poor development of literacy skills, and 22.5%: good development.

The subgroup distribution was done keeping in mind the nonrandomized groups because they are previously established by the institution, and the level of reading comprehension as it shown in table 3.

Table 3

Sub-group distribution: Experimental Group (EG) vs. Control Group (CG)

Level of Reading		N° Students EG	N° Students CG
7 -10 points	Good	7	8
5 – 7 points	Intermediate	8	8
0 -5 points	Poor	5	4
TOTAL		20	20

Source: Jácome, G. (2021)

Because of the current study, the groups had to be categorized like table 3 shows. The EG and CG were integrated by the students previously assigned by the institution in the classes. Although Ary, D., Jacon, L., Sorensen, C. & Walker, D. (2019) stated that there are some possible validity threats and some aspects that can confront them like the maturation during the experiment, the same pretest used for both groups, the same period of time occupied for the treatment. They said that “the more similar the experimental and the control groups are at the beginning of the experiment and the more this similarity is confirmed by similar group means on the pretest, the more credible the results of the nonrandomized control group, pretest-posttest study become, in that sense, the mean of the EG is 6.1, and the mean of the CG is 6.25. The mean results offer a valid start for this research following the above-mentioned theory.

Intervention study

The experimental group's experience was based on a "Balanced Approach," which took into account the author's experience teaching literacy in EFL to children aged 6-7. On this regard, it is useful to look into the work of Shin (2014) who stated that in EFL teaching, literacy is an integral part of the process, especially in the case of young learners and literacy skills learned in the L1 that can be transferred (and even acquired simultaneously) to L2; and also from L2 to L1. Furthermore, it is a process that is learned by students only once (no matter the language: whether Spanish or English), so that it is feasible for teachers to tap into student's skills for both languages at the same time, making it a process even more advantageous for children and the consolidation of their knowledge in both languages.

In that regard, the approach considered for this research includes a balanced approach where the experimental group will learn reading literacy through its application. As a fundamental for reading literacy, Reading Rockets (2022) expressed that the most meaningful components are phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, vocabulary, fluency and reading comprehension. The application of the

balanced approach was determined by different pedagogical activities to build the proper environment of teaching in the second graders as figure 1 shows the components of reading literacy and the intervention to reinforce the present study. The experimental group (EG) had sessions daily under the context explained and the literature framework studied.

The intervention were distributed in a balanced manner during the two months, each sessions lasted 40 seconds on site and virtually because of the returning phase due to the pandemic. As a result of these frequent changes, some activities were done in their houses and others in the school.

Sequence

The activities were distributed from the simplest ones to the more complex because of the student's age and their level of reading comprehension. The good and intermediate developing group were working simultaneously while the poor developing group was having some struggle. That is why the use of an effective strategy in literacy, as the balanced approach, will benefit the whole group's teaching-learning process.

Post-test

To evaluate the didactic experience applied in the research in which phonics instruction was used from the start (in combination with the reinforcement of some other literacy teaching techniques like reading out-loud, high-frequency/sight words lists, and storytelling, among others). Table 4 shows results from both literacy tests: pre and post.

Table 4

Literacy pre-test and post-test: Experimental Group vs. Control Group

LEVEL		PRE-TEST		POST-TEST	
		N° of SS EG	N° of SS CG	N° of SS EG	N° of SS CG
7 - 10	Good	7	8	10	6
5 - 7	Intermediate	8	8	9	9
0 - 5	Poor	5	4	1	5
TOTAL		20	20	20	20

Source: Jacome, G. (2021)

As it could be observed, the experimental group had a significant improvement by comparing their results before and after the didactic experience. Participants of the experimental group went from 7 to 10 students included into the “good development of literacy skills” category. It means the 50% of the sample in the experimental group. In the category of intermediate development are 9 students representing the 45%. This implies that students with poor development of literacy skills was reduced by 1 student with the 5% of the sample. In the meantime, the control group showed a slight improvement which was not as significant as the results obtained by the experimental group, thus confirming the effectiveness of the didactic experience and the proposed “Balanced program” to reading literacy to children aged 6-7 years.

2.3. Research proposal

“Balanced Program to Teach Reading Literacy to Children aged 6-7”

Informative Data

Institution: Unidad Educativa Nuevo Mundo

Province: Tungurahua

City: Ambato

Address: Izamba, Vicente Lalama and Ciro Peñaherrera streets

Phone Number: 032 45 10 33

Area: Second Grade of Basic Education

Proposal Background

Teaching literacy to children is demanding because it suggests looking for engaging strategies to stimulate the students' interest, encourage and connect them with the world of letters and sounds. There are various paths to follow when children learn to read however, a balanced program is highly beneficial for second graders. This proposal aims to set an effective strategy to teach reading literacy to children aged 6-7 at Nuevo Mundo School. Teachers would follow a suitable process where students will learn reading literacy in English and Spanish simultaneously avoiding struggle or confusion.

After many years of teaching English to children aged 6-7, it is vital to find an effective strategy to teach reading literacy at this growing stage. Teachers could have a guide to follow based on five elements: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension. Furthermore, students would feel motivated when learning to read through engaging activities in agreement with the child's evolutionary development, prior knowledge, and own capacities. A balanced program is not always applied when teaching English as a foreign language; even so, it would change how teachers and students succeed on the path to becoming literate.

Justification

This proposal aims to set an effective strategy to teach reading literacy to children aged 6-7 at Nuevo Mundo School. Teachers would follow a suitable process where English and Spanish languages are taught simultaneously while the students learn literacy, avoiding struggling and confusion.

General objective

To design an effective strategy to teach reading literacy in children aged 6-7.

Specific objectives

- To create activities to introduce letters and sounds.
- To propose a path for teaching reading to beginners.
- To improve reading literacy acquisition.

Proposal Feasibility

This study is feasible due to the following:

Nuevo Mundo School aspires to become a bilingual institution that promotes a high level of English language learning in the near future. For that reason, it is crucial to start with a balanced program in reading from the lowest levels.

Reading literacy is one of the most challenging skills hence improving the teaching-learning process will provide a way to reach the goal. It will contribute to work in an enjoyable environment making the letter and sound recognition comprehensible and easy to acquire.

Proposal procedure

To develop a balanced program, it is necessary to follow the next steps:

Figure 4

Skills and Content

Skill	Content
Phonemic awareness	- Initial vowel short sounds of a-e-i-o
	- Initial consonant sounds of m-p-l-s-t-n
	- Middle vowel short sounds of CVC words
Phonics	- Initial consonant sounds of m-p-l-s-t-n
	- CVC words in the fourth week with each vowel
	- Beginning sounds of cvc words
	- High Frequency Words
Vocabulary	- Colors
	- Numbers 1 -10
	- Alphabet
Fluency	- CVC words in groups
	- Video and audio stories
Reading Comprehension	- Big and hand book stories
	- Stories about letters, numbers, emotions, professions, animals, values, people, places and others

Source: Jácome, G. (2021)

Activities

1. Phonemic awareness (PA)

According to Reading Rockets (2022) the phonemes are the smallest units making up spoken language. English consists of about 41 phonemes. Phonemes combine to form syllables and words. To add, the PA is the ability to hear, recognize, and play with the individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words. The activities will be:

- tongue twisters with each vowel
- short poems, songs, chants
- repetition to get familiar with sounds, words, and phrases.
- games like:
- matching pictures and words

- saying the missing word
- saying the phrases loudly or quietly
- acting out and winning prizes
- filling the blanks with the target vowel

2. Phonics

The didactic proposal included a part of phonics instruction. As it has been stated in several ways within this document: phonics instruction is very useful in literacy teaching because it helps students to understand the way in which graphemes (letters/symbols) are related to sounds (phonemes) in the English language.

Phonics instruction is highly recommended for children who are starting their literacy learning in English at a young age and it has been found to be advantageous for students who have had problems learning literacy by other means. One of the advantages is for the children to acquire proper spelling skills (because they establish effective connections between the sounds represented by their learned phonemes and the letter-combinations linked to those same sounds). The National Reading Panel (2000) findings showed that students who received systematic and explicit phonics instruction were better readers at the end of instruction than students who received non-systematic or no phonics instruction (Ehri, 2006; Armbruster, Lehr, and Osborn, 2001).

As part of the pedagogical teaching strategy, some high frequency words like *I/see/have/a/an/am/is/it/he/she/has/go/goes* will be introduced during the lessons. The activities will be:

Alphabet

- Say the sounds of vowels, present pictures of initial sounds.
- Match letters and pictures.
- Chant and use mimicry.
- Place cards of vowels and pictures in a bag to find pairs.

- Sing short songs related to the alphabet, vowels, and consonants.

CVC words

- Classify CVC words in the corresponding groups.
- Play to form CVC words with reading blocks and cards.
- Form big letters on the floor to be filled with different outside materials
- Create a CVC book.

High frequency words

- Demonstrate the use of the word in context.
- Use pictures or realia to set the context.
- Present big word cards to sight the form of the word as a whole.
- Trace it with crayon/painting/dough and others.
- Place different cards in a box, and students will choose
- Form short sentences
- Make a high-frequency notebook divided into four parts of writing words on each piece of paper so that sentences can be built by changing the pages and making new ones.
- Set a group of high-frequency words used daily.

Some online applications were used to collect the reading production from students by recording videos and audio.

3. Vocabulary

Reading Rockets (2022) suggests that Vocabulary development refers to the knowledge of stored information about the meanings and pronunciations of words necessary for communication. To promote the reading literacy through vocabulary the next activities will be developed:

- Demonstrate the use of flashcards in class to practice the spoken words and meaning.

- Play games to show the cards and say the corresponding words.
- Share realia to assign names and form sentences.
- Interchange cards among students to find pairs.
- Solve puzzles of words and pictures to match them.
- Prepare a fair where students can participate freely among the several stands provided with learned content activities.
- Provide the reading activities as part of daily routines.
- Work in teams to solve big puzzles of CVC words.

4. Fluency

The National Reading Panel (2000) stated that fluent readers are able to read orally with appropriate speed, accuracy, and proper expression. The EG participated in some activities of reading books paired with breathing, yoga and mindfulness like the following:

- Set a reading space to read out loud activities.
- Do yoga or mindfulness activities like breathing, listening low sounds and others.
- Choose the right books for the level.
- Use a Big Book to tell stories with interesting topics.
- Perform the reading out loud activities periodically.
- Use puppets related to the stories.
- Encourage students to act out.
- Motivate students to read sentences that contain CVC and high frequency words using the word books.

5. Reading comprehension

The National Reading Panel (2000) determined that young readers develop text comprehension through a variety of techniques. The next activities will be performed:

- Set the activity: before reading, during, and after reading.
- Before reading: explain the listening position that consists of prepare sitting down, legs crossed, listening ears, looking eyes, closing mouths, and thinking brain.
- During the reading: listen to the audio recording or the teacher telling the story.
- After reading: retell the story by filling a “storytelling octopus”, each leg contains: the characters, title, place, feelings, actions, sequence and a Do you like question.
- Do role plays according to the story topic.

Furthermore, each lesson will take two academic hours (80 minutes) daily. The development of this plan will be distributed in two phases because of the school adaptation to the hybrid modality where some groups of students return to live classes and others stay at homeschooling. To take into account the variation of groups and schedules demand a big effort due to the lesson plans prepared for this study and they have to be adapted in each situation.

The lessons will be taught using only English. The mimic, drawings, and symbols support the students to use the language. They will be motivated to do so modeling the expressions and phrases by the tutor first. Thus, it will support the process of comprehension. Thus, the researcher presents a lesson plan as an example of how the classes took place with the proposed strategy. Every class was through a virtual platform at the beginning of this study, then a hybrid system was established to the end of the scholar year. During the intervention phase, the lesson plans will combine the five elements of the Balanced Program for teaching literacy.

LESSON PLAN

Topic : Initial and middle sound A

Grade : Second Year of Basic Education

Institution : Nuevo Mundo School

Aim : To identify the short sound /a/.

Skill : The student will be able to

PRE ACTIVITY:

- The teacher and students set the daily routine activities. They talk about the date, weather, days of the week, months, numbers, feelings and attention getters.
- The teacher and students use songs to state the daily routines.
- The teacher presents the short sound /a/ with mouth gestures and a chant.
- The students pronounce the short sound /a/ and repeat the chant: "A cat with a hat."

ACTIVITY:

- The teacher shows flashcards to relate the initial sound /a/ with pictures like apple, alligator, animal, alphabet, ant and pronounce loudly, quietly, happily, sadly. Gestures are used with each word.
- The students pronounce the words in the same way as the teacher does.
- The students record themselves saying the words asked
- The students identify the short sound /a/ in a word bank. The word bank contains different initial sounds of vowels. The students clap three times if they listen a word with the target sound. The students stay quietly if they listen to a different sound.
- Then they will play a game where the words are pronounced by the teacher, then they will hit with a "fly swatter" the sound a flashcards.

POST ACTIVITY

- The students will classify pictures that contain the short sound /a/.
- They will identify and trace the letter /a/ on a big poster.

CLOSURE

- They will sing the letter A song.

This lesson plan was applied taking into consideration the children's background knowledge. To introduce them to the reading process, it emphasizes phonics

instruction and letter-sound correspondence. It respects the child's cognitive development to avoid struggle and confusion. Once students were able to identify the vowels and some consonants sounds, they started to practice the reading of word banks and then they read simple sentences like I have a cat. /I see a rat./ It is a mat./ It is a hen./ and others more complex like I go to school./ She has a dog./ He has a pin./ and many more.

To assess the lessons, the reading time will be developed twice a week, using the book created by the students. This will be a notebook which is cut in four parts. Each time the students work with a new cvc word and a high-frequency word, they write on their individual notebook. In that sense, the book allows the children to combine the words by flipping the pages and form new short sentences as the next examples:

- I like pizza. I like a flower.
- I see a bug. I see a hat.
- I have a mom. I have a cat
- He has a mug. He has a pizza
- She goes to school. She goes to school.

As they will start to recognize the sound-letter correspondence and the sight of words, the reading book will be easy to handle it All of the words will be modeled on the board first for students to copy. Furthermore, the students will take and play with picture and word cards. This material will be set on the floor. The class will be divided into teams, then the students in turns will compete to make sentences. At the end of this activity, the winning team will be the one that gets the most correct sentences. It belongs to the production phase where the student works independently.

CHAPTER III. ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

As it has been previously established, this study followed a quali-quantitative approach in which: The qualitative data was represented by the mixing of: (a) literature review discussed in chapter I, (b) perceptions of teachers on the subject (gathered via semi-structured interviews), (c) the own experience of the author in teaching of literacy within EFL environments for children aged 6-7 years old.

The quantitative portion of the study consisted of the analysis of the performance of a sample of 40 students who took the literacy test, intervention, and post-test.

3.1. Analysis, interpretation, and validity of the results

This chapter is devoted to analyzing the information obtained through the study. The first section performs to know the students' level of reading comprehension before the didactic experience and set the subgroups distribution. It deals with the analysis of the results obtained by the students in the literacy pre-test and the way in which the sample of students was subdivided into the control and experimental groups.

The second section analyzes the level of reading comprehension of the sample after the didactic experience and deals with results obtained in the literacy post-test by both groups: control and experimental after the didactic experience.

The third section, "Effective strategies for teaching literacy" consists of the qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews with teachers and qualitative information, and

The fourth section, "Results Discussion", portrays the integration of all results.

3.2. Results discussion

This section of discussion analysis will start by reviewing the hypothesis, objectives, and the scientific question established at the beginning of the research contrary to the analysis of results and theoretical notions presented so far.

The hypothesis set for the study was that “an effective strategy helps to improve Literacy Learning with a focus on reading skills in children aged 6-7”, while the general objective was “to design an effective strategy for Literacy Learning with a focus on reading skills in children aged 6 -7”, and the scientific question: how to implement a strategy to improve the reading literacy learning in the EFL area?

In order to prove the hypothesis, answer the scientific question, and accomplish the general objective, a mixed approach, already explained in chapter II of methodology was executed.

First, half of the sample of students in the study were put through the balance program, which combines phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension, as essential components for reading literacy, while the other half received traditional literacy reading training. It led to the development of the didactic experience. To measure the progress of both groups, all 40 students took a literacy pre-test at the start of the experience and a post-test at the end. It is crucial to emphasize that both tests were equally difficult and were created with consideration for previous research as well as approved relevant literature. As it was previously discussed in the section on the analysis of results, the experimental group showed a noticeable improvement for children.

The first category Good Development of Literacy Skills [7 to 10 points in the literacy test]:

a) Children placed in the experimental group went from 35% to 50% within the experimental group sample. Thus, an improvement of 15% was registered for children under the didactic experience for learning literacy developed in the study.

b) Children placed in the control group, who learned literacy with traditional means, remained in the same category. In the pre-test, 40% of the control group was placed in the good development of literacy skills category, and at the end of the experience, the 40% reached scores between 7-10 points. For this group, a reduced percentage of 5% was recorded.

Within the second category: Intermediate Development of Literacy Skills [5 to 7 points in the literacy test]:

a) Children placed in the experimental group went from 40% to 45% within the experimental group sample. Thus, it shows an increase of 5% in this category. Nonetheless, it is interesting to review into that percentage, because 2 out of the 8 students that were before in the intermediate development of literacy skills went from intermediate to good development skills, showing an improvement in their performance at literacy tests. While the other 4 students remained with scores between 5-7 points and were joined by two additional students who also enhanced their performance and went from the lowest category (poor development of literacy skills) to the intermediate.

b) Children placed in the control group, who learned literacy with traditional means, went from 40% to 45% within this category of intermediate development of literacy skills. In the pre-test, 40% of the control group was placed in the intermediate development of literacy skills category, and 45% reached scores between 5-7 points. Thus, showing a moderate improvement of 5% in the category for the control group at the intermediate literacy skills level.

For the third category: Poor Development of Literacy Skills [0 to 5 points in the literacy test]:

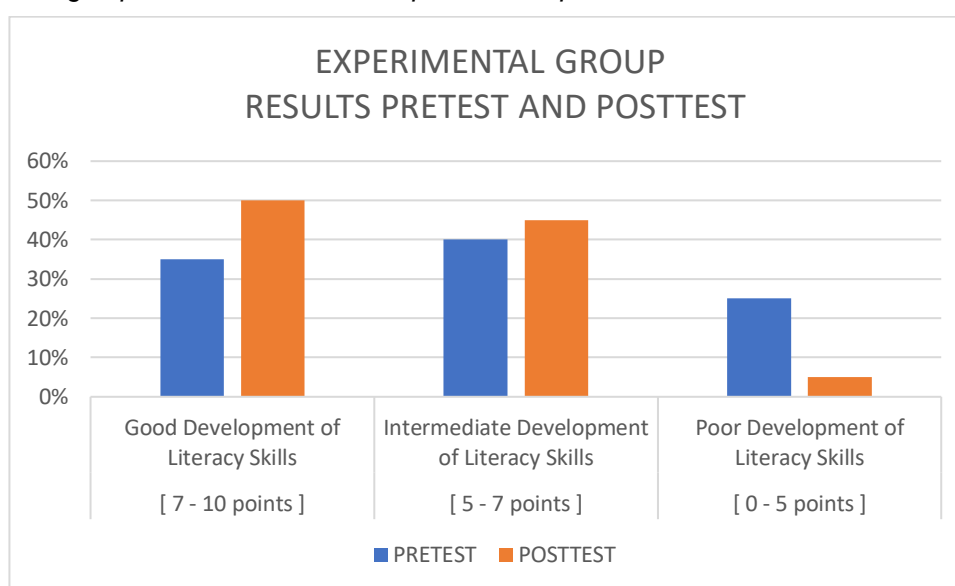
a) Children placed in the experimental group that learned with the didactic experience went from 25% to 5% within the experimental group sample. Thus, shows a decrease of 20% in this category. As it was mentioned before, 4 out of the 5 students that were placed in the lowest rank of literacy skills development,

improved their performances and achieved scores between 5-7 points which shows an improvement in their evaluations, placing them within the intermediate development of literacy skills category.

b) Children placed in the control group, who learned literacy with traditional means, went from 20% to 25% within this category, because one more student scored low and entered the poor literacy development group.

Figure 5

Experimental group results obtained in the pre.test and post.test



Source: Jacome, G. (2021)

After the post-test, the experimental group's performance is noticeable, with 50% of the sample getting into the good development group. According to the results, it is feasible to accept the designed didactic experience that was applied to the experimental group, as "an effective strategy for Literacy Learning with a focus on reading skills in children aged 6 -7". Thus, confirming the hypothesis that by applying proper teaching strategies, it was possible to help to improve Literacy Learning with a focus on reading skills in children aged 6-7.

As it was reviewed in the State of Art portion of this study and the authors' review, the use of phonics/phonemic awareness instruction is recommended as a starting

point to familiarize children with phoneme sounds and their letters/graphemes, introducing examples with words and their proper pronunciation.

Furthermore, the State of Art considered the results of the semi-structured interview of some teachers to design the didactic experience. It was also considered that the didactic teaching strategy was aimed at students aged 6-7 years old within an EFL environment, who are learning literacy in both their L1 and L2. Because of that fact, it was conceived from the beginning to start with sounds similar in English and Spanish (introducing at the beginning vowels: a-e-i-o- without taking into account the “u” sound until later).

This method is consistent with the theoretical concepts discussed in the first chapter by authors such as Hoque, 2017; Gabunia, 2014; Auleear, 2014; Lucas et al., 2008; Conteh, 2015; Flynn, 2017; and UNICEF, 2019. They established that, in order to succeed in an L1/L2 simultaneous teaching, effective strategies must be used to incorporate knowledge from the L1 (native language: Spanish) into the learning of the L2 (language to be acquired: English) through phonetic/coding instruction, grammar teaching of similar structures between the two languages, memory exercises using words that appear similar in both languages (either similar in sound or written form), as well as exploiting individual strengths of students and addressing their weaknesses.

Sight words were also included into the didactic experience, considering the recommendations of interviewed teachers, the author’s experience and the literary review. On this regard, The National Reading Panel (2000), Cambridge (2020), and Seidenberg (2017) put a good word for employing sight words charts in the classroom, and teaching high-frequency lists of words to children, in order for them to acquire new vocabulary, as well as a combination of teaching strategies aiming for a complementary learning process for students and the effective development of their literacy skills.

Furthermore, the storytelling technique and reading out-loud were also included, because of their traditional use which has shown to be a practical resource in literacy

teaching over the years, based on the principle of “practice makes the master”. Moreover, some advises were considered from authors like The National Reading Pannel (2000), Reading Rockets Method, Gold & Gibson (2001), The US National Council of Teachers of English (1992), Bredekamp, Copple & Neuman (2000), Isbell, et al. (2004); Wallace (2000), Cliatt & Shaw (1988), Miller & Pennycuff (2008), and Mello (2001).

CONCLUSIONS

- In conclusion, the theoretical basis supported the choice of a balanced program that contribute the reading literacy to children aged 6-7 years old. The literature review enabled us to evaluate information from various sources and meaningful research er to select the best tools and shape the current study of an effective reading literacy strategy.
- Children aged 6-7 years old need an effective strategy focuses on reading literacy that enhance the teaching process simultaneously in L1 and L2 and avoid the struggle between the two languages.
- The balanced program was developed including the five essential components: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and reading comprehension. This strategy allowed students to progress effectively in their reading literacy journey.
- The application of the effective strategy showed a significant improvement after the intervention. Throughout the procedure, the children became familiar with the strategy, followed the step-by-step activities, and learned reading literacy in a harmonious manner. According to the mentioned results, it is feasible to accept that the designed didactic experience applied to the experimental group turned out to be “an effective strategy for Literacy Learning with a focus on reading skills in children aged 6 -7”. This supported the theory that by using effective teaching strategies, reading literacy learning could be improved in second grade.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Apply the didactic experience to a larger sample, for a more extended period of time with more tests to perfect the pedagogy and the method.
- Include the participation of parents/caregivers, as support system to boost student's performance, to measure the impact of the variable of "homework assistance" into literacy learning in EFL for children aged 6-7 years old.
- Include activities to be performed in small-cells or small-groups of students into the didactic method and design a new experience to measure the impact of this variable of "grouping" or subdivision into smallest cells in literacy teaching for children aged 6-7 years old within EFL environments.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alfares, N. (2017). Benefits and Difficulties of learning in group work in EFL classes in Saudi Arabia. *English Language Teaching*, 10 (7), 247-256.

Auleear, A.M. (2014). Code-related aspects of emergent literacy: How prepared are preschoolers for the challenges of literacy in an EFL context? *Early Child Development and Care*, 185(4), 509-527.

Brown, H. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. (4th edition). New York: Longman Ed.

Caffrey, C. (2017). Phonetics. New England: Salem Press Encyclopedia Britannica.

Cambridge (2020). Phonics and Literacy instruction for young learners in EFL (Part of the Cambridge Papers in ELT series, April 2020). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chall, J.S. (1983). *Stages of reading development*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Cliatt, M. & Shaw, J. (1988). The story time exchange: Ways to enhance it. *Childhood Education*, 64 (5), 293-298.

Cohen, A. (2010). Focus on the language learner: styles, strategies and motivation. In: Norbert Schmitt (ed.), *An introduction to applied linguistics*. (2nd edition.) London: Hodder Education.

Cook, V. (1991). *Second language learning and language teaching*. London: Edward Arnold Editions.

Daud, B. & Salamah, U. (2016). Teaching phonics and phonemic awareness in English beginning reading. *English Educational Journal EEJ*, 7(3), 329-340.

- Dörnyei, Z. (2006). Individual differences in second language acquisition. *AILA Review*, 19(1), 42-68.
- Dörnyei & Zetlan . (2003). Individual differences in second language learning. In: Doughty, C. & Long, M. (ed.) *The Handbook of Second Language Acquisition* (1st edition). Melbourne: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Dörnyei, Z. & Ryan, S. (2015). *The psychology of the language learner revisited*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, and Informa Business. ISBN: 978-1-315-77955-3.
- Ehrman, M. & Leaver, B. (2003). Cognitive styles in the service of language learning. *System*, 31, 393-415.
- Ellis, R. (1985). *Understanding second language acquisition*. Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, R. (2004). Individual differences in second language learning. In: Alan Davies and Catherine Elder (eds.), *The handbook of applied linguistics*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- Flynn, N. (2017). Language and literacy for children who are English language learners (ELLs): developing linguistically responsive teachers. In: Goodwin, P. (ed.) *The Literate Classroom* (4th edition). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Gabunia, K. (2014). Language Situation in Modern Georgia: 1. Kartvelian Languages. *International Journal of Multilingual Education*, 3(1), 35-55.
- Gardner, R. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning. The role of attitudes and motivation*. London: Edward Arnold Editions.
- Goodluck, H. (1991). *Language acquisition: A linguistic introduction*. Hoboken, New Jersey: Blackwell Editions.

- Gutiérrez, C., Luengo, K. & Sandoval, N. (2019). *Comprensión lectora multisemiótica y transversalidad en estudiantes de segundo año medio: Diseño de un instrumento de evaluación*. Chillán: Universidad del Bío-Bío.
- Hamui, A. (2013). Un acercamiento a los métodos mixtos de investigación en educación médica. *Investigación en Educación Médica*, 2(8), 211-216.
- Harris, T. & Hodges, R. (1995). *The literacy dictionary: The vocabulary of reading and writing*. Newark, Delaware: International Literacy Association ILA.
- Hernández-Sampieri, R. (2014). *Metodología de la investigación*, sexta edición. México: McGraw-Hill.
- Hoque, E. (2017). *An Introduction to the Second Language Acquisition*. Retrieved from: www.researchgate.net/publication/335690866_An_Introduction_to_the_Second_Language_Acquisition.
- Huanhuan, R. (2017). The impact of phonics instruction on pre-school learners' development in English language course. Shenyang: 7th International Conference on Education, Management, Computer and Medicine EMCM, 2016.
- Isbell, R., Sobol, J., Lindauer, L., & Lowrance, A. (2004). The effects of storytelling and story reading on the oral language complexity and story comprehension of young children. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 32(3).
- Jhingran, D. *Early literacy and multilingual education in South Asia*. Kathmandu: United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia, UNICEF).
- Johnson, K. (2008). *An introduction to foreign language learning and teaching*. (2nd edition.). Harlow: Pearson Longman.

- Khatib, M. & Taie, M. (2016). BICS and CALP: Implications for SLA. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 7(2), 382-388, ISSN 1798-4769.
- Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press Inc. ISBN 0-08-028628-3.
- Lane, H. & Pullen, P. (2004). *Phonological awareness assessment and instruction: A sound beginning*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. & Long, M. (1994). *An introduction to second language acquisition research*. London: Longman Ed.
- Lee, Y.A. (2005). Introducing reading for young EFL Learners: Issues and perspectives. *English Teaching*, 60(3), 243-263.
- Lindahl, K. & Sayer, P. (2018). Early EFL instruction and L1 literacy. *Colomb. Appl. Linguistic. J.* 20(2), 184-194.
- Lukatela, K., et al. (1995). Phonological awareness in illiterates: Observations from Serbo-croatian. *Applied Psycholinguistic*, 16(1), 463-487.
- Manchón, R. (2009). Individual differences in foreign language learning: the dynamics of beliefs about L2 writing. *RESLA*, 22, 245-268.
- Meadows, S. (2006). *The child as thinker: the development and acquisition of cognition in childhood*, 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- Mello, R. (2001). *Building bridges: How storytelling influences teacher and student relationships*. In *Proceedings, storytelling in the Americas conference*. St. Catherine, on: Brooks University Press ERIC Document. Reproduction Service No. ED457088).

- Miller, S. & Pennycuff, L. (2008). The power of storytelling to improve literacy learning. *Journal of Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives in Education*, 1(1), 36-43.
- Morais, J., et al. (1987). Literacy training and speech segmentation. *Cognition*, 24(1), 45-64.
- National Council of Teachers of English (1992). Position Statement from the Committee on Storytelling. *Teaching Storytelling*. US: NCTE.
- National Reading Panel. (2000). Report of the National Reading Panel. *Teaching Children to Read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. Washington: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and U.S. Department of Education.
- Paradis, J. (2011). Individual differences in child English second language acquisition: Comparing child-internal and child-external factors. *Linguistics Approaches to Bilingualism*, 1(3), 213-237.
- Pawlak, M. (2009). *Studies in pedagogy and fine arts. special issue: new perspectives on individual differences in language learning and teaching*. Poznań-Kalisz: Faculty of Pedagogy and Fine Arts in Kalisz.
- Piaget, J. (1956). Motricité, perception et intelligence. *Enfance*, 9(2), 9-14.
- Pishghadam, R., Noghani, M. & Zabihi, R. (2011). An Application of a Questionnaire of Social and Cultural Capital to English Language Learning. Published by Canadian Center of Science and Education. *English Language Teaching*, 4(3), 151-157.

- Primary National Strategy. (2006). Phonics and early reading: An overview for head teachers, literacy leaders and teachers in schools, and managers and practitioners in early years settings. London: Crown Copyright.
- Ramírez, I. & Aguilar, E. (2018). Estudio comparativo de logros en expresión oral y comprensión lectora en los estudiantes del VII ciclo de educación básica de la institución educativa particular Sollertia, Coronel Portillo. Perú: Universidad César Vallejo.
- Rivers, W. (2008). Teaching Foreign Language Skills (2nd ed.). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Shanahan, T., & Beck, I. (2006). Effective Literacy Teaching for English-Language Learners. In D. August & T. Shanahan (Eds.), *Developing literacy in second-language learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth* (p. 415–488). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Shin, J. (2014). *Teaching Young Learners English: from theory to practice*. Boston: National Geographic Learning/Cengage Learning.
- Wallace, C. (2000). Storytelling: Reclaiming an age-old wisdom for the composition classroom. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 27(4), 434-439.
- Wright, W. (2010). *Foundations for teaching English language learners: Research, theory, policy, and practice*. Philadelphia, PA: Caslon.
- Zafar, S. & Meenakshi, K. (2012). Individual Learner Differences and Second Language Acquisition: A Review. *Journal of Language Teaching & Research*, 3(4), 639-646.

Zulaiha, S., Mulyono, H. & Ambarsari, L. (2020). An investigation into EFL teachers' assessment literacy: Indonesian teachers' perceptions and classroom practice. *European Journal of Contemporary Education*, 9(1), 189-201.

ANNEXES**Appendix 1****LITERACY PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST****Section I: Phonics instruction**

1. Synthetic Phonics: Combine letters to form recognizable words

1.1. Phoneme /_at/ (0.75 points)

- a) words: mat, pat
- b) words: hen, pen
- c) words: pin, fin

1.2. Phoneme /- in/ (0.75 points)

- a) words: pug, mug
- b) words: sat, mat
- c) words: tin, fin

2. Analytic Phonics: select from the list which word contains the phonemes given

2.1. Phoneme /p/ initial sound (0.5 points)

- a) sun
- b) map
- c) pencil
- d) lamp

2.2. Phoneme /s/ initial sound (0.5 points)

- a) apple
- b) sister
- c) tomato
- d) monkey

2.3. Phoneme /i/ initial sound

- a) swan
- b) color
- c) son
- d) boy

3. Onset-Rime Phonics: Listen to the words, identify and say the onset (previous letter to the first vowel) and the rime (the phoneme of the remaining part of the word)

3.1. TOP (0.5 points)

Onset: Rime:

3.2. MAN (0.5 points)

Onset: Rime:

3.3. FAN (0.5 points)





















Onset: Rime:

Section II: Letters and words recognition

4. Recognize and circle the matching lowercase. (0.5 points)

A	H	J	A	g
M	J	U	Y	M
P	P	T	E	R
E	T	E	W	Q
I	O	K	I	N

5. Listen to and cross out the corresponding picture. (0.5 points: 0.1 point each)

5.1 flower	   
5.2 T.V.	   
5.3 house	   
5.4 teddy bear	   
5.5 pizza	   

Section III: Semantics and comprehension

6. Read the word given and form a sentence.

a) have (0.3points)

b) am (0.3points)

c) go (0.3points)

d) park (0.3points)

e) give (0.3points)

7. Read the next sentences and draw

a) He is Tom. (0.3 points)

b) She is my mom. (0.3 points)

c) I like pizza. (0.3 points)

d) It is a cat. (0.3 points)

e) I go to the park. (0.3 points)

8. Complete the activities that are described in English for each exercise

a) Draw a tree with three apples hanging from the tree. (0.3 points)

b) Draw three (3) circles and three (3) suns. (0.3 points)

c) Draw a hat for the bear. (0.3 points)

d) Draw a square inside a circle. (0.3 points)

e) Draw a night sky with the moon, stars, and clouds. (0.3 points)

Appendix 2

Answer Sheet

	Question #	Postulate #	Right answer	Score	
Section I Phonics Instruction	1	1,1	a,b,c,d	0,75	4,5
		1,2	a	0,75	
	2	2,1	b	0,5	
		2,2	a	0,5	
		2,3	d	0,5	
	3	3,1	onset:T/Rime:op	0,5	
		3,2	onset:M/Rime:AN	0,5	
		3,3	onset:F/Rime:AN	0,5	
	Section II	4			
Letters & Words Recognition	5	5,1	Right	0,1	
		5,2	Bed	0,1	
		5,3	Left	0,1	
		5,4	Colour	0,1	
		5,5	House	0,1	
Section III	6	6,1	a	0,3	4,5
		6,2	b	0,3	
		6,3	d	0,3	
		6,4	b	0,3	
		6,5	b	0,3	
	7	7,1	a	0,3	
		7,2	a	0,3	
		7,3	b	0,3	
		7,4	b	0,3	
		7,5	c	0,3	
	8	8,1		0,3	
		8,2		0,3	
		8,3		0,3	
		8,4		0,3	
		8,5		0,3	
	Total score:				

Score values:

Good Development of Literacy Skills: 7-10 points

Intermediate Development of Literacy Skills: 5-7 points

Poor Development of Literacy Skills: 0-5 points

Appendix 3

Teachers' Interview

Questions

Experience of being a teacher of second graders

1. How many years have you been teaching literacy to children aged 6-7 years old?

Literacy challenges

2. According to your experience, what is the most difficult part of teaching young children literacy within EFL classrooms?

Best Strategies

3. Which teaching strategies would you recommend being most effective in the development of reading literacy in children aged 6-7?

Appendix C

Research Pictures



Image 1. Tongue-twister with a by Jacome, G. (2021)

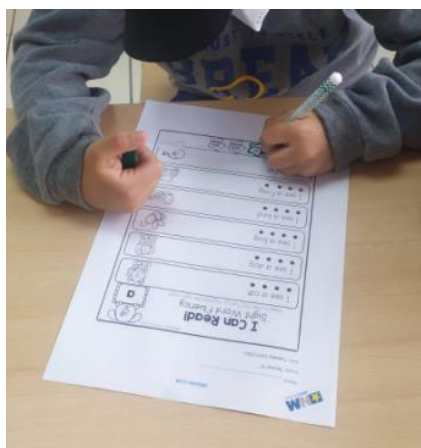


Image 2. High frequency word “see” by Jácome, G. (2021)



Image 3. Match initial letter sounds and pictures by Jácome, G. (2021)

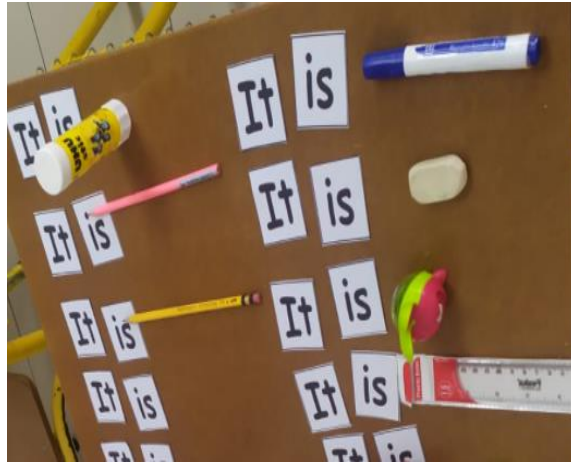


Image 4. High frequency Words it is by Jacome, G. (2021)



Image 6. Matching words and pictures by Jácome, G. (2021)



Image 7. Reading and breathing activity by Jácome, G. (2021)



Image 8. Role play about The Chef by Jácome, G. (2021)

Reading: I have a pen.

19 responses • 368 views • 0 comments • 1.9 hours of engagement

Record a video saying sentences with: I have...

[View as student](#) Join Code: 35e6d9d4

19 Responses [Export Data](#) [Print QR Codes](#)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Name	Date	Comments	Feedback		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Andrea Elvira L 11 views	Nov 23, 2020	-	-		Active
<input type="checkbox"/>	Andres A 12 views	Nov 19, 2020	-	-		Active
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ximena P 15 views	Nov 18, 2020	-	-		Active

Image 5: Students' audios of tongue twisters (2021)

Appendix D

AUTORIZACIÓN DE LA INSTITUCIÓN EDUCATIVA

SOLICITUD DE AUTORIZACIÓN

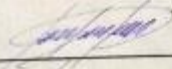
Ambato, abril 1 del 2021.

Msc. Ana María Backach
RECTORA UNIDAD EDUCATIVA "NUEVO MUNDO"

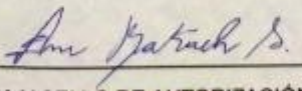
Por medio de la presente, reciba un cordial y afectuoso saludo. A la vez me permito solicitar su autorización para realizar la investigación de mi tesis con el tema "An effective strategy to improve the reading literacy in kids aged 6-7", previo a la obtención del título de Máster en Pedagogía del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera, otorgado por la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador Sede Ambato.

Esta investigación se realizará en los segundos años de Educación Básica, teniendo como uno de mis objetivos contribuir de manera positiva y significativa con estrategias innovadoras para la enseñanza del Idioma Inglés de su prestigiosa y noble institución que orgullosamente formo parte.

Agradezco de antemano su valiosa aceptación para la realización del estudio antes mencionado.



Ing. Gabriela Alejandra Jácome Cortez
CI. 1803389541



FIRMA Y SELLO DE AUTORIZACIÓN

