

Implementing GBA to improve Reading Comprehension in Higher Education in Colombia

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Abstract

The current study took place in a private Higher Education Institution (HEI) in Sincelejo-Sucre; which focus group was six last semester-learners who were around twenty and thirty years old, chosen based on pre-test results, using the two highest, the two medium, and the two lowest scores to describe how the GBA enhanced these learners' reading comprehension skills by using expository (cause-effect) texts. To this effect, only the deconstruction stage of the aforementioned cycle was developed to expose learners to the structure, language features, common words, expressions, and organization of this type of text, which was led by the teacher in an entire modeling stage. The data was gathered using three different quantitative and qualitative techniques: two pre-tests and two post-tests were implemented, and some surveys in forms of questionnaires were done to the focus group in order to triangulate the results objectively. The results revealed the positive incidence of the GBA in the subjects' reading comprehension levels (literal, inferential, and critical thinking), enhancing their skills individually and contributing with some other findings. To conclude, it is essential to acknowledge learners' weaknesses and strengths, since GBA was applied taking into account their needs, interests and context.

Keywords: *English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Genre-Based Approach (GBA), Teaching-Learning Cycle, Reading Comprehension Skills, Reading Strategies.*

Introduction

Many secondary and middle school students face difficulties when addressing content-based texts. More than not having the knowledge in the academic field, they lack the necessary strategies to understand them. The academic tasks learners are exposed to during middle school involve reading and learning new and complicated content, which is even harder to perform in a foreign language. Therefore, instruction in reading comprehension plays a major role. Learners who are taught how to deal with reading strategies and how to use them, improve their reading comprehension levels and, clearly, their results in standardized tests. This study sought to implement the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) and the strategies within its cycle so learners could understand expository texts in content-area materials and, therefore, to be able to answer questions dealing with the literal, inferential, and critical thinking levels of reading comprehension.

Some studies have been done on the importance of developing reading comprehension skills. According to Haganan & Reid (2008), although reading plays a key component in academic success, and learners have a wide number of strategies to improve their reading comprehension at their disposal, research focused on those reading comprehension strategies is very little. Moreover, little is known about if the GBA can really improve learners' reading comprehension skills when dealing with expository texts as most

research has focused on narrative ones. This is the reason why the current study aimed to demonstrate its effectiveness.

Many studies have worked on strategies to improve learners' reading comprehension skills in the academic field, but we still know little about how the GBA can contribute to improving learners' performance when taking tests that ask them to answer literal, inferential, and critical thinking questions, which are present in international tests. Learning around text genres has gained importance in the EFL/ESL teaching contexts. Martin in Chappell (2004 p. 9) states that the number of stages within the cycles of the GBA have special objectives, which translates into a wide number of activities where learners have the opportunity to immerse in the context of culture and social purpose of the text, and the role of the language within the task.

Consequently, the importance of this research relies on the fact that, as learners should move on the same path as their academic demands do, teachers should help them to tackle the aforementioned obstacles, regardless of the lack of time or knowledge they could have.

Through the implementation of this research study, we sought to provide learners with a variety of strategies to help them to comprehend the demanding or required content - area texts they are exposed to, especially in international tests. The results of this study provided information on how the GBA and its teaching-learning cycle can ease the reading process and, therefore, engage learners with a deeper and more autonomous way of approaching reading passages.

Problem Statement

Reading is known as an essential ability due to its usage in all life stages. Learners want to read English texts for different purposes: for their careers, for study purposes or simply for pleasure (Harmer, 1998). As a consequence, authors such as Goodman (1996), Krashen (2004), among others, have investigated about the process, importance, and best practices to teach reading. Based on it, and as a result of learners' worrying performance on reading comprehension tests, educators around the world have looked up for the causes and possible ways of coping with the issue, especially in the countries that have gotten low results in international tests. Colombia has obtained really low scores when it has come to taking them. According to the recent results of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which assesses 15-year-old students in three specific areas: reading comprehension, mathematics, and biology; 47% Colombian high school graduates are below the minimum level of the test or Level 2. Moreover, the Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRLS), a test that is held in 48 countries, also concluded that the performance in reading comprehension in Colombian secondary education is very low. In the most recent PIRLS measurement, Colombian high schoolers obtained a score of 448 (low level) over 675 (advanced level). The Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (TERCE), which is used by 15 different countries, showed Colombia held the sixth and seventh places in reading comprehension. Prestigious universities in Colombia have carried out studies to analyze the reason why students have got such results. The Colombian newspaper, *El Herald*, published an article where the situation of first semester students at these institutions was described. Universidad de la Sabana supported the results of the Pisa tests through a study of the Reading and Writing Network in Higher Education (Red de Lectura y Escritura en Educación Superior). Mario Lozano, professor of the Department of Language at this institution and one of the main researchers of the study, states that first semester students "read, understand and infer, but when they get to the process of critical reading, the situation gets complicated." This situation is not distant in the coastal region. A reading and writing diagnostic test applied to second semester students from Universidad del Norte in 2016 revealed that the 44% of them had difficulties to understand the explicit content of a text, to recognize its purpose, and to show a general understanding of it. The Director of the Spanish Department at this

institution, Professor Nayibe Rosado, pointed out in the analysis of these results that a 50% of those students reaches good levels of reading comprehension, but only a 6% of them understood and contextualized the text, at the time they adopted a critical view towards it. Therefore, educators are concerned about the ways in which learners can improve their reading comprehension skills.

Meeting the different levels of proficiency proposed by standardized testing has become the major goal for all EFL classrooms. These standards deal with what learners should know and be able to do on each educational level during their school life. Globalization and the emerging global community have arisen the need for governments to come up with reliable bilingual policies that can, later on, allow learners to obtain good results based on the aforementioned standards. Standardized proficiency tests, either national or international, deal with reading skills at some point, which is a primary concern as reading habits have been an issue for discussion in the Colombian society, particularly. As reported by the National Ministry of Education (MEN), there is a large amount of Colombian population, who does not fully develop their reading skills in their first language, Spanish. Approximately more than 60% of Colombian learners have not reached the minimum language competence in Spanish, posing a huge challenge for local educators.

International tests are often voluntarily undertaken by fee paying students, who were the subjects to the present study. Along their school and higher education life, they will take a range of English exams, being the most notable the Pruebas Saber 11°, the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

Within the context where this research was carried out, many middle school students show difficulties as for reading and understanding the academic texts on these tests, a situation that hinders the achievement of today's high learning standards. On the path of comprehending the text, a big effort needs to be made on understanding the sophisticated vocabulary and complex terminology, which results in a disruptive reading and consequently, a learning blockage. This research sought to help students to learn how to process academic language and, therefore, to become independent readers.

A case study, as any other research method, is determined by a question or various questions. This specific research addressed the following question: To what extent does the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) improve tenth graders' reading comprehension skills in an L2?

General Objective

To demonstrate how the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) enhances tenth graders' reading comprehension skills.

Specific Objectives

To determine the target group's level of proficiency in reading comprehension skills.

To describe the Teaching-Learning Cycle within the approach.

To analyze how the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) instruction improved the target group's reading comprehension level.

To analyze learners' perceptions towards the use of the Genre-Based Approach.

Theoretical Framework

This section aims to describe the essential concepts regarding the GBA focused on reading comprehension skills. The current chapter defines the following key concepts essential for the holistic understanding of the research: reading in a foreign language,

reading comprehension, reading comprehension strategies, the GBA concept and its teaching-learning cycle.

Reading in a foreign language

Reading, in any language, is conceived as one of the most essential abilities to develop other related language skills while learning it, especially if the learner is learning a foreign one. Reading in an L2 is defined by Alderson (1984: page 245) as “Once again it has been found that reading English as a foreign language is both a reading problem and a language problem.” He pointed this out as there should be what he calls a ‘language competence ceiling’ before the existing abilities in the first language can begin to be transferred to the second one. This conclusion came after the analysis of 4 hypotheses on why L2 reading is poor, which can be summarized as it follows: firstly, learners lack reading competence in their first language; and secondly, having a meager knowledge of the foreign language under study does not allow learners to transfer the correct strategies from L1 when reading in L2. (Wahyu, D. 2015).

Other researchers, such as Bossers (1991) supported Alderson’s claim and provided their own overview of L2 reading. He pointed out that, although L1 reading is significantly important in L2 reading, it only happens at very relatively high levels of the last one: “L1 reading comes into play as a significant predictor variable at a relatively high level of L2 reading.” (p. 59)

Moreover, he stated that even though both L1 reading and L2 knowledge play a major role in L2 reading, “L2 knowledge is a more powerful predictor” because “differences between the least skilled L2 readers are predicted only by differences in L2 knowledge.” In other words, knowledge of L2 has a dominant role in the initial stages of L2 reading to, then, leave space of L1 reading skills transfer at more advanced levels.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is defined by Cain, Oakhill, & Bryant (2004) in Rodríguez (2017) as “an interactive process, rather than a particular outcome or product, through which a reader interacts with a text to construct meaning.” (p.134). Rodríguez (2017) stated that a text is meaningful to a reader if it shows relationship with the reader’s knowledge, experience, and purpose for reading which, afterwards, will lead him to reading fluency and comprehension.

Alvarino & Fontalvo (2017) stated several first and more recent notions of reading comprehension. The early ones rely on reading comprehension as a mental operation where word recognition was the key to text decoding, which was stated by La Berge and Samuels (1974). For Gough & Tunmer (1986) understanding a text does not only lie on the ability to identify words within it because it involves the reader’s engagement into a cognitive and linguistic process, where he makes use of his knowledge of L2 language and reading strategies. More contemporary models for reading comprehension involve the link between the reader’s background knowledge of the topic of the text and the new information presented in it to construct new one (Kintsch, 1998), where a number of schemas is built to understand, predict and give responses to the text content (Langer, 2004). This was claimed by Langer and Flihan (2000) as a meaning-making activity.

Reading Comprehension Strategies

Mastering all components involved in reading turns it into a challenge for readers. To be able to understand a text, a proficient adult reader goes through processes of decoding, interpreting and constructing. First, he must have a clear comprehension of the elements of a sentence. Then, he has to differentiate new versus given information, which will allow him to reinforce the background information he has about the topic of the text. At more global levels, the reader implicitly identifies the genre, purpose, structure, the author’s intention. These apparently happen effortlessly but they are the product of a lot

of exposure to reading strategies, which, many times, the reader is not conscious of their use (McNamara, 2007).

A reading comprehension strategy is defined by McNamara (2007) as “a cognitive or behavioral action which is enacted under particular contextual conditions, with the goal of improving some aspect of comprehension.” By contextual conditions, she meant the situations that learners encounter when reading. She pointed out the example of finding an unknown word and states the difference between a reader who chooses a behavioral action versus one who uses a cognitive one: the first looks up the word in the dictionary and finds its definition while the second reads the definition, re-reads the sentence having the new definition in mind, and then understands the sentence as a whole.

Other authors such as Edge (2002), in Ulker (2017), define reading comprehension strategies as "strategies that encourage your students to use prior knowledge, experiences, careful thought, and evaluation to help them decide how to practically apply what they know to all reading situations"(p. 4). For Medina (2007) it is not just about learners joining their background knowledge of the text with their experiences because, although comprehension strategies are universal and are at the disposal of those who want to use them, they represent “a complex process” mainly because "some strategies work for some students, and other strategies work for other students, just as some strategies work best with certain types of reading material, other strategies work best with other types of reading material" (Medina, 2007: 6). This is the reason why the teacher’s role is crucial in improving learners’ reading comprehension as he is the one who can determine the approach to take and the type of text learners will deal with (Ulker, 2017).

The Genre-Based Approach

This approach looks for a learners’ wider understanding throughout the processes of modeling, scaffolding, doing and feedback in order to move forward in the understanding of the comprehensive levels of reading by using different strategies that help learners to become better readers.

Talking about the English language teaching specifically, the GBA has not been widely used; but some theorists are already talking about its stages and also about how it works as it was published in the Journal English Language Teaching (ELT) 2015: “The steps of GBA are BKOF (Building Knowledge of the Field), MOT (Modeling of the Text), JCOT (Joint Construction of the Text), and ICOT (Independent Construction of the Text)” where is stated that Genre-Based Approach uses many strategies to enhance learners state of comprehension taking a certain, specific field as the base to learn.

In the field of English teaching as a foreign language the Genre-Based approach has not been commonly used. Some of the reading tasks involved recognizing, predicting, and recalling patterns; Rodríguez (2017), a foreign Language professor in Colombia, also mentions that the most advisable strategy to teach reading using the GBA is “learning to read: Reading to learn”, which means that BGA has a detailed process to follow which is full of stages and tasks per stage, but that process must be guided, measured and assessed by the teacher since it is mainly goal-oriented.

On the other side, Rodríguez (2017: 10) defines GBA in the following terms:

“The use of real material based on specific knowledge purposes rather than the language teaching... Instructing students to read by using different genre texts, which were written for other purposes not for teaching reading within an English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) context.”

In other words, this approach encompasses reading comprehension skills development by exposing learners to a specific genre, which will allow them to handle further reading passages belonging to the same type of text.

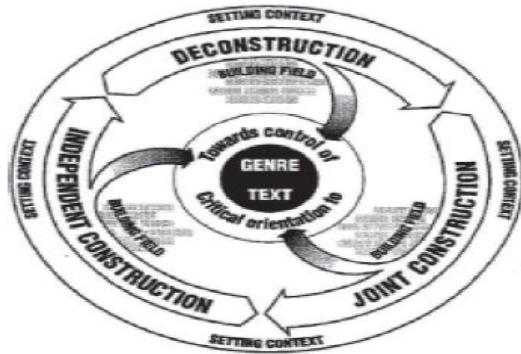


Figure 1. The teaching-learning cycle (Rothery and Stenglin, 1994, in Martin, 1999).

The approach under study in this paper is chosen as a manner to improve learners' reading comprehension skills by using the strategies and stages mentioned above but which will be detailed explained later in the methodology chapter. Due to learners' results when exposed to content expository texts are not good enough, and because of their position as tenth graders, the Genre-Based Approach teaches learners to focus on main idea,

author's perspective, linking words, as well as on using a critical point of view when facing expository texts of higher complexity.

The Teaching- Learning Cycle

Teaching learners the structure of different types of texts and the language features in each is the basis of the Genre-Based Approach instruction (Hyon, 1996). Exposure to genres in reading, especially in high-school, is little, which is why the teacher's role in delivering good instructions becomes the key in the success of the implementation of this approach. It is expected that after the instructions learners can be able to identify the aforementioned patterns by themselves, which will allow them to understand the text in an easier and better way.

The core of this approach lies in its cycle because it provides the teacher with a path to follow along the course to be taught. During the stages of the genre orientation, the teacher guides learners through a deconstruction, a joint construction, and an independent construction stages, allowing teachers, as Martin (2009) in Alvarino & Fontalvo (2017) stated "scaffold the process until a knowledge extending". Moreover, learners have the opportunity to see how the language of a specific genre allows them to recognize the text's main idea, purpose, and the author's intention. The cycle previously mentioned is presented in the following figure; however, in order to meet the objectives of this study, the deconstruction phase was the only one carried out. During the deconstruction stage, the teacher models the text in detail and drives learners' attention to the text organization and the language features in it, in order to prepare them to do the same when facing reading comprehension tasks.

For Rose (2015), in Alvarino & Fontalvo (2017: 7), the deconstruction is the stage where reading and discussion take place, which helps learners "go beyond their independent reading level". The teacher's role in this phase of the cycle is to "guide students to identify and mark key information in each paragraph, building their (students) skills in recognizing and comprehending key information."

As it has been stated before, this study sought to determine how the GBA improved reading comprehension skills, which is why the deconstruction stage served well enough. Although it is one stage, it engages learners in multiple activities such as detailed reading, reading fluently, sharing their perceptions and opinions for the purpose of understanding the text in a broader way (Rose and Martin, 2012, in Alvarino & Fontalvo, 2017).

Being the deconstruction stage the only one taken from the approach, a series of stages within it, proposed by Moss, Benítez & Mizuno (2016) in Alvarino and Fontalvo (2017), were taken into consideration by the teacher to design and to carry out lesson plans: contextualization of the genre, teaching the structure of the text, detailed reading, representation of the text ideas, and reaction to the text.

Literature Review

Several studies have been conducted to seek for the pedagogical implications and effects of implementing the Genre-Based Approach for language development in EFL/ESL contexts.

The Genre Pedagogy has served not only ESL/ EFL school contexts but the teaching of ESP courses. Bonyadi (2012) conducted a study to explore the structures, strategies and social functions of 20 newspaper editorials of criticism from The New York Times in function of their communicative purposes. The target group consisted of students majoring in journalism. Within the methodology, Bonyadi states that identifying the schematic parts in the editorials of criticism is not usually as straightforward as people might assume. The results of this research revealed some drawbacks of using the newspaper and its sub-genres as input in ESL/ EFL classrooms if their communicative purpose, schematic structures and syntactic patterns are not dealt with at the first stage. Therefore, a variety of pedagogical implications for EFL/ESP educators was suggested. To start, learners should be sensitive to genre distinctions; otherwise, the core features of newspaper language would be lost, making it weak. If there is a chance of falling into the previous situation, Bonyadi suggests L2 teachers to design interesting class tasks based on editorials, seeking to transform learners into critical readers, capable of reading between lines. The idea is not to make genre analysis counterproductive.

Despite the important role, the GBA instruction as a newborn approach to teaching, little research has been done on its application to enhance learners' reading comprehension. The following study was carried out by Sadeghi (2013) on Junior and Senior students studying for a B.S. in Biology in Sanandaj Azad University in Takestan, Iran. It aimed to investigate the effects of GBA instruction on ESP learners' reading comprehension. The participants of the study included students at Islamic Azad University of Kurdistan. Participants were randomly assigned into 2 groups: control and experimental. The instructors taught the experimental group (genre-group) based on the genre and the control group (non-genre-group) based on the traditional method of teaching ESP, prevailing in Iranian universities. To meet the purpose of the study, the instructors administered one 30-item proficiency test of English and two 30-item standard tests of English reading comprehension to the participants. The results of the reading comprehension test suggested teaching based on genre had a significant role on the enhancement of learners' reading comprehension ability and the descriptive and inferential statistics showed that learners improved significantly in reading comprehension compared with that of non-genre-group.

In another significant research Sharer, Lehman, & Peters (2011) examined small group discussion of narrative and expository texts in 4th, 5th and 8th grade classrooms (roughly ages 9 to 11). When discussing expository texts, students were less likely to make intertextual comments and more likely to make extra textual comments. When discussing narrative texts, students were nearly three times as likely to discuss prior knowledge although teachers also asked different kinds of questions. This examination of book discussion provides yet another indicator of the relationship between genre and reading comprehension.

Abbaszadeh (2013) conducted a study to analyze the pedagogical implications of designing a language syllabus with the genre approach which allows for a precise account of language of different domains of use. Along the paper, Abbaszadeh compares definitions of the term 'genre', reviews its different types, but most importantly, discusses Hammond et al.'s (1992) model for GBA pedagogy and curricula. This model includes its cycle with its stages, which Hammond et al. suggest teachers to go around twice when planning the lessons in foreign language education context. As a conclusion, the GBA to second language pedagogy is acknowledged as an opener to new horizons for course designers, material makers, and language educators due to its interjection to the principles

of a learning-centered pedagogy through involving learners with real samples of language so their discourse competence is enhanced and boosted.

The influence of the GBA has also reached the Colombian educational context. Rodríguez (2014) carried out an action-research study in a private school in Barranquilla with 25 tenth-graders as participants, who were showing low performance and motivation when dealing with reading tasks due to the trouble addressing different genres and types of texts. The main objective of this research was to design a genre-oriented course to provide learners with genre strategy instructions and, then, determine the way in which the implementation of these strategies would help them improve their comprehension level when facing expository texts in English. The data collection techniques of this study were split into two moments: first, the needs analysis based on the application of data collection techniques and, then, the impact of the intervention after the course lessons were piloted. Findings reported that the instruction of metacognitive strategies and the exposure and analysis of genres boosted learners' effectiveness to read thanks to their awareness of the structure and patterns of the texts, which helped them to approach the passages with strategies that were appropriate for each genre and stage.

Another important contribution about genre-based reading was done by Quiroga (2009), who carried out a study in a public school in Bogota, Colombia, with tenth grade students. The development of this study arose from learners' needs as well as the emphasis of the PEI (Proyecto Educativo Institucional= School Institutional Project) on improving reading comprehension. Several reading strategies were applied along four lessons, including reading speed, non-text information, and discursive strategies. Data was collected through journals, observation, questionnaires and interviews, which provided with information of the improvement in reading comprehension and advances in learners' performance when reading academic texts in English.

Alvarino & Fontalvo (2017) also implemented the GBA to develop reading competencies, especially when exposing learners to the social and functional purposes of English language. This action research study took 40 high school students at a public school in Soledad, Atlántico, Colombia, who were exposed to different text types and their structures in order to foster reading and facilitate language learning. Data was collected before, during and after the implementation of the GBA strategies, going from instruments such as questionnaires, interviews and document analysis before the implementation to class observations, to video recordings and lesson plans analysis during it, and checklists afterwards, in order to evaluate the results and impact of the proposal. The results showed significant effects of the GBA pedagogy on developing reading competences as, along the process, the teacher constantly supported learners throughout the genre stages at the time they learnt to work collaboratively and actively engage in the reading process.

As a conclusion, the above mentioned studies suggest that the arguments to implement the Genre-Based Approach are solid and could prove usefulness for second language education.

Methodology

The current research mixes qualitative with quantitative methods, which provide a more reliable and fruitful source of data collection for obtaining wider and more concrete results that specifically answer the research question under study. Qualitative research is described as a flexible procedure in which the researcher's perspective counts and many external factors can influence the results. Hence, According to Creswell (2014: 104):

Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning for individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures. Data typically collected in the participants'

setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. The final written report has a flexible structure and those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style.

Creswell also defines quantitative research in the following terms:

The approach of testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures. The final written report has a set structure consisting of introduction, literature and theory, methods, results, and discussions, those researchers who engage in this form of inquiry have assumptions about testing theories deductively. (Op. Cit., page number).

In other words, Creswell points out the objectivity of quantitative research which are based on measurable facts more than in beliefs or inferences from subjects' attitudes or perspectives.

A recurrent practice nowadays is the mixed methods in which both approaches are used; it has been proved that both acting together provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon rather than the approach itself. Creswell (2014: 78) explains this innovative resource as:

The approach to inquiry involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks... The combination of both approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone.

This study has various data collection methods; among them there are from qualitative and quantitative ones, that is the reason why the current research use mixed method; this practice has receive diverse names; for instance, mixed method, convergent methodology, multimethod, multitrait, or triangulation. As the research objective is to seek for describing and measuring the degree of improvement on learners' reading comprehension level, is drastically necessary to implement the former and the latter data collection methods which provide a broad description (qualitative) and concise results (quantitative) of the problem.

Research Design

For this research, the method implemented was a Case Study, specifically the descriptive case study, which is defined by Duff (1990) (p.) as "... case study may involve more than one subject... it may be based on particular groups (e.g. group's dynamics within a classroom); organizations or events..." This quotation explains how the case study works, arguing that it can be carried out taking into account various subjects or target groups. Implementing a case study relies on the researcher's considerations regarding the context conditions and if they are highly relevant to the issue under investigation (McKay, 2006).

Yin (2003) (p. 286) supports that the case study design seeks to:

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

Designing and carrying out a case study requires the researcher to follow a series of features. Yin (2003) states that every case study must have:

1. A research question, which is in the form of a “how” or “why”.
2. A proposition, typically pointing at the direction of where to look for significant data.
3. A unit of analysis or the definition of the boundaries of the case. After defining it, the researcher will be able to study similar cases.
4. Cohesion between the data and the proposition, which is achievable by looking for patterns in the data that support the study’s proposition.
5. Criteria for interpreting the findings. The researcher will find the evidence that supports a particular proposition with the evidence.

This research is set out as a case study due to the type of population and the setting where it takes place; the subjects under study were observed and also intervened, and the results before, during, and after intervention were part of the analysis of the data. A case study as such is merely descriptive; it means that any detail, result, event or phenomena found that results important for the current research must be described in- depth, which makes this study different from other case studies is that, although researchers will teach learners how to use different strategies that let them handle any expository text; the results depend on to what extent learners learn how to use and to apply them.

Context and participants

This research took place in a higher Education Institution (HEI) in Sincelejo, which offers around 16 different undergraduate programs at the professional levels. It focused on the particular event of a last semester student of six different careers from the same faculty, currently enrolled in an Upper- Intermediate English course. The participants, whose ages are around 20 and 30 years, belonged to middle and high socioeconomic status. This sample was taken considering their drawbacks in inferential and critical thinking skills when dealing with content-written passages.

Data Collection Techniques

Studies that rely on mixed-methods practices imply the use of both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques either in sequential, concurrent or iterative patterns. (Caracelli & Greene, 1997 in Sandelowski 2000).

The combined use of the aforementioned methods can be used to fulfill a variety of objectives.

The data gathered by the use of those techniques allowed the researcher to turn quantitative data into qualitative and qualitative into quantitative one; For instance, the quantitative results from this study’s pre-test were analyzed in order to describe participants’ current competence of reading comprehension. This instrument will also fulfill the purpose of choosing the participants of the study and the kind of information that will be obtained from them.

Besides the pre-tests, a genre-based course will be designed where the main features of the approach will be reflected on a set of lesson plans, which aim to bind the objectives of the course.

Surveys were carried out in the current study in order to know learners perceptions towards the use of Genre-Based Approach, which will enable the researchers to gather objective data “at some degree”, and complement these data with the previously mentioned tests from the participants under study.

Questionnaires are defined by Brown (2001: 6) as “any written instrument that presents respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting them among existing manners.”

Surveys in the form of questionnaires provide with data on attitudes and opinions from a large group of participants allowing researchers to find out information that participants can report about themselves. The type of survey that will be applied will be a structure close one which provides with a set of possible answers since they do not allow respondents to answer in the way they see fit, as it is explained by Mackey & Gass (2005) “close-item questionnaires typically involve a greater uniformity of measurement and therefore greater reliability.”

This leads to an easier way of quantifying and analyzing the data and henceforth in a less unexpected and subjective information.

Reading proficiency tests are applied in quantitative research to measure participants' performance in the skill assessed. This instrument will be an open-ended form through which quantitative judgments can be gathered to determine the target group level of proficiency in reading comprehension. Tests have much strength and among them Mackey & Gass mention some of them:

1. Tests can provide good measures of many characteristics of people.
2. Strong psychometric properties (high measurement validity).
3. Availability of reference group data.
4. Possibly can be administered to groups.
5. May provide “hard” quantitative data.
6. Allow comparability of common measures across research populations.
7. Instruments usually already developed.
8. Wide range of tests available (with most content able to be tapped).
9. Response rate high for group- administered tests.
10. Ease of data analysis.
11. Researcher- designed tests possibly tailored to local needs.

Data Analysis

This chapter aims to use all data gathered in order to analyze it, leading the objectives and the research questions' methodology.

The results and analysis of this study lie on the triangulation of its three data collection techniques. In its early stage, a pre-test was applied, which allowed researchers to gather information regarding learners' strengths and areas to improve when answering literal, inferential and critical thinking questions.

In the same way, the outcomes of the implementation were examined by analyzing a set of five lesson plans and their corresponding activities, along with learners' perception of the implementation of the approach, which was gathered through an interview applied to learners. The contrast between the transcription of the interviews and the activities planned on the lessons allowed us to check the effectiveness of the GBA implementation and the impact of the proposal.

Lesson Plans Analysis

During the implementation of this proposal to foster reading comprehension skills, the teacher guided learners through a series of activities directed to analyze cause-effect genre. The lessons were designed to enhance learners' understanding of the language immersed in cause-effect texts and, this way, ease their reading comprehension, not only to be able to answer questions but to understand the main idea of the text, its purpose, and be able to summarize it, orally or written. Through the stages of the lesson plans, learners were supported by the teacher, at some points more than at others.

Lesson 1: Contextualization of the Topic

The first moment that the lessons covered was the contextualization of the topic. Here, the teacher introduced the topic (addictions) through a discussion of what learners thought an addiction was and what caused one. Then, learners used strategies such as note taking, predicting and inferring to get the main idea of the text and, consequently, be able to answer comprehension questions.

The aim of this first part was to activate prior knowledge about addictions so learners could link it in the upcoming stages. Activities in this lesson helped the teacher get a broader idea of how learners performed when understanding aural texts.

Lesson 2: Genre Input

The teacher proceeded to provide learners with the input of the genre under study. To do it, a video was presented to show what the cause-effect texts intention is, and the most common words and expressions used in the genre under study. Then, several exercises were modeled by the teacher for learners to identify those words and expressions within paragraphs.

Up to this point, the class was mostly teacher centered. It was necessary not to leave any features (purpose, common words and expressions) of the genre unclear. Although this stage involved learners in the later parts, one of the subjects under study suggested they should be active the whole time.

Moves	Actor	Discourse
11	T	Basados en el nivel de inglés que cada uno tiene y en su estilo de aprendizaje específico, ¿qué llamó más tu atención de las clases? ¿Qué cambiarías? ¿Materiales? ¿Grupos o tiempo de trabajo?
12	L1	A mí me gustó la temática y los textos que ustedes... me parecieron interesantes y pues yo creo que si se toma al estudiante y se pone a él a hacer él mismo a hacer la misma cosa; no sé cómo explicarlo, o sea si el estudiante es el que encuentra o sea el que vivencia lo que se está aprendiendo me parece que es más... o sea es mejor para él por ejemplo a mí me gusta más aprender así como por mí misma, haciendo. No que la profesora esté ahí en clase ahí magistral, no, sino que yo tenga también como una participación.

Later on this stage, learners became more active. Although the teacher was constantly monitoring their performance, she allowed them to work together to classify words and sentences into cause or effect ones. Learners' insights gathered in the interviews show this type of activities, where they are more empowered, help them to understand the text better because it demands an analysis of the formal aspects of the language within the genre, which lately will ease their performance when reaching to conclusions about the author's intention or purpose of the text.

Moves	Actor	Discourse
3	T	¿Qué piensan ustedes de las actividades llevadas a cabo?

Moves	Actor	Discourse
11	T	Bueno, después de todo este trabajo ¿podrían citar algunas actividades o ejercicios específicos que les hayan facilitado la comprensión de los textos?
13	L4	Yo creo q la estrategia que a mi mee, me gustó más fue cuando escogimos individual primero la causa luego el efecto y, eh, así se dio, o sea, por ejemplo, en mi caso yo entendí mejor cómo saber si era un conector de causa o de efecto porque siempre que, por ejemplo, si el conector está y luego sigue la causa es un conector de causa y si está el conector y el efecto es un conector de efecto, entonces fue como lo que más me gusto porque así se entiende más el texto y...
4	L6	Que nos han ayudado mucho a identificar demasiadas cosas como por ejemplo en la primera clase que dimos fue sobre las palabras que nos ayudan a identificar si una oración es causa o efecto, en mi opinión creo que nos sirvió mucho porque últimamente hemos estado dando mejores resultados no solo en inglés sino también en la asignatura de castellano donde nos ponen a identificar sobre las causas y efectos y se nos ha facilitado mucho hacer las conclusiones gracias a identificar las oraciones de la causa y el efecto.

Before moving to the deconstruction stage, learners were asked to organize a jumbled text about caffeine. They were arranged in smaller groups to perform this task. The teacher proposed them to highlight the key words or expressions that indicated the position of each paragraph.

As learners carried out the activity, it was possible for the teacher to notice how easy or difficult was for them to find context clues that helped them identify the sequence of the text. During the monitoring, she approached some groups and did some mediation for them to realize what the right order was.

Moves	Actor	Discourse
3	T	¿Qué piensan ustedes de las actividades llevadas a cabo?
4	L1	En general, la verdad es que siempre como que fueron las mismas actividades de encontrar causa y efectos y no sé qué y pues a mí no me molesta hacerlo pero me pareció divertido porque, por ejemplo cuando hicimos lo de ubicar las hojas en un texto eso me gustó porque ahí aprendimos como decía la profe si aquí hay una cosa mala, se supone que debe seguir una cosa mala, ¿no? entonces esa metodología me gustó.

During this stage, interaction among learners was promoted. Collaborative activities were highly significant to them because they see group work as a strategy through which they

can clarify doubts at the time they improve communication. Learners enjoy contrasting their answers with their peers.

Moves	Actor	Discourse
1	T	¿Cuál creen ustedes que fueron los objetivos de las clases?
2	L2	Bueno los principales objetivos de las clases fue que nosotros identificáramos principalmente las causas y efectos en textos es decir, cómo fortalecer nuestra comprensión lectora eso lo podemos evidenciar con actividades como la de reconocer los conectores que hay en ciertos textos, eso lo hicimos en grupo y fue muy interesante porque la comunicación entre todos los estudiantes favoreció a que nosotros entendiéramos más los textos, también que pudiéramos tener una secuencia lógica de cada texto como lo hicimos cuando pegamos los párrafos para formar el texto.

Moves	Actor	Discourse
9	T	Después de todo el trabajo, ¿podrías citar algunas actividades/ ejercicios que te hayan facilitado la comprensión de los textos leídos?
10	L1	La de causa y efecto de describir. Por ejemplo en la de “pollution”; o hubo otra en la de “caffeine” y la de causa y efecto que yo la hice con otra compañera, también la de organizar textos que luego los pegamos y que entre todos buscamos las palabras... Además cuando la profesora nos dio las hojas con las palabras y nosotros discutimos ahí si creíamos que eso fue causa o efecto.

Lesson 3: Deconstruction

The third lesson was the deconstruction, where the teacher modeled first and the amount of opportunities for students to participate was higher. Having in mind these students like to participate, the deconstruction, which is supposed to be done all by the teacher, was shared. During it, learners could not only engage in activities to improve their comprehension of the text but they could discuss their thoughts and perceptions.

Moves	Actor	Discourse
3	T	¿Qué piensan ustedes de las actividades llevadas a cabo?
4	L2	Bueno lo que pienso es que fueron muy didácticas porque a muchos de nosotros simplemente nos aburre cuando vamos a leer y esas cosas pero las profesoras, las maestras la convirtieron en una actividad didáctica debido a que utilizamos herramientas tecnológicas, utilizamos la comunicación, los grupos, y hablamos mucho que fue lo más importante, no sólo estuvimos escuchando a la profesora sino que también nosotros hicimos ahí.

Moves	Actor	Discourse
11	T	Basados en el nivel de inglés que cada uno tiene y en su estilo de aprendizaje específico, ¿qué llamó más tu atención de las clases? ¿Qué cambiarías? ¿Materiales? ¿Grupos o tiempo de trabajo?
12	L2	Pues, este, lo que más me gustó... en realidad todas las actividades me agradaron, ehh, como dije en especial la de hallar nosotros mismos los conectores porque a veces nos aburre estar escuchando sólo al maestro y nosotros queremos también ser protagonistas del conocimiento, entonces en realidad todas fueron de mi gusto y la verdad no encuentro nada que cambiar.
14	L3	A mí lo que más me gusto fue cuando, cuando nos colocaron y nos presentaron los párrafos de, de un texto y en general todos determinábamos cuál era la causa y cuál era el efecto en un párrafo, entonces también era dinámico y me gustó.

Lesson 4: Graphic Representation

The fourth stage in the development of the lesson plans is representing the text's ideas. During this moment, the teacher showed learners the variety of graphic organizers used for the different text genres. She focused Ss' attention to the cause-effect one and started to use the information from the text to complete it. After modeling the first two paragraphs, learners continued with the remaining ones by filling in the graphic organizer on a paper sheet.

By having learners extract the information from the text and organize it in the graphic organizer, it was possible to approach the different learning styles among the class. Learners felt this strategy improved the way they summarize texts.

Moves	Actor	Discourse
9	T	Después de todo el trabajo, ¿podrías citar algunas actividades/ ejercicios que te hayan facilitado la comprensión de los textos leídos?
10	L6	Sí, por cierto lo de causa y efecto que coloquemos por acá la causa y por acá los efectos; como dijo la profesora si nos hubiesen mandado a hacer un resumen del texto que nos hubiesen mandado a leer como el de la cafeína, se me hubiera hecho más difícil sin haber encontrado las causas y efectos porque no teníamos como que la base entonces esa estrategia de esa clase nos ayudó mucho.

Moves	Actor	Discourse
5	T	Ok. Perfecto. La segunda es piensan ustedes, ¿qué piensan ustedes de las actividades que se llevaron a cabo?

7	L4	<p>A mí me pareció que las actividades eran de mucha ayuda y eran dinámicas que le permitían al estudiante decir como comprender independientemente de su modo de estudio ya que había diversidad de, pues de métodos de, de métodos y técnicas de enseñanza. Además, hay, el hecho de que sean tan variadas nos permitió aparte de enfatizar en el tema propio era dar un repaso a lo que ya se había dado pues como había dicho mi compañera Manuela. Por ejemplo, el tema de la organización de cuadros nos estaban repasando el scanning y nos enseñaban a organizar el texto para redactarlo de forma más resumida en un summary.</p>
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Lesson 5: Independent deconstruction

During the independent deconstruction, learners read a text about a different topic than the one used in the deconstruction. They used strategies such as skimming and scanning, previously worked in class, to look for unknown vocabulary and those words and expressions found in cause-effect texts. After sharing their answers as a group, they used the graphic organizer to extract the most important information from the text. Having it, they were able to answer comprehension questions in an easy and faster way.

Moves	Actor	Discourse
1	T	¿Cuál creen ustedes que fueron los objetivos de las clases?
2	L2	<p>Bueno los principales objetivos de las clases fue que nosotros identificamos principalmente las causas y efectos en textos es decir, cómo fortalecer nuestra comprensión lectora eso lo podemos evidenciar con actividades como: la de reconocer los conectores que hay en ciertos textos, eso lo hicimos en grupo y fue muy interesante porque la comunicación entre todos los estudiantes favoreció a que nosotros entendiéramos más los textos, también que pudiéramos tener una secuencia lógica de cada texto como lo hicimos cuando pegamos los párrafos para formar el texto.</p>

During the implementation of these 5 lessons, the teacher constantly monitored learners' performance, even in the independent deconstruction of the text. This was highly valued by learners who claimed that, although they like to work by themselves, they appreciate the teacher corrected any mistake they had.

Moves	Actor	Discourse
26	T	Excelente. Bueno, la última pregunta es muy clara, ¿la retroalimentación que se les brindó después de cada actividad fue suficiente fue efectiva?
27	Ls3 - 4	Sí.
28	L4	<p>Sí fue efectiva debido a que a través de esta o con su ayuda nosotros podíamos identificar de una forma cuál era nuestro error y poder aprender de él que es lo que nosotros necesitamos si queremos trascender en cuanto</p>

		a nuestros conocimientos
29	L3	Además nos aclaraba las dudas, por ejemplo, a veces pensábamos que una parte era un efecto pero pues vamos a ver que era una causa entonces ella nos, nos aclaraba el porqué de que, el por qué era una causa y no un efecto entonces uno quedaba satisfecho con la explicación que ella daba.

Moves	Actor	Discourse
9	T	Después de todo el trabajo, ¿podrías citar algunas actividades/ ejercicios que te hayan facilitado la comprensión de los textos leídos?
10	L2	Bueno, la actividad que dije de los párrafos, de organizar los párrafos, de reconocer cuáles son las linking words de causa y efecto, también la socialización porque hay cosas que nosotros obviamos pero nuestros compañeros o nuestros profesores nos dicen, esas actividades sí.

Analysis of the Tests

The current study carried some bifunctional pre-tests out, which allowed the researcher and teacher-researcher to first, select the focus group under study and second, to objectively know which exact level of reading comprehension they were in. Subsequently, the lesson plans entirely designed by the teachers were developed following most of the process of the Genre-Based Approach. The post-tests were held afterward to quantitatively determine to what extent did tenth graders improve their reading comprehension skills with the aim of answer the research question previously mentioned; as it is seen in the following tables.

Table 1. Pre-tests and Post-tests Results by Reading Comprehension by Levels

SUBJECT	READING COMPREHENSION LEVELS	PRE-TESTS	POST-TEST
L1	Literal	75%	83%
	Inferential	38%	50%
	Critical thinking	71%	67%
L2	Literal	75%	100%
	Inferential	63%	67%
	Critical thinking	100%	83%
L3	Literal	63%	100%
	Inferential	38%	67%
	Critical thinking	71%	100%
L4	Literal	50%	67%
	Inferential	63%	50%
	Critical thinking	71%	67%

L5	Literal	50%	83%
	Inferential	25%	50%
	Critical thinking	29%	50%
L6	Literal	50%	80%
	Inferential	38%	67%
	Critical thinking	57%	67%

Authors' source

Table 2. Subjects' Progress in Reading Comprehension by Levels

READING LEVEL	COMPREHENSION	PRE-TEST	POST-TEST	PROGRESS
Literal level		60%	86%	+ 25%
Inferential level		44%	58%	+ 15%
Critical thinking level		67%	72%	+ 6%

Authors' source

By analyzing the results from the pre-tests, it could be identified that learners mainly presented difficulties in the literal and in the inferential levels. In the former, the population did not reach a significant percentage since half of it obtained 50% of the answers right while the rest was under 76%. In the latter, 4 of the subjects obtained results under 39%, being the minimum 25%, while the remaining 2 got 63%. All of the above represented a concern based on the grade and level they were in, and the exposure to the language they have had. Although the most demanding level is the critical thinking. Most of the subjects did not present the same difficulties as in the literal and inferential levels, since they felt more engaged with reading when it was linked to their life experiences.

After the implementation of the genre-based approach, two post-tests were applied. The results showed an increase in all levels. For the literal, 5 of the subjects were above 79%, where 2 of them got 100%, two of them got 83%, and one of them got 80%. On the other hand, some of the learners with the lowest scores in this level increased 100% or almost it.

Based on the pre-tests' results, it is possible to affirm that in the inferential level is in which learners had more problems with at the beginning; As it is shown in the last table; the four subjects with the lowest percentages belong to this category; and comparing those percentages with the ones obtained in the post-tests is seen a big increase for instance, both with 38% at the initial part got 67% at the end, which means that obtained a 76% of increase, the other with the same percentage in the pre-test later got a 50% who improved in a 31.57%; but the highest improvement is seen in the subject with the lowest score at the beginning in which a 25% became a 50% which represents a significant improvement of the 100% and the last low score improved from 29% in the first to 50% in the last one, enhancing a 72.41%

Before analyzing the results of the critical thinking level, there are several considerations to be taken into account. As stated before, this level represents a major challenge for learners as it demands the process of linking the text with their life experiences. Therefore, if they do not find any relationship between both, the questions will be poorly or not answered at all. Furthermore, the extent in which learners have been exposed to the content under study highly influences the quality of their answers. In this regard, the increase in this level was not as high as the other two, which should be considered

meaningful as it takes longer to develop in learners, when comparing it with the latter ones.

In general, there was a higher improvement in the literal level (25%), followed by the inferential (15%) and the critical thinking one (6%). These advances are attributed to the permanent use of the reading strategies within the approach, which focused on teaching learners how to identify the main idea of texts, to look up the specific details that were necessary to answer the questions, and to use the information from the text to answer the inferential questions accurately. Besides, the instruction on deconstructing the texts to identify their structure and, consequently, their main goals, helped learners to easily skim them and to recognize where features, such as the author's opinion was, when they were not literally written.

Conclusions

This main purpose of this research was to measure the potential of the GBA in helping tenth graders to improve their reading comprehension skills. In doing so, a course was designed and implemented by the teacher and the teacher-researcher, four tests, two pretests and two posttests) were carried out, the six subjects (2 high, 2 medium, and two low achievers) were interviewed and recorded as well; to be transcribed later.

The implementation of the current research has drawn a set of conclusions in terms of: Interaction, acknowledgement, proficiency, accuracy, frustration, and motivation. As it was shown when the triangulation process took place, the usage of the Genre- Approach enhanced classroom interaction on all sides; Teacher → students and Students ←→ Students and it could improve learners' relationship inside and outside the class. Furthermore, was possible to co-construct knowledge cumulatively, as it is evidenced in the lesson plans with group, pair work and with teacher's feedback and proved with learners testimony in the interviews. Besides, learners could first recognize their main shortfalls as well as their strengths in reading comprehension in order to take action on them. Also in terms of proficiency since learners became more active readers due to the use of genre-based approach as they learned many formal aspects of the English language. One of the most essential issues to be considered in a language classroom is the reduction of learners' frustration, which was substantially reduced through the deconstruction process, led by the teacher, among low and middle achievers.

Another finding revealed was the importance to recognize the appropriate usage of the Genre-Based Approach depending on the context, in other words for implementing the strategy under study is mandatory to take into account the population's proficiency level, its level of reading comprehension, its preferences in terms of readings, what are they exposed the most to?. Since teachers who use the approach under discussion should take into account learners exposure to the aforementioned issues in obtain great improvements in each learner's reading comprehension level in spite of which each one is; as it was evidenced in the current study in which the process had to be adjusted to learners' levels without losing the original process.

Furthermore, as a manner to summarize, we determined that the implementation of a new method or strategy is always a hard and a long process, and GBA is not the exception, there were some issues that jeopardized our record of evidence, and actually it was not possible to apply all necessary tests.

Despite the positive results we got in the study we also faced some limitations, for instance the insufficient amount of time required to assess learners more throughout the process, since there were many external activities at school due to they were tenth graders, it is recognizably possible to affirm that the Genre-Based Approach in fact, improved tenth graders' reading comprehension skills, based on our evidence, on learners

performance after the course, on their scores in the post-tests and on their opinions in the interviews, as well.

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