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Novel Lexical Item Decoding in L2 Reading Acquisition: A Socio-schematic Approach

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NOVEL LEXICAL ITEM DECODING IN L2 READING ACQUISITION:
A SOCIO-SCHEMATIC APPROACH

A Thesis Presented

by

ELIZABETH BELLA ENKIN

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ABSTRACT

NOVEL LEXICAL ITEM DECODING IN L2 READING ACQUISITION:
A SOCIO-SCHEMATIC APPROACH

SEPTEMBER 2008

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Past theorists have shown through their work the versatility and advantages of utilizing pre-established schemata to form a novice's interaction with and comprehension of a text. Schemata have shown to contribute to comprehension by means of four purposes: to disambiguate, to elaborate, to filter, and to compensate (Lee & VanPatten 1999).[1] Furthermore, we see that these schemata, or formerly attained background knowledge, are integral parts of Coady's ESL psycholinguistic reading model (1979)[2], as well as Carrel's schema theory (1984).[3]

Previous studies done by Jimenez[4] (2000) and that of Valdés[5] (2001) with ESL/LEP students show that motivation for learning a second language is partly derived from the social environment in which students are participants. Valdés' study in

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[1] Lee, James F. & Bill VanPatten. Making Communicative Language Happen. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1999.

[2] Coady, James. "A Psycholinguistic Model of the ESL Reader". Reading in a Second Language. (1979): 5-12.

[3] Carrell, Patricia L. "Schema Theory and ESL Reading: Classroom Implications and Applications". The Modern Language Journal. 68.4 (1984): 332-343.

[4] Jiménez, Robert T. "Literacy and the Identity Development of Latina/o Students". American Educational Research Journal. 37.4 (2000): 971-1000.

[5] Valdés, Guadalupe. Learning and Not Learning English. NY: Teachers College Press, 2001.

particular supports a Funds of Knowledge Approach[6] (Moll et. al. 1994), which stresses the need for increased attention on the social environment of the student.

       The present study focuses on novel L2 lexical item decoding. Students will be given a "pre-study" questionnaire in order to ascertain knowledge of and ability level of Spanish. Novices will encounter the lexical items in two different short texts. One will activate a known "social schema", while the other will be a text for which students will not have a background structure. There will be the same amount of novel lexical items in both texts, and each text will be of the same level. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to investigate whether, and how, students interpret the meanings of novel lexical items when they are presented in a "socially tailored" text.

       This new "socio-schematic approach" to L2 lexical item decoding can contribute to the stages of Reading Skill and Acquisition outlined by ACTFL. By applying this "socio-schematic approach", implications for foreign language learning can be linked to the stages of ACTFL.

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[6] Moll, Luis C., Cathy Amanti, Deborah Neff, & Norma Gonzálaz. "Funds of Knowledge for Teaching: Using a Qualitative Approach to Connect Homes and Classrooms. <u>Theory into Practice</u>. 31.2 (1992): 132-141.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1.0 Introduction to thesis

This thesis focuses on potential improvements in the field of L2 reading acquisition. Theories in L2 reading, current models and frameworks, and relevant previous studies all work together to illustrate the importance of presenting novice L2 readers with a more helpful method for acquiring vocabulary. This holds implications for the future of L2 reading for these novice students. This new evidence increases students' potential for achievement in foreign language acquisition overall, but specifically in L2 reading comprehension. With the introduction of a "socio-schematic" approach to reading, novice L2 students are given the opportunity to enhance their lexical item decoding due to contextualized instruction. This thesis infers that with the changing world in which our foreign language students are now finding themselves, current methodologies in instruction of L2 reading must keep pace. This new "socio-schematic" approach is a new framework which aids L2 students in their academic success with their foreign language studies.

1.0.1 General overview of chapters

Chapter 1 of this thesis surveys an array of theoretical literature regarding novice L2 language acquisition, and in particular explains how it relates to second language reading acquirement. Its purpose is to lend respect to researchers who have set the groundwork for second language acquisition theories. Key concepts are extracted in order

to build a clear argument for the new proposed framework of a socio-schematic approach to second language reading acquisition.

Chapter 2 follows in the fashion of a literature review as well. However, the review of literature in this section is tailored to past studies that have proven to be a catalyst for the present study. Analyses of these studies are presented. Specific findings and conclusions from each previous study that is presented culminates in having effects on the manner in which this present study is constructed. Chapter 2 focuses on specific studies done in regards to L2 reading, activation of social schemata and its effects on language acquisition, and also particular aspects of studies in L2 lexical item decoding. It also focuses on the guidelines for teacher training, as stated per ACTFL, so as to explain the needed focus on a social schema in teaching a foreign language.

Chapter 2 concludes with the hypothesis for the newly proposed Socio-schematic L2 Reading Framework for Novice L2 Lexical Decoding. The hypothesis is as follows: Novice L2 learners decode novel L2 lexical items with more success when a reading passage is presented to them socio-schematically, activating the appropriate schemata. In other words, the socio-schematic approach works by accessing an L2 learner's background knowledge within a social construct. Said learner is then able to decode an L2 lexical item with more achievement.

Chapter 3 outlines the means of collecting data. It also analyzes the data sets presented. In order to maintain validity in this study, students are presented with a timed test as well as being given an open-response section, which was immediately followed with a multiple choice test. Parameters in this study were as follows: student majors, amount of time given for each test, amount of time having studied Spanish prior to this

year, and age/grade level of students. Students were given a preliminary questionnaire prior to the testing to establish the aforesaid criteria. Elements such as cognate recognition, parts of speech, and prior taught lessons are all taken into consideration. Answers were either marked correct or not. Acceptable answers varied only slightly and included any close synonyms. Other answers were marked as incorrect. Results indicate support for a socially tailored text in the aiding of lexical item decoding.

A data analysis section concludes chapter 3. It speaks about the importance of the [+ socio-schematic] feature for novices when encountering an L2 text. Within this analysis, the aforementioned feature is compared with the [+/- receptive] feature of each task, and the ranking of each is discussed. Evidence maintains the necessity of a socio-schematic approach to novice L2 reading.

Chapter 4 discusses the conclusions gained from this study. It discusses conclusions of the data set presented. It also discusses implications that the results have for the ACTFL guidelines, and where the socio-schematic approach would "fit in." It also discusses any further implications that can be drawn upon from the current research. It ends with an elaboration for future lines of research as well as potential questions for further growth in this field of study.

1.0.1.1 Chapter 1: literature review—theories in L2 reading and literacy development

Chapter 1 of this thesis will cover all of the literature review that has to do with selection of texts and interaction and comprehension of a reading selection by a novice. Not only will theories of text selection and comprehension be discussed, but also a general reading model and an ESL reading model will be investigated. Of much

importance is the discussion of the role of schemata, and their role in decoding a text. The emphasis on the significance of a pre-established schema and its interaction with a novel text will be of great weight. Together, these theories, models, and focus on schemata will provide this work with sufficient amount of literature support for the proposed term of a "socio-schematic" approach for novice L2 reading. We will have enough evidence to harbor the hypothesis of more efficient novel L2 lexical items in a text by novices.

1.0.1.2 Chapter 2: relevant studies and current frameworks in L2 reading

Chapter 2 deals with the major studies in the field of L2 reading. It discusses Jimenez (2000) and his work with L2 learners, and specifically with their progress with L2 literacy. Following that study is an explanation of the integration of a social schema in terms of text selection for these L2 learners. A funds of knowledge approach (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) and the study of L2 learners is the subsequent topic. This study incorporates the need for validating and incorporating an L2's social world in the choosing of an L2 text. This approach is similar to the newly proposed term of a "socio-schematic" approach, and lays the foundation for the importance of such a framework in L2 learning. To relate a funds of knowledge approach to L2 reading, Valdés (2001) and her case study of a particular L2 learner is presented. Relating these aforementioned studies to the present ACTFL guidelines of teacher training, there is evidence for a need of social correspondence in teaching from the L1 to the L2.

As a final stage in chapter 2, studies of actual vocabulary acquisition are discussed. The reason for this elaboration is to show the differences and significance of both receptive as well as productive vocabulary skills. In a study of Crow (1986), data

presents that both skill sets are important for L2 reading acquisition. However, receptive vocabulary skills prove to be the first skill set that students acquire. This information proves to be of significance for our data analysis section in Chapter three. This study also is followed by a discussion of the importance of lexical skills in foreign language reading (Barnett, 1986). This study offers value so as to support the fact that lexical item decoding is an integral facet in the primary stages of L2 reading.

1.0.1.3 Chapter 3: methodology, results, and data analysis

Chapter 3 presents the data set as well as examines the data through an in-depth analysis. Fifty students from the University of Massachusetts Amherst are the participants of this study. Parameters of this study include the exclusion of the students who have taken advanced levels of Spanish in the high school years (more than two), students without adequate exposure to the social stimulus presented in the [+ socio-schematic] reading passage, and students who have taken another foreign language. Only students from the ages of 19-23 are included (college-aged students). Students in only the first semester of elementary Spanish are included, and each student has had the same amount of time for completing the tests. Lastly, students are split into their majors of humanities and liberal arts, business, sciences and mathematics, and undeclared.

Students are given a preliminary outline in order to establish which participants have valid criteria to participate in this study. Students then read a passage from Lorca's *Bodas de Sangre*. They have six questions asking to decode a lexical item or a lexical phrase that they have not seen before at all, or in that particular context. Their responses are in the form of open-responses. They are then asked to describe briefly what is

happening in the passage. Immediately following is another passage. This passage, however, is a text messaging commercial that they have come across from their own social world—a Verizon Wireless commercial about text messaging. Again, lexical items and phrases presented are those that they have not seen in that specific context. They are then asked to decode them. In addition, they are requested to describe what is happening in the passage. This commercial has been translated by Puerto Rican college-aged students. Thus, it is not a literal translation. It is socially tailored to not only a part of life—technology—with which these students are familiar, but also to the same age group.

Students have five minutes to complete the questions for each passage. The passages each contain six lexical items, and both contain verbal, adverbial, adjectival, and noun phrases in order to not have that as an additional variable. This section of the test specifically focuses on more productive vocabulary skills.

After the completion of the abovementioned procedure, students are presented with the same passages, in the same order. However, this time students are presented with multiple choice questions. This is a test which specifically focuses on receptive vocabulary skills. Students must go in order, and they are instructed to not look back at any previous test. Students are given five minutes again for each test before asked to move on.

The analysis of the data directly follows. Answers are marked as either correct or incorrect. Close synonyms are acceptable answers. There is no half credit—the student either obtains an acceptable answer, or not. Any recent lessons and cognates to English are considered and mentioned in the analysis. Receptive vocabulary as well as productive

vocabulary is each analyzed separately. Charts and graphs are provided in order to illustrate the above data sets.

1.0.1.4 Chapter 4: conclusions

This chapter focuses on the conclusions for this particular study. It describes the implications that are made from the examination as well as illustrates the incorporation of a socio-schematic approach within the context of a foreign language curriculum. There also are considerations made for further research, points of importance, and future potential studies that would be helpful in this field of applied linguistics.

1.1 Introduction to literature review: theories in L2 reading and literacy development

This chapter focuses on the literature review supporting the development of this thesis topic. The topic is: the proper text selection, as we will see developed later in this thesis, will prove to have a direct correlation and implication for the acquisition of novel L2 lexical items. From the literature review provided in this chapter, we will be able to see the background information about theories of language in regards to reading, the reading processes and models, and the implications of appropriate text selection in foreign language classrooms.

As an overview, this chapter presents theories of L2 reading by Galloway, Bernhardt, Eskey, Oller, Krashen, Vygotsky, Kucer, Freeman & Freeman, Kramsch, Lee & VanPatten, Sankoff, Halliday & Hasan, Malinowski, Schleppegrell, Freadman, Coady, and Carrell. These theories all develop models of foreign language learning with a focus on novice L2 learner reading skill acquisition.

In the following paragraphs, a more detailed look will be granted to the breakdown of this chapter. Chapter one introduces key concepts of the theories that concern foreign language reading. Topics such as interaction with a text as seen through major theories in the second language acquisition field is our starting point. Next, approaches to reading in terms of theories/views of reading are discussed. Then, we are able to investigate the general reading model and to closely explore each piece of this model. Afterward, we will move forward with examining the ESL reading model, which holds implications for foreign language reading. The ESL reading model will serve as a beginning point for the discussion of Schema Theory. This in turn sets the groundwork for the deeper explanation of schema and their important role on novice learners. Schemata are discussed in detail, and therefore we investigate the role that schemata play in L2 reading comprehension and interpretation. Lastly, all of the above culminates to a proposed term: the "socio-schematic" approach to novice L2 reading.

The first division of chapter one serves as our starting point by explaining theories about the selection of and interaction with texts. Authentic texts (Galloway, 1998) and the need for them in the foreign language classroom is discussed. After this discussion and definition, we see how this term can be applied to the study [see chapter 3] of this thesis. Only by using an authentic text are students able to activate their pre-established schema of that text. Next, top-down and bottom-up approaches to reading (Bernhardt, 1991; Swaffer, Arens, & Byrnes, 1991) are topics for discussion. Both of these approaches aid in foreign language reading; however, a greater emphasis will be placed on top-down processes since this approach highlights the importance of a reader's background knowledge on text interpretation. Eskey's sociocognitive view of L2 reading

(1986) will then be explored. Implications from this theory will prove to be of significance for the affirmation that schema, or background knowledge, plays a crucial role in text interpretation. Next, Oller's Episode Theory of Language (1983) emphasizes the importance of the social world and schemata already formed by the L2 reading novice. Following is Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982), which implies that through the activation of a known schema, novel L2 lexical items in an L2 text (which are the "+1" in Krashen's formula) lend themselves to decoding (on which our study [see chapter 3] will focus). As a final element to this part, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and his Zone of Proximal Development (1978) will make clear the vital role of the social world apparent. Therefore, activation of social schemata suggests being important to the minds of novice learners of a foreign language.

The next division of this chapter will be the discussion of actual approaches to L2 reading. There are two views: the socio-psycholinguistic view and the word recognition view (Freeman & Freeman, 2004). These two help us to better understand the reading process in general. In particular the socio-psycholinguistic view will support the emphasis on social context of lexical items in a novel text. Lee (1987) also demonstrates, through empirical evidence, the reasoning for a socio-psycholinguistic view. Support for the necessity of background knowledge is made evident.

The third division of this chapter will focus on the reading process and model provided by Kucer (2004). This model will then be broken into its individual parts: knowledge search, contextual dependency, reading for a purpose, reading strategies, and the evolving cognitive text world.

Knowledge search emphasizes the need or a known social schema for reading. This discussion is further elaborated on through Kramsh's (2004) notion of a "content schema" and its importance to a novice's social environment—and therefore the novice's social schemata. This piece of the reading model is concluded with evidence from a study (García, 1996) focusing on how students apply their own schema to new lexical items.

The next feature of the model is contextual dependency within a text. The importance of this section is to show how societal perceptions differ. Therefore, social schemata play a large part in the decoding of novel lexical items. Context of situation and the context of culture (Malinowski, 1967) are also elaborated. These two pieces of context prove to be important for the argument of this thesis because of their implications. This is to say that novices of the Spanish language, therefore being non-natives, have completely different contexts of cultures and situations in the classroom. Consequently, to aid in the decoding of novel lexical items, texts that activate novices' social schemata are crucial elements to this process. Genre selection will also be a topic within this feature. Anne Freadman (1994) has spoken of the functions of genre. Through these functions, the role of social environment of foreign language learners in regards to text types is evident. L1 learners have pre-established schemata and certain anticipations with genres that perhaps L2 learners will not. Hence, there is a need for social schemata incorporation for novel lexical item decoding in L2 texts. Lastly, with this aspect of the reading model, it is necessary to investigate the manner in which a word is decoded from its surrounding context. "Decontextualization" (Olsen 1977) of school language is discussed along with its implications for L2 students. Because this type of language is even difficult for the L1 student, L2 students need to be handled differently and with a

more "contextualized" approach [as theories support in division one of this chapter]. Next for elaboration is Schelppergrell's (2004) discussion about social experiences being an integral aid for students in comprehending this "decontextualized" school language. Also, her notion of "explicitness" and its implications of being an achieved language user, all point to the crucial role that a socially tailored text will have in regards to novel lexical item decoding.

The third feature of the model is reading as an intentional act. The importance of this feature is its role on motivation and therefore social schemata being activated for this motivation to occur. The fourth feature is the role of reading strategies. There is evidence of difficulty in comprehension with the concept of a word when it does not carry through cultural borderlines. That is to say, in support of the socio-psycholinguistic view of reading, texts need to be chosen that are socially tailored to the student in order for initial comprehension to occur. A manner in which we can measure this comprehension of concepts in a novel text is by measuring the efficiency of novel lexical item decoding. Lastly, feature five of the model talks about the evolving cognitive text world. The constant changing and rebuilding of meanings and concepts is explored in more depth. Implications suggest that webs of meanings are established by not only new information entering, but rather with the connection of past knowledge and experience (social schemata) to new information provided (the novel L2 text).

The fourth division of this chapter focuses on Coady's ESL Reading Model (1979). Through this elaborate discussion of the model, its pieces will be discussed in detail. The pieces are: conceptual abilities, process strategies, and background knowledge. As previously discussed, these three parts of Coady's Reading Model also

appear as intricate facets of Kucer's general reading model (2004). As will be evident these three parts work together as a unit to aid in comprehension. Therefore it is important to highlight here that we see background knowledge (social schemata) as one of the main pieces to L2 text comprehension.

The fifth division of chapter one will focus on Carrell's Schema Theory (1984). As seen previously, schema in particular has been discussed by Kramsh (2004). Kramsh has affirmed that content schema is derived from background knowledge and is necessary for L2 text comprehension. Therefore, Carrell's schema theory has much support. Also, Kucer (2004) had affirmed from his feature one that knowledge is derived from social environment and experience. Using this information, Carrell's schema theory holds much validity. Her theory goes on to state that efficient comprehension is the result of the connection of prior, existing knowledge (socially coded knowledge) with new textual material (novel concepts through new lexical items). Hence, the need for "social schema" activation with novel L2 texts is apparent.

The sixth and final division of the first chapter of this thesis has to do with the role of schemata themselves in regards to interacting with a text (Lee & VanPatten, 1999). The four basic functions of schemata when encountering and interacting with a novel text (in the L1 or L2) are using schemata: to disambiguate, to elaborate, to filter, and to compensate. All four will be discussed in detail, and it will demonstrate how students (even though they are reading in their L1) apply their own personal background knowledge and social environment to the new text at hand. If L1 students apply their own social schemata to novel L1 texts, then students who interact with L2 texts would hypothetically do the very same thing, if not to a greater extent. This is precisely the goal

of this thesis—to prove the importance of the activation of social schemata when comprehending the concepts (and thus new lexical items) of the text. This last division lays the foundation for a "socio-schematic" approach to L2 reading.

1.2 Interacting with an L2 text

This section will present theoretical frameworks for a basis in L2 learning. We focus on novice L2 learner reading and its connection to the following theories at hand. We also speak of what types of texts are important, and then further our investigation with methods for novice L2 reading.

1.2.1 Authentic texts

Galloway (1998) defined *authentic texts* as 'those written and oral communications produced by members of a language and culture group for members of the same language and culture group" (Shrum & Glisan, 2005, p. 74). There is a naturalness of form and the context of the material is situational to the culture of the target L2 group. Through the use of authentic texts, novice L2 readers are able to see a purpose and motivation for their learning since they are being exposed to real life situations through texts. It is language that serves a purpose. "Because these texts are prepared for native speakers, they reflect the details of everyday life in a culture as well as its societal values" (Shrum & Glisan, 2005, p. 74). These authentic texts already see the target audience as part of the same society and as possessing similar societal norms as the one being written about in the text. Therefore, it provides the novice L2 reader with a real life situation, worthwhile reading.

1.2.2 Top-down and bottom-up approaches to reading

Effective language instruction reflects bottom-up processing and top-down processing in their activities and tasks (Bernhardt, 1991; Swaffer, Arens, & Byrnes, 1991). The bottom-up approach is where meaning is understood through analysis of language parts. Language is processed in a sequential manner, combining sounds and letters to form words, and then combining words to form sentences. Sub-skills include "discriminating between different sounds or letters, recognizing word-order patterns, recognizing intonation cues, analyzing sentence structure, and translating individual words" (Shrum & Glisan, 2005, p. 158). Other comprehension tasks reflect top-down processing where meaning is derived through the use of contextual cues and activation of personal background knowledge about the content of the text. Identifying key ideas and guessing meaning are the main sub-skills of this type of process. Top-down strategies ensure that learners "manipulate the language to communicate thoughts using higher-level skills"; precisely what is required for comprehension that is useful to the student (Shrum & Glisan, 2005, p. 159). It is more contextualized and in conjunction with bottom-up strategies, top-down processing delivers immediate comprehension benefits. Bottom-up processes work with top-down processes to repair comprehension and make it more refined (Shrum & Glisan, 2005, p. 158-159).

As is evident, a top-down process is responsible for giving reader background knowledge such an important weight. Top-down factors, in regards to texts, include text schema, structure, and episode sequencing (like in the "story approach"—[see section 1.1.4]). According to Lally (1998), "top-down models of comprehension are reader-

driven and focus on what the reader/listener brings to the text in terms of knowledge of the world (Shrum & Glisan, 2005, p. 159).

1.2.3 Eskey's sociocognitive view of L2 reading

Evidence clearly shows us the value and importance of background knowledge/prior knowledge in the novice's reading and comprehension of a text. *Eskey's sociocognitive view of second-language reading* (1986) proposes that when readers come into contact with a given text, they choose the elements that are necessary for processing the information presented in the text, and then reconstruct the meaning. In this way, they will comprehend the text. Her theory does not concentrate so much on the interpretation of linguistic elements, but more so on the text's pragmatic nature, content, and topic (Shrum & Glisan, 2005, p. 159). "Furthermore, a great deal of comprehension and interpretation is based on the experiences the learner brings to the text" (Shrum & Glisan 2005, p. 160). Without the activation of background knowledge, a novice's reading would be greatly hindered.

1.2.4 Oller's episode theory of language

Oller's Episode Hypothesis of Language (1983) describes how crucial good texts are for comprehension in a second language. The implications of the hypothesis suggest that a better "story" approach for texts would aid novices in their understanding when reading. This is because the stories would present real-world language or situations, which would serve as a catalyst for novice reading in the L2 forward (Shrum & Glisan, 2005). The "story approach" to reading is when a text is structured episodically.

> *According to Oller (1983), a text that has 'motivation' has an apparent*
> *purpose, holds the attention and interest of the listener or reader,*
> *introduces a conflict of some sort, and is not dull and boring. A text that is*
> *logically organized has the characteristics of a good story and connects*
> *meaningfully to our experience in the world* (Shrum & Glisan, 2005, p.*
> 73).

Therefore, we see that the social world of the novice is crucial to the motivation for acquisition and comprehension of an L2 text.

1.2.5 Krashen's input hypothesis and its implication for L2 reading

Krashen's input hypothesis (1982) states that students are only able to acquire a language when exposed to a sufficient amount of interesting input. Added to this is the concept that this input must be a certain small amount above their current level of competence (or what he called [i + 1]. In this formula, the "i" represents the current language competence of the novice, while "1" represents the next level of competence to which the novice will be exposed. This input, which is a bit above the novice's current academic level, must properly utilize comprehensible background knowledge and context with which the novice learner is familiar (Shrum & Glisan, 2005).

1.2.6 Implementation of aspects of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory

Using the "story approach" as a point of departure, we can further understand the significance of text selection as well as the significance of text delivery by the teacher. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory introduces to us the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (1978). This zone represents the place in between a student's actual academic level, what they can do by themselves, and their potential developmental level, what they

can do with assistance (Shrum & Glisan, 2005). It should be understood that Vygotsky

focused on the social interaction found in a classroom. The social world therefore is a key

component in novice L2 reading. In addition, the emphasis of the ZPD is that one of the

primary tools for mediation within the ZPD is texts and text selection (Donato &

McCormick, 1994).

1.3 Approaches to L2 reading

In the following section, the focus is on novel L2 reading. Two separate views on

L2 reading are shown. From that point of departure, we are able to see the importance of

background knowledge for a novel L2 learner when engaged in an L2 text for the first

time.

1.3.1 Two primary views of reading

There are two primary views of reading in a second language—the *word*

recognition view and the *socio-psycholinguistic view* (Freeman & Freeman, 2004). The

goal of the former is to be able to identify specific words in a text in order to acquire a

word's meaning. The latter view is based on using background knowledge from the

language systems of graphophonics, syntax, and semantics. In the word recognition view,

when it comes to vocabulary, students should learn the new words prior to reading;

whereas in the socio-psycholinguistic view, students acquire new vocabulary as they

read. They encounter words in context, and thus construct meaning (Freeman & Freeman

2004).

When we speak of moving towards L2 acquisition, the socio-psycholinguistic view of reading plays a significant role. According to Weber (1996), summarized by Kucer, he affirms:

> *it was through direct experience with the concepts at hand, rather than simply through the introduction of vocabulary words, that [L2] readers can be provided with the necessary background knowledge to effectively process the [L2] written discourse* (Kucer, 2004, p. 114-115).

Adopting the socio-psycholinguistic view of reading, we see its relevance and usefulness because "concepts cannot easily be represented by dictionary definitions, which is what vocabulary instruction often provides the reader". Conceptual knowledge is representative of the webs of meanings that students will make when comprehending the meaning of a word (Kucer, 2004, p. 158). Thus, memorizing new vocabulary is not an efficient way to grasp the meaning, or concept, of a word. It is neither in the grand scheme, an effective method of comprehension of a text as a comprehensive whole.

1.3.2 Importance of background knowledge for L2 reading

Empirical studies, according to Lee (1987), have shown that exposure to texts with unfamiliar grammar and vocabulary does not significantly affect comprehension. Factors such as the quality of the text in terms of factual consistency and coherence, as well as the background knowledge and motivation of learners, are more important in the comprehension of a text. Novice readers must be interested and have prior knowledge about the subject of the text to build upon in order to not frustrate the students' comprehension building. Students' background is also telling of what would motivate a novice's learning and comprehension. Successful readers often preview a text, establish a

purpose, predict meaning, activate background knowledge, preview unfamiliar content, anticipate new vocabulary and text language, skim for the gist, and scan for specific information (Shrum & Glisan, 2005). In order for comprehension to begin, it is vital that meaning must be constructed between the text and personal experience and/or background knowledge of the novice. These students must be engaged in the text personally, and find personal relevance within it, for optimal reading comprehension and understanding.

1.4 The reading process and Kucer's reading model (2004)

This section focuses on the reading process itself as well as Kucer's proposed reading model. The reading process as an entity adheres to a certain model. The model incorporates five different features: knowledge search, context, goals and plans, strategies, and evolving text (Kucer, 2004). These features prove to adhere to the socio-psycholinguistic view of reading. L2 readers are engaged in the same process of reading as those readers who only read in one language. Although other strategies exist for L2 learners, they are woven into the model, and the actual larger processes remain the same (Kucer, 2004). It is necessary to view this model because of its connections to background knowledge and evidence of the importance of contextual cues, which should be common knowledge to the student. These two vital pieces of the manner in which novices learn to read in the L2 make activation of background knowledge, found within their social world, that much more needed and required. The implications here for literacy of L2 learners suggest that separate and appropriate text selection is essential.
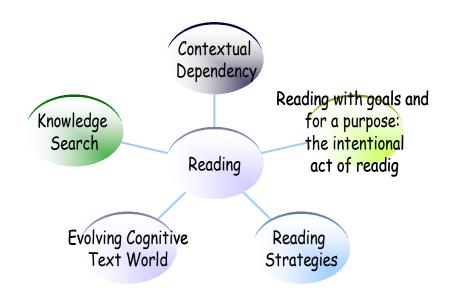
Figure 1: Kucer's (2004) reading model

1.4.1 Feature #1: knowledge search

The first feature of the reading model discusses that while reading a text, there is a

degree of search for knowledge within that text. The reader will search for background

knowledge that is relevant to the text being read. They will search for known schemata in

the text structure, which are like cognitive maps, of a certain type of text. Within these

schemata, there are concepts that represent the different interlocking roads. Concepts

build upon each other, consequently building knowledge, which is all "implicitly or

explicitly culturally coded" (Kucer, 2004). Thus, according to Ferdman (1990), it is not

possible for a human to act independently of one's culture. In other words, he/she is

consistently playing subject to their culture of belongingness by assuming different

societal roles and identities (Kucer, 2004). We can conclude that adhering to the socio-

psycholinguistic view of reading connects learning concepts to the incorporation of the

social environment in which the novice learner lives.

1.4.1.1 Implications of schemata and evidence of importance of background knowledge

When choosing a text type for a novice L2 reader—ESL or FL—it is vital to remember that text selection and explanation is crucial to their understanding. When it comes to "content schemata", novice L2 readers may have trouble understanding motives and intentions of texts because expectations from certain types of texts may be different in their social environment. Thus, some background knowledge should be provided (Kramsch, 2004, 141). Students will impose "background knowledge" to a text, even an inappropriate background. The challenge for teachers is to guide the novice reader in the correct direction. "The reader's contribution to comprehension of a text is their schemata—their personal knowledge and experience that they rely on to represent and understand concepts" (Lee & VanPatten, 1999, p. 190). [See Section 1.7 for more in-depth discussion about the relevance of schemata in L2 reading].

In a study done by García (1996), it was found that Spanish-speaking intermediate grade students differed from their native-English speaking counterparts. The difference was evident in the level and type of background knowledge that the L2 learners brought while reading and interpreting a text and its English vocabulary (Jiménez, García, & Pearson, 1996). In an interview, an ESL student, Pamela, described her experience with bringing in her prior knowledge to the reading: "*Extinct* no quiere decir like when they're almost gone? Like the African elephant I think there aren't anymore." (Jiménez, García, & Pearson, 1996, p. 100). It is clear that foreign language learners search within their banks of knowledge to arrive at a conclusion while reading and interpreting vocabulary.

However, what is more important is the effect of the *concept* that the vocabulary word will have on the *meaning* of the word.

1.4.2 Feature #2: context—contextual dependency within a text

The next feature of the reading model describes that there is a certain degree of contextual dependency in reading. Sankoff (1980) proposed a model for language processing while reading. He argued that while meaning is being constructed during the process of reading, one's "competence" in the language is not as important as the social context to the reading itself (Kucer, 2004, p. 127-128). Societal perceptions vary; and thus, we can conclude that novice L2 readers bring a completely separate set of prior knowledge understanding while reading an L2 text for the first time. This is why providing them with a content schema would be so essential.

1.4.2.1 Explanation of context of situation and context of culture surrounding texts

A text can be defined as "a piece of language in use; that is, according to Halliday and Hasan (1985) 'language that is functional'" (Butt, 2000, p. 2). A text occurs in two forms, or within two contexts, when a student is interacting with it. These two different forms of interaction are known as the context of culture and the context of situation. According to Knapp and Watkins,

> *Texts are always produced in a context. While texts are produced by individuals, individuals always produce those texts as social subjects; in particular social environments. In other words, texts are never completely individual or original; they always relate to a social environment and to other texts* (2005, p. 18).

Therefore, language is seen as a social process. Language in texts "…are formed by individuals in social contexts to serve specific social needs and requirements" (Knapp & Watkins, 2005, p. 18)

The context of culture (Malinowski, 1967) is very much like the outer shell within which a text lays. It encompasses all of the schemata of discourse, genre, and most importantly for our purposes, actual texts that the novice L2 reader has been presented with within his/her own culture (Butt, 2000). "The context of culture is sometimes described as the sum of all the meanings it is possible to mean in that particular culture" (Butt, 2000, 3). Within this context of culture, there is a context of situation (Malinowski, 1967) in which students use their knowledge about the text they are interacting with in the particular environment in which they are situated (Butt, 2000). Malinowski (1967) coined the term 'context of situation' "in order to have a way to describe the immediate environment in which texts are produced". He later developed the term 'context of culture' (1967) "to describe the system of beliefs, values and attitudes that speakers bring with them into any social interaction" (Knapp & Watkins, 2005, p. 18). Clearly, it becomes particularly important to the teacher to realize that novice L2 readers will be bringing a completely different "context of culture" into the "context of situation", and will need their texts modified to fit their unique situation. Both of these notions—context of culture and context of situation hold monumental potential for L2 text selection because of the unique characteristics—in terms of social environment—in which these beginners are learning their L2.

Within any given text, Halliday (1985) has proposed an articulated model of the relationship between context and text, all within the context of situation. "Context, or

what is going on around a language event, is seen as 'virtual' or having the potential to

'actualize' the event in the form of a text (Knapp & Watkins, 2005, p. 18). Halliday

(1985) has proposed that the content of any given text would be known as its 'ideational',

or 'representational' meaning, while the social relations of people involved in the text

will be known as the 'interpersonal' meaning, and lastly the actual text type, or

mode/medium of the language event will be known as the 'textual' meaning (Knapp &

Watkins, 2005, p. 18). These three meanings can also be classified into the field, tenor,

and mode of a text, respectively (Schleppegrell, 2004). The field is what is being spoken

about, or the presentation of ideas. The tenor is the relationship between the reader and

writer (or the text), and the mood. The mode is the expectations of the organization of a

particular text type (Schleppegrell, 2004). While choosing text types for novice L2

readers to engage in, it is important to be able to identify the characteristics of the text

according to these meanings so that the reason and purpose of introducing a particular

text to novice L2 readers would be clear.

1.4.2.2 Genre selection in regards to text selection

        With the parts of any given text having been described, we can proceed to speak

about the importance of genre selection when it comes to text selection. Anne Freadman

(1994) has defined four basic functions of genre. These four functions, simply stated are

1) genre as an organizing construct for cultural practices in a given social environment; 2)

genre is a network of contrasts; 3) genre is a mixture of place occasion, function,

behavior and interactional structures; and 4) genre is cultural competence in regards to

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the appropriateness of the given genre in the social situation. Points 1) and 4) are relevant

facets to this present line of research. According to Freadman (1994),

> *"…genre is an organizing concept for our cultural practices….[also]*
> *cultural competence involves knowing the appropriateness principle for*
> *any genre, knowing the kind of margin you have with it, being able to vary*
> *it, knowing how to shift from one another and how many factors would be*
> *involved in any such shift* (Knapp & Watkins, 2005, p. 21)

1.4.2.2.1 The purpose of appropriate genre selection

Considering the first and fourth functions of genre, according to Freadman

(1994), we see that social purpose is what develops various genres. Each genre moves

through a prescribed and set standard of stages in order to achieve its purpose. "Purpose

is theorized… as a cultural category" (Knapp & Watkins, 2005, p. 22). This is to say that

a process differs in achieving its purpose depending on the context (of culture and

situation) in which it arises. Consequently, L1 students have been given a prescribed set

of genres since very early in their schooling, however, when it comes to L2 learners, as

teachers, we must not assume that they are aware of a certain genre and/or text type. By

beginning with a genre and text type which holds some familiar boundaries to them, we

can begin to instill motivation and enthusiasm in our L2 novice readers, rather than

diminish their desire to learn by frustrating their efforts.

1.4.2.3 Novel lexical item decoding

When it comes to novel lexical item decoding, the context of the word in the text

is crucial to the motivation and fostering of learning for the novice L2 reader. The

language used in schools and in teaching literacy in schools is extremely

"decontextualized (Schleppegrell, 2004). According to Olsen (1977), written school language is extremely "decontextualized". This is to mean that the language that a student encounters in a given school text is outside the sphere of informal discourse. Therefore, that formal language is outside the context of the classroom, and is much more distanced than informal language. A student who has effectively read a school text has successfully handled decontextualized information (Schleppegrell, 2004). Nevertheless,

> *if … it is recognized that contexts are in fact evoked in the language choices made in constructing every text, then the role of social experience in preparing a student to use language in ways expected in school tasks can be explicitly acknowledged and incorporated into language development theory and pedagogy* (Schleppegrell (2004, p. 9).

School based texts are difficult for mainstream students because they deal with a completely different construction of language than language found outside of school (Schleppegrell, 2004). Consequently, since texts are even difficult to L1 students, then teachers must opt for different text selection in order accommodate novice L2 readers in their acquisition of L2 literacy. Novice learners of an L2 have different social factors driving their motivation. As Schleppegrell states:

> *"Understanding the role of social experience is especially important in light of the fact that unfamiliarity with the language of schooling is closely related to social class membership…people develop different coding orientations, or ways of using language, related to their social class and culture"* (Schleppegrell, 2004, p. 26).

As a primary stage to acquisition of vocabulary and reading comprehension, teachers must first inspire interest and activate knowledge in novel lexical items.

In terms of novel lexical item decoding, taking the notion of explicitness, or the use of full noun phrases and verb phrases when interacting with a text (Schleppegrell, 2004), we can see that explicitness "...requires control of the range of vocabulary needed to construe meanings precisely" (Schleppegrell, 2004, p. 50). In order for students to attain this range of vocabulary for genres and text types, we must understand that novice L2 readers question the purpose of literacy within the school context. Acting as a "middle man" for novice L2 readers, who are attempting to grasp the goal of reading within the school environment, teachers must appeal to their context of culture (their social environment) through appropriate text selection.

1.4.3 Feature #3: reading as an intentional act

The next feature of the reading model is reading as an intentional act. There are certain goals and plans that a student will have when engaging in a particular text. For example, if a person were to read a recipe, they would skim and scan it most likely for ingredients (Kucer, 2004). For instance, when "limited English proficient" (LEP) students read in English, their home life and goals in the family play a crucial part in what they want to or need to read, such as having to read lease contracts and income tax forms. In the above example, said texts are not readily read in an academic environment, but are nevertheless important for LEP students to be able to read and comprehend (Jimenez, 2000). By providing texts that are seen as important in these students' environments, motivation and background knowledge could be activated.

1.4.4 Feature #4: reading strategies

Possessing reading strategies is the following feature in the reading model. These strategies are driven by print, background, and purpose, which all guide the reader comprehension of the text at hand (Kucer, 2004, p. 131). L2 readers are presented with different strategies for reading in their L2. In one study, Langer (1990) concluded that good meaning-making strategies were more significant than L1 or L2 proficiency when it came to L2 children reading (Langer, Bartholme, Vasquez, & Lucas, 1990). Evidence showed that knowledge from Spanish was used when encountering difficulty in reading English (Langer, Bartholme, Vasquez, & Lucas, 1990). These strategies of comprehension between one language and another have their roots in the language structure of each language, and not simply in the memorization of words, thus reinforcing the socio-psycholinguistic view of reading discussed before. In consequence with these processes, one can conclude that conceptual grasp and comprehension of a text is far greater than simply applying a dictionary definition.

Other strategies for L2 learners found in a study done by Jimenez (2000) include making inferences, assigning temporary words or concepts to unknown vocabulary, and asking questions (Jimenez, 2000). It is evident that strategies that activate prior knowledge are used as linguistic strategies for these students; however, the importance of activating this prior knowledge when it comes to content in reading material has not been so widely analyzed.

1.4.5 Feature #5: evolving cognitive text world

The evolving cognitive text world is the last feature of the reading model. In this stage, the reader makes eye to text contact and using his/her acquired strategies, the reader then builds a web of meaning from the print (Kucer, 2004). This construction forms a deeper structure of understanding of the concepts at hand, which aids in complete comprehension of the text (Kucer, 2004). As these meanings are constantly changing, they are better understood as webs of meaning and concepts, rather than only one-word definitions that could be found in a dictionary. Webs of meaning are derived from past knowledge and experiences, and so text selection should not counteract L2 learners' prior knowledge, but should work with it and use it as an excellent base for L2 reading comprehension.

1.5 Coady's ESL psycholinguistic reading model (1979)

From the structure of the above reading model, from each feature, we can see the distinct difference between novice L2 readers, as seen through the importance of text selection and comprehension. Novice L2 readers bring a separate set of cultural knowledge, conceptual knowledge, strategies, and motivation when it comes to reading in their L2. Therefore, we can see and understand the importance of not only choosing different texts for these individuals, but also focusing on a socio-psycholinguistic view of teaching reading. Taking into consideration this information, we can further investigate Coady's elaborated psycholinguistic model of ESL reading (1979), which also intertwines with the socio-psycholinguistic view of reading (Coady, 1979). In his model, "the ESL reader's background knowledge interacts with the conceptual abilities and

process strategies, more or less successfully, to produce comprehension" (Carrell, 1984, p. 332). Background knowledge, or the third factor in this model, needs to have sufficient emphasis placed onto it. Without the appropriate activation of this background knowledge (as we see from Kucer's reading model as well as the information we now know about the importance of one's cultural orientation from Kucer and Coady's ESL reading model), full reading comprehension would not be possible. Our attention is thus directed to the importance of text selection and schema.

Conceptual Abilities ⟷ Background Knowledge

Process strategies
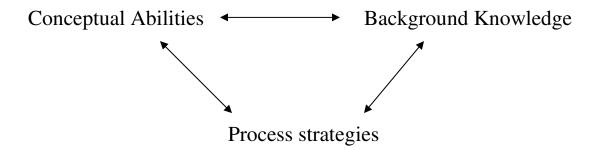
Figure 2: Coady's (1979) ESL psycholinguistic reading model

1.6 Carrell's schema theory (1984)

We have discussed the implications of content schema for novel L2 readers, which now direct our attention to the third component of Coady's ESL reading model. This component demonstrates the importance of schema for the L2 reader.

Schema theory is a term that is used to describe the significant role of background knowledge in language and reading comprehension. The theory states that "any text, either spoken or written, does not carry meaning by itself; rather, a text only provides directions for listeners or readers as to how they should retrieve or construct meaning from their own, previously acquired knowledge" (Carrell, 1984, p. 332). This knowledge

is known to us as the reader's background knowledge, and thus the previously acquired knowledge structures are called schemata. Relating back to Kucer's reading model, we have learned that all knowledge is "culturally coded" (Kucer, 2004, p. 125), thus, these schemata, or background knowledge, are derived from one's unique social environment. According to schema theory, the process by which a text is comprehended or understood is an interactive one that takes place between the reader's background knowledge and text. "Efficient comprehension requires the ability to relate the textual material to one's own knowledge" (Carrell, 1984, p. 333). Therefore, according to schema theory, readers are free to activate the appropriate content schema, with meanings and concepts that are appropriate to the interpretation and comprehension of the text at hand. Schema theory, as a result, holds strong implications for the importance of materials selection in an L2 classroom. "Reading teachers should use materials the students are interested in, including materials self-selected by the student". This method of teaching will not only ensure comprehension and efficient novel L2 item learning, but also a motivation to learn to read.

1.7 Role of schemata on L2 reading comprehension

In this section, we will consider the role of a novice's own schema on L2 reading comprehension. A schema is a novice's own "…personal 'data structure' for representing concepts" in their first encounter with an L2 text (Lee & VanPatten, 1999, p. 193). A novice L2 reader's own personal background and experiences must be brought to the task of reading. Their own personal schemata, therefore, must be activated. In this section, we will speak of the actual function and importance of these schemata and their absolute

necessity for the initial interaction with an L2 text. We will be looking at four different functions of using these schemata: to disambiguate, to elaborate, to filter, and to compensate.

1.7.1 Schemata to disambiguate

A novice L2 reader uses their schemata in order to "disambiguate" a text. According to Lee & VanPatten (1999) "we tend to screen out certain possibilities in a passage consistent with our background knowledge" (Lee & VanPatten 1999, p. 193). In order to illustrate this function of schemata, the work of Anderson et. al. (1976) must be cited. Her work was based on a text that she gave to students in their L1 (English). The two passages could have been identified as either that of a prison or of wrestling, or about cards or music, respectively. The prison/wrestling passage held key words and phrases such as "mat", "planning his escape", and "considered his present situation". The cards/music text contained principle words and phrases such as "notes", "gathered the cards", couldn't agree on what to play". It was founded that physical education majors interpreted the first passage as a text about wrestling, while the second passage was considered to be about playing music according to music majors. This demonstrates how strong known schemata are for students in their L1, which holds promise for the importance of schemata for disambiguating a novel L2 text. This also points to a schema's importance for decoding, or "disambiguating" novel L2 lexical items.

1.7.2 Schemata to elaborate

Schemata are vitally important to readers for the function of elaborating a text and making inferences from it. According to Lee & VanPatten, "…we fill in gaps either in things we did not comprehend or in things that were not in the passage" (Lee & VanPatten, 1999, p. 193). Perkins (1983) goes on to indicate that after reading a text, what can be logically inferred (taking into account a reader's schema) is logically connected to said text by the reader.

Riley (1990) has shown this implication in L2 readers using fairy tales as the genre of choice. The L2 readers in her studies have demonstrated sensitivity to the information presented to them in the fairy tales. For example, since a "fairy tale" is usually made for the audience of children, the stories are free of serious adult issues. Therefore, when the students in the study read about a wife who was married twice in the same story, the students included in their recount that she had divorced her first husband. This was because, logically, in a fairy tale, it can be inferred that is what happened. However, without this schema knowledge of the structure of a fairy tale, a reader would not be able to make the inference.

1.7.3 Schemata to filter

A schema can also act as a filter for the reader. This is to say that once a schema in a reader is indeed activated, the information that is processed by that reader passes through this said "filter". According to Lee & VanPatten, "…a schematic filter provides an evaluative perspective on unambiguous incoming information" (Lee & VanPatten, 1999, p. 194). This function of a schema was demonstrated in the studies done by Pichert

and Anderson (1977). In their study, they separated L1 readers into two groups. They gave each of them the same passage regarding two boys playing in a house. However, they gave each group a different role. One of the groups was to be potential buyers of the house, while the other was to be thieves of the house. An interesting situation occurred where the two groups remembered completely different sets of information about the house. For example, the former group remembered that the house had a leaky roof, while the latter group remembered that there was a color television set in one of the rooms. Since the two groups had different purposes, and had a different schema for each, the unnecessary information was "filtered" out and only the essential information was "filtered" and "kept" as obligatory knowledge for their assigned roles.

Nevertheless, we must also look at another example where L1 readers were not to be assigned "roles" in order to see if the "filter" would still be activated and functional. This work was done by Steffenson, Joag-Dev, and Anderson (1979). These researchers demonstrated, when reading letters about different marriage ceremonies to both Indians and Americans, how information in these letters was filtered differently due to culturally generated schematic filters. An example of their study is that a part of the passage was about how an heirloom wedding dress is an acceptable custom for Americans. However, the Indian reader inferred, from the completely unambiguous sentence presented to him/her, that this meant that the dress was out of fashion (since culturally there is an emphasis in India on financial power of the two families in a wedding). We can therefore see the impact that a schema has when it comes to filtering information and "grasping" the meaning, or concept, of a passage.

1.7.4 Schemata to compensate

As Lee and VanPatten affirm, "The final function that schemata can play in comprehension is to compensate for other knowledge sources such as underdeveloped orthographic knowledge, lexical knowledge, and syntactic knowledge" (Lee & VanPatten 1999, 194). This is to say that, for example, an L2 reader does not need to know a second language fluently in order to decode the meaning of a text. In other words, schemata can act to compensate for gaps in linguistic knowledge comprehension by providing a certain set of clues. For example, if we were speaking about a past event or a historical, known occurrence in the past, it would be general knowledge, no matter what your background knowledge is and from what culture it is from, that we are speaking in the past tense. However, this is not to say that L2 readers must solely rely on small knowledge sources in order to decode meaning in a novel L2 text. This can lead to inaccurate meaning construction. To illustrate this point, it would behoove us to look at a study done by Lee (1990) which demonstrates the latter point exactly. When one reader interpreted a passage on feudalism as being an actual feud between two people, we can clearly see that linguistic knowledge in a schema is obligatory. Consequently, as this student read the passage, he compensated for his lack historical knowledge by activating the prior background knowledge he had about the lexical item "feud" to the text. However, if the student did not have a working schema for "feud", then he/she would not be able to interpret the passage at all. "This reader's reconstruction demonstrates that not only must a schema be activated for comprehension to take place, but the appropriate schema must be activated for accurate comprehension to take place" (Lee & VanPatten, 1999, p. 195).

1.8 Synthesis and conclusion

      As we have seen from the aforementioned researchers, focus on background knowledge and a schema for text content is important when it comes to novice L2 learning. As we have seen, authentic texts are important for L2 reading. However, our goal in this line of research is to use that concept in a practical manner. It is not only about including the novice in another's culture, but rather, incorporating one's own social environment in their learning. In order to achieve this, we must adhere to a top-down process for texts and also to the socio-psycholinguistic view of reading. This adherence to the latter view of reading can be seen throughout Kucer's reading model stages, and the theoretical work done by Eskey, Oller, Krashen, and Vygotsky. Background knowledge to a text and the social world of the novice appears to be crucial for the motivation in reading comprehension.

      Through the reading model and examples of studies, we can see that there are implications that the concept of background prior knowledge in terms of the social environment of the novice L2 reader is very important to their motivation. The context of culture of a novice and the culture of situation in the classroom must coincide with each other, and create a parallel environment for reading acquisition. Text types and genre are coded by the society in which they are created. Therefore, social experiences are meant to be mixed with reading comprehension and motivation. This is the only way in which novices will see a purpose in reading. Thus, known schemata of a genre and text type in comparison to its social relevance is a key facet in terms of motivating factors.

      Novel L2 readers must see a purpose in their reading. The concepts that they come across in through their texts, in terms of novel L2 lexical items, must hold

relevance to their social environments (either in the home or in other aspects of their lives). As Coady and Carrel have outlined through their approaches, background knowledge and therefore making content relevant to a novice's life is an intricate part in the decoding process of novel L2 lexical items and reading comprehension as a whole.

The notion of a working schema in every reader is evident from various researchers that we have seen. Schemata work in four ways: to disambiguate, to elaborate, to filter, and to compensate. Although examples have been seen in L1 reading, we can hypothesize that L2 novice readers must have working schemata as well. In regards to schemata acting to disambiguate, in regards to novel lexical item decoding with a novice L2 reader, it may be better if the structure of the genre (or text type) being read is known to the child due to their previous background knowledge. This can be stated because based on the studies done, we can speculate that the decoding process of novel L2 lexical items will be better harnessed with the presence of background knowledge. With respect to schemata acting to elaborate, if a genre is known by a novice L2 reader, we can speculate that these readers would be able to elaborate more on the concept of novel L2 lexical items, if not their exact definitions. This is because certain genres and text types have different structures with different events, which consequently contain different "key" words. In regards to a schema acting as a filter, we can consider that novice L2 readers will be going through the same process of filtering when their schemata are activated when in contact with novel L2 lexical items. Finally, with regard to schemata acting to compensate, it is important to understand that schemata can be shared throughout many cultures, however, it is the own personal knowledge of the reader that shapes their own personal schemata. These schemata that are prevalent and

ready to be activated are formed by the social environment in which individual L2 readers find themselves. It is thus their social environment that is the defining factor of the manner in which their schemata will be shaped and formed.

Societal environments are what students view as a reality in their own lives. It is clear that they would need to bridge the gap of what is learned at school to what would be useful in society and in their lives. It is important, as stated above, to remember that schemata may be (and often is) cross cultural, and so what is important to activate is the prior knowledge of the "culture". "Culture" here is defined as the social situation/environment of the novice L2 readers. This brings us to the proposed term of a needed "socio-schema" when in contact with an L2 text for the first time. The proposed term here is a "socio-schematic" approach to novice L2 reading.

CHAPTER 2

RELEVANT STUDIES AND CURRENT FRAMEWORKS IN L2 READING

2.0 Introduction

Chapter two of this thesis takes into account several key studies and ACTFL guidelines that all act as catalysts for this present study. The studies along with the ACTFL guidelines for reading and requirements for language teachers work jointly to present a rationale for the present study. The aforementioned matters offer evidence of importance for working within a social framework in regards to L2 language instruction, specifically in regards to L2 reading.

This chapter covers primarily the study of Jimenez (2000) in its first sections. Within this study, a main topic of discussion is the relevance of social worlds and roles of L2 students as students and also as adolescents functioning in society. Communicative language instruction is discussed as well and the importance of task-based activities is explored (Lee & Vanpatten, 1999 & Richards & Rogers, 1986). However, the notion of how communicative tasks can be made relevant to the social worlds of L2 students is the main objective of this thesis, and is discussed here. Specifically, within L2 reading, Richards (1986) discusses the semantic importance of novel lexical items. In other words, he explains the fact that each lexical item carries with it a "concept", and not just a simple definition. In this thesis, we extend this notion to more successful L2 reading instruction by means of socially contextualizing novel L2 lexical items in a reading passage for which students have a pre-established schema. The hope is that the decoding process will become an easier and less frustrating task, thereby supporting achievement in L2 novice reading comprehension.

To contextualize this addition to communicative language teaching, the ACTFL guidelines for the novice stages of reading until the expert levels of L2 reading is presented. Within these guidelines, this thesis presents the underlining concept of using language to solidify prior knowledge until the L2 student is able to use the L2 to acquire new information. This will prove of extreme relevance when L2 texts are chosen for novice L2 learners. The appropriate texts have the capability of capturing novice student interest, and also of bridging the gap between the abilities of novice learners to those higher on the acquisition ladder (expert/superior levels). This section closes with NCATE (provided by ACTFL) requirements of L2 teachers, which affirm, in short, that foreign language teachers must have an understanding of the level and capability of their students. They must have the proper tools (L2 texts) in order to instill student interest, motivation, enthusiasm, and ability.

The next section deals with the "funds of knowledge" approach (Moll, Tapia, & Whitmore, 1993). This term reinforces the idea of the unique social world in which students find themselves. The usefulness of this term is affirmed by the study of Valdés (2001), which is discussed. One case study of hers in particular is elaborated upon, and the validity of an approach that incorporates background schema and social practices of students is shown. With the aforementioned studies and the concepts they bring with them as discussed above, along with the input of the ACTFL guidelines for L2 reading and for NCATE, the proposed term of this thesis—a "socio-schematic" approach for L2 reading—is supported and can be seen as necessary for aspiring second language learners.

The second division of this chapter deals specifically with vocabulary instruction for successful L2 reading comprehension. Crow (1986) is referenced in detail. The explanation of the difference between receptive and productive vocabulary skills is discussed. The importance of this discussion rests in the fact that L2 teachers must understand what is meant by receptive vocabulary skills and productive skills when instructing reading. Even though both pathways are necessary for successful reading, the fact that receptive control is the first acquired vocabulary skill is important because this thesis specifically discusses novice L2 readers. The discussion of a continuum for what is meant by a receptive skill versus a productive skill is also discussed, and presents the rationale for the manner in which the materials for testing have been developed (see chapter 3 for further details about testing methodology).

Within the discussion of Crow (1986), four misconceptions of receptive vocabulary instruction are discussed. These misconceptions are important for our argument in this thesis because they lead to the thinking that there must be a better approach for vocabulary instruction, especially for novice students. They support the proposal for novel lexical items being embedded in socially tailored and relevant texts. We also discuss topics from Crow (1986) such as aiding students into the correct manner of thinking about vocabulary acquisition, a proper reading environment, and the evidence for a semantic field approach. These all work jointly to affirm that the socio-schematic approach to L2 reading will indeed benefit novice L2 learners.

The last part of the second division of chapter two discusses the study of Barnett (1986). His study concludes that syntax knowledge and vocabulary acquisition work together. Therefore, this thesis questions how foreign language teachers can mock this

contextualization that obviously novice learners cannot obtain from L2 syntax (since they are in effect novices of the L2). By accessing a social schema through a socially tailored text, we hypothesize that students are able to apply syntax rules to those sentences recognized from their L1 (essentially their L1 background schema). Again, a socio-schematic approach to L2 reading is supported by the aforesaid study.

Lastly, this chapter summarizes the main topics in its conclusions section, and closes with the hypothesis for this thesis. This section offers a rationale for the study in this thesis, and expresses the fact that this study is original work insomuch that it proposes that texts must adapt to the student, rather than vice-versa. This study is an extension of several studies in L2 vocabulary acquisition and literacy development, but it proposes a different approach that will put the conclusions of the abovementioned studies into practice. Consequently, the socio-schematic approach to novice L2 reading joins important conclusions from several milestone studies. It therefore conceptualizes a more efficient manner of instructing, and acquiring, L2 vocabulary. This eventually culminates to successful L2 reading, and makes for a smoother transition to higher levels of L2 literacy.

2.1 Jimenez (2000): the importance of activating social schemata for L2 acquisition

The following is a summary of a study done by Jimenez (2000). It will summarize it as well as provide us with important results and conclusions. We will further be able to explore ACTFL standards and combine both to use as evidence for background knowledge and social environment incorporation into L2 reading instruction.

Jimenez's study (2000) of L2 learners holds relevance for this thesis because it emphasizes the importance of the use of a background schema in the acquisition of an L2. Novel L2 subjects were adolescents and pre-adolescents. Jimenez's study highlights the value of accessing background knowledge for the motivation and even ability to comprehend a novel L2 text. Accessing the social schema of these L2 students' cultural worlds, of their society, and their cultural practices all proved essential in successful L2 literacy. Activating the social schema of the reader for the process of literature attainment to take place proves to be an integral component for L2 learners.

Jimenez's study (2000) is important because it provides the rationale for conducting research about the topic of this thesis, as asserted above. As cited in Jimenez (2000), Cummins (1986) speaks about the assessment of quality instruction for our language minority students. He claims that these students:

> *will succeed or fail to the extent that their language and culture are incorporated into the school program, to the extent their parents and their overall community are included as an integral component of their education, and to the extent that the students are provided with instruction designed to allow them to generate their own knowledge through activities such as reading, and writing* (Jimenez, 2000, p. 973).

In another study by McKay and Wong (1996), summarized by Jimenez (2000), L2 students' academic achievement was directly explained to be a consequence of their identity construction. Because of negative positioning of less successful students by educators, students resisted and consequently found fulfillment in activities outside of school, hence having "less motivation to excel in traditional academic pursuits" (p. 975). Students who did not assume a valued role in their classroom found another "social" connection with the language, and used it in that facet of their lives. Evidence infers that

if a student's social world were more valued and classroom materials that were provided

to them had more social validity, the outcome could have been a bit different.

Lastly, theories about identity by Ferdman (1990) have been summarized by

Jimenez. Ferdman provides a base for the theme of this thesis. Ferdman has theorized

that:

> *…identity is rooted in an individual's membership in particular ethnocultural groups and that this membership has consequences for 'becoming and being literate'. These consequences include the possibility that one's cultural identity will be either affirmed or negated during literacy events. In Ferdman's view, curriculum, and by extension, instruction, ought to 'facilitate the process by which students are permitted to discover and explore (…) connections'* (Jimenez, 2000, p. 975).

Identity development holds significance for this present study because college

students/adolescents, too, have a special identity that is being formed and which is unique

to that social "culture." By activating that schema (especially at the novice level) it will

be possible to engage students in more active and successful literacy acquisition.

Returning to Jiménez's study (2000), the interviews proved to be very telling. The

views and opinions presented showed that societal roles played a large part in their L2

learning, and in their L2 literacy development. These students had experienced

instruction and teaching methodology in what is described as "cultural borderlands", and

thus their literacy development was heavily linked to their social, cultural and linguistic

realities.

College-aged students have a special social identity, and what is more, they have

a separate social environment, which exerts its influence on them. In addition, due to the

consistent changing nature of technology and its impact on our students, foreign language

teaching must keep pace as well. When instructors understand the social environment and social schemata formed by students' background experiences, foreign language instruction benefits. Specifically, with the implementation of proper L2 text that activates a social schema, L2 learners can discover a social validity as part of their language learning.

2.1.1 Identifying a specific social role ("social place") of L2 learners

Students of a foreign language genuinely occupy their own "social place", or in other words, unique identity orientation, especially within the constructs of a school. This becomes more prevalent at the university level where students form a new group identity, which is generally separate from family influence. Taking into consideration their L2 aspirations and the syllabus's aspirations is important, however, the teacher's/professor's focus should also include students' ages, societal roles for that age group, and their daily tasks and functions as students as well as adolescents in today's society. Therefore, taking this a step further, if teachers expect students to participate willingly and with enthusiasm in the classroom, they must remember that students are acting within their social constraints. Students know their "social roles" as students—the listeners and the receptors of knowledge (Lee & VanPatten, 1999).

This thesis demonstrates that in the classroom, teachers have the ability to bridge the gap between student "social roles" as students, a role teachers may impose on them, and their "social roles" as adolescents. As Lee and VanPatten (1999) state, "The classroom is *a social environment* in which there are social as well as linguistic

outcomes" (p. 17). The following quote reveals the responsibility that teachers have to provide their students with the proper environment for learning to happen:

> *Constructing social norms is a process of building expectations for how to behave and what to do…. The instructional and communicative processes that take place across time during classroom foreign language teaching and learning influence not only what occurs in the classroom and how it occurs, but also what is eventually learned. That is, as students are learning the pieces and parts of the language, they are simultaneously learning how to be competent members of the classroom in order to participate in language learning activities…. As in learning a native language, learning a foreign language is also a tacit process of socialization that comes about through social interaction* (Brooks, 1990, p. 164-6, as cited in Lee & VanPatten, 1999, p. 17).

The main question then is how to activate this social place, which would be the driving force for relevant functional tasks that are carried out successfully in L1. This social place would aid in constructing the L2 classroom tasks that students feel comfortable performing. Activating this social place incorporates the accessing of social schemata, and in turn these social schemata can be applied to L2 learning, specifically L2 literacy. By selecting appropriate texts that activate the appropriate social schemata of our L2 students, students' social daily tasks in society can be applied to the foreign language classroom. The interdependency of the multiple facets of L2 learners' social worlds all interact with a nucleus of a certain "social place" of inter-text, which can be accessed with proper texts in L2 instruction.

In Jimenez's study, an instance of a unique identity, or "social place", of an L2 student is of particular interest because it demonstrates the strong social influence that L2 students bring to their language learning. The case study demonstrates that choosing culturally relevant texts for L2 students instills motivation. Jimenez (2000) points out the

fact that students could identify with the appropriate story due to their social background and social schemata. Consequently, this proved to be helpful in L2 literacy acquisition.

2.1.2 Integration of ACTFL with a socio-schematic approach

Choosing a socially relevant L2 text for our students should be of top priority. In the beginning phases of L2 acquisition, attention and awareness is captured by accessing the social schemata from their social environment as adolescents and students. By means of appropriate texts in terms of being socially relevant to students' social environment, students will be able to relate their background knowledge to lexical item decoding, which is the first step to literacy attainment.

In foreign language classrooms where novice L2 learners are concerned, there is a strong push to use language communicatively and to form and execute task-based activities. Applied linguists have begun to see "…the need to focus in language teaching on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastery of structures" (Richards & Rogers, 1986, p. 64). However, what has not been explored is the use of the actual daily activities of our college students and the functions in society they carry out every day and its potential application to vocabulary instruction. Teaching a foreign language is different than teaching any other subject matter because language by its very nature reinforces what a person already knows. It is therefore a vehicle with which to acquire new information.

Beginning by accessing the social schemata of novice L2 students, teachers have a starting place for building upon that schema in terms of language instruction. With that, students move through the levels of American Council on Teaching Foreign Languages

(ACTFL) from novice to intermediate and all the way to advanced and expert levels.

However, the proposal here is that to begin teaching a foreign language without building

upon some social schema is in vain. As seen previously, adolescents carry out different

tasks and functions in society, and they are enveloped in a society that is changing

rapidly. Consequently, by means of appropriate texts that we deliver to our novice L2

learners, students can begin building upon their social schemata immediately, making L2

literacy more speedily and efficiently acquired.

The following (Table 1) is the chart for "L2 Reading" acquisition as seen by the

ACTFL guidelines (ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines—Reading, 1999):

TABLE 1

ACTFL reading proficiency guidelines

(1986, Revised 1999) These guidelines assume all reading texts to be authentic and legible.	
Novice-Low	Able occasionally to identify isolated words and/or major phrases when strongly supported by context.
Novice-Mid	Able to recognize the symbols of an alphabetic and/or syllabic writing system and/or a limited number of characters in a system that uses characters. The reader can identify an increasing number of highly contextualized words and/or phrases including cognates and borrowed words, where appropriate. Material understood rarely exceeds a single phrase at a time, and rereading may be required.
Novice-High	Has sufficient control of the writing system to interpret written language in areas of practical need. Where vocabulary has been learned, can read

	for instructional and directional purposes standardized messages, phrases or expressions, such as some items on menus, schedules, timetables, maps, and signs. At times, but not on a consistent basis, the Novice-High level reader may be able to derive meaning from material at a slightly higher level where context and/or extralinguistic background knowledge are supportive.
Intermediate-Low	Able to understand main ideas and/or some facts from the simplest connected texts dealing with basic personal and social needs. Such texts are linguistically noncomplex and have a clear underlying internal structure, for example chronological sequencing. They impart basic information about which the reader has to make only minimal suppositions or to which the reader brings personal interest and/or knowledge. Examples include messages with social purposes or information for- the widest possible audience, such as public announcements and short, straightforward instructions dealing with public life. Some misunderstandings will occur.
Intermediate-Mid	Able to read consistently with increased understanding simple connected texts dealing with a variety of basic and social needs. Such texts are still linguistically noncomplex and have a clear underlying internal structure. They impart basic information about which the reader has to make minimal suppositions and to which the reader brings personal interest and/or knowledge. Examples may include short, straightforward descriptions of persons, places, and things written for a wide audience.
Intermediate-High	Able to read consistently with full understanding simple connected texts dealing with basic personal and social needs about which the reader has personal interest and/or knowledge. Can get some main ideas and information from texts at the next higher level featuring description and narration. Structural complexity may interfere with comprehension; for example, basic grammatical relations may be misinterpreted and temporal references may rely primarily on lexical items. Has some difficulty with the cohesive factors in discourse, such as matching pronouns with referents. While texts do not differ significantly from those at the Advanced level, comprehension is less consistent. May have to read material several times for understanding.
Advanced	Able to read somewhat longer prose of several paragraphs in length, particularly if presented with a clear underlying structure. The prose is

       	predominantly in familiar sentence patterns. Reader gets the main ideas and facts and misses some details. Comprehension derives not only from situational and subject matter knowledge but from increasing control of the language. Texts at this level include descriptions and narrations such as simple short stories, news items, bibliographical information, social notices, personal correspondence, routinized business letters and simple technical material written for the general reader.
Advanced **High**	Able to follow essential points of written discourse at the Superior level in areas of special interest or knowledge. Able to understand parts of texts which are conceptually abstract and linguistically complex, and/or texts which treat unfamiliar topics and situations, as well as some texts which involve aspects of target-language culture. Able to comprehend the facts to make appropriate inferences. An emerging awareness of the aesthetic properties of language and of its literary styles permit comprehension of a wider variety of texts, including literary. Misunderstandings may occur.
Superior	Able to read with almost complete comprehension and at normal speed expository prose on unfamiliar subjects and a variety of literary texts. Reading ability is not dependent on subject matter knowledge, although the reader is not expected to comprehend thoroughly texts which are highly dependent on knowledge of the target culture. Reads easily for pleasure. Superior-level texts feature hypotheses, argumentation and supported opinions and include grammatical patterns and vocabulary ordinarily encountered in academic/professional reading. At this level, due to the control of general vocabulary and structure, the reader is almost always able to match the meanings derived from extralinguistic knowledge with meanings derived from the knowledge of the language, allowing for smooth and efficient reading of diverse texts. Occasional misunderstandings may still occur; for example, the reader may experience some difficulty with unusually complex structures and low-frequency idioms. At the Superior level the reader can match strategies, top-down or bottom-up, which are most appropriate to the text. (Top-down strategies rely on real-world knowledge and prediction based on genre and organizational scheme of the text. Bottom-up strategies rely on actual linguistic knowledge.) Material at this level will include a variety of literary texts, editorials, correspondence, general reports and technical material in professional fields. Rereading is rarely necessary, and misreading is rare.

As can be seen from the above table, it is important to understand what role language

actually plays in language teaching. That is, there is a period of time in L2 acquisition

where the L2 is only to be used to reinforce concepts already known to the learner so as

to not overload their learning process. Eventually, as we move to the intermediate,

advanced, and expert levels, the L2 is progressively used more and more as a vehicle to

learn new information. Within the novice levels, a part of the proposal for this thesis is to

create "socio-schematic stages" so that the gap between novice levels and higher levels

can be bridged with more ease and in a more natural manner.

2.1.2.1 Impact of NCATE guidelines on a socio-schematic approach

Looking at the ACTFL standards, we can focus our attention at this juncture to

Section II of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE),

which outlines certain standards of evaluation. Specifically, we can focus on standard

three of these guidelines of prospective teachers. Standard three, which is "Language

Acquisition Theories and Instructional Practices", reads as follows:

> Candidates (a) demonstrate an understanding of language acquisition at
> various developmental levels and use this knowledge to create a supportive
> classroom learning environment that includes target language input and
> opportunities for negotiation of meaning and meaningful interaction and (b)
> develop a variety of instructional practices that reflect language outcomes and
> articulated program models and address the needs of diverse language learners
> (ACTFL, 2007).

This standard works into a socio-schematic approach of language acquisition because of

its implications about the needs of students. To integrate meaningful interaction in a

classroom through task-based activities is an important role as a teacher. Nevertheless,

integrating meaningful interaction that sparks interest in students is another quintessential element in an L2 classroom. Having formed identities within their current environments and social worlds (adhering directly to the "diverse learner" statement in the aforementioned standard), students will hypothetically gravitate toward communicative activities that incorporate facets of their current social worlds. This is not to say, however, that this method must be carried out throughout foreign language instruction. On the contrary, it should be used as a particular novice stage in order to scaffold interest and involvement in L2 learning.

2.1.2.2 Social world of students, task-based activities, and the functional purpose of language

As discussed above, foreign language is very much focused on practice with task-based activities and with the communicative classroom. However, for our novice students, an emphasis on the already established social schemata could prove to bring about a less frustrating and more attention drawing language learning experience. In order to further explain this phenomenon, we can draw upon Jimenez's study and his results with L2 students. He asserts that the types of texts that these students would need in order to practice reading, and would therefore have motivation to read, are texts that are "seldom a formal part of the school's curriculum" (Jimenez, 2000, p. 987).

In accordance with Jimenez's conclusions, texts need to be carefully chosen so as to motivate and capture student attention. Therefore, appropriate text selection fosters a desire to lean by the student. Language then becomes functional for daily tasks in society and within adolescents' societal roles. Jimenez's students in his study were observed to

be successful when they needed to use their language for a functional purpose. Thus, this thesis asserts that the motivation to learn and the need to perform a task can be recreated in the foreign language classroom by focusing on the pre-established social schemata of students. We can introduce novel L2 learners to a situation where the L2 message would have personal relevance to them. Students know their societal roles and the daily tasks that they carry out in their environment. Consequently, by introducing that same societal identity, or "social place", by means of appropriate texts, students can apply their known social schemata to L2 lexical item acquisition. After that, they can use their newly acquired language as an aid to move through the ACTFL levels of language proficiency.

With the combination of language working in a joint effort with the social schemata of students, the ultimate goal is that students will be able to use what they learned outside the classroom and in society—whether it be in their jobs, research, multimedia, popular culture, or other rationale they identify as a motive for learning a language. The multiple facets of society that students are engaged in already have a coded social schemata and so do the identities they have, and are still, developing. Therefore, this approach would be adding on to these social schemata. It would provide students with a different vehicle, or code, to operate within their established schemata and their social roles that they have already established for themselves.

In regards to the function of language, and more specifically the function of words within a language, Richards (1986) discusses various vocabulary teaching assumptions. These assumptions are important in the way that teachers approach vocabulary instruction. For this thesis, we focus on his assumption number eight, which reads as follows: "Knowing a word means knowing many of the different meanings associated

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with the word" (Richards, 1986, p. 82). In other words, a word's definition, or rather the concept that it represents in a learner's mind, needs to be understood from context, and not strictly through a one or two word definition. The meaning of a word, or its concept, is much richer than a strict definition. To understand a word is to understand its semantic representation through context.

Word meanings are of extreme relevance to this thesis because of its implication for the manner in which novel lexical items should be introduced to the novice. According to Eskey (1973):

> …word meanings do not exist in isolation in the reader's mind like so many entries in a dictionary. What a word means to the reader depends upon what he is reading and what he expects to read, the phrase, clause or sentence in which the words appear. The meaning of a word, that is to say, depends upon the through that it is being used to express and the context of its expression (as cited in Richards, 1986, p. 83).

Therefore, if students are presented with a socially relevant reading passage, then the meanings of novel lexical items will not only be easier to decode, but will be more conducive to contextual orientation. This is to say that students are now able to decode a lexical item, but also they are able to understand the overall concept and true meaning of said vocabulary item. Consequently, words appearing in context within a socially tailored text are the two facets of L2 reading instruction that can work jointly to create a deeper learning experience for our L2 students.

2.2 Socio-schematic approach for novel L2 lexical item decoding

This section will focus on the newly proposed term of a "socio-schematic" approach to L2 acquisition. A discussion about from where this term has derived its roots proves to be of importance. From that point, we continue our investigation in terms of a socio-schematic approach's implications for the L2 learner. We finally go into depth of a study done by Valdés (2001) and focus on one case study from her study. This demonstrates the importance of a socio-schematic approach for the L2 student and the unique social identity, or "social place", which said learner brings to the classroom.

2.2.1 A socio-schematic approach

From the aforementioned study of Jimenez (2000) presented above, it is evident that not only social environment itself, but also a focus on social and cultural norms are important aspects to consider in text selection for teaching L2 reading. It is a way in which motivation is inspired.

College-aged students have their own set of social schemata into which they must incorporate a new language. These schemata range from the use of all branches of communication, technology, and daily life—seen in the form of ipods, cell phones, text messaging, use of computers and email, etc. L2 instructors must take into consideration the learner's base (his/her social schema) in order to then proceed with building knowledge upon that.[7]

A term similar to a socio-schematic approach is a "Funds of Knowledge" approach (Moll & Gonzálaz, 1992), which is defined as:

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[7] Krashen, 1982. This is meant as an extension of Krashen's Input Hypothesis. The notion of I+1 is being explanded.

those historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for […] individual functioning and well-being. As [language learners] interact within circles of kinship and friendship, [they] are "participant-observers" of the exchange of goods, services, and symbolic capital which are part of each [language community's] functioning (p. 443).

Taking the above into consideration, the proposed socio-schematic approach incorporates these funds of knowledge that language learners already possess. The new framework accesses the social schemata that are formed within the funds of knowledge of learners. Using the new approach, foreign language teachers can be sure to choose appropriate texts for L2 reading, which of course is the very tool that are the building blocks for vocabulary decoding.

The "funds of knowledge" is the accumulation of the experiences, interests, and motivations for learning possessed by the student. "This totality of experiences, the cultural structuring of [communities], whether related to work or play, whether they take place individually, with peers, or under the supervision of adults, helps constitute the "funds of knowledge" [language learners] bring to school" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzálaz, 1992, p. 134). These language communities contain "ample cultural and cognitive resources with great, potential utility for classroom instruction" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzálaz, 1992, p. 134). Therefore, using language for a task, for a purpose and function, is closely linked to prior background knowledge possessed by the language learners.

An understanding about a funds of knowledge means knowing that every student, every learner, has already pre-established background knowledge about the world. These funds of knowledge are extremely important because they form students' identities.

These identities are precisely what shape personalities, and consequently social functioning. By introducing a socio-schematic approach, a collective identity of a student body is activated. The goal is to activate the majority of students' funds of knowledge, and therein lies the importance for a socio-schematic approach. More often than not, there is something that all students of the same age and position in school share in terms of aspects of the same social environment. Therefore, the socio-schematic approach accesses this collective knowledge, or schemata.

2.2.2 The socio-schema and L2 reading

A language learner's "funds of knowledge" while reading texts plays a crucial role in L2 reading activities. In one study (Moll, Tapia, & Whitmore, 1993), a classroom of L2 learners were given a set of story books to read about the topic of war and how it affects people's lives. As these children read through the material, they encountered problems understanding these accounts of war of these other people, in other places, at another time but the present. Only through borrowing from each other's experiences in making sense of the stories and by relating them to their own lives, were the students able to build their concepts and understandings, and thus building their prior background knowledge, were they able to comprehend the L2 texts. A social schema was activated, drawn upon, and put into action for the decoding of the text's meaning.

2.2.3 Valdés (2001): evidence of a "funds of knowledge" approach

In a computer class of L2 students, Valdés (2001) synthesizes that a teacher whom she names "Mrs. Thompson" explains that during her classroom activities that integrated the L2 "…students were motivated by an opportunity to do something that is highly valued in the world around them" (Valdés, 2001, p. 134). Valdés affirms that literacy development was made easier as well as motivating when the prior social world background knowledge was activated, and also when it was valued. By using this example in combination with Carrell's schema theory (1984), it is apparent that a Funds of Knowledge approach works in second language acquisition.

Elaborating on the above example, students of a second language are most highly engaged when given a task in which they find meaning or purpose. This task accesses a facet of their social environment. Foreign language learners can access aspects of their social world in order to construct meaning during L2 reading acquirement. It is also no surprise that Bernardo, one of the L2 focal students in Valdés's study (2001), was heavily engrossed in the class in which technology was the main focus. As students in this fast paced world are moving rapidly, so too must foreign language education. By activating the social schemata of the world around them, students will see a purpose for the task at hand in their school work.

The importance though is not to only contextualize the information in worksheets or with the use of movies, but rather it is to go the extra step and connect material to their social worlds. This in turn accesses the social schemata already formed by our second language learners. An identity has already been formed in our students, just like an identity had already been formed with Bernardo in Valdés's study. Therefore, teachers

must work to activate this identity and bring it into the reading world of the L2 so that the tasks appear functional in society.

2.3 Receptive and productive vocabulary skills

This section focuses on the importance of receptive and productive vocabulary skills for successful reading comprehension. As we have discussed accessing social schemata and its essential nature in L2 reading acquisition, we must now break down the individual facets of L2 reading. Second language reading acquisition is the focus of research in this body of work, and therefore we must name the aspects which are responsible for successful L2 reading acquisition. This section is also important because it outlines why the testing (see chapter 3) is done in the manner in which it is, in terms of utilizing both receptive and productive vocabulary skills.

Without vocabulary learning, students would not be able to comprehend L2 reading selections. Vocabulary acquisition requires not one, but two set of skills—receptive and productive pathways. This section explores the importance of both of the aforementioned vocabulary skills needed for L2 reading comprehension.

2.3.1 Productive vs. receptive vocabulary knowledge: significance of both skills

Productive and receptive vocabulary skills are both essential to the L2 reading comprehension process. Both skills are seen as channels for acquiring vocabulary knowledge, which in turn aids in successful reading comprehension. Productive skills are generally known as the abilities which enable a student to produce the vocabulary, or language, that student has learned. For example, productive vocabulary knowledge is

seen through speaking and writing. On the other hand, receptive vocabulary knowledge is seen through skills such as reading and listening. Productive channels of communication are most commonly known as "active" skills, while receptive channels are known as "passive" skills (Crow, 1986).

According to Crow (1986), schema theory has shown that in regards to reading, "participants are very actively involved during *both* productive and receptive language performance" (p. 242). Therefore, there are no "passive" skills, only active vocabulary decoding through two different pathways. In order to achieve success in second language reading acquisition, students must actively accomplish both "productive" and "receptive" vocabulary capabilities. Therefore, taking into consideration schemata in terms of second language reading, students must be able to access and utilize both pathways in order to successfully read in the L2.

2.3.2 Misconceptions in receptive vocabulary instruction

Since this thesis focuses on receptive vocabulary skills since a novice learner acquires them first, we now address certain misconceptions in teaching in regards to receptive vocabulary instruction. According to Crow (1986), there are four major misconceptions in receptive vocabulary instruction. They are as follows: 1) teaching vocabulary involves the teaching of new concepts; 2) teaching vocabulary means presenting word lists to be memorized; 3) teaching vocabulary entails giving students a productive control of the words; and 4) The receptive-productive vocabulary distinction is an either-or dichotomy (Crow, 1986).

2.3.2.1 Misconception #1: teaching vocabulary involves the teaching of new concepts

Crow (1986) states, "The adult (i.e. post pubescent) student of a foreign language has already established innumerable concepts relating to everyday events and activities" (p. 243-244). This is to say that their identity in a certain social environment has already been formed. Concepts of lexical items already have a definition in a novice's mind, and therefore the re-teaching of said lexical item in order to attach a novel concept to it, will not work well. Rather, as Crow puts it, vocabulary acquisition of novel lexical items involves "accessing existing schemata in reaction to a unique set of encodings" (p. 244).

Students are able to access a schema for a lexical item once they realize what is happening in the reading passage. However, the question arises about the types of passages to which novices should be exposed. Contextualization to real-world events is the trend, as stated previously, however, if we take this a step forward, teachers can begin to integrate socially tailored texts with which students have already come into contact. Technology is a large facet of a student's every day life, and perhaps foreign language teachers can begin there in search of their tailored texts. Not only would students' pre-established schemata be accessed, but also much frustration in trying to scaffold students in the correct direction could be eliminated. Recognition of the passage can trigger past encodings of concepts of lexical items, which ultimately leads to the decoding of novel L2 lexical items.

2.3.2.2 Misconception #2: teaching vocabulary means presenting word lists to be memorized

Crow (1986) discusses that previous studies in L2 vocabulary learning all criticize a word list approach. There is almost no research available that focuses on a contextualized approach to lexical acquirement. In regards to the word list approach studies, Crow (1986) states that, "Studies such as these test vocabulary instruction in its most ineffective and inefficient manifestation…" (p. 244). Therefore, the presentation of novel L2 lexical items to the novice is a very ineffective manner of presentation.

Despite what foreign language textbooks do at the end of each of their chapters, contextualization is an integral aspect for L2 reading comprehension to become the ultimate result of proper lexical item decoding and acquisition. Taking into consideration the aforementioned first misconception, combining these two misconceptions, the new socio-schematic approach completely disregards word lists as a means to an end. If anything, word lists should be the byproduct of a student's retention from reading a passage, and it should be one that they form themselves; in addition, this would demonstrate progress for productive control for the new lexical items acquired by students.

2.3.2.3 Misconception #3: teaching vocabulary entails giving students productive

        control of the words

In reading, Crow asserts that in a reading situation, words are already correctly 'used', and so even though no two words, inter-or intra- lingual, are the same, "the reader does not normally require the specific knowledge needed to make these subtle distinctions" (p. 245). Since recognition of lexical items in context is the primary task, worrying about the exact definition of the word is pointless (Crow, 1986).

The focus on remembering all of the words in the vocabulary lists is in reality a test of productive skills. However, this poses the question of why we give them to our students if we already know that receptive skills are the first acquired by the novice. If students are to understand the gist of a word from context, then there should be no reason to present even more vocabulary in the form of lists. By imposing a socio-schematic approach, it is the hope that students should ultimately have an easier time converting their receptive skills into productive vocabulary skills.

Crow speaks of the fact that students even in their native language have more receptive vocabulary skills than productive. More words with their definitions need to be actually memorized in order to achieve true productive skills with the lexical items (Crow, 1986). However, the goal of vocabulary acquisition for the novice should be recognition. After all, even in one's native language one will always have receptive knowledge of more lexical items as opposed to productive knowledge. Therefore, as teachers, we cannot expect learners of a second language to acquire productive skills immediately, let alone from something as decontextualized as vocabulary word lists.

By instilling a socio-schematic approach, students will be able to apply their pre-established background social knowledge to a socially contextualized text in order to achieve more successful receptive control over lexical items. More still, since the information would be socially significant to them, students will ultimately assume more productive control over more vocabulary as they move forward in their foreign language careers.

2.3.2.4 Misconception #4: the receptive-productive vocabulary distinction is an
either-or dichotomy

As Crow (1986) affirms, "Teachers quite often assume that any vocabulary exercise or test involves a choice of either active or passive knowledge of the words" (p. 245). Even though there is a clear division, receptive and productive control of verbs does move along a continuum, with some activities being further along the continuum from the receptive side to the productive. Approaching vocabulary by means of an either-or dichotomy causes problems when students are in their intricate time of being able to show some productive control over the newly acquired lexical items. Therefore, activities in the classroom should be approached with both skill sets in mind.

If both skills sets are needed for successful reading comprehension and lexical item decoding, the question then becomes which set of skills are the first to be used by novices? As Crow (1986), goes on to state, "…the further one moves from requiring general semantic field knowledge and/or from providing contextualization, the more one moves along the continuum toward requiring productive control over the vocabulary" (p. 245). This definition proves to be of importance for the manner of testing in this thesis.

Since the continuum begins with receptive vocabulary skills, and moves along to more advanced productive skills, students were exposed to receptive skills tests. However, one of the tests is further along on the continuum toward productive skills, and this was done so that the two could be compared. In both tests, semantic knowledge was provided in terms of socially shared knowledge, which entails the newly proposed socio-schematic approach.

2.3.3 Receptive vocabulary acquisition: classroom activities

Crow (1986) discusses various classroom activities that work to foster receptive vocabulary decoding. He discusses three facets that are pertinent for successful instruction of vocabulary. These three are as follows: proper student orientation, proper reading environment, and implementing a semantic field approach. These three work together in order to support the need for a more socially tailored way to teach vocabulary. By "teaching vocabulary", what we mean is the initial stages of vocabulary acquisition to novice L2 learners.

2.3.3.1 Proper student orientation

Crow (1986) speaks of the general trend of novice L2 students wanting to gain productive control over every new lexical item encountered. If students were to understand that this is of course impossible, they are then free to explore increasing their receptive control. This means students now understand more about the difference between receptive and productive control. They also gain insight into the importance of having receptive control versus wanting to strive solely for productive control. He also

comments on the uselessness of decontextualized word lists, flash cards, and other discrete-item approaches. It is ludicrous to believe that a student can learn a list of 30+ decontextualized lexical items for an exam, and then retain all of them, or even most of them. Instead, these words must be embedded in a more meaningful context.

For novice learners, the proposed contextualization within a social context would be a way in which students receive contextualization for novel lexical items. In addition, they already have a schema for the social context, and can therefore identify even more with the vocabulary items. This propels novice students further into solidifying the vocabulary items, and truly "owning" them.

2.3.3.2 Proper reading environment

Crow (1986) speaks of the importance of vagueness, and having students read for the "gist" of a reading passage. According to Crow, recent trends in L2 reading shows teachers requesting detailed analysis from students of what is being read from a passage. He then goes on to state that temporary vagueness should be accepted, and even valued. However, how do we completely move away from the need of intricate accounts of reading passages to the acceptance of vagueness?

With the proposed socio-schematic approach, students could be given the chance to accept vagueness, while at the same time have an idea, or a "schema" for what is actually happening in the passage. They can use this as a base for contextualizing the novel lexical items. In this manner, students can accept vagueness for the moment, while still knowing they are "on the right track".

2.3.3.3 Semantic field approach

Crow (1986) speaks about the way in which adult native speakers store semantic and lexical knowledge. Evidence (Buckingham & Rekart, 1979) shows that semantic networks connect concepts, and inadvertently words, together. There is one long chain reaction of lexical items, with the "core" lexicon being the nucleus of this chain. Buckingham and Rekart (1979) maintain that there exists two basic properties of words when they are thought of as units of languages: (1) "signifying", and (2) "coding" (as cited by Crow, 1986, p. 246). Signifying is the designating of certain objects with words, while coding is the actual attachment of these newly formed words to a system of connections, a semantic map, where the word now acquires semantic meaning. Using a semantic field approach means making groups of connections for new vocabulary items. Having students use one or two "nucleus" words while they encounter novel lexical items that are all part of that network increases the lexicon receptively available to them.

This elaboration of a semantic field increases a student's knowledge of novel lexical items. By working within these fields, novices are more prepared for further readings. This "web of meaning" acts as a catalyst for more receptive vocabulary acquired. However, the proposed socio-schematic approach already provides students with the semantic knowledge of the passage. That is, by understanding the social significance of a reading passage combined with working within a semantic field, students are able to acquire an exponentially larger amount of vocabulary than before.

Nagy and Herman (1984) sum up the situation as follows:

Word learning cannot be equated with memorizing synonyms or short definitions. Rather words must be treated as labels for concepts which are embedded in larger schemata. Instruction must aim at establishing rich ties between new words and prior knowledge (as cited by Crow, 1986, p. 247).

By combining the former with the socio-schematic approach, novel lexical items will have concepts attached to them, or rather, a semantic background. However, what is more is that students will be able to immediately contextualize the items and "encode" them directly into a context that is socially significant to them and pertinent to their lives and identity.

2.4 Syntactic and lexical/semantic skill in foreign language reading: importance and interaction

Barnett's study (1986) of the effect of syntax and vocabulary on the comprehension of an L2 text introduces the concept of the importance and interaction of these two facets for reading comprehension. From this study, Barnett answered all of her research questions as follows: "1) recall increases according to level of vocabulary proficiency; 2) recall increases according to level of syntactic proficiency; and 3) recall is related differentially to vocabulary and syntactic proficiency at medium and high levels of each but not at lower levels" (p. 346). Therefore, unduly stressing vocabulary with novices that do not have a syntactic knowledge of the reading passage (or language) may be in vain.

The question then becomes how to teach novices of a second language in regards to reading comprehension. We know from the aforementioned study that syntax knowledge and vocabulary go hand in hand, and are both factors for reading

comprehension. However, do we need to make sure that students understand all of an L2's syntax, or can it be mocked in a different manner?

By taking a text that students have already seen in their first language and is socially relevant, it can be hypothesized that students can deduce its meaning. Students will be able to infer the syntactic structure of the text because of their background schemata for the socially tailored text.

2.5 Conclusion

Taking into consideration all of the studies discussed, we can conclude that lexical item decoding is an integral facet of successful reading comprehension. However, with this said, there are many aspects to consider when approaching vocabulary instruction.

In regards to Jimenez (2000) and Valdés (2001), background knowledge for a student's ability to decode an L2 reading passage is an intricate part in the web of the decoding process. The reinforcement of identity development and being able to transfer that identity to an L2 is an important facet to understand. College-aged students have developed their identities by means of the society in which they have grown up. Technology is reinforced in the foreign language classroom all the time, and so we can therefore speculate that it should come into our lexical instruction.

Crow (1986) demonstrates the importance of both receptive and productive vocabulary skills for successful reading comprehension. However, receptive skills are the first acquired, and being able to instruct vocabulary in the proper manner so that receptive skills are activated is a necessary process in the novice foreign language

classroom. Crow (1986) shows the uselessness of decontextualized word lists. He focuses on the importance of contextualization with receptive skills since words "in context" are used correctly. Therefore, these lexical items "in context" strengthen a student's ability to retain the "concept" from the words. Even in the native language, an individual has receptive control over more words than words at the productive level. There is not a clear "line" of what is receptive and/or productive control, and therefore this control lays on a continuum. This fact proves to be of importance in the methodology for this study (see chapter 3).

Barnett (1986) has shown that knowledge of syntax is just as important as lexical item recognition. Therefore, in a novice situation, a way to mock a syntactical structure of the native language without actually teaching syntax explicitly would be ideal. Giving novices a social schema for the reading passage is a way in which syntax could be mocked. A novice having endless vocabulary overloaded upon them will not be beneficial without some knowledge of the syntax of the reading passage presented to them.

With these aforementioned studies, we can put together the facts that a student's identity is formed through their experiences and information from the society in which they have grown up; foreign language education must keep pace with an ever evolving world; students first gain receptive control of novel lexical items that are presented in some kind of context; lastly, novices benefit from some base of syntax in a reading passage. Thus, the proposed term of a socio-schematic approach for L2 reading acquisition combines all the findings of the previous studies. With this new approach, the hope is to integrate the framework within the ACTFL guidelines for vocabulary

acquisition. The goal is to develop specific stages using this new approach to vocabulary decoding; the ultimate goal therefore being successful reading comprehension.

2.6 Hypothesis

Up until this point the only notion about a schema is one to which students must adapt. In other words, students would read an L2 text and need to access some part of their background knowledge, or schema, and apply it to the text at hand. The present thesis develops an idea that L2 reading passages would adapt themselves to the novice learner, rather than the other way around. Consequently, students would not have to search and apply a schema, any known schema, to the reading passage. Rather, these students will have the opportunity of having an obvious social schema built into what it is they are reading. This in turn makes vocabulary acquisition, an integral part of reading, a much easier task to perform, as well as to teach.

As seen through the ACTFL chart, levels of reading go from novice levels to superior levels, and the L2 is used for different purposes. With this thesis, we address the needs of the novice learners, and propose a series of "socio-schematic stages". It is the eventual hope, therefore, that the gap between novice and higher intermediate and advanced/superior levels can be closed. Essentially there should be a smooth transition from novice learners to more advanced levels in regards to what they are able to do with the L2. However, with the "socio-schematic stages", students do not lose their motivation for learning and enthusiasm of the L2.

From the new proposed term, we can form a hypothesis for this thesis. The following will serve as our hypothesis for the following study: novice L2 learners decode

novel L2 lexical items with more success when a reading passage is presented to them

socio-schematically, activating the appropriate schemata. In other words, the socio-

schematic approach works by accessing an L2 learner's background knowledge within a

social construct. Said learner is then able to decode an L2 lexical item with more

achievement.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY, RESULTS, AND DATA ANALYSIS

3.0 Introduction

Chapter 3 of this thesis offers research questions, an elaborated hypothesis, methodology, and the results section with its data analysis. The research questions that are presented serve as a guide for the analysis of the data. The hypothesis follows and offers prospective answers to the aforementioned research questions. These serve as a mini introduction themselves to the methodology for the study.

The methodology that is presented is separated into a few sections. This chapter begins with the description of the setting of the main study. It provides an overview of the participants as well as gives a description of the university setting. Parameters have been set for certain aspects of the participants and environment, and these are further explained. The latter serves as an explanation as to why certain students were involved in the study, and why other students could not participate. A breakdown of all parameters which are applicable to the subjects of this study are provided. Students also had a certain amount and specific types of variables, which are taken into consideration and analyzed. These variables are also discussed in the abovementioned section.

The materials that are used in this study are presented in another portion of the methodology section. This section covers the types of materials needed for the study to take place. It also provides the parameters of the content in the materials, and what types of features have been taken into consideration. Therefore, it has been made sure that the materials kept within the parameters prescribed, and have yielded the most accurate results possible. The next subcategory within this section describes the types of tasks

used. This section delves into the actual test types used for this study. It reviews and explains all of the tasks that students were asked to complete, as well as describes what each task means in terms of what type of vocabulary skills are being tested. Along with the preliminary questionnaire, which establishes the demographic of participants, this section speaks about the two open response tasks and the two multiple choice tasks that were used. It explains what type of skills each task is testing. The section also explains the content of each task.

The following subdivision of the methodology section is the "procedure" section. This section outlines the manner in which the participants of this study were tested. It talks about the order of tasks that were given to the students, and the amount of time they had to complete each task. The last subcategory to follow this section is the "assessment" section. This section states the manner in which the data was put into numerical format so as to produce a more concrete way of viewing the data collected. It describes the point values attached to each question in each task, as well as how each task was "graded". This section is important in regards to being able to understand the subsequent sections, which deal with results and data analysis.

The results and data analysis sections follow, and work together to paint a better picture of what exactly is being proved in this study. The results section displays a table of the average points obtained on each task (averages overall and averages for each "major" area), while the graphs that follow display the same figures as in the aforementioned table, but only in their converted format of percentages. As is discussed in the data analysis section, each task has been given the features of either [+/- receptive] and/or [+/- productive] as well as [+/- socio-schematic]. In two of these tasks, the

receptive feature is being kept constant, that is, the feature remains "stable", while the socio-schematic feature changes. In the other two tasks, the reverse is true. In this way, it is possible to then compare not only one feature, but rather two, in order to determine which features are necessary for optimal lexical item decoding in the L2 reading process.

3.0.1 Research questions

There are specific research questions, which we ask for the present study. They are as follows:

1.) When novice L2 students are presented with a reading passage that activates a "social schema" from their background knowledge of their social environment, are they able to decode novel lexical items/phrases in the passage with more success?

2.) When students are presented with a multiple choice task (more receptive task [see chapter 2])[8] that is <u>not</u> accessing a "social schema", do they perform better than on a more "productive side" receptive vocabulary task (which is the open-response task) that is again <u>not</u> activating a "social schema"?

3.) Regardless of the type of receptive vocabulary task, open-response or multiple choice, do students perform better on a task that activates a "social schema" from their background knowledge?

4.) Do students perform better on a non-"socially tailored", but more "receptive" task (multiple choice task #1), or do they perform better on

_____

[8] Crow, 1986. Elaborating on the notion that receptive and vocabulary skills lie on a continuum scale, and some receptive vocabulary activities/"tasks" are more on the "receptive side", while others lie closer to the "productive side"

a more "productive side" receptive task that is <u>not</u> activating a "social

schema"? In other words, what is the more decisive factor,

[+ receptive] or [+ socio-schematic] for best results in regards to novel

lexical item decoding?

3.0.2 Hypothesis

At this juncture, we provide a more elaborated and specific hypothesis than from

the previous chapter. To do so, we begin by hypothesizing the answers for the above

research question. It is our belief that in regards to questions #1 and #3, students will

perform better on a "socially tailored" more receptive task. In regards to question #2, we

hypothesize that students will perform better on the more "receptive side" task. Lastly, in

regards to question #4, we hypothesize that students will perform better on the "socially

tailored" task, even though it is toward the "more productive" side.

3.1 Methodology

In the section, we will examine the methodology used in this study. We present

the materials prepared and used during the testing portion of this study. We discuss the

amount and type of subjects that are used, the procedure for task administration, and

finally the parameters to which the variables for the study have been held.

3.1.1 Participants

For this study, fifty students from the University of Massachusetts are the participants. These students are all considered to be adolescents, and range from the ages of 19, being the youngest, to 23, being the oldest. These students may not all have the same cultural background, however, they are presently living and absorbed in the culture, or what we call the "social world", of a university. They are all subject to social variables around them within their university culture.

In order to ensure that each student was beginning with similar "social schemata", questions #6 and #7 from the preliminary questionnaire (see below) are particularly important.

6. What technology do you use daily, such as cable television, email, internet, cell phone, test messaging, etc?

   _____

7. How many hours per day do you use each of the above?

   _____

Two students had to be discarded due to insufficient time with the media for which is asked (under two hours per week). Each student in this study, therefore, had access to the same social components as the other, and thus, had a prepared background "social schema" for the social world in which they find themselves. This was done so that the proper "social schemata" of participants could be accessible in order to be activated.

3.1.1.1 Prescribed parameters and variables of participants

There are certain parameters of this study that apply solely to the participants that have been used. Participants are all between the same ages. Students are matriculated in the first semester of Spanish (Spanish 110), which is the first elementary Spanish course that is offered at the University of Massachusetts. All of the students had the same teacher for the course, and had therefore learned the same amount of material and had said material presented to them in the same way. All students who have taken more than two years of Spanish (at the high school level or somewhere else) are not included. Students who had taken another romance foreign language for over two years are not included in this study. Students who speak another romance language fluently or are near native fluency have been discarded as well. Lastly, as stated in the above section, two students who did not have an appropriate "social schema" for this study were discarded.

Certain variables are applicable to the participants of this study. In this experiment, students have different "social schemata" in terms of the majors in which they are matriculated. We separate majors by humanities, business, sciences & math, and undeclared. Humanities (Arts & Sciences) include subject matters such as any social science, education, journalism, political science, art and art history, music, legal studies, communications, psychology/sociology, history, pre-law, and English/literature fields. Business includes all fields related to business, such as marketing, economics, accounting, and finance. Math & sciences include all fields that are related to the aforementioned headings, such as engineering, environmental sciences, nursing, biology, chemistry, computer science, pre-med, mathematics (calculus, geometry, etc.), communication disorders, and kinesiology. Lastly, undeclared majors are considered to

be taking a little of everything. Although this may not be the exact division of every

university, it provides us with enough separation to be able to compare results with the

appropriate social schemata in mind. In this study, 32 students were from humanities, 11

were from Math & Sciences, 4 are from Business, and 3 are Undeclared. There was not

an equal division of students from each department. However, this method of separation

is only done in order to observe anything in passing as it is beyond the scope of the

research questions of this study.

3.1.2 Materials

Students have four tasks to complete for this study. Prior to the testing procedure,

students fill out the "preliminary questionnaire" in order to establish the aforementioned

parameters and variables of the participants. In this section, we discuss the contents of the

four tasks in this study. Two of the tasks are in the format of open-response

questions/answers, while the next two tasks contain the same content, but are presented in

the form of a multiple choice task. The appendices at the end of this thesis present the

preliminary questionnaire, as well as the four tasks (in the order in which they were used)

completed by the students in this study.

The open response tasks are the first two in the series of tasks to be taken by the

students of Spanish 110. The first open response task (O-R #1) is an excerpt from the

second act of Garcia Lorca's *Bodas de Sangre*. It includes stage directions as well as the

dialogue between two women. The second open response task (O-R #2) presents to the

students a Verizon Wireless commercial about text messaging, which has been translated

into Spanish. To keep the content valid, the commercial was translated from English to

Spanish by college level Puerto Rican Spanish speaking students, either heritage speakers or native speakers. Therefore, the age bracket and "type of language" used has been kept as a constant. This commercial was one of the highly watched commercial (students referred to it as the "my BFF Jill commercial"), and its popularity was even noted through an established "group" on the interactive network of "Facebook" (central to college life).

We conclude that for a first semester Spanish student, O-R #1 has no social value to students' environment or identity, while the content in O-R #2 has much significance to their identity roles as adolescents living in the present time, as well as to technology and their identity roles as college students. A last question (question #7) is a completely open response question, asking what the student thinks is happening in the passage. There were seven questions total for each O-R #1 and O-R #2.

The multiple choice tasks were the second two in the series of tasks to be taken by the students. The first multiple choice task (M-C #1) presented the exact same information as O-R #1, however, rather than asking for an open response "definition" for the underlined phrase, two choices were given (A or B), and the student was asked to circle the best fit answer. The second multiple choice task (M-C #2) presented the same content as O-R #2, but again like M-C #1, M-C #2 presented the student with two choices for the best fit answer. The multiple choice tasks (both #1 and #2) did not ask a final question of what was happening in the passage. There were six questions total for the multiple choice tasks.

The two reading passages for the tasks were chosen specifically to test our hypothesis. In other words, though it is true that the Verizon Wireless commercial is a

known entity to the Spanish 110 student, this was done purposefully so as to demonstrate that a foreign language can be brought to a known social element. This is to say that students can now take a known entity, and apply new information (the foreign language) to it. Again, we are only speaking of the beginning stages of L2 literacy development. As students progress through the proficiency levels, they will hypothetically be able to decode more complicated reading passages with the base acquired in the "socio-schematic" beginning stages. On the other hand, the reading passage of Lorca's is a *controlled literary* passage. What is meant by this aforementioned term is that its correlating task (open response #1 and multiple choice #1) has been controlled in terms of only asking about beginning level grammar and vocabulary found in the passage. This is again to express that the only factor between the two reading passages was to what degree they were [+ receptive] and whether or not they were [+ socio-schematic] versus [-socio-schematic].

3.1.2.1 Parameters of materials

Within the four tasks, there was a certain amount of factors that were kept relatively constant so as to keep the validity of the results acquired. Since all participants had the same instructor for the course, they were in the same place and had all learned the same material. The first thing that had to be set to a parameter was the use of grammar. This had to be done in order for no task to be grammatically more challenging than the other.

Looking at the tasks, the grammar used is all grammar that had been taught, or discussed about in passing, from Spanish 110. From the appendices, we can see that in O-

R #1 and in M-C #1 (which contain the same content), the following grammatical items are used: present tense of regular verbs, reflexives (i.e. "se sienta"), immediate past [acabar + de + infinitive], "haber", correct use of the present tense of "ser". O-R #2 and M-C #2 (containing the same content) use the following grammatical items: present tense for regular verbs, an irregular present tense verb ("pagar" → "pagué"), the immediate future [Ir + a + infinitive], superlatives (i.e. "mejor"), and use of comparisons (i.e. "tantos"). Therefore, each task uses the same amount of grammar points (5), and each grammar point is something the student has worked with prior to completing these tasks. Nevertheless, we still consider this to be "novel lexical items" because these students are novices to the L2, and have not had a sufficient amount of time to solidify the information. When a word in context was used in a grammatical manner that had never been seen by the student (i.e. "ser" in O-R #1 and M-C #1 in the imperfect tense [era], the student was given the infinitive along with the proper present tense form of the verb).

The next factor that was held to certain parameters was the types of phrases and lexical items given to the students. In all four tasks, the lexical items chosen were all vocabulary items that had been seen by the students. They were all from chapters that had been covered in the textbook that semester. No reading passage was deemed "harder" than the other. Even the colloquial "No pasa nada" (no big deal/ do not worry) from O-R #2 and M-C #2 had been introduced at some point in the semester to the students

Cognates were also considered. In each of the tasks, there was the same amount of lexical items/phrases that could potentially be considered cognates, or close enough to be cognates that they could be deemed "easy words/phrases". From O-R #1 and M-C #1, the "cognates" included "aire", "madre", "consumir", and "muchos". From O-R #2 and M-C

#2, the "cognates" included "mensajes instantaneous", "confiscar", "mamá", and "teléfono celular". Therefore, each reading passage contains four "easy"/"cognate" words.

Finally, the amount of novel lexical phrases/items used was the same for all four tasks. There were six underlined phrases in each task. For the open response tasks, seven questions were asked. However, the last one was a question asking for the interpretation of the passage. Therefore, it was considered a question that was independent from the rest of the questions since it did not introduce another lexical phrase. Because the open responses were considered more on the "productive side" of receptive vocabulary skills, this aforementioned last interpretation question was needed. For the multiple choice tasks, the same novel lexical phrases were underlined as were found in the open response tasks, and therefore the same six phrases were asked to be decoded, but they were just presented in a multiple choice task format.

3.1.2.2 Types of tasks

At this juncture, we provide a rationale for using both types of tests with the same content provided in them. If we refer back to Crow (1986) (see chapter 2), we can recall the discussion of productive versus receptive vocabulary skills. Two points from this discussion provide sufficient support for the use of the two types of tasks used in this study. (1) Both receptive and productive vocabulary skills are important for reading comprehension, although receptive skills are the first to become solidified, and (2) Receptive vocabulary and productive vocabulary skills appear on a continuum, there are therefore skills that are closer to the "receptive" side, as well as other skills that are closer

to the "productive" side. Students in this study are students in the first semester of Spanish, and therefore we as teachers can only hope to develop and perfect their receptive vocabulary skills, since those are the first skills to develop. The open response tasks are further along the continuum (moving from receptive to productive), while the multiple choice tasks are closer to the receptive side of the continuum.

3.1.3 Procedure

All of the participants were provided with the same conditions for completing each task. After a class of Spanish, they were all handed a packet of five pages. These five pages included the preliminary questionnaire, open-response task #1 (O-R #1), open-response task #2 (O-R #2), multiple choice task #1 (M-C #1), and multiple choice task #2 (M-C #2). The contents of the preliminary questionnaire and the four tasks have been described in the above sections. The preliminary questionnaire was administered in order to establish the validity of the subjects in the study. The four tasks that followed have been described in detail in the "materials" section (see previous section).

All students were asked to fill out the preliminary questionnaire after the completion of the four tasks. Therefore, students were given the same amount of time on each of the four tasks. Each student was given five minutes for each reading task. After the five minutes had passed, students were asked to turn the page and move on to the next task. Students were presented with O-R #1, O-R #2, M-C #1, and M-C #2 in that order. They were instructed <u>not</u> to go back to any section of the testing materials after time had been called. Therefore, for example, while on M-C #1, students were not allowed to turn back to O-R #1 in order to "correct", "tweak", or "add on to" any answers they had

already given. After twenty minutes, students were instructed to end the last task, and to complete the preliminary questionnaire. The packets were collected, and testing concluded.

3.2 Assessment

In order to assess the work of the students, a certain point value was assigned to each of the questions. For the open response questions, since there were seven questions total, each question was "worth" 15 points. For the multiple choice questions, since there were six total questions, each question was "worth" 17.5 points. Therefore, the total amount of "points" possible on each task/test was 105 points. Finally, the points on each test were converted into percentages out of 100%.

In order to deem whether or not answers were correct, a certain amount of leeway was given. Following Crow's (1986) logic on "semantic orientation", on the open response tasks, any deviation that provided the correct "semantic orientation", or meaning of the statement, was marked as a correct response. There was no half credit given, and the answer was either marked correct or not. Very little leeway was given for either open response task. What we mean by "leeway" is for example "it's no big deal", "it's not a big deal", and "it's nothing big" would all be marked correct. However, "what's up" and "how are you?" would not be marked correct. Hence, we can be assured that the guidelines for leeway were strict.

3.3 Results

The results for the four tasks are presented in this section. We first present the figures in written form, followed by six figures of graphs, which serve to visually illustrate the data. First, the packets of the tasks completed by the participants were split into piles of proper "academic department". They were either in the "Humanities", "Math & Sciences", "Business", or "Undeclared" department (see section 3.1.1.1 for specifics). Average amount of points on each task were calculated along with their corresponding average percentages (out of 100%). These average percentages are the figures that are presented in the graphs below.

The average amount of points with their corresponding average percentages is presented in this section. The following table shows the amount of average points acquired along with the corresponding average percentages (out of 100%) on each task for each "department". It also shows the same averages (points and percentages) for all the participants of this study.[9]

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[9] It should be remembered that in this study, 32 students were from humanities, 11 were from Math & Science, 4 are from Business, and 3 are Undeclared. Therefore, there was not an equal division of students from each department. Consequently, the average of all students is a clearer expression of the main results of this thesis. No concrete conclusions could be drawn from the division of departments.

TABLE 2

Points and scores on tasks

DEPARTMENT	O-R #1	O-R #2	M-C #1	M-C #2
Humanities	7 pts./ 7%	84 pts. / 80%	76 pts. / 72%	96 pts. / 91%
Math & Sciences	22 pts. / 21%	69 pts. / 66%	70 pts. / 67%	89 pts. / 85%
Business	27 pts. / 26%	64 pts. / 61%	67 pts. / 64%	92 pts. / 88%
Undeclared	28pts. / 27%	61 pts. / 58%	63 pts. / 60%	103 pts. / 98%
AVERAGES of ALL STUDENTS	21 pts. / 20%	70 pts. / 67%	69 pts. / 66%	95 pts. / 90%

The graphs (Figures 3 – 7) below are interpretations of the percentages in the

table above.[10] Each graph compares the results by department and also includes the

average of all students. The graphs are color-coded for "department" and "average of

all". All five graphs are in bar graph format. The first graph compares results on O-R #1

to O-R #2. The second graph compares results of M-C #1 to M-C #2. The third graph

compares O-R #1 with M-C #1. The fourth graph compares O-R #2 with M-C #2. The

fifth graph is the final bar graph displaying all of the students and their average results on

each task.

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[10] The reading passage of Lorca (Open Resonse #1 and Open Response #2) is a **controlled literacy** passage, meaning control for vocabulary and grammar for the beginning level Spanish.
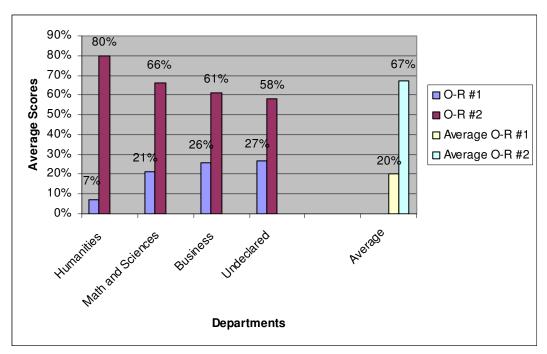
Figure 3 Average Scores on Open Response #1 versus Open Response #2

In the above graph, both tasks are [+ productive], while open response #1 is [-socio-schematic] and open response #2 is [+ socio-schematic]
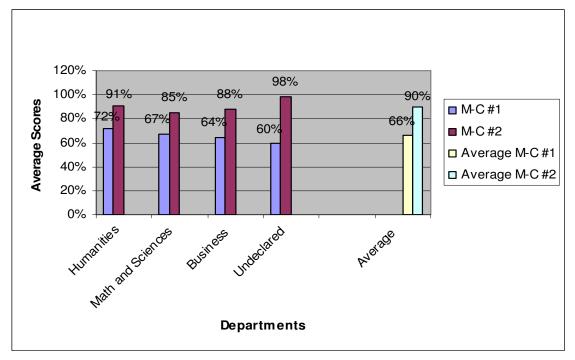
Figure 4 Average Scores on Multiple Choice #1 versus Multiple Choice #2

In the above graph, both tasks are [+ receptive], while multiple choice #1 is [-socio-schematic] and multiple choice #2 is [+ socio-schematic].
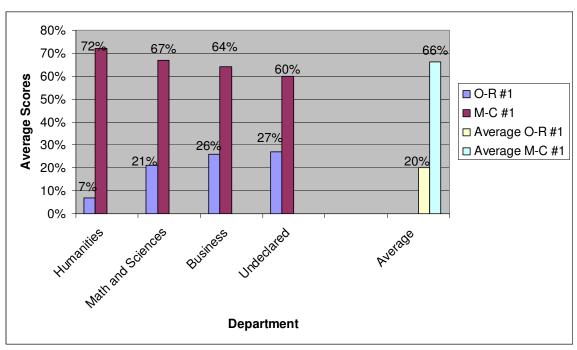
Figure 5 Average Scores on Open Response #1 versus Multiple Choice #1

In the above graph, both tasks are [-socio-schematic], while open response #1 is [+ productive] and multiple choice #1 is [+ receptive].
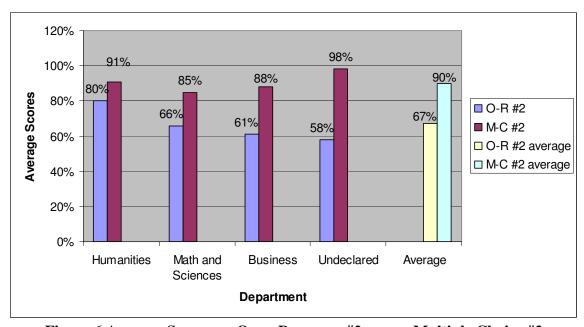
Figure 6 Average Scores on Open Response #2 versus Multiple Choice #2

In the above graph, both tasks are [+ socio-schematic], while open response #2 is [+ productive] and multiple choice #2 is [+ receptive].
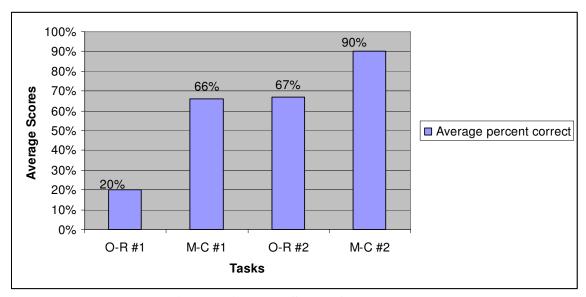
Figure 7 Average Scores for all Tasks

3.4 Data analysis and discussion

Revisiting our hypothesis, we speculated that students would do better on M-C #2 than the rest of the tasks. They would also perform significantly better on M-C #1 than they would on O-R #1. Lastly, we speculated that M-C #1 would yield a lower average score than O-R #2.

Combining the principles of receptive vocabulary tasks and a socio-schematic reading passage is an integral facet for the analysis of our results. M-C #2 was a very receptive vocabulary task. This is according to the spectrum of what is extremely [+ receptive] versus a task that is still a receptive vocabulary task, but is closer to the [+ productive] "side" of the spectrum. Therefore, as we have seen from Chapter two, novices acquire [+ receptive] vocabulary skills first (Crow, 1986). With the implementation of a socio-schematic approach in choosing a reading passage combined with the aforementioned [+ receptive] multiple choice task, students indeed do phenomenally well. All students in each department have averages of 85% or higher on

this task. The average of all students is at 90%. Clearly, all students have "passed" this task with much success. However, if we look at M-C #2, which has the same degree of the characteristic of [+ receptive], the results are much different than those from M-C #2. Averages for M-C #1 range from 60% to 72%, with the average for all students being at 66%. This is a huge difference from 90% for the average score on M-C #2. However, the tasks for both appear in the exact same format. Consequently, we can conclude that the difference lies in the content of each reading passage—M-C #1 containing a [-socio-schematic] passage, while M-C #2 contains a [+ socio-schematic] text.

We now lend our attention to the open response tasks. Both of these tasks are presented in a [+ receptive] manner, however, they are less [+ receptive] than the multiple choice tasks. Therefore, by comparing O-R #1 and O-R #2 to each other, we eliminate the aforementioned variable of the [+ receptive] feature. To review, O-R #2 is the reading passage presented socio-schematically, while O-R #1 is not. Student averages support the success on a passage that is presented in a socio-schematic manner. Student average scores on O-R #1 range from 7% to 27%, with an average of all the students being at 20%; however, student performance on O-R #2 ranges from 66% to 80%, with an average overall score of 67%. Evidently, there is a large discrepancy between scores on O-R #1 versus O-R #2. Although scores on O-R #2 are not as high as on M-C #2, the factor then of what type of task is more [+ receptive] than the other needs to be taken into consideration. Nevertheless, comparing the same type of task, it is without doubt that students perform significantly better with a reading passage which activates a social schema.

We now are cognizant of the fact that a socio-schematically tailored reading passage affects novice L2 learners' reading comprehension for the better. However, we must now consider what type of task is the best combination with these types of reading passages. Also, we question what is more important to the reading success of novices— working with a socio-schematic reading passage or working with a more [+ receptive] task?

The answers to the abovementioned questions can be answered from the data collected. First, we consider the effects of the [+ socio-schematic] reading passage. If we look at the [+ socio-schematic] reading passage, which appears in tasks O-R #2 and M-C #2, as compared to the [- socio-schematic] reading passage, which appears in O-R #1 and M-C #1, we can see the large discrepancy between average scores of 67% and 90% as compared to averages of 20% and 66%, respectively. Evidently, having a reading passage with the [+ socio-schematic] feature serves to help performance for novice L2 reading comprehension.

Secondly, we consider the effects of a vocabulary task being more [+ receptive], and if this feature outweighs the effects of a [+socio-schematic] approach. If we look at the average scores on O-R #2, which is <u>less</u> [+ receptive], but is [+ socio-schematic] as compared to the average scores on M-C #1 which is <u>more</u> [+ receptive], but is [- socio-schematic], the scores are shown to be very close, with averages of 67% and 66%, respectively. Even though the averages are extremely close, students still appear to do better on the [+ socio-schematic] task that is nevertheless <u>less</u> [+ receptive]—that is, they perform better on O-R #2.

The important factor to remember is the content of the two reading passages. We call the [-socio-schematic] reading passage a "controlled literacy" reading passage. This is because we have made sure to control for vocabulary and grammar that students of elementary Spanish had seen during their first semester of Spanish. We made sure to provide present conjugations for "estar" / "ser" and a grammar point like "acabar + de + infinitive] had been seen by students prior to these tasks. In addition, reflexive verbs were taught during the semester, as well as the fact that the other lexical phrases had been seen in previous chapters covered in Spanish 110. The same environment was created in the [+ socio-schematic] passage. Therefore, we can conclude without reservation, that there were no other factors except for the ones controlled for— [+/- socio-schematic] and [+/- receptive].

There are other reasons as to why students may have performed with a decent percentage on M-C #1. It was a multiple choice task, and therefore guessing is always an issue. Also, students had learned the lexical items prior to this exam, even though they are considered novices. Therefore, guessing becomes an even bigger issue. Thus, the only true manner of measuring the effects of a socio-schematic approach is through the open response tasks, which have significantly supported the aforementioned approach. It is also important to note that the open response tasks test true comprehension along with novel lexical item decoding, and does not leave any room for a 50/50% guess; whereas the multiple choice tasks do lend themselves to guessing as well as do not test semantic comprehension along with lexical items themselves. In addition, open response tasks included the question of "What do you think is happening in the reading passage?", while multiple choice tasks did not include this question. Lastly, the fact that average scores on

M-C #1 and O-R #2 were so close, and yet O-R #2 (a <u>less</u> [+ receptive], but [+ socio-schematic] reading passage) *still* yielded a higher average indicates the potential benefits of a socio-schematic approach for novice L2 reading.

In regards to the individual departments, all departments indicate a strong success rate on M-C #2, a more [+ receptive] task containing a [+ socio-schematic] passage. It is to be remembered, however, that the division of students across departments was <u>not</u> equal, and therefore, no concrete conclusions can be formed. All departments indicate a very low success rate on O-R #1, a <u>less</u> [+ receptive] task containing a [- socio-schematic] passage. Three out of the four departments (Business, Math & Sciences, and Undeclared), the smaller ones, indicate a slightly higher rate on M-C #1, a <u>more</u> [+ receptive] task containing a [- socio-schematic] passage as opposed to O-R #2, a <u>less</u> [+ receptive] task containing a [+ socio-schematic] passage. However, the discrepancy is minuscule, and since only a small amount of students were in each department, the results are not conclusive. For the department that had the most amount of students, Humanities, students performed significantly higher (over a 10% difference) on O-R #2 than on M-C #1, therefore supporting the socio-schematic approach as being the highest factor in predicting success in novice L2 reading comprehension.

What can we say are the possible reasons for such a close score on M-C #1 as on O-R #2 for some departments? Another possibility as to why the more "science" oriented fields may have done better is because of the test taking skills that they may have developed. Henceforth, due to their majors and manners of testing approaches, they may just do better on multiple choice tasks since that is the general format of exams in those academic fields. The fact that these students performed so closely on M-C #1 as on O-R

#2 may actually even indicate the bigger potential that the socio-schematic approach may have. Hypothetically, if these aforementioned students have been conditioned for quite some time for the "multiple choice" format of testing, then the fact that they scored almost the same on a task in which the approach was something that were not used to implies quite a lot. The socio-schematic approach may have the potential to be the highest factor when it comes to successful novice comprehension of an L2 text, no matter of students' habits in regards to test format.

3.5 Summary and conclusion

In this chapter, the main hypothesis has been proven—L2 students have a positive reaction to a [+ socio-schematic] text. Not only that, students score significantly higher on a [+ receptive] task, which has already been proven by Crow (1986). However, what is interesting about this study, and resonates with the applied linguistics world is that the presence of the [+ socio-schematic] feature outweighs the [+ receptive] feature in regards to a novice L2 reader. Although there are discrepancies within the "majors", as discussed previously, this could be due to many other factors. However, the average scores on each task demonstrate the significance for a socio-schematic approach for novices in L2 reading. Simply stated, the features of just how [+ receptive] a task is combined with the [+ socio-schematic] feature holds great evidence that novice L2 learners rely heavily on the natural acquirement of lexical items (being a receptive task) as well as their own background knowledge. Without these two factors working together, with the [+ socio-schematic] feature being more necessary than the [+ receptive] feature, novices have a very difficult time with the acquisition of novel lexical items in an L2 reading passage.

In addition, we can see that a commercial, which is a known entity to the beginning level students, acts as a setting for creating a semantic field of orientation. In other words, because students have prior knowledge of the social situation of this reading passage (the Verizon Wireless commercial), they are able to "decode" other lexical items in the passage with more success. In essence, learners are "getting the gist" of the passage utilizing their semantic field of orientation of the known entity.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the conclusion of this thesis. In doing so, it covers concluding remarks about the study done. It speaks about the implications that can be drawn from the results of the study. Then, the conclusions continue with a way in which the socio-schematic approach can be implemented within ACTFL. Explanations of the manner in which ACTFL lends itself to this approach are explored. A rationale for the need of incorporating the socio-schematic approach within ACTFL is given. In order to successfully continue this discussion, sample "socio-schematic stages" within the ACTFL guidelines are discussed. Materials along with methods are explored. The incorporation of the new socio-schematic approach is illustrated into a clearer picture through these parts.

The conclusions address the manner in which educators should "teach socio-schematically". Observations and thoughts on grammar teaching are drawn upon in order to arrive at a rationale for introducing the socio-schematic approach to vocabulary instruction. From there, a section that discusses concrete curriculum design within the socio-schematic approach—the reason for it and what it entails—is addressed. Finally, this chapter concludes with further research suggestions for this line of investigation. Forthcoming research is outlined, as well as questions that were not fully addressed and were outside the scope of this thesis are discussed.

4.1 Concluding remarks of the study

From chapter 3, the data offers us much insight into the learning patterns of novice L2 students in regards to reading comprehension. To review, in the open response tasks (O-R #1 and #2) with the feature of [+ productive] (or <u>less</u> [+ receptive]) as we called it, (although it is a [+ receptive] task it falls further on the continuum toward the more "productive" side), the variable was the feature [+/- socio-schematic]. With the multiple choice tasks (M-C #1 and #2), the opposite is true; the feature [+ receptive] is present, and the variable, again, was the feature [+/- socio-schematic].

Results from chapter 3 display the importance for a socially tailored text. The fact that average scores on M-C #1 and O-R #2 were so close, and yet O-R #2 (a <u>less</u> [+ receptive], but [+ socio-schematic] reading passage) *still* yielded a higher average indicates the potential benefits of a socio-schematic approach to novice L2 reading. Interestingly, all disciplinary areas did about the same on each task. However, the academic "department" with the most number of people, humanities, supports the necessity for a socially tailored text. It is therefore clear that from the performance on the [+ socio-schematic] tasks, we can deduce that *acquisition* of lexical items is taking place.

Using the socio-schematic approach in the early years of language teaching can prove to be the driving force for ultimate, and optimal, results of reading comprehension in the L2. By instilling a socio-schematic approach, students will be able to apply their pre-established background social knowledge to a socially contextualized text in order to achieve more successful receptive control over lexical items. Moreover, since the information would be socially significant to them, students will ultimately assume more productive control over more vocabulary as they move forward in their foreign language

learning. In regards to the unending debate about how to solve the discrepancy between levels (novice → intermediate → superior), the socio-schematic approach can very well serve as a platform upon which to bridge this gap in lexical acquisition.

In order to begin the process of "bridging the gap", we must have a starting point for novice L2 learners. As we have previously noted, vocabulary acquisition begins with the acquisition of receptive vocabulary skills and moves from there to more productive control of more lexical items. This occurs even in the L1. Therefore, when speaking about novices, what is testing receptive recall as opposed to a more productive skills task must be noted. Since this continuum does indeed begin with receptive vocabulary skills, and moves along to more advanced productive skills, students were exposed to receptive skills tests. However, one of the tests is further along in the aforementioned continuum, toward the more productive skills (that is, the open response tasks). This was done so that the two could be compared. What differs between open response #1 and multiple choice #1 is how receptive of a task each is (with the multiple choice being the task that tests more receptive skills). They both, however, share the feature of being [-socio-schematic]. With open-response #2 and multiple choice #2, both tasks are different in terms of "receptiveness", but share the [+ socio-schematic] feature. In both of the latter tasks, semantic knowledge was provided in terms of socially shared knowledge, which entails the newly proposed socio-schematic approach. Both of the abovementioned tasks were completed with the highest success rate in multiple-choice #2; it was the highest scoring task among the participants.

4.2 Implementation of socio-schematic stages into ACTFL guidelines

As shown in Chapter two with Table 1, repeated here as Table 3, Guidelines for

Foreign Language Reading (ACTFL, 1999) have been proposed by the American Council

for the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

TABLE 3

ACTFL reading proficiency guidelines

(1986, Revised 1999) These guidelines assume all reading texts to be authentic and legible.	

Novice-Low	Able occasionally to identify isolated words and/or major phrases when strongly supported by context.
Novice-Mid	Able to recognize the symbols of an alphabetic and/or syllabic writing system and/or a limited number of characters in a system that uses characters. The reader can identify an increasing number of highly contextualized words and/or phrases including cognates and borrowed words, where appropriate. Material understood rarely exceeds a single phrase at a time, and rereading may be required.
Novice-High	Has sufficient control of the writing system to interpret written language in areas of practical need. Where vocabulary has been learned, can read for instructional and directional purposes standardized messages, phrases or expressions, such as some items on menus, schedules, timetables, maps, and signs. At times, but not on a consistent basis, the Novice-High level reader may be able to derive meaning from material at a slightly higher level where context and/or extralinguistic background knowledge are supportive.
Intermediate-Low	Able to understand main ideas and/or some facts from the simplest connected texts dealing with basic personal and social needs. Such texts are linguistically noncomplex and have a clear underlying internal structure, for example chronological sequencing. They impart basic

	information about which the reader has to make only minimal suppositions or to which the reader brings personal interest and/or knowledge. Examples include messages with social purposes or information for- the widest possible audience, such as public announcements and short, straightforward instructions dealing with public life. Some misunderstandings will occur.
Intermediate-Mid	Able to read consistently with increased understanding simple connected texts dealing with a variety of basic and social needs. Such texts are still linguistically noncomplex and have a clear underlying internal structure. They impart basic information about which the reader has to make minimal suppositions and to which the reader brings personal interest and/or knowledge. Examples may include short, straightforward descriptions of persons, places, and things written for a wide audience.
Intermediate-High	Able to read consistently with full understanding simple connected texts dealing with basic personal and social needs about which the reader has personal interest and/or knowledge. Can get some main ideas and information from texts at the next higher level featuring description and narration. Structural complexity may interfere with comprehension; for example, basic grammatical relations may be misinterpreted and temporal references may rely primarily on lexical items. Has some difficulty with the cohesive factors in discourse, such as matching pronouns with referents. While texts do not differ significantly from those at the Advanced level, comprehension is less consistent. May have to read material several times for understanding.
Advanced	Able to read somewhat longer prose of several paragraphs in length, particularly if presented with a clear underlying structure. The prose is predominantly in familiar sentence patterns. Reader gets the main ideas and facts and misses some details. Comprehension derives not only from situational and subject matter knowledge but from increasing control of the language. Texts at this level include descriptions and narrations such as simple short stories, news items, bibliographical information, social notices, personal correspondence, routinized business letters and simple technical material written for the general reader.

The levels that are outlined by the guidelines go from "Novice-low" to "superior", as can be seen from the table. With students, a conversion in learning a foreign language must occur. Students first are able to use the L2 in order to label or name known concepts, actions, people, places, and things. These students then need to use those acquired skills to now use the L2 in acquiring new information. More clearly stated, the gap between learning a foreign language as a foreign language and learning subject matters, like history, literature, and linguistics as examples, *by means of* said foreign language as the primary vehicle of communication is precisely the dilemma that all foreign language programs must face.

We know that adolescents carry out different tasks and functions in society, and they are engaged in a society that is changing rapidly. Therefore, their identity within a certain social construct and environment has already been formed, with language being a large part of their identity. It is no surprise that students form their identity largely around the language that they speak; language is the main vehicle of communication within any society. The manner in which any student expresses himself/herself, how they speak, the lexical items they choose, and also the content of their discussions have completely shaped their identities. To ask students to leave their old "self" behind and begin to express themselves in a foreign language is not an easy task—for learner or teacher. A way in which to reach students efficiently is by means of written language since it is the most non-threatening vehicle of communication. It is an intrinsic activity, and students do not have to feel the pressure of being "put on the spot" to "say" the correct answer. Consequently, by means of appropriate texts that we deliver to our novice L2 learners,

those students can begin building upon their social schemata immediately, moving them with more speed into L2 acquisition.

The important fact to remember is that the two passages in this study consisted of a "controlled literacy" reading passage, and a reading passage that was a known entity to the students. As was observed, some students had their schema for the commercial so activated, that they announced it aloud during the task, claiming—"oh! It's that bff Jill commercial!" They were thus able to decode more lexical items and phrases than with the controlled literacy passage. The fact is that many times students are not able to "decode" lexical items in context in either an elementary or intermediate textbook because it is not activating any social schemata. In order for this gap to be bridged between beginning language skills and more intermediate skills, such as reading and writing, textbook passages are in effect, becoming obsolete since they are not "keeping pace" with the students of today. Supplemental exercises are being used with more frequency in the foreign language classroom, and this is surely a sign for the need to progress our L2 materials—beginning with reading material.

4.2.1 "Socio-schematic" stages within ACTFL

As stated above, there is a period of time in L2 acquisition where the L2 is only to be used to reinforce concepts already known to the learner so as to not overload their learning process. Eventually, as we move to the intermediate, advanced, and superior levels, the L2 is progressively used more and more as a vehicle to learn new information. Within the novice levels, a part of the proposal for this thesis is to create "socio-

schematic stages" so that the gap between novice levels and higher levels can be bridged with more ease and in a more natural manner.

Within the novice levels of L2 reading acquisition, there is a separation into "novice-low", "novice-mid", and "novice-high". Therefore, within each part of the novice levels, there is room to implement "socio-schematic" materials, and gradually increase the amount of new information given in the L2. In this manner, novice students can make their journey into the intermediate levels with the confidence that they are noq able to decode lexical items and consequently become more successful readers.

In order to illustrate the above mentioned concept, we must look at an example. Suppose we take the Verizon Wireless commercial used in this study. We can place this activity in the "novice-low" category because it is almost completely socially relevant to the world of the L2 student in the context of their school (University of Massachusetts in the United States). An activity for the mid-range would therefore be, for example, a famous "you tube" segment for a certain product found in the target culture. However, the format of said famous "you tube" segment must activate a social schema that students already possess from their L1 social world. The aforementioned examples are some possibilities that could be used to scaffold students while using the socio-schematic approach, as it is applicable within the ACTFL guidelines.

4.3 Teaching socio-schematically

The study that utilizes the new "socio-schematic" approach holds concrete evidence that students overwhelmingly gravitate toward a schema that is familiar to them. In addition, they are able to relate their social world knowledge to a new "social world"

of the L2; therefore, novice L2 students are, and do, successfully decode more lexical items than if they had not been activating their social schemata. This being stated, we now turn our attention to the need for "teaching socio-schematically".

In part, this concept has already been briefly spoken about in regards to grammar teaching. How do foreign language instructors teach grammar? Students do not just memorize formulas—educators have long learned that decontextualized grammar does not work for students. Rather, from personal observations and those of my colleagues, students tend to make relationships to their L1 and then enhance the grammar parameters for the new syntactical structure. As we have seen from Barnett (1986), syntax and vocabulary learning are closely linked. Many times as a teacher of foreign languages, it seems to benefit my students to draw comparisons from an L1 grammar while teaching a "new" L2 grammar, in regards to syntactical structure. If Universal Grammar is a person's L1, and that "UG" is adjusted to accommodate different grammatical parameters, then it makes sense that while teaching, an educator draws upon the schema for grammar from the L1 and allows for adjustment to the schema of the L2. Therefore, it the stance of this thesis that vocabulary acquisition and grammar acquisition are two sides of the same coin.

Vocabulary learning is an area that baffles many in the foreign language education field because it is one of the most difficult areas to "teach". We know that word lists do not work, and decontextualized lexical items signify close to nothing for our students, which usually do not lead to mastery of grammar or vocabulary in context. The notion of contextualized language instruction, and its implementation, leads students

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toward mastery of the L2. The socio-schematic approach takes the aforementioned notion a step further.

4.3.1 Curriculum design within the socio-schematic approach

The question at hand is how to actually teach within the new approach? As teachers, we must remember the connection to identity and importance of background schemata from the social world that students have already formed. The acknowledgement of both validates the foreign language learner as not only a student, but also as a person. From there, "building" a new identity, in a sense, is what learners must do if they aspire to obtain superior and expert levels in the foreign language. Also, especially at higher levels of proficiency, the learner must develop an understanding of the "other" in the new culture (Weston-Gil, 2007). Since language is so highly linked to a person's identity, these two concepts, identity and schemata, must be integrated in order to achieve academic success.

Lessons must be planned accordingly with the students' current "identity" and schemata. The easiest way, and we will go as far as to say the only way within the constructs of a classroom, is through the vehicle of the social world that students share. Choosing appropriate texts for each level of Spanish will not only improve vocabulary teaching methods, but will also contribute to the achievement of further strides in grammar-in-context teaching.

4.4 Further research

Further research about this approach would benefit learners and educators. First, we must lend our attention to forthcoming materials for the socio-schematic approach. Although beyond the scope of this thesis, a productive next step is to provide sample materials and lesson plans for each level within the novice area of ACTFL. This set of materials will be explored as a future project.

In addition to forthcoming materials, some further questions are important to address. More investigation into the interests and motivations of students should be considered. Moreover, further investigation into the various majors of students and its link to foreign language learning and/or testing needs to be considered.

The socio-schematic approach has been presented in order to provide an effective novice level approach to the teaching of reading in the field of foreign language education. The benefits of working within this approach carry implications for more successful vocabulary learning, and higher levels of L2 reading acquisition. Working with the socio-schematic approach, L2 students will have an enhanced ability to succeed at reading the L2 and, as a result, will feel more at ease and validated as adolescents with unique identities. In turn, achievement in second language acquisition in general will have a firm foundation. In particular, as this thesis studies, the socio-schematic approach will construct a firm foundation for success in the decoding process of novel L2 lexical items. This solid base will ultimately lead to high achievement rates in L2 reading acquisition.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONAIRE

1. What year are you in college? _____

2. What is your major and minor (if any)? _____

3. Have you taken Spanish at the high school level? And if yes, how many years of Spanish have you taken in high school?

   _____

      a. What was the highest level achieved? _____

4. Have you taken SPA 110 before? _____

      a. If yes, reason for taking it again? _____

5. Do you speak any other romance languages fluently?
      a. If yes, which one, and how do you know it?
         _____

         _____
6. Have you taken any other romance languages in high school or college?
      a. If yes, in college or high school?

         _____

      b. To what level?

         _____

7. What technology do you use daily, such as cable television, email, internet, cell phone, test messaging, etc?

      _____

8. How many hours per day do you use each of the above?

      _____

APPENDIX B

OPEN RESPONSE TASK #1

Acto segundo
Cuadro primero

Zaguán de casa de la NOVIA. <u>*Portón al fondo*</u> *(1). Es de noche. La NOVIA*
sale con enaguas blancas encañonadas, llenas de encajes y puntas bordadas y un
corpiño blanco con <u>*brazos al aire*</u> *(2). La CRIADA lo mismo.*

CRIADA. Aquí te acabaré <u>*(acabar; acabo)*</u>** de peinar **(3)**.
NOVIA. No se puede estar ahí dentro, del calor.
CRIADA. En estas tierras no refresca ni al amanecer.

<u>*se sienta*</u> *(4) la NOVIA en una silla baja y se mira en un* <u>*espejito de mano*</u> *(5). La*
CRIADA la peina)
NOVIA. <u>Mi madre era (ser; es)** de un sitio donde había (haber; hay)* muchos árboles</u>
(6). De tierra rica.
CRIADA. ¡Así era (ser) ella rica de alegre!
NOVIA. Pero se consumió (consumirse; consume)** aquí
CRIADA. El sino.
NOVIA. Como nos consumimos todas. Echan fuego las paredes. ¡Ay! No tires
demasiado.

**The infinitive form followed by the present tense of the verb in context is shown.

Now, decode the underlined phrases/words/verbs into what it means in English:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

Also, what do you think is going on here (in English)?
_____

_____

APPENDIX C

MULTIPLE CHOICE TASK #1

MADRE: ¡Ana Elisabet!

HIJA: ¿QP? **(1)**

MADRE: Tu teléfono celular es lo que pasa. Tantos mensajes instantáneos **(2)**.

HIJA: DM, NoPNá **(3)**

MADRE: ¡A qué sí que pasa algo! ¿A quién estás mandando 50 mensajes al día?

HIJA: No S, a miMAa **(4)** Juana

MADRE: Dile a tuMAa Juana que te voy a confiscar el celular **(5)**

HIJA: ¡NoE'J!...¿Tá tó?

MADRE: Qué pague yo la cuenta es lo que No E' J **(6)**....¡Tó tá!

```
KEY
¿QP? = ¿Qué pasa?
DM = Diós mío
NoPNá = No pasa nada
No S = No sé
miMAa = mi mejor amiga
¡NoE'J!....¿Tá tó?= No es justo.....¿está todo?
¡Tó tá! = todo está
```

Now, decode the underlined phrases/words/verbs into what it means in English:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

Also, what do you think is going on here (in English)?

_____

_____

APPENDIX D

OPEN RESPONSE TASK #2

Acto segundo
Cuadro primero

*Zaguán de casa de la NOVIA. <u>Portón al fondo</u> (1). Es de noche. La NOVIA
sale con enaguas blancas encañonadas, llenas de encajes y puntas bordadas y un
corpiño blanco con <u>brazos al aire</u> (2). La CRIADA lo mismo.*

CRIADA. Aquí te acabaré <u>(acabar; acabo)** de peinar</u> (3).
NOVIA. No se puede estar ahí dentro, del calor.
CRIADA. En estas tierras no refresca ni al amanecer.

<u>*se sienta*</u> *(4) la NOVIA en una silla baja y se mira en un <u>espejito de mano</u> (5). La
CRIADA la peina)*

NOVIA. <u>Mi madre era (ser;es)** de un sitio donde había (haber; hay)* muchos árboles</u>
(6). De tierra rica.
CRIADA. ¡Así era (ser) ella rica de alegre!
NOVIA. Pero se consumió aquí
CRIADA. El sino.
NOVIA. Como nos consumimos todas. Echan fuego las paredes. ¡Ay! No tires
demasiado.

**Now, for each of the above, pick from two answers by circling the letter, which one
would be the closest meaning.**

1)   a) Gate/ Inner door is in the background

       b)   The guard is at the door

2)   a)   braids of hair in the air

       b)   arms exposed in the air

3)   a) starting to comb the hair

       b)   ending with combing of hair

4)   a) she sits

       b) she feels

5)   a) reflection of her hand

b) pocket mirror

6)   a) she was from a place where there was many trees

    b)   she is from a site where there was many acorns

APPENDIX E

MULTIPLE CHOICE TASK #2

MADRE: ¡Ana Elisabet!

HIJA: ¿QP? (**1**)

MADRE: Tu teléfono celular es lo que pasa. <u>Tantos mensajes instantáneos</u> (**2**).

HIJA: <u>DM, NoPNá</u> (**3**)

MADRE: ¡A qué sí que pasa algo! ¿A quién estás mandando 50 mensajes al día?

HIJA: <u>No S</u>, <u>a miMAa</u> (**4**) Juana

MADRE: Dile a tuMAa Juana que te <u>voy a confiscar el celular</u> (**5**)

HIJA: ¡NoE'J!...¿Tá tó?

MADRE: <u>Qué pague yo la cuenta es lo que No E' J</u> (**6**)....¡Tó tá!

KEY
¿QP? = ¿Qué pasa?
DM = Diós mío
NoPNá = No pasa nada
No S = No sé
miMAa = mi mejor amiga
¡NoE'J!....¿Tá tó? = No es justo.....¿está todo?
¡Tó tá! = todo está

Now, for each of the above, pick from two answers by circling the letter, which one would be the closest meaning.

1) a) What's up?
    b) It happens

2) a) As many instant messages as you want
    b) Too many instant messages

3) a) Oh my god, it's not a big deal
    b) Oh my god, something happened

4) a) I don't know, my best friend…
    b) I don't know, my older friend…

5)   a) I'm going to take away your phone
                b) I'm going to conserve your phone

6)   a) That I have to read this story, that's what so not funny…
                b) That I have to pay this bill, that's what's so not fair…

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