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Implementing a Reading Program in Beginner Spanish L2 University Courses: Graded Readers, Vocabulary Learning, and Students and Instructors' Perspectives

By

DIEGO ALINS BREDA
DISSERTATION

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Abstract

Previous studies in second language teaching have called attention to the importance and benefits of including reading, especially graded readers (i.e., books adapted to the proficiency level of the students), in the L2 curriculum (Martinez, 2017; Rodrigo, 2018). On one hand, previous scholars have found the following benefits from graded readers: (1) an increase in reading comprehension (Beglar et al. 2012; Suk, 2016), (2) a reduction of anxiety towards reading (Martinez, 2017; Rodrigo, 2011), (3) a fostering of cultural knowledge (Hill 2013), and (4) an increase in vocabulary learning (Horst, 2009; Suk, 2016), to name a few. On the other hand, most of the research on graded readers has been conducted in English as a second language classes and little is known about the experience of L2 Spanish elementary proficiency learners at university settings (Nation & Waring, 2020).

To fill this gap, this dissertation provides information on the implementation of a Reading Program using graded readers in an ongoing first-year Spanish program at the university level. Two different studies have been conducted. The first one explores the implementation of the Reading Program, the creation of in-house graded readers and present students' reactions and opinions on the reading program in general and the graded readers in particular. Through focus groups before the implementation of the reading program and a student questionnaire at the end, this study highlights the importance of matching the proficiency level of the graded readers with the students' level and the importance of creating stories with familiar settings and relatable protagonists to increase students' enjoyment.

The second study focuses on vocabulary acquisition and the effects of post-reading fill-in-the-blanks activities and evaluates the reliability of the *Technique Feature Analysis* (TFA) framework on measuring the effectiveness of these activities. 260 students participated in this

study and were divided into 4 groups (i.e., a control group and three experimental group), they have to complete a vocabulary test before and at the end of the Reading Program. Results in this study emphasized the importance of complementing reading with word focused activities in order to increase vocabulary acquisition, highlighted the fill-in-the-blanks with the translation of the target words in English as the most powerful one, and advocate for the use of the TFA framework in order to choose the most appropriate activities.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Reading has been broadly supported by researchers as a way to improve learners' second language proficiency, especially as a source of comprehensible input (Nation & Waring, 2020; Rodrigo, 2018). In a second language classroom setting, a key issue is to understand how L2 reading can be best developed and which reading approach (i.e., extensive or intensive reading) is best suited for students in order to acquire important skills such as reading comprehension, fluency, vocabulary acquisition, grammar skills or cultural awareness. On one hand, extensive reading has been proposed as a source of meaningful input, which provides an opportunity for consistent exposure to easy materials for a long period of time, increases students' motivation by letting them to read freely, and leads to the develop of skilled reading abilities and fluency (Nation & Waring, 2020). On the other hand, intensive reading presents more challenging texts than extensive reading, needs explicit instruction and gives less freedom to the students that normally have to focus on a specific learning goal and the completion of language-focused exercises (Rodrigo, 2018).

What is interesting is that both approaches can be used together to maximize learners' benefits from reading. On this matter, scholars have advocated for the inclusion of Graded Readers (GRs) in second language (L2) classrooms (Beglar et al. 2012; McLean & Rouault, 2017; Suk, 2016). These materials are adapted to the proficiency level of the students, are a perfect reading material to use with elementary proficiency learners (Nation & Waring, 2020), and can be used in an hybrid approach that embraces the benefits from ER and IR at the same time. However, most of the research on GRs has been conducted in English as a L2 setting and little is known about the experience of L2 Spanish elementary proficiency students at US

universities (Nation & Waring, 2020). Moreover, the majority of Spanish language instructors at universities in the US do not know what GRs are (Alins Breda et al., 2022).

To fill this gap, this thesis aims to provide information on the use of GRs in an ongoing Reading Program in a first-year Spanish program at a university in the US. This program uses a hybrid reading approach that includes extensive reading characteristics, such as exposing learners to easy materials and reading stories with familiar settings to increase their motivation, but additionally includes intensive reading features such as completing activities focused on vocabulary and grammar topics. Two different studies have been conducted. The first one explains the context of the creation and development of the Reading Program, the creation and integration of in-house GRs, and presents students' reactions to using these materials. Through the completion of focus groups and questionnaires, students' and teachers' feedback has been fundamental to develop the program introducing different changes through several iterations of the Reading Program that have concluded in the creation of our own GRs.

The second study investigates the effects of post-reading word-focused activities (i.e., fill-in-the-blanks) on vocabulary acquisition and evaluates the reliability of the framework *Technique Feature Analysis (*TFA) on measuring the effectiveness of these activities. TFA is a framework proposed to determine activities' efficacy for the purpose of vocabulary acquisition. In this study, students were divided into four different groups (i.e., a control group and three groups with three different versions of the fill-in-the-blanks activity) and had to complete a pre- and post- test where they had to recall the meaning of a number of target words encountered in the GRs. The treatment in this study consisted of pre and post vocabulary tests and results will show students vocabulary learning gains through reading and the completion of vocabulary activities. Furthermore, by comparing the three different fill-in-the-blanks formats, it will be

demonstrated which activity has better results and, thus, the TFA framework and its reliability

will be evaluated.

The structure of this dissertation is as follows:
1. Chapter 1: Introduction
2. Chapter 2: Literature review on Extensive reading, Graded Readers, and vocabulary learning through reading
3. Chapter 3: Design and evaluation of a Reading Program and focus group with students and teachers
4. Chapter 4: Study 1 on students' experiences in the Reading Program
5. Chapter 5: Study 2 on vocabulary learning through reading and fill-in-the-blanks activities
6. Chapter 6: Discussion

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1. Extensive and Intensive approaches to reading

In the last decades, the inclusion of Extensive Reading (ER) in L2 classrooms has been

supported by an important number of scholars willing to provide students with opportunities for

comprehensible input (McLean & Rouault, 2017; Nation & Waring, 2020; Rodrigo, 2018; Webb

& Chang, 2015). ER has been defined as reading a significant number of textual materials at the

right level, independently, and silently (see Nation & Waring, 2020). In other words, the goal of

the teachers is to provide large quantities of texts adapted to the proficiency level of the learners

and, whenever possible, give them autonomy to choose their own readings. By doing so, students

have the opportunity to select the most pleasurable and enjoyable readings for themselves and

find the motivation to keep reading in their L2.

ER completely differs from the Intensive Reading (IR) approach that is more typical in

L2 classrooms at the university level (Alins Breda et al., 2022), where students read more

difficult materials than in ER to accomplish specific learning goals with the help of

language-focused and comprehension activities (Rodrigo, 2018). In this approach, students'

motivation and enjoyment are not as important as in ER and learners read less quantity of

materials.

Although IR language-focused activities seem promising, a number of studies on English

L2 compared both approaches and highlighted the better results of ER. For example, in a study

conducted over one academic year, McLean & Rouault (2017) measured the efficiency of

developing reading fluency in an experimental group (ER) and a control group (IR). Learners in

both groups spent the same amount of time reading (i.e., 60 minutes each week), and, by the end

of the academic year, the ER group increased their reading rates significantly more than the IR

group. The same conclusion was achieved by Beglar et al. (2012) when measuring the reading rates and reading comprehension outcomes of Japanese university students of EFL during an ER program that lasted a year. Participants in this project were divided into three Pleasure reading groups (i.e., ER) and an IR group. From the three ER groups, two of them had the same dynamics and read the same GRs while the other group used unsimplified books. The three Pleasure reading groups outperformed the IR group and the two Pleasure reading groups that had the best results in reading rates and reading comprehension were the ones using Graded Readers (GRs).

Suk (2016) also compared IR and ER with participants in a Korean university during a 15-week EFL reading course. Students in the ER group outperformed the IR group on the three variables selected, namely, reading comprehension, reading rates, and vocabulary learning. Finally, these same three variables were measured by Al-Homoud & Schmitt (2009) in an environment where ER is atypical. This study took place in a Saudi college course where participants were not familiar with pleasure reading. Nevertheless, the students in the group using this 'new' ER approach had similar gains in the three variables as the participants using a more 'familiar' IR approach. Furthermore, students in the ER group reported a positive attitude towards reading, a conclusion that was not shared by the students in the IR group.

Clearly, these studies encourage the use of an ER approach. Reading large quantities of books with the freedom to choose helped participants in these projects improve their reading comprehension skills, reading rates, and vocabulary learning. Furthermore, it seems that this freedom to choose the materials helps students to stay motivated to read in a second language. Two additional conclusions can be drawn from these studies. First of all, ER groups in the four studies using GRs had the best performance. These materials, adapted to the proficiency level of

the students, have shown better results than the readings used in the other groups. This is, reading materials such as short stories in a textbook or unsimplified materials such as fairy tales or a real novel followed by comprehension, vocabulary, and grammar activities. Furthermore, as found in Al-Homoud & Schmitt (2009), GRs seem to be better received by learners and increase their pleasure in reading. This idea is further confirmed by Beglar et al. (2012), who compared not only IR and ER approaches, but also various ER groups using different materials. In this context, the authors found that groups using GRs outperformed the others on both variables measured (i.e., reading rates and reading comprehension). Thus, using GRs with elementary English students had the best results in these four studies no matter the reading approach.

The second conclusion is related to the similarities and differences between the control and experimental groups in the different studies. Indeed, in three of these studies (Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009; Beglar et al. 2012; Suk, 2016), the ER groups spent time completing IR exercises. These papers agree that exposing students to large quantities of reading is more beneficial than an IR approach. However, ER reading in these groups is usually followed by IR activities such as vocabulary focused activities or comprehension questions. For example, from a 100-minute class, the ER group in Suk (2016) completed 70 minutes of IR instruction and 30 minutes of ER instruction per week. During the reading sessions, in Beglar et al (2012), students in the ER group had free reading for 15 minutes and IR exercises before and after. Activities such as rewriting several sentences from the text or selecting words from a vocabulary list to describe characters in the text. Al-Hamoud & Schmitt (2009) used the same strategy and explained that one of the reasons behind introducing the ER group to IR activities was to have an ER program balanced and intertwined with IR exercises.

In conclusion, these findings suggest that a mix of IR and ER approaches seems to be better suited for students. Participants had the best results on reading comprehension, reading rates, and vocabulary learning when they had the opportunity to read freely but, at the same time, complete language-focused activities about the readings.

This hybrid approach has also been supported by other authors, especially, when focusing on elementary learners of English in a Korean highschool setting (Park, Isaac & Woodfield, 2018). Nation & Waring (2020) explained that a more controlled ER approach is necessary at the early stages. At this level of proficiency, learners might benefit from having a structured approach where a close guidance from the instructor can make learners feel more supported and confident, which is more in line with the idea of introducing an IR component in any L2 beginner Reading Program. On the same page, in their ER program with elementary learners Webb & Chang (2015) replaced reading independently, a characteristic from ER, with a more IR approach where students followed the teacher instructions while reading.

2.2. Teachers' and students' opinions

Interestingly, this hybrid approach is not only encouraged by researchers but also better accepted by teachers and students. Stoeckel et al. (2012) measured students' attitude towards reading in English learners at a Japanese university. These authors compared the performance of an ER group reading at their own pace and a group where participants had to complete comprehension quizzes after reading. Results showed that adding comprehension quizzes (i.e., an IR component) did not have a negative impact on students' positive attitude towards reading. Furthermore, Huang (2015) explained that students enjoyed reading freely but demanded language-focused activities to match the course content and the exams. Students in Dykstra et al. (2022) demanded more assistance from the teacher when reading a GR. In this study, novice

Spanish learners were also asked about their preference for choosing their own GR from a list or selecting the entire class reading the same GR. Most students preferred reading the same book to have more support from the instructor, which confirms that students prefer to participate in more guided reading activities where they are just beginning to read in their L2.

Regarding teachers' opinions, Rose (2019) highlighted the importance, from a research point of view, of considering teachers' beliefs and previous experiences when making suggestions on daily pedagogical practices. On this matter, Alins Breda et al. (2022)[1] documented instructors' perspectives on the use of GRs in K-12 and university settings. Through an online questionnaire, the authors found out that GRs are widely used in K-12 but most university teachers did not know what they are. Moreover, the second part of this study focused on instructors' opinions about a Reading Program implemented on an elementary Spanish L2 course at a university. Teachers completed a questionnaire after the first term and a second one after three years of teaching in the program. On the whole, instructors supported the idea of complementing the GRs with activities focused on the grammar and the vocabulary seen in the course curriculum (i.e., a hybrid extensive-intensive reading approach). In this context, an elementary Spanish L2 course at a university seems more realistic to propose an approach where reading can be used, not only to improve reading skills and for pleasure, but to review the grammar and vocabulary contents seen previously in the classroom.

In other words, IR and ER are two approaches with different learning goals that can be used together in a complementary manner. Nation & Waring (2020), for example, claim that it is a mistake to oppose them, and explain that both approaches have strengths and advantages in different settings. For example, while learning new words, IR allows students to focus on

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[1] Dykstra et al. (2022), Alins Breda et al. (2022), and this thesis are studies conducted on the same Spanish Reading Program at the University of California, Davis.

specific target words, in a way that can be done very quickly, and is suitable for the initial form-meaning level acquisition of word knowledge. ER, on the other hand, emphasizes the pleasure of reading, and learners spend much more time with words that they already know thus developing a deeper knowledge of those words. At the same time, pleasure reading can help students partially learn some words incidentally when these are presented enough times in their readings (Rodrigo, 2018).

In short, a combination of extensive and intensive approaches may be the best option for a Spanish language program at the university level, a context where pedagogical innovations are limited by pre-existing structures. Previous studies have shown a number of benefits and positive feedback from students and teachers in different settings when implementing such Reading Programs. In addition, this hybrid model can be easily integrated into an existing curriculum where language focus activities can be aligned with the syllabus goals for a specific language course.

2.3. What are Graded Readers?

A type of reading material that can easily integrate ER and IR approaches is GRs. These books allow students to find pleasure in L2 reading while also focusing on activities that tap into specific language-focused contents. GRs differ from other books in the way they are written, as these readings (1) consider vocabulary and grammar difficulty, (2) use illustrations and footnotes, and (3) sentence complexity is adapted to a specific proficiency level. At the same time, most of these books include reading comprehension activities and vocabulary or grammar exercises related to the topics in the reading. In other words, L2 instructors willing to integrate intensive and extensive approaches in an L2 elementary proficiency classroom can start by using GRs.

Therefore, an increasing number of scholars have advocated for the use of GRs in L2 classrooms (Beglar et al. 2012; Martinez, 2017; Rodrigo, 2018; Webb & Chang, 2015). Nation & Waring (2020) considered these materials to be an essential tool for reading at beginning and intermediate levels of language proficiency. Similarly, Rodrigo (2018) sees the relevance of introducing enjoyable GRs to L2 learners during the first stages of their linguistic development since these facilitate the transition to reading authentic texts. Previous studies have found benefits from using GRs in different areas, such as reading rates (Beglar et al. 2012; McLean & Rouault, 2017), reading comprehension (Beglar et al. 2012; Suk, 2016), positive attitude toward reading (Huang, 2015; Rodrigo, 2011), fostering cultural knowledge (Hill 2013), reducing anxiety towards reading and fostering enjoyment (Martinez, 2017; Rodrigo, 2011; Yamashita, 2008), incidental vocabulary learning (Al-Homoud & Schmitt 2009; Horst, 2009; Suk 2016) or vocabulary learning through GRs with explicit vocabulary activities (Cobb 2016; Teng, 2014).

2.3.1. Graded Readers in university settings

Although, as explained by Nation & Waring (2020) or Rodrigo (2018), the research on GRs has mostly been conducted in L2 English, a number of studies describe Reading Programs incorporating GRs in university Spanish L2 settings. For example, Rodrigo et al. (2004) studied vocabulary and grammar acquisition on intermediate-level Spanish students when introducing GRs in a semester university course. Participants were divided into two experimental groups (one doing ER and another ER plus discussion) and one control group (an IR class). Students in both experimental groups could select their own GRs from an assigned list and while one group had to write a short report, the other group instead had a discussion in class and oral presentations. Furthermore, students in the control group participated in a grammar and composition course following the guidelines of a textbook. Participants in this group did only IR

by completing the reading passages in the textbook. At the end of the project (15 weeks) participants in the three groups took a grammar and vocabulary test and both experimental groups outperformed the IR class. Rodrigo (2011) included an ER component in an existing intermediate and beginner Spanish L2 program. The main goal was to find out students' perceptions about reading. Although the number of books read by the participants was very limited for ER (beginner students read one GR and intermediate read two), the author focused on reading enjoyment and not on the number of books. Both groups had a positive attitude toward reading and, because of this, the author highlighted the possibility to include an ER component in the initial stages of Spanish learning.

Hardy (2016) measured the reading comprehension, attitude, and motivation toward reading in Spanish in intermediate-level university students who read GRs as part of a standalone reading course. Participants met three hours a week to read GRs silently in class during a 7-week ER course. At the end of the course, learners completed a questionnaire and a cloze test and, although there was no control group, students improved their reading comprehension skills and most students reported positive feelings.

In short, previous studies in English and Spanish as a second language advocate for the use of GRs in L2 classrooms. GRs have the capacity to integrate IR and ER approaches, have shown the possibility of acquiring different benefits, and have broad support from previous scholars.

2.3.2. Choose the right GRs

GRs seem to be the perfect materials for a Reading Program in a beginner Spanish L2 program. However, as Rodrigo (2018) warned, instructors need to know the importance of choosing the correct GRs. Otherwise, students cannot see any improvement and get bored and frustrated. To

select the right book, Rodrigo (2018) introduced three different aspects for instructors to pay attention to: language, format, and content. The former is especially important with beginner learners because of the limited vocabulary and grammar level of the students (Webb & Chang, 2015). Previous research has shown that adding a language-focused component to a Reading Program can improve students' reading rates, reading comprehension, and vocabulary acquisition (Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009; Beglar et al. 2012; Suk, 2016). Moreover, connecting the language and the activities in the GRs with the content in the course curriculum seems to produce a positive reaction in students (Park, Isaac & Woodfield, 2018) and teachers (Alins Breda et al., 2022).

The second aspect, format, is related to the design of the book. Paying attention to characteristics such as pictures, cultural notes, vocabulary footnotes, reading comprehension activities, or typography can have an impact on students' performance. For instance, Alessi & Dwyer (2008) compared different strategies of vocabulary assistance while reading a Spanish newspaper article. Participants were taking intermediate Spanish at a US university and were divided into three experimental groups (a pre-reading vocabulary practice group, a group reading with glosses, and a mix of both), and a control group reading with a dictionary. Reading comprehension and students' feelings about the reading were measured and the group using glosses outperformed all the other groups. The results highlighted the glosses as a tool that not only helps students with difficult vocabulary but increases their reading comprehension and motivation toward reading.

Finally, the third aspect proposed by Rodrigo (2018) is content. The story has to be interesting, enjoyable, and relevant for the reader. On this matter, a number of studies have focused on narrow or series reading (i.e., reading several books by the same author or about a

single topic) (Chang & Millett, 2017; Chang & Renandya, 2021; Renandya et al. 2018). The advantage of doing narrow reading is that students have the opportunity to become familiar with the characters, the language, and the plots in the stories. Moreover, in series reading the vocabulary is more familiar and may be used more repeatedly compared to unrelated texts where larger vocabulary is required. Thus, series, or narrow, reading increases the opportunity to learn unfamiliar words (Chang & Renandya, 2021; Renandya et al., 2018).

In addition to narrow reading, Rodrigo (2018) highlighted the importance of having GRs with an interesting topic, a story in which students can identify with the characters, the plot, and the settings. More interesting stories and familiar and relatable settings can influence students' engagement in reading and, therefore, improve their vocabulary learning (Lee & Pulido 2017), motivation in reading (Renandya et al., 2018), and reading comprehension (Erçetin, 2010). In sum, the literature reviewed on GRs explains the benefits of reading these books and the importance of choosing the right GR. Once the advantages and disadvantages of IR and ER and the benefits of using GRs have been discussed, the next section focuses on the possibilities of learning vocabulary through reading. Special attention will be paid to how IR and ER approaches benefit vocabulary acquisition and the best ways to assess the effectiveness of GR activities for vocabulary learning.

2.4. Vocabulary learning through reading

As seen in section 2.1, reading has shown a number of benefits when implemented in L2 classrooms. For instance, previous studies focused on ER (Al-Homoud & Schmitt 2009; Horst, 2009; Suk 2016) and ER with vocabulary activities (Cobb 2016; Teng, 2014) have shown positive results on students' vocabulary acquisition. These findings support the idea of including reading in the classroom to facilitate vocabulary learning. Moreover, as Horst (2010)

demonstrates, the classroom environment does not provide enough lexically rich input for students to learn the necessary vocabulary to understand most frequent words in a given text in their L2. In her study, she analyzed the words used by a teacher in a language classroom in every session of a 9-week course. Results indicate that many words that would be useful for the students were either not introduced at all, or repeated only a few times, making it difficult for incidental learning to take place. In this context, reading can be seen as a welcome addition to provide learners with the additional input that they need. The practice of ER has thus been considered as a complement to other language learning practices that students engage in during L2 classes to acquire new vocabulary in an incidental way (Nation & Waring, 2020; Rodrigo, 2018).

Hulstijn (2001) defined incidental vocabulary learning as the learning of vocabulary produced by any activity not explicitly focused on vocabulary learning. The majority of studies on incidental word acquisition have focused on learning through reading (Eckerth & Tavakoli, 2012) and have specifically looked at the number of exposures to a target word that is necessary for students to learn a word. Findings in this area do, however, show great variation across studies given the multifaceted nature of word knowledge. For instance, five exposures could be sufficient for orthographic recognition of a new word but not enough to develop a strong association between the word's form and its meaning (Brown, Waring & Donkaewbua, 2008; Pellicer-Sánchez & Schmitt, 2010; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006; Webb, 2008).

As an example of such studies, Pellicer-Sánchez & Schmitt (2010) measured the acquisition of the spelling, word class and meaning of 34 words both at the receptive and productive level when reading a novel. The authors concluded that 10 exposures allow students to learn spelling and recognition aspects, however, more than 10 repetitions are needed to

acquire the aspects of recall and word class. For this reason, they highlighted the importance of explicit vocabulary learning activities to consolidate the potential of incidental learning that takes place through mere exposure, a conclusion that was shared by Pigada & Schmitt (2006). The latter authors evaluated the acquisition of word meaning, spelling, and grammatical behavior in one intermediate level French student reading four different GRs. They examined whether one month of ER enhanced knowledge of a total of 133 target words. Results demonstrated that even after 20 repetitions the learner had trouble retaining some of the words' meanings, an indication that repetition alone is an insufficient learning tool. This is particularly clear when taking into account that the student involved in this case study was a highly motivated learner, thus the incomplete learning cannot be due to limited motivation. The obvious conclusion is again that incidental vocabulary learning needs to be supported by additional intentional focus on target words. On the same page, Teng (2014) proposes that explicit word-recall tasks should be included in any vocabulary learning endeavor, even when reading is involved.

Therefore, researchers are proposing to use a more explicit approach to vocabulary learning/teaching, even in the context of reading activities (Eckerth & Tavakoli, 2012; Pellicer-Sánchez & Schmitt, 2010; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006; Schmitt, 2008; Teng, 2014), which aligns well with the idea mentioned above of combining ER and IR approaches. On the same page, a recent meta-analysis on intentional vocabulary learning by Webb et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of combining intentional exercises such as fill-in-the-blanks with incidental activities such as reading to increase vocabulary gains. Concretely, the idea is to complement non-vocabulary-focused reading comprehension exercises, which do not explicitly tap into any determined set of target words, with intentional vocabulary learning exercises focused on specific word-learning goals. The objective is thus to promote vocabulary learning through two

complementary approaches: incidental, through reading, and intentional, through activities aimed at acquiring specific words.

Indeed, as was mentioned in Rodrigo (2018), the main concern that arises from using only ER is the large amount of reading that students need to be exposed to enough repetitions of words in order to learn new vocabulary. For instance, authors such as Beglar et al. (2012), Nation & Waring (2020), or Suk (2016) recommended reading one GR per week for low proficiency learners to encounter enough repetition of words to facilitate their learning. This amount of reading, however, may not be possible to implement in certain learning contexts. In the case of L2 Spanish courses in large US universities, many problems arise when it comes to introducing such large numbers of books in the curriculum for beginner classes. First, as was explained in Nation & Waring (2020), there are not as many Spanish GRs in the market as GRs written in English. The authors thus propose to combine incidental and intentional vocabulary learning to make up for this lack of materials. Second, according to Rodrigo (2018), the proficiency level of the students may not be suitable for an incidental only approach to vocabulary learning. Therefore, the author highlights the importance of combining ER programs based on GRs with direct instruction of the most frequent words. Additionally, the recommendation of one GR per week collides with students' and teachers' reality. In Alins Breda et al. (2022) instructors in K-12 and university settings agreed that reading one GR every three months was a reasonable goal. The same conclusion was reached by Dykstra et al. (2022) when they asked university students.

In conclusion, available evidence shows that a hybrid approach is the best option to learn new words in a Spanish L2 classroom. While reading alone can slightly enhance a variety of word knowledge aspects when repeated encounters are ensured, explicit vocabulary learning

tasks are expected to dramatically improve the learning rate of specific target words from the text (Nation & Waring, 2020; Rodrigo, 2018; Schmitt, 2008).

GRs could therefore satisfy the requirements of this hybrid approach in elementary proficiency level students. These books provide level-appropriate reading materials to the learners, by containing a majority of words that students are expected to know at a given level, while also providing exposure to lower-frequency words that are relevant to the story. They also exclude words that are not useful at the students' proficiency level and provide vocabulary that is worth learning (Nation & Waring, 2020). Moreover, most of these books include activities that tap into different skills, such as grammatical knowledge, vocabulary learning, or reading comprehension (Alins Breda, 2021), giving students the possibility to work on target words previously encountered in the reading.

While the structure of GRs seems promising when it comes to complementing incidental vocabulary learning through reading with activities focused on specific words, the quality of these exercises will affect the amount of lexical learning that can realistically happen when using these books. In order to measure the quality of different exercises, two models have been proposed to determine activities' efficacy for the purpose of vocabulary acquisition. The next section thus addresses the advantages and disadvantages of the two models that have been used over time to evaluate the effectiveness of several types of exercises in developing lexical knowledge.

2.5. Ways to assess the effectiveness of reading activities for vocabulary learning

The articles reviewed on L2 learning and vocabulary acquisition through reading highlight the importance of combining incidental and intentional vocabulary learning. Therefore, reading has to be followed by activities that allow students to work with the new vocabulary previously

encountered in the text. However, little is known about how the current activities presented in GRs actually promote vocabulary learning. In the SLA literature, two models have been used so far to determine pedagogical activities' usefulness for the purposes of lexical learning: Laufer & Hulstijn' (2001) *Involvement Load Hypothesis (ILH)* and Nation & Webb's (2011) *Technique Feature Analysis (TFA)*.

ILH builds a motivational-cognitive construct that is based on the assumption that deeper processing results in better retention (Craik & Lockhart, 1972). The model consists of three components: *need*, *search,* and e*valuation*. *Need* is the motivational component and can be moderate (1 point), if the activity is imposed by an external agent, or strong (2 points), if the task is self-imposed by the student. The two other components constitute the cognitive dimension. *Search* is the attempt to find the meaning or the form of an unknown L2 word (e.g., by consulting a dictionary or a teacher). *Evaluation* entails a comparison between the different meanings of a word or comparing similar words to choose the one that best fits in a given context. If the task demands students to compare the difference between words' meanings or to choose between several meanings of a word in a given context (as in a fill-in-the-blank activity with the words provided), it is considered moderate. If the evaluation requires a decision about how to combine several words with the target word (as in an original sentence or text), it is considered a strong evaluation. Each of the three factors can be absent (0 points) or present to a higher or lower degree, receiving 1 or 2 points respectively. The sum of the scores obtained for *need*, *search* and *evaluation* represents the total ILH of a given task, with six being the highest ILH possible. Hulstijn & Laufer (2001) provide two examples of tasks to explain how the involvement loads can vary. In task one, students have to write sentences with words provided by the teacher. The task induces a moderate need (imposed by an external agent), no search (the

words are given), and a strong evaluation (students have to write an original text). The final score of this activity is 3 (1 + 0 + 2). In the second task, students have to read a text with relevant words glossed, and answer comprehension questions. *Need* is moderate because it is imposed by the teacher, and *search* and *evaluation* are not present in this task because the meaning of the new words is provided. The involvement of this activity is thus 1 (1 + 0 + 0), meaning that this activity should be less effective to learn vocabulary than task one.

A number of studies have examined the efficacy of ILH (e.g., Folse, 2006; Hulstijn & Laufer, 2001; Keating, 2008; Kim, 2008). Hulstijn & Laufer (2001) measured the retention of ten words by adult ESL (English as a Second Language) students in Israel and the Netherlands after the completion of three different tasks: reading comprehension with marginal glosses, with an involvement index of 1 (moderate *need*, no *search*, and no *evaluation*), reading comprehension plus filling, with an involvement index of 2 (moderate *need*, no *search*, and moderate *evaluation*), and writing a composition using target words, with an involvement index of 3 (moderate *need*, no *search*, and strong *evaluation*). The findings of the students in Israel were in line with the predictions of the ILH. The composition group scored higher than the reading plus filling students, and this group scored higher than the reading with glosses group. However, students of the Netherlands only obtained the same results in the composition group. The remaining groups only partially supported the ILH´s predictions.

Following Hulstijn & Laufer (2001), Kim (2008) used the same three tasks (i.e., reading with marginal glosses, reading plus filling, and writing a composition). The results were similar to the ones obtained by the Dutch students in Hulstijn & Laufer's (2001) article. Writing a composition, the task with the highest ILH, had the best score and, as in Hulstijn & Laufer (2001), there was no significant difference between reading with marginal glosses and reading

plus filling. Finally, Keating (2008) measured retention after completing different tasks with beginner learners of Spanish. In line with the predictions of the ILH, retention was highest in the task with the highest amount of involvement (sentence writing using target words), lower in the reading plus filling task, and lowest in the reading with glosses. In sum, ILH has received support in literature based on evidence of its usefulness, but it does not seem to offer a deep enough explanation of how different activities affect vocabulary learning outcomes. Therefore, some critics have suggested that other factors may be more (or just as) important as the three aspects taken into account in ILH.

For example, Keating (2008) and Kim (2008) measured the role of time on task and partially criticized ILH because it does not take this important factor into account. Likewise, Folse (2006) selected three tasks: one fill-in-the-blank exercise, three fill-in-the-blank exercises (i,e., the same words were practiced three different times), and one original sentence writing exercise. From the perspective of ILH, the third task was supposed to have the best effect on learning but, when time on task was controlled, students doing activity 2 outperformed learners doing the other two tasks. Based on these results, the author claimed that "the important feature of a given L2 vocabulary exercise is not depth of word processing but number of word retrievals required" (Folse, 2006, p.273). Finally, Eckerth & Tavakoli (2012) worked with advanced learners of L2 English to investigate the effects of the variables 'word exposure frequency' and 'elaboration of word processing' on word retention. Results showed that the elaboration with which unfamiliar words are processed is more relevant for word retention than repeated encounters with the same words.

In 2011, Nation and Webb created another theoretical framework, known as the *Technique Feature Analysis (TFA)*, introduces more criteria to operationalize depth-of-processing

than those included in the ILH. This framework has a total of five components: noticing,

retrieval, generation, motivation, and retention. These factors are formed of different criteria, and

each of these criteria can have a score of one, if it is present, or zero if it is absent (Nation &

Webb, 2011). As seen in Table 1, the highest possible score for an activity is 18, and, as in ILH,

the higher the score, the better the activity.

Table 1. Technique Feature Analysis (adopted from Nation & Webb, 2011, p. 7).

Criteria	Scores	
Motivation		
Is there a clear vocabulary learning goal?	0	1
Does the activity motivate learning?	0	1
Do the learners select the words?	0	1
Noticing		
Does the activity focus attention on the target words?	0	1
Does the activity raise awareness of new vocabulary learning?	0	1
Does the activity involve negotiation?	0	1
Retrieval		
Does the activity involve retrieval of the word?	0	1
Is it productive retrieval?	0	1
Is it recall?	0	1
Are there multiple retrievals of each word?	0	1
Is there spacing between retrievals?	0	1
Generation		
Does the activity involve generative use?	0	1
Is it productive?	0	1
Is there a marked change that involves the use of other words?	0	1

Retention		
Does the activity ensure successful linking of form and meaning?	0	1
Does the activity involve instantiation?	0	1
Does the activity involve imaging?	0	1
Does the activity avoid interference?	0	1
Maximum score		18

Nation & Webb (2011) provided a checklist with a description of each criterion. The component of *motivation* is related to whether the activity has a clear vocabulary goal and motivates learning. The *noticing* factor concerns whether the activity focuses attention on the target words or not and if the activity involves negotiation. Regarding *retrieval*, the authors differentiate between receptive and productive retrieval, number of retrievals, and spacing between them. They also determine if the activity focuses attention on recall or recognition of the target words. The component of *generation* involves meeting (receptive generation) or using (productive generation) a word in a novel context. Fill-in-the-blanks activities with previously taught words entail receptive generation, while sentence production activities involve productive generation. Finally, *retention* focuses on whether the activity ensures successful linking of form and meaning and if the activity involves instantiation or imaging, and whether or not it avoids interference.

Nation & Webb (2011) did a scoring comparison between ILH and TFA on different vocabulary activities and they found some disagreements between these two frameworks. For example, upon calculation of the final score for a fill-in-the-blanks activity, they discovered that this task had a low TFA score (8 out of 18) but a high ILH score (4 out of 6). These diverging

results entail different predictions depending on what framework is used when evaluating an activity.

Given the mismatches between both frameworks, Hu & Nassaji (2016) contrasted TFA and ILH in four different tasks (i.e., reading a text with multiple-choice items, reading a text and choosing definitions, reading plus fill-in-the-blanks, and reading and re-wording the sentences) with adult EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students who aimed to learn the meanings of 14 unknown words. These learners were divided into four groups and completed one of four vocabulary activities ranked differently by TFA and ILH. The results showed that TFA was more accurate than ILH in predicting vocabulary learning gains during task performance and in pretest to posttest vocabulary gains. It also demonstrated that form-focused tasks (i.e., activities directly related to the target words) resulted in increased lexical learning gains. Similarly, Gohar, Rahmanian & Soleimani (2018) worked with EFL students to examine TFA and ILH into three different activities (i.e., sentence making, composition, and reading comprehension). This study concludes that, although none of the vocabulary frameworks predicted vocabulary learning entirely, TFA was better than ILH in pretest to posttest score change but not during task activity. Finally, Zou et al. (2018) compared four different vocabulary tasks to evaluate TFA predictions' effectiveness and found that post-test results were consistent with the TFA checklist, thus confirming the reliability of this framework to measure word learning activities.

After reviewing previous work that compares ILH and TFA frameworks, and previous studies using the TFA framework, the present study will rely on TFA, as results indicate that it is more complete and precise to determine the quality of a specific vocabulary learning task. The objective is, thus, to evaluate the reliability of the TFA framework in measuring three activities

used in a Reading Program at a US university and to document students' vocabulary learning gains.

To sum up, this literature review provides evidence on the importance of reading in the L2 classroom using a hybrid intentional - incidental approach. Despite the constant comparison and opposition in previous studies, Nation & Waring (2020) describe these two approaches as complementary and claim that both approaches have different strengths and can be used together. Seeking to incorporate this approach to a Reading Program, this thesis proposes two studies.

Study 1 is a description of the implementation of a Reading Program at a first-year Spanish proficiency level at a large university in the US and presents students' experiences and opinions on reading the GRs. The approach used in this Reading Program mixes incidental reading components such as reading enjoyment with intentional components such as the inclusion of targeted language-focused activities. In contrast to previous studies, this program uses GRs created by the teachers instead of commercial GRs. Moreover, classes in this Reading Program are not taught by researchers but Graduate Teaching Assistants. This study will discuss the outcome of creating and using GRs, the development of the reading sessions, and the feedback from students and teachers. The analysis of this program can have important pedagogical implications for future Spanish reading programs in large universities willing to incorporate a reading component to their courses.

Seeking to improve the vocabulary activities in the Reading Program, study 2 evaluates three activities using the TFA framework that has never been used to evaluate activities in GRs. In addition, previous studies on reading and vocabulary learning have mainly focused on incidental learning through reading, leaving aside the possibility of using intentional vocabulary activities that tap into specific language-focused contents. For these reasons, study 2 proposes

linking the TFA framework with the GRs' design to assess which intentional vocabulary learning

activities can be a better complement to the incidental vocabulary learning from reading.

Chapter 3: Design and evaluation of a Reading Program

3.1. Introduction

Graded readers have long been supported by different scholars as promising reading materials to foster second language acquisition (Beglar & Hunt, 2014; Rodrigo, 2018; Yamashita, 2008). These books are well known for being adapted to the proficiency level of the students, promote incidental vocabulary learning, usually include activities focused on different skills (Alins Breda, 2021), and have a positive effect on L2 learners' attitudes towards reading as they foster enjoyment and decrease reading anxiety (Martinez, 2017; Rodrigo, 2016). Although these books are widely used by teachers in K-12 settings (i.e., elementary and secondary education), Alins Breda et al. (2022) found out that most Spanish language instructors at universities in the US do not know what they are. To fill this gap, this chapter aims to provide information on the use of GRs in a Reading Program in a first year Spanish-program at a large university in the US.

This Reading Program started four years ago and is still ongoing. During the first two years, two different research studies were conducted in this program, one focusing on students' perspectives and the other one focusing on instructors' perspectives. Dykstra et al. (2022) explored students' anxiety and overall experiences in the program by comparing students' reading individually versus in pairs, and by contrasting classes where students could select a book from a list with classes reading the same book. Through a questionnaire, students' responses highlighted an overall choice for classes reading the same book, and a preference for reading in pairs, as it increased peer-to-peer support. Alins Breda et al. (2022) also reached this same conclusion from the instructors' assessment of the reading program. In this study, a questionnaire was completed by TAs working in the Reading Program instead of students. The TAs not only highlighted students' preference on reading in pairs but also favored reading

activities after the readings in line with the grammar content of the course.

　　To follow up with these two studies, this chapter aims to provide an inside view on how this Reading Program works and how teachers' and students' feedback has helped to modify and improve the program over the course of four academic years. More specifically, this chapter aims to document one of the most recent and innovative changes in the Reading Program, which happened during the 2021-2022 academic year: the integration of in-house GRs written by a team of instructors. Furthermore, through the completion of an online questionnaire at the end of the quarter after reading the GRs, students gave their opinion on the books, the activities, the reading format, and suggestions to improve the GRs. The most important changes during the first four academic years are presented in Figure 1.

　　During two academic quarters: Winter and Spring 2022, these GRs were introduced into the Reading Program and used in the majority of the classes[2], instead of more traditional GRs from commercial publishers. Previous studies highlighted the importance of creating books with interesting plots and relatable characters (Chang & Millett, 2017; Chang & Renandya, 2021; Renandya et al. 2018; Rodrigo, 2018). The same conclusion was provided from learners' and instructors' feedback in this study[3]. Based on this data, it was predicted that when asked about engagement and interest in the books, students reading the new GRs would have more positive responses than participants reading the previous GRs.

　　Furthermore, special attention was paid to students' opinions on vocabulary learning through reading the books. This reading program advocates for a hybrid approach with the integration of typical extensive reading learning goals, such as reading enjoyment, and intensive

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[2] The reason behind not introducing the new GRs to all the classes during the first two quarters is because a few classes kept reading the old GRs. This situation allowed us to compare students' opinions on all the GRs through an online questionnaire. Currently all classes read the new GRs.

[3] 3.5. Context of the reading program in the fourth academic year (2021-2022). Evaluation of the new graded readers through focus groups.

reading goals, such as vocabulary learning. In other words, one of the goals is to present vocabulary that is worth learning and that is adapted to the proficiency level of the students (Nation & Waring, 2020). For instance, previous research emphasized the use of GRs and explicit vocabulary activities as a powerful combination to learn new words (Cobb, 2016; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006; Teng, 2014). For these reasons, it was predicted that students highlight vocabulary learning as a skill developed by participating in this Reading Program.

At the end of the first two iterations of the new GRs, students were asked through an online questionnaire about the reading format, how engaging the books were, their opinion about the activities, and suggestions to improve these materials. The aim of the chapter is thus to present the creation and development of the Reading Program, including the recent inclusion of new in-house books, compare students' opinions on the previous and new GRs, and document the attitudes of the students towards it throughout a period of four years. I expect this data to be useful for researchers to better understand what works and what does not when implementing this type of Reading Program with the integration of in-house GRs, and I also expect this information to be particularly relevant for language program coordinators who aim at introducing more reading activities in their programs. Through the experience acquired after four years of work, this data may contribute to a more realistic approach to reading in second language classrooms, especially in multi-sections large programs that are generally less flexible when it comes to introducing pedagogical innovations. Additionally, I believe that the presentation of the different steps that have been taken to modify the program over the last few years based on student feedback demonstrates how important it is to establish a direct relationship between researchers, teachers, coordinators, and students when it comes to creating and using new pedagogical materials.

3.2. Context of the reading program in the first academic year (2018-2019)

The first-year Spanish program at UC Davis is divided into three courses (i.e., SPA 1, 2, and 3), each one lasting one academic quarter (i.e., Fall quarter, Winter quarter, and Spring quarter). The courses meet five times a week in 50-minute sessions and are taught by Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA), who are trained by the language program coordinator.

During the summer 2018 a research team consisting of two professors and two graduate students started the creation of the Reading Program. The research team met biweekly to assess 20 graded readers. Towards the end of the quarter, three graded readers were chosen based on the following combination of criteria: the proficiency level, engaging plot, and diverse representation of Spanish speaking countries, as determined by the research team. The chosen books were: *El secreto de su nombre* in SPA 1, *El misterio de la llave* in SPA 2, and *Lola Lago: vacaciones al sol* in SPA 3. At the same time, before the Winter quarter 2019 started, the books were included in the syllabus and an email was sent to the GTAs in the multiple sections of each course to ensure they followed the instructions to properly implement and use the books and the related activities. Each class had a weekly 50-minute reading workshop where students read a chapter of the GR and completed comprehension, vocabulary, and grammar activities about the reading.

Since the first iteration of the program (i.e., Winter quarter 2019), many changes have been applied to better address students' and GTA's needs or solve the issues that they experienced in using the books and activities. Throughout the last three years of the reading program, different approaches to reading (e.g., reading individually, in pairs or in groups, reading one book per class vs. letting students choose their book) have been tested. Decisions about which one of those approaches to use were made based on students' feedback (see Dykstra et al.,

2022) and GTAs' opinions (see Alins Breda et al., 2022). For instance, during the first quarter

that the program was implemented, half of the sections of SPA 1, 2, and 3 read individually and

the other half in pairs. At the end of the quarter, students and GTAs completed a brief

questionnaire where most of them indicated their preference for pair reading Alins Breda et al.

(2022). GTAs perceptions of the GRs' Implementation highlighted reading in pairs as engaging.

For instance, one participant commented:

In pairs, I think it was more fun for them given that they could share their experiences. I think that the cultural discussions were easier when they read in pairs, they felt safer sharing their opinions, maybe because they have already shared with their partners. (Participant in Alins Breda et al., (2022).

At the same time, GTAs whose students read individually commented that students

disliked this format and suggested the possibility of reading in pairs in future academic quarters

(Alins Breda et al., 2022). On this matter, one GTA highlighted:

They did not like to work individually so I had to constantly remind them that the reading was individually. (Participant in Alins Breda et al., 2022).

The comments from GTAs suggested that reading in pairs was the favorite format

because it allows students to share their opinions between themselves, and creates an atmosphere

where learners feel safer by asking questions to their partners instead of in front of the class. The

same conclusion was achieved by Dykstra et al., (2022) from students in these classes where

their feedback described working in pairs as helpful and supportive. For these reasons, starting in

the third iteration (i.e., Fall quarter 2019), in subsequent academic quarters, all sections read in

pairs.

3.3. Context of the reading program in the second academic year (2019-2020)

Starting in the 2019/2020 academic year,[4] The first-year Spanish program classes are taught following the flipped-classroom approach. This learning model requires students to learn grammar and vocabulary topics independently, and then practice those concepts in class (Jiang et al., 2022). To do so, three days a week before coming to class, students have to complete different assignments in the online textbook *Contraseña* (Lord & Rossomondo, 2019), and then practice these concepts in class with writing and oral activities. For the remaining two days, students have two different workshops (i.e., read a GR and watch a TV show). During these two sessions, students not only practice listening and reading but also complete activities related to the book or the TV show, and the grammar practiced during the week in *Contraseña*. Currently, in a normal week, these classes combine two days practicing new topics from *Contraseña*, one day doing the reading workshop, another day completing the TV show workshop, and the last day reviewing the new topics learned during the week. The weekly schedule for the 50-minute sessions is as follows:

- Mondays: practice the topics learned the day before at home in *Contraseña*
- Tuesdays: read a chapter of the GR and complete activities about the reading
- Wednesdays: practice the topics learned the day before at home in *Contraseña*
- Thursdays: watch a chapter of the TV show and complete activities about it
- Fridays: review the week's new topics from *Contraseña*

As explained in the previous section, all sections started to read in pairs. In addition to this update and the acquisition of *Contraseña*, three more changes were introduced during the second academic year of the Reading Program.

The first one was the introduction of an in-person orientation session for GTAs before the beginning of the classes during the Fall quarter 2019. In the initial offerings of the reading

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[4] Classes started to be held online from the Spring Quarter 2020 until the Fall Quarter 2021 because of the Covid pandemic. During this time, students completed the readings and the activities by themselves as homework.

program, GTAs only had written instructions about how to complete and manage the workshops, but we realized that they needed more information about the relevance of reading skills in L2 learning or how to best organize reading in pairs, for example. Taking into account previous feedback from teachers and students' questionnaires, an informal session was conducted with the instructors with details on how to conduct the reading workshops. During the meeting, the following topics were discussed: the benefits of reading in the L2 classroom, time management issues, the rationale behind the organization of the exercises, tips on how to engage students to participate during the reading workshops, and tips on how to explain the relevance and structure of the reading activities to the students. For this last point, GTAs watched and discussed selected videos of previous instructors teaching grammar, vocabulary, and summary activities in preceding reading workshops in order to see real models of how the workshops can be managed.

Another important update was the creation of a template with the same model of activities for the GRs in the three courses. This template was composed of pre-reading activities where learners had to summarize previous chapters and answer a number of vocabulary tasks, while-reading exercises with reading comprehension questions and grammar tasks related to the reading and to the course curriculum, and post-reading activities where participants had to summarize the reading and make predictions about the upcoming chapters.

Finally, GTAs and students in SPA 3 suggested that the graded reader for that course was not particularly engaging. Through a questionnaire after reading the book, students and GTAs highlighted the possibility to change the book. Since the literature on extensive reading suggests that allowing students to select their readings increases engagement (Briggs & Walter; 2016) we decided to provide SPA 3 students five different books to choose from, which varied in themes and genres. Table 2 presents the books utilized in the first and in the third iteration.

Table 2. Graded readers utilized in the first (Winter 2019) and in the third iteration (Fall 2019)

Title	First iteration	Third iteration	Themes	Genre	Setting
El secreto de su nombre	SPA 1	SPA 1	Art, History, adventure	Fiction, mystery	Mexico
Lola Lago: Vacaciones al sol	SPA 3	SPA 2	Adventure, mystery	Fiction	Spain
El misterio de la llave	SPA 2	SPA 3 Option 1	History, culture, adventure	Fiction, mystery novel	Spain
Guantanameras	n/a	SPA 3 Option 2	Family, coming of age	Fiction, drama novel	Cuba/Florida
Rebeldes de Tejas	n/a	SPA 3 Option 3	History, war	Fiction	Texas/Mexico
Fantasmas en la escalera	n/a	SPA 3 Option 4	Friendship	Fiction, mystery novel	Spain
48 Horas	n/a	SPA 3 Option 5	Travel, study abroad	Fiction, Adventure novel	Ecuador

Concerning the effect of choosing one's book, SPA 3 students responded contrary to what was expected. This is, students preferred to read the same book as their classmates, instead of having the possibility of choosing from a group of five books. During this third iteration, Dykstra et al. (2022) studied the differences between classes where learners chose their graded reader and classes where students read the same graded reader. It was found that participants reading their own book wanted more support from their instructors, students suggested that the entire class reading the same book would allow for more teacher support. From then on, students read the same book.

Ultimately, students could not choose their book. SPA 1 students read *El secreto de su nombre*, while *Lola Lago: vacaciones al sol* was selected for SPA 2, and *48 horas* was the one chosen for SPA 3. This update was established in the Winter quarter 2020 and remained until the Winter quarter 2022 when new graded readers created by a Professor and a team of GTAs were introduced.

3.4. Context of the reading program in the third academic year (2020-2021). The creation of the new Graded Readers

As explained before, GTAs' and students' feedback have been fundamental to introducing different changes in the reading program. One of the most important concerns was learners' level of engagement with the stories since feedback from GTAs and students suggested that the graded readers were not engaging enough and that part of the issue was the lack of familiarity with the settings and limited identification with the characters.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of giving students the opportunity to read stories with familiar plots and settings, and relatable characters to increase their motivation in reading (Renandya et al., 2018). The role of familiar and interesting topics in reading has been related not only to motivation, but also to incidental vocabulary learning. Lee & Pulido (2017), for example, measured vocabulary learning in students who were reading both high and low interest topic passages. The former obtained significantly better results and revealed a relation between topic interest and vocabulary learning than the latter. For these reasons, a group of instructors decided to create a book series related to students' life in the city of Davis with familiar settings, while seeing those familiar spaces through the eyes of characters from Spanish-speaking countries or Spanish-speaking families. The main goals were to increase

motivation and facilitate incidental vocabulary learning through plots and characters that would feel closer to the students' daily experiences.

During the academic year 2020-2021, a sequence of three new graded readers were created for the courses in the First-Year Spanish program by the language coordinator and a group of GTAs. The first step in the process to create the new books was to conduct a meeting where the different plots were decided. The most important decision in this session was to create three books where the main characters in the first book would continue to appear in the other books. The goal was to maintain a coherent plot and a sense of increased familiarity across course levels. The main character from the SPA 1 book, Irene, is an international student from Spain who starts her undergraduate education at UC Davis. The rationale behind that decision was to present learners with a character that they could possibly identify with and who would realistically interact in Spanish on campus and at home. While Irene is also present in the other two books, Gabriel, a Mexican-American student at UC Davis becomes the lead character in the SPA 2 book and Jake, an American student going abroad to Argentina, is the protagonist of the book in SPA 3.

During the process of writing the books, special attention was paid to the cultural and linguistic variety of the Spanish-speaking world through characters who use the varieties of Spanish from their regions while also explaining and negotiating certain aspects of their cultural background as they interact with other people in the books. Irene, the main character in the first book, presents some of the challenges and cultural shocks that a new international student from Spain can experience when first arriving in California and engaging with the academic world of a small college town. The second book shows a traditional celebration from Mexico from the point of view of a Mexican family, a student from Spain, and a student from California, who all

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discuss their own backgrounds to participate in the celebration. Finally, the third book exposes the cultural shocks and experiences of an American student in a study abroad program in Argentina. It is important to note that, in order to increase the realism of the stories, multiple instances of Spanish- English code-switching are included and, when speaking to characters who would not realistically speak Spanish, we did not hesitate to include dialogues fully in English in certain chapters. This was also thought as a strategy to normalize multilingual exchanges, which are extremely frequent among speakers of multiple languages. To avoid stereotypes and to make sure the different cultures and linguistic varieties were represented properly, the teams in charge of writing the books included at least one person from the regions represented in each book.

Each story was written and reviewed by a group of GTAs who were familiarized with the students' proficiency level in these classes. First of all, the GRs were written by two GTAs and the program coordinator and, then, revised by three other GTAs to make sure the grammar and vocabulary in the story was adapted to the students' proficiency level. Table 3 presents the graded readers, the linguistic variety spoken by the main characters, and a brief summary of the stories.

Table 3. Graded Readers created by GTAs in the Reading Program

Course level	Book's title	Linguistic diversity	Summary
SPA 1	Mi primer año en Davis (Alins Breda et al., 2022)	Spain and Mexico	Irene is a new international student from Spain. The problems arise from day one when she finds out she was defrauded and doesn't have a house. Her new friends will help her to resolve the mystery.
SPA 2	La Quinceañera (Ortega Pérez et al., 2022)	Spain and Mexico	Irene has a new boyfriend, Gabriel. His family is from Mexico, and they will enjoy the traditional celebration of La Quinceañera.

SPA 3	Quarter Abroad en Argentina (Cerbino et al., 2022)	Argentina	Jake, Irene's friend, decided to study abroad in Argentina. Jake has the opportunity to live and explore Mendoza as a local with his new host family and Argentinian friends.

Finally, when the stories were written, new activities were created following the same pattern as in previous reading workshops. Thus, reading comprehension, vocabulary exercises, and grammar activities related, not only to the stories, but to the course curriculum. Figure 1 presents a timeline of the most important changes during the four academic years. From the beginning of the program until the implementation of the new GRs created by a number of instructors in the program.

Figure 1. Timeline of the Reading Program

Summer 2018:
-Selection of GRs

Winter 2019:
-First iteration
-Classes read in pairs or individually

First academic year (2018/2019)

Summer to Fall 2020:
-The new GRs were created

Winter 2021 to Summer 2021:
- New activities were created for the new GRs

Third academic year (2020/2021)

Second academic year (2019/2020)

Fourth academic year (2021/2022)

Fall 2019:
-In person orientation session for the GTAs
-All classes read in pairs
-Same model of activities for the three courses
-Students in SPA 3 chose a GR from a selection of five

Winter 2020:
-Students in SPA 3 can no longer chose the GR.

Winter 2022:
-The new GRs were implemented

3.5. Preliminary study: Evaluation of the new graded readers through focus groups

During the second quarter of the fourth academic year (i.e., Winter quarter 2022), the new GRs were implemented. Before that, the previous quarter, two different focus groups were conducted to have an outside opinion about the books and the activities from students who had taken the courses in the First-year Spanish program in previous quarters, and GTAs who did not participate in the creation of the new books. Their perspectives on the GRs helped us to comprehend and identify strengths and weaknesses before the introduction of the new GRs in the reading program.

The participants, the procedure, the questionnaire, and the answers on both focus groups are discussed in the following sections. Quotations in the text will be followed by a parenthesis that states the pseudonym and the group (i.e., student vs. teacher) of the participant. For example, if a student named Helena was to be cited, the parenthesis would look like this: (*Helena, student*).

3.5.1. Participants

Students

Two classes in the first semester of the second year of Spanish instruction[5] were asked to participate in the focus group. The reason for choosing students from a higher level instead of learners from the first year was to have an opinion from students who had already learned Spanish using the commercial GRs in previous quarters and had experience using these materials. In order to recruit as many participants as possible, the details of the structure and organization of the focus groups were explained to both classes in a 10-minute session. During this session students learned about how the new graded readers were created and the procedure

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[5] At UC Davis, several students take the First year of Spanish instruction as part of a requirement for their degrees. Students taking Spanish during the second year are no longer fulfilling a requirement.

to participate in the focus group. Learners who were willing to participate were asked to (1) sign a consent form, (2) read the graded reader for SPA 1, and (3) choose a pseudonym prior to the meeting so their identity would not be revealed during the focus group session. Students also learned that the session was going to be audiotaped and transcribed, but their names would not be included in the transcription, as pseudonyms would be used instead. Finally, participants received 5 points of extra course credit on their final exam grade.

A total number of five students participated in the focus group, four females and one male. We will refer to them as Luisa, Helena, Ramona, Teodoro, and Marta. All of them were part of the first course in the second year of Spanish instruction but belonged to two different sections. These classes meet five times a week for 50 minutes and they follow the structure of the textbook *Imagina* which is divided into different units with new vocabulary, grammar, culture, and literature in each of them.

Instructors

An email was sent to GTAs in the Spanish department that were not participating in the creation of the new GRs and were currently teaching one of the courses in the First-Year Spanish program. This last point was important because these courses read other GRs at that time and teachers were familiarized with these materials and how to use them in the class. For this reason, by reading the new GRs, GTAs could provide a professional point of view on the implementation of these materials and compare them to the GRs currently in use.

In the email, the procedure to participate in the focus group session was explained. GTAs had to read the three new GRs before the meeting, choose a pseudonym prior the meeting so their identity would not be revealed, and they were aware that the session was going to be audiotaped and transcribed.

Three GTAs participated in the focus group. As explained before, the three of them were teaching in the first year of Spanish instruction at that moment and did not take part in the creation of the new GRs. One GTA, referred here as Pilar, had been teaching Spanish classes in the department for the last 4 years and had experience teaching not only the elementary level classes, but upper division level. The other two GTAs, referred to here as Jacobo and Germinia, had been teaching elementary Spanish classes in the department during one academic year. The three of them had experience using GR in Spanish classes.

3.5.2. Materials and procedures

During the session, participants answered six different questions:

1. What do you think about the topics in the books? Are they engaging? Do you think they can interest students? Please elaborate on your opinion.

2. What do you think about the books' difficulty level for learners in SPA 1-3? Do you think students in those levels will be able to understand what is going on in the books?

3. Do you think the quantity of reading (one chapter per week) and activities is appropriate to complete in one 50-minute session?

4. Do you believe reading these books as part of SPA 1-3 will help students develop

   - their overall linguistics skills

   - their written comprehension skills

   - their vocabulary

   - their grammar

   - their cultural awareness

   - other aspects?

5. If you have used other graded readers than these ones in previous quarters of SPA 1-3,

what differences do you observe between these new ones and the ones you used

previously? What are the most positive and challenging aspects of both types of

graded readers?

6. Do you have any suggestions to improve the readings or the activities?

Both sessions were held virtually on a video-conferencing platform, Zoom, and followed

the exact same structure. They started with a brief introduction where I reviewed the questions,

and I reminded them that the Zoom meeting would be recorded. During the meeting, I read the

questions one by one, and participants gave their opinion to each one. Both meetings took 35

minutes, and the only difference was that GTAs read and answered questions about the three new

GRs, while students only read and responded to questions about one new GR: the one for SPA 1.

3.5.3. Analysis

Once the virtual sessions ended, I personally examined the discussions and the answers of both

focus groups. The data was composed by the responses and interaction between participants

answering the open-ended questions. After examining the discussions for the first time, I created

a category system based on the open-ended questions and the participants' responses. Then, an

analysis of similarities and differences and repetitions between the participants' comments were

conducted. The major points were highlighted and exemplified in the next section with original

examples from the participants. These quotations will be followed in the text by the name and

group (i.e., students or teacher).

3.5.4. Results

Results are divided in two groups, students and instructors. Responses in the former are

distributed over three sections (i.e., students' Perceptions on the new GR for SPA 1, students'

Perceptions on potential benefits from reading the new GR, and students' suggestions to improve

the GRs) each of which are represented by a table. Furthermore, instructors' responses will be distributed over the same sections but are not organized in tables. The reason behind this decision is to avoid confusion between instructors' answers and the different books. Instructors had to read three books and their answers to the same questions were different depending on the book. For this reason, instead of making a table for each GR and section, a decision was made to include and discuss their answers in the text without tables.

Students

Table 4 shows Students' perceptions on the new GR for SPA 1. Overall, students were satisfied with the book and all of them perceived the GR as engaging for SPA 1 learners. Four out of five participants commented on this matter and highlighted the familiarity of the plot and how relatable the story was to their lives in Davis as exemplified in Helena's comment:

I can totally see myself going through some of the dilemmas and the problems that she had.
(Helena, student)

Regarding the book's proficiency level, three out of five students considered the book as well-adapted for SPA 1 learners and only one participant believed the book was too difficult. Two out of five students highlighted the dialogues in English as a feature that, from their point of view, made the reading level appropriate for SPA 1 learners. For example, Ramona saw these dialogues as a positive break from reading in Spanish:

Something that I like about this book, especially for Spanish 1, is that there is [sic] some dialogues in English ... gives the reader a little bit of a break. (Ramona, student)

Finally, although most of the students highlighted the level of the GR as appropriate for SPA 1 classes, they also thought that learners would need more time to complete the reading and the activities during the 50 minute sessions. Three out of five participants agreed with this

statement, while only one participant considered the amount of time to be appropriate to complete the reading and all the activities.

Table 4 Students' Perceptions on the new GR for SPA 1

	Students (n=5)	Quotation
The book is engaging	5 (students commented on this topic)	I thought it was interesting and there was a good plot twist *(Ramona, student)*
The book is relatable	4	I can totally see myself going through some of the dilemmas and the problems that she had *(Helena, student)*
The level of the book is adapted to the student's level	3	The paragraphs were never long and I think those kind of breaks really allow learning spanish speakers kind of digest the story *(Luisa, student)*
Dialogues in English	2	Something that I like about this book especially for spanish 1 is that there is some dialogues in English … gives the reader a little bit of a break *(Ramona, student)*
Level of the book is too difficult	1	I do feel like for Spanish1 I feel like maybe some of the vocabulary and even the grammar points might be difficult. *(Teodoro, student)*
Amount of time is appropriate to complete the reading and the activities	1	I feel like it was pretty comparable (previous spanish 2 and 3 classes that she took) … the readings that we had, the level of difficulty, the amount of time that we had to complete the activities. *(Ramona, student)*
Amount of time is not enough to complete the reading and the activities	3	I feel like this is not enough time for me (50 minutes) … I think it would help me to have it assigned as homework (the activities) *(Teodoro, student)*

Table 5 focuses on students' perceptions on potential benefits from reading the new GR. In general, students considered this material as appropriate to provide L2 input, increase

vocabulary learning, develop grammar skills, and foster cultural knowledge. Participants'

comments on cultural awareness highlighted the cultural shocks that the protagonist had moving

from Spain to the University of California, Davis as one of the topics that they enjoyed the most.

One student specifically highlighted the comparison of coffee prices between these two countries

as one of his favorite cultural shocks in the story:

I like that there is kind of a few lines that the character would say like about the coffee for example compared to how much coffee is here compared to in Spain, I really like those touches. (Teodoro, student)

Table 5 Students' Perceptions on potential benefits from reading the new GR

	Students (n=5)	Quotation
Help students increase their vocabulary	4	I like the part about how at the end everybody kind of came together with, like, dishes from, you know, their own country… it was like just in the span of my mind cuisine wise, you know it's part of the vocabulary as well. I've heard of paella before, but I just thought that aspect was just kind of a fun addition for the reading. *(Marta, student)*
Help students develop grammar	2	Putting together sentences is probably the most challenging part about learning a new language so for me reading and listening has always been the most helpful *(Ramona, student)*
Help students develop cultural awareness	3	I like that there is kind of a few lines that the character would say like about the coffee for example compared to how much coffee is here compared to in Spain, I really like those touches. *(Teodoro, student)*

Table 6 shows students' suggestions to improve the GR. Most comments on this topic

were focused on footnotes. All participants in the focus group suggested the implementation of

vocabulary and cultural notes as a way to make the reading easier for learners, as we can see in

this recommendation from one of the students:

The footnote idea, I think it would be helpful for words that maybe are not as common or maybe like others, like you can add additionally cultural notes or something… (Teodoro, student)

Table 6 Students' suggestions to improve the GR

	Students (n=5)	Quotation
Footnotes	5	The footnote idea I think it would be helpful for words that maybe are not as common or maybe like others like you can add additionally cultural notes or something… *(Teodoro, student)*
Pictures	1	It could be helpful to maybe like add some more photos and colors to make the textbook… and a little more interesting because I felt like at times I was just reading an article *(Helena, student)*

Instructors

Teachers' comments on their perceptions of the new GRs were focused on the degree of

engagement and the proficiency level of the books. When talking about these two topics,

teachers tended to approve the SPA 1 story, but they suggested some modifications for SPA 2 and

3 GRs. Specifically, teachers considered the book for SPA 1 engaging, but they did not enjoy the

readings for SPA 2 and 3 as much. Two out of three commented positively on the SPA 1 book as

we can see in this remark from one of the instructors:

Se me hizo algo interesante y me gustó la trama de la historia (SPA 1)... creo que los estudiantes van a sentirse enganchados por la historia (Germinia, teacher)

On the other hand, two instructors recommended changes in the SPA 2 and 3 books to

make the stories more entertaining. In this comment, one teacher clearly suggested to modify the

characteristics of the main characters to make the stories more engaging and familiar to the students.

Necesitamos que los personajes estén más definidos para que los estudiantes se reconozcan más con sus historias (Pilar, teacher)

When reflecting on the level of difficulty of the GRs, two out of three teachers considered the books in SPA 2 and 3 to be too difficult for learners and suggested to adapt the grammar to the syllabus in the class as the following example shows:

En cuanto al contenido y la gramática en el primer capítulo (SPA 3) empezamos con tiempos perfectos que no los vemos hasta la semana 10 en clase. (Pilar, teacher)

Although instructors highlighted differences between the engagement and the proficiency level of the new GRs, there was a consensus on vocabulary learning and cultural knowledge as two potential benefits from reading these books. Two out of three instructors considered GRs as excellent tools to help students learn new words. Furthermore, all teachers in the focus group agreed on highlighting the development of cultural knowledge as a benefit from reading the books as the following quote from Jacobo suggests:

Es una buena manera de mostrarles cómo es ser latino o hispánico y llegar a Estados Unidos (SPA 1 book) y vivir lo mismo que están viviendo ellos (the students) (Jacobo, teacher)

When referring to suggestions to improve the GRs, there were no differences between the books, and instructors' comments were related to the three new GRs. All teachers commented on adding pictures to help make students feel more comfortable while reading in Spanish, as explained by one of the instructors:

Las ilustraciones ayudan a crear un clima, una atmósfera de inmersión un poco más marcada (Jacobo, teacher)

In addition, instructors remarked to include vocabulary and grammar adapted to the course curriculum and to add cultural footnotes in all of the books. The following quote illustrates one of the participant's preferences for using footnotes:

Hay mucho vocabulario específico… podríamos poner notas al pie con un sinónimo que esté en Contraseña (textbook) (Pilar, teacher)

3.5.5. Discussion

These two focus groups have documented participants' perspectives on the implementation of new GRs in the first year of Spanish instruction at UC Davis. The similarities and differences between their responses will be discussed in this section. As was previously explained, students only read the new GR for SPA 1, while teachers read the three new GRs for SPA 1, 2, and 3. A priori, this could be a problem when comparing results from different focus groups, but this issue was minimized since teachers were asked to emphasize which of the GR they were referring to during the focus group session and it was thus easy to focus on the SPA 1 GR for comparisons with the students.

Overall, both groups considered the GR for SPA 1 as quite engaging and stressed the familiarity of the plot as one of the strengths in this book. When discussing the proficiency level of the book, comments were also positive and suggested that this GR was well adapted for SPA 1 learners. On this matter, students highlighted the dialogues in English as a feature that helped adapt the book to an appropriate level for SPA 1 and increase reading fluency and ease. These opinions are in line with previous studies that highlighted familiar plot to keep the readers engaged (Chang & Renandya, 2021; Rodrigo, 2018) and adaptation of the level of the book, especially with beginner proficiency learners, (Rodrigo, 2018) as important characteristics when choosing the correct GR. However, teachers had different opinions about the other two. Overall,

they did not consider these books as engaging as the first one and suggested a revision of the books to adapt them to the proficiency level of the students.

Regarding potential benefits from reading the new GRs, both groups agreed on cultural awareness and vocabulary learning as the two most important features to obtain from reading the books. However, to increase and enhance vocabulary acquisition, teachers recommended the inclusion of glosses in the form of footnotes with English translations, a suggestion also supported by previous studies (Alessi & Dwyer, 2008). This feature was also advised when both groups were asked for recommendations to improve the books. Teachers, as well as students, highlighted the importance of footnotes to help learners with new vocabulary and pictures to make the GRs more interesting. Finally, when asked about the new books in SPA 2, and 3, teachers commented on the possibility of modifying some of the grammar tenses in the books because of their difficulty. They suggested adapting it to the grammar in the course curriculum and, by doing so, giving a chance for learners to practice the new grammar in a real context.

In conclusion, both groups commented positively on the GR for SPA 1. Participants thought the plot was engaging and the grammar and vocabulary were well adapted to the proficiency level of elementary learners. When asked about the other two books, teachers expressed their worry about the grammar in the books and proposed to modify it. In addition to this suggestion, both groups recommended adding pictures and footnotes. These advices were considered and, before the first implementation of the new GRs, footnotes and pictures were introduced in the three books, and grammar was reviewed in the GRs for SPA 2 and 3.

4. Study 1. Students' experiences with the graded readers during the first iteration of the new GRs

4.1. Research questions

In Winter 2022, during the first iteration of the new GRs, students completed an online questionnaire at the end of the quarter to express their opinion on the readings and the activities, the reading format, and recommendations to improve the books. At this time, a number of classes kept reading the old GRs in order to compare participants' opinions about the new vs. old books. Special attention was paid to participants' feedback on the familiarity of the plot and the relatable characters in the new GRs to see if their opinions were in line with previous studies and teachers' and students' comments in the focus group. (Chang & Millett, 2017; Chang & Renandya, 2021; Renandya et al., 2018; Rodrigo, 2018) emphasized the importance of familiar plots to keep students engaged, while students and instructors that completed the focus group on the new GRs highlighted the same characteristics as one of the strengths in the GR designed for SPA 1 courses. Based on this data, it was hypothesized that when asked about engagement and interest in the books, participants reading the new GRs would have more positive comments than students reading the commercial GRs.

In addition to the familiarity of the plot, it was relevant for this study to know students' opinions on vocabulary learning and how the reading of the book and the completion of the activities contributed to their vocabulary development. GRs are reading materials that focus carefully on the vocabulary presented to the reader, exclude difficult words (Nation & Waring, 2020), and include activities that review the vocabulary previously encountered in the books (Alins Breda, 2021). Additionally, GRs and vocabulary acquisition have long been researched in previous studies with positive outcomes in incidental vocabulary learning (Al-Homoud &

Schmitt 2009; Horst, 2009; Suk 2016) or vocabulary learning through GRs with explicit

vocabulary activities (Cobb 2016; Teng, 2014). For these reasons, it was expected that students'

opinions emphasized vocabulary learning as a skill developed by reading the GRs.

The following research questions (RQ) were proposed:

1. According to the students, how adapted were the new GRs, when compared to the old

   ones, to learners' proficiency, interests, and expected learning outcomes?

2. What were the students' opinions on skills developed when reading and completing the

   activities?

3. Does the familiar plot in the new GRs make a difference in terms of student engagement?

4. What reading format did the students prefer (i.e., reading at home or in class)?

4.2. Methods

4.2.1. Participants

A total of 230 students completed the questionnaire. 51 were enrolled in SPA 1 and were divided

into 5 different sections, SPA 2 had nine classes and a total of 104 students, and the 75 learners

in SPA 3 were split into six sections. Each level (i.e., SPA 1, SPA 2, and SPA 3) was divided into

two different groups: classes reading the new GR for that course level, and one class in each

course reading the "old" GR. This would allow us to compare the differences and similarities

between students' responses about the new vs. old books. Table 7 presents the books used during

this academic quarter. The number of students reading each GR appears in parenthesis next to the

title of the GR.

Table 7. Books used during this academic quarter

	SPA 1	SPA 2	SPA 3
Old GRs	El secreto de su nombre (23 students)	Lola Lago: vacaciones al sol (16)	48 horas (6)

| New GRs | Mi primer año en Davis (28) | La Quinceañera (89) | Quarter Abroad en Argentina (69) |

4.2.2. Procedure

The first iteration with the new GRs took place during the Winter quarter of 2022. This quarter was special because the university had to adjust to the COVID restrictions at that moment. During the previous quarter, Fall 2021, instruction was held in person but, because of a COVID wave at the end of that quarter, classes started online during the first 4 weeks of the Winter quarter. During this period of time, students completed the readings at home individually. However, for the rest of the quarter classes took place in-person and students were able to read in class and work in pairs as had been the case in previous iterations.

Two weeks before the end of Winter quarter 2022, an email was sent to all the GTAs teaching in the first-year Spanish program at that moment. In this first communication, the importance of collecting feedback from students about the new and previous GRs was explained, and we emphasized how students' perceptions would help us to improve and develop better materials for future iterations. After receiving GTA's approval, another email was sent explaining that students would only have to complete a brief questionnaire after finishing the GR during the last week. Furthermore, detailed instructions on how to conduct this questionnaire were provided to the GTAs. That was, students had to sign a consent form before completing the questionnaire, participation in this project was voluntary, the questionnaire had to be done in class, and by completing this survey students would get five points of extra credit in one of their course assignments.

4.2.3. Questionnaire

At the end of the Winter quarter, students completed a questionnaire[6] on *Qualtrics* which included both closed and open-ended questions. After finishing a brief demographic questionnaire with 3 questions, students had to complete eleven questions about the reading. Using a Likert-based scale, students were asked if they enjoyed reading the book, how adapted the GR was to their level of proficiency, and how much they thought the completion of the reading contributed to their development of different skills (i.e., vocabulary acquisition, grammar skills, reading skills, overall Spanish proficiency, cultural awareness, student's self-confidence, and pleasure in reading in Spanish). In the open-ended questions, students elaborated on aspects they liked and disliked about the reading and the activities, and reflected on the best format to use these materials (i.e., reading at home-individually or in class-groups). This last question was introduced because, as was explained before, this quarter was divided into online and in person instruction.

4.3. Analysis

Participants' responses to the Likert-scale questions were computed by book (i.e., SPA 1 old book *El secreto de su nombre*, SPA 1 new book *Mi primer año en Davis*, SPA 2 old book *Lola Lago*, SPA 2 new book *La Quinceañera*, SPA 3 old book *48 horas,* and SPA 3 new book *Quarter Abroad en Argentina*). Data from these questions are presented in the form of descriptive statistics, including the total number of participants who gave a response (e.g., agreed, strongly agreed) as well as their percentage.

Open-ended questions were analyzed following through thematic analysis. First of all, responses were read by a first researcher to create a category system based on the students' comments, from which an initial set of qualitative codes was created. Secondly, 20% of the data

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[6] The completed questionnaire can be found in the Appendix section.

was coded by two different researchers using the program Nvivo (QSR International Pty Ltd, 2020) in order to analyze their inter-rater reliability. Most codes surpassed 90% of agreement but several did not. Regarding those, a meeting was set up to decide on possible changes to the coding structure, which were then implemented and resulted in 100% agreement for those new codes. As a final step, the first researcher used the new qualitative codes to analyze the rest of the data.

Table 8 shows the resulting codes and an explanation for each code. Quotations in the text will be followed by a parenthesis that includes the students' course level and the book type (i.e., old vs new). For example, a student who is cited, was in SPA 1 and read the new book would appear as: (SPA 1, new).

Table 8 qualitative codes

Assessment of the book	
Relatable/ familiarity	Students highlight the plot to be relatable or familiar to their lives as university students
Plot	Students consider the plot as engaging or interesting
Proficiency	Students consider the proficiency level of the book to match their level
Plot negative	Students do not like the story
Proficiency negative	Students consider the proficiency level to be difficult or easy
Activities students like/dislike the most	
Activities	Students like the activities but did not specify which type
Vocabulary	Participants like vocabulary activities
Comprehension	Students like reading comprehension activities
Culture	Students like culture activities
Syllabus content	Students like the activities related to their syllabus content
Vocabulary negative	Students do not like vocabulary activities

Reading format	
In class	Students like reading in class
At home	Students prefer reading at home
Neutral	Students do not prefer to read at home nor in class
Whole class	Students like to read all together in class
Groups/ Pairs	Students prefer to read in pairs or in small groups

4.4. Results

4.4.1. Quantitative results

Table 9 shows students' opinions on how adapted the book was to their proficiency level. The majority of students reading the old books in SPA 1 and 3 considered the readings to be exactly at their proficiency level. Most learners reading the rest of GRs highlighted the level of the books as challenging but manageable.

Table 9. How adapted was the book to your level of proficiency in Spanish?

	SPA 1 old book (23 students)	SPA 1 new book (28)	SPA 2 old book (16)	SPA 2 new book (89)	SPA 3 old book (6)	SPA 3 new book (69)
It was too challenging	0% (0)	3.57% (1)	0% (0)	5.62% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)
It was slightly challenging but manageable	39.13% (9)	57.14% (16)	81.25% (13)	76.40% (68)	16.67% (1)	66.67% (46)
It was exactly at my level of proficiency	60.87% (14)	39.29% (11)	18.75% (3)	16.85% (15)	83.33% (5)	33.33% (23)
It was too easy	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	1.12% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)

Participants were also asked how enjoyable the reading was. The Likert-based scale used in this question started at 1 (*I disliked it a great deal*) and ended at 5 (*I liked it a great deal*). As explained in table 10, positive answers were higher in all books, with 4 (*I like it somewhat)* being the most popular response for every GR. With regards to the books, the new book in SPA 1 *Mi primer año en Davis* was the favorite book with 85% of the responses being a 5 or a 4, followed by the new GR in SPA 3 Quarter Abroad en Argentina. However, the previous GRs in SPA 2 *Lola Lago* and in SPA 3 *48 horas* were the books students disliked the most.

Table 10. Did you like the book?

	SPA 1 old book (23 students)	SPA 1 new book (28)	SPA 2 old book (16)	SPA 2 new book (89)	SPA 3 old book (6)	SPA 3 new book (69)
I disliked it a great deal	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	6.25% (1)	2.25% (2)	0.00% (0)	1.45% (1)
I disliked it somewhat	4.35% (1)	0.00% (0)	6.25% (1)	7.87% (7)	16.67% (1)	4.35% (3)
I neither liked nor disliked it	30.43% (7)	14.29% (4)	31.25% (5)	25.84% (23)	33.33% (2)	26.09% (18)
I liked it somewhat	43.48% (10)	64.29% (18)	50.00% (8)	52.81% (47)	33.33% (2)	49.28% (34)
I liked it a great deal	21.74% (5)	21.43% (6)	6.25% (1)	11.24% (10)	16.67% (1)	18.84% (13)
Average score	3.8	4.1	3.4	3.6	3.5	3.1

Tables 11 to 15 report on how much students thought the completion of the reading contributed to their development of a number of skills (i.e., vocabulary acquisition, grammar skills, reading skills, overall Spanish proficiency, cultural awareness). The tables are divided by topics and use a Likert-based scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*a great deal*). Overall, results from

students' perspectives on the different books agreed that reading contributed the most to the development of reading skills in Spanish. On the other hand, students agreed on grammar as the least likely skill to develop by reading the GRs.

Table 11. Develop vocabulary skills in Spanish

	SPA 1 old book (23 students)	SPA 1 new book (28)	SPA 2 old book (16)	SPA 2 new book (89)	SPA 3 old book (6)	SPA 3 new book (69)
None at all	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	12.50% (2)	1.12% (1)	0.00% (0)	1.45% (1)
A little	13.04% (3)	10.71% (3)	18.75% (3)	20.22% (18)	33.33% (2)	21.74% (15)
A moderate amount	39.13% (9)	50.00% (14)	50.00% (8)	35.96% (32)	33.33% (2)	44.93% (31)
A lot	30.43% (7)	28.57% (8)	18.75% (3)	34.83% (31)	16.67% (1)	26.09% (18)
A great deal	17.39% (4)	10.71% (3)	0.00% (0)	7.87% (7)	16.67% (1)	5.80% (4)
Average score	3.5	3.4	2.8	3.3	3.2	3.1

Table 12. Develop grammar skills in Spanish

	SPA 1 old book (23 students)	SPA 1 new book (28)	SPA 2 old book (16)	SPA 2 new book (89)	SPA 3 old book (6)	SPA 3 new book (69)
None at all	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	12.50% (2)	2.25% (2)	0.00% (0)	2.90% (2)
A little	17.39% (4)	7.14% (2)	25.00% (4)	29.21% (26)	33.33% (2)	27.54% (19)
A moderate amount	43.48% (10)	60.71% (17)	50.00% (8)	39.33% (35)	33.33% (2)	37.68% (26)
A lot	26.09% (6)	21.43% (6)	12.50% (2)	22.47% (20)	16.67% (1)	26.09% (18)

	SPA 1 old book (23 students)	SPA 1 new book (28)	SPA 2 old book (16)	SPA 2 new book (89)	SPA 3 old book (6)	SPA 3 new book (69)
A great deal	13.04% (3)	10.71% (3)	0.00% (0)	6.74% (6)	16.67% (1)	5.80% (4)
Average score	3.4	3.4	2.6	3.0	3.2	3.0

Table 13. Develop reading skills in Spanish

	SPA 1 old book (23 students)	SPA 1 new book (28)	SPA 2 old book (16)	SPA 2 new book (89)	SPA 3 old book (6)	SPA 3 new book (69)
None at all	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	6.25% (1)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)
A little	4.35% (1)	7.14% (2)	18.75% (3)	12.36% (11)	0.00% (0)	11.59% (8)
A moderate amount	13.04% (3)	28.57% (8)	18.75% (3)	31.46% (28)	16.67% (1)	37.68% (26)
A lot	52.17% (12)	46.43% (13)	50.00% (8)	43.82% (39)	66.67% (4)	33.33% (23)
A great deal	30.43% (7)	17.86% (5)	6.25% (1)	12.36% (11)	16.67% (1)	17.39% (12)
Average score	4.1	3.8	3.3	3.6	4.0	3.6

Table 14. Develop overall Spanish language proficiency

	SPA 1 old book (23 students)	SPA 1 new book (28)	SPA 2 old book (16)	SPA 2 new book (89)	SPA 3 old book (6)	SPA 3 new book (69)
None at all	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	12.50% (2)	1.12% (1)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)
A little	8.70% (2)	7.14% (2)	12.50% (2)	22.47% (20)	33.33% (2)	26.09% (18)
A moderate amount	39.13% (9)	32.14% (9)	50.00% (8)	37.08% (33)	33.33% (2)	42.03% (29)
A lot	21.74% (5)	46.43% (13)	25.00% (4)	33.71% (30)	16.67% (1)	21.74% (15)

A great deal	30.43% (7)	14.29% (4)	0.00% (0)	5.62% (5)	16.67% (1)	10.14% (7)
Average score	3.7	3.7	2.9	3.2	3.2	3.2

Table 15. Develop cultural awareness towards Spanish-speaking communities (in the US or abroad)

	SPA 1 old book (23 students)	SPA 1 new book (28)	SPA 2 old book (16)	SPA 2 new book (89)	SPA 3 old book (6)	SPA 3 new book (69)
None at all	4.35% (1)	7.14%(2)	6.25% (1)	3.37% (3)	16.67% (1)	4.35% (3)
A little	17.39% (4)	14.29% (4)	31.25% (5)	21.35% (19)	16.67% (1)	23.19% (16)
A moderate amount	17.39% (4)	42.86% (12)	50.00% (8)	37.08% (33)	33.33% (2)	28.99% (20)
A lot	26.09% (6)	25.00% (7)	12.50% (2)	30.34% (27)	16.67% (1)	26.09% (18)
A great deal	34.78% (8)	10.71% (3)	0.00% (0)	7.87% (7)	16.67% (1)	17.39% (12)
Average score	3.7	3.2	2.7	3.2	3.0	3.3

Tables 16 and 17 report on how much the readings contributed to student's self-confidence and pleasure in reading in Spanish. Using the same Likert-based scale from 1 to 5, students' perspectives on the different books were generally positive. Overall, the new book in SPA 1, *Mi primer año en Davi*s, got the best responses in both categories. For this GR, 60% and 68% of the students' responses, when asked about their self-confidence and pleasure in reading in Spanish respectively, were a 4 (a lot) or a 5 (a great deal). This book was followed in both categories by the previous GR in SPA 1 *El secreto de su nombre*. On the other hand, the book with the most negative responses was the previous GR in SPA 2 *Lola Lago*.

Table 16. Increase self-confidence in reading in Spanish

	SPA 1 old book (23 students)	SPA 1 new book (28)	SPA 2 old book (16)	SPA 2 new book (89)	SPA 3 old book (6)	SPA 3 new book (69)
None at all	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	12.50% (2)	2.25% (2)	0.00% (0)	5.80% (4)
A little	8.70% (2)	7.14% (2)	25.00% (4)	17.98% (16)	0.00% (0)	11.59% (8)
A moderate amount	39.13% (9)	32.14% (9)	43.75% (7)	34.83% (31)	50.00% (3)	43.48% (30)
A lot	13.04% (3)	53.57% (15)	18.75% (3)	35.96% (32)	16.67% (1)	30.43% (21)
A great deal	39.13% (9)	7.14% (2)	0.00% (0)	8.99% (8)	33.33% (2)	8.70% (6)
Average score	3.8	3.6	2.7	3.3	3.8	3.3

Table 17. Increase pleasure in reading in Spanish

	SPA 1 old book (23 students)	SPA 1 new book (28)	SPA 2 old book (16)	SPA 2 new book (89)	SPA 3 old book (6)	SPA 3 new book (69)
None at all	0.00% (0)	3.57% (1)	18.75% (3)	10.11% (9)	0.00% (0)	14.49% (10)
A little	8.70% (2)	7.14% (2)	25.00% (4)	23.60% (21)	50.00% (3)	26.09% (18)
A moderate amount	34.78% (8)	21.43% (6)	50.00% (8)	30.34% (27)	0.00% (0)	27.54% (19)
A lot	26.09% (6)	53.57% (15)	6.25% (1)	25.84% (23)	33.33% (2)	27.54% (19)
A great deal	30.43% (7)	14.29% (4)	0.00% (0)	10.11% (9)	16.67% (1)	4.35% (3)
Average score	3.8	3.7	2.4	3.0	3.2	2.8

4.4.2. Qualitative results

Table 18 shows students' opinions on what they liked or disliked the most about the reading. Since qualitative results are based on responses to open-ended questions, the number of total participants in the study did not match the number of total responses since a number of students did not answer to the open-ended questions. Overall, participants seemed satisfied with the books, especially when it came to the plot and students' engagement with the story. Furthermore, the main difference between the new and the old books was that students reading the new books commented specifically on the familiarity and relatability of the stories and none of the students reading any of the old books commented on this matter. For example, this participant reading the new book in SPA 1, remarked how interesting it was to read a story with the protagonists being UC Davis students:

I liked that the setting was Davis and the people in the story attended UC Davis. It made it more interesting and we're able to relate to them. (SPA 1, new book)

Finally, participants also remarked on the difficulty level of the book. On this matter, students' responses had a similar tendency across the different books. Some participants considered their book to have the right proficiency level while the same number of students considered their book to be a bit difficult for their level.

Table 18. What did you like the most (and/or the least) about the book?

	SPA 1 old book (23 students)	SPA 1 new book (28)	SPA 2 old book (16)	SPA 2 new book (89)	SPA 3 old book (6)	SPA 3 new book (69)
Relatable/ familiarity	0% (0)	35.71% (10)	0% (0)	21.35% (19)	0% (0)	34.78% (24)
Plot	26.09% (6)	53.57% (15)	75% (12)	15.73% (14)	0% (0)	14.49% (10)
Proficiency	8.70% (2)	3.57% (1)	6.25% (1)	10.11% (9)	16.67% (1)	5.80% (4)

Plot negative	0% (0)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	6.74% (6)	16.67% (1)	11.59% (8)
Proficiency negative	8.70% (2)	10.71% (3)	12.5% (2)	4.49% (4)	0% (0)	7.25% (5)

Table 19 shows students responses on what activities they liked or disliked the most. The majority of participants liked the activities but did not specify their favorite type. When focusing specifically on the different types, vocabulary activities (i.e., fill-in-the-blanks) were the ones with the most responses. Although a small percentage (less than 15% in all the groups) of students disliked the vocabulary activities, the majority of the responses were positive, as this participant explained:

I enjoyed identifying vocabulary because it made it easier to remember. (SPA 2, new book)

Vocabulary activities were followed by comprehension activities and cultural tasks. Furthermore, a small percentage of students gave positive feedback on the activities in the readings being connected to the grammar and vocabulary in the course syllabus. For example, this student highlighted the importance of relating the grammar activities that accompany the readings with the grammar in the textbook:

I liked the quizzes after because I was able to get better at grammar. The grammar in the book was often closely correlated with the current unit and it helped me improve. (SPA 2, new book)

Table 19. What did you like the most (and/or the least) about the activities?

	SPA 1 old book (23 students)	SPA 1 new book (28)	SPA 2 old book (16)	SPA 2 new book (89)	SPA 3 old book (6)	SPA 3 new book (69)
Activities	43.48% (10)	32.14% (9)	12.5% (2)	15.73% (14)	66.67% (4)	13.04% (9)
Vocabulary	17.39% (4)	17.86% (5)	25% (4)	20.22% (18)	33.33% (2)	15.94% (11)

Comprehension	8.70% (2)	10.71% (3)	25% (4)	14.61% (13)	0% (0)	15.94% (11)
Culture	4.35% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	11.24% (10)	0% (0)	8.70% (6)
Syllabus content	0% (0)	3.57% (1)	0% (0)	4.49% (4)	0% (0)	4.35% (3)
Vocabulary negative	4.35% (1)	0% (0)	6.25% (1)	13.48% (12)	0% (0)	8.70% (6)

When reflecting on the reading format used (i.e., reading at home or in class), students clearly preferred reading in class (table 20). Two main reasons were highlighted from their responses. Students appreciated the possibility of working in groups and asking questions to their teachers and classmates. For instance, one participant explained that:

Reading in class and discussing it with classmates makes me understand better (SPA 1, new book)

At the same time, students favored not only working in groups, but having the possibility of reading out loud to practice the pronunciation, something that was impossible to do by reading individually at home. One of the students commented on this matter:

Once in class I got to practice my pronunciation much more since I was reading out loud. (SPA 1, new book)

On the other hand, almost no participants preferred reading at home, no more than 5% of students in each of the books. Lastly, a small percentage had no preferences between the reading formats.

Table 20. What reading format is better for the taller de lectura?

	SPA 1 old book (23 students)	SPA 1 new book (28)	SPA 2 old book (16)	SPA 2 new book (89)	SPA 3 old book (6)	SPA 3 new book (69)
In class	43.48%	28.57% (8)	50% (8)	65.17%	33.33% (2)	28.99%

	(10)			(58)		(20)
At home	4.35% (1)	3.57% (1)	0% (0)	3.37% (3)	0% (0)	4.35% (3)
Neutral	8.70% (2)	17.86% (5)	18.75% (3)	8.99% (8)	33.33% (2)	10.14% (7)
Whole class	13.04% (3)	14.29% (4)	0% (0)	5.62% (5)	0% (0)	2.90% (2)
Groups/ Pairs	17.39% (4)	7.14% (2)	31.25% (5)	51.69% (46)	16.67% (1)	7.25% (5)

4.5. Discussion

This study provides information about the experiences and opinions of students in a Reading Program after implementing new GRs for the first time and, at the same time, the questionnaire answers will provide an opportunity to compare differences and similarities between students reading the new and the previous GRs. To do so, this discussion will analyze and respond to four different RQs:

1. According to the students, how adapted were the new GRs, when compared to the old ones, to students' proficiency level?
2. What were the students' opinions on skills developed when reading and completing the activities?
3. Does the familiar plot in the new GRs make a difference in terms of student engagement?
4. What reading format did the students prefer (i.e., reading at home or in class)?

RQ 1 focuses on students' perception of the GRs' proficiency level. Overall, quantitative results show that students considered the books to be adapted to their proficiency level. Most of them expressed that the book was challenging but manageable while another big number of participants, especially readers of the old books in SPA 1 and 3, considered the books to be at their exact proficiency level. Additionally, in the open-ended questions, less than 12% of students in every GR commented positively or negatively on this topic with no important

differences between the books. As Rodrigo (2018) explained, matching the level of the GRs to the student's proficiency level is essential, especially with beginner learners because of their limited vocabulary and grammar. To achieve this goal, feedback from students and teachers in the focus groups conducted before the implementation of the new GRs was crucial to modify and adapt the grammar in two of the new books before the first iteration. For this reason, this study highlights the importance of an outside opinion to identify grammar constructions and vocabulary not adapted to the level of the students.

Concerning RQ 2, participants responded on how much they thought reading the book and completing the activities contributed to their development of different skills (i.e., vocabulary acquisition, grammar skills, reading skills, overall Spanish proficiency, cultural awareness). Quantitative results highlighted reading skills in Spanish as the one with the most positive responses across the different books and grammar as the least likely skill to develop, even though students completed grammar activities after the reading. Furthermore, when asked about their favorite activities in the open-ended questions, results showed that vocabulary activities (i.e., fill-in-the-blanks and cognate identification tasks) were the exercises that students liked the most, although these comments were not supported by the quantitative results when asked about how the GRs contributed to their development of vocabulary skills. This study expected students to emphasize vocabulary as one of the skills developed by participating in the Reading Program; the sum of the quantitative and qualitative results partially supported this hypothesis. On one hand, the open-ended responses supported previous studies' suggestion of including activities to review the vocabulary encountered in the reading (Alins Breda, 2021), and are in line with instructors' opinion of complementing the GRs with vocabulary activities focused on the book and the course curriculum (Alins Breda et al., 2022). On the other hand, quantitative data showed

that students did not perceive reading as an activity that contributed to their development of vocabulary. These opinions are contrary to results in previous research where students achieved vocabulary gains through the combination of GRs with explicit vocabulary exercises (Cobb 2016; Teng, 2014). To evaluate this disagreement, Study 2 will analyze students' vocabulary acquisition after reading the GRs and, therefore, learn if students' perception on their own vocabulary learning matches their own results.

Regarding RQ 3, *Does the familiar plot in the new GRs make a difference in terms of student engagement?* students' responses supported past studies and the ideas shared by the participants in the focus groups. When asked if they like the book in the Likert-scale questions, the GRs with the most positive responses were the new book in SPA 1 followed by the new book in SPA 3. These answers were supported in the open-ended questions when students reading the new three GRs emphasized the familiar plot and relatable protagonists as the characteristic that they enjoyed the most when reading the books, while students reading the old books did not comment on this matter. The content and the theme in the GRs have been highlighted by Rodrigo (2018) as one of the most important aspects to choose the correct GR, if students are not interested in the story they can get bored and frustrated, and will not make any improvement. Specifically, finding a familiar plot with relatable characters can make a positive difference (Renandya et al., 2018), and, in this particular Reading Program, it seems that students' opinions are in line with this idea and highlight the protagonists being from their university as an engaging and motivating factor.

Finally, concerning RQ 4 and the preferred reading formats, students clearly favor reading in class instead of at home. By reading in class, students felt more confident having the opportunity to ask questions to their teachers and other students. In this same Reading Program

Dykstra et al., (2022) collected feedback from students that also described working in pairs as helpful and supportive. Lastly, students highlighted reading in class as a way to improve their pronunciation.

To summarize, three important conclusions can be drawn from students' feedback. First of all, conducting two focus groups with teachers and advanced students before the implementation of the reading program was crucial to adapt the new books to the proficiency level of the students. This is especially important with elementary students because of their limited grammar and vocabulary knowledge (Webb & Chang, 2015) and for this reason, this study highlights the importance of carrying out focus groups or other sources of second opinions to make sure the proficiency level of the books are adapted to the students' level. Secondly, a significant difference was found between the new and the old books regarding the benefit of familiarity. Students reading the new books enjoyed reading stories where the settings and the protagonist were relatable to them, and they highlighted this characteristic as one of the topics that they liked the most about the books. These opinions are in line with previous studies (Chang & Renandya, 2021; Renandya et al. 2018) and with the hypothesis in this study confirming that relatable and familiar topics are key characteristics for students' enjoyment. This finding can have important pedagogical implications for teachers and coordinators seeking to introduce new GRs to their classrooms. Hence, finding readings that are familiar and connect with the students can enhance their motivation, and have a positive effect on their attitudes toward reading. Finally, this study hypothesized that students' feedback will emphasize vocabulary learning as a skill developed by reading the books. Students supported the idea of including activities to review the vocabulary (Alins Breda, 2021; Alins Breda et al., 2022) but did not perceive vocabulary as a skill developed, contrary to previous studies' results on vocabulary learning

through reading (Cobb 2016; Teng, 2014). On this matter, study 2 will evaluate the effects of the reading and the word-focussed activities, and find out if students' perceptions are in line with their vocabulary gains.

Chapter 5: Vocabulary learning through reading and fill-in-the-blanks activities

5.1. Introduction and research questions

Graded Readers have been broadly recommended to use in L2 classes (Rodrigo, 2018; Webb & Nation, 2017). Among other reasons for these positive recommendations, several studies have found benefits from using these materials in learning new words incidentally through repetition and varied encounters during reading activities (Al-Homoud & Schmitt 2009; Horst, 2009; Suk 2016). In addition to this, Graded Readers usually included vocabulary activities that tap into specific language-focused content. In other words, Graded Readers present the opportunity to mix incidental vocabulary learning through reading with intentional vocabulary learning through language focused activities. Learning words rarely occurs in isolation and with Graded Readers learners can encounter the words in different occasions and context during the reading, and study them further by completing language focused activities. This mixed approach has been chosen from previous research as the strongest approach to learn new words from reading (Eckerth & Tavakoli, 2012; Pellicer-Sánchez & Schmitt, 2010; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006; Schmitt, 2008; Teng, 2014). It is important to note, however, that selecting the correct activities is fundamental to increase the students' learning opportunities, activities that can complement the learning of vocabulary through reading. Hence, one key objective on this matter is to select the best vocabulary activities that can be used while reading a Graded Reader in a Reading Program. Seeking to improve the vocabulary activities in the Reading Program, this study evaluates the reliability of the TFA framework in measuring three exercises used in the Reading Program and documents students' vocabulary gains after completing the readings plus the different activities.

Reading and vocabulary acquisition have been broadly researched in previous studies (Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009; Horst, 2009; Pellicer-Sánchez & Schmitt, 2010; Pigada &

Schmitt, 2006; Suk 2016). However, these studies are mainly focused on incidental vocabulary learning and do not use intentional vocabulary activities, like the ones in this study, that focus specifically on language-focused content. In addition to this, by measuring the reliability of the TFA this study will explore if teachers can rely on this framework when choosing vocabulary activities in a reading context. In other words, this study links the TFA framework with the GRs to evaluate the advantages of mixing intentional vocabulary learning activities with incidental vocabulary learning from reading.

Two different frameworks were used in previous studies to measure activities' quality for lexical development (i.e., TFA and ILH). The reason behind choosing the TFA framework is because, as explained in chapter 2[7], previous literature indicates that TFA is more complete and precise to determine the quality of a specific vocabulary learning task. Furthermore, this framework has also been used by other authors to analyze isolated vocabulary activities (Webb et al., 2020), to assess activities within Spanish L2 GRs (Alins Breda, 2021), and as a pedagogical tool to help teachers choose textbook activities that are most likely to be effective in promoting vocabulary acquisition (Alins Breda et al., 2022). In order to choose the activities for this project, it is important to review the activities used in previous studies that have analyzed the efficacy of both frameworks' ability to predict and explain the effectiveness of diverse vocabulary tasks. Table 21 presents a summary of these studies with the activities and the framework analyzed.

Table 21. Summary of the studies

Hulstijn & Laufer (2001) ILH	Reading comprehension	Fill-in-the-blanks	Composition writing	
Folse (2006) ILH	Fill-in-the-blanks	Three fill-in-the-blanks	Sentence writing	

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[7] Literature review on the TFA and ILH Frameworks can be found in section 2.4.

Keating (2008) ILH	Reading comprehension	Fill-in-the-blanks	Sentence writing	
Kim (2008) ILH	Reading with marginal glosses	Fill-in-the-blanks	Writing a sentence	Writing a composition
Eckerth & Tavakoli (2012) ILH	Reading with marginal glosses	Fill-in-the-blanks	Writing a summary	
Hu & Nassaji (2016) TFA and ILH	Multiple choice	Choosing the definitions	Rewording sentences	Fill-in-the-blanks
Yang et al. 2017 TFA	Reading comprehension	Fill-in-the-blanks	Writing a sentence	
Zou (2017) ILH	Fill-in-the-blanks	Writing a sentence	Writing a composition	
Gohar et al.2018 TFA and ILH	Reading comprehension	Writing a sentence	Writing a composition	
Zou et al. 2018 TFA	Reading comprehension with multimedia annotations	Fill-in-the-blanks with textual annotations	Fill-in-the-blanks with multimedia annotations	Writing a sentence with textual annotations
Valdehíta (2023) TFA and ILH	Choosing the correct definition	Choosing the correct examples	Writing sentences	

As described in table 21, three activities have been broadly evaluated (i.e., sentence writing using target words, fill-in-the-blanks, and reading comprehension tasks). Results on these studies are consistent with the frameworks analyzed and showed that the most effective activity is sentence writing followed by fill-in-the-blanks (Hulstijn & Laufer, 2001; Keating, 2008; Kim, 2008; Eckerth & Tavakoli, 2012; Zou, 2017; Yang et al. 2017; Zou et al. 2018).

Following the set of criteria proposed by the TFA, the differences between sentence writing and fill-in-the-blanks are visible. From the 5 categories (i.e., motivation, noticing, retrieval, generation, and retention) only noticing has the same importance in both tasks, and

there are significant differences in the remaining 4 categories. The former activity allows

students to ensure successful linking form and meaning (retention) and create contexts where

students can use the word in a new way (generation). On the other hand, fill-in-the-blanks

encourage learning (motivation) and involve recognizing or recalling the target word from

memory (retrieval). These intrinsic differences between the tasks can make previous studies

challenging to analyze and evaluate. This is, the different components in each task make it

difficult to predict which one is the key factor to make one activity better than the other.

Another alternative explanation of the findings may be the influence of an external factor

such as time on task. The importance of this factor is highlighted in previous studies (Folse 2006;

Keating, 2008; Kim, 2008; Eckerth & Tavakoli, 2012; Zou, 2017), however, not all of them

consider this variable in their investigations and participants were given different amount of time

to complete the tasks (Hulstijn & Laufer, 2001; Hu & Nassaji, 2016; Zou, 2017; Gohar et al.

2018; Zou et al. 2018). As a consequence of this, the results of previous studies might have been

due to time on task rather than the score on the frameworks analyzed.

In conclusion, previous studies support the value of these frameworks and their ability to

explain which tasks have a better score and, as a result, are more useful to learn vocabulary.

However, the activities selected in these studies are very different between them making it very

difficult to understand why one activity has a better score than the others. As a consequence of

this, their results may have happened because of various factors outside of the TFA score. Thus,

measuring a writing task and reading with glosses task in the same study may lead to a result that

supports the TFA framework but, at the same time, can have other factors such as time on task,

degree of difficulty, students' familiarization with the activities, or productive or receptive

knowledge influencing the results. To understand and evaluate the reliability of the TFA

framework it is important to eliminate as many external factors as possible to make sure that the differences on the tasks score are well predicted by the TFA. At the same time, it is important to choose tasks that have similar TFA that only differ in a few categories. By doing so, the key factors that make one task better than the other can be highlighted.

To achieve this goal, one possibility is to use the TFA to analyze three different versions of the same activity. These tasks will have the same but one criteria in the TFA score, external factors such as time on task will remain the same, and the only factor that will change between the activities will be the one measured, the TFA criteria that varies within the tasks. An activity that allows making small modifications that can affect only one of the five categories in the TFA (i.e., retrieval) at a time is fill-in-the-blanks. This is a broadly used exercise in previous studies in L2 classrooms (Nakata & Webb, 2016), and in worldwide conducted exams such as the Cambridge English Exams (Kılıçkaya, 2019). Furthermore, participants in Study 1 highlighted this activity as useful to remember new vocabulary, as this students described:
I enjoyed identifying vocabulary because it made it easier to remember. (SPA 2, new book)

This study tries to evaluate the reliability of the TFA framework by studying three different versions of the same activity. To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first one to discuss this issue and can have two important advantages with regards to previous research. Firstly, the use of three similar tasks eliminates external factors that can influence the results such as time on task or students' familiarity with the activity. Secondly, these tasks allow as few intrinsic differences in the TFA as possible; from the five TFA categories only one, i.e., retrieval, is different between the activities. Previous studies compared activities with many differences in the TFA distribution, and therefore, made it difficult to highlight which one was the key criteria

that made one activity better than another. This difficulty disappears by comparing tasks with differences only in one category.

Once we select the best possible activity for our students, this will be the chosen format for our open-access GRs.

5.2. Methods

5.2.1. Design of the study

The study was conducted in the first-year Spanish program at UC Davis which is divided into three courses (i.e., SPA 1, 2, and 3), each one lasting one academic quarter (i.e., Fall quarter, Winter quarter, and Spring quarter). The study took place over a period of 10 weeks involving a pre-test in Week 1, before students started reading the GR, and a post-test in week 10 after they finished the GR. To investigate how each activity affected their vocabulary gains, students were divided into fours groups (i.e., three experimental groups and one control group) and each performed one of the four tasks. Once a week, students in the different groups participated in the Reading Program in 50-minute sessions where they read one chapter and completed activities about the reading, including one vocabulary activity per week. There were two main differences between the groups: the type of vocabulary exercise and the encounters with the target words in the activities. While experimental groups completed fill-in-the-blanks tasks and engaged with each target word three times over the 10-week period, the control group completed an exercise where they had to find cognates in the text, thus not prompting them to practice the target words explicitly. However, all the groups encountered the target words in the readings. Finally, during the pre and post test sessions, participants were forbidden to use any type of dictionary, nor were allowed to discuss the meaning of the vocabulary items with their classmates.

5.2.2. Research Questions

It was expected that students using the fill-in-the-blanks activity with the highest TFA score will have better vocabulary gains than the rest of the students (see Table 22). Furthermore, it was hypothesized that the three experimental groups will have better acquisition of the target words since the control group meets the target words only in the reading but not in the activities. Based on this information, the following research questions were proposed:

1. Do students reading and completing explicit vocabulary activities have better results in vocabulary learning than students only reading?

2. Does the TFA Framework predict the vocabulary gains of three similar activities in a Reading Program?

5.2.3. Activities and Task Involvement Load

Three different versions of a fill-in-the-blank activity with a minimal difference in their TFA score are applied in this study. As explained before, the only differences between these activities are in the retrieval category, and more specifically in the criterias: retrieval, productive retrieval, and recall. Table 22 presents the TFA score of the three tasks.

Table 22. Three different versions of a fill-in-the-blank activity

	Activity 1 Retrieval	Activity 2 Productive retrieval	Activity 3 Recall
Motivation			
Vocabulary learning goal	1	1	1
Motivate learning	1	1	1
Words selected by learners	0	0	0
Noticing			
Attention on target words	1	1	1

Awareness of new vocab learning	1	1	1
Negotiation	0	0	0
Retrieval			
Retrieval	1	1	1
Productive retrieval	0	1	1
Recall	0	0	1
Multiple retrievals	0	0	0
Spacing between retrievals	0	0	0
Generation			
Generation	1	1	1
Productive generation	0	0	0
High degree of generation	0	0	0
Retention			
Successful form-meaning linking	0	0	0
Instantiation	0	0	0
Imagining	0	0	0
Avoidance of interference	1	1	1
Total score	**9**	**8**	**7**

As shown in table 22, activity 1 is the task with the lowest TFA score (7) where students need to recognize the correct word meaning from a number of choices (retrieval), but neither productive retrieval nor recall are present because the word forms are provided and learners do not need to retrieve the words from memory. An example task is described below:

Read the sentences and choose the missing words from the list.

Jamón / gambas / chipirones / patatas fritas
A Lola Lago le gusta comer _____.

Activity 2 gets one more point in the TFA score (8) than task 1 because students need to retrieve the form (productive retrieval) and, as explained in Nation & Webb (2011), this is more demanding than retrieving the meaning (receptive retrieval). To complete this activity, translations of the target words in the students' L1 are given. Thus, students have the meaning of the words but need to retrieve the form as exemplified in the task below:

Read the sentences and write the English translation of the missing word.

A Lola Lago le gusta comer (Spanish ham) _____.

Finally, in activity 3 neither the word´s form nor meaning are provided and learners have to retrieve them from memory (recall). As presented in Nakata & Webb (2016), in this activity the first letter needs to be provided in order to make sure students use the target words. Hence, out of these three exercises, activity 3 has the highest TFA score (9) since recall is more demanding than recognition (Nation & Webb, 2011). Here there is an example:

Complete the sentences with the missing words. The first letter of each missing word is provided in parentheses for each sentence. Use words from the book.

A Lola Lago le gusta comer j_____.

5.2.4. Participants

A total of 260 learners participated in this study with an age range between 18 and 26. Participants were students in one of the three courses in the first-year Spanish program at UC Davis. Each course had at least 4 different sections and each section performed one of the four tasks. Before the beginning of the study, teachers were contacted by email with information about this project to be delivered to their students. It was explained to the students that participation in this project was totally voluntary and that they will obtain 5 extra points in one of

their course assignments if they complete the pre and posttest. Table 23 presents the different

activity groups at each level, the activity name, the number of participants, and the number of

classes.

Table 23. Participants

	Group 1 Retrieval	Group 2 Productive Retrieval	Group 3 Recall	Control group Cognates
SPA 1	One class	One class	One class	One class
	9 participants	16 participants	17 participants	17 participants
SPA 2	One class	One class	One class	One class
	14 participants	11 participants	12 participants	18 participants
SPA 3	Two classes	Two classes	Two classes	Two classes
	40 participants	40 participants	43 participants	23 participants

5.2.5. Vocabulary Test

Participants in the four groups completed a pre and post vocabulary test[8]. The test consisted of

the eight target words plus an additional 24 words for which students had to provide the English

translations. This meaning recall vocabulary test was completed by students right before the start

of the Reading Program and a week after they completed the reading. The scoring system in the

pretest and the posttest followed the same criteria with a score of 0 for an incorrect response and

a score of 1 for a correct one. The additional 24 words chosen were vocabulary encountered in

the readings. The process to select the target words will be explained in the next section.

5.2.6. Target words

The process to select the target words had the following steps. First, 35 words in SPA 1, 38 in

SPA 2, and 18 in SPA 3 were selected as candidates to be the target words. These words were

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[8] The completed pre and post vocabulary tests for students in SPA 1 can be found in the appendix section.

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considered to be not necessary to understand the plot and from a higher proficiency level than the students reading the books had. From these lists, a number of steps were taken to ensure students did not have previous contact with the words. First of all, only words that appeared three or fewer times were selected to prevent students from getting partial knowledge of the target words by seeing them several times. The number of appearances was chosen based on previous studies results, Pellicer-Sánchez & Schmitt (2010) explained that there is not too much difference in learning words by only reading when the words' occurrence in a book is between 1-4 but there is an increase in learning starting at 5 exposures. Secondly, the Spanish corpus (Davies, 2017) was used to make sure the target words were not between the 2000 most familiar words in Spanish to avoid students' previous contact with the words. For the same reason, the items were contrasted with the course syllabus and with the other activities in the readings to ensure that students only saw the target words during the reading and during the completion of the fill-in-the-blank activities. Finally, the quarter before the implementation of this study, a pilot test was conducted with 20 students in SPA 1, 45 in SPA 2, and 42 in SPA 3 to ensure students in these courses do not have previous knowledge of the target words. Participants had to answer if they knew the meaning of a number of items, including the target words. If more than 10% of the students knew the meaning, these words were automatically eliminated.

In short, three important points were taken into account in order to select the final words and discard the rest: (1) items that were not presented in the readings more than 3 times, (2) items that were not part of the 2000 most familiar words in Spanish, and (3) words that were known by less than 10% of the participants in the pilot test. A total of 8 eight words in each book were selected. Tables 24- 26 show the selected target words, the number of appearances in the

books, their scores in the Spanish Corpus of Davies, and the pilot test results with the number of

students that knew the words and the percentages.

Table 24. Target words SPA 1

	Number of appearances	Spanish Corpus (Davies, 2017)	Pilot test with 20 students
aduana	2	6760	2 (10%)
felpudo	1	30116	0 (0%)
cava	2	18411	0 (0%)
pija	1	20307	0 (0%)
lágrimas	1	2557	0 (0%)
césped	2	8091	1 (5%)
desconsolada	1	16298	2 (10%)
acogedor	1	8704	2 (10%)

Table 25. Target words SPA 2

	Number of appearances	Spanish Corpus (Davies, 2017)	Pilot test with 45 students
guay	1	12517	1 (2.2%)
escayola	1	28904	1 (2.2%)
jadear	1	21718	1 (2.2%)
travesura	1	11559	0 (0%)
malabares	1	20086	2 (4.4%)
glorieta	2	19848	0 (0%)
palmada	1	16768	1 (2.2%)
buitre	1	8921	0 (0%)

Table 26. Target words SPA 3

	Number of appearances	Spanish Corpus (Davies, 2017)	Pilot test with 42 students
sevillanas	1	30023	0 (0%)
andinismo	1		3 (7.1%)
ubicarse	1	2052	3 (7.1%)
aduana	1	6760	2 (4.8%)
bostezar	1	15443	3 (7.1%)
piba	3	6671	0 (0%)
choripán	4	31840	0 (0%)
mozo	2	9619	3 (7.1%)

5.3. Results

The results show that substantial learning of the target words occurred in the three experimental groups and this learning was consistent across the three courses (i.e., SPA 1, 2, and 3). Table 27 presents the pre and posttest results divided into the different groups and courses. In all three courses best results were obtained by Group 2, followed by groups 3 and 1, and finally, the control groups. In other words, from the three experimental groups, participants using the version of the fill-in-the-blanks with productive retrieval had the best performance in the posttest, followed by the recall version and, in the last place, the retrieval version. Furthermore, participants in the control groups learnt fewer words compared with any of the experimental groups. This was expected since students in this group did not encounter the target words in the activity but only in the reading. Finally, when divided by courses, experimental groups in SPA 2 had better results in the posttest than the same groups in SPA 1 and 3. However, participants that only read but did not complete activities (i.e., control groups) had the best results in SPA 1, followed by SPA 3 and SPA 2.

Table 27. General Results

SPA Course	Group	Pretest	Posttest
SPA 1	Group 1	2.8%	38.9%
	Group 2	3.9%	79%
	Group 3	0.7%	41.9%
	Control group	5.1%	26.5%
SPA 2	Group 1	7.1%	53.6%
	Group 2	2.3%	72.7%
	Group 3	2.1%	61.5%
	Control group	0%	4.9%
SPA 3	Group 1	3.4%	33.4%
	Group 2	4.7%	48.1%
	Group 3	1.5%	34.3%
	Control Group	1.1%	16.8%

Table 28 presents the results by words in the different groups in SPA 1. On one hand, the word *césped* was the one that students learnt the most in the three experimental groups and the control group, followed by *felpudo* and *lágrimas*. On the other hand, *pija, acogedor*, and *aduana* were the words with the least positive results. In addition to this, in the control group, the results highlight the differences in the score between two specific words (i.e., *felpudo* and *cava*) and the rest of the target words. While *felpudo* and *cava* were learnt respectively by 0% and 5.9% of the participants in the posttest, the remaining words were acquired by, at least, 23% of the students.

Table 28. SPA 1 Results by words

	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Control Group	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest

Aduana	0%	22.2%	0%	62.5%	0%	23.5%	11.8%	29.4%
Felpudo	0%	44.4%	0%	93.8%	0%	64.7%	0%	0%
Cava	0%	33.3%	0%	81.3%	0%	47.1%	0%	5.9%
Pija	0%	22.2%	0%	62.5%	0%	17.6%	0%	29.4%
Desconsolar	0%	44.4%	6.3%	62.5%	0%	29.4%	0%	23.5%
Césped	0%	66.6%	6.3%	93.8%	5.9%	70.6%	5.9%	47.1%
Acogedor	0%	22.2%	0%	87.5%	0%	23.5%	5.9%	35.3%
Lágrimas	22.2%	55.5%	1.88%	87.5%	0%	58.8%	17.6%	41.2%

In SPA 2, the target word *guay* had the best results in the posttest in all the different groups (i.e., the three experimental groups and the control group). In addition to *guay*, two other words that were learnt from a significant number of students in the three experimental groups were *glorieta* and *palmada*. Although the meaning recall posttest presents with positive results across all target words in the three experimental groups, two of the target words present with less positive results than the rest: *jadear* and *travesura*. Finally, the posttest in the control group presents a huge difference between guay, that was learnt by 27.8% of the students after the reading, and the rest of the target words that share a poor score in the posttest. Table 29 introduces the results by words in the groups in SPA 2.

Table 29. SPA 2 Results by words

	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Control Group	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Guay	7.1%	78.6%	0%	90.9%	16.7%	83.3%	0%	27.8%
Escayola	7.1%	50%	0%	63.6%	0%	58.3%	0%	5.6%
Jadear	7.1%	28.6%	0%	63.6%	0%	25%	0%	0%

Travesura	21.4%	42.9%	18.2%	72.7%	0%	50%	0%	0%
Malabares	7.1%	57.1%	0%	63.6%	0%	66.7%	0%	0%
Glorieta	0%	57.1%	0%	81.8%	0%	83.3%	0%	0%
Palmada	7.1%	64.3%	0%	72.7%	0%	66.7%	0%	5.6%
Buitre	0%	50%	0%	72.7%	0%	58.3%	0%	0%

From the eight target words in SPA 3, *choripán* was the one with the best results in the three experimental groups and the control group followed by *andinismo*. In addition to this, the word *piba* was learnt by a large number of participants in groups 1 and 2 but, at the same time, had a low score in group 3 and the control group compared with the other target words. Lastly, *sevillanas* was the least learnt word across the different groups. Results by words are presented in table 30.

Table 30. SPA 3 Results by words

	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Control Group	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Sevillanas	0%	17.5%	0%	27.5%	0%	20.9%	0%	0%
Andinismo	5%	60%	7.5%	57.5%	0%	48.8%	0%	21.7%
Ubicarse	5%	27.5%	5%	45%	2.3%	37.2%	4.3%	30.4%
Aduana	5%	25%	5%	45%	2.3%	14%	0%	13%
Bostezar	7.5%	32.5%	7.5%	50%	4.7%	34.9%	4.3%	26.1%
Piba	2.5%	32.5%	2.5%	57.5%	2.3%	20.9%	0%	13%
Choripán	0%	47.5%	2.5%	70%	0%	74.4%	0%	21.7%
Mozo	2.5%	25%	7.5%	32.5%	0%	23.3%	0%	8.7%

5.4. Discussion

In answer to the first research question, *Do students reading and completing explicit vocabulary activities have better results in vocabulary learning than students only reading?*, the results indicated that the three experimental groups completing the reading plus vocabulary activities had better results than the group that only read. These results were expected and are in line with previous studies that highlighted the importance of complementing reading with intentional vocabulary activities in order to learn new words (Cobb, 2016; Pellicer-Sánchez and Schmitt, 2010; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006; Teng, 2014).

Although this data was conclusive, incidental vocabulary learning in the control groups did occur, specially in SPA 1. Students in SPA 2 only gained a small percentage of the target words, 4.9%, SPA 3 improved these results to 16.8%, and SPA 1 had impressive results with 26.5% of the words known by the students in the posttest. One possible explanation for this promising result in SPA 1 is the inclusion of short paragraphs in English in the story. Students in this class had no previous experience with Spanish but, at the same time, one of the goals of the Reading Program was to use interesting and motivating reading materials. For this reason, it was decided to include parts of the story in English to advance the plot and to make the story more engaging. This feature had a direct effect on the amount of input known by the readers, as well as their lexical coverage of the text, which means that if a text has 100 words and 10 of those words are in English, students are exposed to fewer Spanish words than a text written completely in Spanish, and therefore, the lexical coverage is higher in the former text. In other words, there is a direct relationship between lexical coverage and reading comprehension (Schmitt. et al., 2011), an increment in the amount of input known by learners increases their reading comprehension,

and at the same time, gives learners more time to focus on the unknown target words, and therefore, increase their possibility for vocabulary acquisition.

Although vocabulary learning happened in the control and the three experimental groups, there was a large difference between the acquisition of the different words. While a number of them were broadly acquired by the majority of the learners, a few of them did not have as positive results. *Césped* in SPA 1, *Guay* in SPA 2, and *Choripán* and *Andinismo* in SPA 3 had the best results overall, these words caught the attention of the students and were broadly learned. Although it is difficult to find an explanation for the positive results with the word *césped*, the other three, *guay*, *andinismo*, and *choripán*, have a strong cultural component and represent specific dialects spoken in the different stories. This cultural component can have a direct impact on the vocabulary acquisition of the new words and increase their engagement with the story, a conclusion shared by Plonsky & Loewen (2013).

Research Question 2 asked if the TFA framework predicted the vocabulary gains of the three experimental groups in a Reading Program. Each of these groups completed a different version of a fill-in-the-blanks activity with a different TFA score predicting the quality of the activities. In group 1 participants had to recognize the word meaning from a number of choices and had the lowest TFA score (7). Group 2 had one more point in the TFA score (8) because students needed to retrieve the form instead of the meaning and, as explained in Nation and Webb (2011), this is more demanding. Finally, group 3 completed the activity with the highest TFA (9) where students did not have the form nor the meaning and had to retrieve the target words from memory. In other words, the TFA predicted group 3 to have the best results in the posttest followed by group 2 and group 1.

Results partially support the TFA prediction. As expected, group 1 had the least positive results and students completing this fill-in-the-blanks activity had more gains than only the control group where students were only exposed to the target words in the reading. However, results in the other two groups were not well predicted by this framework. Group 2 had the best outcome in the posttest even when their TFA score was lower than group 3. Two possible explanations can be drawn. First, the TFA originated to measure isolated activities, for instance, (Webb et al., 2020) highlighted the accuracy of the TFA framework to predict task efficacy with this type of activities. However, to the best of our knowledge, the TFA has never been tested in a Reading Program where students encountered the target words in context (i.e., the book) before completing the activities. Even more, whereas in group 2 translations of the target words were given and students had to go back to the reading and retrieve the form (i.e., encounter the target words one more time). Group 3 had to remember words from memory, and although this is more demanding, it could be too difficult for the students and result in worse acquisition than group 2. The second explanation is related to the vocabulary test format which was a meaning recall test where students had to provide the English translations of the words. This assessment is broadly used in studies seeking to evaluate intentional vocabulary learning activities such as fill-in-the-blanks (Webb et al., 2020). However, this test could influence the outcome because of the similarity with the activities carried out by group 2. The test asked students to write the english translation of the target words, and in turn, students in group 2 were already exposed to the english translation while completing the activities. For this reason, the test format could influence the positive results obtained by group 2.

To sum up, this reading program has highlighted the positive results on vocabulary acquisition in the different groups, including the control group. Reading has shown to be a

powerful tool for learning new words by itself but is much more powerful when complemented with vocabulary activities. Specifically, this study advocates for the use of a productive retrieval filling-in-the-blanks activity where students have the opportunity to retrieve the form of the target words from their English translation.

Chapter 6: General Discussion

6.1. Discussion

Previous studies in reading in a second language have focused on the best possible approach (i.e., extensive or intensive reading) to develop L2 reading skills such as fluency, reading comprehension, cultural awareness, or vocabulary acquisition (Cobb, 2016; Eckerth & Tavakoli, 2012; Pellicer-Sánchez & Schmitt, 2010; Teng, 2014). On one hand, extensive reading has been highlighted as an approach that increases students' motivation on reading, as a source of meaningful input with consistent exposure to content, and as an opportunity for students to develop reading abilities and fluency (Nation & Waring, 2020). On the other hand, intensive reading needs explicit instruction and focus on a specific learning goal such as the completion of a language-focused activity (Rodrigo, 2018). Despite all the differences, these two approaches can be used together in order to highlight their strengths and hide their weaknesses. However, although best practices and approaches to reading have been broadly studied and previous research has supported the use of reading materials in a second language classroom, little is known about the teachers' and students' perspectives and beliefs on this topic and their opinion on reading in a second language classroom. More specifically, little is known about the experiences of teachers and students in a first-year Spanish instruction program where the proficiency level of the learners can be a handicap to include a Reading Program in the curriculum. In other words, students with zero or very limited knowledge of Spanish can be more susceptible to developing reading anxiety than more advanced students.

To fill this gap, this dissertation provides an inside view of the experiences and beliefs of teachers and Spanish beginner students in a Reading Program at the university level and highlights best practices from the point of view of teachers and learners. This Reading Program

started four years ago, and previous to this thesis, different studies have been conducted and conclusions have been made based on data collected from the participants in the program. Dykstra et al. (2022) focused on students' anxiety while reading and their overall experience while reading individually versus in pairs, by comparing classes where students read the same book with classes where students could choose a book from a list. Students completed a survey and their responses emphasized reading in pairs and reading the same book as their preferred formats. This is because reading in pairs allowed for increased peer-to-peer support, and reading the same book took away the distress of not having enough support from their teachers when choosing their own book. While this study collected data from the students in the program, Alins Breda et al. (2022) focused on teachers' opinions in the same program. These teachers reached the same conclusions as the students when asked on their preferences in reading in pairs or individually. In addition to this, they also favored including activities in line, not only to the reading, but the grammar and vocabulary content of the course.

Continuing with this Reading Program and taking into account the conclusions reached by these two studies, this dissertation went one step further and presents students' opinions and experiences after implementing, for the first time, new GRs created by professors and Teacher Assistants in the department. The process to create and implement the GRs brought important conclusions that can be shared with other professors or language departments willing to implement a Reading Program.

In order to match the proficiency level of the books with the proficiency level of the students it is crucial to have an outside opinion after the creation of the books and before the implementation of the program. This study was conducted with two different focus groups with outside professors and students whose feedback was fundamental to make a number of changes

in the grammar and vocabulary to adapt it to the proficiency level of the students and the grammar topics in the curriculum. As Rodrigo (2018) emphasized, beginner learners have a very limited vocabulary and grammar knowledge and matching their level with the proficiency level of the GRs is essential. For this reason, this study considers that having an external opinion is necessary to ensure the proper proficiency level of the GRs. In addition to the proficiency level of the books, this dissertation highlights the importance of a familiar plot in the books in terms of student engagement with the story. In these books students can either see familiar settings through the eyes of international students from Spanish-speaking countries or discover Spanish-speaking countries through the eyes of study abroad students. This allows learners to identify with the characters as they manage complex intercultural exchanges or cultural shocks. As explained in Rodrigo (2018) choosing the right content and theme for the GRs can have an important impact on students' performance in terms of their engagement. On the same page, finding a familiar plot with relatable characters has been highlighted by (Renandya et al., 2018) as an important aspect to engage students with the story. These conclusions achieved by previous studies have been also underlined for teachers and students in this program emphasizing the familiar plot and relatable characters as fundamental characteristics of the Reading Program. For instance, participants in the focus group before the implementation of the new books highlighted this characteristic, as explained by one of the students:

I can totally see myself going through some of the dilemmas and the problems that she had. (Student)

Students' comments after the implementation of the new GRs were in line with the participants in the focus groups. When asked if they liked the book, the quantitative and qualitative results emphasized the relatable protagonists and familiar plot as the most positive characteristics of the books. To sum up, beliefs and experiences from teachers and students

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highlighted the importance of matching the proficiency level of the book with the proficiency level of the students, and the importance of students' engagement with the stories. These factors can have important implications for students' motivation and attitude towards reading, and ultimately, reduce students' anxiety towards reading.

In addition to these findings, this dissertation focused on the acquisition of vocabulary through reading and finding which activities are the best to tap into specific language-focused contents in the specific context of a Reading Program. It is well known that a single explicit vocabulary activity will not provide the same vocabulary gains as a combination of incidental and intentional approaches (i.e., reading plus vocabulary activities) (Webb et al., 2020). In addition to this, it is also known that incidental vocabulary learning through reading is not enough, and previous studies proposed to add explicit vocabulary activities to complement the readings (Cobb, 2016; Eckerth & Tavakoli, 2012; Pellicer-Sánchez & Schmitt, 2010; Teng, 2014). This dissertation tested this association of reading plus vocabulary activities and the results are in line with previous studies. More specifically, all groups completed a vocabulary posttest at the end of the Reading Program and the groups that combined the reading with activities had better results on vocabulary retention than the group that only read.

Once the advantages of using activities that complement the reading were tested, the main focus was on finding the best possible activity for the specific context of a Reading Program. To achieve this goal, this dissertation applied the TFA framework to evaluate three different activities. To the best of our knowledge, this framework has never been tested in the specific context of a Reading Program where students meet the vocabulary for the first time while reading, and later, complete the vocabulary activities. In other words, this dissertation was not only evaluating different activities, but also testing the reliability of the TFA framework in a

context that has never been used before. The activities used in this study were three different versions of a fill-in-the-blanks activity with a different TFA score[9] predicting the quality of the activities. The reason behind choosing three versions of a fill-in-the-blanks activity were: (1) to eliminate external factors such as time on task, (2) allow as few intrinsic differences in the TFA as possible, (3) fill-in-the-blanks is a broadly used exercise in previous studies in L2 classrooms (Nakata & Webb, 2016), and (4) is worldwide used in exams such as the Cambridge English Exams (Kılıçkaya, 2019).

The fill-in-the-blanks with the best results was the exercise where students needed to retrieve the form from the text instead of the meaning. In other words, translations of the target words in the students' L1 were given and students had to write the word in the L2, Spanish. This activity was not the one with the highest score in the TFA framework which means that this framework was not totally accurate when measuring three versions of a fill-in-the-blanks activity in the specific context of a Reading Program. The next section addresses these findings and possible implications for teachers and second language programs looking to implement a Reading Program.

6.2. Implications

This dissertation provides an inside view of the implementation of a Reading Program in a first year Spanish program at the university level. The opinions and beliefs of teachers and students on the books and activities, and the vocabulary data collected from students can have important implications for teachers and language programs willing to start a Reading Program in a similar context.

First of all, to make the experience of reading in a second language class useful, it is necessary to adapt the proficiency level of the books to the students' knowledge. This Reading

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[9] An explanation of the different TFA scores can be found in section 4.2.3.

Program highlighted the importance of having outside opinions, such as teachers in the program or more advanced students that took these classes before. These points of view are important because these participants have been in these classes and know the exact proficiency level of the class, the course syllabus, the grammar and vocabulary taught, and the strengths and weaknesses of the students. In addition to the proficiency level of the books, these participants shared their opinions on the students' engagement with the story and their points of views were in line with previous studies suggesting the importance of choosing the books based on students interests (Rodrigo, 2018). Not only these participants shared their positive opinions, but students during the first iteration of the Reading Program also emphasized the story as interesting and, specifically, they highlighted the inclusion of familiar settings as one of the strengths in the stories.

For these reasons, and in order to choose the perfect reading materials in terms of the proficiency level of the book and students' engagement with the story, this dissertation emphasized the importance of having professional outside opinions (i.e., teachers and students). In addition to this, it is concluded that the creation of our own books had important implications for students' motivation and attitude towards reading. Teachers and language programs willing to incorporate reading materials in their classes have the task of creating or choosing books in the market that tap into their students' interests and include familiar settings.

Apart from these implications, this dissertation achieved important conclusions in terms of vocabulary learning through reading. First of all, it is important that future reading programs willing to develop vocabulary learning consider to include activities that tap into specific language-focused contents. This dissertation proved that, although partial knowledge of the

target words is acquired while reading, all students completing language-focused activities in addition to reading acquire more vocabulary than those only reading.

Once the advantages of using vocabulary activities have been demonstrated, and this dissertation focused on which activities are best to complement the reading. To do so, the TFA framework was used to evaluate three different versions of the same activity (i.e., fill-in-the-blanks) and, at the same time, measure the reliability of the framework. This dissertation recommends the use of fill-in-the-blanks to complement the reading and, specially, a fill-in-the-blanks where students needed to retrieve the form from the text instead of the meaning. This specific version had better results than the other two fill-in-the-blanks where students had to recognize the word meaning from a number of choices or retrieve the words from memory. Finally, this dissertation advocates for the use of the TFA framework in order to choose the most appropriate activity. Although it was not completely accurate in this project, the activities measured were very similar between them and this could have influenced the results. However, when measuring different activities, this framework has demonstrated to be an accurate and a powerful tool to predict vocabulary learning. (Gohar, Rahmanian and Soleimani, 2018; Hu and Nassaji, 2016; Zou et al., 2018).

6.3. Limitations and future studies

One limitation concerns the lack of a delayed posttest in Study 2. Students completed only two word knowledge tests, one before the implementation of the Reading Program and the second one just after the completion of the reading. It is possible that completing a posttest several weeks later could have had a decline in the positive results and for this reason this dissertation claims to include a delayed posttest in future studies. In addition to this, it can be argued that study 2 only measured partial knowledge of the words. In the post and pre tests students only had

to focus on the meaning and it is clear that learning a new word entails much more than that (Webb et al., 2020). Finally, one last limitation could be the test used to measure vocabulary acquisition in study 2. Although this type of test has been used broadly to evaluate intentional vocabulary activities (Webb et al., 2020) it could have influenced the positive results of group 2 because of the similarity with the activities carried out in this group.

In addition to the limitations, this dissertation claims for the inclusion of future studies willing to research on reading programs using in-house reading materials and on vocabulary acquisition through GRs. It will be important to understand if the positive effects of the inclusion of in-house reading materials can be extrapolated to other Reading Programs and if the positive vocabulary results are consistent in future studies.

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Appendix

Study 1: questionnaire completed by students at the end of the quarter

Start of Block: Consent form

Q1 Before you start, please read this <u>Consent form</u> and, if you agree to take part in this project, write your name here:

End of Block: Consent form

Start of Block: Demographic Questionnaire

Q2 Please write your name and last name here so that we can identify that you participated in the study and give you your extra credit.

Q3 In which Spanish course are you enrolled?

 o SPA 1

 o SPA 2

 o SPA 3

Q4 What is the name of your Spanish language instructor? Make sure to write their complete name, so that we know who they are and we can communicate with them easily in order for them to add the correct number of points to the grade of your final exam.

End of Block: Demographic Questionnaire

Start of Block: Questionnaire

Q5 During this quarter, you read a book in class. We would like to know what you thought about the book, the experience of reading in Spanish, the activities that you had to complete, etc. In the following section, please respond to all questions to give us an idea of your overall experience with the book and the

activities that go with it. We will use your responses to modify the Talleres de Lectura in future quarters, so your input is really important.

Q6 Which book did you read?

- o El secreto de su nombre (SPA 1)
- o Mi primer año en Davis (SPA 1)
- o Lola Lago (SPA 2)
- o La quinceañera (SPA 2)
- o Quarter Abroad en Argentina (SPA 3)
- o 48 horas (SPA 3)

Q7 How adapted was the book to your level of proficiency in Spanish?

- o It was too challenging
- o It was slightly challenging but manageable
- o It was exactly at my level of proficiency
- o It was too easy

Q8 Did you like the book?

- o I disliked it a great deal
- o I disliked it somewhat
- o I neither liked nor disliked it
- o I liked it somewhat
- o I liked it a great deal

Q9 What did you like the most (and/or the least) about the book?

Q10 Did you read a Spanish book in previous Spanish classes at UC Davis? If yes, which one was it? How did it differ from the one you read this quarter? Which one did you enjoy the most? Explain why. If this is your first time reading a book in a Spanish class at UC Davis, just write "N/A".

Q11 This question focuses on the activities you completed during the Talleres de Lectura, not the book itself.
What did you like the most (and/or the least) about the activities done during the Talleres de Lectura?

Q12 How much do you think the completion of this quarter's Talleres de Lectura contributed to your development of these different skills?

	None at all (1)	A little (2)	A moderate amount (3)	A lot (4)	A great deal (5)
Develop vocabulary skills in Spanish	o	o	o	o	o
Develop grammar skills in Spanish	o	o	o	o	o
Develop reading skills in Spanish	o	o	o	o	o
Develop overall Spanish language proficiency	o	o	o	o	o
Develop cultural awareness towards Spanish-speaking communities (in the US or abroad)	o	o	o	o	o
Increase self-confidence in reading in Spanish	o	o	o	o	o

Increase pleasure in reading in Spanish	o	o	o	o	o
Other	o	o	o	o	o

Q13 How did the experience of reading in Spanish change from the first Talleres de Lectura this quarter, where you completed them at home as an assignment, to the last weeks, where you completed the Talleres in class?

Q14 What suggestions do you have to improve the Talleres de Lectura? If you have none, write N/A.

Q15 Do you have any other comments about the book, the experience of reading in Spanish, the activities, etc?

End of Block: Questionnaire

Study 2: This is the pretest completed by students in SPA 1

Start of Block: Consent form

Q1 Consent form
 Before you start, please read this consent form and if you agree to take part in this project write your name in the next question.

Q2 By writing my name in this document I accept to take part in this project.

End of Block: Consent form

Start of Block: Demographic Questionnaire

Q1 Please write your name and last name here so that we can identify that you participated in the study and give you your extra credit.

Q2 In which Spanish course are you enrolled?

    o SPA 1

    o SPA 2

    o SPA 3

Q3 What is the name of your Spanish language instructor? Make sure to write their complete name, so that we know who they are and we can communicate with them easily in order for them to add the correct number of points to the grade of your final exam.

Q4 What is your age?

Q5 What is your gender?

    o Male (1)

    o Female (2)

    o Non-binary / third gender (3)

    o Prefer not to say (4)

End of Block: Demographic Questionnaire

Start of Block: Vocabulary

Q1 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the english translation. If not, write "no".
Fugaz

Q2 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the english translation. If not, write "no".
Luego

Q3 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the english translation. If not, write "no".
Siempre

Q4 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the english translation. If not, write "no".
Aduana

Q5 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the english translation. If not, write "no".
pincel

Q6 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
abundante

Q7 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
ella

Q8 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
felpudo

Q9 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
semejante

Q10 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
enero

Q11 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
cava

Q12 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
bastante

 Q13 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
solventa

Q14 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
mano

Q15 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
pija

Q16 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
rama

Q17 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
logopeda

Q18 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
generoso

Q19 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
desconsolada

Q20 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
curva

Q21 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
elefante

Q22 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
dañar

Q23 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
botella

Q24 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
Césped

Q25 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
rescatar

Q26 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
lava

Q27 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
ordenador

Q28 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
acogedor

Q29 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
insulto

Q30 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
pañuelo

Q31 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
lágrimas

Q32 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
cura

End of Block: Vocabulary

Start of Block: Questionnaire

Q1 How prepared do you feel about reading a book in Spanish? On a scale from 1 to 7, 1 being not prepared at all and 7 extremely prepared.

	Not prepared at all (1)	A little prepared (2)	Moderately prepared (3)	very prepared (4)	Extremely prepared (5)
How prepared do you feel about reading a book in Spanish? (1)	o	o	o	o	o

Q2 How nervous do you feel about reading a book in Spanish? On a scale from 1 to 7, 1 being not nervous at all and 7 extremely nervous.

	Not nervous at all (1)	A little nervous (2)	Moderately nervous (3)	very nervous (4)	Extremely nervous (5)
How nervous do you feel about reading a book in Spanish? (1)	o	o	o	o	o

End of Block: Questionnaire

Study 2: This is the posttest completed by students in SPA 1

Start of Block: Consent form

Q1 Consent form
 Before you start, please read this consent form and if you agree to take part in this project write your name in the next question.

Q2 By writing my name in this document I accept to take part in this project.

End of Block: Consent form

Start of Block: Demographic Questionnaire

Q1 Please write your name and last name here so that we can identify that you participated in the study and give you your extra credit.

Q2 In which Spanish course are you enrolled?

o SPA 1

o SPA 2

o SPA 3

Q3 What is the name of your Spanish language instructor? Make sure to write their complete name, so that we know who they are and we can communicate with them easily in order for them to add the correct number of points to the grade of your final exam.

Q4 What is your age?

Q5 What is your gender?

o Male (1)

o Female (2)

o Non-binary / third gender (3)

o Prefer not to say (4)

End of Block: Demographic Questionnaire

Start of Block: Vocabulary

Q1 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the English translation. If not, write "no".
Fugaz

Q2 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
Luego

Q3 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
Siempre

Q4 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
Aduana

Q5 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
pincel

Q6 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
abundante

Q7 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
ella

Q8 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
felpudo

Q9 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
semejante

Q10 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
enero

Q11 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
cava

Q12 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
bastante

Q13 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
solventar
Q14 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
mano

Q15 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
pija

Q16 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
rama

Q17 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
logopeda

Q18 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
generoso

Q19 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
desconsolada

Q20 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
curva

Q21 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
elefante

Q22 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
dañar

Q23 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
botella

Q24 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
césped

Q25 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
rescatar

Q26 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
lava

Q27 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
ordenador

Q28 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
acogedor

Q29 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
insulto

Q30 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
pañuelo

Q31 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
lágrimas

Q32 Do you know the meaning of this word? If Yes, Write the meaning in English. If not, write no.
cura

End of Block: Vocabulary

Q1 During this quarter, you read a book in class. We would like to know what you thought about the book, the experience of reading in Spanish, the activities that you had to complete, etc. In the following section, please respond to all questions to give us an idea of your overall experience with the book and the activities that go with it. We will use your responses to modify the Talleres de Lectura in future quarters, so your input is really important.

Q2 Which book did you read?

o El secreto de su nombre (SPA 1)

o Mi primer año en Davis (SPA 1)

o Lola Lago (SPA 2)

o La quinceañera (SPA 2)

o Quarter Abroad en Argentina (SPA 3)

o 48 horas (SPA 3)

Q3 How adapted was the book to your level of proficiency in Spanish?

o It was too challenging (1)

o It was slightly challenging but manageable (2)

o It was exactly at my level of proficiency (3)

o It was too easy (4)

Q4 Did you like the book?

o I disliked it a great deal (1)

o I disliked it somewhat (2)

o I neither liked nor disliked it (3)

o I liked it somewhat (4)

o I liked it a great deal (5)

Q5 What did you like the most (and/or the least) about the book?

Q6 Did you read a Spanish book in previous Spanish classes at UC Davis? If yes, which one was it? How did it differ from the one you read this quarter? Which one did you enjoy the most? Explain why.
If this is your first time reading a book in a Spanish class at UC Davis, just write "N/A".

Q7 This question focuses on the activities you completed during the Talleres de Lectura, not the book itself.
What did you like the most (and/or the least) about the activities done during the Talleres de Lectura?

Q8 How much do you think the completion of this quarter's Talleres de Lectura contributed to your development of these different skills?

	None at all (1)	A little (2)	A moderate amount (3)	A lot (4)	A great deal (5)
Develop vocabulary skills in Spanish	o	o	o	o	o
Develop grammar skills in Spanish	o	o	o	o	o
Develop reading skills in Spanish	o	o	o	o	o
Develop overall Spanish language proficiency	o	o	o	o	o
Develop cultural awareness towards Spanish-speaking communities (in the US or abroad)	o	o	o	o	o
Increase self-confidence in reading in Spanish	o	o	o	o	o

Increase pleasure in reading in Spanish	o	o	o	o	o
Other	o	o	o	o	o

Q9 What suggestions do you have to improve the Talleres de Lectura? If you have none, write N/A.

End of Block: Questionnaire posttest

Start of Block: Questionnaire

Q1 After reading this book, how prepared do you feel about reading a book in Spanish? On a scale from 1 to 7, 1 being not prepared at all and 7 extremely prepared.

	Not prepared at all (1)	A little prepared (2)	Moderately prepared (3)	very prepared (4)	Extremely prepared (5)
How prepared do you feel about reading a book in Spanish?	o	o	o	o	o

Q2 After reading this book, how nervous do you feel about reading a book in Spanish? On a scale from 1 to 7, 1 being not nervous at all and 7 extremely nervous.

	Not nervous at all (1)	A little nervous (2)	Moderately nervous (3)	very nervous (4)	Extremely nervous (5)

How nervous do you feel about reading a book in Spanish?	o	o	o	o	o

End of Block: Questionnaire