Perspectives of Reading Strategies in EFL Students of a Private Ecuadorian University

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Proyectos de Investigación

Certifico que Lilian Estefanía Calle Méndez y Daniel Isaac Zambrano Zambrano han

cumplido satisfactoriamente su investigación descriptiva como pre-requisito de graduación de

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Enseñanza de Inglés. Su investigación es parte del proyecto PERSPECTIVES OF READING

STRATEGIES IN EFL STUDENTS cuyo objetivo general es determinar las dificultades que

tienen los estudiantes al leer en inglés como lengua extranjera.

En este proyecto, cada participante reporta los resultados de una encuesta tomada en un

contexto educativo diferente. Las secciones de introducción, literatura y metodología

(instrumentos y análisis de datos) son las mismas.

Particular que comunico para los fines consiguientes.

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Abstract

This study describes the perception of 54 students in a private University, in Ecuador. The purpose of this study was to determine participant's perspectives towards vocabulary, and their perspective towards reading in English. This descriptive study was supported by a quantitative instrument. Data obtained from questionnaires applied through google forms was used to answer the research questions. Results demonstrated that half of the participants read in English. Furthermore, it was evidenced that there was a lack of application of strategies while reading. Also, the participants considered that the acquisition and learning of vocabulary is complex due to the lack of practice, similar spelling and pronunciation of some words, the large amount of new vocabulary, among others. Finally, the participants mentioned that they feel anxious when reading in English since they do not understand quickly. Despite that, they read until they understand. The findings of this study will be useful for EFL teachers. Therefore, they will assist students in the acquisition and improvement of reading comprehension skills.

Keywords: reading, reading strategies, vocabulary, perspectives

Resumen

Este estudio describe la percepción de 54 estudiantes de una universidad privada, en Ecuador.

El propósito de este estudio fue determinar las perspectivas de los participantes en cuanto a

vocabulario y la lectura en inglés. Este estudio descriptivo fue apoyado por un instrumento

cuantitativo. Para responder a las preguntas de investigación se utilizaron datos obtenidos de

cuestionarios aplicados a través de formularios de Google. Los resultados demostraron que la

mitad de los participantes leían en inglés. Además, se evidenció que hubo falta de aplicación

de estrategias durante la lectura. Asimismo, los participantes consideraron que la adquisición

y aprendizaje de vocabulario es complejo debido a la falta de práctica, similitud en la

ortografía y pronunciación de algunas palabras, la gran cantidad de vocabulario nuevo, entre

otros. Finalmente, los participantes mencionaron que se sienten ansiosos al leer en inglés ya

que no entienden rápidamente. A pesar de eso, leen hasta que comprenden. Los resultados de

este estudio serán útiles para los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera. Por lo tanto,

ayudarán a los estudiantes a adquirir y mejorar sus habilidades de comprensión lectora.

   Palabras clave: lectura, estrategias de lectura, vocabulario, perspectivas

Reading Strategies in EFL Students in a Private Ecuadorian University

It has been demonstrated that reading is substantially important for people in general. "The ability to read is highly valued and imperative for social and economic advancement" (Qarqez & Rashid, 2017, p. 422). In the educational domain, it "provides the basis for a significant amount of learning" and academic progress would be restricted if learners do not become skilled at reading comprehensively (Guthrie, et al., 2004, p. 403).

Additionally, Harmer (2007, p. 99) sustained that "Reading texts also provide good models for English writing". Consciously and unconsciously, students can learn the way sentences, paragraphs and complete texts are formed. This can even become more productive if educators encourage learners to focus on "vocabulary, grammar or punctuation while they read" (Hammer, 2007, p. 99).

Due to the importance of reading, it becomes crucial that learners know and apply strategies to improve their reading comprehension. At first, applying these reading strategies could take more time than just reading the passage. Nonetheless, with practice, learners become skilled and able to "understand and remember much more from the text in less time" (McNamara, 2007, p. 23).

Despite the importance of strategies while reading (Lopera, 2012), the truth is that not many learners apply them as part of their reading habits. This situation leads EFL students confront different difficulties and challenges when they attempt to read effectively. In a study carried out in a foreign country to non-native English students, Samad et al. (2017) mentioned some of those difficulties: Students find especially difficult to interpret both implied and stated information, as well as their capacity to use context and spot the main idea of a text. Another study carried out by Sultana (2016, as cited in Suchona & Urmy, 2019) reported that some students also face difficulty in comprehending and figuring out the main points of a passage.

Lack of lexis is likewise a difficulty experienced by learners when trying to comprehend a text. According to Jayanti (2016, p. 299), "vocabulary is considered to be the most significant source of students' difficulties". This problem leads to another one, which is the dependance students have on dictionaries when they "find new or difficult words in a text." This limits their capacity to understand the meaning of the words in context.

Alternatively, Chandran and Shah (2019, p. 3381) exposed another inconvenience EFL learners encounter. They basically "do not know the proper reading process of comprehending the content of the texts". This is supported by Davoudi and Yousefi (2015) who alleged reading problems to be related to a lack of good meaning-in-text decoding techniques during the reading process. Finally, León (2020, p. 1) corroborated this in a study focused on "summarization as a strategy to enhance reading comprehension of narrative stories." The lack of knowledge about reading strategies prevent reader to have a good understanding of a text.

Corroborating the above, in Ecuador, students from higher education do not possess the reading skill correctly developed. Even though people who begin university studies are required to have a B1 English Proficiency, the reality is that most of them "barely have an A1 level". In an article, Contreras (2019, p. 6) reported having taken diagnostic tests in his higher education institution, and the scores mostly "showed students having no more than A1 proficiency level." Additionally, Peñafiel (2014, p. 219) stated that "While college students are reading advanced academic material, it does not mean that they always comprehend the information."

In countries other than Ecuador, some authors have carried out descriptive studies about the use of reading strategies and reading comprehension proficiency among learners (Alrabah & Wu, 2019; Ardi, 2016; Kurnia, 2011; Paige, et al., 2013; Zare & Othman, 2013). Ardi (2016), for example, conducted a descriptive study on reading proficiency in a tenth-

grade group of students with the objective of identifying their mastery of reading comprehension. A 20-item test was used, for the data collection in 45 participants out of a population of 219 students. The findings showed that 84,45% of the randomly selected group were between good and very good readers and only a minor group of the population were fair and poor readers.

In another study, Paige et al. (2013) also explored reading comprehension skills in a group of 193 elementary and middle school students ranging grades 3-9. The study aimed to measure the proficiency of students' reading in the following categories: phonology, reading fluency, reading comprehension, and vocabulary knowledge. Different tests were applied for each one of the indicators. Some important findings were obtained. First, even though the teachers in the institution were not native English speakers, they had led their students to acquire high fluency skills when reading. This proposes that students are capable of acquiring high level of fluent "decoding and reading" skills in English even though they live where "no English is spoken at home". The results also showed that there was a "statistically significant relationship between vocabulary and comprehension" (Paige et al. 2013). This suggests that if learners do not possess an acceptable amount of vocabulary, it might be difficult for them to understand a text.

Comprehension ability by using authentic materials from internet has also been studied (Kurnia, 2011). For the main data, Kurnia (2011) utilized a reading comprehension test consisting of 30 items; while interview, observation and documentation were used to collect supporting data. The participants were 43 students from a school where reading class have been imparted, using only authentic materials from internet since 2007. The test was divided in 4 indicators: word comprehension, sentence comprehension, paragraph comprehension and text comprehension. The results obtained stipulated that in general, 80.21 percent of the students possessed a good level of reading comprehension ability, while 19.61

percent did not have good reading skills. In general, it can be said that the use of authentic

material in reading classes can help text comprehension skills. Among the four indicators, the

highest achievement was on text comprehension. In contrast, the lowest scores were obtained

in paragraph comprehension.

All the previous researches mainly had as goal to know the reading proficiency of the

students. Nevertheless, Zare and Othman (2013) went beyond and analyzed the usage of

strategies when students read English texts. The aim of the study was to identify the "rate of

recurrence of reading strategies among learners" who were also separated between males and

females. A "reading strategy inventory and a reading comprehension test" were used to

collect data of 95 students from Malaysia: 50 males and 45 females. In first instance,

participants were given an instrument listing 15 reading strategies. They had to choose how

often they used the strategies marked as: never, rarely, occasionally, frequently, always.

Additionally, they also took a reading comprehension test "from a retired version of IELTS".

There were two important findings in the research. First, the results showed that participants

were high strategy users. This can be explained with the fact that English is highly used in

Malaysia, so the exposure to this language is also frequent. This generates interest for

learning and opportunities for practice as well. Second, the study demonstrates that "there is a

strong positive correlation (r = .89) between reading strategy use and reading comprehension

achievement (The correlation is significant at the level of 0.01)" (Zare & Othman, 2013, p.

190). This stipulates that the more well implemented strategies learners use, the better they

well do in reading comprehension.

Even though most of the descriptive studies analyzed in this research were executed

in high schools; at college level, Alrabah and Wu (2019) conducted a study to identify the

awareness and use of *metacognitive reading strategies* in a group of EFL students at a

medical college. Data collection was based on the administration of the survey *MARSI*

*(*Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory) developed by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002, as cited in Alrabah & Wu, 2019) using google forms and the mobile phones of the students. The survey was conducted to a group of 83 students from two different degree programs; (1) Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), (2) Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN).

Metacognitive strategies are procedures used to help students understand, be aware of and think about the way they learn. *Metacognitive reading strategies* were classified by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002, as cited in Alrabah & Wu, 2019) into *Global strategies*, which "include planning, monitoring, and evaluating what one has read"; *problem-solving strategies*, which are aimed "at solving problems when the text becomes difficult to read"; and *support reading strategies* which stands for "the use of outside reference materials such as looking up unknown words in dictionaries." (Alrabah & Wu, 2019, p. 25).

The findings of the research indicated that participants were highly users of problem solving and global strategies and medium users of support strategies. Since students review content related to their specific major during all their English cases, a good learning environment could have been created, which allowed students to enhance their reading skills in texts related to their major.

Although the relationship of applying reading strategies and the improvement of reading skill have been studied in Asian Countries such as India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Kuwait (Ardi, 2016; Alrabah & Wu, 2019; Kurnia, 2011; Paige, et al., 2013; Zare & Othman, 2013), there is no evidence of this been studied in Ecuador at university level. That is the basis for the present descriptive study, which was carried out in a private Ecuadorian university. In this institution, students have to present a B1 English proficiency certification before they finish any degree program. Consequently, most students take a 6-level course in the language center to obtain the certification. Some others who speak English fluently

decide to present an international proficiency certification such as TOEFL, FCE or IELTS. students' proficiency in English varies drastically even among students of the same course level. To conclude, the present study was done with the objective to find the answer for the following research questions which were addressed in accordance to the participants' necessities.

- Do participants read in English?

- Do they use reading strategies?

- What are their perspectives towards vocabulary?

- What are their perspectives towards reading in English?

Literature Review

Reading

A person who reads will have many opportunities in life. According to Singer and Alexander (2016), reading is one of the most important skills for economic, political, civic and social improvement. In their study they mentioned that a person who reads has more opportunities in a globalized world.

Stanovich's belief (1986, as cited in Malatesha, 2005) supported that students who read copiously tend to have a large vocabulary and wide knowledge about the environment that surrounds them, in contrast to those who read just a few.

Emphasizing the significance of literacy, Kassam (1994) affirmed,

"[…] Literacy enables people to read their own world and to write their own history. Literacy makes people aware of their basic human rights and enables them to fight for and protect their rights. Literacy enables people to have a greater degree of control over their own lives. Literacy helps people to become self-reliant and resist exploitation and oppression. Literacy provides access to written knowledge - and knowledge is power" (p. 3)

Learning English as a foreign language involves the development of four basic skills. Reading skill is one of those language skills. This skill is considered by Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), as one of the most significant skills that students should master. Those authors said if students can read, they will perform many academic activities. Nowadays, English is considered a mandatory subject. Consequently, most of the teachers focus on reading skills to develop students' proficiency in the language while increasing knowledge regarding any topic. Even though some students might consider reading as a complex skill, through practice they learn to decode, analyze, and express their ideas from what they read (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016).

According to Graves et al. (as cited in Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016), reading is a skill in which readers make meaning from what they read. Readers have to recognize and interpret symbols to understand what is written (Dennis, as cited in Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). Also, some important skills such as word recognition, fluency, and lexical knowledge, are connected to reading. By integrating these skills, the reader has more opportunities to learn and master the language (Pressley & Birsch, as cited in Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016).

Falk-Ross (2014) stated that reading is a process in which the reader interacts with the text. Readers apply their knowledge regarding word recognition and vocabulary to build meaning from the text. In other words, reading is a process in which people interpret a written message based on their expertise. Furthermore, it is the construction of meaning in which the reader connects information from the written message with previous knowledge to develop an understanding (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 13).

Tavakoli (2014, as cited in Wu, 2016) mentioned reading as the key to many academic opportunities for all the students. For that reason, teachers are focused on helping students to develop this skill and to construct meaning from the text through different strategies. Another reason for teachers' interest in reading skills, according to River (1981, as

cited in Wu, 2016), is because of the lack of oral interaction in countries where English is not a native language. Notwithstanding the absence of verbal communication, students find various literary, scientific, and technical written resources (Wu, 2016).

Reading Components

There are several types of components in reading that help to know what are the strengths and weaknesses that each student has. Based on them, teachers can apply new strategies to develop reading skills and improve comprehension (MacArthur et al., 2010).

Vocabulary.

It is a component in fluent reading and in the acquisition of a second language. Vocabulary plays an important role firstly for phonological recoding, and secondly for reading comprehension (Suggate et al., 2018) Furthermore, vocabulary along with grammar are considered to allow learners to improve their reading skills (Ibrahim et al., 2016). Laufer and Sim (1985, as cited in Ibrahim et al., 2016) mentioned that vocabulary performs a fundamental role in the acquisition of a foreign language. Unfortunately, a lack of vocabulary can affect the understanding of a text and progress in acquiring new knowledge.

Grammar.

Grammar is a part of acquiring a second language. It also has a role that helps to recognize rules of structures to master the language. In other words, grammar is a guide that helps to know the morphology, clauses, sentences, and complete texts. However, the traditional way of teaching grammar has caused learners to feel unmotivated and find this area of the language very tedious (Lin et al., 2020).

Reading Strategies

Izquierdo and Jiménez (2014), mentioned that reading strategies are useful in order to engage students in the reading process and promote the understanding ability. To achieve these goals, they suggested putting into practice the following strategies:

a. Scanning refers to seek for specific information without reading the whole text. It is considered a quick reading for "specific reading goals" (p. 70). Marliasari (2017), mentioned the following example regarding Scanning. A reader might scan a biography of a famous person looking for specific information concerning their studies. The reader will leave out information that does not include descriptions of studies, stopping only when he/she sees something related to the topic that is interesting.

b. Skimming is to look briefly at the text and find the main ideas focusing just on "main lines and headings" (Izquierdo & Jiménez, 2014, p. 70). In other words, it can be said that it is the action of looking quickly at the text to get a general idea of it. The reader wants to understand the essence of the text, but he or she does not give much importance to the details (Marliasari, 2017).

c. Summarizing is a strategy that allows the reader to synthesize the ideas of a text. Moreover, it increases retention and understanding because students analyze the main thoughts and relevant details of the reading. Readers report their understanding in their own words (Pourhosein & Sabouri, 2016).

a. Decoding is a process of analyzing and understanding each word or sentence of a text. Readers apply their previous knowledge into practice to interpret the smaller linguistic units such as phonemes and graphemes. Consequently, they understand what the reading aspires to communicate (Pourhosein & Sabouri, 2016).

b. Encoding is a strategy that allows the construction of words from sounds. It is very useful because it increases phonological awareness to avoid difficulties when reading (Russell & Shiffler, 2019).

c. Reading out loud is a strategy that allows controlling the rhythm of visual attention, fluency, and reading comprehension. Also, it enables readers to be corrected and

guided by their teacher. In this way, readers make corrections and improve their reading. This strategy can be individual, in pairs, or groups. The reader may be interrupted by the monitor to ask questions and check the understanding of both the reader and the audience (Topping, 2014).

All the mentioned strategies will help readers in both reading comprehension and in the acquisition of vocabulary. Furthermore, readers will be able to recognize main ideas, important details and new lexical elements within the text (Jaramillo et al., 2019).

Prior Knowledge when Reading

Echeverri and McNulty (2010) mentioned in their research that activating students' previous knowledge is helpful to engage students in the reading activity. The students develop their imagination and bring out more ideas and curiosity. Also, the students concentrate and understand the text easily while linking it with their previous knowledge (Echeverri & McNulty, 2010). Having prior knowledge is of great importance to readers. Readers associate their prior knowledge with the text. In other words, they integrate the text base with their knowledge. In addition, prior knowledge regarding the topic of the text facilitates comprehension and readers can generate inferences during reading (Hwang, 2019).

It is important to take into consideration that students might be lacking previous knowledge regarding the topic of the text. In other words, students may not be able to infer the meaning or relate some previous experiences with the topic of the text, if they lack previous knowledge (Echeverri & McNulty, 2010).

Purpose for Reading

There are a variety of purposes to read: reading to get knowledge, reading to write, reading to learn a language, reading to evaluate critically, reading for entertainment (Grabe, 2002; Sheeba, 2018). Due to this, the cognitive process of reading varies depending on its purpose. A person reading for an exam may have stricter standards than another one who

reads a magazine for pleasure. This may as well determine the time invested and strategies to be employed (Linderholm, 2016).

Organization of Texts

According to Dickson (1995), the organization of a text is very important for the reader to understand the ideas and purpose of the text. Also, a well-organized text facilitates understanding, relates main ideas to supporting ideas, and avoids irrelevant information. Dickson (1995) mentioned two important elements in the structure of a text. The first is physical presentation, which is the visual part of the text. In a well-organized text, readers will find the titles, subtitles, main ideas and conclusions. On the other hand, there are text structures, which are less visual than the previous one, but its organization is important to make the purpose of the text known.

Methodology

The methodology for this research was descriptive study with analysis of quantitative data. The objective of a descriptive research is to "describe a phenomenon and its characteristics." (Nassaji, 2015). This type of research is mainly focused on "what rather than how or why something has happened." That is why observational and data collection tools such as surveys are used (Gall et al., 2007).

Participants

This study was conducted in private University located at the coast region of Ecuador. The participants were 54 students from the English language school. There were 23 males and 31 females, whose ages ranged between 18 to 25 years old. It is important to mention that students were chosen on availability rather than random selection. They belonged to a Beginner, Basic and Intermediate proficiency level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

All of the participants were Ecuadorian, so their mother language was Spanish. The great majority chose Mestizo as their ethnicity, just one participant mentioned to be Afro. As to religion, it can be said that catholic is predominant, based on participant's answers. There were two Christian and two Mormon students. Regarding their Socio – economic class, most of them belonged to the middle class, however, the 14,8 percent were low income students. All of them had access to technological supplies such as desktop, laptops, and smartphones as well as internet and the majority of them had a basic to intermediate knowledge about technology.

Finally, student's participation in the study was voluntary. They were invited to take part in it by the researcher. Additionally, they were informed that their responses in the survey would remain confidential and would not affect their grades in the course.

Instruments

In order to collect data, the researcher applied an online questionnaire. Social distance has been promoted due to a virus that has spread worldwide. For that reason, the questionnaire was applied through google forms. It consisted of twenty-two multiple choice and open questions. The first part provided demographic information of the participants such as age, gender, ethnic group, social status, and religion, among others. The second part of the survey allowed to answer the research questions of this study. That part was focused on reading habits and strategies as well as their perspective towards reading. Furthermore, the survey was written in English and Spanish for a better comprehension of each item.

Data Analysis

A Google Spreadsheet was generated from the Google Forms survey. Google Forms computed the percentages of the demographic information and a formula was used to get the means. For some questions in which students had to type an answer instead of selecting one,

selective coding was applied to obtain the most relevant comments. Finally, the survey was taken by 54 students, however some of them did not answer all the survey items.

Ethical Considerations

To carry this study a formal permission e-mail was sent to the language center director. After the consent was received the researcher was able to apply the instrument. Before the application of the questionnaire, the students were informed about the research process through the zoom platform. Besides, the objective of collecting information and its importance for the development of this study was mentioned. Once the consent of the participants was obtained, the questionnaire was applied. Participants were instructed to fill out the entire questionnaire and not leave blank spaces.

Results

Descriptive statistics for answering the first question of this research, *RQ: Do you read in English?* is presented in table 1. Table 1 shows there is no meaningful difference between the group that reads and does not read in English. Most of the students who read in English do it to increase their knowledge and vocabulary. Some students stated that they read in another language to maintain or increase their interest in reading. Besides, participants mentioned that reading in English is also for their pleasure. In other words, some participants considered reading in English as a hobby since they read comics, books, or subtitles in movies.

On the other hand, students do not read in English because they do not feel interested in the English language. Other students commented that they do not do it because they consider that reading in English is difficult. Also, when they read, they cannot pronounce the words since they do not know them. The lack of knowledge in the language and vocabulary is also a complication for reading because they do not understand what they read. Finally, the

students mentioned that they do not have a habit of reading, much less in English. They consider that this skill has not been their priority.

Table 1

Do you read in English?

Yes (N= 27)	Increase knowledge (7)
	Learn new words (4)
	SS Understand the language, therefore reading is English is not complicated (4)
	Keep interest in reading (2)
	Hobby (3)
	Passion towards learning the language (2)
	No explanation (4)
	Does not know (1)
No (N= 27)	Lack of material (1)
	Lack of opportunities in or out the classroom (1)
	Lack of knowledge and vocabulary for understanding (4)
	Difficult (5)
	Reading aloud difficulties (5)
	Does not like (6)
	Not a priority (3)
	No explanation (3)
	Does not know (1)

In regards to the next question *RQ: Do the participants use reading strategies?* some questions from the questionnaire were given a code and a formula was used to obtain the

means. The results of this question are shown in table 2. The students had to select some

answers according to the strategies that they can apply in reading. The responses were

classified within a range of 5 to 1 where *to a great extent* corresponded to 5, *most of it* 4,

some to 3, *a little bit* to 2, and *none* to 1. Based on the results, the researcher evidenced that

the highest mean was from 3 to 3.57. It means that the participants managed to develop

"some" strategies such as: understand a long text by rereading it, the punctuation helps to

understand the text, observe punctuation pauses, and understand single phrases at a time;

while the other strategies can be understood or performed a little bit.

Table 2

Reading Strategies

Item	Mean
I can understand a long, complex text.	2.76
I understand single phrases at a time.	3.57
I understand a long text with the first reading.	2.41
I understand a long text by rereading it.	3.06
I can skim.	2.40
I can scan.	2.56
I know the elements of a summary.	2.83
When I read I translate all the words.	2.96
I identify the type of texts I read.	2.72
I know the organization of the text.	2.58
I use my prior knowledge when I read.	2.87
I can classify words of a reading according to their function in context of the reading: noun, verb, adverb, adjective, among others.	2.87
When I read, I observe punctuation pauses.	3.24

When I read, the punctuation helps me understand the text.	3.22

Also, table 3 shows some answers concerning the second research question. The majority of participants responded that they can skim and scan a text. However, the 40.74% of the participants could not explain the processes. Unfortunately, by not having the explanations, the answer is not valid since there is no way to verify that the participants can apply these strategies. On the other hand, the 31.48% mention that they cannot carry out the processes.

Table 3

Skim and Scan

	Percentage
Yes (N= 12)	22.22%
No (N= 17)	31.48%
Yes, but no explanation of the process (N= 22)	40.74%
No answers (N= 3)	5.55%

Results to answer the third question *RQ: What are their perspectives towards vocabulary?* are presented in the tables 4 and 5, in the appendix. According to the answers in the table 4, regarding the statement *I feel my knowledge of vocabulary in English is,* 48.14% of the participants considered that they have an intermediate level, 31.48% mentioned that their knowledge is basic, 16.66 agreed that they had a low level. The 1.85% stated that they had an advanced vocabulary. 1.85% did not answer the question.

On the statement *I think learning vocabulary is complex,* 22.22% responded that they do not practice enough, so learning vocabulary is complicated; 5.55% mentioned that they did not have previous knowledge to make connections with the new vocabulary; 12.96% of

the participants considered that there are a lot of words that the instructors teach; 22.22% of

the respondents considered that there are some words with similar or difficult pronunciation.

That is difficult for them as they cannot retain the vocabulary learned. Also, 9.25% stated that

it is complex because of the similarity in some words, so they got confused. The 5.55% of

participants indicated that some new vocabulary words are not frequently used.

Consequently, they tend to forget them quickly. Unfortunately, 7.40% of the participants do

not like memorizing new words while 11.11% consider that learning vocabulary is not

complex, it is useful for mastering the language. Some of the last participants mentioned that

they need to practice, use it more often, and apply it in sentences. Finally, 3,70% did not

answer the question.

To answer the last question *RQ: What are their perspectives towards reading in

English?* the participants had to complete the statement *I see an English passage and I feel*.

25.92% of the participants mentioned that they felt anxious for not understanding. 31.48%

said that they read and try to understand the text. 16.66% feel bored because they have to

translate words to their mother tongue. 11.11%, stated that they feel interested in reading.

Also, they mentioned that this skill is helpful to increase vocabulary and learn the language.

5.55% of the participants do not read English texts. Finally, 9.25% did not answer this

question.

Discussion

The aforementioned results, taken from the questionnaire applied in the private

University in Ecuador, have been of importance to answer the questions of this study.

According to the first question: Do participants read in English? approximately half of the

participants read (50%) and the other half do not. Participants who read in English recognize

its importance in improving language acquisition. As presented in Table 1, most of them

realized that reading helps to increase knowledge and vocabulary. This supports Gilakjani

and Sabouri (2016) affirmation that reading is a skill that helps to acquire knowledge

regarding various topics, not only related to the subject of English. Besides, the interest and

passion for learning a new language are relevant for students to make reading a hobby. Many

participants mentioned that they read out of passion and because many comics, books, and

movies are written in English. According to Sheeba (2018), there are many purposes for

reading. The results of the questionnaire showed that students are interested in reading texts

for entertainment.

For the second question: Do they use reading strategies? The results indicated that the

participants use or apply reading strategies *a little bit*. Furthermore, the participants

mentioned that by reading the text once they understand *a little bit* and by rereading it, they

understand *some*. Therefore, reading twice is not enough. The results suggest that readers

need to examine the text several times to understand it. Falk-Ross (2014) mentioned that

reading is a process of interaction with the text. For that reason, readers should take their time

and read it as many times as they consider necessary to understand.

Falk-Ross (2014) also mentioned the importance of connecting prior knowledge with

reading for a better comprehension. Similarly, Echeverri and McNulty (2010) stated that

activating prior knowledge helps readers to get engaged with the text and understand it.

Sadly, that is something that the participants, according to their answers, do not fully apply.

Another important point to consider are skimming and scanning strategies. Most of the

participants mentioned that they can skim and scan a text. However, only 22,22% could

explain the process to apply these strategies. Hence, there are not enough valid answers to

ensure that all who said that skim and scan a text can use these strategies. Nevertheless, the

students who explained the process demonstrated that they know how to apply them. In

accordance to Izquierdo and Jiménez (2014), the participants described skimming as the

process of searching for general information in a fast way, that is, browsing the text. Besides,

they agreed with Marliasari (2017) when saying that scanning is a process of searching for specific information.

In regards to the third question: What are their perspectives towards vocabulary? This study showed that most students considered that they had an intermediate level in vocabulary. Both they and those with a slightly higher level considered that learning vocabulary is a matter of practice. Also, they stated that learning new vocabulary helps them to acquire the language. For that reason, when they learn a new word, they try to use it in sentences or to apply it frequently. The thinking of these participants agrees with Laufer and Sim (1985, as cited in Ibrahim et al., 2016) who mentioned that vocabulary plays an important role when acquiring a new language. However, those who have a low level expressed that it is difficult to memorize so many words that are not used every day, therefore they are easily forgotten. In addition, many words tend to be confusing either because they are spelled or pronounced the same way.

Finally, the last research question: What are their perspectives towards reading in English? The participants stated that despite feeling anxious when reading a text for not understanding, they try and read until they comprehend it, corroborating what Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) mentioned that although students or participants consider that reading can be a complex skill, practice and effort lead to a better understanding or analysis. Consequently, readers will be able to express and comprehend what they have read.

Conclusion

This present descriptive study concludes that only half of the participants read in English. Furthermore, they considered that reading is one of the most complex skills but at the same time of great practice to develop their understanding. The answers to the questionnaires helped the researcher to know the perspective that students have regarding this skill. Therefore, it was possible to show what the main reasons are and why students read in

English. The participants demonstrated that they do it to improve in the learning process of the EFL language since it helps them to learn vocabulary and grammar. Besides, they read because they consider that reading helps them to acquire knowledge in many areas, like science, technology, and others. Finally, interest plays a valuable role since the participants stated that reading what they like will increase their curiosity.

When responding to the Can statements about the strategies used in reading, the results obtained showed that the participants did not apply them. Unfortunately, the highest rank they reached in terms of the application of strategies is 3, this value referred to the expression *some*.

Hence, the perspectives that students had towards reading are unfavorable. The participants mentioned that they feel anxiety when they see a passage in English since they cannot understand it. However, they try to read it as many times as necessary to understand the text. Unfortunately, the participants reported that they get bored when they have to translate words into their native language. Unquestionably, this is due to the lack of application of reading strategies. Overall, it was demonstrated that the mentioned strategies in this study are essential for the development of reading skills.

Limitations

Due to the global pandemic caused by Covid-19, the researcher applied an instrument through a virtual platform known as google forms. This platform provided the result of the questionnaires quickly. However, if the researcher could personally guide the participants to respond to the questionnaires, the answers would have been much more real. In some cases, the participants did not explain their responses. That was not favorable when presenting the results. Similarly, despite having explained to the participants that they had to answer all the questions, there were some unanswered. It was evident that the participants were not serious in the application of the questionnaire

Recommendations

Based on the limitations mentioned, future researchers should ensure that the participants fully understand each question so that they can provide useful answers. Also, future researchers should consider a larger sample of participants for a better vision of the reality that students live in the development of reading skills. In this study, there were 54 participants, but in some questions, some did not answer. Consequently, more participants' answers will empower the statistical results.

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Appendix 1.

Consent letter.
Available upon request.

Appendix 2.

I think learning vocabulary is complex ...

Available upon request.

Appendix 3.

Table 6

I see an English passage and I feel...

Available upon request.