



Perspectives of EFL Students about Reading: A Descriptive Study

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Proyectos de Investigación

Certifico que David Alexander Lucas Pinargote ha cumplido satisfactoriamente su investigación descriptiva como pre-requisito de graduación de Magíster en Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros con Mención en la Enseñanza de Inglés. Su investigación es parte del proyecto PERSPECTIVES OF EFL STUDENTS ABOUT READING: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY 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 descriptive research looked for describing the reading difficulties that EFL learners in a technological institute in Portoviejo, Manabi – Ecuador, present during their classes. The researcher obtained the information through the data collected from a specific instrument. The participants were fifty adults with different English proficiency levels. Their ages ranged from 19 to 56 years. The instrument implemented for the study was a reading survey focused on collecting and analyzing data about difficulties in the EFL context applying reading strategies and perspectives toward the study. Main findings demonstrated that 56% of students read. Moreover, most students understand singles phrases when reading, obtaining a mean of 2.32. Most of participants observe punctuation pauses when reading, with a mean obtained of 2.68. On the other hand, learners struggle with the skimming strategy use with a mean of 3.32. Finally, it is demonstrated that lack of vocabulary and low English knowledge cause anxiety in 26% of the group, and an 18% of participants mentioned that summarizing is impossible for them. Educators and researchers could consider this research to guide learners during their learning process before using it in real academic implementation.

Keywords: reading, reading strategies, reading comprehension, summarizing, vocabulary.

Resumen

Esta investigación descriptiva buscó evidenciar las dificultades lectoras que los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera en un instituto tecnológico en Portoviejo, Manabí - Ecuador, presentan durante sus clases. El investigador obtuvo la información a través de los datos recolectados de un instrumento específico. Los participantes fueron cincuenta adultos con diferentes niveles de dominio del inglés. Sus edades oscilaban entre los 19 y los 56 años. El instrumento implementado para el estudio fue una encuesta de lectura enfocada a recolectar y analizar datos sobre las dificultades en el contexto del inglés como lengua extranjera aplicando estrategias y perspectivas de lectura hacia el estudio. Los principales hallazgos demostraron que el 56% de los estudiantes leen. Además, la mayoría de los alumnos comprenden frases al leer, obteniendo una media de 2,32. La mayoría de los participantes observan pausas de puntuación al leer, con una media obtenida de 2,68. Por otro lado, los estudiantes tienen dificultades con el uso de la estrategia de encontrar la idea principal con una media de 3,32. Finalmente, se demuestra que la falta de vocabulario y el bajo conocimiento del inglés provocan ansiedad en el 26% del grupo, y un 18% de los participantes mencionó que resumir les es imposible. Los educadores e investigadores podrían considerar esta investigación para guiar a los estudiantes durante su proceso de aprendizaje antes de usarla en una implementación académica real.

Palabras clave: lectura, estrategias de lectura, comprensión lectora, resumen, vocabulario.

Perspectives of EFL Students about Reading: A Descriptive Study

It is a requirement that teachers train, encourage and interact with students to develop the second language four skills in an integrated way (Ministerio de Educación, 2016a). Implementing different language classroom activities gives learners opportunities to create and interchange accurate information while gaining confidence (Sadiku, 2015). Reading is one skill that facilitators should enhance in L2. When acquiring another language, the task for reading gets particular attention (Rios & Valcarcel, 2005).

Reading is one EFL skill that receives special attention in strategizing. For this reason, “reading is a problem-solving process,” reading strategies are beneficial in comprehension of the text (De Leon & Tarrayo, 2014, p.8). Although it is reported that some EFL online readers use strategies (Chen, 2015), not all learners may have the same management in reading strategies (Cheng, 2016, p. 166). According to Cheng (2016), adults are “less likely to take notes to enhance understanding, read aloud when having difficulties, or ask themselves questions to check for the main points of the reading material” (p. 172).

Language learners must be encouraged to develop their reading skills, it will facilitate further skills growth (Haupt, 2015). The author commented that reading develops writing, speaking, and listening. Albiladi (2018) stated that researchers have noticed the importance and necessity of developing a good reading skills as a second language. For this reason, the reading skill had earned much attention from researchers and second language educators these years, and different researchers have investigated about different ways to improve and increase reading skills in second language learners.

There are some studies which demonstrate that learners improve their reading strategies in different but in meaningful ways; for instance, in their study about the

effectiveness of summarizing in teaching reading comprehension for EFL students, Nurhayati and Fitriana (2018) highlighted that the low reading comprehension of the students was caused by the students' difficulties to understand the meaning in the text; the students' problems to read and spell words correctly whether in spoken form or written form; and, the lack of vocabulary. Based on the findings, it was concluded that there was a significant influence of using summarization technique of reading comprehension on students.

Another line of research was focused on summarization strategy, Zafarani and Kabgani (2014) investigated the possible outcomes of the effectiveness of the primary idea and summarization strategies and the explicitness of the training on improving comprehension of English textual materials of Iranian ESP learners. The researchers found the explicit instruction on summarizing strategy effectively contributed to enhancing ESP learners' ability and aptitude in reading understanding and comprehension to help them build up a positive attitude and results toward English reading in an Iranian context.

In the Ecuadorian context, Pinargotty (2020) applied a descriptive study in a private institution, where 50 participants fulfilled a reading survey used as instrument to collect and analyze data to present the results found in the investigation. The results demonstrated that students were not adapted to read, they did not develop the reading habit previously; as consequence of this, students translated the words all the time, their vocabulary knowledge was much reduced, and the recognition of summary's elements in their case was almost impossible. At the final part of her research, the author concluded that it is necessary to keep in mind that reading is a learning tool that allows students to read and understand texts to be autonomous learners.

The problem with reading skills is that not all learners dominate them in their own L1 (Barreiro, 2019). In a UNESCO report (2019), literacy is the first concern in adult learning, “in the sense of reading and writing in the mother tongue or other languages.” UNESCO (2020) published another report where it encourages interested parties to provide adults a better opportunity in literacy and urges authorities to support the process of learning to read with technology.

In Ecuador, the law establishes that English language learning is essential in college students. The Higher Education Council shows that “learning a second language will be a requirement for graduating university” (Consejo de Educación Superior, 2015). The High Education Organic Law (LOES) urges to “develop, strengthen and improve the bilingualism education system” (Consejo de Educación Superior, 2018, 10). Currently, the real situation shows a big gap in Ecuador and its English knowledge that was placed in the 93rd from 100 countries, obtaining the lowest of proficiency of English level in Latin America (Education First, 2020).

This study was implemented in a Higher Technology Institute in Portoviejo. Students are adults, the ages range from 19 to 56 years old. The class is A1 level based on an initial proficiency test the students took when signing up to the courses. Students have demonstrated that they are still struggling with some issues when learning a language, specifically in reading. Some of these problems involve the lack of knowledge of an adequate vocabulary for a proper use, the incorrect use of reading strategies, and reading comprehension tasks, especially in their L1 which will not allow students to transfer their knowledge to a second language.

The present study aimed to collect information about students’ difficulties in reading in L2. Through the results that were found, the author may help diminishing the

problems of lack of reading strategizing, and establish some guidelines aligned to the education system for further learners and next research.

Literature Review

The current section presents the descriptive study's central concepts, where the literature and studies related to the applied variables are revised. There are different theories of reading comprehension's primary authors as the main component, with specific strategies like summarizing, skimming and scanning among others. These concepts support this study and illustrate this part of the study.

Benefits and Theories of Reading

Kim and Krashen (1997) implied that in some cases, learners do not understand the benefits of reading, and students do not like reading due to non-existing access to a variety of books related to their English level, or books that could have the correct guidance to scaffolding their knowledge. Krashen et al. (2018) shared a current theory of reading input. A compelling comprehensible message is one that you read or listen to easily enough to understand and enjoy the activity (p. 3). In the case of adult learning, given that they demonstrate a few attraction reading by pleasure, self-selected reading should help in this aspect (Cho & Krashen, 2019).

Reading

Reading is not simply pronouncing the written language into spoken, either verbally or read in silence. Reading is a process of written language comprehension by decoding the words (Rumelhart, 1985, as cited in Budiharso, 2014). The author also expressed that reading is a process, it starts from viewing the linguistic surface representation and ends with specific ideas or meanings about the writer's messages. Thus, reading is a combination of perceptual and cognitive process.

Successful reading instruction focuses on developing foundational skills to support comprehension of texts. These concepts talk about phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency and on teaching understanding of key features of a text, such as its structure, and integrating information across multiple texts (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008, as cited in Rhoads, 2015). Grabe and Stoller (2002) mentioned that reading comprehension, according to a set of necessary procedures, can be defined as understanding information in a text and interpreting it appropriately.

Vocabulary.

Vocabulary in reading is related to the words that a learner can read and understand (Elish-Piper, 2010). When learners know more words, they are more capable of understanding what they read. There is a significant connection between understanding the meaning of words and understanding a story, textbook, or other reading materials. Additionally, the essential role of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension has been well recognized in first language (L1) situations, which has appeared to be true of second language (L2) settings (Zhang & Anual, 2008). However, most students still struggle with the vocabulary learning in an L2. This is why little vocabulary knowledge could affect reading comprehension.

Grammar.

Grammar sometimes looks like a thorny issue, mainly due to the overlap between the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary (Perfetti, 1999 as cited in Akbari, 2014). The correct function of grammar must be based on the reinforcement of the contribution made by grammar aligned to the vocabulary when possible.

Regardless of the language to be learned, successful reading comprehension depends on the grammar the reader knows; that is, grammar plays a significant role to comprehend texts, both for the first language (L1) or the second one (L2) (Jeon

& Yamashita, 2014). However, little is known about how grammar and reading comprehension for English as a foreign language develop and interact in an institutional context where learners have little reading knowledge and understanding (Ministerio de Educación, 2016a).

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is one of the most complex cognitive activities in which humans engage, making it difficult to teach, measure, and research (Elleman & Oslund, 2019). Reading comprehension is a component of the reading skill which is crucial for people to success in the field of the good understanding (Best et al., 2005). Authors mentioned that without an adequate comprehension skill, learners could struggle in many learning areas that go beyond than acquiring a second language. Hence, reading comprehension is important to generate the necessary inferences in all the different areas.

Once it is considered the natural result of decoding and verbal language, comprehension is now perceived as a much more complex process that involves knowledge, experience, thinking, and teaching (Fielding & Pearson, 1994). The authors also mentioned that comprehension inherently involves inferential and evaluative thinking, not just literal reproduction of the author's words.

Reading Strategies

Understanding and using the information of texts are vital to a student's improve in learning. Students with better predisposition for learning, acquire and develop a repertoire of strategies to draw upon and know how to use them in different contexts. Struggling students need explicit teaching of some strategies to become better readers (Brevik, 2019). This section presents some useful strategies to increase students' knowledge and facilitate their second language acquisition. Suk (2017) reported that the

lesson plan should aim to include extensive reading activities, set a clear reading goal, and continue monitoring students' reading progress (p. 15).

Summarization.

The process involves outlining the main ideas; turn them to a new text, and it is related to a close analysis of each paragraph and an original synthesis (Nasrin, et al., 2013). Summarization implies considering students' own strategies and "their responses to instruction" (Friend, 2001). Summarizing allows the students to reduce the information in the passage to principal ideas easy to remember (Ministerio de Educación, 2016b). The main reason educators apply the summarizing strategies is to help students focus on the central ideas of the text (Özdemir, 2018).

Summarizing teaches students how to discern the most important ideas in a text, how to ignore irrelevant information, and how to integrate the central ideas in a meaningful way (Spirgel & Delaney, 2014). Summarization strategies can be used in almost every content area. Teaching students to summarize improves their memory for what is read, students in many cases apply their previous knowledge to understand texts better (Spirgel & Delaney, 2014). Parrish (2020) commented that this strategy can help students who are able to decode well but have difficulty understanding what they read and they are beneficial for all students.

Skimming and scanning.

Skimming and scanning are two specific speed-reading techniques that help to cover a vast amount of material very rapidly. These techniques are similar in the process but different in purpose. Quickly "looking over" an article is neither skimming nor scanning. Both require specific steps to be followed.

Skimming is a reading strategy used by teachers and students when they need to identify the gist of a text quickly; it means reading a text rapidly to understand its

essence (Azmi, et al., 2020). The authors stated that skimming helps to determine whether a particular article may be of interest to the reader. It also involves reading critical parts of the text and it happens at three to four times the average reading speed. For that reason, reading comprehension takes a nosedive when the reader skims.

Scanning, on the other hand, requires learner to look for a particular word or phrase. The learner will ignore unnecessary information. If the learner is reading, he/she must have or about to have the questions to be answered; wisely choose what to read and quickly get what may benefit him/her (Ngo, 2018). Scanning looks for specific data and the reader stops reading until the information is found to respond to a specific question.

Encoding and decoding.

In simple terms, people communicate through a process of encoding and decoding. The encoder is the person who sends the message. The decoder has to determine how the message will be received by the audience and make adjustments to understand it (Hawkins, 2016). The author expressed very comprehensible concepts about these processes. Encoding and decoding support students' ability to read, but both have different processes; and the lack of knowledge related to their management makes most of the students have difficulties understanding unknown words in the whole text (Collingwood, 2015).

Encoding is defined as the process when the reader breaks a spoken word into individual and separated sounds and phonemes to spell the word (Bonnie, 2021). This process is applied when a word is spelled phonetically. For instance, there are four sounds in the word **star**: /s/ /t/ /a/ /r/. On the other side, some older readers often struggle with early decoding skills (Toste et al., 2017). If learners cannot master decoding, they may have difficulty with more complex activities, such as passage

reading fluency or developing a different skill. Word **decoding** is the ability to recognize letter patterns, letter-sound correspondences, and word patterns to identify words in print (Bear et al., 2015).

Parts of speech.

Parts of speech are the words of a language distributed into diverse types of formal equivalents (Ruiz, 2019). In the parts of speech are traditionally nine classes distinguished: verb (sit, go, read, etc.), noun (dog, tree, table, etc.), adjective (blue, cheap, nice, etc.), adverb (here, today, well, often; more on adverbs below), preposition (in, on, below, before, after, etc.), article (the, a/an), pronoun (you, they; someone, anyone; who, whose etc.), conjunction (and, or; if, because, etc.) and interjection (shh, oh no, phew, hey, hmm, etc.). This categorization is, however, rather biased towards word classes in the familiar European languages (Broschart, 1997 as cited in Rijkhoff, 2007).

Parts of speech have semantic and structural aspects. The semantic features derive from language functions in communication and cognition, and the structural elements are essentially based on the combination of signs in a text (Lehmann, 2013). Consequently, the two sets of features are largely independent of each other. Their variety in a language yields sets of parts of speech whose combination and adaptation is largely language-internal.

Prior knowledge when reading.

There is a virtual agreement that background knowledge is determinant for reading comprehension. In a simple way, when students know more about a topic, it is easier to read, understand, and retain the information, which has been shown that background knowledge plays an enormous role in reading comprehension (Hirsch, 2003).

Through their research, many investigators have shown that having some prior knowledge about a passage's topic enables a greater comprehension of the text and better memory for it (Gómez & Ávila, 2009). The effects of previous knowledge on understanding are so pronounced that researchers have advocated including assessments of prior expertise in comprehension batteries tests and designed a reading curriculum that aims to improve comprehension scores by establishing a core of common knowledge for all students (Priebe et al., 2011).

In contrast, Priebe et al. (2011) expressed that there has been very little research investigating whether prior knowledge might also improve word identification. Logically, it is possible that part of the benefit of prior knowledge on comprehension maybe because when one has topic knowledge, then the words can be identified more readily (Association for Psychological Science [APS], 2019). Accurate word identification is a strong predictor of comprehension.

Purpose for reading.

The reading purpose is to connect the ideas on the stage students are and tie them with the new concepts acquired during the learning process. The original goal in reading is to develop communication to something which remains or increases the reader's theoretical world (Sangia, 2018).

Having a purpose for reading motivates students being focused and involved while reading, and gives them a clear goal where comprehension can be strengthened. Reading with specific purposes encourage students take their time acquiring knowledge so they will follow the key elements in the text for a clear understanding of it (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). It is valuable for students to have a clear purpose in the reading, students understand how their level is, and feel motivated to prepare new strategies to increase their learning.

Methodology

Design

Descriptive studies aim to accurately and systematically describe a population, situation, or phenomenon; according to their purpose, they answer *what, where, when,* and *how* questions rather *than why* questions (McCombes, 2020). The author expressed that a descriptive research design can use various research methods to investigate one or more variables. Therefore, the study applied a mixed research method methodology. Mixed methods means that the researcher works with qualitative and quantitative data in the same research (Gunnell, 2016).

Research questions:

- 1.- Do participants read in English?
- 2.- Do they use reading strategies?
- 3.- What are their perspectives towards reading?
- 4.- What are their perspectives towards summarizing a reading in English?

Participants

All the participants are adult students from a Technological Institute in Portoviejo, Manabi. Fifty students were the participants who fulfilled the surveys to collect the required data. Thirty-two of the participants were female. It represents the 64% of the sample, and 18 were male that represents the 36% of the study. Their ages ranged between 19 to 56 years old.

Instrument

The instrument implemented in the study was a survey (Appendix A) that had in its beginning some items to ask some students' personal information. The rest of the survey was based on specific questions to know students opinions and perspectives about their English knowledge. The students did a good job fulfilling the survey very

fast. At the beginning, some of them were a little confused. The directions and instructions were explained in some online sessions. Learners understood a little better the instructions about the survey fulfillment. Fifty participants voluntarily fulfilled the survey. The survey was prepared in the Google Forms format and sent to the students by their different communication forms. All the directions were double checked to avoid any misunderstanding.

Data Analysis

The students fulfilled a reading survey applied as the instrument to obtain this descriptive study outcomes. The data collected were analyzed and displayed in a table where results show students' facts. Then students' answers were registered in an excel worksheet. Every table shows the mean of each item.

Ethical Considerations

As a first step, the researcher communicated to the institution about implementing the descriptive study by sending a document (Appendix B) with the respective information. The institution agreed to be part of the investigation. The institution asked to keep confidential students' personal data and private data. This information was replaced by specific codes. Additionally, all the participants were adults and responsible for their decision to participate in the study. Since the first days, the students voluntarily participated to fulfill the survey.

Results

This section presents the results obtained after organizing and analyzing the data collected from the students to answer the following research questions: Do participants read in English? Do they use reading strategies? What are their perspectives towards reading? What are their perspectives towards summarizing a reading in English? The results are displayed in the next tables.

RQ# 1. Do participants read in English?

The following table displays the results answered by the students about a specific but significant question which is essential for this study.

Table 1.

Results about if participants read in English.

I read in English	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	20	40%
No	22	44%
A little bit	6	12%
Some	2	4%
Total	50	100%

Results displayed in Table 1 show that 28 participants that represent the 56%, read in English in a different quantity. However, 22 of the participants that represent the 44% mentioned that do not read.

Why?

Some learners answered:

I read ...	I do not read ...
Because reading in English is important for develop my learning skills.	Because I think I can pass the year without learn this language.
Because If I read texts in this language, and I have a good feedback, I will improve in my skills to understand the language better.	Because I practice English and I try a lot, but for me it is impossible to obtain a proper learning of this language.
Because If I have a clear comprehension of the reading I can get the main ideas, I will increase my learning.	Because I have not found any motivation for reading.
Because I need to learn English because it is mandatory to pass the level.	Because My English knowledge is too poor, I do not know how to improve it.”

Because My English knowledge is too poor, I need to improve it.”	Because my experience with the English language has been awful.
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RQ# 2. Do they use reading strategies?

The following table displays the results to answer this question. Additionally, specific codes were implemented to respond the questions with Likert scales that made the results more comprehensible. The codes were: 1 (To a great extent), 2 (Most of it), 3 (Some), 4 (A little bit), and 5 (None).

Table 2.

Results about the use of reading strategies.

Items	N	Mean
I can understand a long, complex text.	50	3.26
I understand single phrases at a time.	50	2.32
I understand a long text with the first reading.	50	3.44
I understand a long text by rereading it.	50	2.80
I can Skim.	50	3.32
I can Scan.	50	3.18
I know the elements of a summary.	50	3.00
When I read I translate all the words.	50	3.02
I identify the type of texts I read.	50	3.08
I know the organization of the text.	50	3.22
I use my prior knowledge when I read.	50	2.86
I can classify words of a reading	50	2.88

When I read, I observe punctuation pauses.	50	2.68
Punctuation helps me understand the text.	50	2.82

In this section, the most significant results are explained. Outcomes have demonstrated that most learners could **understand single phrases at a time** with a mean of 2.32, which means that participants mostly agreed with the item taken from the survey. Moreover, it is noticeable that students **observed punctuation parts when they read** with a mean of 2.68, which means that students spend time observing their texts to understand them better. Nevertheless, there are some students who struggled with the **skimming strategy** with a mean of 3.32. This means that learners despite to observing punctuation parts, they need to have a conscious training to improve the skimming technique. Finally, the lowest score was obtained in the item that mentioned that students **understood a long text with the first reading** with a mean of 3.44, which means that students need to read more than once to understand long texts. In most cases, it is caused by the lack of vocabulary knowledge.

RQ# 3. What are their perspectives towards reading?

This question purpose looked to find students' perspectives towards reading through frequencies, and percentages that were necessary to find the results. The item involved in this question was: "If I as student see an English passage, I feel..."

Table 3.

Results about students perspectives towards reading

I feel...	Frequency	Percentage
Sometimes anxious	6	12%
Always anxious	13	26%
Sometimes bored	5	10%
Always bored	7	14%
Confused	4	8%

Nervous	8	16%
Happy	4	8%
Normal	3	6%
Total	50	100%

Results have demonstrated that there many different perspectives and reactions among the group of participants. There is a 26% of participants who feel anxious all the time. Some student said *“I feel anxious all the time when I have to read in English, letters are similar, but words are totally different.”* Fourteen percentage of participants mentioned that they get always bored. It could be provoked by the significant educative gap that students have. A student mentioned that *“I have to translate every word, it is very boring for me.”* Additionally, results showed that 16% of participants get nervous at the reading time. They confuse words and it is hard for learners, they lack of knowledge makes their learning complicated. On other hand, a 6% of learners felt the reading activity as a normal skill that they need to develop. A learner mentioned that *“Reading in English is an adequate activity to improve our second language developing different skills (speaking, writing, and reading) in only one task.”*

RQ# 4. What are their perspectives towards summarizing a reading in English?

This question looked to find students’ perspectives towards summarizing a reading in English through the explanation of the process.

Table 4.

Results about students perspectives towards summarizing a reading in English.

I can summarize	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, I can summarize.	14	28%
I can summarize sometimes.	16	32%

I can summarize a few.	11	22%
I cannot summarize.	9	18%
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Total	50	100%

Results have demonstrated that in a different measure, students can summarize. Students explained the process for summarizing as they understand it, and some of their answers are the following.

Students who can summarize, expressed comments like these: *“I read the text, identify the main idea, then I organize them; after that, I write the ideas following the structure of a paragraph.”* Other student said: *“I find the main idea of each paragraph and the secondary idea that complements and gives meaning to what the text explains.”* Another participant mentioned that *“First, I read everything, and the words that I do not understand are translated; after that, I am getting the most important ideas.”*

Some participants who can summarize sometimes expressed these statements: *“Sometimes I am confused by the process of doing the summary. I read the title, then the introduction, and develop the conclusions, but I have doubts because everything seems very important to me.”* Another student said: *“Sometimes I extract the main ideas and then organize them.”* Finally, students who cannot summarize mentioned these types of statements: *“For summarizing, the first thing that I have to do is translate the text since I don't have enough English knowledge. The translator helps me to complete the activity.”* Other participant mentioned *“I do not understand the summarizing process.”*

Discussion

This descriptive study revealed students' experiences concerning reading comprehension described in each research question.

The first research question: **Do participants read in English?** Results demonstrate that the majority of students read, but in a different measure. Students have

mentioned that reading in English is essential for them; it will allow them to understand texts better obtained from proper feedback that will give them more opportunities to develop the second language accurately. The National Early Literacy Panel (2008, as cited in Rhoads, 2015) stated that successful reading instruction focuses on developing foundational skills to support comprehension of texts. Learners mentioned that it is crucial to understand the texts to get main and specific ideas. It will help to increase the skill consciously. A similar statement was expressed by Rumelhart (1985, as cited in Budiharso, 2014), who mentioned that reading is a process that starts from viewing the linguistic surface representation and ends with specific ideas or meanings about the writer's messages.

On the other hand, it is also noticeable that an important part of the students (44%) do not read. They mentioned that their lack of knowledge in vocabulary or grammar makes it impossible to understand the texts when reading. This lower proficiency makes them farther to reach their learning goals. Jeon and Yamashita (2014) stated that regardless of the language to be learned, and successful reading comprehension depends on the grammar the reader knows to comprehend texts for the first (L1) or second language (L2).

The second research question: **Do they use reading strategies?** Results show that students implement reading strategies in their classes. Results showed that learners understood single phrases at a time. Reading is a process of written language comprehension by decoding the words (Rumelhart, 1985, as cited in Budiharso, 2014). As the authors mentioned, for understanding texts better, it is required to decode the words. Students do similar to it, single phrases interpreting word by word.

Additionally, outcomes showed that learners observed punctuation parts when they read. Students spend time watching their texts to understand them better. Darling-

Hammond et al. (2020) mentioned that reading with specific purposes encourages students to take their time acquiring knowledge so they will follow the key elements in the text for a clear understanding of the task.

On the other hand, results display that some students struggle with the skimming strategy. It is a reading strategy used to quickly identify a text's gist; it means reading a text rapidly to understand its essence (Azmi et al., 2020). Learners need to have conscious training to improve this strategy for comprehending texts better. Elleman and Oslund (2019) said that comprehension is one of the most complex cognitive activities challenging to teach, measure, and research.

Finally, as mentioned before, students presented good results understanding single phrases, but they presented some issues to comprehend long texts at the first reading. Zhang and Annual (2008) stated that most students still struggle with vocabulary learning in an L2. This is why little vocabulary knowledge could affect reading comprehension.

The third research question: **What are their perspectives towards reading?** Results demonstrate that learners feel anxiety, also get bored, and feel nervous. They expressed that these issues are mainly caused by their lack of knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Elish-Piper (2010) described that vocabulary in reading is related to the words that a learner can read and understand. Additionally, in adult learning, for avoiding boredom, given that they demonstrated a slightly intention in reading for pleasure; self-selected reading should help in this aspect (Cho & Krashen, 2019). There is only a minimum percentage of students who feel normal or relaxed with the reading activities. Language learners must be encouraged to develop their reading skills, facilitating further skills growth (Haupt, 2015).

The fourth research question: **What are their perspectives towards summarizing a reading in English?** Results demonstrate that some learners have some complications for summarizing. Parrish (2020) commented that this strategy could help students who are able to decode well but have difficulty understanding what they read and are beneficial for all students. On the other hand, many learners can summarize well or sometimes practice with this helpful strategy. Summarizing allows the students to reduce the information in the passage to main ideas easy to remember (Ministerio de Educación, 2016b).

Conclusion

This research focused on the reading difficulties that learners face during their English activities. It is required to adapt new strategies to connect them to the innovative teaching and learning English practices. Moreover, results show that a significant percentage of students have not the reading habits created. Thus, it is necessary to develop an effective training and a good preparation that could motivate learners to enhance in their reading skills and their language comprehension.

Students present some challenges at the reading time. Most of them get anxious and bored when they face their tasks to be solved. Their lack of knowledge increases the bad assumptions in students that make reading perspectives farther to reach the academic goals. That is why is necessary to teach learners to scaffold their skills adequately. Some strategies mentioned in the survey are not implemented at all by the students, but with an effective design, these strategies will be useful resources to help students to conduct their learning and getting better improvement. Finally, for students who cannot summarize what Spirgel and Delaney (2014) mentioned is that teaching students to summarize improves their memory for what is read. In this way, they can train and improve gradually.

Limitations

The COVID-19 pandemic has slowed down the educative system. Students have modified their life priorities. They are currently focused on keeping their families saved more than studying. Also, the teaching and learning way has changed; students are still adapting themselves to work and learning through a screen computer. It is noticeable since students have not the same learning opportunities. Firstly, there was a little confusion at the fulfillment, but through some explaining by WhatsApp, doubts were solved. Another limitation was the integrity of the answers. Some learners tend to modify their responses to look more proficient in their knowledge. Finally, a significant part of the group was not adapted to read; it delayed the survey fulfillment.

Recommendations.

The researcher must be sure all participants have a total understanding of the requirements in the survey. Besides this, it is recommendable to foster reading skills and implement suitable strategies to develop learners' English levels. Additionally, it is recommendable to design a plan to work with actual activities to increase reading learning skills. Finally, it could be recommendable to develop these types of descriptive studies in the school curriculum to get positive solutions that motivate learners to acquire better reading skills and comprehension.

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Appendixes

Appendix A

Reading Survey

Available upon request.

Appendix B.

Consent letter request

Available upon request.