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Reading Attitudes, Habits and Classroom Practices among Ecuadorian Master's Students

Actitudes, hábitos y prácticas lectoras en el aula entre estudiantes ecuatorianos de Maestría

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine how master's students' personal reading attitudes and habits impact their classroom instructional practices. An online questionnaire was used to collect data on participants' habits and attitudes toward reading in English. Only 24% read between 30 minutes and more than an hour, a small number of teachers (8) consider themselves to be "devoted" readers, teachers who value reading more are more likely to use best practice strategies. However, teachers who value reading less tend to share their own perceptions related to reading and also recommend reading material to students, and teachers who read for pleasure more than 30 minutes a day use a greater number of instructional practices considered to be among the best.

Descriptors: Reading instruction; reading habit; reading promotion. (UNESCO Thesaurus).

RESUMEN

El propósito de este estudio es determinar cómo las actitudes y hábitos de lectura personales de los estudiantes de maestría impactan en sus prácticas de instrucción en el aula. Se utilizó un cuestionario en línea para recopilar datos sobre los hábitos y actitudes de los participantes hacia la lectura en inglés. Solo el 24 % lee entre 30 minutos y más de una hora, un pequeño número de docentes (8) se consideran a sí mismos como lectores "devotos", los maestros que valoran más la lectura son más propensos a utilizar estrategias de mejores prácticas. Sin embargo, los docentes que valoran menos la lectura tienden a compartir sus propias percepciones relacionadas a lectura y también recomiendan material de lectura a los estudiantes, y los docentes que leen por placer más de 30 minutos al día utilizan una mayor cantidad de prácticas de instrucción consideradas ser entre las mejores.

Descriptores: Enseñanza de la lectura; hábito de lectura; promoción de la lectura. (Tesoro UNESCO).

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is viewed as a rich source of input and an important factor that has an impact on L2 acquisition (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Similarly, Grabe (2009) has expressed that reading as a skill is considered by several scholars to be a vital source for language learning. However, achieving any improvement in reading education will be a difficult task if schools do not have teachers who are not just skilled at teaching reading but also are readers themselves (Miret, 2008). When discussing the issue of teaching reading, the belief is that the action of reading ought to be practiced by teachers as well. Regardless of the subject or grade level being taught, all educators are expected to inspire their learners to be lifelong readers which can be an issue if teachers themselves do not possess positive personal reading attitudes and habits (Nathanson et al. 2008).

Experts in the area of reading have agreed that in order to teach effectively, teachers must first be readers (Scott, 1996; Searls, 1985) because they will most likely “engage in instructional practices that model their own passion for reading” (McKool & Gespass, 2009, p. 273), (Braithwaite, 1999) expressed that it matters what teachers believe about reading because the evidence has shown that their reading beliefs affect not only classroom practices but also to some degree, students’ outcomes. Teachers play a main role in modeling the love of reading for pleasure and can influence the reading attitudes of students through the use of best practices in classroom instruction (Morrison et al. 1999).

Great emphasis has been placed on researching university students’ and future teachers’ reading habits and attitudes and their relationship with academic performance (Benevides & Peterson, 2010; Ögeyik & Akyay, 2009; Rimensberger, 2014). However, studies that focus on the educator as a reader are scarce. Some of the results have shown that few teachers read personal and/or professional reading materials (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Benevides & Peterson, 2010; Cremin et al., 2008), or they may limit themselves to read only what the job requires (Tovar, 2009). In Ecuador, little research investigating the reading habits of university students has been carried out (Henriquez et al. 2020; López

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et al. 2015), let alone about teachers. Therefore, this research study seeks to contribute to our understanding of how the personal reading habits and attitudes towards reading in English of Ecuadorian master's students in a TEFL Master Program at Universidad Catolica in Ecuador impact their classroom instructional practices. The questions that guided this study were:

- What are the habits of reading in English of master's students in a TEFL Master Program at Universidad Catolica in Ecuador?
- What are the attitudes towards reading in English of master's students in a TEFL Master Program at Universidad Catolica in Ecuador?
- What is the relationship between the master's students' reading attitudes and habits and their overall classroom instructional practices?

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Zoltán Dörnyei's L2 Motivation Theory

Dörnyei (1994) claims that there are three teacher-related motivational components: affiliative drive, authority type, and socialization of student motivation. Regarding the third teacher-related motivational component, the author argues that educators can exercise a direct motivational influence on students "by actively socialising the learners' motivation through appropriate modeling, task presentations, and their feedback" (Dörnyei & Otto, 1998, p 60). Among the channels for the socialization process, modeling is the teacher-related component that aligns with this study. Concerning modeling, Dörnyei (1994) reasons that teachers, being group leaders, represent the 'group conscience' and, therefore, student attitudes toward learning will be modeled after them, equally in terms of the amount of effort provided and interest in the subject. This means that teachers are in a position where they will influence students on their motivation and attitudes towards learning, or in the case of this study, towards reading.

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Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory

A key concept of Bandura's Social Learning Theory is Reciprocal Determinism which recognizes the fact that there are external and internal determinants that form an interweaving system that influences people's behavior (Bandura, 1977). Reciprocal determinism supports the idea of observational learning or learning through modeling (Bandura, 1989). Learning through modeling is based on the premise that people learn from their interactions with others in a social context. Therefore, by observing others' behaviors, we tend to assimilate and imitate that behavior, particularly if those observational experiences are positive and/or include some kind of reward related to the observed behavior (Nabavi, 2012). This main element of modeling in Bandura's theory is directly related to the aim that drives this study since it can be argued that modeling from teachers in the classroom may influence students' attitudes towards reading if the teacher's performance is seen as positive by students.

Reading habits

In the words of (Sangkaeo, 1999), reading habits denote the behavior which expresses the affinity of reading individual kinds of reading. Correspondingly (Shen, 2006), recognized reading habits in terms of the frequency, amount, and the material students read. Additionally (Zwiers, 2010), expressed that reading habits describe the automatic process readers go through when reading texts and deriving meaning unconsciously. Furthermore (Shabi & Udofia, 2009) stated that reading habits mean possessing the routine of reading not only for academic purposes but also in daily life. The authors added that a reading habit is a reading activity that is done in a continuous manner and without coercion from others. From these definitions, it can be inferred that an individual's reading habits are ruled to a considerable degree by the amount of material read and the intensity with which the reading activity is pursued. This idea is shared by (Aisah et al. 2019) and (Erdem, 2015) when they claimed that the reading activity is viewed as a habit when it is

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performed persistently, continuously, and critically. Therefore, habits are not expected to come instantly since it is a long process to be built.

Reading attitudes

Attitude is an intricate concept that has been studied by numerous authors in different fields. Ortega, et al. (2010) defined attitude as the common specific reactions people tend to experience towards a stimulus which can be a person, a situation, or any phenomenon. In regards to reading habits, several scholars have agreed on the idea that it can be seen as a system of reading-related feelings which causes the reader to approach or elude any reading situation (Alexander & Filler, 1976; McKenna et al. 1996). Similarly (Smith, 1990) shared the belief that reading attitude involves not only feelings but also convictions about reading. This means that if learners just read without the willingness or conviction, they will not be doing it wholeheartedly and enthusiastically. Attitudes towards reading can be positive or negative (Isakson et.al. 2016) and can influence the learners' academic success and/or becoming life-long readers (McKenna et al. 2012). It can be concluded that students with positive attitudes towards reading will believe reading is important, will enjoy the act of reading, and will develop a high self-concept as a reader.

Empirical Studies about the Object of Study

Future English Teachers

Some other studies aimed to discover the attitudes towards reading in English finding mixed results (Aisyiyah & Hakim, 2020; Delvi et al. 2020). Delvi et al. (2020) performed a study with 125 Indonesian students of the University English Department and employed questionnaires discovered that even though the majority (99%) feel positive attitudes towards reading literature in English, half of the respondents have negative attitudes towards poetry in English. They believed that by reading literature, they could improve their language ability. However, the respondents added that they preferred to read a less complicated genre such as short stories instead of poetry. Similarly, et al. (2020), using

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questionnaires and interviews, examined the attitudes towards reading in English of 88 Indonesian English teacher candidates. The findings suggested that although most of the participants (56.8%) displayed positive attitudes towards reading and recognized that reading is essential for life and education, they did not make an effort to invest time in personal reading. An amazing 81.8% of the students said that they preferred to watch films instead to read a book during leisure time. Half of them stated that most of the reading they do is tasks asked by their teachers.

A considerable amount of research has been done to determine reading habits and/or attitudes of college students training to become teachers. The majority of them have shown disheartening results (Vera, 2017; Aisah, et al., 2019; Aisyiyah & Hakim, 2020; Delvi et al., 2020). In terms of reading habits, in some studies, the researchers have concluded that the future teachers' habits are poor, to say the least. In the study done by (Vera, 2017), the author asked 433 Education undergraduates of the University of Castilla-La Mancha to answer questionnaires to discover their reading habits and motivation. The findings showed that only 5.9% of the participants can be considered frequent readers and 6.9% of the future teachers read for pleasure over 10 books per year. Concurrently, (Aisah, et al. 2019), through questionnaires and observation, determined that the 130 pre-service EFL Indonesian students' reading interest and frequency of reading, as well as their habits, were very low. The findings showed that 35% of the students spent less than 30 minutes per day reading. These participants claimed that they easily get bored and feel lazy when it comes to reading. The only reason they read any material is that the teachers asked them to do it.

The results of these studies are alarming and raise the question of how important is for future teachers to develop the habit of reading because when they become practicing teachers, it will be very difficult for them to spread the passion for reading if they do not feel this passion, to begin with.

Little research examining the reading habits among Ecuadorian university students has been conducted (Henríquez et al., 2020; López et al., 2015). For instance, López et al.

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(2015) employed surveys to examine the reading habits among 334 future journalists studying at the University of Guayaquil, two university teachers, and four professional journalists. The authors concluded that overall, the participants did not possess any reading habits. The findings showed that only 21% of the respondents considered reading as a preferred leisure time activity. However, 73% of participants mentioned that they read for pleasure contrasting with the previous results. Finally, half the participants claimed that they read between two and five books per year which the authors considered to be low since they were at the university level. Likewise, Henríquez et al. (2020) aimed to explore the reading habits of 318 students majoring in different fields at Universidad Técnica de Manabí. Overall, the authors concluded that the reading habits were very low or even non-existent. Once again, contradicting results were shown in this study. For instance, even though 64% of the respondents expressed they enjoy reading, only 33.7% of them read in their free time. When asked who or what inspires them to read, findings showed that teachers, followed by parents, are the ones that most influence them to pick up any kind of material to read. This outcome relates to the theories behind this study (Bandura, 1977; Dörnyei, 1994) which discuss the important role teachers play in the classroom as a model for students. Teachers must consider this fact and start developing reading habits and positive attitudes.

English Teachers

Research that focused on analyzing teachers' reading habits and attitudes is scarce. Some of these studies concluded that the reading habits of teachers impact not only the reading habits of students but also their academic performance (Oluwabiyi & Adetunji, 2018; Udu, 2021). The findings on the research performed by (Oluwabiyi & Adetunji, 2018) on 190 Nigerian teachers showed that a good number of the participants (92%) do not consider themselves frequent readers with far-reaching consequences on the reading habit of their students. In regards to influencing their students, 81% of the teachers do not recommend any book to be read by the students, and 82.1% assign only one extra book

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included in the curriculum. On the other hand (Udu, 2021), explored the attitudes towards reading in English of 38 secondary school English teachers finding that the teachers had positive reading attitudes, and this influenced the students' achievement in the English language. The results exposed that 46.6% of the variation in students' achievement in the English language can be attributed to their teachers' attitude towards reading. Thus, these findings highlight the need to analyze Ecuadorian teachers' reading habits to discover if they can influence their students.

When determining the reading habits attitudes of Turkish teachers, it was discovered that they possess moderate reading habits (Akçay, 2017; Tuba, 2017). Akçay (2017) examined the reading habits of 92 Turkish teachers and the findings showed that 65% of the participants read a book regularly. Additionally, the results presented that Turkish teachers often have students read in their lessons, and most importantly, the majority of them also read which sets an example for the students.

Due to the scarcity of research examining the reading habits and attitudes towards reading of teachers, and based on the findings from previous studies, the necessity to identify the reading habits and attitudes of teachers in Ecuador is felt. Would similar results hold of Ecuadorian teachers as well? It would be beneficial to investigate Ecuadorian English teachers' reading habits and attitudes in order to discover if there is any impact on their instructional practices and perhaps on their students as well.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

In order to discover the personal reading habits and attitudes of students attending a TEFL Master's Degree Program at Universidad Católica in Ecuador and their practices implemented in the classroom, an empirical study was conducted. The research design used a quantitative method since it is an approach that aims to test theories by examining the relationship among variables, which can be measured using instruments that can later be analyzed using statistical procedures (Creswell, 2014). However, collecting qualitative

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data in the form of open-ended questions through an online questionnaire was needed to provide a fuller picture of how the participants' attitudes and habits towards reading impact their instructional practices. Therefore, both qualitative and quantitative data have been collected for this study. According to Creswell (2014) this approach "provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone" (Creswell, 2014, p.3).

Participants

The researcher used convenience sampling. To collect the data, 29 teachers (23 female and 6 male) from the first cohort at a TEFL Master's Degree Program at Universidad Católica de Ecuador have been given questionnaires to complete. The participants were mostly experienced teachers who teach English and/or subjects taught in English in elementary school, high school, and university. Their ages range from their mid-thirties up until their 50s. The criterion to be selected as a participant of the study is that they teach reading, and they are in charge of teaching to elementary, secondary, and/or university students. Concerning ethical issues, a consent form was provided to the teachers to get their agreement to voluntarily participate in this study. The nature of this consent document implies voluntary agreement to participate in studies as long as the participants have enough information to make an informed choice (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Participants also had the right to withdraw from the research at any time. Data collected will be safely kept and used only by the researcher.

Instruments

To obtain the reading attitudes and habits of the teachers, the study employed an online questionnaire based on the questions in the (Applegate & Applegate, 2004) and (McKool & Gespass, 2009), questionnaires which explore the teachers' attitudes, habits, and instructional practices. The questionnaire has been previously employed to measure reading habits and attitudes by several authors (Ruber, 2019; Schmitt, 2009; Applegate,

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et al. 2014). The questionnaire was also piloted with a group of teachers from the University of Cuenca. Analysis of the piloted questionnaire resulted in a reconfiguration of the questionnaire and removal of some questions as they were irrelevant to the context of this study.

Procedure

After the approval to participate in this study was granted by the teachers, the researcher shared the link to the online questionnaire which contains a variety of four-option Likert-type questions as well as a few open-ended questions to determine their reading habits, values, and how often they implement certain practices in their classrooms. Google Forms was used to collect the data since is efficient to fulfill this task. The participants had a week to complete the questionnaires due to their busy agendas. The first set of questions was related to their preference for their instructional practices in the classroom. The second set of questions aimed to find out their reading habits and attitudes towards reading. Finally, a few short answer questions were added to provide the researcher with further information about the teacher's reading habits and attitudes. In order to analyze the quantitative data gathered from the online survey, the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was employed since it is a user-friendly software mainly used for statistical analysis (Field, 2018). The qualitative data collected from the open-ended questions were analyzed in order to find patterns and trends.

RESULTS

Teachers' Reading Habits

The teachers participating in this study were asked to share how much time they employ daily performing some activities (see Table 1). The main focus was to discover how much time they spend reading per day compared to other activities. All of the participants reported that the activities they perform the most after class are planning and grading. 16

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of them utilize even more than an hour to plan classes. Only one of the teachers does not do any grading after class.

Table 1.
Daily time spent on activities after school.

Activities	0 min.		1-15 min		16-30 min		31-60 min		> 60 min.	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Watching TV	10	34.48	7	24.14	9	31.03	3	10.34	0	0.00
Exercising	11	37.93	5	17.24	7	24.14	6	20.69	0	0.00
Planning	0	0.00	0	0.00	7	24.14	6	20.69	16	55.17
Reading professional material	3	10.34	6	20.69	10	34.48	5	17.24	5	17.24
Cooking	7	24.14	5	17.24	9	31.03	6	20.69	2	6.90
Household chores	3	10.34	5	17.24	6	20.69	11	37.93	4	13.79
Grading	1	3.45	3	10.34	7	24.14	6	20.69	12	41.38
Family activities	2	6.90	5	17.24	5	17.24	9	31.03	8	27.59
Reading for pleasure	6	20.69	8	27.59	8	27.59	4	13.79	3	10.34

Source: Own calculation based on survey results.

In regards to reading, most of them take some time to read either for information or pleasure. This finding aligns with the qualitative data collected from the open-ended questions where 26 of the teachers expressed that they do read daily a combination of novels, science fiction stories, online articles, and newspapers. On average, around 35% of the participants read between 16 and 30 minutes either professional material or for pleasure. These findings are consistent with research conducted by (Aisah et al. 2019) on 130 pre-service EFL Indonesian student teachers.

The authors found that 35% of these future teachers spend less than 30 minutes per day reading. The participants claimed that, when it comes to reading, they get easily bored. Even though both studies share the same findings, it is likely that in this research, the main reason for teachers not to read more could be because they have to plan classes and grade students' tasks. A small number of participants (3) do not have time to read

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professional material whereas 6 of them do not read for pleasure at all. 10 of the teachers read professional material from 30 minutes to more than an hour after class while 7 (24.14%) read for pleasure the same amount of time.

Leisure time activities such as watching TV and exercising are performed by a similar number of participants. Only 10 of the teachers do not watch TV. Similarly, 11 of them do not have time to exercise. Around 90% of the participants employ some time after class to do household chores. A great emphasis is placed on family activities. Nearly 60% of the teachers perform family activities between 30 minutes and more than an hour. Cooking is an activity done by 22 of the participants. However, they do not invest so much time doing it. Only 2 of them cook for more than an hour.

Teachers' Attitudes towards Reading

In regards to attitudes towards reading, a little bit more than 50% (16) of the participants reported that they do not consider themselves as readers (see Table 2). This finding matches the result from the qualitative section of the survey where 15 of the teachers answered that they do not think of themselves as readers.

On a 1 to 4 scale with 1 being *extremely descriptive* and 4 being *not at all descriptive*, the researcher grouped with the options "*extremely descriptive*" and "*very descriptive*" as the more descriptive options from the teachers. Table 2 shows that only 8 teachers reported that they thought of themselves as devoted readers whereas around 55% never really thought of themselves self as "readers". These results are in disagreement with the findings from a research study performed by (Aisyiyah & Hakim, 2020). In this study, the authors discovered that 56.8% of 88 Indonesian English teacher candidates displayed positive reading attitudes since they recognized how important is reading for life and education. The reason for this discrepancy in the findings might be the country's culture from where the participants are. For instance, it is believed that in Ecuador, reading is not a strong habit among its people.

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Table 2.
 Teachers' attitudes towards reading.

Teachers' self-perception	Extremely descriptive		Very descriptive		Slightly descriptive		Not at all descriptive	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
I've never really thought of myself as a "reader"	2	6.90	14	48.28	7	24.14	6	20.69
I think I am a devoted reader	0	0.00	8	27.59	12	41.38	9	31.03
I like spending a day reading when I have time	3	10.34	8	27.59	15	51.72	3	10.34
I get lots of satisfaction from my personal reading	2	6.90	15	51.72	9	31.03	3	10.34
I'd rather watch TV or movies than read	6	20.69	10	34.48	6	20.69	7	24.14
Frankly, I don't find reading very exciting	1	3.45	5	17.24	12	41.38	11	37.93
I wish I had more time to read for myself	5	17.24	17	58.62	7	24.14	0	0.00
I always make time to read for myself	0	0.00	9	31.03	14	48.28	6	20.69

Source: Own calculation based on survey results.

In addition, while 55% of the participants stated that they rather watch TV or movies instead of reading, 58% get lots of satisfaction from reading, and only 6 admitted that they did not find reading very exciting. Once again, the study conducted by (Aisyiyah & Hakim, 2020) also examined the participants' reading habits and discovered that 81.8% of the students preferred to watch films instead of reading a book. The reason why these results are not consistent could be because, besides the option of watching TV or films, since the majority of the participants in this study were married females, they chose other options perhaps related to family activities.

An interesting result is that 22 teachers reported they wish they had more time to read. On the same topic, 11 teachers confirmed that when they have time, they like spending a day reading, and only 9 always make time to read. These results, once again, confirm the qualitative findings since they reported in the open-ended questions that they do not read more frequently due to the lack of time and excess of school and home duties.

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Teachers' Use of Instructional Practices

The teachers in this research were asked to read a list of instructional strategies related to teaching reading and choose how often they used each practice. The researcher of this study group the options *every day* and *1-2 times a week* as the more frequently used strategies by the teachers. Results show that an average of 75% of the participants reported that they have students frequently answer comprehension questions either orally or in writing (see Table 3). Findings related to answering comprehension questions from the qualitative part of the survey show that 10 teachers named this strategy as a common practice in class.

Table 3.
 Frequency of use of instructional strategies.

Instructional Strategies	Not at all		1-2 times a month		1-2 times a week		Every day	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Ask students oral comprehension questions?	1	3.45	7	24.14	7	24.14	14	48.28
Ask students to answer comprehension questions in writing?	1	3.45	5	17.24	14	48.28	9	31.03
Have students read orally in a large group setting?	1	3.45	9	31.03	14	48.28	5	17.24
Give students opportunities to read self-selected materials in class?	8	27.59	13	44.83	6	20.69	2	6.90
Give students opportunities to discuss self-selected materials in class?	12	41.38	11	37.93	1	3.45	5	17.24
Read aloud from any kind of text in class?	0	0.00	7	24.14	12	41.38	10	34.48
Let students discuss literature/texts in small groups?	8	27.59	12	41.38	7	24.14	2	6.90
Let students discuss literature/texts with the whole class?	11	37.93	6	20.69	10	34.48	2	6.90
Have students responded to reading texts in notebooks?	3	10.34	11	37.93	11	37.93	4	13.79
Share insights from your own personal reading?	6	20.69	16	55.17	4	13.79	3	10.34
Recommend specific reading materials to your students in class?	8	27.59	11	37.93	5	17.24	5	17.24

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Model-specific reading strategies?	8	27.59	11	37.93	6	20.69	4	13.79
Conduct any kind of pre-reading activities?	1	3.45	6	20.69	17	58.62	5	17.24
Conduct any kind of post-reading activities?	0	0.00	8	27.59	16	55.17	5	17.24

Source: Own calculation based on survey results.

An activity considered to be good practice is allowing students to bring and read their material. 8 teachers give students opportunities to read self-selected material in class recurrently. Another great practice is having students discuss what they have read. Only around 37% of the teachers frequently have their students discuss readings either in small groups or as a whole class, and 6 let students discuss texts they chose themselves to read.

An average of 20% of the participants regularly use pre- and post-reading activities, and around 50% have students respond to texts in their notebooks. Around 65% of the teachers have students repeatedly read in class in large group settings. Twenty-two teachers frequently read aloud in class. Twenty-two teachers do not frequently share insights from their personal reading with the students. Similarly, an equal number of teachers (19) do not recommend very often students specific reading material neither they model specific reading strategies in class.

Classroom Practices and Teachers' Reading Habits and Attitudes.

When the relationship between teachers' reading attitudes and instructional practice was examined, some fascinating findings were discovered (see Table 4). The teachers who considered themselves as "devoted readers" were more likely to use literacy practices linked to being best practices.

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Table 4.

Frequency of use of instructional strategies in teachers who value reading the most and the least.

Instructional Practice	Percentage of teachers who value reading the most	Percentage of teachers who value reading the least
Reading self-selected material	37.5	14.28
Discuss reading texts	75	33.33
Shared insights from your own personal reading	25	28.57
Recommend specific reading material to the class	25	38.09
Model-specific reading strategies	25	38.09
Conduct any kind of pre- post-reading activities	87.5	71.42
Ask students comprehension questions (written/oral)	75	76.19

Source: Own calculation based on survey results.

Seventy-five percent of the teachers who valued reading the most provided students with opportunities to discuss reading material in class, whereas only 33.33% of the teachers who valued reading the least had students discussing texts in class. Teachers who valued reading the most also allowed students to read self-selected material more often (37.5% versus 14.28%). Teachers who thought of themselves as “readers” conducted more frequently (87.5%) pre- and post-reading activities compared to the teachers who responded that they were really “readers” (71.42%). There is a small difference between “reader” teachers (75%) and “non-reader” ones (76.19%) about asking students to answer comprehension questions either orally or in writing.

The relationship between how much time teachers spent reading and instructional practice was also examined (see Table 5). For the purpose of this study, the teachers were split into two groups: teachers who read for pleasure 15 minutes or less per day and those teachers who read more than 30 minutes every day.

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Table 5.

Frequency of use of instructional strategies in teachers who read for pleasure the most and the least.

Instructional Practice	Percentage of teachers who read the most	Percentage of teachers who read the least
Reading self-selected material	40	0
Discuss reading texts	46.66	21.42
Shared insights from your own personal reading	40	7.14
Recommend specific reading material to the class	40	42.85
Model-specific reading strategies	40	28.57
Conduct any kind of pre- / post-reading activities	86.66	64.28
Ask students to answer comprehension questions in writing/orally	86.66	64.28

Source: Own calculation based on survey results.

Several interesting results were discovered. The majority of the teachers (86.66%) who read more than 30 minutes per day conducted pre- and post-reading activities and asked students to answer comprehension questions in a written or oral form in comparison with the teachers who read 15 minutes or less (64.28%). An equal number of participants who read the most (40%) allowed students to read their own material, shared insights about their personal reading, and model reading strategies in class far more frequently than those who read the least (0%, 7.14%, and 28.57% respectively).

Also, teachers who read for more than 30 minutes after class every day gave more than double opportunities to students to discuss reading material in class (46.66% versus 21.42%). On the other hand, teachers who read the least recommended specific reading material to their students a little bit more often (42.85%) than the teachers who read the most (40%).

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PROPOSAL

The findings of this study assert that teachers' reading habits and attitudes do impact their instructional practices. Teachers must value and engage in the act of reading, so great instructional strategies will be used in classrooms. Another reason for encouraging teachers to be readers could be the fact that they can influence their students' reading behaviors in positive ways. As a result of the findings of this research, the following suggestions are set forth:

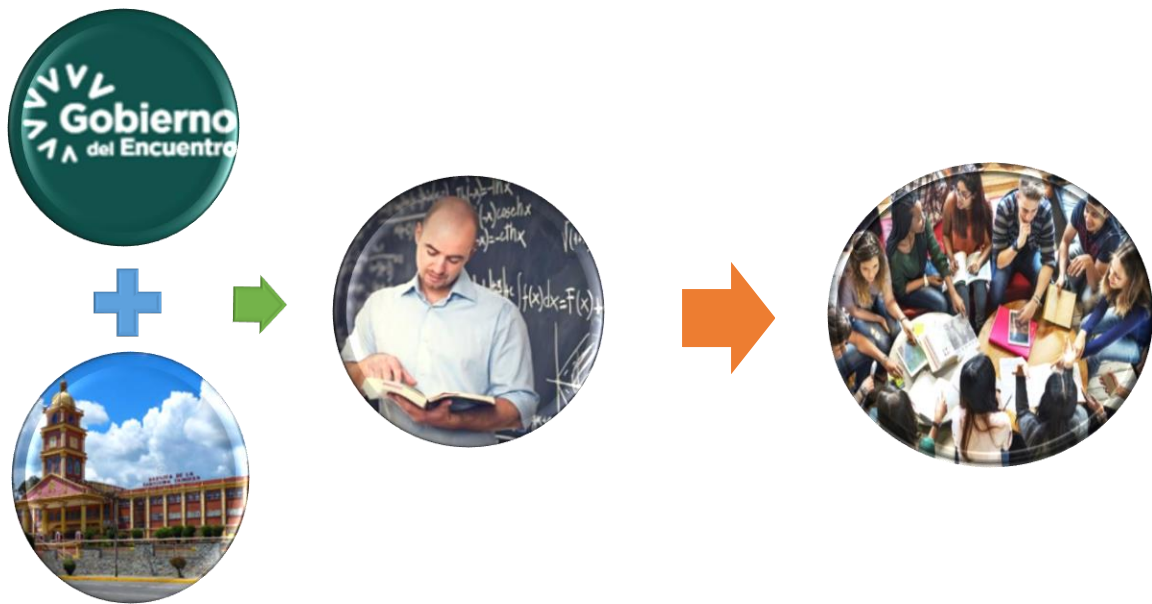


Figure 1. *Proposal for the development of teachers' reading habits and attitudes*
Source: Own calculation based on survey results.

Government Reading Programs for Teachers

For quite a few years, the Ecuadorian government has been promoting programs for students in schools to develop good reading habits. One of them is the "Yo Leo" Reading program. According to Ministerio de Educacion (n.d.), the main purpose of this program is to strengthen the reading behavior of the whole educational community: students,

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parents, teachers, and administrators of all forms of education. Even though the “Yo Leo” program aims to help improve the reading habits of everyone involved in education, it has been mainly focusing on students rather than teachers or even parents. Several Ecuadorian educational institutions have been taking part in this reading program hoping that their students will change their attitudes towards reading in English that usually are not positive.

Even during the pandemic, many schools have implemented the objective of the “Yo Leo” reading program and have had virtual reading sessions for their students. Therefore, this study’s researcher would recommend the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education to broaden its scope and try to implement reading programs designed specifically for practicing teachers and students preparing to become teachers. It should be a priority for the Ecuadorian government to emphasize and advertise its intention to build teachers that not only want to improve their English language skills but also wish to include reading as one of their preferred habits.

Universities Support to Future Teachers

Throughout the years that the teachers’ preparation program in universities takes, a great deal can be done by the institution to help future teachers to become enthusiastic readers. For instance, to help teacher candidates acquire the habit of reading, universities could restructure their curriculum to include at least two hours per week of mandatory reading during class time where teachers and students can just read for pleasure. Activities such as book clubs, book fairs, and book promotions where students can meet frequently and discuss books they are reading could be also advocated. Additionally, practices that will encourage future teachers to read such as giving book sets as a gift at the beginning of the semester and/or promoting events or competitions where students who have read the most are awarded badges or trophies can also be suggested. Since books tend to be expensive in our country, the university library plays an essential role in providing reading material. Libraries should be enriched with texts of various types; perhaps, taking into

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account the opinions of the future teachers when acquiring new books. For those students who cannot afford to purchase books for any reason, accessing the university library will be without any doubt the easiest and more practical way to find material to read.

If the recommendations presented in this study were to be put into practice, there will be many possibilities that some of the students preparing to be teachers will find reading interesting and hopefully, they might continue reading after graduating, and consequently, based on this research' results, they will employ the best instructional strategies in their classrooms and hopefully, show their enjoyment to read in class. In addition, as discussed in this study, teachers are role models for students. Thus, there is the chance that students might notice the enthusiasm portrayed by their teachers when it comes to reading that they could also feel implicitly encouraged and motivated to read as well. In the end, the suggestions described in this research have the potential of changing the reading habits and attitudes of both teachers and students and it might become a virtuous circle that will benefit our society in general.

CONCLUSIONS

This study was undertaken to examine how the reading habits and attitudes of Master's students at a private university in Ecuador impact their instructional practices in the classroom. After analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data, several conclusions were drawn. First, teachers are reading daily either for pleasure or for professional purposes but are not frequent readers. It seems like they do not have time to read more often as they would like to due to their heavy workload. Teachers invest many hours grading tasks and planning future classes. Additionally, the majority of the teachers in this study were females, which might involve also performing household chores and family activities. Secondly, the findings reveal that a small number of teachers consider themselves avid readers. By contrast, a great number of teachers get lots of satisfaction from reading, and they wish they had more time to read. It can be concluded that even though only a few teachers have positive attitudes towards reading in English, most of them are interested

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in doing so. About the main objective of this research, findings suggest that there seems to be a connection between teachers' reading attitudes and the use of instructional practices thought to be best.

All of the teachers who valued reading the most put into practice in the classroom strategies such as allowing students to read material of their preferences as well as to discuss those texts. In addition, these teachers follow the recommended pre-, while-, and post-reading activities and ask comprehension questions to students either orally or in written form. However, they do not share insights from their own personal reading, recommend specific reading material to their classes or model-specific reading strategies. Finally, there is a strong relationship between teachers who read 30 minutes or more and the instructional practices used in classrooms. All the teachers who read the most tend to use strategies considered to be best.

Even though the aims of this research have been successfully achieved, this study is not deprived of some limitations. Even though a few open-ended questions were added to the Likert-type questionnaire to gather the information, the responses from the participants were purely based on their opinions, and there is the possibility that they were not objective enough. Additionally, since the researcher and the teachers participating in this study were classmates in the same Master's Program, they might have tried to please the former. If this study were to be replicated, using different methods such as reading journals or time diaries might provide more complete and accurate data.

Moreover, the findings of this research study were limited to a small number of participants from one particular private university in Cuenca, Ecuador. Therefore, generalizations of this study's findings would not be reliable or accurate since they cannot be seen as a true representation of the entire city. Further research should focus on examining the reading habits and attitudes of a greater number of participants and possibly from more than one institution.

The results of this study have a few implications as well. This study has shown that teachers' reading habits and attitudes play a big role in the instructional strategies used

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in the classroom. Therefore, teachers should not spare any efforts in developing themselves the habit of reading and changing their attitudes towards reading in English for the benefit of the students. If teachers are devoted readers, it is more likely that they will put in practice the best instructional strategies with their students in the classroom. What is more, teachers are role models for students.

Thus, if we want a society that reads, teachers should set an example and be the first ones to do it. Results also revealed that even though not many teachers think of themselves as readers, most of them find satisfaction when reading and would like to have more time to do so. In consequence, educational institutions should be aware of the workload they require from the teachers. Time must be provided to teachers to read not only for pleasure but also for professional purposes. Reading articles, papers, and research is vital for teachers, so they are up-to-date with the most current findings especially the ones related to education. In the same vein, the results showed that teachers who have the habit of reading daily tend to use the best instructional strategies. This is another reason for authorities in institutions to consider providing teachers with time to read at home after class.

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