

Assessment strategies and English-reading skills in web-based learning environments

Estrategias de evaluación y destrezas de lectura en inglés en ambientes de aprendizaje virtual

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Emily Juliet Cueva Criollo

emilyjulietc@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-0289-1025>

Marcia Iliana Criollo Vargas

marciacv4@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5326-2456>

Miriam Eucevia Troya Sánchez

mrmtry@yahoo.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7798-8684>

Resumen

La aplicación de estrategias de evaluación efectivas para evaluar las habilidades de lectura en entornos basados en la web presenta desafíos únicos. El estudio tiene como objetivo examinar las estrategias de evaluación empleadas por los docentes y su impacto en las habilidades de lectura en inglés entre estudiantes universitarios en entornos virtuales. Se utilizó un enfoque metodológico de comparación, incorporando datos tanto cualitativos como cuantitativos de 287 estudiantes universitarios y 10 docentes. La recolección de datos implicó una encuesta escala Likert aplicada a docentes y una prueba de rendimiento a estudiantes. Los resultados indicaron que la evaluación formativa fue la estrategia más utilizada, con preferencia por preguntas de opción múltiple y de verdadero-falso. Además, se empleó con frecuencia el proceso de lectura de arriba hacia abajo, centrándose en la comprensión superficial. Tanto las

evaluaciones de forma sincrónicas como en ambientes asincrónicas fueron recibidas positivamente, con una ligera preferencia por los ambientes asincrónicos. En general, las estrategias de evaluación implementadas por los docentes tuvieron un impacto positivo en el nivel de habilidades de lectura de los estudiantes en el idioma inglés, que fueron calificadas como “excelentes” en entornos de aprendizaje basados en la web.

Palabras clave

Estrategias de evaluación, habilidades de lectura, entornos de aprendizaje web, dominio del idioma inglés.

Abstract

Applying effective assessment strategies to evaluate reading skills in web-based environments presents unique challenges. The study aims to examine the assessment strategies employed by teachers and their impact on English language reading skills among university students in virtual settings. A comparison methodology approach was used, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data from 287 university students and 10 teachers. Data collection involved a Likert-scale survey applied to teachers and an achievement test for students. The results indicated that formative assessment was the most commonly used strategy, with a preference for multiple-choice and true-false questions. Additionally, the top-down reading process was frequently employed, focusing on surface-level comprehension. Both synchronous and asynchronous assessments were positively received, with a slight preference for asynchronous setting. Overall, the assessment strategies implemented by teachers had a positive impact on students' Level of proficiency in English language reading skills, which were rated at an “excellent” level in web-based learning environments.

Keywords

Assessment strategies, reading skills, web-based learning environments, English language proficiency.

Introduction

Reading skills are indispensable for communication when learning English, as they assist with vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation, information and input for acquiring the target language. However, as mentioned by Huh and Hirumi (2011) “there is a dearth of studies and information on how to address reading problems at a distance” (p.279). This challenge needs to be researched in order to determine if the assessment strategies affect the development of reading skills.

The rapid expansion of technology in educational environments has revolutionized traditional classroom settings, enhancing learning by making education more accessible and cost-effective (Haleem et al., 2022). This transformation became particularly pronounced after the Pandemic COVID-19, which accelerated the shift to web-based learning, providing unprecedented access to educational opportunities. However, alongside these advantages, significant challenges have emerged, particularly concerning the assessment of English language reading skills in this modality. Kaya (2015) highlights that reading skills are vital for comprehension, a critical component for effectively understanding written material, whether for pleasure or informational purposes. Furthermore, reading aloud plays a dynamic role in developing pronunciation and communicational skills (Suryana et al., 2020); while Pigada & Schmitt (2006) state that reading supports vocabulary acquisition, making learners more proficient in their target language.

Despite the recognized importance of reading skills in the English teaching learning process, assessing these skills remains a complex challenge due to its multifaceted nature, which includes many subskills such as comprehension, understanding the main idea, recognizing details, text-type recognition, sequence arrangement, prediction type of questions in assessing. This issue represents an evident gap in the English language learning, that is why this research results important in the field of education. Incorporating web-based learning into the assessment process complicates these challenges further. For instance, Hassan and Ahmed (2023) note that academic dishonesty poses a significant barrier to accurately assessing reading skills in online learning environments.

Considering the complexities of assessing reading skills, there is a need to analyze the relationship between the teacher's reading assessments strategies and students' reading skills in web-based learning environments. Understanding these strategies is necessary to overcome the challenges in the development of defective reading understanding. This research aims to find out how different assessment strategies used by teachers impact student's reading skills within web-based environments. While platforms provide flexibility, they often lack teachers' immediate feedback to assess students' reading skills.

This study was conducted in a higher education institution where teachers manage large groups of students in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Synchronous sessions effectively mimic face-to-face interaction, providing opportunities for dynamic assessment and engagement. However, asynchronous settings offer flexibility for students to engage with content at their own pace, presenting an alternative for diverse learning needs. The findings highlight the importance of further research with larger, more diverse populations to refine assessment strategies for reading skills in web-based environments (Saefurrohman & Susiloningtyas, 2022). Additionally, as Huh and Hirumi (2011) emphasize, addressing reading challenges in remote learning contexts remains a valuable area for exploration and innovation.

Literature Review

Assessment Definition

Black and William (1998) define assessment as activities conducted by both teachers and students to gather information that serves as feedback, leading to improvements in teaching and learning. As Cheng and Fox (2017) explain assessment is a multidimensional process that includes: (1) self-assessment is when students evaluate their own progress, peer-assessment when students assess each other's work, formal assessment such as International standardized tests such as the TOEFL test; and informal assessment which are the daily assessments in the classroom.

Assessment Strategies in Web-based Learning

Dahalan & Hussain (2010) define assessment in web-based learning as evaluating student achievement in online instruction. Teachers and students use results for reflection and

improvement. Common web-based assessment strategies include: Online quizzes and tests: Provide immediate feedback, allowing students to identify areas for improvement. E-portfolios: Track student progress and showcase learning over time. Project-based tasks: Assess a combination of theoretical and practical skills, with methods such as case-based and performance-based assessments (Van den Bergh et al., 2006a).

Types of Questions in Reading Assessment

Several types of questions assess English reading skills:

- **Cloze tests:** Students fill in blanks in a text to assess comprehension (Brown, 2004).
- **Multiple-choice questions (MCQs):** Test reading sub skills such as skimming, scanning, and inferring (Ajideh & Mozaffarzadeh, 2012b)
- **Retelling:** Students recount a text in their own words to assess comprehension and recall (Gunning, 2014).
- **Matching:** Students match headings or sentences to evaluate understanding of main ideas.
- **True-False:** Assesses comprehension by identifying specific information in a text.
- **Fill-in-the-gaps:** Tests vocabulary and sentence structure by completing texts.
- **Sequencing:** Requires students to order events or ideas logically, enhancing critical thinking (Baxodirovna, 2020).

Formative and Summative Assessment

Cheng & Fox (2017) define formative assessment as an ongoing process that supports learning throughout the instructional period, aligned with assessment for learning. Summative assessment evaluates overall learning at the end of a unit or course, aligned with assessment of learning.

Synchronous and Asynchronous Environments

According to Gava (2011), web-based learning environments include two types of communication: **Synchronous:** Real-time interactions via tools like Zoom or Google Meet. **Asynchronous:** Delayed communication through emails, discussion forums, and educational

platforms like Moodle, Canvas and others. These platforms offer a variety of tools to support learning, including quizzes, assignments, and instant messaging.

Reading Skills Overview

Reading is a fundamental skill that enables the identification, understanding, and comprehension of written texts, making it essential for language acquisition and communication. Scholars such as Arbandari et al. (2022) and Mastrothanas et al., (2023) highlight its importance in language learning, especially within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, where reading proficiency is a key for academic success.

Reading Assessment Strategies

Effective assessment of reading skills plays an important role for determining learner's proficiency and areas of improvement. (Adcock, 1993) suggests a comprehensive framework for assessing reading strategies, focusing on key areas, such as identifying the main idea, recalling facts, understanding sequence, and distinguishing between fact and opinion. These assessments help teachers evaluate students' abilities to comprehend texts and apply critical thinking skills.

Sub-skills of Reading

Reading comprehension is an integral process involving many subskills. These are scanning, skimming, inferring meaning, and predicting content. Scanning refers to quickly locating specific information in a text, while skimming refers to getting the gist or general idea of a passage. Inferring meaning helps readers deduce unknown words or phrases using context; and predicting means anticipating the content based on prior knowledge and textual clues. (MacLeod, 2018; Greenall & Swan, 1986). These sub skills are important for **efficient and effective** reading in both academic and everyday contexts.

Reading Processes

Ardhani (2011) identifies two primary processes involved in reading comprehension: the top-down and bottom-up approaches. The top-down process emphasizes the reader's background knowledge, allowing them to draw on prior experiences and contextual understanding to interpret and make sense of the text as a whole. This approach highlights the importance of schema theory, where readers integrate existing knowledge with new information to construct meaning. Conversely, the bottom-up process is more linear, starting with the recognition of fundamental

linguistic elements such as word meanings, phrases, and grammatical structures. These components are gradually pieced together to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the text. Together, these processes demonstrate the interplay between cognitive frameworks and linguistic proficiency in the development of effective reading comprehension.

Feedback

Feedback is the process of “giving information in a way that encourages the recipient to accept it, reflect on it, learn from it, use it, and hopefully make changes for the better” (Obilor, 2019, p. 40). In web-based learning environments, teachers can provide immediate feedback during synchronous classes, offering real-time guidance and support. Additionally, they can deliver delayed feedback using various tools such as email, audio and video recording, screencasts, or recycled comments. These strategies encourage students reflect to reflect on their learning, fostering critical thinking and promoting independence as learners (Mamoon et al., 2016).

Material and Methods

The design of this study is comparative with a mixed focus responding to a quantitative and qualitative approach, as it involves gathering numerical and categorial data. This method is effective for obtaining quantitative information from a large sample or an entire population because the results can be generalized to the broader population. Surveys with standardized questions, were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics (Rana et al., 2020).

The method was hypothetic-deductive method, which is called scientific method. The main purpose focused on the statement of research questions that guided the research process, and by deducing the findings that the study might derive after finishing it. According to Tariq (2015), the hypothetic deductive method allows the researcher to prove a theory derived from a research problem or a gap.

The population of this study are students who belong to the Language Institute at a public Institution of Higher Education in Loja, Ecuador. The population includes four groups, totaling 412 participants. The instruments were administered to a sample of 278 students, representing the

majority of the population, which enhances the reliability of the study. The participants share similar characteristics regarding the A2.1. level of English Knowledge, and modality of study who learn English through web-based learning by developing in synchronous and asynchronous sessions. Moreover, 10 professors participated in the study, who are the ones teaching the students' group of participants.

The instruments and techniques that were used to collect data are described as follows: The survey technique with the instruments of a questionnaire was used to collect information from teachers. Surveys are useful to research about opinions, beliefs, perceptions, attitudes and issues of individuals (Creswell, 2012). It used the Liker's scale with a five-parameters scale which goes from strongly agree to strongly disagree. This instrument gathered information about the strategies that teacher uses in assessment reading skills as well as about the students' perceptions about these strategies.

The testing technique was used by administering an achievement test which served to collect data about the knowledge of the students average in reading. The test was administered to assess students' proficiency in English reading skills through five targeted questions. The first question (6 items) evaluated skimming skills, or the ability to grasp the main idea. The second question (5 items) assessed scanning skills, focusing on understanding specific details. The third question (6 items) measured vocabulary comprehension within context. The fourth question (6 items) tested sequencing skills, and the fifth question (4 items) evaluated predictive abilities based on the text. Tests in education can facilitate a comparative analysis of data in correlational studies (Hamed Taherdoost, 2021).

Additionally, the test and the questionnaire underwent two validation processes: construct validation, achieved through theoretical analysis, and external validation conducted by three experts in the field. These steps enhanced the reliability of the instruments.

Considering the study's design, the data were represented in tables and graphs using the JAMOVI program to calculate percentages and measures of central tendency in the test. The results from the teachers' survey were analyzed through thematic analysis and descriptive statistical processes and the test was measured with a scale of excellent to insufficient.

Results:

Objective One:

To identify the assessment strategies that teachers use for assessing reading skills in web-based learning environments among university students.

Assessment strategies applied by the teachers

Table 1

Types of assessment

| Assessment strategies | Strongly agree | | Neutral | Strongly disagree | | Total |
|---|----------------|----------|---------|-------------------|----------|-------|
| | agree | Disagree | | Disagree | disagree | |
| Use of portfolios in assessing reading skills | 20.0 % | 50.0 % | 10.0 % | 10.0 % | 10.0 % | 100 |
| Use of projects in assessing reading skills | 50.0 % | 40.0 % | 10.0 % | 0% | 0% | 100 |
| Formative Assessment | 80.0 % | 20.0 % | 0% | 0% | 0% | 100 |
| Summative assessment | 60.0 % | 20.0 % | 20.0 % | 0% | 0% | 100 |
| Timely Feedback | 40.0 % | 30.0 % | 20.0 % | 10.0 % | 0% | 100 |

The present table deals with the assessment strategies that are most commonly used within educational settings, specifically with the purpose of assessing reading skills. Five assessment strategies were presented and rated using a five-point Likert Scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Table 1 shows that the use of portfolios in assessing reading skills received mixed responses. For instance, 20% of respondents strongly agree on the usage of portfolios for reading assessment, while 50% agree but with slightly less intensity. On the other hand, 10% of respondents are indifferent, 10% disagree and the remaining 10% strongly disagree. This distribution of responses suggests that portfolios are perceived as useful by the majority of

participants, yet a significant minority are either indifferent or doubtful about the potential value that portfolios could have in the field of reading assessment.

Alongside this, the use of project-based assessment in reading skills has a more significant level of support, with 50% of the teachers strongly agreeing about that, and 40% agreeing, showing that these activities also are used as formative assessment in improving reading skills. The remaining 10% of teachers showed a neutral stance, and not a single participant issued a negative response against the use of projects. These results indicate that projects are widely deemed as a beneficial and effective assessment strategy.

Moreover, formative assessment is the assessment strategy that received the highest support by teachers, with 80% strongly agreeing on their usage and 20% agreeing. No respondents were neutral or had a negative response to this assessment strategy. This indicates an overwhelming and almost complete strong approval of formative assessment, being deemed as essential for effective assessment of reading skills.

As for summative assessment, 60% of participants strongly agree with its usage, with 20% agreeing. Nevertheless, the remaining 20% of teachers choose to stay neutral, suggesting certain level of skepticism on this form of assessment regarding reading skills. These findings illustrate that while the majority of teachers expressed positive perceptions about the use of summative assessment, there is some level of hesitation by some of them. However, not one participant disagreed or strongly disagreed, positively reflecting on using this assessment strategy.

Timely feedback has mixed results, with 40% strongly agree, 30% agree which indicates an overall positive trend in the support of using this assessment strategy. However, 20% remain neutral and 10% disagree, suggesting that while timely feedback is accepted by most of teacher as useful, some participants are either unconcerned or hesitant about its efficiency and usefulness.

All in all, the data described in Table 1 highlights that the most widely accepted assessment strategy for reading skills is formative assessment, followed by summative assessment, regular feedback, and projects, all of which are also heavily supported, although with varying degrees of interest. However, portfolio assessment showed the most diverse responses, suggesting mixed opinions on their usefulness and effectiveness.

Table 2
Types of Questions in Reading Assessment

| Types of Questions | Strongly agree | | | | Strongly disagree | | Total |
|---|----------------|--------|---------|----------|-------------------|------|-------|
| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree | | |
| Multiple Choice and true or False questions | 50.0 % | 30.0 % | 20.0 % | 0% | 0% | 100% | |
| Completing sentences and fill in gaps | 40% | 40% | 10% | 10% | 0% | 100% | |
| Sequencing passages | 40% | 40% | 20% | 0 % | 0% | 100% | |
| Matching sentences | 20.0 % | 70.0 % | 10.0 % | 0% | 0% | 100% | |

Table 2 is concerned with the most common types of questions implemented while assessing reading skills. Four categories were proposed some of them being multiple-choice questions, sequencing passages, and so on. A Likert Scale was used to measure the level of agreement that participants had regarding each type of question used in reading assessment.

To start, regarding to multiple choice and true/false questions are particularly used by teachers, with 50% of respondents strongly agree and 30% agree in testing the ability to identify key details and main ideas in reading skills; while 20% are neutral, showing less acceptance for these types of questions. Importantly, no respondents disagree or strongly disagree, a fact that positively reflects on the general acceptance that Multiple choice and True and False questions are effective in the field of assessing reading skills.

Likewise, completing sentences and fill-in-the-gap questions receive dense support, with 40% of respondents each strongly agree and agree. This means that teachers positively view these types of questions and they are very likely to use or have used in assessing reading skills. However, 10% of the teachers remain neutral and 10% disagree, indicating that while these questions are generally accepted there is a level of reluctance and uncertainty about their value in reading assessment.

Furthermore, sequencing passages questions has positive responses, as well. The 80% of teachers' responses are equally distributed by strongly agree and agree, with the remaining 20%

selecting a neutral stance. There are no negative responses for this type of question, which illustrates that sequencing passage questions are generally favored with slight hesitation or indifference issued by English teachers.

As the last type of question, which is “Matching sentences”, with 20% of participants strongly agreeing, and with a significant 70% agreeing. Notably, only 10% of respondents remain neutral, with no negative responses. This reflects a positive use of this type of questions, but with slightly less interest, since most of teachers agree, instead of strongly agreeing.

Overall, multiple-choice and true/false questions are the most preferred formats among teachers for assessing reading skills. These are followed by matching questions and sequencing passage formats, which are also accepted but tend to elicit slightly more neutral or mixed perceptions regarding their application in assessing reading skills.

Table 3

Types of reading

| Types of Reading | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Total |
|-------------------|----------------|--------|---------|----------|-------------------|-------|
| Intensive Reading | 70.0 % | 30.0 % | 0% | 0% | 0% | 100% |
| Extensive Reading | 18.2 % | 63.6 % | 9.1 % | 0% | 0% | 100% |

Table 3 represents teachers' perceptions of the two most common types of reading, intensive reading and extensive reading. Furthermore, a five-point Likert scale was used to measure educators' agreement with the usage of shorter or longer texts in assessing reading skills during class.

Starting with intensive reading, there is an overwhelming 70% of teachers who strongly agree with its use, while the remaining 30% agree. There are no neutral or negative responses for this type of reading, which indicates that intensive reading is considered by teachers as highly applied for assessing reading skills.

On the other hand, extensive reading received mixed responses, with answers spread throughout the scale. For instance, only 10% of teachers strongly agree with using extensive reading, and 30% agree. Moreover, 20% remain neutral, 30% disagree, and 10% strongly disagree on its use. This illustrates that while some teachers believe that extensive reading could be beneficial, although not as enthusiastically as with intensive reading strategies, another significant percentage are hesitant and skeptical about using it with students in synchronous environments, better preferring to expose them to shorter texts through intensive reading.

On the whole, intensive reading is valued more actively by teachers, with all of them either strongly agreeing or agreeing. However, extensive reading rises mixed responses, still being appreciated but by a smaller amount, and with somewhat less enthusiasm. This means that teachers prefer to use shorter and more precise texts for assessing reading skills, rather than using longer texts like books to assess reading skills.

Table 4
Reading processes

| Reading Processes | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Total |
|---------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|-------|
| Top-down reading process | 50% | 40% | 10% | 0% | 0% | 100% |
| Bottom-up reading process | 30% | 70.0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 100% |

Table 4 presents respondents' levels of agreement with the usage of either top-down or bottom-up reading processes. For the measurement, a Likert scale was used with responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

As for the top-down reading process 50% of teachers strongly agree, and 40% agree, indicating strong support for its use in reading tasks that emphasize contextual understanding and inferencing. Meanwhile, the bottom-up process, which focuses on detailed comprehension and textual analysis, received 30% strongly agree and 70% agree, suggesting a broader favorability for assessing students' reading skills among the teachers.

All things considered, the absence data in disagreement for either process underscores the perceived importance of both strategies in assessing reading skills with a slightly inclination toward bottom-up methods.

Table 5
Synchronous assessment and Feedback

| Learning Environment | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Total |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|-------|
| Synchronous assessment (live) | 30% | 50% | 10% | 10% | 0% | 100% |
| Synchronous Feedback | 40% | 50% | 10% | 0% | 0% | 100% |
| Asynchronous assessment | 50% | 40% | 10% | 0% | 0% | 100% |
| Asynchronous Feedback | 60% | 30% | 10% | 0% | 0% | 100% |

Table 5 presents the agreement expressed by participants regarding being assessed through synchronous (live) assessments and receiving synchronous feedback, as well as their agreement regarding being assessed and receiving feedback in asynchronous environments. Responses are measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.”

Regarding synchronous assessment, 30% of respondents strongly agree, while 50% agree, this indicates a wide acceptance of this type of assessment, with the majority of responses being positive. Moreover, 10% of participants choose to remain neutral, and the other 10% disagree. This means that while synchronous assessment is highly supported by the majority of teachers, there exists a minimal number of teachers who are indifferent about its value in assessing reading skills.

In terms of synchronous feedback, the support is even more significant, with 50% strongly agreeing on its usage, and 40% agreeing. This illustrates an almost complete support of using this kind of feedback, with only 10% of participants choosing to remain neutral. The lack of negative responses positively reflects on the acceptance of synchronous feedback, with very minimal hesitancy on the part of some teachers.

The data indicates that participants generally favor asynchronous assessment and feedback over synchronous (live) methods. For asynchronous assessment, 50% of teachers strongly agree with its effectiveness, compared to 30% for synchronous assessment. Similarly, asynchronous feedback has the highest level of strong agreement at 60%, whereas synchronous feedback stands at 40%. Although "agree" responses are high for both environments, asynchronous assessment have a slightly higher percentage in agreement 50% for both assessment and feedback, than their asynchronous counterparts 40% for assessment and 30% for feedback. Neutral and disagreement responses remain low across both types, with only 10% disagreeing with synchronous assessment. This suggests a clear preference for asynchronous reading assessment in reading skills, particularly in providing feedback.

To sum up, with no negative responses on either asynchronous assessment or feedback, this assessment environment remains highly supported by teachers. Additionally, the lack of negative responses, highlights teachers' confidence in the usefulness and effectiveness of asynchronous environments in assessing reading skills, with slightly more acceptance and support for asynchronous feedback

Objective Two:

To determine the students' level of proficiency in English language reading skills.

Students' proficiency level in Reading Skills

Table 6
Descriptive Results about the test scores

| Descriptive | Reading Test Average |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| N | 278 |
| Lost | 0 |
| Mean | 15.7 |
| Median | 17.0 |
| Standard Deviation | 4.22 |

| Descriptive | Reading Test Average |
|-------------|----------------------|
| Mínimum | 3 |
| Máximum | 22 |

In a reading achievement test taken by 278 students, the average score was 15.7 out of a possible 22, suggesting a generally positive performance level from the group. The median score was slightly higher at 17.0, indicating that more than half of the students scored above the mean, which suggests a positive skew and a tendency for students to perform relatively well.

The standard deviation of 4.22 points reveals moderate variability, implying that most students' scores fell within a range of approximately 4.22 points above or below the mean. This variability indicates differences in reading proficiency, with some students scoring significantly higher or lower than the average.

The range of scores, from a minimum of 3 to a maximum of 22, underscores a broad spectrum of abilities, highlighting that while some students demonstrated high reading skills, others struggled in reading skills. This spread in scores suggests potential areas for targeted intervention to support lower-performing students and help bridge performance gaps, while also recognizing the achievements of higher-scoring students. Overall, the data reflects a group with generally strong reading skills but also points to a need for differentiated support to address the varied performance levels among students.

Table 7
Reading Test Average

| Reading Test Average | Frequencies | % Percentage |
|----------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Excellent (22-16.6) | 142 | 51 % |
| Good (16.5-11.1) | 92 | 33 % |
| Regular (11-5.6) | 34 | 12 % |
| Insufficient (5.5-0) | 10 | 4 % |

| | | |
|-------|-----|------|
| Total | 278 | 100% |
|-------|-----|------|

An achievement test was administered to determine students' proficiency in English reading skills. The test consisted of five questions, each with a distinct purpose. The first question, which included six items, aimed to assess students' skimming strategy, or their ability to understand the main idea of a text. The second question, with five items, measured the scanning strategy, which reflects the ability to identify specific details. The third question, containing six items, was designed to evaluate students' understanding of vocabulary in context. The fourth question, also with six items, assessed students' ability to sequence ideas from the text. Finally, the fifth question, which included four items, evaluated the ability to make predictions based on the text.

The table 7 shows that 51% of students got a score between 16.6 and 22 out of 22 points, which is equivalent to an “excellent” grade on the reading test. The results evidence that over half of the students demonstrated a high level of reading proficiency, meeting the expected standards. Additionally, 33% of students scored within the range of 11.1 and 16.5 which represent a “good” score whose achievement shows a solid understanding in reading texts. Meanwhile 12% reached scores between 5.6 and 11 corresponding to a “Regular” rating. Finally, 4% of participants scored between 0 and 5.5 which is classified as “insufficient” rating. This small group likely faces significant challenges in reading skills.

In a general analysis of the results the scores reached by students are outstanding in the test about reading proficiency. Only a minimal group of students show low scores which evidences the importance of providing tailored support to bridge the gap in reading achievement and ensure all students reach the expected level of proficiency.

Discussion

In the first place, the first sub-question goes as follows: *What are the assessment strategies that teachers use for assessing reading skills through web-based learning environments at the Language Institute of Universidad Nacional de Loja?* This question can be answered by addressing the findings gathered using the survey directed to teachers regarding their reading assessment practices. First, as portrayed in Table 1, formative assessment is the most commonly used assessment strategy, followed by summative assessment, then projects, followed by regular feedback, and portfolios, as the least used strategy. These findings can be compared to the claims made by Cheng & Fox (2017), who assert that formative assessment is an ongoing process that takes place constantly throughout the instructional periods, so it is only natural that formative assessment is the most common assessment strategy used by educators for assessing students' reading skills. Moreover, to continue analyzing teachers' assessment practices, mentioning the most common questions used in reading assessment is imperative. In this field, Multiple Choice and True or False questions take the stand of most common questions, followed by both Completing sentences and Fill in gaps questions and Sequencing passages, with the same amount of popularity, Matching sentences being the least favored. These results align with the claims made by authors who recognize that multiple-choice questions are widely used because they effectively measure factual knowledge and understanding of specific details, as well as their ease in scoring tests. True-False questions are valuable for testing students' understanding of key concepts. Sentence completion tasks help to assess the recall of specific terms, concepts, or facts, as well as comprehension and critical thinking. Sequencing questions are useful for understanding the logical order of events and analyzing the relationships and connections between them, particularly in reading assessments (Ajideh & Mozaffarzadeh, 2012; Baxodirovna, 2020; Brown, 2004).

Continuing with the type of reading favored between intensive and extensive reading, the results indicated a higher level of support for intensive reading. This is reflected back on the types of questions most commonly used, since they focus on more specific details, instead of assessing reading through extensive reading. Because, as Brown (2004) mentions, extensive reading taps into learners' general knowledge and understanding of the text, rather than small details.

Consequently, the preferred reading process by teachers is the bottom-up reading process to assess reading skills, this aligns the findings of the most commonly used intensive type of reading because as acknowledged by top-down processing is favored for most extensive tasks due to this process requires from the readers prior knowledge, comprehension and language skills to understand the context and meaning of the text (Ardhani, 2011). Brown, (2004) also explains that the bottom-up reading process enables learners to first grasp letters, morphemes, syllables, words, phrases, grammatical structures, and discourse markers, and then use a processing mechanism to create reasonable, coherent, and meaningful understanding of the text. And, considering that intensive reading is favorite, then it is only fair that the bottom-up reading process is favored, as well.

Lastly, regarding synchronous and asynchronous assessment and feedback, both are positively received by teachers in evaluating reading skills. However, asynchronous assessment is slightly more favored, while synchronous feedback is considered more beneficial. These findings align with the claims of Gava (2011), who states that web-based learning environments are becoming indispensable in second language (L2) learning. They provide a wide range of tools to foster collaborative learning and interaction, supporting learners in becoming more effective communicators and users of English as a foreign language (EFL).

Regarding to the subquestion: *What are the students' perceptions about the assessment strategies used by teachers in assessing English reading skills in web-based learning environments?*

The second sub-question that inquiries about students' level of proficiency in English language reading skills can be answered by addressing the findings gathered using the achievement test. As illustrated in Table 7, over half of the total students demonstrate excellent proficiency in English reading skills, being able to accurately and proficiently skim and scan a text, understand vocabulary in context, sequence ideas, and make predictions.

Likewise, with no less merit, more than a third of participants show good reading skills. Only very few participants have either regular or insufficient reading proficiency. These findings show that the majority of students at the Language Institute of Universidad Nacional de Loja possess satisfactory English reading skills. These results align with Tomlinson and Whittaker's

(2011) acknowledgment that web-based environments offer more opportunities for self-study and autonomy, provided that teachers implement an appropriate mix of synchronous and asynchronous sessions, and learners have access to adequate technological tools and internet connectivity to support effective reading assessment practices. Therefore, the students at the Language Institute, who are learning English as a foreign language (EFL) through web-based environments, have demonstrated that their reading skills remain strong despite the challenges associated with virtual learning. These results align with the findings (Dahalan & Hussain, 2010) who state that web-based environments offer learners greater flexible to read at their own pace while providing opportunities for self-reflection and self-correction. These findings suggest that the learning setting itself does not hinder students' ability to improve their reading proficiency.

Conclusions

Formative assessments were the most commonly used strategy, followed by summative assessments, reading projects, feedback and portfolios being the least used. The findings suggest that these strategies are the most used by the teachers to effectively assess reading skills in web-based learning environments.

A preference for multiple choice and true/false types of questions in reading assessment was observed. These types of questions emphasize surface-level comprehension and recall of the information, aligning partially with the top-down reading process, which relies in prior knowledge and contextual understanding. While, teachers focus on a preference for intensive reading which reflects a bottom-up reading process, prioritizing detailed comprehension over broader understanding.

Both synchronous and asynchronous assessments were well-received by teachers and students. However, students showed a slight preference for asynchronous settings when it came to reading assessments. These results propose that the type of learning environment, particularly in web-based learning, does not inherently hinder the development of reading skills.

Regarding the proficiency of students' reading skills, the majority demonstrated satisfactory performance in web-based learning environments. These findings advocate that the

reading strategies employed by teachers positively impact students' reading skills in web-based learning environments.

Contribución De Los Autores

EJCC: Title, Literature review, Material and methods, Results, and discussion.

METS: Introduction, Conclusions, and Revision of the work.

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