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A THEORETICAL BIBLIOGRAPHIC REVIEW FROM THE PRACTICUM EXPERIENCE OF READING APPREHENSION AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ENGLISH CLASSES.

**UNA REVISION BIBLIOGRAFICA DESDE LA EXPERIENCIA
PRACTICA DE LA APRENSION A LA LECTURA EN
ESTUDIANTES DE BACHILLERATO EN CLASES DE INGLÉS**

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A theoretical Bibliographic review from the practicum experience of reading apprehension among high school students in English classes.

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ABSTRACT

This theoretical bibliographic review examines reading apprehension in Ecuadorian Basic General Education (B.G.E.) English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) settings. In this study, reading apprehension is used as a pedagogical label for avoidance, frustration, boredom, and low willingness to engage with reading; it is not treated as a standardized clinical construct or as interchangeable with reading anxiety. A corpus of 25 peer-reviewed publications was selected from 214 initially identified records. The synthesis addresses antecedents, learning consequences, and pedagogical responses. Evidence supports a contextual model in which learner beliefs, text demands, instructional climate, and prior literacy experiences interact. The strongest practical implication is not a universal remedy but the design of supported, meaningful, and choice-aware reading experiences. Because no reviewed study directly tests the proposed model in Ecuadorian B.G.E. classrooms, the article presents theoretical propositions rather than testable hypotheses. The review contributes a structured synthesis of current evidence and a context-sensitive agenda for teacher preparation and future Ecuadorian research.

Keywords: reading apprehension; EFL; reading motivation; reading anxiety; reading strategies; Ecuador.

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Una revisión bibliográfica desde la experiencia práctica de la aprehensión a la lectura en estudiantes de bachillerato en clases de inglés

RESUMEN

Esta revisión bibliográfica teórica examina la aprehensión lectora en contextos de inglés como lengua extranjera (ILE) de Educación General Básica (EGB) en Ecuador. En este estudio, la aprehensión lectora se emplea como una etiqueta pedagógica para la evitación, frustración, aburrimiento y baja disposición a involucrarse con la lectura; no se presenta como un constructo clínico estandarizado ni como sinónimo de ansiedad lectora. Se seleccionó un corpus de 25 publicaciones arbitradas a partir de 214 registros inicialmente identificados. La síntesis aborda antecedentes, consecuencias para el aprendizaje y respuestas pedagógicas. La evidencia respalda un modelo contextual donde interactúan las creencias del estudiante, las exigencias del texto, el clima instruccional y las experiencias previas de alfabetización. Dado que ningún estudio revisado prueba directamente el modelo en aulas ecuatorianas de EGB, el artículo formula proposiciones teóricas y no hipótesis comprobables. La contribución del estudio consiste en una síntesis estructurada de la evidencia actual y una agenda de investigación y formación docente situada en Ecuador.

Palabras clave: aprehensión lectora; ILE; motivación lectora; ansiedad lectora; estrategias de lectura; Ecuador.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is an essential route to linguistic input and academic participation in EFL classrooms. Yet, students may approach reading tasks with avoidance, boredom, low confidence, or frustration. This article uses the term reading apprehension to name that classroom-relevant pattern. The term is deliberately narrower than a diagnostic label and broader than reading anxiety. Reading anxiety refers to a related affective response often measured with specific instruments; apprehension here describes a pedagogical problem that can include avoidance and low engagement without assuming a medical condition (Mardianti et al., 2021; Miao & Vibulphol, 2021).

The distinction matters. Treating all disengagement as anxiety can lead to unsupported causal claims, whereas treating it only as misconduct can obscure genuine barriers. Evidence across EFL and general reading contexts indicates that motivation, self-efficacy, vocabulary demands, strategy use, teacher support, and prior literacy experiences are associated with reading engagement and achievement (Li & Gan, 2022; Toste et al., 2020; Zhang & Kim, 2025). These findings do not establish a single mechanism for Ecuador, but they justify a careful, context-sensitive synthesis.

In Ecuador, the national EFL curriculum positions reading as a core communicative skill across compulsory schooling (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). Recent Ecuadorian evidence addresses general EFL motivation and reading comprehension, but not reading apprehension as operationalized in this review. Andrade-Molina et al. (2022) examined motivated behavior among 128 high-school learners, Díaz Chávez et al. (2023) studied reading-comprehension instruction with tenth-grade students in Loja, and Soto et al. (2025) mapped motivation research nationally. Together, these sources show that relevant local work exists while confirming that the precise intersection of reading avoidance, affect, and EFL engagement remains underexamined.

1.1 Research Gap

The gap is not simply the absence of a label. The reviewed sources address reading anxiety, motivation, self-efficacy, strategies, and engagement, but no retained study directly tests their interaction in Ecuadorian B.G.E. EFL classrooms. Ecuadorian research documents broader motivational patterns and a limited set of reading interventions (Andrade-Molina et al., 2022; Díaz Chávez et al., 2023; Soto et al., 2025), yet it does not establish the prevalence, causes, or developmental course of reading



apprehension. The present review therefore synthesizes transferable mechanisms and specifies what must be examined locally without presenting international findings as Ecuadorian causal evidence.

1.2 Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

What factors contribute to the development of reading apprehension in EFL high school students?

How does reading apprehension affect students' engagement with and outcomes in EFL learning?

What pedagogical strategies are most effective in reducing reading apprehension in EFL classrooms?

1.3 Research Objectives

General objective:

To analyze reading apprehension as experienced by B.G.E. high school students in EFL instruction, identifying its contributing factors and the pedagogical strategies most effective in reducing it, as informed by current theoretical literature and practicum-based observation.

Specific objectives:

To identify and examine the affective, motivational, and contextual factors that contribute to the development of reading apprehension in EFL B.G.E. high school students, drawing on theoretical frameworks and empirical literature published between 2020 and 2026.

To recognize the pedagogical strategies documented in current research that demonstrate effectiveness in reducing reading apprehension and promoting autonomous, motivated reading in EFL secondary contexts.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Understanding reading apprehension is foundational to improving EFL outcomes in Ecuadorian high schools. At the theoretical level, this review integrates motivational, affective, and developmental frameworks that are rarely read together in EFL reading research, producing a more complete account of how apprehension develops and why it resists conventional instruction. At the practical level, the findings offer pre-service teachers in B.G.E. practicum placements a framework for recognizing apprehension-related behaviors, student silence, off-task behavior during reading tasks, avoidance, and responding to them with evidence-based strategies rather than disciplinary responses.



For curriculum designers, the review identifies specific instructional adjustments, student text choice, collaborative reading, ungraded reading time, compatible with the national EFL curriculum framework that could systematically reduce the affective barriers preventing B.G.E. students from meeting the English reading standards assessed in the Prueba Ser Bachiller and required for bachillerato completion.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study follows an integrative theoretical bibliographic review design and does not collect primary data through experiments, surveys, or interviews. Practicum-based observations provide the experiential context that motivated the problem and its pedagogical relevance; they were not systematically recorded or analyzed as evidence about participants or learning outcomes. The unit of analysis is a corpus of 25 peer-reviewed publications, while the 2016 national EFL curriculum is used only to establish institutional context.

2.1 Heuristic Stage

The search covered publications dated from January 2020 to July 2026 and was conducted in ERIC, Scopus, JSTOR, SciELO, and Google Scholar. English and Spanish combinations were used for the concepts reading apprehension, reading anxiety, reading motivation, reading self-efficacy, EFL, English as a foreign language, secondary school, high school, extensive reading, reading strategies, collaborative reading, Ecuador, and Latin America. The search terms were combined with AND and OR and adapted to the syntax of each database. Although the search window included 2026, no 2026 publication met the topical and methodological criteria for inclusion.

The search log recorded 214 documents at identification. Title-and-abstract screening removed 163 records that did not address the phenomenon, population, EFL/ESL context, or a transferable reading mechanism. Fifty-one full texts were then assessed. Twenty-six were excluded after full-text review: 12 focused exclusively on first-language reading with no defensible EFL connection; 9 examined higher education without a transferable secondary-school mechanism; 3 lacked sufficient methodological information; and 2 were duplicate versions. The resulting corpus contained 25 peer-reviewed publications. The historical log preserved aggregate counts but not reliable database-by-database subtotals; those subtotals were therefore not reconstructed.



2.2 Hermeneutic Stage

Each full text was organized in an evidence matrix containing author and year, country, design, participants or context, principal finding, methodological limitation, and contribution to the present review. Initial coding assigned findings to the three research questions: factors contributing to apprehension, effects on engagement and learning, and pedagogical responses. A second comparative reading identified recurrent subthemes, including self-efficacy, text demand, instructional climate, prior literacy experience, autonomy, strategy scaffolding, and collaboration.

Interpretation followed three safeguards. First, correlational evidence was not rewritten as causal evidence. Second, findings from university samples were used only when they described a theoretically transferable mechanism and were explicitly marked as indirect for B.G.E. students. Third, Ecuadorian claims were restricted to studies conducted in Ecuador; international evidence was presented as a basis for propositions requiring local testing. Agreements, discrepancies, strengths, and limitations were recorded in the matrix and used to construct the conceptual model rather than being averaged into a single effect estimate.

The model emerged through convergence coding. A factor was assigned to Variable A when at least two independent sources linked it to reading affect or engagement; the central pattern of avoidance and low willingness was represented as Variable B; and participation, strategic processing, comprehension, and sustained exposure were grouped as Variable C. Pedagogical practices were treated as moderators only when intervention or synthesis evidence described a plausible change in engagement or reading outcomes. This rule explains both the structure and the limits of the model.

2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Sources were included when they met the following criteria:

Peer-reviewed publication dated between 2020 and 2026 and written in English or Spanish.

Direct attention to EFL/ESL reading or to a reading-related affective, motivational, self-efficacy, engagement, comprehension, or pedagogical mechanism with a stated connection to the present EFL problem.

A secondary-school population, or another age group when the study offered a clearly relevant mechanism whose transfer limitations could be stated.



Sufficient methodological information about the design, participants or context, and findings.

Sources were excluded when they met any of the following conditions:

Publication outside the review period, except for the official curriculum document used only for context.

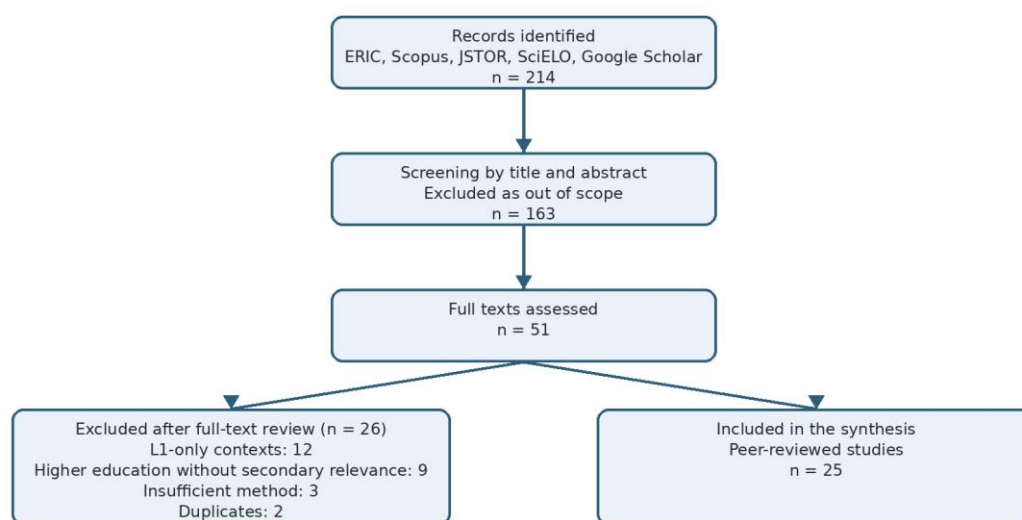
Exclusive focus on first-language reading with no relevant connection to EFL/ESL learning.

Higher-education evidence without a transferable contribution to the secondary-school problem.

Editorial, thesis, dissertation, conference abstract, duplicate, or publication lacking sufficient methodological information.

Figure 1

Flow of Identification, Screening, Eligibility, and Inclusion of Studies



3. Results and Discussion

The 25 studies retained for analysis are summarized in Table 1. Presenting the corpus before the thematic findings allows the reader to distinguish direct secondary-school evidence from evidence whose relevance is theoretical or contextual. The matrix summarizes the study characteristics required for interpretation. “Contribution” indicates how each publication informed the synthesis; it does not imply that findings from another population transfer automatically to Ecuadorian B.G.E. classrooms.

Table 1*Matrix of the 25 Studies Included in the Review*

Source	Country/region	Design	Participants/context		Main finding	Contribution to this review
Anggia & Habók (2024)	Multiple contexts	Systematic review	Online	English extensive reading	Synthesizes quantitative and mixed-methods studies; transfer depends on context.	Supports cautious use of choice-based extensive reading.
Bakkaloğlu & Pilten (2023)	Türkiye	Correlational survey	571 Grade 4 students		Motivation and comprehension self-efficacy were positively associated.	Supports the self-efficacy component, not causal claims.
Fitrawati et al. (2023)	Indonesia	Survey	30 university students	EFL	Unfamiliar language, topics and fear of error were salient anxiety factors.	Identifies possible affective antecedents.
Gebremariam & Weldeyohannes (2025)	Ethiopia	Quasi-experimental	Secondary students		Critical reading strategies were linked to gains in comprehension and motivation.	Supports strategy instruction as a classroom lever.
Ismail et al. (2023)	China	Quasi-experimental	50 university students	EFL	Task-based reading improved comprehension; affective	Supports meaningful-task design.



					outcomes require contextual interpretation.	
Jarssa et al. (2025)	Ethiopia	Mixed-methods experiment	quasi-106 Grade 11 students		Integrated reading improved self-efficacy and motivation relative to usual practice.	Closest secondary-school intervention evidence.
Koné (2023)	Mali	Qualitative diaries	60 university EFL students		Cohesive reading circles and enjoyment accompanied higher engagement.	Supports collaborative reading, with limited transferability.
Li & Gan (2022)	China	Cross-sectional model	543 university EFL students		Motivation, strategies and vocabulary jointly related to comprehension.	Supports a multi-factor rather than single-cause model.
Li et al. (2022)	China	Mixed-methods intervention	117 university EFL students		Strategy instruction improved comprehension; motivational change was not automatic.	Prevents overclaiming intervention effects.
Li et al. (2024)	China	Survey/SEM	405 secondary EFL students		Motivation and learning strategies were positively	Direct secondary-EFL evidence.



					related and varied by school level.	
Maipoka & Soontornwipast (2021)	Thailand	Pre/post mixed methods	11 primary students	EFL	Integrated intensive-extensive reading improved English reading ability.	Illustrates early-stage instructional potential.
Mardianti et al. (2021)	Indonesia	Correlational	50 ESP students		Higher reading anxiety was associated with lower comprehension.	Supports anxiety as a related, distinct construct.
Miao & Vibulphol (2021)	China	Survey	459 university students	EFL	General reading ability and vocabulary-related factors were prominent anxiety sources.	Supports text and learner antecedents.
Romero-González et al. (2023)	Spain	Quantitative study	Children aged 6–8 and adults		Active home literacy environment related to motivation and performance.	Supports a developmental/contextual antecedent.



Stander (2022)	South Africa	Mixed methods	First-year university students	Affective strategies and proficiency were positively related.	Supports affective factors as relevant to L2 learning.
Tegmark et al. (2022)	Sweden	Qualitative student study	Middle/lower-secondary students	Students valued meaningful practices and opportunities for agency.	Supports choice and relevance, not direct efficacy claims.
Toste et al. (2020)	Multiple contexts	Meta-analysis	K–12 studies	Motivation and reading achievement showed a meaningful association.	High-level evidence for motivational relevance.
Valizadeh (2021)	Iran	Quasi-experimental	EFL learners	Reading strategy instruction reduced reported reading anxiety.	Supports strategies as a plausible protective factor.
van der Sande, Dobber, et al. (2023)	Netherlands	Longitudinal/observational	Kindergarten and Grade 1	Reading attitudes are observable early in schooling.	Supports early-development caution.



van der Sande, van Steensel, et al. (2023)	Multiple contexts	Meta-analysis	Motivation interventions	Interventions can foster reading motivation; effects vary by design.	Supports targeted, evidence- informed interventions.
Zhang & Kim (2025)	China	Structural model	University students	EFL Teacher support related to engagement through motivational pathways.	Supports classroom climate and support.
Zhou & Zhang (2025)	China	Longitudinal mixed methods	293 university students	EFL Self-efficacy and strategy use showed reciprocal links over time.	Supports dynamic rather than fixed affective patterns.
Andrade- Molina et al. (2022)	Ecuador	Questionnaire/correlational	128 students aged 16– 18 in two Ibarra high schools	Ideal L2 self and positive learning experience were salient predictors of motivated behavior.	Provides direct Ecuadorian secondary-EFL motivational context.
Díaz Chávez et al. (2023)	Ecuador	Mixed-methods experiment	quasi- Tenth-grade students and pre-service teachers in Loja	Lesson study with reading strategies improved comprehension and supported teacher learning.	Provides direct Ecuadorian reading/practicum evidence; affective effects were not isolated.



				Found little motivation	
Soto et al. (2025)	Ecuador	Qualitative literature review	20 studies across primary/secondary educational levels	Ecuadorian EFL research in Ecuadorian settings gap and identified reading- motivation gaps.	Corroborates the local evidence and prevents claims of complete national absence.



3.1 Conceptual Framework

The framework is a product of the two-cycle coding procedure, not a pre-existing instrument. Four recurrent families of evidence converged. First, motivational and self-efficacy studies linked learner beliefs to engagement or comprehension (Bakkaloğlu & Pilten, 2023; Li & Gan, 2022; Toste et al., 2020). Second, EFL anxiety studies identified vocabulary, unfamiliar content, and fear of error as task-level affective demands (Fitrawati et al., 2023; Mardianti et al., 2021; Miao & Vibulphol, 2021). Third, developmental evidence located reading attitudes and literacy support before secondary school (Romero-González et al., 2023; van der Sande, Dobber, et al., 2023). Fourth, intervention research showed that strategy scaffolds, integrated reading, and autonomy-supportive practices can alter participation or reading outcomes, although not uniformly (Anggia & Habók, 2024; Jarssa et al., 2025; Li et al., 2022).

These convergent strands produced three analytic variables. Variable A contains antecedent conditions: prior literacy opportunities, text accessibility, vocabulary demands, learner self-efficacy, and instructional climate. Variable B is reading apprehension, defined in this review as the observable pattern of avoidance, frustration, boredom, and low willingness to engage. Variable C is reading engagement and EFL learning opportunities, expressed through participation, strategic processing, comprehension, and sustained contact with texts. Pedagogical supports are proposed as moderators of the B–C relation because the intervention literature changes the conditions under which learners approach texts; their effects in Ecuadorian B.G.E. classrooms remain to be tested.



Table 2*Conceptual Framework for Reading Apprehension in Ecuadorian B.G.E. EFL Contexts*

Variable	Definition in this review	Indicative evidence
A. Antecedent conditions	Text accessibility, prior literacy opportunities, self-efficacy, and instructional climate.	Bakkaloğlu & Pilten (2023); Miao & Vibulphol (2021); Romero-González et al. (2023).
B. Reading apprehension	A classroom pattern of avoidance, frustration, boredom, and low willingness to engage; not a clinical diagnosis.	Related evidence: Fitrawati et al. (2023); Mardianti et al. (2021).
C. Engagement and learning opportunities	Participation, strategic processing, and sustained contact with texts that support comprehension and language learning.	Li & Gan (2022); Toste et al. (2020); Zhang & Kim (2025).

3.2 Factors Contributing to Reading Apprehension (RQ1)

The reviewed literature does not support a single origin for reading apprehension. Instead, it points to interacting conditions. At learner level, reading self-efficacy and motivation are positively associated in general reading research (Bakkaloğlu & Pilten, 2023), while EFL studies connect reading efficacy and strategy use over time (Zhou & Zhang, 2025). In Ecuadorian high schools, Andrade-Molina et al. (2022) found that the ideal L2 self and the learning experience were more salient for motivated behavior than externally imposed expectations, a result consistent with the present emphasis on agency. At text level, unfamiliar vocabulary, cultural content, and the expectation of understanding every detail can heighten anxiety in EFL reading (Fitrawati et al., 2023; Miao & Vibulphol, 2021). At classroom level, supportive



feedback, meaningful tasks, and teacher support are associated with engagement pathways (Ismail et al., 2023; Zhang & Kim, 2025).

These strands should not be conflated. A low vocabulary threshold may create task difficulty; a negative self-belief may shape the interpretation of that difficulty; and an assessment-heavy classroom may increase the perceived risk of error. None alone demonstrates that a learner has stable apprehension. The appropriate inference is a contextual one: recurrent exposure to tasks experienced as too difficult, low-control, or socially risky may be associated with avoidance and low engagement.

Table 3
Factors Associated with Reading Apprehension and Related Affective Barriers

Factor group	How it may contribute	Illustrative sources
Learner beliefs	Low self-efficacy or a history of unsuccessful reading can make a task seem unmanageable.	Andrade-Molina et al. (2022); Bakkaloğlu & Pilten (2023); Zhou & Zhang (2025).
Text demands	Unfamiliar vocabulary, culture, and the expectation to understand every detail may heighten anxiety.	Fitrawati et al. (2023); Miao & Vibulphol (2021).
Instructional climate	Low-control, error-focused, or weakly supported tasks can reduce participation.	Ismail et al. (2023); Zhang & Kim (2025).
Prior literacy context	Home literacy and early reading attitudes shape, but do not determine, later engagement.	Romero-González et al. (2023); van der Sande, Dobber, et al. (2023).

The strength of these claims varies by design. Meta-analytic and longitudinal studies support broad links among motivation, attitudes, and achievement, but they do not isolate reading apprehension as a separate construct (Toste et al., 2020; van der Sande, van Steensel, et al., 2023; Zhou & Zhang, 2025). EFL anxiety studies provide closer construct relevance, yet several use small or university samples (Fitrawati



et al., 2023; Mardianti et al., 2021). The Ecuadorian evidence improves contextual fit but focuses on general L2 motivation rather than reading-specific avoidance (Andrade-Molina et al., 2022; Soto et al., 2025). Therefore, RQ1 is best answered through an interaction model, not a ranked list of independent causes.

3.3 Impact of Reading Apprehension on EFL Language Learning (RQ2)

The strongest aggregate evidence concerns the association between motivation and reading achievement. Toste et al. (2020) synthesized K–12 research and found that motivational processes are meaningfully related to reading outcomes. In EFL settings, Li and Gan (2022) found that motivation, self-regulated strategies, and vocabulary knowledge jointly predicted English reading comprehension. Mardianti et al. (2021) reported a negative relation between reading anxiety and comprehension in an ESP sample. These findings justify attention to affective barriers, but they remain associative or context-bound; they do not prove that any one instructional practice will reverse them in Ecuador.

A second critical point is that strategy instruction does not automatically transform motivation. In a mixed-methods EFL intervention, Li et al. (2022) found improvement in comprehension but no immediate significant change in self-reported motivation or self-efficacy. This is a useful corrective to simplistic claims: cognitive support may improve performance while affective change requires repeated, credible experiences of competence and agency.

Direct Ecuadorian reading evidence points in the same cautious direction. Díaz Chávez et al. (2023) reported gains in tenth-grade reading comprehension through a lesson-study intervention and described benefits for pre-service teacher learning; however, the study did not isolate reading apprehension as an outcome. Accordingly, the reviewed evidence supports an association between affective barriers and reduced engagement or outcomes, but it does not establish a national effect size or prevalence for Ecuadorian B.G.E. students. The most defensible response to RQ2 is that apprehension is expected to limit participation, persistence, strategy use, and exposure to language input, with comprehension effects mediated by task difficulty and instructional support.



3.4 Pedagogical Strategies for Reducing Reading Apprehension (RQ3)

Table 4

Pedagogical Strategies and Boundaries of the Evidence

Practice	Mechanism proposed by the review	Boundary of the evidence
Supported text choice and extensive reading	Choice and accessible texts can strengthen perceived relevance and autonomy.	Promising synthesis evidence, but EFL exposure and implementation vary (Anggia & Habók, 2024; Tegmark et al., 2022).
Explicit strategy instruction	Prediction, questioning, annotation, summarizing, and monitoring can make a task more manageable.	Comprehension effects are clearer than immediate motivational effects (Li et al., 2022; Valizadeh, 2021).
Collaborative reading	Reading circles and guided peer work can distribute cognitive and social load.	Evidence is engagement-focused and context-specific (Koné, 2023).
Integrated intensive and extensive reading	Guided close reading plus broader exposure creates supported success and reading volume.	Small or quasi-experimental samples limit generalization (Jarssa et al., 2025; Maipoka & Soontornwipast, 2021).
Supportive instructional climate	Clear feedback, meaningful tasks, care, and participation opportunities may reduce perceived risk.	Teacher support cannot replace accessible texts or explicit strategy teaching (Zhang & Kim, 2025).



Practice	Mechanism proposed by the Boundary of the evidence review
Lesson study and practicum reflection	Collaborative planning, observation, and revision connect student evidence to instructional measure apprehension directly decisions. (Díaz Chávez et al., 2023).

The evidence does not justify naming one universally “most effective” strategy. The most consistent pattern is a coordinated package: reachable text difficulty and bounded choice reduce the entry barrier; explicit strategies raise perceived control; collaboration distributes effort; and low-stakes feedback protects willingness to continue. Meta-analytic and review evidence is strongest for motivation-related interventions and extensive reading at a broad level, while quasi-experimental studies offer more direct evidence for strategy instruction and integrated reading. Their convergence supports the package, but variation in samples, duration, and outcomes prevents a precise ranking.

For B.G.E. practicum, this synthesis favors short cycles of observation and adjustment. A pre-service teacher can record the chosen text, difficulty indicators, support provided, participation pattern, and student explanation; introduce one bounded change; and compare engagement and comprehension before and after it. This recommendation joins the international evidence with the Ecuadorian lesson-study experience without claiming that the latter measured apprehension directly (Díaz Chávez et al., 2023).

Based on Table 4, the findings can be translated into the following brief classroom guide:

1. Choose texts whose vocabulary and length are manageable for the group.
2. Offer a small, guided choice of texts so students retain a sense of control.
3. Explain the purpose of the reading task before students begin.
4. Model one reading strategy at a time, such as predicting, questioning, or summarizing.
5. Break demanding texts into shorter stages with clear instructions.
6. Use pairs or reading circles when peer support can reduce the task burden.



7. Give low-stakes feedback that treats mistakes as part of learning.
8. Observe participation, persistence, and strategy use instead of assuming a cause for silence.
9. Change one classroom condition at a time and compare student responses.
10. Treat persistent avoidance as a pedagogical signal requiring support, not as a clinical diagnosis.

3.5 Theoretical Propositions

Proposition 1. When demanding text conditions, low perceived reading competence, and low-control instructional experiences co-occur, students are more likely to display reading apprehension behaviors (Bakkaloğlu & Pilten, 2023; Fitrawati et al., 2023; Miao & Vibulphol, 2021).

Proposition 2. Reading apprehension behaviors are expected to be associated with lower voluntary engagement, thereby limiting opportunities for strategic processing and language input (Li & Gan, 2022; Toste et al., 2020).

Proposition 3. Instruction that combines accessible texts, strategy scaffolds, meaningful choice, and supportive collaboration is more likely to reduce avoidance than instruction relying only on performance pressure (Anggia & Habók, 2024; Koné, 2023; Li et al., 2022).

Proposition 4. The strength and form of these relations in Ecuadorian B.G.E. classrooms must be tested empirically; related Ecuadorian motivation and reading studies do not yet validate the complete model (Andrade-Molina et al., 2022; Díaz Chávez et al., 2023; Soto et al., 2025).

3.6 Discussion

The Ecuadorian curriculum establishes reading as a central EFL skill, and three retained studies improve the national contextualization. Andrade-Molina et al. (2022) show that ideal L2 self and learning experience matter for motivated behavior in Ecuadorian high schools; Díaz Chávez et al. (2023) show that reading instruction and practicum learning can be studied together; and Soto et al. (2025) demonstrate that motivation research at Ecuadorian primary and secondary levels remains limited. None measures the complete constellation of avoidance, frustration, self-efficacy, instructional climate, and reading outcomes proposed here. Consequently, claims about B.G.E. remain theoretical propositions rather than local causal estimates.

The revised evidence changes the article's central argument in an important way. The question is not whether one method "solves" reading apprehension, but how classroom conditions shape students'



willingness and capacity to engage with text. This synthesis supports an integrated response: reduce unnecessary linguistic barriers, teach how to work through difficulty, offer bounded choices, and observe whether students' participation changes. That is more defensible than attributing avoidance to a fixed trait or to motivation alone.

The evidence also reveals tensions. Strategy interventions can improve comprehension without immediate motivational change (Li et al., 2022). Extensive and collaborative reading can promote engagement, but their implementation depends on text availability, teacher preparation, time, and local norms (Anggia & Habók, 2024; Koné, 2023). Early literacy and home environments matter (Romero-González et al., 2023; van der Sande, Dobber, et al., 2023), but secondary teachers cannot retroactively change them. Their realistic leverage lies in current classroom routines and in referral or family-engagement systems where feasible.

For pre-service EFL teachers, the practical implication is to observe behavior before assigning a cause. Silence, rushed completion, or off-task behavior may stem from vocabulary load, fear of error, unclear task goals, lack of relevance, or a combination. A practicum protocol can ask student-teachers to record the text's difficulty, the support offered, the participation pattern, and student explanations. Such observations would create a defensible local baseline for later intervention research.

The scientific contribution is therefore a bounded synthesis rather than a new prevalence claim. Conceptually, it connects affective, motivational, developmental, and instructional evidence in a three-variable model while preserving the distinction between reading apprehension and reading anxiety. Methodologically, it relates the 214–51–25 selection process to the thematic analysis and identifies where evidence is direct, indirect, or contextual. Practically, it translates the model into observable decisions for practicum without treating silence or avoidance as proof of a fixed learner trait.

Limitations of the review.

This is an integrative bibliographic review, not a registered systematic review or meta-analysis; the selection flow documents the review process but does not estimate pooled effects.

The search was restricted to publications dated 2020–2026 and written in English or Spanish. Relevant work outside that period or in other languages may have been missed.



Grey literature, theses, dissertations, editorials, and conference abstracts were excluded from the analytic corpus. This clarified the corpus but may have reduced coverage of emerging Ecuadorian work. Most empirical evidence comes from non-Ecuadorian contexts, and several EFL studies involve university learners. Transfer to B.G.E. requires local testing.

The historical search log preserved aggregate counts but not reliable database-by-database subtotals; Google Scholar results are also less reproducible than indexed-database searches.

The term reading apprehension is a transparent pedagogical label used in this article; it is not a standardized measurement construct. Related evidence on reading anxiety, motivation, and self-efficacy should not be treated as interchangeable.

Publication bias, search vocabulary, and the geographic concentration of studies in Asian, African, and European settings may have limited the visibility of Latin American evidence.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In response to the general objective, reading apprehension is best understood as a context-sensitive pattern produced by the interaction of learner beliefs, text demands, prior literacy experience, and instructional climate. It is a pedagogical label for observable classroom behavior, not a clinical diagnosis, and the international evidence cannot establish its prevalence in Ecuador. The proposed A–B–C model explains how antecedent conditions may be expressed as avoidance or low willingness and, in turn, reduce engagement and opportunities for EFL development.

In response to the first specific objective and RQ1, the most defensible contributing factors are low reading self-efficacy, weak task value, unfamiliar vocabulary or content, repeated experiences of difficulty, low-control or error-focused instruction, and limited prior literacy support. These factors interact; none should be treated as sufficient proof that a student is apprehensive. Ecuadorian motivation evidence supports the importance of positive learning experience and learner agency, but reading-specific causal relations remain untested.

In response to RQ2, apprehension is expected to reduce participation, persistence, strategic processing, and sustained exposure to English texts, thereby constraining comprehension and broader language-learning opportunities. The evidence is strongest for associations among motivation, anxiety,

engagement, and reading outcomes. It does not justify a national effect size, and improvement in comprehension does not necessarily produce immediate motivational change.

In response to the second specific objective and RQ3, the literature most consistently supports a combined approach: accessible texts and bounded choice, explicit reading-strategy scaffolds, collaborative reading, supportive low-stakes feedback, and iterative lesson-study or practicum reflection. No single strategy can be ranked as universally most effective because designs, samples, durations, and outcomes differ. Effectiveness in Ecuadorian B.G.E. classrooms must be demonstrated through local implementation data.

The article's scientific contribution is a focused synthesis that separates direct evidence, transferable mechanisms, and Ecuadorian inference; converts hypotheses into four theoretical propositions; and derives a model that can guide observation and future testing. For practice, the model supports brief cycles in which pre-service teachers document task conditions and student responses before and after a bounded instructional change. Future Ecuadorian studies should use longitudinal and mixed-methods designs, validated affective measures, student voice, and transparent reporting of school type, English exposure, text difficulty, and implementation fidelity.

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