



USING THERAPEUTIC READING WITH EFL TEENAGED STUDENTS:

AN ECUADORIAN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY

by

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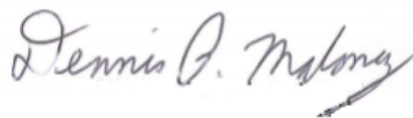
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### **Declaración Expresa**

La responsabilidad del contenido de esta Tesis de Grado, me corresponde exclusivamente; y el patrimonio intelectual de la misma a la Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral.



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## Abstract

This research reports on an ethnographic case study that explored and described the process of using bibliotherapy to address Ecuadorian EFL teenaged learners' social and emotional needs, while developing their EFL reading comprehension skills. Nevertheless, although over the last decades, there has been an important increase in the practice and use of therapeutic reading in learning environments mainly in the U.S., where it is widely recognized as a useful tool to help with the mental growth and development of children and adolescents, its effects and helpfulness for Ecuadorian EFL teachers are not fully explored or documented. In light of this, this ethnographic case study was conducted at an Ecuadorian private high-school to find out how effective and helpful therapeutic reading is by having teenaged students read selected self-help stories in EFL over a nine-week period. The findings suggest that for the eleven participants, therapeutic reading does enable them to address their significant needs as it provides them with relevant information about issues of daily life, whilst fostering self-reflection and a better understanding of their social, emotional, and learning needs. Findings also suggest that therapeutic reading is a helpful pedagogical practice that language teachers may use, either inside or outside the classroom to help students develop reading comprehension skills in both L1 and L2. Finally, some recommendations, implications for future research on teaching EFL therapeutic reading in Ecuadorian learning environments, and personal reflections are presented.

*Keywords:* Ethnography, case study, bibliotherapy, therapeutic reading, emic, epic, observation, interview, field notes, reflective journals

## **Dedication**

Dedicated to the memory of two wonderful human beings whose amazing legacy goes far beyond life and death:

To Dr. Annita Ward, a delicate lady and outstanding English professor; her wise words and deep experience awakened me to a new EFL teaching and learning style.

To Mr. Galo Aníbal Merizalde Almeida, an honorable man and lovely grandfather who taught me to appreciate that honesty and gratitude are endless values.

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Special thanks also to all my eleven students who participated in this study. They were the force that nurtured my teacher's soul with their motivation, cooperation, and life experiences. Without a doubt, they were the best.

I am ever grateful to my parents Mercedes and Rafael, to my husband Javier, to my son Bryan, and to my guardian angel Jeremy, for being always there to support me during the hardest times and for giving me their love and devotion. I love you so much!

Finally, I am heartily thankful to God for giving me the necessary strength to live my life this way. I would not be here today without Him.

“We read to know we are not alone”

(Clive Staples Lewis)

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Reading is a similar process in both a native and a second or foreign language, which engenders unique experiences that join together readers' cognitive and subjective knowledge that allows them to develop and enrich their individual personality as well as their problem solving skills by means of insights offered through literature (Samalieva, 2001). When used in this way, reading has a deep therapeutic and teaching value known as bibliotherapy, which is an approach or family of techniques widely employed by mental health professionals, classroom teachers, school counselors, psychologists, nurses, or librarians to produce change in readers' behaviors, thoughts, and feelings; or to foster individual healing; and to develop problem solving skills through the reading of literary sources.

Even though the term bibliotherapy was coined by Samuel Crothers in 1916, its practice has been used for centuries (Olsen, 2007). In this sense, experts such as Sullivan and Strang (2002) agree that the concept of bibliotherapy is the source of the terms self-help literature or therapeutic reading, which are used interchangeably to refer to this practice, in which a full spectrum of different kinds of literature, such as parables, myths, fables, legends, fairytales, Biblical stories, and poetry have been used to provide readers with meaningful contexts that enable them to understand themselves. Hence, the terms bibliotherapy and/or therapeutic reading will be used interchangeably throughout this document to include the use of self-help reading material in counseling and teaching.

The origins of bibliotherapy can be traced as far back as ancient Greece; in fact Allen, Sheen, Leavy, Young, and Money (2005) have emphasized that above the entrance of an ancient Greek library it is inscribed, "The Healing Place of the Soul" while in Alexandria, Egypt it is inscribed "Medicine for the Mind" (p. 563). Jack and Ronan (2008) have this same opinion when saying that "in terms of the written word, the ancient practice of inscribing

statements on the entrances to libraries provides a historic example of the early recognition of how books were believed to help humans meet needs” (p. 162). Hence, throughout history, books have served as one of “the most influential therapeutic tools for facilitating emotional growth, healing, and reflective thinking” (Bergsma, 2007, p. 341). This expert has also established that the intended use of books to cure the human condition began in institutional, medical, and correctional facilities during the Middle Ages to help people deal with mental and physical sicknesses in an effort to maintain moral foundations. Accordingly, the practice of therapeutic reading became more institutionalized late in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe.

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “the use of books for purposes of medical treatment finally came to the United States” (Jack & Ronan, 2008, p. 164), and by 1840 the first documented use of bibliotherapy as an intervention technique was recorded (Sullivan & Strang, 2002).

Subsequently, early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the American Library Association (ALA) recognized and supported the reading of books not only as a therapeutic tool, but also as an accepted aspect of librarianship to imply the use of books as a therapeutic means to help people (Myracle, 1995). Then, as stated in 1916, Samuel Crothers coined the term bibliotherapy and used it for the first time in a published article to describe the process of presenting books to medical patients who needed to understand their problems. By 1930, the idea of using literature to suggest solutions to modern problems and reduce a student’s personal confusion was first explicitly discussed in Ireland, where librarians created lists of written material to assist individuals to cope with life situations (Cook, Earles-Vollrath & Ganz, 2006). In 1946, this practice was applied to children and teenagers in hospital libraries as an emerging strategy effective not only for clinical problems but also for helping them handle developmental needs (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1986). The development of these hospital libraries in the USA had a significant influence on the interest in and development of therapeutic

reading so that until 1998, 68% of the studies about bibliotherapy carried out in the whole world were originated in this country (Forrest, 1998).

Regarding these chronological events, some researchers in this field highlight the fact that bibliotherapy provides people with the ideal means to use written materials to counsel and support readers and to foster emotional wellness while guiding them to live and behave socially, ethically, and spiritually (Brewster, 2007). Other experts such as Bruneau (2007) and Hebert and Furner (1997) remark on the specific pedagogical purpose of bibliotherapy given that it not only provides a language for an individual to interpret and understand his or her life, but also teaches him/her how to do things better. In line with these pedagogical viewpoints of bibliotherapy, currently it is successfully used in classroom settings to address specific social and emotional concerns as well as to deal with learning problems since it is a remarkable teaching tool that may help “individuals learn in different ways in line with varying personalities and needs” (Bruneau, 2007, p. 17). Jack and Ronan (2008) stressed these words when stating that “bibliotherapy is an expression of an education stance which focuses upon both academic learning and psychological maturity” (p. 170).

From these views, the use of bibliotherapy in language settings as a way to develop learners’ reading and social skills might be a valuable asset in educational language programs owing to the fact that language teachers constantly have to deal with a wide range of students’ social and emotional issues and needs at all grade levels. So, by implementing and using bibliotherapy in language learning environments and by considering its therapeutic and pedagogical functions, teachers and students may be provided with the ideal means to meet learners’ individual educational, emotional, and social needs through social and emotional guidance given by self-help literature (Shaw and Aslanian, 2002).

These needs and individual differences pose language teachers with new challenges that go beyond the traditional ones given that language learning environments are becoming more

and more diverse with students from diverse cultural backgrounds, motivation, ages, learning abilities/styles, and socioemotional needs, which play a major role in the success of second or foreign language acquisition (Lightbown, Spada, 2006). This situation is mainly lived and experienced by EFL/ESL teachers given the current and prominent status of the English language, i.e. English has the status of *lingua franca* being the official language in over sixty countries represented in every continent (Godwin, 2001). Hence, EFL educators may take advantage of this pedagogical benefit of therapeutic reading to get learners to develop their EFL reading comprehension because it engages the reader in two modes of learning: one that provides “the reader with factual information from a book” and another that “engages the reader in imagination and self-expression” (Bruneau, 2007, p. 18). So, thoughtful planning and needs analysis are required with the aim of identifying what reader’s needs and concerns are as the selected reading material has to describe their current problem or situation since this way teachers “systematically match reading materials to the unique needs of each learner to facilitate student achievement and development” (Cook, Earles-Vollrath & Ganz, 2006, p. 91).

#### Statement of the Problem

Ecuadorian EFL teachers are in a unique position to assist our students - mainly children and teenagers, who in some cases may lack the necessary social, emotional, and academic prerequisites- to meet their educational and personal needs so that they become proficient users of this foreign language. So, by developing and integrating reading strategies and counseling curriculum in our learning environments, we might perform as facilitators/motivators who might be able to handle our students’ educational, social, or emotional needs with empathy and without moralizing, threatening, or commanding by selecting and understanding suitable therapeutic reading material. Nevertheless, regarding the commonly volatile emotions of adolescence as during this stage of life individuals have a less

developed range of emotional expression to call on, the researcher of this ethnographic case study has considered it valuable to apply therapeutic reading as a pedagogical and enjoyable academic activity to deal with teenagers' social and emotional needs while increasing their EFL reading comprehension.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this ethnographic case study was to use therapeutic reading as a way to address EFL teenaged learners' social and emotional needs while developing their EFL reading comprehension. Hence, this study highlights the educational benefits offered by good literature through the practice of bibliotherapy inside foreign language classrooms as set up in the book "*Integrating Language Arts through Literature and Thematic Units*", by Roe and Ross (2006). These authors remark that good literature is a main component of a total language arts program at all grade levels as it supports the development of all the language skills; i.e. listening, understanding, speaking, reading, writing, thinking, and grammaring.

So, by listening to stories students can relate to, they are given opportunities for practicing listening skills, and by discussing the different topics students can practice their speaking and thinking skills while expressing their thoughts, feelings, and reactions. Furthermore, when students read literature, they practice their comprehension strategies in meaningful situations. Writing and grammaring skills are also encouraged by the use of good literature because it exposes students to correct sentence patterns, standard story structures, and varied word usage (Larsen-Freeman, 2003).

In addition, there are other special benefits that good literature can offer in foreign language learning settings by means of therapeutic reading such as easy access to a wide variety of books in different languages; flexibility in application to different settings; and use with a range of presenting problems. In the same way, stories offered through good literature can provide students with explicit immersion into another culture, offering exposure to

alternative lifestyles and beliefs. Some studies find multicultural literature leads not only to an increased appreciation of different cultures, viewpoints and lived experiences, but also to enhance the development of learners' ethnic/cultural identity (Pehrsson & McMillen, 2005). A final benefit of bibliotherapy that deserved to be mentioned is related to the fact that by reading good literature in any language students can appreciate its real value while feeling and experiencing that reading can also be a fun and pleasant activity.

### Research Questions

This ethnographic case study research about the application of therapeutic reading as a way to develop EFL teenage learner's reading comprehension while addressing their social and emotional needs is intended to answer the following research questions:

1. - What do students perceive as their social and emotional needs in this beginning EFL course?
2. - What are the perceptions of the EFL teacher as to the social and emotional needs of her adolescent students?
3. - How do students view the usefulness of bibliotherapy?
4. - Does bibliotherapy foster students' self-reflection and a better understanding of real-life challenges?
5. - Is bibliotherapy a learning practice that may help EFL learners improve their reading comprehension skills?

According to Richards (2003) ethnography "seeks to describe and understand the behavior of a particular social or cultural group" (p.14); therefore this study seeks to explore how reading from the perspective of self-reflection can help EFL learners at a private high school in Ecuador discuss and process solutions to sensitive matters regarding social and emotional issues by using suitable self-help reading materials while increasing their EFL reading comprehension (Richards, 2003).

## Justification

There are various reasons that this ethnographic research study about the application of therapeutic reading with teens is justifiable, such as the lack of similar studies in Ecuador; the need for Ecuadorian EFL teachers to understand the potential advantages and limitations of using therapeutic reading with therapeutic and teaching purposes either inside or outside the classroom; the importance of detecting learners' social, emotional, and educational needs and problems to help them develop the strategies needed to solve these situations; and the lack of understanding of how this practice is felt and understood as helpful or not by teenage learners. Each one of these factors will be analyzed as follows:

Currently, research about bibliotherapy in this country is typically devoted to the use of therapeutic reading in clinical settings in which health professionals are the ones who prescribe a self-help book to their patients. Thus, it is common to observe research or programs about the use of children's literature to help kids with cancer to improve their self-esteem as well as their immunological system. It is also possible to find some information regarding the use of therapeutic reading to help adolescents overcome problems inherent in their age, e.g. Seminario del Colegio de Psicólogos Educativos del Guayas, 2010; Urso, 2009; Ecuador Ciencia, 2007; Arcos Cabrera, 2005; among others. Nevertheless, all this information refers specifically to the therapeutic use of therapeutic reading in Spanish.

In spite of these facts, there is a growing interest for using therapeutic reading not only as a way to help people solve problems, but also as a way to get readers to improve their reading skills in Spanish clearly fostered by the Corporación Andina de Fomento (CAF), as seen in its book *"Books for Children and Teenagers"* published in 2005. This book was based on an exploratory study that revealed the general characteristics of countries such as Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela regarding the standards of production and publication of reading material for children and teenagers embracing themes such as the free



access to reading and the development of reading in order to promote individuals' intellectual growth and recognition of citizenship principles; the starting point was to choose quality books for children and teenagers in line with their needs. Unfortunately, data about the use of therapeutic reading as a pedagogical tool intended to help Ecuadorian EFL teachers to teach learners how to become more skillful and independent readers in this foreign language remain elusive, which is the reason why language teachers may wish to integrate therapeutic reading into EFL classrooms as well as to carry out more methodological investigations into its helpfulness and applicability to language learning environments.

Hence, Ecuadorian EFL teachers may wish to consider and study the importance of therapeutic reading valuing its multiple benefits from a therapeutic and pedagogical perspective that encourages self-change and self-learning in EFL learners, so that they become more proficient users of this foreign language.

Therapeutic reading is used as “a positive problem-solving approach, too since this kind of literature promotes the development of problem solving and social reasoning skills” (Shaw & Asianian, 2002, p. 3). Thus, through therapeutic reading materials learners can be given not only psychological and emotional relief, but also “reliable information and examples to help them recognize and solve their problems” (Klemens, 1993, p. 3). Accordingly, other experts in this field recommend that “successful bibliotherapy should be dependent on literature that appropriately addresses student needs” (Allen, Sheen, Leavy, Young, and Money, 2005, p. 566). Authors such as Sridhar and Vaughn (2000) are emphatic when saying that “the theory underpinning bibliotherapy is to match appropriate self-help reading material(s) with students and their various problems” (p. 75); this way they can be able to identify with the main character and events in the story and learn problem solving strategies. Therefore, those Ecuadorian EFL teachers who want to develop and implement bibliotherapy programs into their learning communities need to identify and understand those unique needs

and problems in order to select the most suitable literature that lets them address their students' unique social, emotional, and learning needs, while their students learn coping skills when facing personal difficulties that will eventually allow them to become independent, effective, and proactive problem solvers. In this way, teachers may become truly "involved and committed to the health and well-being of students while supporting and meeting their students' needs in a safe and effective educational setting" (Forgan, 2002, p. 75).

Finally, Ecuadorian EFL teachers can learn and understand that the practice of therapeutic reading "creates unique experiences that are integrated in students' general and shared knowledge" (San Segundo, 2006, p. 15); however, all the way through this mental process learners' subjectivity and motivation have to be taken into account since it is vital to realize how this educational practice is felt and understood as supportive by them. So, even though bibliotherapy has a long and rich history, mainly in the U.S. as it is evidenced by numerous research studies on this topic, they have been mainly intended to conduct outcome research with cognitive and behaviorally based self-help literature without considering learners' feelings and thoughts. Then, it is suggested that language teachers should also carry out research into the efficacy and helpfulness of bibliotherapy regarding two more aspects: (1) how therapeutic reading is supportive and helpful to learners who have emotional as well as learning difficulties and (2) what this experience is like for them.

## Chapter 2

## Literature Review

The longstanding application of bibliotherapy makes the research literature on this topic abundant, so that it has an extensive history according to the needs of an ever-changing society. But, in spite of these changing needs, people agree that reading is important and helpful in many ways; hence, several studies have centered on the therapeutic value of reading. Among these studies, the meta-analysis carried out by Whitworth (1966) deserves to be mentioned given that this author compiled a series of research on bibliotherapy for children and teenagers. He supported his study with the Bloomer Identification Figure Test, which is an initial screening procedure for identification of children who might need support to succeed in learning both in and out of school (Reitan & Wolfson, 2008), and concluded through empirical investigation that this therapeutic practice might help them face and solve personal problems of everyday living.

Following similar target readers, Klemens (1993) led a study on handicapped adolescents and their interest in reading novels about handicapped teenagers. Accordingly, ninety-two classified high school students were given a survey/questionnaire to elicit their answers. The results showed that when given choices, those teenagers seemed to enjoy reading books about teenage problems that seem realistic to them.

Several years later, Reid and Wayne (1997) completed a study of Barbadian School personnel attitudes on coping with grief in the public schools. The survey instrument used in that study was a modified version of an untitled survey cited in Pratt et al. (1987) which led researchers to conclude that even though public school personnel were in an advantageous position to help grieving students meet their needs, they did not have enough experience in counseling training. In their final recommendations, authors firmly suggested that Barbadian

teachers should use concrete language in discussing death with students, use other losses in life to teach about death, and use literature suited to students for this purpose.

The use and application of bibliotherapy inside the classroom has evolved considerably over time, so that currently teachers and school counselors are given cross-disciplinary training in the areas of reading and social skill development, all of which represents an important shift in educational training programs (Shaw & Asianian, 2002). Thus, it is more and more common to find teachers and school counselors and nurses who perform as qualified facilitators using the psychological and pedagogical functions of therapeutic reading not only to facilitate students' sorrow "by giving them guidance on how to deal with their profound feelings of grief" (Riely, 2003, p. 212), but also to help students with and without learning difficulties develop problem solving skills.

Among the problems that students face in their daily life either inside or outside the classroom, the most used with bibliotherapy include teasing and bullying; suicide attempts; depression; stress; identity; drugs; homelessness; sexual abuse; alienation; unwanted pregnancy; poverty; health issues; self-esteem; personal growth; personal relationships; panic disorders; anxiety; divorce; grief; misbehavior; physical disabilities; and lack of social, emotional, and/or academic prerequisites to be successful (Olsen, 2007; Shaw & Asianian, 2002). Allen et al. (2005) provide a reading list based on some of these themes (see Appendix A).

Of all these recurrent themes, suicide is without a doubt the most tragic. In the midst of depression it can begin to look like the only option left. This is the reason why, authors such as Henriques, Beck, and Brown (2003) and Tarrier, Taylor, and Gooding (2008) have carried out respective research on cognitive therapy for adolescents and young adult suicide attempters, in which it was revealed that suicidal behavior is the third leading cause of death for 15 to 24-year-olds. Hence, it deserves to be mentioned that the study accomplished by

Henriques et al. (2003) was carried out in Pennsylvania, where the intervention was a 10-session protocol with specific strategies developed for the early, middle, and late phases of the treatment for older adolescents and young adults who have attempted suicide. On the other hand, Tarrier et al. (2008) searched databases for articles reporting clinical trials from 1980 in order to carry out their study in the United Kingdom. They used suicide and therapy and cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT); CBT and suicide; CBT and self-harm, among others as search criteria. There were identified 8,345 articles for this study. Findings in these studies evidenced the positive intervention of bibliotherapy as a CBT to develop problem solving skills in an attempt to reduce subsequent suicidal behavior.

Childhood and adolescence are challenging developmental stages that are severely complicated and even threatened by other problems such as the effect of family dissolution or divorce. Hence, Pehrsson and McMillen (2007) presented an article on this topic, in which they remarked the benefits of using bibliotherapy with teens as it often fits well for this hard stage provided that counselors and teachers have knowledge and training for using this approach as properly as possible. Another recurrent problem for children and teens is related to teasing and bullying, a topic that was investigated by Gregory and Vessey (2004) in their scientific article in which they strongly recommend the use of bibliotherapy to address childhood teasing and bullying as a suitable approach to promote healthy educational settings. They conclude that through the exchange that takes place while reading a book, children can express their feelings to adults and learn new coping mechanisms to deal with difficult issues such as teasing and bullying.

Similar studies were carried out by Boeijen, Oppen, Balkom and Van Dyck (2007); Weersing, Rozenman, and Gonzalez (2009); and Philip (2009) respectively to evaluate the effect of self-help books on anxiety, depression, fear of negative evaluation, dysfunctional attitudes, and assertive behavior. Results showed the therapeutic benefits of this sort of

literature that was used as a first-line treatment to modify these kinds of disorders. Authors such as Mihalas, Morse, Allsopp, and Alvarez (2008) conducted another study on this topic when investigated the use of bibliotherapy to cultivate caring relationships between teachers and secondary students with emotional and behavioral disorders in order to achieve better learning outcomes. Thus, they conclude that by using effective stories in books, magazines, videos, or other media that resonate with students' lives, teachers can help them stimulate their thinking while providing the opportunity for dialogue. Researchers also suggested that students should keep journals that teachers have to monitor and debrief in order to give them feedback and support as appropriate.

#### Fundamentals of Effective Bibliotherapy

The use of bibliotherapy as an effective psychological and learning approach has been widely employed by school professionals (teachers, counselors, nurses, librarians, and psychologists) in an effort to promote the skills and cognitive strengths necessary for students to reach successful adjustment, both inside and outside the classroom. Accordingly, Forgan (2002) presented his research on using bibliotherapy to teach students with high-incidence disabilities problem solving skills by using the *I SOLVE Strategy*. Thus, the strategy *I SOLVE* (that stands for Identify the problem; Solutions to the problem; Obstacles to the solutions; Look at the solutions again and choose one; Very good – try it; and Evaluate the outcome), allowed the author to see that by learning a problem-solving strategy and applying it to children's literature titles, students with disabilities could learn to become independent and effective problem solvers and more proficient readers.

The application of these problem-solving skills is also needed in foreign language academic settings, where students need to become proficient readers too. So, foreign language students' reading skills require in-depth comprehension that is frequently related to specific requirements to perform cognitive and procedural tasks such as writing papers,

developing oral presentations, and so forth (Samalieva, 2001). Therefore, in the study of languages, bibliotherapy can be employed successfully by foreign language teachers as an effective strategy to get foreign language students to progress towards their full reading potential.

In view of that, Rakes and Buchanan (1980) remarked on the helpfulness of bibliotherapy as a viable learning tool that reading teachers should use to improve reading skills given that this approach requires students to use higher level comprehension skills, including comparison, evaluation, and application. Once more, it was suggested that teachers should have adequate technical knowledge of the process itself as well as the ability to identify and evaluate student needs in order to select the most suitable books for bibliotherapy that help them get the best reading comprehension levels. Twenty years later, Sridhar and Vaughn (2000) carried out an analogous study intended to foster the use of bibliotherapy for improving reading comprehension skills, enhancing self-esteem, and improving behavior for students with learning and behavior problems. Their findings revealed that bibliotherapy is an overall effective tool for developing motivation, assertiveness, attitude, change, self-development, and therapeutic gain that produce a positive change in self-concept.

These findings were replicated by Alden, Lindquist, and Lubkeman (2003) in their research about using literature to increase reading motivation and to develop readers' awareness of different literary genres through participation in literature-based discussion activities. Thus, the literature they employed provided three strategies to promote students' reading interest as follows: (1) to use bibliotherapy to offer students a reference for their feelings about reading; (2) to encourage literary discussion by creating a book buddy system; and (3) to create a goal-oriented program that incorporates literature-based activities to

encourage reading interest on behalf of students. Final outcomes of the research revealed that students' motivation to read increased considerably.

In line with this literature review, therapeutic reading might be seen as an enlightening pedagogical and psychological practice given that it aims to reflect both human concerns and changing societal needs, no matter the socio-cultural contexts of any given time in history (Starker, 1989). What is more, since currently we live in a society that stresses free will, self-responsibility, and common sense, therapeutic reading might become a rewarding and useful practice that might answer and fit this message.

### Definitions of Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy is a kind of therapy that has gained more interest and recognition over the past years, but in line with the context in which it is used, its definitions can range from general to specific, or simple to complex (Olsen, 2007). This complexity in defining bibliotherapy is due to it is being based on two elusive and abstract constructs, i.e. therapy and reading. Also, different terms such as self-help reading, bibliotherapy, therapeutic reading, and self-administered therapy are interchangeably used within the research literature to describe this practice, which also uses a diversity of names to describe written self-help materials, including self-help literature, theory based self-help manuals or books of programmed instruction, self-help books (either fiction or nonfiction books and workbooks), and self-help psychological books (Kramer, 2006). In every case, this type of literature embraces a full spectrum of written text and media, including fiction and nonfiction books, poetry, plays, short stories, and sections from textbooks, magazine articles, films, audio-visual recorded material, and web pages that authors such as Starker (1989), Hunt (1988), and Bruneau (2007) have classified into four different categories.

So, category one embraces general advice or inspirational books for life issues such as spirituality, unhappiness, unemployment, relationships, parenting, and so forth. Then,



category two includes books of programmed instruction and books for a particular problem such as mental health disorders. These books are frequently based on a psychological theory, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy. Category three takes account of autobiographies written by a person who has suffered from a mental health disorder or life problems. Finally, category four is unintended self-help reading, which includes a variety of media, such as works of fiction, textbooks, poetry, pamphlets, magazine or newspaper articles, and information from the Internet.

Consequently, in his definition of bibliotherapy Forgan (2002) proposes that it is “the use of written material to help people solve problems” (p. 75). In the same way, Allen, Sheen, Leavy, Young, and Money (2005) say that “Bibliotherapy consists of sharing books with the intent of helping an individual or group gain insight into personal problems” (p. 564). Gregory and Vessey (2004) go beyond to assert that bibliotherapy is in fact an “approach or family of techniques for structuring interaction between a facilitator and a participant based on the mutual sharing of literature” (p. 128). In their study, Hodge, Robinson, and Davis (2007) are emphatic when saying that one method of linking literature to health is bibliotherapy, which they broadly defined as the “use of literature to bring about therapeutic effects, usually under the guidance of a facilitator or therapist” (p. 2). Hence, when reading self-help literature it is vital to consider there are three main and interactive elements, e.g. the facilitator or bibliotherapist, the literature, and the reader. It is undeniable then, the importance of the close relationship between the personality of a reader and the cognitive and affective experience offered through literature, which is the reason why, Bruneau (2007) defines reading as a universal experience in which “self-help literature aims to get readers to gain meaning, insight, and self-understanding” (p. 1-2).

Another definition of self-help literature is given by Brewster (2007) who states that self-help literature “involves using non-fiction books based on cognitive behavioral therapy

techniques to help people understand their problems and change their behavior” (p. 6). Other experts point out that basically self-help literature is useful because it demonstrates readers they are not the first to have problems and lets them “identify with others who are coping with similar problems” (Gregory & Vessey, 2004, p. 127); it also allows readers to see it is possible to find different solutions to their problems by teaching them problem solving skills that provide them with essentials required for the clarification of problems. Finally, self-help literature get readers to understand the intrinsic motivation and the moral principles experienced by human beings when going through particular situations, so that they can become encouraged to deal with their own situations as sensibly and rationally as possible. Accordingly, there is no doubt about the deep interaction between the reader and the literature he/she reads that aims to enhance his/her personal strengths and functioning.

Since the origins of therapeutic reading in the ancient Greece, literature was used to treat the mentally ill; it is clear that within the medical humanities, the main interest in therapeutic reading was to promote a more empathetic and holistic understanding of the human condition among medical practitioners and to provide new insights into conditions such as mental illnesses (Cook, Earles-Vollrath, & Ganz, 2006). In the same way, since the 1930s, therapeutic reading has been widely used in educational settings to help students minimize their problems and meet their needs. But, it is in the U.S. where bibliotherapy has been used most extensively with children and adolescents with and without disabilities to address a wide range of issues such as divorce, the mental illness of a parent, sexual abuse, death and dying, aggression, personal growth, personal relations, coping with stress and identity, among others.

For that reason, it is it possible to see that bibliotherapy may be applied as a self-help model to promote personal growth as well as an interactive process in which guided discussions are used to achieve therapeutic goal revealing two distinct forms known as: (1)

clinical, which most often takes place in a structured setting as is facilitated by a counselor, therapist, or psychologist to treat individuals experiencing serious emotional or behavioral problems, and (2) developmental, which is most appropriate for the school media center or classroom and uses guided readings as an interaction between readers' personalities and literature (Cook, Earles-Vollrath, & Ganz, 2006).

Thus, for the purpose of this ethnographic case study, developmental bibliotherapy will be used and referred to as

...the use of reading to produce affective change and to promote personal growth and development in an attempt to help young people understand themselves and cope with problems by providing literature relevant to their personal situations and developmental needs at appropriate times (Herbert & Furner, 1997, p. 169).

The definition also includes the steps of selecting materials to use with students, presenting the materials, and building students' comprehension of the issue. By following this approach, educators may find more suitable ways to target children and teenagers' needs within school settings (Forgan, 2002).

#### Stages of Developmental Bibliotherapy

Since developmental bibliotherapy is used more extensively for learners with significant learning and behavior problems to enhance self-understanding, for developmental bibliotherapy to be successful, learners should experience the following three stages over the course of interacting with the self-help literature: (a) identification; (b) catharsis; (c) insight/universalization (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1993; Gregory & Vessey, 2004; Sullivan & Strang, 2002; Olsen, 2007; Lowe, 2009).

In the first place, identification refers to the stage in which a learner is able to identify with the main character (fictional or not) and events of story similar to what he/she is facing for bibliotherapy to be beneficial. Experts agree this is not only the most important stage but

also the theory underpinning bibliotherapy since when using this teaching tool, facilitators have to make sure that a book is a good match for a learner (Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000; Gregory & Vessey, 2004; Cook, Earles-Vollrath, & Ganz, 2006). Hence, they mostly suggest that (1) the main character of the story should be about the same age as learners, show like behaviors, and cope with events with which the learners can identify, and (2) that the self-help reading material should also be consonant with learners' reading and developmental level because the more children have in common with the main character of the story, the more they are able to reach identification (Herbert & Furner, 1997). Just by being aware of the importance of this identification stage in the process of bibliotherapy and by ensuring that learners are interacting with age and situational-appropriate stories, facilitators and learners will get greater effects from bibliotherapy.

In the second place, catharsis refers to the stage in which a learner relates to events that unfold in the story. In this stage, the reader can feel and develop emotional ties to the main character. When a student becomes emotionally involved, literature can have the effect of mitigating and releasing his/her unexpressed emotions (Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000).

Additionally, experts in this field strongly recommend that facilitators should encourage their students to express their feelings under safe conditions in follow-up guided discussion sessions, journaling or written responses, painting, drawing, dramatization, pantomiming, or role playing (Gregory & Vessey, 2004).

In the third place, insight/universalization refers to the "realization that occurs when learners become aware that the problem they are experiencing, like that of the characters in the story, need not remain static" (Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000, p. 75). This stage provides learners with a suitable means in which they can analyze the main character and situations and develop opinions regarding behaviors or actions accomplished by the main character in his or her efforts to face the problem. It is through this guided analysis and exploration of

useful alternative behaviors that insights/universalization are gained into how learners might develop their own problem-solving skills, which will eventually allow them to replace their current inappropriate behaviors since they realize they are not isolated in either circumstance or feelings (Herbert & Furner, 1997). So, in order to develop and implement successful bibliotherapy programs at schools, teachers/facilitators need to select appropriate self-help literature, create a safe environment for the bibliotherapy to take place, and design sensitive follow-up activities that guide learners through the fundamental process of identification, catharsis, and insight/universalization (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1993; Olsen, 2007).

### Selecting Themes in Bibliotherapy

Given that the assumption of bibliotherapy is that during reading a reader will identify with the characters and their situations, it is hoped that this identification will enable him/her to develop insight; release emotions, feelings and ideas; and explore methods of problem solving and the development of coping skills. Hopefully, all this can be accomplished by following three guidelines that teachers/facilitators need to keep in mind every time they select themes in self-help reading material (Bundrick, 2009). In the first place teacher-facilitators should pick up self-help reading material that grabs readers' attention by selecting themes related to their current needs (Kramer & Smith, 1998). In the second place, themes should provide readers with realistic hope and information (Pardeck, 1994). Finally, readers should be given the opportunity to choose their own self-help books and themes.

In spite of these individualities, in general terms it is possible to find four recurrent themes in the self-help literary research such as personal growth, personal relationships, coping with stress, and identity (Bergsma, 2007). Thus, themes about personal growth refer to the development of the self, personal efficiency, self-management, art of living and ways to reach personal goals. Themes about personal relationships focus on close relationships and how they are related to the themes of communication. However, themes about personal

growth are more goal-oriented to having pleasing relationships, while themes about personal relationships try to offer tools to understand and enhance communication abilities. Themes about coping with stress provide readers with practical ideas on how to find relaxation and rest, in particular in relation to daily life at home, school, and work. These themes also let reader enhance resilience in difficult circumstances. Last but not least, themes about identity provide readers with the insights offered through literature to help them discover who they really are (Rakes & Buchanan, 1980). These identity themes have a close relationship to the personal growth themes; but it is necessary to point out that identity themes are more oriented towards providing self-awareness, while personal growth themes are more practical.

By regarding the potential of using bibliotherapy in educational settings, specific issues such as individual learning abilities, disabilities, depression, grief, misbehavior, puberty, suicide, anger, teasing, bullying, abuse, aggression, anxiety, death, drugs, alcohol, among others need to be taken into account since they can provide learners with enlightening opportunities for discussing different interpretations of these issues, which will eventually allow them to interact imaginatively, solve problems, develop brave attitudes, adopt appropriate behaviors, adapt socially, and understand others (Cook, Earles-Vollrath & Ganz, 2006).

#### Bibliotherapy and Teenagers' Environment and Reading Skills

Experts on bibliotherapy such as Cartledge and Kiarie (2001) agree that currently teenagers seem to be able and willing to read written material that truly appeals to them, e.g. online content, music magazines, SMS, and so forth. In this respect, adolescents could be regarded as avid readers because they are reading and comprehending all what they read every single day. However, when asked to read fictional reading materials and display their level of literary appreciation, teenagers have different behaviors. Hence, the topic of teenagers' reading environments has received the attention of several researchers who have

revealed interest in the response of adolescents to situations in fictional reading materials as well as the level of literary appreciation displayed by them (Whitworth, 1996; Loban, 1963; Evans, 1968). In line with these authors, teenagers have unique reading patterns that make them respond to literary selection in line with their unique personal sensitivity levels.

It is precisely this individual sensitivity that makes being a teenager become a hard thing. Hence, teens have to deal with many social, academic, and personal pressures, which can be getting worse and worse when they have to live in violent or abusive environments. In the same way, there are some teens that worry about sexuality and relationships, wondering if their feelings and attractions are normal, or if they will be loved and accepted. Others struggle with body image and eating problems; trying to reach an impossible ideal leaves them feeling bad about themselves. Some teens have learning problems or attention problems that make it hard for them succeed in school. They may feel disappointed in themselves or feel they are a disappointment to others. All these problems can be difficult and demanding for teenagers and can lead to depression or even suicide attempts if they go on too long without relief or support (Pardeck, 1994; Henriques, Beck, & Brown, 2003; Tarrier, Taylor, & Gooding, 2008; Lowe, 2009).

Counselors and therapists can provide teenagers with emotional support and can help them build their own coping skills for dealing with problems. But, teachers, school counselors, nurses, and even librarians can also perform as bibliotherapists assisting teenage students and providing a caring environment where they can talk through problems with people who share their concerns by linking reading to health; that is by means of bibliotherapy. In any case, it is advised that before proceeding with this practice, the bibliotherapist should consider an important factor such as the adolescent's readiness, given that inappropriate timing may interfere with the process, so, experts agree that normally adolescents are most ready for the initiation of bibliotherapy when friendly relationships,

trust, and confidence have been established by the bibliotherapist; when adolescents and bibliotherapist have agreed upon the presenting problems; and when some preliminary examination of the problem has taken place (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1993).

Once these conditions truly exist, bibliotherapy becomes an ideal means where teens can be given the opportunity to read texts that they can relate to such as newspaper articles, sports and beauty magazines, articles on teenage problems, and texts that target young people with the aim of encouraging reading pleasure and reading comprehension. Hence, with the purpose of fostering this practice, authors such as Hodge, Robinsons, and Davis (2007) offered several reasons for using bibliotherapy with teenagers including helping them develop their concept of self and encouraging honest self-appraisal; increasing their understanding of human behavior and motivations; helping to relieve emotional or mental pressure; and enabling them to see that their problem is not unique to them. In 2002, Sullivan and Strang demonstrated how bibliotherapy can be used in the classroom to promote the development of emotional intelligence by integrating academics and social skills training given that when people read a book they enjoy, it is natural for them to wish to discuss it with others. In 2004, Forgan and Gonzalez-DeHass replicated this study and concluded that “infusing social skills training into literacy activities serves as a gateway for linking social skills with activities”(p. 28) in natural learning environments where students find the skills truly meaningful. In this sense, bibliotherapy becomes an enjoyable academic activity that gives students an ideal opportunity to learn social skills. Therefore, for all those teenage students who may have emotional as well as reading difficulties, bibliotherapy may offer them a practical and pleasant way to come to terms with problems and achieve their full reading potential.

#### Qualifications for Using Bibliotherapy



A bibliotherapist, i.e. a mental health professional, teacher, school counselor/psychologist, nurse or librarian, is someone who facilitates emotional healing and growth through self-help reading material. Hence, he/she needs to perform as a facilitator/motivator who knows and understands the practice proficiently. Bibliotherapy must be handled with great delicacy, with the practitioner keeping in mind that the chosen literature should have clarity of writing style, freedom from stereotypes, and use of appropriate language relevant to student needs and proficiency levels (Cook Earles-Vollrath, & Ganz, 2006). So, those who are interested in using bibliotherapy should have professional training and preparation in order to facilitate effective experiences for students, either on an individual or group level.

Experts in this field such as Shaw and Asianian (2002) agree with this standpoint and suggest creating cross disciplinary training for teachers and counselors in the areas of reading and social skill development that includes solid knowledge of student development, maturational changes, psychopathology, current stressors facing students, and suitable knowledge of available resources (Allen, Sheen, Leavy, Young, & Money, 2005). Additionally, there are other personal qualifications any proficient bibliotherapist should have such as personal stability; a genuine interest in working with others; and the aptitude to understand others' needs.

Besides these professional and personal qualifications, bibliotherapists need to remember that the use of this approach addresses an extensive variety of issues ranging from normal developmental issues to severe clinical issues. Therefore, they are expected to have not only enough knowledge in this area and preparation and skills that let them address student needs, but also criteria to know when it is necessary to work with another practitioner or authority in a different field when assisting students with more severe problems that require clinical skills beyond a classroom teacher's training. In cases like these, it is strongly

suggested that teachers work together with the school librarian, counselor, nurse, psychologist, or mental health professional utilizing specific and focused stories along with other therapeutic interventions (Kortner, 1993).

#### How to Implement Bibliotherapy at Schools

In order to implement different strategies of bibliotherapy for classroom use in school settings, reasonable financial resources; training, preparation, and skills on behalf of bibliotherapists are required. In addition a suitable teaching framework for bibliotherapy and problem solving should be put in place. In most of the cases, the framework outlined by Pardeck and Pardeck (1993) is the most frequently applied as it includes four basic stages in the implementation of bibliotherapy strategies for schools settings. They focused on meeting objectives for students needing special education techniques. Accordingly, stage one or pre-reading is intended to help educators/facilitators identify the problem, situation, behavior, or skill to be acquired; and to select an appropriate work of literature; stage two or guided reading is intended to help educators/facilitators present the literature; stage three or the post-reading discussion is intended to help educators/facilitators follow-up the reading with a discussion; and stage four that is intended to carry out problem-solving/reinforcement activities (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1993; Forgan, 2002; Cook Earles-Vollrath, & Ganz, 2006; Rakes & Buchanan, 1980).

This framework provides a rationale for the successful implementation of bibliotherapy in school settings. So, the first stage is fundamental in this process given that it is in this step where student needs are identified and the self-help reading material is chosen, so that it provides accurate information about the target behavior or situation and does not give students unrealistic or false expectations. This first stage also requires teachers/facilitators to read and discuss all the material to be used so that they can get insight into the problem(s). In the same way, stage two is vital as it gives teachers opportunity to introduce the material and

guide readings in such a way that help students discover similarities between them and the character in the narrative.

Once a connection between students and the character is established, students are ready for stage three of following-up the reading with a discussion, in which teachers/facilitators try to elicit students' understanding of the problem as well as to encourage them to give their own solutions to the presented problem or situation. Given that this stage has the potential to encourage extensive discussion, powerful emotions often arise, i.e. students start to feel true understanding and empathy (Cook Earles-Vollrath, & Ganz, 2006; Rakes & Buchanan, 1980; Lowe, 2009). Finally, stage four gives teachers the opportunity to include problem-solving / reinforcement activities that provide practice and application of the solutions students learned. In this stage, teachers are expected to instruct social skills within a natural setting by using real-life examples as well as to use reinforcement practice that includes homework assignments as a strategy to promote maintenance of the learned skill (Forgan, 2002; Lowe, 2009).

Additionally, successful bibliotherapy implementation in school settings requires all this process to be carried out in a safe and supportive environment, where every student has a say, where open and respectful discussions are not restricted by time limits, and above all where teachers/facilitators use positive feedback and tolerant questioning techniques to encourage students to ask as many questions as necessary (Masters, Mori, & Mori, 1999). When all these guidelines are put into practice, bibliotherapy becomes the ideal means in which students can get more information and insight, discuss their problems and needs, communicate new values and attitudes, create awareness that other people have similar problems, and hopefully provide more realistic solutions to problems.

Teachers' Role as Bibliotherapy Motivators/Facilitators

Educators have an important responsibility to students so that experts in this field such as Shaw and Asianian (2002) say “teachers are the cornerstone of students’ social developmental needs” (p.3) since they provide interpersonal modeling, reinforcement, and emotional attachment to students as authority figures. However, the practice of bibliotherapy inside the classroom requires an additional value called trust, which must be established between a teacher and his/her students prior to beginning the process of using bibliotherapy as a pedagogical tool. This is the reason why, teachers who use this approach inside the classroom are expected to perform as motivators/facilitators who realize the need for a student to see from another's perspective in order to discover how to deal with familiar situations that help him/her overcome difficulties while understanding his/her own feelings (Forgan & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2004).

Hence, teachers who perform as motivators/facilitators in the process of bibliotherapy are responsible for selecting all the self-help reading material on relevant topics that truly appeal to their students, as well as for reading it as carefully and completely as possible before implementing bibliotherapy lessons, which should be based on a suitable teaching framework for bibliotherapy and problem solving. Most of them, advocate for the usage and implementation of the framework outlined by Pardeck and Pardeck (1993) including the stages of pre-reading, guided reading, post-reading discussion, and problem-solving/reinforcement activities.

Additionally, teachers/facilitators should plan bibliotherapy lessons considering to whom they are being presented; that is, a student or a group in which students face common problems or needs. Time is a key factor in bibliotherapy too; so teachers should allow enough time for reading either aloud or silently, interpretation, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of the characters, problems, and solutions or coping strategies from the storyline to occur in line with students’ developmental and reading level (Forgan, 2002). Throughout this process,

teacher's close supervision as well as interactive dialogues and guided discussions with students in response to the readings are needed.

So, with the purpose of leading more suitable bibliotherapy discussions, Halstead (1994) proposed six specific techniques in which he suggested teachers/facilitators should: 1) Set up the discussions as meaningfully and confidentially as possible; 2) Help students avoid disclosing information they may feel sorry for; 3) Support students in sharing their own techniques for coping with certain difficulties with their classmates; 4) Let discussions flow in line with students' desires; 5) Teach students rules of acceptable behavior in good group discussion; and 6) Behave as discussion facilitators and not as discussion leaders. Finally, teachers need to take into account that younger students may need more specific information and guidelines while older and higher-functioning students may need more abstract ones. In both cases, a successful bibliotherapy lesson will depend on students' ability to identify and relate to main characters in the stories (Cook, Earles-Vollrath, & Ganz, 2006).

#### Effectiveness and Benefits of Using Bibliotherapy in School Settings

The classroom setting is one of the most effective means for providing all the students with the knowledge and skills encouraged by bibliotherapy, either individually or in a group in order to help them adapt and cope with the social and emotional changes that naturally occur in their lives. In the same way, bibliotherapy can help students adjust to ecological changes in the wider social and cultural community, while enhancing their potential to learn (Shaw & Aslanian, 2002). Cook, Earles-Vollrath, and Ganz (2006) agree with this vision when saying that "...one of the primary reasons bibliotherapy is effective in the schools setting is that it recognizes that teachers, librarians, and school counselors know and understand their students' academic, social, and emotional needs" (p. 92).

So, every time school personnel, i.e. teachers, schools counselors, psychologists, nurses or librarians, use literature as a guided instructional tool, they are giving their students

a channel that fosters their emotional and social development as they are not just reading a book which they get pleasure from, but also they are reading and relating to individuals across broad and diverse backgrounds, all of which makes students wish to discuss it with others. Bibliotherapy and more specifically developmental bibliotherapy addresses this natural wish to discuss literature as well as makes room for the teaching of social skills in the classrooms (Evans, 2009).

Likewise, the use of this kind of bibliotherapy encourages group work as well as group counseling for the whole classroom or small groups as it introduces social skills into academic curriculum while focusing on reading. When taught in meaningful settings like these, students may be more likely to transfer their knowledge to other settings. This is true for all of the students, including those with poor reading skills and other learning and socio-emotional problems. Therefore, a specific benefit of bibliotherapy it is related to students' individual problems and needs; hence it may help prevent these problems as well as draw students out of their shells and help the class bond (Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000). One more benefit that can be obtained from bibliotherapy is that all students will develop independent problem solving skills, which are gotten from identifying the main character's problem and trying to think of possible solutions. All this is accomplished in a familiar, comfortable, and safe setting such as the classroom or library.

Finally, beyond social skills, bibliotherapy offers the same academic benefits for all students noticeably improving not only in their reading skills but also in their vocabulary usage. It is known that the more a student reads, the more his/her vocabulary increases (Alden, Lindquist, & Lubkeman, 2003). This benefit is highly valued as one of the most important educational goals in foreign language learning settings, where language students need to be able to understand and use the words and terms encountered in their daily life, as

well as prepare themselves by increasing and improving the vocabulary of the target language they will need to reach their own personal and academic goals.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

In Chapter 2, I summarized the research literature that lays the foundation of bibliotherapy as an approach to dealing with students' emotional and learning difficulties. In general, research findings revealed that this practice has been used and applied into school settings successfully. The aim of this qualitative study was to use therapeutic reading as a way to address EFL teenage learners' social and emotional needs while developing their EFL reading comprehension. The guiding research questions were: 1) What do students perceive as their social and emotional needs in this beginning EFL course? 2) What are the perceptions of the EFL teacher as to the social and emotional needs of her adolescent students? 3) How do students view the usefulness of bibliotherapy? 4) Does bibliotherapy foster students' self-reflection and a better understanding of real-life challenges? 5) Is bibliotherapy a learning practice that may help EFL learners improve their reading comprehension skills? This chapter provides a review of the methodological procedure used for this research study.

#### Ethnographic Case Study Research Design

Given that qualitative research is purposeful and can help people increase their understanding of the social world, an ethnographic case study research design appeared most befitting to investigate the helpfulness and efficacy of therapeutic reading in dealing with EFL teenage learners' social and emotional needs while helping them increase their EFL reading comprehension. Based on an approach used by Cresswell (1998), however, there are seven core traditions in qualitative research that are highly relevant to the work of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). These traditions are ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, case study, life history, action research, and conversation analysis.



At this point, it is necessary to say that initially the teacher-researcher had considered carrying out her research by adopting an ethnographic approach because its usefulness relies on that “the researcher set out deliberately to discover something about the world with the intention of eventually making claims on the basis of the evidence gathered” (Richards, 2003, p. 3). According to Spradley (1979), ethnography is “the work of describing a culture and understanding another way of life from the native’s point of view” (p. 3). This author believes that more than studying people, ethnography means learning from people. From his view, ethnographic research has extensive implications for many fields, including education; so he advises professional development evaluators and staff developers to use this tradition to understand teachers’ and students’ needs, experiences, viewpoints, and goals. Such information could allow them to design more practical and helpful programs for teachers while improving student learning. Regarding the potential relevance of ethnography to TESOL, it is seen as an ideal means for understanding teachers’ professional world, for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) practitioners, and for the professional world of language students (Richards, 2003).

However, there were some other situations such as limited time and the fact of working with one group of students that led the researcher to consider another tradition called case study to carry out her research because it provides a “detailed description of individual cases” (Richards, 2003, p. 13) and in most cases “sampling is likely to be purposeful” (Richards, 2003, p. 21). This entire situation became more complex because the terms ethnography and case study are used almost interchangeably in many social science research journals (Gale Group, 2003), so that Taft (1997) discusses ethnography “as a case study method” (p. 74). It was necessary then, to establish similarities and differences between ethnography and case study. Thus, the researcher found out that they shared some similarities by regarding the primary means of data collection such as observation, interview, recording, and documents

(Richards, 2003). However, there is still a difference between ethnography and case study that lies in the intention of the study; i.e. ethnography is inward looking while case study is outward looking and aims based on intensive study of a case, to contribute to our understanding of a phenomenon (Gale Group, 2003).

Different doubts and questions invaded researcher's mind, then: 1) Should I use the terms ethnography and case study interchangeably in my thesis research? 2) Should I only use the term case study to describe the tradition of my qualitative research? 3) Do I have to change all the methodology section and include information about case study and delete all the information about ethnography? Fortunately, the researcher's thesis director provided her with suitable and clear feedback to clarify doubts and answer all these questions, and suggested her to adopt an ethnographic case study approach to carry out her research as it gives major emphasis on the examination of one group in one setting and places actions and events in context that might help her take account of the issue of uniqueness and deepen understanding of the phenomena under study.

This is the reason why, an ethnographic case study approach was selected to carry out the present research project, which has as the main goal studying the helpfulness of therapeutic reading to get EFL students to overcome socio-emotional problems and needs as well as to increase their EFL reading comprehension. To understand this approach it is necessary to realize how appropriately it focuses on the social world in which a researcher aims to study a particular cultural group or phenomenon in their natural or native environments, as systematically as possible based upon extensive fieldwork in one or more selected locales (Riemer, 2008). This means that fieldwork is vital to all ethnography so that a researcher has "to negotiate entry into the research site, often as a participant observer, a role in which he/she undertakes work in the setting, i.e. as a part-time teacher, but at the same time gathers data" (Richards, 2003, p. 14). All this gives ethnographical research a holistic

standpoint that allows researchers to emphasize cultural interpretation for the purposes of description or extension of social theory as well as to become the main data collection instrument.

Additionally, as stated, any researcher who follows this approach uses multiple data sources and methods of data collection such as participant observation, interviews, questionnaires, recordings, and field notes to increase the reliability and trustworthiness of the findings. But, it is vital to say that the most common ethnographic approach is participant observation as a part of field research so that the ethnographer becomes immersed in the culture as an active participant and records extensive field notes. According to Denzin (1997) there are seven principles that researchers should consider when observing, recording and sampling data as follows: (1) the groups should combine symbolic meanings with patterns of interaction; (2) researchers should observe the world from the point of view of the subject, while maintaining the distinction between everyday and scientific perceptions of reality; (3) researchers should link the group's symbols and their meanings with the social relationships; (4) researchers should record all behavior; (5) methodology should highlight phases of process, change, and stability; (6) the act should be a type of symbolic interactions; and (7) researchers should use concepts that would avoid casual explanations.

By regarding these principles, ethnographers not only show their ethical values, but also show their care to reduce any risks to other participants and themselves before, during, and after the research process, with the purpose of bringing complex, personal and thoughtful insights and meaning to the inner workings of social settings (Riemer, 2008). In the same way, there are two key terms that recurrently appear in ethnographic research such as *emic* and *etic*, which are used respectively to refer to the perspective with which the members of the given culture perceive their world, and to refer to the perspective with which non-members (outsiders) perceive and interpret behaviors and phenomena associated with a given

culture (Richards, 2003). In line with this author, these perspectives allow a researcher “to move from outsider to insider status, although the aim is not to become a complete insider” (Richards, 2003, p. 14) since this could imply he/she is accepting and connecting to the beliefs, attitudes, and routines from which he/she needs to remain detached to observe and describe.

Hence, the process and method of this ethnographic case study research embraces four stages that are quite well defined. So, at stage one the researcher gets access to and familiarization with the participants who need to be told about the purpose of the research. At this stage, the researcher learns basic skills and has access to social and cultural knowledge that will allow her to have coherent and fluid interactions with the participants under study. At stage two, the researcher has already gotten basic notions for interacting with the participants so that she is ready to accomplish participant observation as a main part of field research. Then, at stage three, the researcher is able to identify some relevant aspects of the participants and by means of interviews she can have in-depth knowledge and determine interesting facts about participants’ personal experiences. Lastly at stage four, the researcher makes a final analysis and arranges the results in the different categories found during the research process (Abdelnour, 2002).

In spite of all the advantages and benefits given by this qualitative design, no approach is free from drawbacks. So, one of the main disadvantages of an ideal ethnographic approach is related to the “extended exposure to the field, which makes it very difficult for the researcher to stay in work during the period of investigation” (Richards, 2003, p.16). Then, ethnography, as any other qualitative tradition, relies heavily on the subjective experience of the researcher. As regards case study approach, one of the most challenging situations is the “problematic nature of the relationship between case and theory building” (Richards, 2003, p.22) because it requires careful negotiation. It is recommended then, that researchers

establish different viewpoints of the situation they are studying and use different theories, methods, and techniques to avoid a one-sided view. This requires researchers to be able to immerse themselves in different environments, cultures, and populations so that they can establish relationship with people in these social contexts to interact with them through participation, observation, and dialogue to uncover their attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and values, as well as the unspoken cultural patterns that shape behavior (Spradley, 1979).

#### Sampling Procedure and Participants

In this ethnographic case study research the sites and participants were chosen following the strategy called purposeful sampling (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997) given that it enabled the researcher to select information directly from participants who had had life experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched. Consequently, purposeful sampling helped the researcher study in depth the effectiveness of therapeutic reading as a healing and pedagogical tool that EFL teachers could use to address teenage learners' social and emotional needs as well as to improve their EFL reading comprehension skills. The fieldwork was conducted at a private high-school in a small Ecuadorian city; an institution in which EFL is an obligatory part of the curricula for students of all levels.

Given that in ethnographic case study research data collection is mainly purposeful, it can be "tailored to meet the information needs of each study" (Riemer, 2008, p. 245). This way the researcher can not only determine the information required to address the study's research questions, but can also plan a combination of several techniques to elicit that information. Hence, data collection is usually undertaken over an extended period of time, ranging from several months to many years given the range of activities inherent in collecting data (Riemer, 2008). For this reason, this qualitative study data collection occurred over a period of two and a half months (ten weeks), which occurred in the last

quarter of the academic year. Prior to collection of data and regarding the rationale of this study the researcher employed a careful combination of purposeful sampling strategies.

Accordingly, these strategies included comprehensive sampling and extreme-case sampling, which allowed the researcher to choose the entire group of participants by criteria and to choose extreme cases after knowing typical average cases, crisis, or events, respectively (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). With this purpose, the researcher arranged a meeting with the counselor of that high-school to talk about the different courses and students with the most noticeable behavioral, social, emotional, and learning problems as regards the importance of selecting participants who have had varied experiences with the topic under investigation. From this meeting, both the counselor and researcher agreed that freshmen should be chosen to participate in this study based on the criterion that they were going through intense life experiences, both at school and at home, that fit better to the purpose of this ethnographic research. Among the main reasons that led the teacher to select these teenagers as the participants of this qualitative research there are some that deserve special mention as follows: 1) Students enrolled in that course were the ones with the greatest discipline and behavior problems at that high school; 2) Some of them had similar problems with their parents and/or siblings at home; 3) Most students had serious learning and attitudinal problems towards EFL; and finally 4) There were some students with noticeable psychological problems such as irritability, depression, anxiety, excessive shyness, and deep loneliness, among others.

On the other hand, the researcher held a second meeting with the EFL teacher of students enrolled in the first year of high school with a twofold purpose; that is, to explain to him the rationale and purpose of this study that adopted an ethnographic case study approach to investigate the usefulness of bibliotherapy as a pedagogical tool inside EFL settings; and to ask him to participate in this research as actively as possible. The EFL teacher honestly said

that that was the very first time he had heard about bibliotherapy and its pedagogical practice. However, even though he showed enthusiasm for learning this practice, he was cautious and decided to perform as a nonparticipant observer during the first class sessions, and then as he was learning this approach, he would take a more active role. Therefore, the researcher had to adopt the role of an EFL teacher-researcher who needed to develop a complete EFL reading course in order to investigate the helpfulness of therapeutic reading as a way to help teenage students overcome their socio-emotional problems and improve their EFL reading comprehension.

Prior to carrying out the research, because the selected students were minors, it was necessary to get consent on behalf of their parents, who as legal representatives had to provide their consent to allow their children to be part of this research study, as well as to have their interviews audio-taped. The parents were aware that their sons or daughters could discontinue their participation in this study at any time. To ensure confidentiality, student participants were asked to select a pseudonym in the data presentation. Only demographic data, such as pseudonym, age, gender, current education level, EFL course, and EFL level is presented in the result section. In view of that, this qualitative study consisted of eleven student participants enrolled in the first year of high school and whose range of ages was between 14-16 years old. They were of mixed gender; i.e. five females and six males and all of them were Ecuadorian. From the teacher-researcher's viewpoint, the final sample size was appropriate with regard to the purpose of this study.

These student participants were freshmen who received two academic hours or ninety minutes a day of instruction on an EFL therapeutic reading course for the beginner level, which was exclusively planned for this research for a period of nine weeks, on Tuesdays from 9:00 to 10:30 and on Thursdays from 7:00 to 8:30 in the morning, according to the regular EFL class schedule. The classroom area was small but was well furnished with a

whiteboard, an electric ventilator, and comfortable benches. All course materials as well as readings and extra resources were given to student participants by the teacher-researcher, who also employed further methods and techniques to complement the EFL therapeutic reading course in order to fit better students' social, emotional, and learning needs.

Permission to carry out this study was provided by the principal of that high school (see Appendix B).

### Procedures

This study adopted an ethnographic case study approach to explore and describe the process of using therapeutic reading to address EFL teenage learners' social and emotional problems and needs while developing their EFL reading comprehension, at an Ecuadorian high school, in a small city. As stated, in order to collect relevant data from student participants, it was necessary to get legal consent on behalf of their parents or representatives as all the students were minors. To accomplish this, the teacher-researcher developed a complete packet of information about the study that included a cover letter that explained the purpose of the research study, the demographic questionnaire, the first interview questions, and a specific informed consent agreement. This entire information packet, written in English and translated into Spanish, was fully explained by the researcher to the students in Spanish and was included in individual folders so that they could take them to their parents (see Appendix C) in order to get the respective consent.

After the researcher reviewed the returned informed consent agreement, in which all the students' parents willingly agreed to allow their sons or daughters to take part in this research, the collection of data started and was carried out over a ten-week period. Thus, the first source of data was the demographic questionnaire that each representative had to fill completely in order to provide the teacher-researcher with background information of students. The second source of data was the initial semi-structured interview with each one of



the student participants to ascertain his/her educational background and prior experiences when reading either in Spanish or English, as well as his/her prior experience with self-reading material. As the student participants talked about issues of a sensitive nature, the teacher-researcher debriefed each one of them at the end of the first interview by means of a brief discussion to make sure that no participant experienced distress from the interview. These initial and individual semi-structured interviews which were scheduled on October 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009, were fully conducted in Spanish and were held at the principal's office. Each interview lasted fifteen minutes per student and was audiotaped and transcribed in full as quickly as possible.

Given that one of the main objectives of this research was to establish the usefulness of bibliotherapy in EFL school settings as a way to help learners improve their reading comprehension skills, the teacher-researcher regarded it necessary to assess student participants' reading comprehension levels and rates not only in English, but also in Spanish. Hence, the third sources of data were as follows: one EFL reading comprehension test retrieved from Oxford Bookworms Library corresponding to the EFL reading comprehension Starter Test 2, which lasted thirty minutes and was intended to determine the initial EFL reading proficiency level of each student participant; one reading and comprehension test in English that lasted thirty minutes in order to establish individual and initial EFL reading rates and assign individual initial reading comprehension scores; and one reading comprehension test in Spanish, which also lasted thirty minutes to set up student participants' initial Spanish reading proficiency along with their reading rates. The teacher-researcher administered these three tests on October 27<sup>th</sup> 2009, and they were included as the first activities of the EFL self-help reading course to be carried out inside the classroom.

The next stage of data collection consisted of sixteen participatory observations of the classes programmed in the EFL therapeutic reading course syllabus especially developed for for this research, in which the researcher performed as the EFL teacher, too. These classes and observations were completed in a period of nine weeks, in which there were sixteen working days that corresponded to thirty-two academic hours. In general the observational research went smoothly. Qualitative field notes and reflective journals were kept from these classes and observations that included students' reactions to the teacher-researcher's explanations and questions; students' reactions, viewpoints, comments, and questions to the readings, assignments such as keeping a vocabulary notebook and writing double-entry reflective journals; activities and oral presentations; as well as their body language, which provided teacher-researcher with additional clues about students' attitudes towards readings.

The last stages of data collected consisted of the above mentioned EFL reading comprehension test retrieved from Oxford Bookworms Library corresponding to the EFL reading comprehension Starter Test 2, which again lasted thirty minutes, but on that occasion was intended to establish the final EFL reading proficiency level of each student participant; the former reading and comprehension test in English that lasted thirty minutes, which teacher-researcher used to set up final student participants' EFL reading rates and assign final reading comprehension scores. The same reading and comprehension test in Spanish, which also lasted thirty minutes with the aim of setting up student participants' final Spanish reading proficiency along with their reading rates. The teacher-researcher administered these three tests on December 22<sup>nd</sup> 2009.

The final source of data was a final semi-structured interview with each one of the eleven student participants on the last day, i.e. December 23<sup>rd</sup> 2009. Final interview questions were intended to draw out data about student participants' experiences, feelings, and supporting reasons regarding the effectiveness of therapeutic reading not only as a psychological tool

that might help them read from the perspective of self-reflection to get a better understanding of everyday issues and discuss sensitive matters that let them overcome personal, social, and emotional needs, but also as a pedagogical practice that might help them improve their EFL reading skills. These final interviews held in the EFL classroom, were conducted in English and Spanish, lasted ten minutes in length per student, and were audiotaped and transcribed in full.

### Instrumentation

The instruments used in the current study included the following items: the demographic questionnaire; the initial semi-structured interview with recordings; the reading comprehension and rate tests in English and Spanish; sixteen classroom participatory observations with the respective field notes and reflective journals; and the final semi-structured interview with recordings. In this section, the teacher-researcher reviews each one of these instruments in depth.

### Demographic Questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire included in the initial packet of information was designed to let students' representatives provide the teacher-researcher with the demographic profile of each student participant. Likewise, representatives were told all answers on this questionnaire were held confidential and they were encouraged to contact the researcher via mail if they had further doubts or questions. The results from this questionnaire also served as categories in the data analysis process.

Thus, each student's representative was asked to provide the following background information: (1) participant's name; (2) gender; (3) age; (4) e-mail; (5) nationality; (6) education level; and (7) current EFL course/level. Additionally, each representative was asked to answer the following question: (8) Would your son or daughter be able to participate in 18 class sessions of reading self-help material in EFL, on Tuesdays and

Thursdays during the EFL class sessions each one lasting 90 minutes a day from October 20<sup>th</sup> through December 23<sup>rd</sup> 2009, to find out how self-reflection may help them increase their understanding of everyday issues while improving their EFL reading comprehension?

#### Initial Semi-structured Interview

The initial semi-structured interview contained open-ended questions intended to encourage student participants to talk about themselves, to give more detailed answers about their expectations of reading in English and Spanish, as well as to talk about prior experiences when reading self-help material. This way, the teacher-researcher could begin to understand how all their answers interrelated in order to establish their most noticeable social, emotional, and learning needs. These questions were adapted from a previous phenomenological research study on bibliotherapy carried out by Bruneau (2007) to explore how female readers describe the helpfulness of this practice in their lives. This initial semi-structured interview was also included in the initial packet of information and following an ethnographic case study approach, it was based on social conversation, in which student participants were asked to talk about the specific phenomenon in question. Nevertheless, when student participants' answers were not clear enough, the teacher-researcher tried to elicit ideas by rephrasing them or by asking them to give further clarification. By means of this initial interview, the teacher-researcher was able to distinguish recurrent or individual situations, problems, and needs so that themes began to emerge in order to include them in the EFL reading course. Regarding student participants' EFL proficiency level, the teacher-researcher had to conduct all the initial interviews in Spanish.

The initial structured interview had the same set of ten questions, which were asked to every one of the student participants as follows:

1. Could you please describe yourself as a person in terms of traits or characteristics?
2. What are your personal expectations for reading?

3. Have you ever read any kind of self-help material in the past?
4. What was it like? Could you briefly describe this experience?
5. What situation(s) led you to choose and read self-help material? Could you briefly describe this time in your life?
6. Do you feel you were helped by this self-help reading material? Please explain.
7. Did you share what you learned from the book with others? Please explain.
8. Did you choose to read this self-help reading material under the recommendation or guidance of your parents, friends, teachers, others?
9. How would you define the experience of reading in EFL?
10. Do you enjoy reading in EFL? Please explain

#### Reading Comprehension and Rate Tests in English and Spanish

Reading comprehension and rate tests in English and Spanish (see Appendix D) included the following items: the EFL reading comprehension Starter Test 2 from Oxford Bookworms Library, which is a greatly used seven-stage system of grading, from Starter through Stage 6 that lets English teachers know the right student' level while encouraging reading for pleasure. Each level includes three phases as follows: the stage above, right to this level, and stage below (Oxford University Press, 2010). Regarding student participants' demographic data about their EFL proficiency, the teacher-researcher chose the EFL reading comprehension Starter Test 2 from the Oxford Bookworms Library, with the aim of establishing both the initial and final EFL reading comprehension stage of every student-participant, in line with an international and standard proficiency test on EFL reading comprehension. In order to take this test at the beginning and at the end of the data collection phase, students were given thirty minutes to answer twenty questions by choosing from four different options, the one they regarded fit the answer the best (multiple choice).

The next assessment tool was a Reading and Comprehension test in English that had a twofold purpose: in the first place to establish initial and final student participants' reading rates; and in the second place to assign initial and final reading comprehension scores. This reading test along with the reading rate chart was included in the Reading and Writing Course and Workshop Booklet compiled by Shaw and Rohrer (2007), which is based on Anderson's book titled "*Exploring Second Language Reading*" written in 1999. Hence, in order to set up student participants' reading rates, they were asked to read the pre-intermediate level story "*A Good Reason to Look Up*" (O'Neal, 1998), which averaged 15.5 words per line. Every student participant was given one minute to read aloud this story. Simultaneously, the teacher-researcher was following their reading aloud session silently to tabulate their words per minute and include this information in the reading rate chart. To tabulate student participants' rates, the teacher-researcher had to count the word in each of ten complete lines; write the number of words in each line, next to the line; add the numbers and divide by ten to get an approximate average number of words per line; mark where each student participant started and stopped, and write the times on the chart; count the lines each student had read; multiply the average number of words times the number of lines; and finally divide the total number of words by the number of minutes; i.e. one minute to know how many words per minute each student participant read (Anderson, 1999).

Additionally, with the aim of checking student participants' reading comprehension and assigning individual initial and final scores, they were given thirty minutes to read silently the same story so that they could answer six true or false comprehension questions, and translate into Spanish or paraphrase in English a set of twenty vocabulary words and phrases chosen from the reading.

The test on Reading and Comprehension in Spanish enabled the teacher-researcher not only to assign individual scores for the student participants' initial and final reading

comprehension levels and rates, but also to compare their performances in English and Spanish. In the same way, this test and the reading rate chart were included in Anderson's book (1999). The teacher-researcher employed the same process to establish reading comprehension levels and rates in Spanish as in English. Thus, in order to set up student participants' Spanish reading rates, they were asked to read the advanced level article titled "*Hacia un modelo de desarrollo para el siglo XXI*" (Bahá'í International Community, 1994), which averaged 11.8 words per line.

Likewise, every student participant was given one minute to read aloud this article while the teacher-researcher was following their reading aloud session silently to tabulate their words per minute and include this information in the reading rate chart. The process used to tabulate student participants' rates in Spanish is the same as the process used to tabulate student participants' rates in EFL, which was fully described above. Finally, the teacher-researcher also checked student participants reading comprehension in Spanish and assigned individual initial and final scores. Once more, student participants were given thirty minutes to read silently the same article so that they could answer eight different comprehension questions.

#### Sixteen Classroom Participatory Observations

In the present research, there were sixteen classroom participatory observations regarding the criterion that participant observation is the most demanding but the most involving method of data collection used in ethnography (Cowie, 2007, Richards; 2003). This reality is mainly evidenced inside language settings where the actions of participation and observation are fundamental to language teaching providing a very natural way for teachers to research, either their own or somebody else's classroom. In this case, the researcher performed as the EFL teacher who investigated and witnessed

connections, correlations, and causes of the psychological and pedagogical helpfulness of therapeutic reading for teenagers as and how they unfold.

As stated, in order to accomplish these class observations, the teacher-researcher designed and developed a complete EFL self-help reading course syllabus (see Appendix E) for beginner level based on a learner-centered approach (Grunnert, 1997) as regards its sensitivity and adaptability to learners' unique lives and educational needs and purposes for learning EFL. When doing this, teacher-researcher's subjectivity as well as student participants' answers to the initial interview played a major role. So, this course was designed for teaching intensive therapeutic reading and for introducing student participants of first year of high school at Stage 1 of EFL proficiency, which aimed to get student participants to develop the following five reading skills: (1) paying attention to supporting cues; (2) highlighting, summarizing, reviewing important ideas, and demonstrating sensitivity to or empathy with characters or events; (3) monitoring effectiveness; (4) creating motivation and interest; and (5) being as critical and self-reflective as possible. Accordingly, this reading course included three self-help reading stories directly retrieved from the Internet; two true pieces selected from the series of books *Chicken Soup for the Soul* as follows: *All the Good Things* (Mroska, 1999) including its respective lesson plan and two more ones designed by the teacher-researcher; and *A Step to Healing* (Yamoah, 2004) whose lesson plans were designed by the teacher-researcher. And the third piece was a fiction story titled *An Insignificant Task* (Sacristan, 2008), with lesson plans created by the teacher-researcher. All these stories were chosen as a way to motivate and engage student participants in themes on responsibility, the importance of family, and the importance of true friends. Overall, the teaching EFL therapeutic reading material was structured into four main phases: (1) pre-reading questions, (2) while reading story, (3) post-reading questions, and (4) student activity given that they



showed representative levels of comprehension for the intensive self-help reading class sessions.

From this view, pre-questions were intended to activate student participants' schemata so that they could predict and understand what type of story they were going to read. Authors such as Anderson (1999) and Brown (2007) believe students' schemata increase reading comprehension; in other words, that meaning does not depend only on the printed words, but that students bring certain knowledge, experience, emotion, and culture to the reading that affects their comprehension. Therefore, student participants were asked to express their opinions and answers as freely as possible. Then, in the phase of reading the story, student participants were asked to underline or highlight vocabulary or phrases with which they were unfamiliar, recognize main character(s), and summarize main ideas, so that they could relate to them. All this allowed student participants to gain a sense of understanding the message of the input given because meaning was primary. In order to accomplish this process the story was read three times as follows: the first time, the teacher-researcher read aloud the story while students were reading the story silently; the second time, student participants had to read the story silently and individually without the teacher-researcher's interruption in order to get a global understanding of the text; and the third time, student participants took turns to read aloud segments of the story until finishing it completely.

After that phase, student participants were asked post-reading questions that were either literal comprehension questions or more personal questions intended to: (1) encourage them to remember specific details about the characters involved in the story; (2) check their basic understanding of the text; and (3) give their personal viewpoints and different ways to solve similar situations or problems. This process was intended to help student participants construct meaning using the text and to encourage group and class

discussions. So, student participants were motivated to answer these questions through dialogic negotiation for meaning while interacting with the text to create or construct meaning and thinking as critically as possible. Throughout this process, the teacher-researcher performed as a facilitator. Finally, in the phase of student activity, the teacher-researcher tried to integrate all the language skills in the entire classroom activities.

Accordingly, student participants were given opportunities to integrate reading with listening and speaking skills as a way to promote interactive practices for a negotiation of meaning. Additionally, all the reading lessons were connected to specific writing activities including keeping a vocabulary notebook and writing double-entry reflective journals.

Following this general schema, qualitative field notes emerged from these classes and observations, which provided the teacher-researcher with excellent and numerous opportunities to take core field notes; either mental notes, jotted notes, or full field notes of students' most interesting and noteworthy words, phrases, gestures, and comments as responses to the selected reading materials, assignments, activities, topics student participants chose to produce and develop their individual oral presentations, partners' comments, or teacher-researcher's explanations and questions.

Finally, another essential kind of field notes employed during this ethnographic case study research included reflective journals that were used by the teacher-researcher to reflect and think carefully and seriously on all aspects and issues that seemed to support or interfere with this research, as well as to help her establish her right place within this study. At this moment, it is necessary to make a distinction between the purposes with which the teacher-researcher employed field notes and reflective journals respectively in this study; that is field notes were employed to emphasize students' ideas, gestures, impressions, etc., in an unobtrusive manner, while reflective journals were employed to record, reflect, and analyze the researcher's learning experience and thoughts as an EFL teacher and researcher.

Throughout this process, the teacher-researcher kept in mind the purpose of this study, the activities accomplished either inside or outside the classroom, and the themes regarding helpfulness of therapeutic reading as an instructional and healing practice.

#### Final Semi-structured Interview

The final semi-structured (see Appendix F) also contained open-ended questions, but in this occasion they were intended to elicit information about all student participants' experiences, values, feelings, comments, and reasons concerning the significance of therapeutic reading as a psychological and instructional tool that helped them develop their problem solving skills regarding the needs and problems teenagers face every day, and increase their EFL reading comprehension levels, or not. In the same way, when student participants' answers were not clear enough, the researcher tried to clarify ideas by rephrasing them or by asking them to give further clarification. To avoid bias or subjectivity on behalf of the teacher-researcher, individual interviews were taped and transcribed in full. To conduct final interviews, the teacher-researcher spoke in English and Spanish to clarify meanings when necessary.

The final structured interview had the same set of six questions, which were asked to every one of the student participants as follows:

1. How did you experience reading the self-help material chosen for your EFL reading classes? Explain your answer.
2. What value if any have you gotten from reading the self-help material included in this reading course? If yes, have you reflected on its value?
3. Do you feel the self-help reading material chosen for this EFL reading module has helped you overcome and/or improve some social and emotional needs? Why?

4. Do you regard the role of the self-help reading material included in this course as having helped you improve your EFL reading skills? Give reasons to support your answer.
5. At this point, how would you define the experience of reading in EFL? Why?
6. From your personal viewpoint, what were the best and worst aspects of this EFL reading course? Give reasons to support your answer.

#### Data Analysis

This study employed a selective and inductive ethnographic case study analysis as a method for data collection in the context of a specific issue such as the use and efficacy of therapeutic reading material to address EFL teenage learners' social and emotional problems and needs while developing their EFL reading comprehension. According to Sierhuis (1996) this analysis consists of a four-step cyclic process that can be performed as many times as necessary as allows the researcher to (1) identify the data that needs to be collected, (2) perform the observation, (3) analyze the data, and (4) generate recommendations for dealing with the problem or issue in the design effort. This explains why throughout this ethnographic case study research, data collection merged with that of data analysis following a cyclical process. That is, data were collected and analyzed throughout the period of fieldwork, with each succeeding data collection stage being influenced by the analysis of the data already collected. The interaction between data collection and analysis appears clearly evidenced in the description of the following procedure.

As a first stage in the analysis process, the teacher-researcher developed interview questions in order to gather information about student participants' initial backgrounds and expectations when reading in EFL and Spanish, as well as their prior experiences (if any) when reading self-help material. This stage was important as it let student participants talk about themselves and their current problems freely. Hence, main themes to be included in the

EFL therapeutic reading course began to emerge. In the following stage of data analysis, the teacher-researcher performed the transcriptions of the audiotaped initial semi-structured interviews; the organization of data using two categories; i.e. truly significant and significant in order to investigate the phenomenon observed. The process of transcribing initial interviews was accomplished shortly after they happened so that the teacher-researcher's ideas were not affected by time given that her purpose was to describe authentic words from each participant as well as the body language that accompanied his/her answers. The importance of these transcriptions relied on the fact that they helped the teacher-researcher discover key answers, words, or phrases related to the initial significance of reading and therapeutic reading from student participants' viewpoints; they let her summarize and combine their words in order to write a rich narrative description of their individual experiences with therapeutic reading; and they gave her valuable feedback with the emerging themes that were integrated into the EFL therapeutic reading course.

In the next stage of the data analysis process, the teacher-researcher analyzed the scores by student participants in their initial reading comprehension tests both in English and Spanish, as well as their respective reading rate scores. This process was key as it enabled the researcher to place student participants in the right EFL level in line with their reading proficiency in this foreign language. These assessment tools also helped the teacher-researcher compare student participants' performance and proficiency reading levels in English and Spanish at the beginning of the research.

Then, the teacher-researcher analyzed participatory observational data after each class session in which she tried to identify key instructional episodes, which were written down either in her field notes or in her reflective journals e.g. classroom events/stories that arouse agreement, controversy, or unpredicted reactions of the student participants

regarding the phenomenon observed; their responses to partners' comments; their responses to teacher's observations, explanations, and questions; their written comments and ideas on the double-entry journals; and the topic chosen to develop individual oral presentations along with the way in which they were delivered. All these data were valuable since they prompted questions through which the researcher-teacher could gain insight into the causes behind student participants' reactions or words to the selected themes. Finally, these questions were compiled in a list generated by episodes; collated by category, i.e. truly significant and significant; and summarized in analytical memos (see Appendix G).

The next stage of the study consisted of the analysis of the results by student participants in their final reading comprehension tests in English and Spanish, as well as their respective reading rate scores. The final assessment tools were the same as the initial ones. So, the teacher-researcher was able to establish final reading comprehension levels and rates in EFL and Spanish in order to compare student participants' performances with and without the use of self-help reading material and point out the respective improvement in their reading skills. In the last stage of data analysis, the teacher-researcher analyzed and transcribed in full final semi-structured interview questions, which were intended to encourage eleven student participants to determine if that EFL therapeutic reading course had met their personal and educational expectations, and if they had gotten values from those classes. These questions also elicited valuable information regarding student participants' overall feelings and experiences with therapeutic reading in EFL. The teacher-researcher conducted final interviews in English to allow student participants to see their progress in this foreign language and in Spanish to help them clarify concepts or ideas when absolutely necessary. Then, the teacher-researcher transcribed, coded, and summarized responses from each one of the final interviews using the same procedure as in the initial interview.

Finally the teacher-researcher combined student participants' summaries of their initial and final interviews to write a complete narrative description of their experiences and sense of achievement with EFL therapeutic reading.

#### Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers argue for different standards for judging the quality of research. From this view, Guba and Lincoln (Richards, 2003; Trockim, 2006) proposed four criteria for emphasizing the trustworthiness of qualitative research that include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In view of these criteria, the teacher-researcher thought it necessary to include the following information on how each one of these factors was met in this study

#### Credibility

The credibility criteria involve establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant in the research (Trockim, 2006). This factor is also known as internal validity (Richards, 2003). Hence, to set up credibility the teacher-researcher chose two widely used methods, i.e. triangulation and peer debriefing given that the first one allowed her to improve the probability that findings and interpretations were found credible, and the second one let her consult with a peer about the data analysis procedures.

In order to complete triangulation in this qualitative study, the teacher-researcher relied on authentic data provided by student participants that helped her understand the phenomenon observed in this study. Furthermore, she had access to several information sources; i.e. books and journals on prior and similar investigations. In order to use the peer debriefing technique the teacher-researcher met with a peer; in this case the EFL teacher who performed as the peer debriefer. The meeting took place after student participants' oral presentations to consult, discuss, analyze, and interpret with him data

gathered from student participants' personal reactions, assumptions, and feelings on self-help themes. Valuable field notes were taken from this activity.

#### Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings (Trochim, 2006). From a qualitative perspective transferability is the main responsibility of the researcher. So, regarding that in Chapter 4, the teacher-researcher worked at providing a thorough description of the research context and the assumptions that were central to the psychological and pedagogical usefulness of therapeutic reading in EFL learning environments, it is the intention of the researcher to assure that researchers in the future could replicate the research design of the study with other participants in other settings. Readers may be able to assess if that experience can be transferred to similar contexts.

Dependability refers to the reliability of the research findings based on the assumption of replicability or repeatability (Trochim, 2006). The idea of dependability emphasizes the need for the researcher to explain the ever-changing context within which research occurs. The researcher is accountable for describing the changes that occur in the setting and how these changes affected the way the research approached the study. In the same way, confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. In order to meet these two factors, the teacher-researcher used reflective journals, in which she included her own reflections on the data analysis and procedures and the decisions she made to meet better student participants' educational and personal needs.



## Chapter 4

### Results and Discussion

This chapter offers the findings of this ethnographic case study in the light of therapeutic reading and discusses the implications of such research for expanding current understanding of usefulness of self-help reading as a healing and pedagogical tool. Accordingly, the object of analysis was to support the usefulness of self-help reading material as a way to address EFL teenage learners' social and emotional problems and needs while developing their EFL reading comprehension. In view of that, this chapter introduces demographic data relevant to each one of the eleven participants, and then provides a complete description of the research findings gotten from the different data collection instruments, i.e. the demographic questionnaire, the initial semi-structured interview; the reading comprehension and rate tests in English and Spanish; sixteen classroom participatory observations with the respective field notes; reflective journals; recordings; and the final semi-structured interview, regarding the five research questions, i.e. (1) What do students perceive as their social and emotional needs in this beginning EFL course? (2) What are the perceptions of the EFL teacher as to the social and emotional needs of her adolescent students? (3) How do students view the usefulness of bibliotherapy? (4) Does bibliotherapy foster students' self-reflection and a better understanding of real-life challenges? And (5) Is bibliotherapy a learning practice that may help EFL learners improve their reading comprehension skills? All this was done with the aim of encouraging a thorough comprehension of the experience of self-help reading from the learners' standpoints.

#### Participants' Demographic Data

This section is intended to introduce the reader to each of the participants. Hence, this sample included eleven student participants from a private high-school in Ecuador. Table 1 provides an overview of their demographic data including pseudonym, gender, age,

nationality, education level, current EFL course, and EFL proficiency level according to their own stance.

Table 1

*Student Participants' Demographic Data*

No.	Participant's Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Nationality	Education Level	EFL Level
1	Andrea	Female	14	Ecuadorian	Freshman	Low
2	China	Female	15	Ecuadorian	Freshman	Low
3	Johanny	Female	15	Ecuadorian	Freshman	Low
4	Kristen	Female	15	Ecuadorian	Freshman	Low
5	Luna	Female	15	Ecuadorian	Freshman	Low
6	Alex	Male	14	Ecuadorian	Freshman	High
7	Chuck	Male	16	Ecuadorian	Freshman	Intermediate
8	Dan	Male	15	Ecuadorian	Freshman	Low
9	El Barto	Male	15	Ecuadorian	Freshman	Low
10	J.T.	Male	14	Ecuadorian	Freshman	Low
11	Roy	Male	15	Ecuadorian	Freshman	Low

Findings shown in Table 1 revealed that out of eleven participants, five were women and six were men. All of the participants were Ecuadorian and were enrolled in first year of high school. Their age range was between 14-16 years old and in most of the cases they regarded their EFL proficiency level was low. There was one male student who thought his EFL proficiency level was high, and there was another one who regarded his EFL proficiency level was intermediate. What follows is a full description of the several instruments used in this ethnographic case study organized by the five research questions. Nevertheless, it is vital to say that regarding the close relationship of the research questions one and two, and three and four, they will be addressed jointly in that order. The research question number five will be addressed individually.

Question 1: Student Participants' Perceived Social and Emotional Needs / Question 2: Perceptions of the EFL Teacher as to the Social and Emotional Needs of her Adolescent Students

For the purpose of this study, the first research question addressed student participants' perceived social and emotional needs and the second research question addressed perceptions of the EFL teacher as to the social and emotional needs of her adolescent students. These needs were established regarding student participants' answers to the initial interviews. Hence, the results show an accurate and real perspective of the more noticeable and recurrent social and emotional problems of the total eleven students (see Table 2), from student participants' and teacher-researcher's perceptions. In addition, for the ease of reading, student participants' summaries of their initial interviews are included individually as it was in this stage where problems, needs, and recurrent themes emerged clearly. It is worthwhile to mention again these interviews were held in Spanish and transcribed and translated into English.

Table 2

*Student Participants' Perceived Social and Emotional Needs / Perceptions of the EFL Teacher as to the Social and Emotional Needs of her Adolescent Students Gotten From the Initial Interviews*

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1. These teenagers have problems interrelating with one another inside the classroom. They regard they are partners but not true friends; so it is hard for them to recognize that authentic friendship can truly exist inside the classroom as a wonderful value that may support and encourage one another in many ways throughout their lives.
  2. There are small elite groups that do not welcome newcomers.
  3. Some students hide their fears and insecurity with a false sense of security and superiority. This situation reveals their low self-esteem.
  4. There is lack of respect on behalf of some students for other partners, teachers, and even parents.
  5. Most of the student participants distrust one another in many ways. One of them employed the term "enemies" to refer to some partners.
  6. Most of the student participants admitted not being responsible enough. For them, teens are not supposed to be responsible.
  7. There is bullying on behalf of some student participants who disguise that misbehavior as practical jokes.
  8. Some student participants experience isolation, sadness, shyness, and depression due to the school environment.
  9. One student-participant has experienced episodes not only of depression but also of anxiety, panic attacks and a suicide attempt. Another one has psychological traumas related to his dead mother.
  10. Some student participants have problematic relationships with their parents and siblings at home, too.
  11. Even though some students realize the importance of learning English, most of the student participants agree that reading in EFL can be an overwhelming and frustrating practice due to their lack of vocabulary and skills that prevent them from understanding when reading in EFL. Some of them really feel they are not good enough at learning EFL. Therefore, there is lack of self-confidence in their abilities to learn EFL.
- 

In spite of the fact that these student participants have individualities regarding their specific problems and needs, there were some recurrent ones as it is outlined in Table 2. So,

it is possible for the teacher-researcher to set up that the most noticeable social and emotional problems and needs of these student participants can be aligned in five major categories: (1) lack of responsibility; (2) lack of respect among one another; (3) no sense of true friendship inside the classroom; (4) problematic relationships with partners, teachers, and family members both at school and home; and (5) a sense of insufficiency for learning EFL. These categories are the source of further subcategories such as low self-esteem, stress, depression, loneliness, sadness, fear, distrust, shyness, and insecurity.

It deserves to be mentioned that there are two student participants that were being given therapeutic counseling to deal with their psychiatric and psychological problems respectively; the teacher-researcher considered it necessary to entwine these specific problems with the above mentioned ones in order to include them as secondary topics in the self-help reading course for Stage 1. At the same time, regarding the high importance of the answers given by student participants during the initial interviews, they are included as individual summaries, as it was in that stage where the teacher-researcher began to understand their problems and needs, as well as their knowledge regarding the topic of self-help reading.

#### Summary of Andrea's initial interview

Andrea is a lovely and open fourteen-year-old teenager. She describes herself as an honest and friendly person. Still, she recognizes

*...es muy difícil para mí tener amigos en mi aula porque existen grupos bien definidos en los cuales yo no encajo bien. Creo que esto es porque soy estudiante nueva en este colegio. Por esta razón estoy sola en los recreos, lo que me hace sentir triste y deprimida algunas veces. [...it is hard for me to have friends in my classroom because there are well-defined cliques in which I do not fit well. I think this is because I am a*

new student at this high school. So, I am alone during the breaks, which makes me sometimes feel sad and depressed].

On the topic of reading, she expresses her preference for reading short stories in Spanish that let her get the main idea of the text as fast as possible. She used the term “concrete” to describe her favorite kind of reading material as she does not like the kind of readings in which authors hide their meanings. Her personal expectations about reading are that the reading texts must be as certain and specific as possible in every sense. She says she does enjoy reading in Spanish due the way in which authors describe fiction characters.

Although, Andrea points out she has never read any kind of self-help material either in Spanish or English, she knows what self-help reading is and admits it would be helpful for her because she is going through some problems with her older sisters at home, too. In line with reading in EFL, she emphasizes that her EFL level is low, which is the reason why she has a lot of troubles when reading and understanding meanings from contexts in this foreign language. However, she admits that the English language appeals to her a lot because it has words that sound nice for her.

#### Summary of China’s initial interview

China is a lively and contradictory fifteen-year-old teen. She describes herself as a talkative and friendly girl, but emphasizes the fact that she only behaves that way with her true friends because strangers scare her. She also told me

*...cuando estoy con gente extraña, estoy completamente callada, pero siento que usted es digna de mi confianza y por eso está en mi lista de gente agradable. Soy muy selectiva al escoger a mis amistades, ya que ellos deben tener costumbres, posición social y estilos similares a los míos. Estoy segura que por esta razón algunas personas creen que soy creída, arrogante y presuntuosa. [...when I am with strangers I am fully silent, but I feel you are trustworthy and for that reason you are in my list of nice people. I am so*

selective in choosing my friends because they need to have similar customs, status, and style. I am sure for this reason some people think I am spoiled, arrogant, and conceited].

China also speaks of not being as responsible as she should be, either at home or school because according to her, teenagers are supposed to live without responsibilities. She also recognizes that she is quite cheeky with her parents and some teachers as they sometimes try to compel her to perform tasks that she does not need or want to do.

Regarding the topic of reading, she expressed that her personal expectations are related to the fact of understanding what the author really means. In this sense she used the phrase “well defined concepts”. Furthermore, she said once she had to read a kind of self-help material -a very short story for kids- in EFL to do an assignment on how to become a better student. Her EFL teacher asked her to do it. At that time she was twelve years old and was attending classes in eighth academic year. She describes that experience as of little interest with little importance for her. However, she admitted she was given a kind of help from that self-help reading material as she put into practice a few tips to improve as a student. She was emphatic when telling me that she had not shared that personal experience with anyone else. As regards reading in EFL, she remarked that it can be interesting because it allows people to learn a foreign language as well as to stimulate the development of the brain to remember new words and much more. She says she likes reading in English but since her level is low, she has to use translators to get all those strange words to have authentic meaning for her.

#### Summary of Johanny’s initial interview

Johanny is an outgoing fifteen-year-old teen. She describes herself as a good, happy, natural, talkative, and sociable person. She said to me:

*... me encanta hacerle bromas a mis compañeros de clases pero no a mis verdaderos amigos porque mis bromas pueden resultar muy pesadas algunas veces. Yo hago esto porque soy honesta y directa con lo que siento y pienso. [...I like so much making jokes*

on my partners but not on my true friends because my practical jokes may sometimes be hurtful. I behave this way because I am honest and forthright in my manners].

In line with her expectations from reading in Spanish, she states her preferences for all those reading materials that have good contents and messages. She had a prior and single experience with reading one book on self-help though she did not remember the title. She defined that experience as good because it helped her become a better person. She explained her decision to read that book was based on curiosity because a cousin of hers was reading it. Still, she did not share that experience with other people, not even with her cousin.

For this teenager, reading in EFL is interesting as she really enjoys learning foreign languages. Nevertheless, she is aware she needs translators to understand meanings when reading in this foreign language as her English level is not so good. In spite of this, she points out her desire to speak not only English but also Mandarin Chinese perfectly well. Hence, she has decided to go on an exchange trip once she finishes high school in this country. She emphasized how much her parents support her in every sense.

#### Summary of Kristen's initial interview

Kristen is a lonely and mature fifteen-year-old teen. She describes herself as a good friend with her true friends, sometimes funny, a little witty and moody, easily irritable, and very demanding and impatient. She also said

*...yo soy así porque soy hija única y vivo sola con mi mama. Nuestra relación está llena de altibajos. Por esto he perdido mi confianza en el mundo y principalmente en mis compañeros de los diferentes salones de clases en los que he estado. Ellos no son amigos de verdad son sólo compañeros que nunca me han entendido para nada. Para ellos solamente soy una chica rara. [...I am this way because I am an only daughter and live alone with my mother. Our relationship has more downs than ups. For this reason I have lost my confidence in the world and mainly in my partners of the several classrooms I*



have been in. They are not true friends but classmates who have never understood me at all. For them, I am only a weird girl].

On the other hand, regarding the topic of reading in Spanish, she expresses her preferences for all those books that really help her “go to other worlds”. She explained this answer by telling me that sometimes she feels so unhappy that she would like to live in a different universe in which she could get rid of her problems. This young girl had multiple prior experiences when reading self-help material in Spanish; mainly she remembered two books: *Cuando Nadie Entiende (When No One Understands)* by Brad Sachs and *Hijos Brillantes, Alumnos Fascinantes (Brilliant Sons, Fascinating Classmates)* by Augusto Cury. She described the experience of reading those books as rewarding and nice as they helped her understand the way she feels, and described the way she is.

This teenager was tremendously sincere when telling me that the situations that led her to read those books were her psychological problems as she suffered from depression, anxiety, panic attacks, and even a suicide attempt. She openly admitted these books were helpful because when reading them she had the guide of a psychologist who helped her understand that she was not the only person with those types of problems. In spite of this situation, she said she had not shared her personal experience of reading those books with anyone else because she wanted to keep her confidentiality. In her case, it was the psychologist who suggested that she should read those books. About reading in EFL, she says that it is an exciting experience because English is a different language that makes her feel a different person. She emphasized how much she likes reading in English because she feels people who speak this foreign language find many doors widely open in their personal and professional lives.

Summary of Luna’s initial interview

Luna is a sweet fifteen-year-old teen. She describes herself as an impetuous, friendly, and romantic girl, who loves her mother above all things. Luna said to me:

*...soy hija única y reconozco lo afortunada que soy al tener a mi mamá conmigo. Mi papá murió hace mucho tiempo. A veces me siento muy sola en este colegio porque mis compañeros no son tan amigables como pensé que serían. Solamente tengo una mejor amiga quien también vive una situación parecida a la mía. Este es mi primer año en este colegio y por esto he tenido algunos problemas con mis notas, usted sabe existen diferentes materias y formas de enseñar. [...I am an only daughter and I acknowledged how lucky I am to have my mother with me. My father passed away a long time ago. Sometimes, I feel very lonely at this high school because my partners are not as friendly as I thought they would be. I only have a single best friend who is going through a similar problem. This is my first year at this high school and for this reason I have had some academic problems; you know there are different curricula and teaching styles].*

She recognizes that she would like to be a good student, but she is aware her scores are not good enough. In this respect, she thinks she is not being as responsible as she should be to improve her scores. From reading in Spanish, this dreamy girl just expects to read romantic novels where true love always wins. She has never read any kind of self-help material.

About reading in EFL, Luna expresses how disappointed she feels every time she has to read in this foreign language because she does not understand anything. At her former high school, EFL classes were quite irregular and she feels she learned nothing about this subject. She is absolutely convinced she is the worst student in this subject in her current classroom. That is why; she does not enjoy reading or doing any other activity in English. She was emphatic in her true desire to change this situation and learn English to go to

America and visit her cousins who live there. She said: “I hope you help me reach my dream goal.”

#### Summary of Alex’s initial interview

Alex is a smart fourteen-year-old teen. He describes himself as an optimistic, faithful, and loyal person. From the very beginning of the interview, Alex showed certain attitudes of disdain for this research project because in his opinion

*...este curso de inglés no va a satisfacer mis expectativas personales y educativas porque mi nivel de suficiencia de inglés es extremadamente alto. Estoy casi seguro que mis horas en este curso serán aburridas y repetitivas. Quiero que entienda esto. Pero mis padres ya aprobaron mi participación en este curso de inglés y ellos me han aconsejado que vea este curso como otra experiencia en mi vida. Solamente por eso estoy aquí. [...this English course is not going to meet my personal and educational expectations because my English proficiency level is extremely high. I am almost sure that my hours in this course are going to be boring and repetitive. I want you to understand this. But my parents have already approved my participation in this EFL course and they have advised me to take it as another experience in my life. Only for this reason I am here].*

In line with his personal expectations from reading in Spanish, Alex said that it depends on the message the author is trying to convey, but in general he prefers to read books that can give him positive messages in order to put into practice some good advice and reject bad things. This smart boy said he had read one book on self-help reading titled *La Culpa es de la Vaca* (The Fault is of the Cow) by Jaime Lopera Guitiérrez. He described that experience as an interesting opportunity to discover essential things and feel better as a teenager from a different perspective in which it is possible to reflect. The situation that led him to read that book was quite personal; his father asked him to read that book because its parables, anecdotes, and fables fitted his son’s needs.

It was unexpected when Alex said that he had not shared what he had learned from that book with others, not even with his father. He explained to me that his father had already read that book, so it was unnecessary to talk to him about it. As regards reading in EFL, Alex points out reading in English is easier than reading in Spanish because the words in English are “shorter and have more meanings.” According to him, it is easier to understand meanings from contexts when reading in English than when reading in Spanish because of his proficiency in EFL. Obviously, this teenager really enjoys reading in English as this practice helps him learn new and useful words and improve his vocabulary.

#### Summary of Chuck’s initial interview

Chuck is an enthusiastic sixteen-year-old teen. He describes himself as a happy, outgoing, and affectionate person who really likes to respect and to be respected. He said to me:

*...quiero que sepa que respetar y ser respetado es mi regla dorada de vida. Pero tengo que reconocer que en mi salón de clases eso es muy difícil de lograr. Mis compañeros son groseros e irrespetuosos, principalmente cuando hacen bromas pesadas. [...I want you to know that to respect and to be respected is my golden rule of life. But, I have to recognize that in my classroom it is really hard to reach this goal. My partners are rude and disrespectful, mainly when making practical jokes].*

For this teenager, the most important expectations from reading in Spanish are to get positive messages that help him become a better person and to find high quality books that foster self-education. He prefers to study and understand things by himself as he thinks by being an autodidact he can learn much more. Chuck admits he had to read one single book on self-help reading when he was studying in Quito three years ago. His literature teacher asked him to do it and even though he did not remember the title of the book he could speak about its plot and main character, a little girl who discovers she is not alone in the world to

overcome evil. Chuck really feels he was helped by that self-help reading book because it let him understand his life as a whole and change the course of his thoughts. He said that before reading that book, he used to think about all of the obstacles and problems that were hard or impossible to overcome, and thanks to that book he had understood everything in this life has a solution. This adolescent did share what he had learned from the book with his roommates and even they created conversation groups to discuss ideas about it.

About reading in English, Chuck said his proficiency level is intermediate so he can understand certain topics without the help given by a dictionary or a translator. However, he believes it is highly important to speak and understand English because it is the main language of business and communication, so he is aware he needs to improve his EFL skills to become a better student and professional in the future. Finally, he remarks he does enjoy reading in English as he can understand meanings from contexts and can add his own imagination to get a deeper understanding when necessary. He concluded saying “My imagination is endless.”

#### Summary of Dan’s initial interview

Dan is an overwhelmingly honest fifteen-year-old teen. He describes himself as an irresponsible, indifferent, and messy person who can also be nice and sincere with his family and true friends. He openly said

*...mi peor defecto es ser irresponsable; por favor no espere que yo haga algún deber o tarea en casa. A mí me gusta vivir mi vida así porque me siento libre y tengo que aprovechar esta época irrepetible en mi vida. [...my worst fault is being irresponsible; please do not expect me to do any assignment or homework. I like to live my life this way because I feel free and have to make good use of this unrepeatably time in my life].*

About reading in Spanish, Dan just prefers to read books that make him feel fun. He does not like deep stories in which he has to read a lot in order to grasp main ideas. It was not

surprising that he had not read any kind of self-help material until then, either at home or at school.

Regarding EFL reading, things are not much better; in fact Dan expresses how upset he is every time he has to read in this language because he simply does not understand anything. His last words were that even though he does not hate EFL, he does not like reading it due to his lack of understanding. When he was asked if he would give this course a chance to change that view, he honestly answered “I will see.”

Summary of El Barto’s initial interview

El Barto is a nice fifteen-year-old teen with a transparent look. He describes himself as

*...una persona alegre, quien puede ser calmada, pacífica y tierna con sus familiares y amigos. Tengo buenos sentimientos y actitudes con todas las personas porque amo la paz. [...a funny person, who can be calm, peaceful, and tender with my family and friends. I have gentle feelings and attitudes towards everybody because I love peace].*

About his personal expectations for reading in Spanish, El Barto remarked on the importance of key words to understand main ideas. He said he knows there are certain words that convey more meaning than others, so he looks for them to grasp the whole meaning when reading. He also said he had a prior experience with self-help reading material in Spanish; in fact he is a fan of the book *Recetas para el Alma* (Recipes for the Soul) by Diana Kennedy because since he was a child his mother has always read that book. It was his mother who asked him to read it. He describes the experience of reading that book over and over as enriching and inspiring because it makes him think a lot about good and evil. So, he tries to think about the consequences of his actions before behaving in a bad way. He is really concerned about not hurting people. El Barto recognizes that this kind of reading has been helpful at least for him because it has taught him a golden rule in his life: think first and act

later. This experience has been shared with his younger siblings and with his parents; this teen is proud of having loving and caring parents who are always there for their kids.

At the same time, he has tried to share that experience with some friends, but he said some of them are reticent to talk about those kinds of “sentimental topics” and do not want to listen to him. There are other cases in which he has been able to share that experience with other friends who really need some advice and the presence of a good friend to deal with familiar and personal problems. His personal experience when reading in EFL is not so good; most of the time he does not understand what he reads in this foreign language and then it is hard and tedious to look for unknown words in a bilingual dictionary. Furthermore, the shameful situation of not knowing how to pronounce certain words whose meaning he does not understand is always present. He recognizes he is completely ashamed every time he has to go through that experience and really wants to improve it.

#### Summary of J.T.’s initial interview

J.T. is a quite shy but sweet fourteen-year-old teenager. He describes himself as *...una persona amable a quien le gustaría vivir en un mundo donde el bienestar de todos fuera obligatorio*. [...a kind person who would like to live in a world where common wellbeing was a must].

The interview with this teenager was difficult since he constantly blushed before answering questions with monosyllables or very few words. Even though he was encouraged to give more open and elaborate answers, in most of the cases he resorted to silence mainly when answering negatively. Because silence is very telling, it was clear that he had not had any former experiences reading self-help material either in Spanish or English. About his personal expectations for reading in Spanish, J.T. said it should grab his attention but he did not explain what characteristics this material should have to do it.

Regarding EFL reading, J.T. defined that experience as interesting but sometimes frustrating as he does not understand everything when reading. He said he does not like too much reading in English because there are many words whose meaning and pronunciation are unknown to him. Those were his final words in this initial interview.

#### Summary of Roy's initial interview

Roy is a restless fifteen-year-old teenager. He describes himself as a good person who can help his family and friends when necessary. Roy also said

*...yo soy extrovertido y amigable, pero impaciente y no muy responsable. Me encanta tocar mi guitarra porque me da paz y calma. Vivo en una casa muy grande con mi papá porque mi mamá murió cuando yo era bebé. Esta situación me aterra y me da ansiedad porque estoy convencido de que el fantasma de mi mamá vive en mi casa conmigo y me asusta. [...I am outgoing and friendly, but impatient and not too responsible. I love so much to play my guitar because it gives me peace and calm. I live in a big house with my father because my mother died when I was a baby. This situation scares me and makes me feel anxiety because I am convinced that my mother's ghost lives at home with me and frightens me].*

Due to this problem, Roy frequently sees the psychologist of that high school for therapy and counseling. On the other hand, Roy made it clear that he can be cheeky when he finds rude people who deserve to be treated like that because in that way he can get respect on behalf of his enemies. When being asked why he had enemies and who they were, he just said "look around you, everybody has enemies in his life because they are a necessary evil to grow up and mature." About his personal expectations for reading in Spanish, Roy told me he tries hard to understand and know the whole meaning of a text as exactly as possible. That is the reason why, he reads a text over and over until getting the core idea(s). He pointed out the importance of having good reading material to get good messages from them. This frank



teen had not had any former experiences reading self-help material either in Spanish or English.

Regarding EFL reading, Roy said it is fun as it lets students learn a new language. He also said that by practicing reading language students can get two benefits; on the one hand they can understand the authentic meaning authors want to convey much better, and on the other hand they can learn how to pay close attention to the whole process of reading in a new language while setting similarities when reading in their own mother tongue. In spite of enjoying the whole process of reading in EFL, Roy said he finds annoying the fact of having problems with the new vocabulary, a situation that compels him to look for new words in a bilingual dictionary constantly.

To sum up these results regarding the two first research questions about what student participants perceive as their social and emotional needs and about the perceptions of the EFL teacher-researcher as to the social and emotional needs of her teenaged students gotten from the preliminary examination of the problem by means of the initial interviews, it is possible to conclude that these teenagers mostly face problems that in spite of being quite common to their age, are being dealt with their unique personal sensitivity levels. Social, personal, interpersonal, and academic pressures aligned in the five major categories above mentioned make in most cases these teens experience a sense of inadequacy that prevents them from building their own coping skills for dealing with their current problems. This problematic situation is analyzed by Forgan and Gonzalez-DeHass (2004) in their research, in which they provide insight into these potential barriers of effective social skill interventions and suggest literature instruction is “an enjoyable academic activity, and it offers an ideal opportunity to teach social skills” (p. 2) given that it serves as an opportunity for connecting social skills with activities in the natural environment in which students find the skills meaningful.

Hence, when analyzing this entire situation, it seems to depend on different reasons. In the first place, these teenagers have to perform in environments where they can neither develop their concept of self nor increase their understanding of human behaviors. In the second place, these teens do not have a suitable way to relieve all that emotional and social pressure so that they can see and understand their problems are not unique to them. Finally, these teens are not given the opportunity to promote the development of emotional intelligence in such a way that allows them to integrate academics and social skills in a learning environment where support and counseling are necessary. These are the reasons why, self-help reading appears like a suitable pedagogical practice that may help learners understand how this misperception of situations, inappropriate behavior, social incompetence, failure cycles, and poor school outcomes may be overcome by encouraging them to enjoy selecting and reading books for social instruction, so that they can develop sympathy not only for characters in the books but also for others in real-life situation (Cartledge & Kiarie, 2001).

As regards these initial and individual interviews, the teacher-researcher wrote in her reflective journal that even though she knew these teens had some behavioral problems, she was surprised by their honest feelings when answering questions; in this respect she emphasized

Today was a long but enlightening day because I was given the opportunity to know my students in more personal ways. My goodness, I have almost forgotten how vehement adolescents could be! Some of them are tremendously sincere and want everybody to know and accept them that way. But there are other ones who try to disguise their fears, insecurities and real personalities with false stances or unkind words. I am clear about this; at a personal level my students face hard problems such as poor or inexistent respect among one another, lack of responsibility, low self-esteem, loneliness, etc. But as regards their attitudes towards EFL I am kind of glad;

some of my students do like learning this foreign language and there are other ones who feel they are not being given the chance to taste this delicious experience. All of them want to increase their EFL proficiency level. It was a nice surprise Andrea's enthusiasm for the sounds of the English language. We share that aspect in common.

Question 3: Usefulness of Bibliotherapy from Student Participants' Views / Question 4:

Bibliotherapy as a Way to Foster Student Participants' Self-Reflection and a Better

Understanding of Real-Life Challenges

The second set of research questions addressed the usefulness of bibliotherapy from student participants' point of views, and the third set of research questions addressed the way in which bibliotherapy fosters student participants' self-reflection and a better understanding of real-life challenges. These aspects were established by taking into account the sixteen classroom participatory observations with the respective field notes; teacher-researcher's reflective journals; and student participants' gestures, comments, responses, and activities carried out both inside and outside the classroom in line with the four main phases of every lesson plan carefully programmed for the self-help reading course for beginner level, which adopted a learning-centered approach and included three readings: *All the Good Things*, *An Insignificant Task*, and *A Step to Healing*. Detailed lesson plans of two class sessions are included in Appendix H. Hence, the phases included pre-reading questions, while reading story, post-reading questions, and student activity. The results of usefulness of bibliotherapy from student participants' views, and the results of bibliotherapy as a way to foster student participants' self-reflection and a better understanding of real-life challenges from classroom observations are as follows:

- During the first days of classes, students carried out group activities just with partners they were used to working with.

- From the beginning of the course, students' responses and cooperation to carry out activities inside the classroom were acceptable in most of the cases.
- In every opportunity they answered the questions and expressed their opinions about readings as thoughtfully as possible.
- There were some students who got confused with the term *honesty* and made some rude comments about their peers' opinions, ideas, or even English pronunciation when reading or speaking in that language.
- Respect was proclaimed as the official name of that EFL Self-help reading course, which created a safe environment for self-help reading process to take place.
- Most students showed interest in every one of the three selected readings as follows: *All the Good Things*, *An Insignificant Task*, and *A Step to Healing*.
- Once a full understanding of the reading materials was attained, it was obvious that student participants had experienced the three stages over the course of interacting with the self-help reading; that is, identification, catharsis, and insight/universalization.
- The first reading *All the Good Things* from the Series of Books *Chicken Soup for the Soul* was helpful and productive in many ways as it allowed students to develop their own opinions regarding behaviors or actions accomplished by the main character in her efforts to face her problems with her own students.
- Students employed adjectives such as important, appealing, amazing, realistic, sad, and emotive to describe that reading, which dealt with the topic of giving and receiving positive feedback during one's life, as well as with a sub-topic such as death.
- Most students agreed that the moral of that story was that the teacher was truly interested in helping her students respect one another, valuing the importance of

seeing good things in friends and partners, and having and preserving good and positive memories of them.

- Two students did not agree with that conclusion. So, as regards the sub-topic of death, Roy said that it was terrible and unfair as it took away the people one loves the most when least expected, while Kristen said that she did not think that friendship was such an important and durable value.
- The last activity for the first article required students to write a list with anonymous compliments to everyone else in the classroom by focusing on inner qualities such as humor, honesty, friendship, kindness, etc.
- By the time, students were asked to read the story number two; that is *An Insignificant Task* by Pedro Sacristan, the teacher-researcher had already begun to connect with them while building a true relationship of trust and respect.
- To describe reading number two, i.e. is *An Insignificant Task* by Pedro Sacristan, which dealt with the topic of responsibility, students employed adjectives such as important, good, necessary, and rewarding, but not so funny or entertaining in some cases.
- Initially, for most students the word responsibility implied an abstract concept that was not compatible with their age.
- By the end of that reading, some students became aware of how irresponsible they had been regarding their own EFL reading assignments, and started to do their late homework.
- The final reading was *A Step to Healing* from the Book *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul IV*, whose theme dealt with the hardest part of being a teenager.
- Students agreed that loneliness, stubbornness, sense of not belonging or fitting in anywhere, lack of respect and comprehension on behalf of parents and other adults,

sadness, not knowing who you really are, confusion, depression, and even suicide attempts were the hardest part of being a teenager.

- Students' final comments were that long and progressive depression, sadness, and loneliness are bad feelings that can trigger fatal consequences.
- They emphasized the importance of the support given by family, friends, teachers, and specialists in the area to overcome those problems.
- Themes about love, respect, and confidence to strengthen family ties were read and analyzed by means of the mid-term evaluations. Again, students' answers were honest and revealing.
- Most students reaffirmed their desire for freedom and independence, but eventually they could realize that only a family that stays together wins together in adversity.

As seen in these results, self-help reading material included in this EFL reading course was useful from student participants' stance and indeed fostered their self-reflection and a better understanding of real-life challenges as regards the way in which they were able to meet some of their own social and emotional problems and needs. To begin with, their initial reluctance to work with other partners was gradually overcome as the tension and suspicion among them was decreasing and confidence increasing. Then, the initially abstract concept of responsibility became more tangible inside the classroom; so all student participants were eager to accomplish inside activities and express aloud their opinions and new ways to solve the problems dealt with in the different articles. In the same way, the fact that respect was so valuable in that course was significant as it taught students how to be honest and tolerant to others' opinions leaving aside disrespectful and impolite behaviors or comments. For instance, Johanny's initial rude comments on her partners' opinions about different readings, such as *...es mejor estar callada y no decir tantas idioteces* [...it is better to be silent than to say idiocies], as well as Alex's pejorative words such as *...sólo los burros preguntan eso*

[...just foolish people ask that] to remark on his partners' low EFL proficiency level every time they had doubts about the meanings of some words or phrases. As regards this situation, the teacher-researcher wrote down about the importance of building an authentic relationship of respect and trust not only with her students, but also among them before the healing process of bibliotherapy took place. Her concern about this aspect is seen in the following extract of her reflective journal after the second class session.

I am worried because today some students almost insulted their partners due to their performance and comments in our class session. I need them to stop doing that because it is breaking the harmony in our classes that urgently need to go hand in hand with respect; it is not possible that some students made offensive comments on their partners' performance and then say they were just kidding. I need to find a way to help my students see positive aspects in their partners so that they can start feeling esteem and respect one another. I think I should prepare the next lesson plan so that my students read about validating and respecting one another.

Fortunately, after third class session, student participants could develop self-reflection about giving and receiving positive feedback from peers and their negative comments were notably decreasing to the extent that the classes progressed day by day. All this was conducive to building a safe and comfortable learning environment.

Discussions about reading materials were deeply productive and emotional as well. Hence, themes about respect, friendship, responsibility, family support, and suicide were covered in this EFL self-help reading course; so there were some cases in which students felt overwhelmed or surprised by the situations they had to deal with when reading the selected stories. In the same way, it is worthy to say that the rationale for reading about death as a sub-topic was simple: "death is a part of life"

(Nowak, K., 2007, p. 18). In this respect, Nilsen and Donelson (2009) wrote in their book *Literature for today's young adults*, that “teenagers urgently need books that speak with relevance and immediacy to their real lives and to their unique emotional, intellectual, and developmental needs” (p. 5).

So, students' initial impression when seeing reading material number one; that is, *All the Good Things* from the Series of Books *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, was of surprise. For them, that was the very first time they had to read such a long story, even though there were two pages. That is the reason why, that first reading was accomplished in three different class sessions. That procedure let free tensions of the student participants, who that way could go through the three stages of the self-help reading process without major problems while experiencing mutual understanding. Accordingly, by the end of reading number one most students had already developed their own problem-solving skills in the stage of insights/universalization (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1993; Gregory & Vessey, 2004; Sullivan & Strang, 2002; Olsen, 2007; Lowe, 2009), so that they concluded that people should behave in life how they would like to be remembered when they are not in this world anymore. From that conclusion, students such as Johanny, Roy, China, Alex, and Dan tried really hard to avoid making rude comments or practical jokes in every class session.

That renewed sense of respect and friendship was evident when students wrote individual lists with anonymous compliments to everyone else in the classroom. So, these teenagers were able to see and write positive adjectives to describe their partners. As a reward for that magnificent effort, the teacher-researcher wrote in her journal

These kids have done a wonderful job; they deserved to be motivated and rewarded for this reason. So, I am going to edit the anonymous lists and write individual letters emphasizing my students' qualities from their peers' views.



Those letters were printed on high quality and lasting paper and given to them at the end of the course, so that the student participants could keep them as a nice memory of their partners of the first year of high school (see Appendix I). The importance of these letters was so helpful that emotion and happiness were evident in every case.

Three letters deserved to be mentioned, however; that is Alex's and Roy's ones because they were the most troubled student participants in this research, and Kristen's one because her letter had the most explicit reaction of her partners towards this teenager. So, every letter beautifully printed included an extract from the book *El Delfín - Historia de un Soñador* [The Dolphin- Story of a Dreamer] by Sergio Bambarén. This extract was written both in English and Spanish as follows:

*Algunas cosas siempre serán más fuertes que el tiempo y la distancia, más profundas que los lenguajes y las costumbres. Como el hecho de seguir tus sueños, y aprender a ser tú mismo. Comparte con otros la magia que ellos han descubierto en ti.* [Some things will always be stronger than time and distance, deeper than languages and ways. Like following your dreams, and learning to be yourself. Sharing with others the magic they have found in you].

Accordingly, as regards Alex's initial reluctance to participate in this research and his rude comments on her partners' EFL proficiency level, as well as his refusal to do any homework, it is possible to say that this teen was pleasantly surprised by his letter, which included anonymous expressions on behalf of his partners such as: "He is a funny friend...I love him"; "He is cheerful and positive"; "He is respectful"; "He is a happy and joyful boy"; "He is my best friend in the whole world"; etc. Alex just could not believe those words; in this respect he said

*...profesora, no me había dado cuenta hasta ahora de que mi alegría era tan notoria para mis compañeros [...teacher, I had not realized until now that my joy was so evident to my partners].*

With these words, this teen was able to recognize that his hours in this classroom had not been boring or unproductive to him from the beginning of the EFL reading course. Similarly, with regard to Roy's initial rude position towards his classmates, some of whom he used to call "enemies," it is necessary to point how excited he was by his letter, given that it included compliments such as "He is kind and supportive"; "He is friendly"; "He is a shy guy with extraordinary feelings"; "He is an awesome friend"; etc. Roy was surprised because he could understand the meaning of some words by himself; however there were other ones such as supportive whose meaning was unknown by Roy. When he asked me what the word supportive meant in Spanish, I answered him *comprensivo*. After that he told me,

*Profesora, hay otras palabras que no entiendo, pero no voy a buscar su significado en mi diccionario directamente sino que voy a tratar de descubrir su significado por mí mismo para poder comprender bien todo lo que mis compañeros piensan de mí.*

[Teacher, there are other words whose meaning I do not know, but I am not going to look up their meanings in my dictionary directly, but I am going to guess meanings by myself to understand well all what my partners think about me].

Roy just could not stop laughing; he was absolutely excited by his partners' words.

Kristen's case was different. Her initial distrust and hard remarks about friendship were followed by more profound and real comments which showed her true feelings and thoughts. This was perceived by their peers, so much that Kristen was the one who got the most touching letter. Her partners wrote about her: "She is kind and genial"; "She is a good human being"; "She is affectionate towards her friends even though it does not seem to be true at

first sight. She is amazingly intelligent”; etc. Kristen made use of her sense of humor to recognize that she had changed her own vision of herself along with her partners when saying

*...estos chicos son más inteligentes de lo que creí. Profesora y ahora ¿quién es la chica rara? [...these guys are smarter than I thought they would be. Teacher and now who is the weird girl?]*

Regarding these letters, the teacher-researcher wishes to highlight her personal reflection about the reasons that led to the favorable reception of these letters by their students. In the first place, even though the letters were written at the end of the first story included in the EFL reading course whose main theme was friendship, this activity occurred in the third week of the project; that is, when students had already spent three different class sessions reading the story *All The Good Things*. In the second place, it is worthwhile to emphasize that by that time, the student participants had already had the opportunity to spend time with each other for more than 20 days not only inside but also outside the classroom. Therefore, based on this reasoning, the teacher-researcher could realize that during those days her students had begun to treat one another differently, from a new and authentic perspective of respect and tolerance for their personalities and individualities. It is obvious then, that during that time, the student participants had begun to know one another better and feel more sincere friendship ties. From the teacher-researcher’s viewpoint this is one of the most tangible evidence of the healing power of reading, above all in a time as difficult as adolescence.

Self-help reading also placed the teacher-researcher in a suitable position to handle with valuable issues facilitating and guiding group discussion in which the student participants could come to positive decisions by engaging themselves in the different themes in which the main characters of the stories took part (Nowak, 2007). Hence, the teacher-researcher emphasized on her reflective journal how much her students needed right guidance and

support in this respect. A good example of this group guided discussions is seen in the story number two of this reading course titled *An Insignificant Task*. From this reading, students were expected to use their own knowledge and experience to understand the authentic meaning of responsibility. Once the teacher-researcher was sure that each student was able to understand the text and as a matter of assessment, she asked her students to work in two groups, so that they could answer some post-reading questions. In this respect, question number one deserves to be mentioned because it gave student participants opportunity to self-reflect on their own behavior and use their personal problem-solving strategies when dealing with the problem of lack of responsibility. The question is as follows: (1) If you were the main character of the story, would you have done the same as her or not? Explain your answer.

Dan's initial and informal answer to this question was honest as always and said

*...yo sé que yo no hubiera cuidado a mi hormiguita, se me hubiera muerto el mismo día en que el teacher me la dio* [...I know I would not have taken care of my little ant, it would have died the very first day when the teacher gave it to me].

Amazingly, it was Johanny who replied and admonished him when she said

*...sólo piensa que no hubiera sido una hormiguita sino alguien importante para ti, ¿habrías actuado igual?* [...just think that it would not have been a little ant but someone really important to you, would you have done the same?]

Then, Luna added

*...y si fuera tu propia mascota, alguien quien depende de ti para todo para vivir...*[...and if it were your own pet, someone who depends on you for everything for being alive...].

After these questions, a visibly more serious Dan said

*..bueno es que no lo había considerado desde ese punto de vista...* [...well, it is just that I have not regarded it from that viewpoint].

At that right moment J.T. told him

*...por eso debes pensar bien antes de actuar, tú deberías ser responsable hasta de guardar un secreto...*[...for that reason you have to think carefully before acting, you should be responsible even from keeping a secret].

As a result of this delicious interchange among student participants, the rest of this second reading was accomplished in a more familiar reading environment. Students just loved reading it and sharing their personal opinions while drinking chocolate, yogurt, or fruit juices that the teacher-researcher gave them at the beginning of each reading session. An atmosphere of quiet and safety was clearly developing inside the classroom. In this sense, the teacher-researcher wrote down in her reflective journal

*...without a doubt the usefulness of this story has been more than evident because students who until now have not done any homework have begun to fulfill some of their obligations. Dan, Chuck, El Barto, China, Luna, and Johanny, I am so happy for you guys. Thank goodness for this positive change in their lives!*

Regardless of these positive attitudes and more responsible behaviors, all the students in the classroom agreed that J.T. was the most responsible of them all. That was true in every sense; that lovely teen was the only student who accomplished every one of the outside assignments programmed for this reading course with human and academic excellence. His sense of respect and responsibility was only exceeded by his modesty. On the other hand, it is necessary to say that there were students such as Roy, who just accomplished one of the outside assignments included in that EFL self-help reading course, i.e. his oral presentation, and Alex, who insistently refused to do any of the outside activities. He constantly made

excuses to justify that behavior by telling me that he was doing well in his activities accomplished inside the classroom so that the outside ones were unnecessary.

Without a doubt the final reading, *A Step to Healing* from the Book *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul IV* had a deep effect on student participants' perceptions about the hardest part of being teenagers. The stage of identification was valuable in this sense. They were shocked by the theme of suicide attempts as way to solve problems. In particular, Kristen was really surprised by the way in which that story approached her own case so that she could relate to events that unfold in the story that let her feel and develop emotional ties to the main character. Once she understood the purpose of that reading, she expressed freely that having the support of one's family was essential to overcome hard situations like that. Other student participants concluded that in those situations, teens also need the support given by mental health professionals because they help people realize suicide is not a viable solution to a temporary problem. Their logic and maturity in reaching that conclusion was a soothing balm for the teacher-researcher. Without a doubt, student participants' awareness of the problems of other people was enhanced through the use of this self-help reading story (Lowe, 2009).

In her reflective journal the teacher-researcher wrote down about her own surprise given that the day after that class, Kristen's mother came to the classroom with her daughter and even though she did not ask to talk to her, she stared at the teacher with gratitude and affection. About this situation Kristen said "my mother just wanted to meet you teacher." It was inevitable that the teacher-researcher remembered that the relationship between Kristen and her mother did not used to be so good; hopefully the self-help reading course could have begun to change that situation in positive ways.

Similarly, themes of family ties were dealt with in the mid-term evaluations. Again, student participants' answers were honest and revealing. Students such as Andrea, Luna, El

Barto, and Dan said that when problems emerge in the family they prefer to be silent before saying offensive words that they may regret later. In Dan's words

*...preferiría morderme la lengua antes que insultar a mis padres o hermanos. [...I would prefer to bite my tongue before insulting my parents or siblings].*

So, students concluded that love and respect must be cherished by all the family members. In general, from these classroom observations it is evident how with guidance and support, teens can go through these difficult stages in their lives. In line with Nilsen and Donelson's words (2009), "by acquainting readers with the glorious varieties of the human experience, young adult literature invests young hearts and minds with tolerance, understanding, empathy, acceptance, compassion, kindness, and more" (p. 25). Accordingly, as the course was developing, student participants' behavior and responses were more open and frank. They were truly interested in finding ways to solve their current individual problems and were trying hard in every reading session to reach that internal and personal goal. Chuck's words summarize this aspect when saying that "these EFL reading classes are not as the traditional ones," so that he thought of them "as special moments to reflect about daily facts." Andrea used the term "light in my life" to define those reading sessions.

According to Forrest (1998) "It has been recognized for some time that the most widespread use of literature for help with mental growth and development is with children and adolescents" (p. 8). Results gotten from these classroom observations confirm the veracity of these words. It can be seen then that even though the path to be followed for teens in order to overcome all the limitations and problems they may encounter in their life lasts as long as life itself; it is possible to find counseling and support on self-help reading given that it appears as an outstanding and potential light that can help them set on the right path to make the most suitable and safest decisions. Themes included in this self-help EFL course undoubtedly provided students with the insights offered through literature to help them discover who they

really are and how important the presence and support of parents, siblings, relatives, friends, and teachers is in every sense.

Effective reading learning process is not limited to activities done in the classroom. Hence, another measure of usefulness of bibliotherapy to foster student participants' self-reflection and a better understanding of real-life were the three double-entry journals that student participants had to write as homework at the end of every reading. Regarding the awesome sensitivity and honesty shown by some student participants when doing those tasks, it is worthy to include the positive results gotten from them (see Table 3).



Table 3

*Usefulness of Bibliotherapy from Student Participants' Views / Bibliotherapy as a Way to Foster Student Participants' Self-Reflection and a Better Understanding of Real-Life Challenges from Double-Entry Journals Responses*

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1. Most student participants wrote two out of three double-entry journals in response to the readings accomplished inside the classroom.
  2. In every case they could personalize their reaction with personal experiences and offered advice on the problem presented in the different readings.
  3. From the reading "*All the Good Things*" J.T. wrote in his double-entry journal that "there are special people, moments, and things in life that deserve to be valued forever."
  4. From the reading "*All the Good Things*" Andrea wrote "friendship is a rewarding and lifelong value."
  5. From the reading "*All the Good Things*" Luna wrote "I learned how to value me [myself]".
  6. From the reading "*An Insignificant Task*" El Barto wrote "the importance of your tasks is not determined by its size, but by the responsibility and effort to accomplish it."
  7. From the reading "*An Insignificant Task*" China agreed when writing that "there are not really insignificant tasks" because each implies a personal commitment to be fulfilled.
  8. From the reading "*A Step to Healing*" Kristen wrote "many people who want [to] die because they're afraid."
  9. From the reading "*A Step to Healing*" Johanny wrote "parents and family give support."
  10. From the reading "*A Step to Healing*" Chuck wrote "friends are important to overcome hopelenseses [hopelessness]."
  11. Alex and Roy did not write any double-entry journal.
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As Table 3 clearly indicates, most student participants demonstrated their ability to translate the themes presented in reading into real situations by integrating past experiences and evaluation as evidence of well thought out appraisal of information presented in readings. In the same way, these outcomes illustrate they were truly involved with the material they had to read and analyze by giving more insightful and honest reactions and interpretations. A good example of this situation is found in Dan's responses and actions after reading the second story of the self-help reading course "*An Insignificant Task*". In his double-entry journal, Dan's personal opinion was: "We must demonstrate interest for the task that they assign us and fulfilling responsibility." He had finally realized the importance of applying responsibility in his life, as he worked hard to catch up with his first double-entry journal, in which he expressed that "good teachers make good students in every sense."

Kristen's personal opinion from reading number three "*A Step to Healing*" was the result of identifying her own problem to the main character's one. In this aspect she wrote: "These situations are experienced by so many people and there must be listened to, understood and love[d] to get out of the problem." She gave an answer to this problem when saying that "...only defeating the fear people discover the problem had solution." It was evident that for her, that had been an important step in her recovery and counseling process.

Chuck and Johanny's most emotive reactions were given in response to this same reading. So, in Chuck's view "each one of the people should help of the rest, but always to the person in that confide us." In this way, he was expressing the strength of his solidarity and loyalty as a compassionate human being. Johanny's view also gave importance to the fact of having someone to trust, but she specifically pointed out "parents are confident for good and bad things of children" because they are always there to help them when it is most necessary.

Luna's deepest feelings were shown in her double-entry journal in response to reading number one "*All the Good Things*" in which she said "I learned how to appreciate and value me [myself] and my friends" Andrea agreed with Luna in her opinion about this reading and added a new aspect "good attitudes give experience" to make right decisions when hard times come in life. J.T's ideas complement this view when saying that "people treasure good friends and remember the[m] forever."

China's deepest thoughts were seen in her double-entry in response to reading number two; hence she pointed out "nothing in the life is insignificant, only that the people don't see that until is to [too] late." El Barto's reaction to this same reading is convincing when he said that "thanks to little tasks one begin to ripen." By all means, these reactions were well focused and reflected the authentic meaning of the reading.

In general, it is possible to say that these positive results gotten from the double-entry journal assignments were valuable as they provided student participants with authentic purposes for reading and writing; hence they truly needed to express their personal reactions as well as possible ways to solve different problems or challenges in real life. In addition, when writing their double-entry journals, the student participants were not constrained by time factors; on the contrary they had enough time to write them with the peace and quietness needed to reach deep thoughts and develop self-awareness. In her reflective journal, the teacher-researcher wrote down about the importance of double-entry journals as they offered student feedback to her that she would be unlikely to receive in any other way. In the same way, she agrees with Forrest (1998) as regards that "The benefits derived from reading are far too intangible to chart, but, there are enough facts to support the theories of those who believe there is a definite therapeutic agent in the library" (p. 5).

Some explanations are possible in this respect. In the first place, double-entry journals let student participants improve their comprehension of the different themes included in the

selected reading materials by activating their prior knowledge and connecting it with their present feelings, which is an imperative step when reading self-help material. In the second place, they promoted interactive learning that made it possible the student participants be capable once again to identify with the main characters and situations of the different stories by writing their own responses and giving their own ways to solve problems. This aspect made students' deeper insights, emotions, and feelings appear as well as personal methods of problem solving and coping skills. In the third place, they provided a flexible place for informal and independent writing to take place as a way to encourage student participants' motivation and engagement with the different themes. Finally, they were useful because helped student participants become more reflective and critical thinkers, who had authentic and thoughtful views that supported their opinions and responses in every sense.

As regards another measurement of the usefulness of self-help reading as a way to foster self-reflection and a better understanding of real-life challenges, and by following Bundrick's final guideline (2009), which explains that when selecting themes in self-help reading material, student participants need to be given the opportunity to choose their own ones in line with their personal interests and needs. It is necessary to say that during this self-help EFL reading course, individual oral presentations gave students that chance and allowed them to express their opinions about peer's oral presentations, too.

Therefore, results of every oral presentation were triangulated among the formative and summative assessments given by the EFL teacher, the teacher-researcher, and peer's final comments. Students' motivation and commitment to perform that assignment better was encouraged by awarding individual prizes to the best three oral presentations. About the positive results gotten from them, it is necessary to consider this aspect in order to verify the usefulness of self-help reading as a psychological tool that helped the student participants

foster self-reflection and a better understanding of real-life problems and needs from a more mature perspective (see Table 4).

Table 4

*Usefulness of Bibliotherapy from Student Participants' Views / Bibliotherapy as a Way to Foster Student Participants' Self-Reflection and a Better Understanding of Real-Life Challenges from Themes Selected To Develop and Deliver Individual Oral Presentations*

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1. Andrea's oral presentation theme was how lack of responsibility affects your life.
  2. China's oral presentation theme was friendship.
  3. Johanny's oral presentation theme was generosity to improve the world.
  4. Kristen's oral presentation was how constancy helps you reach your goals.
  5. Luna's oral presentation theme was sensitivity to cure the world.
  6. Chuck's oral presentation theme was how young people can be affected by the misuse of Technology of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).
  7. Dan's oral presentation theme was the importance of love in your life.
  8. El Barto's oral presentation theme was honesty above all.
  9. J.T.'s oral presentation theme was the importance of self-awareness in teenagers.
  10. Roy's oral presentation theme was respect as a core value.
  11. Alex neither selected any theme nor developed his oral presentation.
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Table 4 clearly indicates that out of eleven student participants, ten developed self-reflection and a better understanding of their social and emotional needs and problems, and planned their individual oral presentations on time in line with the topic they were interested in. In the same way, these teens worked hard to build upon their enthusiasm and made each

one of the oral presentations become interesting, funny, and emotive. They were asked to draw individual oral presentations as mind maps (bubble diagrams) from the web [www.mindmeister.com](http://www.mindmeister.com), submit the links in teacher's mail, and present them inside the classroom. However, due to serious electricity problems this country was going through at that time, most students had also to work on further visual aids using colorful and bright cards and flip charts in order to deliver their oral presentations. They spoke in a mixture of English and Spanish to do that.

Accordingly, Andrea was truly concerned on how irresponsibility may affect one person's life. She used concrete examples to visualize that problematic situation and openly expressed her concern for all those students who do not do homework because "they prefer their personal interest and fun to obligations." She said that at her house everybody has well defined tasks. She also said that the lack of responsibility on behalf of certain teens is the source of unwanted pregnancy with terrible consequences for all. Her words and remarks were absolutely mature and sincere.

China's theme was that of friendship at school, at home, and in the community in general. She said friendship as a value is taught at home by parents, so that one can be a true friend of his/her parents by telling them good and bad things that happen in one's life. For China, friendship with friends at school and community is built every day, when you are always there to support them when needed. Her example was quite clear, she openly said "I had helped some friends in my classroom" to clarify doubts about certain tasks of this self-help EFL reading course. Finally, China remarked the importance of building authentic friendship with the environment to take care of our beloved planet. Her vision of friendship was global and ecological.

Johanny's selected theme was generosity as a way to improve the world. She employed three verbs to define generosity, i.e. "share, help, and give." She said it is necessary to be

generous to live better. According to her, generosity is what makes you “share with the brothers, don’t fight with them, to help them with the things that they don’t understand.” She said a daughter can be generous with her parents when she tries not to get herself into problems so that they do not worry about her. Finally, she pointed out there were some cases in which she has had to give money to her friends at school because “they do not have and need to eat.” For her, the world could become a better place to live in if more generous people were there.

Kristen’s oral presentation emphasized the need of constancy to help people reach their goals. She said every single day she makes use of constancy to try to build a better place to live in, to be responsible with her duties at home and school and reach academic excellence, and mainly “to try to overcome all those ghosts” that prevented her from being free. She believes some people in our Ecuadorian history became important because they never gave up and every single day worked hard with a goal in their minds and souls. Kristen concluded by saying that constancy is fundamental to get “all your dreams come true.”

Luna’s feelings were openly exposed by her theme about sensitivity to cure the world. This romantic girl used four words to talk about sensitivity, i.e. “feelings, motivation, dedication, and comprehension.” She truly believes feelings of love and loyalty motivate you to comprehend better others’ problems; she added that is the reason why “the mother *se dedican a* [are devoted to] her children” and she “*cuida a* [takes care] the grandparents.” For this lovely girl, sensitivity goes beyond personal interests to reach mutual goals.

Chuck’s main theme was how teens can be affected by the misuse of ICT. He was worried about children and teenagers who can be victims of deceptions, kidnapping, corruption, or trafficking given that there is so much technology without parental guidance and support. He thinks “in Ecuador that situation happens frequently”, but the lack of communication prevents parents from detecting it. He said, “That is ironic” because ICT lets people around

the world communicate with each other in seconds. So, he suggested that people should improve “close communications” at home, school, and workplace. He concluded by saying that “ICT is good for everybody” but children and immature or naive teens will always need teacher and parental guidance.

Dan’s oral presentation theme was the importance of love in your life. For this teen, “the love” is an easy feeling because it grows from the bottom of one’s soul “towards your parents, siblings, friends, and pets.” He thinks love is “unconditional [unconditional], romantic, and fraternal,” so that it is the source of all the good things in the world. He showed concern about certain expressions or feelings that may “attack the love” among which he emphasized arrogance, rivalry, and enmity. Finally, he suggested people should “regar [nurture] the love” with a lot of esteem, respect, kindness, and generosity.

El Barto’s oral presentation dealt with the theme of honesty above all. He expressed his concern about adolescents and children that lie a lot to their parents and even to themselves to hide their mistakes and avoid accepting the consequences. He said that “honesty is a quality of well born people” because when you are honest “you live in peace with your soul.” Finally, he asked his partners and friends to be as honest as possible in every sense; that is, honest to tell the truth, honest to get money “for your work and *sudor de tu frente*” [by the sweat of your brow], and to respect the laws in your community.

J.T.’s oral presentation theme was the importance of self-awareness in teenagers. In J.T.’s words self-awareness makes “adolescents know, understand, and accept themselves better” creating emotional consciousness about who they really are. J.T. established key aspects of self-awareness in his oral presentation such as, assertiveness, social responsibility, empathy, optimism, happiness, and problem solving and emphasized how all these aspects help you identify feelings and emotions mainly when you have to make important decisions in your life that can affect others’ ones. J.T. remarked the way in which self-awareness is



“decisive to help you get a balanced and honest view of your own personality,” so that you can know how to overcome your own defects and increase virtues, no matter your personality. He concluded by saying that “self-awareness has an extra benefit” as it improves the personal ability to interact with others frankly and confidently. In his personal case, that was completely true.

Roy’s oral presentation was respect as a core value in your life. His oral presentation was quite different. In other words, he neither drew a mind map with the theme for his oral presentation, nor submitted the respective link in teacher’s mail. However, when being in the classroom he asked the teacher-researcher permission to draw his own mind map on the whiteboard because all his oral presentation was completely in his mind. His request was immediately accepted and his performance showed how true his words were. For Roy, respect was a feeling by which he was able to express admiration, understanding, interest, and deference toward everybody. As a practical example Roy said that respect is what makes the teacher (he meant me) ask us “May I erase the board” when the time allotted to do an activity is over and she needs to continue with the rest of the class, even though she can see we are not doing what we are supposed to do. Finally Roy said that important figures of our time such as “Gandhi and Mother Teresa used respect” as a key value to teach people how to become more tolerant toward others’ thoughts, ideas, or actions in pursuit of common welfare.

Unfortunately, Alex was reluctant again to select a theme in order to develop and deliver his oral presentation. He just said he had not had time to do it. About this situation, the teacher-researcher wrote down in her reflective journal

Alex’s unwillingness to do homework is really worrying. I will talk to him again; maybe he needs a new opportunity, a new motivation on behalf of me to do his oral presentation.

Regardless of this conversation between Alex and his EFL teacher, he still persisted in his refusal to work on his project.

To sum up the results regarding the usefulness of self-help reading for students as a way to foster their self-reflection and a better understanding of real-life challenges from themes selected for developing and delivering individual oral presentations, it can be seen how most student participants were able to talk about different values or life problems that had impacted them emotionally and had helped them go through hard times or situations in their lives. Hence, themes such as the lack of responsibility, generosity, friendship, constancy, sensitivity, correct use of ICT, love, honesty, self-awareness, and respect were seen, identified, and analyzed through the eyes and experience of these teenagers who amazingly could give the best of themselves in every case. In this respect, it is possible to say that the goals of this self-help reading course were reached as they allowed most student participants to provide information and insight about individual problems; stimulate discussion about problems; communicate values and attitudes from a more articulated perspective; create awareness that others have dealt with similar problems; and give solutions to problems (Pardeck, 1994).

Roy's case deserves a special mention. Even though he did not go through the process of submitting the linking with his mind map in line with his theme and preparing visual aids for his oral presentation in advance, he had a complete vision and knowledge of his theme about respect. He had devoted enough time to reflect on the importance of that value and had carried out some research to find current examples of important people who were known by practicing and living that value. He really wanted to deliver his oral presentation and be an active participant in that activity. His engagement and enthusiasm were evident in every moment. Without a doubt, that theme gave him insights to understand the true significance of living with respect in our world, so that he was able to make an internal analysis of his own

old behavior when dealing with people or situations in which it was not acceptable as it should be. At this point, the teacher-researcher regards it is essential to make some connections between Roy's overall performance in his oral presentation and his words in his initial interview. It is clear that his rude behavior and manners to get acceptance and respect on behalf of his classmates as well as his way to refer to some of them as "enemies" had experienced a notable change, which reflected his careful and more mature thoughts to try to overcome those old habits. In other words, he had gone through the process of identifying his lack of respect as a problem and had found a new way to overcome that old habit and replace it with a new and respectful one. Fortunately, for this teen, attempts at getting respect from the group through rudeness and an attitude of superiority were abandoned.

In contrast, Alex' situation is more complex. On the one hand, there was a good student inside the classroom with good performance and achievement. On the other hand, there was his reluctance to do outside activities and homework; situation that was really worrying. In order to solve it, the teacher-researcher held a private meeting with Alex in which he said that in his opinion all the outside assignments were too easy and simple to be done. In spite of his words, Alex seemed to be embarrassed and anxious. It was clear for the teacher-researcher that Alex's apparent lack of enthusiasm to do homework and extra assignments disguised his true feelings; he felt overwhelmed by his own expectations about being the best student in his EFL class; situation that was getting worse and worse every day. It was necessary then, to find a new way to release that pressure on Alex's mind and reassure him by telling him that he was free to adapt homework and outside assignments and make them as complex as he wanted to or even create his own ones. Alex was also told that his assignments would be quite welcome when he was ready to do them. This student agreed with that solution; however he did not fulfill his word and did not do any homework.

As regards the results of the three best oral presentations and once information was triangulated it was concluded that J.T, Chuck, and Kristen's oral presentations were the most completely developed and delivered ones. However, there were only two places: J.T.'s oral presentation with the first place, and Chuck and Kristen's with the second place respectively. They were awarded three self-help books as follows: for the first place the book *La Brújula del Alma* [Your Soul's Compass] by Deepak Chopra, and for the second places two books titled *El Espejo del Alma* [The Mirror of the Soul] by Walter Dresel. Regarding these books, two aspects deserved to be mentioned: (1) given the impossibility of finding and buying self-help books in English in this city, the teacher-researcher considered it suitable to award students with these books in Spanish; and (2) one more value that stood out in that activity was the lack of selfishness on behalf of these eleven teens that gave honest and good comments on their peer's presentations and showed happiness for the winners.

Different explanations are possible for these positive results gotten from most student participants. In the first place, these teenagers were given the chance to choose, search, and learn about topics of interest to them in a supportive and encouraging environment where their choices and words were valued and respected above all. Hence, they gained more confidence to talk about their interests and needs. Then, they learned how to be more tolerant of others' ideas and to appreciate their value. It was noticeable that in that classroom, most students had begun to integrate the academic and social skills that gradually helped them become productive, assertive, and respectful, while improving their problem-solving skills (Cartledge & Kiarie, 2001).

Finally, the results from the final interviews are also included as key aspects to establish the helpfulness of self-help reading (see Table 5).

Table 5

*Usefulness of Bibliotherapy from Student Participants' Views / Bibliotherapy as a Way to Foster Student Participants' Self-Reflection and a Better Understanding of Real-Life Challenges from Final Interview Responses*

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1. Andrea said self-help reading in English was “authentic, reflective, interesting, and productive.”
  2. China said self-help reading in English was “good and effective to learn a lot.”
  3. Johanny said self-help reading in English was “good and full of values.”
  4. Kristen said self-help reading in English was “helpful, psychological, and reflective.”
  5. Luna said self-help reading in English was “nice and beautiful” in every sense.
  6. Alex said self-help reading in English was “pretty good and interactive.”
  7. Chuck said self-help reading in English was “good, rewarding, and *esclarecedor* [enlightening].”
  8. Dan said self-help reading in English was “easy and fun.”
  9. El Barto said self-help reading in English was “new, good, and entertaining”
  10. J.T. said self-help reading in English was “important, necessary, good, and reflective.”
  11. Roy said self-help reading in English was “interesting, fun, and *profunda* [deep].”
- 

Overall, the student participants used positive words to describe the usefulness of bibliotherapy from their personal viewpoints as a way to foster their self-reflection and a better understanding of real-life challenges. Hence, adjectives such as good, reflective, and

fun were the most frequently used ones to describe the experience of reading self-help material in English. These results indicate that student participants experienced an authentic sense of helpfulness from the selected self-help reading materials as they reflected their real-life challenges and problems (Cartledge & Kiarie, 2001). Given the scope and purpose of this study, student participants' answers and personal reflections are included individually.

Andrea thought her self-help reading class materials were “authentic, reflective, interesting, and productive” as they made her reflect a lot about her own behavior and the ways in which it affects her partners and sisters' too. Among the values she got from the selected materials she stressed “generosity, respect, and responsibility” since now she tries “to practice them more consciously both at home and school.” She also said

*...estas lecturas y las presentaciones orales me han dado la oportunidad de conocer mejor a mis compañeros [...these readings as well as the oral presentations have given me the chance to know my partners better].*

Andrea is also aware some of her partners share similar problems with her, which is the reason why she tries not to make judgments about them when they have bad days. In spite of this, she feels that a sense of camaraderie is present not only inside but also outside her classroom. Finally, Andrea does believe self-help reading material included in this course helped her become reflective and overcome some learning obstacles. Hence, she says

*...actualmente puedo entender un poquito más cuando leo en inglés [...currently I can understand a little more when reading in English].*

She is convinced that here lies the usefulness of self-help reading for her to meet some social and emotional problems and needs.

China's vision about the helpfulness of self-help reading in EFL embraced two aspects: how “good” the readings were and how “effective” they were for learning a lot

regarding values such as an authentic friendship, free from envy and full of generosity and love. However, she says

*...principalmente he aprendido acerca de la importancia de la responsabilidad en mi vida diaria y en las consecuencias de no serlo. [..I have mostly learned about the importance of responsibility in my daily life and in the consequences of not being like that].*

China regards the reading materials and themes included in her reading course helped her overcome some personal problems regarding her view of herself as an EFL student. Now, she feels her knowledge of this foreign language is quite similar to her partners', above all because she can understand when she reads given that her EFL vocabulary and pronunciation have improved a lot. Hence, she told me:

*...mis compañeros ya no tendrán razón para reírse de mí por mi bajo nivel de inglés. Siento que me he quitado una gran presión de mis hombros. [...my partners will not have reasons to laugh at me for my low proficiency in EFL. I feel a great pressure has been taken off my shoulders].*

Johanny said self-help reading materials were “good and full of values.” The good aspects of those readings were that they were suitable to some of her problems and needs. Hence she thinks she learned not only EFL reading but also values. In her own words

*...uno aprende a cómo comportarse mejor en todo sentido, principalmente con los compañeros en el colegio [one learns how to behave better in every sense, mainly with partners at school].*

As regards her situation with the subject of EFL, Johanny pointed out how much her vocabulary had improved as well as her pronunciation and understanding when reading without using translators. For her, that course was successful due to the “clear explanations and patience” shown by the teacher-researcher. Finally, she says

*...usaré este mismo método para aprender chino* [... I will employ this same approach to learning Chino Mandarin].

Kristen's words to define self-help reading in EFL were "helpful, psychological, and reflective." For her the most important value she got from this course was constancy to "keep walking in your life no matter problems or difficult times." For her, the reading "*A Step to Healing*" was the most important of all as it was tremendously emotive and psychological in many ways. She said that

*...esta historia me permitió compartir emociones similares con el personaje principal de la historia* [this story let me share similar emotions with the main character in the story].

Hence, reflection was inevitable and the comparison intense. She also said she shared that experience with her mom; a situation that strengthened the relationship between them. As regards the subject of EFL, Kristen remarked how much her pronunciation, vocabulary, understanding, and speaking skills had improved during that course. She concluded by saying "I think all that [what] we learned in this course is very help [helpful] for us."

Luna defined self-help reading in English as a "nice and beautiful" experience in every sense. She emphasized the most important value she got from the readings included in her course was the recurrent importance of responsibility as a main value to be cherished "during all your life." As regards her social and emotional problems and needs, Luna says

*...este curso me ayudó mucho porque me permitió cambiar mi visión del mundo. Ahora ya no me siento sola y soy capaz de apreciar el valor de la gente que me ama por mi esencia y personalidad* [...this course helped me a lot because it permitted me to change my vision of the world. Now I do not feel lonely anymore and I am able to appreciate the value of the people who really love me for my essence and personality].

As regards her sense of inadequacy as an EFL student, she thinks that she has been



able to overcome that “ugly feeling” as she can “read, understand, and reason readings” in that language more easily. She thinks her new and improved vocabulary has been decisive for her success.

Alex defined self-help reading in EFL as “a pretty good and interactive learning way.” He emphasized how much he liked the reading materials included in the reading course because “... most of English courses just use homework but don’t have fun or interactive material and activities” to be accomplished in the classroom. He thinks he learned one value in particular, the value of being “grateful” for all the things he has. So, he recognizes how lucky he is for having his family and his stuff “that other people are not able to have.” He feels he was helped by the readings included in this course to think that way because “before this EFL class I wasn’t that way.” As regards the usefulness of self-help reading to improve his EFL proficiency, Alex said that “before these classes I used to read just in my mind, but I did not use to talk with others about it.” He feels this course has fostered his desire for reading aloud and exchanging opinions with everybody. He concluded by saying that not only his reading comprehension but also his vocabulary, grammar, listening and speaking skills had improved considerably.

Chuck defined self-help reading in EFL as a “good, rewarding, and *esclarecedor* [enlightening]” learning practice. For him, the most important value gotten from these readings is the “importance of fostering responsibility among young people” as it is a value that it is not as cherished by teens. For this student, the usefulness of these readings is evident because

*...ellas me dieron una visión diferente para valorar a las personas y las situaciones por las que atraviesan...Estas ideas están siempre en mi mente y me muestran el camino a seguir para vencer toda clase de problemas. [...they gave me a new vision to value people and the situations they are going through...These ideas are always in*

my mind and show me the right way to follow in order to overcome different kinds of problems].

As regards his feelings about the usefulness of self-help reading to improve his reading skills he emphatically said: “Even me [I] can see my own progress when reading, speaking, and understanding in EFL.” He said he is aware he has learned many new words that make the process of reading and understanding in EFL “easier and funnier” [more enjoyable]. For this teen, the best aspect of this course was the fact of linking the internet activity with values of self-help reading.

Dan defined self-help reading as an “easy and fun” way of learning values and EFL. For this teen, the initial experience when reading self-help material was “difficult” and overwhelming, but then it became easier and more enjoyable to the extent to which practice and interest were growing every day. Dan feels he was helped by these readings to overcome his problems with his lack of responsibility. In this respect, he says “I was irresponsible I know that, but now I am responsible.” He also says

*...de esta forma espero poder crecer y madurar de una forma más correcta* [this way I expect to grow up and mature more correctly].

Dan also emphasized the importance of “sincerity” but now he added that it needs to be the best friend of “the respect.” As regards the helpfulness of these readings as a way to improve his learning problems in EFL, he said before he did not enjoy his EFL classes because he used to understand nothing, but now he really “wants to reading [read] in English” because he feels more secure when doing it and because he has discovered that by means of reading in this foreign language he has learned much more than words and vocabulary, he has learned a new life style.

El Barto defined self-help reading in English as a “good, new, and entertaining” experience. According to him, this experience has been new in every sense. That was the

very first time he had had the chance of reading self-help material in a foreign language. So, he emphasizes that he has mainly learned values of respect, honesty, and friendship. He says he is always practicing and reflecting on them because “I don’t want to be a bad person.”

By means of this course, he has been able to rediscover \the above mentioned values to apply them in all his actions for the rest of his life. He thinks the helpfulness of the self-help reading materials as regards his reading skills in EFL has been positive too. So, he says

*...ya puedo leer más rápido y entender mucho mejor; así que ya no me da vergüenza cuando leo en inglés en voz alta [...I can read faster and can understand much better; therefore, I am not ashamed anymore when reading aloud in EFL].*

He concluded by saying that he would like to use all this new knowledge and values not only here in Ecuador, but also abroad when he has the chance of living and studying in a foreign country.

J.T. defined self-help reading as “important, necessary, good, and reflective.” He thinks the helpfulness of these readings lies in the fact that they show authentic people going through authentic and painful situations and wise ways to deal with them. For J.T. all the values learned in this course are included in a single one; i.e. self-awareness. According to him, this value lets you know “when you are doing bad things” so that it also gives you

*...la oportunidad de reflexionar en tus errores y corregirlos para no herirte o herir a los demás [the opportunity to reflect on your errors and correct them to avoid hurting yourself or other people].*

J.T. feels that this course has been helpful in many ways, mainly regarding how to know and recognize others’ feelings. In J.T.’s words people need to be aware that we “live in a single world,” so it is important “to understand and help much more people.” In line with the helpfulness of self-help reading in the subject of EFL, J.T. thinks both his knowledge about new vocabulary and self-confidence have increased “notoriously” [notably]. He feels

his experience when reading in EFL is becoming more and more interesting every single day. Without a doubt, this final interview with a more talkative J.T. was more productive and rewarding.

Roy defined self-help reading in English as an “interesting, fun, and *profunda* [deep].” learning practice. According to him, he could get some important values from the self-help reading materials such as respect, friendship, and responsibility; values that he is trying to apply in his daily life as much as possible. He emphasized

*...lo mejor de estar en este curso fueron las discusiones después de las lecturas y las presentaciones orales porque nos dieron a todos la oportunidad de expresar nuestros pensamientos, preocupaciones y sentimientos [...the best of being in this course were the discussions after the readings and the oral presentations that allowed us the opportunity to express aloud our thoughts, concerns, and feelings].*

He admits he has reflected a lot about his former way of getting respect, but now he is aware he was going through a false path. For Roy, it is not possible to have true friends without respecting them as you want to be respected and treated. As regards the helpfulness of the self-help reading materials as a way to overcome EFL learning problems, Roy says

*...la lectura de auto-ayuda te da una forma profunda y reflexiva de aprender inglés que tú puedes relacionar las palabras y descubrir el significado de muchas de ellas sin usar un diccionario o traductor en muchas veces [...self-help reading gives you a deep and reflective way to learn English so that you can relate words and eventually discover meanings of new words without using a dictionary or translator many times].*

Roy remarked that point because during that course he had tried to guess meaning of many words from contexts as much as possible before his teacher gave him information about the new vocabulary, and that in some cases his guessing had been right. That situation had made him feel smarter and more productive.

It is possible to attribute this generalized sense of usefulness of bibliotherapy on behalf of student participants as a way to increase their self-reflection and a better understanding of their own problems and needs, because they were provided with reflective, deep, and authentic experiences of life found in the selected reading materials (Cartledge & Kiarie, 2001; Forgan & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2004). In most of the cases, values such as respect, responsibility, and friendship were the most cherished ones. As regards the self-help reading course itself, the student participants also agreed that it became easier and easier for them to carry out inside and outside activities as it was gradually progressing. For them, the self-help reading classes included enjoyable academic activities that let them increase not only their social, but also their learning skills. As a result, there were noticeable improvements as well in the area of EFL learning problems to the extent that the student participants started to read to get authentic and meaningful learning while increasing their motivation and enthusiasm.

Accordingly, when analyzing these final results, it is possible to notice that these students were able to recognize and value the fact that they were being taught not only EFL but also values intended to help them overcome the hard problems teens face every day. They could also recognize they were doing that by using a non-traditional approach which had the main purpose of increasing self-reflection and engagement to deal with realistic problems, so that they could develop the necessary problem solving skills that eventually allowed them to find viable ways to solve old problems or improper behaviors. Once again, it is worthy to say that all this was accomplished in a safe, respectful, and motivating learning environment.

Question 5: Is Bibliotherapy an Efficient Learning Practice that May Help EFL Learners Improve Their Reading Comprehension Skills?

The fifth research question addressed the efficacy of bibliotherapy as a learning practice that may help students improve their EFL reading comprehension skills. This efficiency was established in terms of their performance and scores gotten at the beginning and at the end of the course on individual reading comprehension and rate tests in English such as the EFL Reading Comprehension Starter Test 2 from Oxford Bookworms and the Reading and Comprehension Test (see Table 6).

Table 6

*Differences between Student participants' Initial and Final EFL Reading Comprehension Stages, Levels, and Rates*

Student	EFL Reading Comprehension Starter Test 2 from Oxford Bookworms / Stage		CEF Level		Reading and Comprehension Test Scores / 4		EFL Reading Rates / Average Words Per Minute	
	Initial	Final	Initial	Final	Initial	Final	Initial	Final
Andrea	CSSS	S	A1-B	A1-B	1,34	2,6	77,5	108,5
China	CSSS	S	A1-B	A1-B	1,7	2,8	108,5	124
Johanny	CSSS	S	A1-B	A1-B	1,6	2,8	77,5	124
Kristen	CSSS	S	A1-B	A1-B	3,15	3,8	170,5	201,5
Luna	CSSS	S	A1-B	A1-B	1,32	2,7	124	130
Alex	S	S1	A1-B	A1/A2-PI	3,1	3,5	139,5	155
Chuck	CSSS	S	A1-B	A1-B	2,3	3,3	124	139,5
Dan	CSSS	S	A1-B	A1-B	1,2	2,9	77,5	124
El Barto	CSSS	S	A1-B	A1-B	2,3	3,4	108,5	139,5
J.T.	CSSS	S	A1-B	A1-B	2,5	3,9	77,5	124
Roy	CSSS	S	A1-B	A1-B	2,4	2,7	124	139,5

*Note: Comic Strip Starter Stage: CSSS; Starter: S; Stage1: S1*

*CEF: Common European Framework: Beginner: A1-B; Pre-Intermediate: A1/A2-PI*

Table 6 illustrates how this self-help reading course in EFL had positive results in improving student participants' reading comprehension in spite of their individual learning needs. In this sense, the teacher-researcher wrote down in her journal "teaching slowly but

steadily is necessary for my students to know how to deal with life and EFL learning problems.”

Accordingly, outcomes reveal that there was a well-defined range of initial EFL proficiency reading, which in line with the EFL Reading Comprehension Starter Test 2 from Oxford Bookworms and with the Common European Framework corresponded to Comic Strip Starter Stage (CSSS) and A1-Beginner (A1-B) level respectively. Just Alex’s initial EFL reading comprehension proficiency was Starter Stage (S) corresponding to A1-Beginner (A1-B) level. These results were widely verified by the initial scores gotten by the student participants in the Reading and Comprehension Test from the book *Exploring Second Language Reading* (Anderson, 1999). This test was rated on four points, being the lowest score 1.2 and the highest 3.4 with a Mean of 2.11. Additionally, initial results on individual EFL reading rates were given by calculating the average words per minute of every student-participant. In this aspect, the lowest and more recurrent reading rate was 77.5 words per minute, while the highest reading rate was 170.5 words per minute.

By the end of the course, all student participants improved their reading comprehension stage and level and were placed in the immediate higher ones, thanks to the increasing of their reading comprehension skills. So, out of eleven student participants, ten reached the Starter Stage corresponding to the A1-Beginner level. Just Alex reached the Stage 1 corresponding to the Pre-Intermediate A1/A2 level. Once more, these results were confirmed by the final scores gotten by the student participants in the Reading and Comprehension Test (Anderson, 1999), being the lowest score 2.6 and the highest score 3.9 with a Mean of 3.13. Furthermore, final EFL reading rates were also established with a noticeable increment per student, so that the lowest and most recurrent reading rate was 124 words per minute, while the highest reading rate was 201.5 words per minute.

This notable improvement on the student participants' EFL reading comprehension skills was accomplished slowly but steadily by means of introducing specific strategies and techniques that students learned and practiced during this EFL beginner self-help reading course. Hence, in terms of the strategies they learned to get a better understanding when reading in EFL, it is worth noting that self-reflection can be a key aspect for reading self-help material by following closely the teaching framework for self-help reading and problem solving with its four stages; that is, pre-reading; guided reading; post-reading discussion; and problem-solving / reinforcement activity (Forgan, 2002). That is why, self-reflection played a major role in helping student participants become active, reflective, analytical, and responsible participant readers.

Then, it deserves to be mentioned how by means of the use of specific reading techniques such as underlining main ideas, taking useful notes as and when necessary, summarizing paragraphs in student participants' own words, keeping individual vocabulary notebooks with drawings updated, writing double-entry journals, using examples to illustrate their points, taking part in group discussions, among others, the student participants could identify with the main characters' problems or situations so that they became engaged in finding new ways to solve them. By reading self-help material from this perspective, they could realize how active and interactive reading as a process is and were able to monitor their own progress while enjoying the whole reading process. Student participants' progress was also notable in their vocabulary, grammar, and conversation skills.

All student participants were given the opportunity to see, compare, and analyze their initial and final tests in EFL reading comprehension; all of them wrote down their initial and final scores, levels, and reading rates to keep them as a record of their progress. This was accomplished the last day of classes, after the final interviews were held in order not to create bias in their answers. They were truly excited about their improvement, which is the reason



why individual results as well individual comments on final performances are included as follows:

Andrea's EFL reading comprehension proficiency improved so that she could go from CSSS to Starter Stage. As regards the Reading and Comprehension Test Scores / 4, her scores improved from 1.34 to 2.6 while her EFL reading rate was from 77.5 to 108.5. Andrea was happy, a big smile on her face and a sense of satisfaction were evident when she compared her initial and final tests and scores. In this respect, she said that she had had serious doubts about her own performance at the beginning of the course, but then she had realized that the less she worried, the more she understood. She was eager to show her results to her mother and older sisters.

China's EFL reading comprehension proficiency improved so that she could go from CSSS to Starter Stage. As regards the Reading and Comprehension Test Scores / 4, her scores improved from 1.7 to 2.8 while her EFL reading rate was from 108.5 to 124. China just could not believe her scores and the way in which she had improved her EFL reading comprehension. In this respect, she said "I know it is only 1.1 more point, but it represents a huge difference between my initial and final EFL knowledge." She emphasized her pleasure for having better comprehension when reading and more fluency when producing utterances in EFL, so that she felt her confidence as an EFL student had increased positively.

Johanny's EFL reading comprehension proficiency improved so that she could go from CSSS to Starter Stage. As regards the Reading and Comprehension Test Scores / 4, her scores improved from 1.6 to 2.8 while her EFL reading rate was from 77.5 to 124. Johanny was happy for this fact and emphasized the importance of increasing vocabulary to read and achieving better comprehension of the main ideas in a text when reading in a foreign language. In this respect she told me "now I can say I am truly learning English." Finally, she

said that she really wanted to keep learning EFL this way because everything had been easier for her to understand and do.

Kristen's EFL reading comprehension proficiency improved from CSSS to Starter Stage. As regards the Reading and Comprehension Test Scores / 4, her scores improved from 3.15 to 3.8 while her EFL reading rate was from 170.5 to 201.5. She was so proud of herself. Her total score was really high and her score on the vocabulary section was perfect. In this respect she said that her new knowledge of EFL had been the result of her personal endeavor to improve her overall proficiency in this language as well as of the methodology employed by means of the self-help reading to help her reach that goal.

Luna's EFL reading comprehension proficiency improved from CSSS to Starter Stage. As regards the Reading and Comprehension Test Scores / 4, her scores improved from 1.32 to 2.7 while her EFL reading rate was from 124 to 130. Even though Luna could see her reading rate had not experienced a great improvement, she said that for her it was more important to understand more than to read faster. Luna was satisfied with her overall performance in this course as she no longer had that sense of inadequacy that made her feel like the worst student of EFL in her classroom. Finally she said "this is my best Christmas gift."

Alex's EFL reading comprehension proficiency improved from Starter Stage to Stage 1. As regards the Reading and Comprehension Test Scores / 4, his scores improved from 3.1 to 3.5 while his EFL reading rate was from 139.5 to 155. When comparing his initial and final tests on EFL reading comprehension, Alex knew for the very first time in the course that his initial EFL proficiency level in line with international tests and parameters was that of a starter. When he saw the mistakes he had made in the initial tests, he said that there were some words whose meanings were unknown for him, but that thanks to this course he had been able to increase considerably his vocabulary, reading comprehension, grammar,

listening, and speaking skills. Even though he was aware of his final score in the EFL Reading Comprehension Starter Test 2 from Oxford Bookworms had been perfect and that no one else had reached that proficiency level, he expressed his desire to further increase his knowledge and reach the highest EFL proficiency levels.

Chuck's EFL reading comprehension proficiency improved from CSSS to Starter Stage. As regards the Reading and Comprehension Test Scores / 4, his scores improved from 2.3 to 3.3 while her EFL reading rate was from 124 to 139.5. For him, the most important and rewarding aspects of this course were not the scores, but the knowledge and skills acquired by means of such an enlightening method that had helped him discover the importance of reading while reflecting with "skin-deep feelings and emotions."

Dan's EFL reading comprehension proficiency improved from CSSS to Starter Stage. As regards the Reading and Comprehension Test Scores / 4, his scores improved from 1.6 to 2.8 while her EFL reading rate was from 77.5 to 124. Dan's words were full of enjoyment and gratitude. He said that the very first time he had taken those tests he could hardly understand meanings from context, which is the reason why he had been disappointed and somewhat upset. Now, his feelings were different because by means of his classes he has gained more security and understanding when reading in English.

El Barto's EFL reading comprehension proficiency improved from CSSS to Starter Stage. As regards the Reading and Comprehension Test Scores / 4, his scores improved from 2.3 to 3.4 while his EFL reading rate was from 108.5 to 139.5. As regards his own improvement, El Barto said that it was incredible how by reflecting and reading about values, he had gained knowledge and increased his vocabulary in EFL so that his reading comprehension skills and vocabulary were better than ever. He was happy for this.

J.T.'s EFL reading comprehension proficiency improved from CSSS to Starter Stage. As regards the Reading and Comprehension Test Scores / 4, his scores improved from 2.5 to

3.9 while her EFL reading rate was from 77.5 to 124. J.T. got the highest score in the Reading and Comprehension Test. His outstanding achievement throughout the EFL self-help reading course had made him increase self-confidence and self-esteem visibly. He just said that this EFL reading course had represented an interesting and reflective opportunity to overcome some fears and insecurities as a person and as an EFL student. For him, that fact was more rewarding than scores.

Roy's EFL reading comprehension proficiency improved from CSSS to Starter Stage. As regards the Reading and Comprehension Test Scores / 4, his scores improved from 2.4 to 2.7 while his EFL reading rate was from 124 to 139.5. Even though Roy's improvement was not as noticeable, he said that he had learned to be more reflective and respectful, and a little more responsible at home and school and that unfortunately those values could not be measured by numbers. Finally he pointed out how much he had enjoyed and learned from his reading classes and group discussions.

A few comments need to be made in conclusion to this section of the results. In the first place, this course on self-help reading was based on a syllabus purposely created to meet these student participants' emotional and learning needs, so that all the reading-based activities were intended to encourage their interest in reading. As a consequence, the more student participants' interest when reading in EFL, the more their reading comprehension increased. In the second place, self-help reading encouraged both individual and group work by introducing reflection and group discussions, into academic curriculum while focusing on reading as a central activity, situation that fostered radically students' motivation to read more and more. As a result, they were given many opportunities to practice their comprehension strategies in meaningful situations, which determined that the student participants could appreciate the value of reading as an authentic, productive, and pleasant activity. In the third place, all student participants improved their vocabulary usage. This

aspect was established considering the following criteria: students' achievement on the vocabulary section of the EFL Reading Comprehension Test in English, in which they were asked to paraphrase or translated different words or phrases into Spanish; vocabulary usage in discussions, oral presentations, mid-term evaluations, and written journals. All this allowed student participants not only to understand but also to use the words and terms encountered in the different self-help stories with meaningful purposes. So, it is true that the more students read, the more their vocabulary increase (Alden, Lindquist, & Lubkeman, 2003). Finally, given that good literature is sometimes a main component of a total language arts program at all grade levels, it could support the development of other language skills such as listening, speaking, and grammaring in EFL.

At last, even though the purpose of this self-help reading course for the beginner level was to increase students' reading comprehension skills in EFL, they also experienced noticeable improvement in their Spanish reading comprehension proficiency and reading rates. These results were established in terms of their final performance and scores gotten on the individual Reading Comprehension and Rate Test in Spanish (Shaw & Rohrer, 2007) at the end of the course (see Table 7).

Table 7

*Efficiency of Self-Help Reading as a Learning Practice for Students to Improve Their Spanish Reading Comprehension Skills*

Student	Spanish Reading Comprehension Level		Reading and Comprehension Scores / 4		Spanish Reading Rates / Average Words Per Minute	
	Initial	Final	Initial	Final	Initial	Final
Andrea	B	PI	1.25	2.75	129.8	165.2
China	PI	I	2.75	3.25	141.6	177
Johanny	PI	I	2	3	141.6	212.4
Kristen	PI	I	2.75	3.9	177	188.8
Luna	PI	PI	2	2.25	118	188.8
Alex	B	PI	1.5	2.75	153.4	212.4
Chuck	PI	I	2.5	3.25	141.6	165.2
Dan	PI	I	2.25	3	94.4	118
El Barto	PI	I	2.5	3	129.8	188.8
J.T.	I	UI	3.75	4	141.6	165.2
Roy	B	PI	1.75	2.5	165.2	212.4

*Note: Beginner: B; Pre-Intermediate : PI; Intermediate: I; Upper Intermediate: UI  
Band Score System: B: 1.00-1.99; PI: 2.00-2.99; I: 3.00-3.99; UI: 4.00*

As seen in Table 7, the usefulness of self-help reading as a pedagogical tool and learning practice to get students to increase their reading comprehension levels goes far beyond language barrier. This aspect is clearly explained in the research carried out by Kecskes and Papp (1997) that set up how foreign language learning can support mother tongue development. So, in line with the Reading Comprehension and Rate Test in Spanish (Shaw & Rohrer, 2007) it is seen how at the beginning of the course, out of eleven student participants, seven were placed in the pre-intermediate proficiency reading level; three student participants were placed in the initial beginner proficiency reading level; and one student was placed in the intermediate proficiency reading level. It deserves to be mentioned that this Reading Comprehension and Rate Test in Spanish (Shaw & Rohrer,

2007) was rated on four points, being the lowest score 1.25 and the highest 3.75 with a Mean of 2.27. About the Spanish reading rates, the lowest one was 118 words per minute, while the highest reading rate was 165.2 words per minute.

By the end of the course, there were positive results that clearly demonstrate that thanks to the reflective strategies and techniques employed during self-help reading, all student participants could improve their comprehension skills when reading in their mother tongue, i.e. Spanish, and were placed in the immediate higher proficiency level. Hence, out of eleven student participants, seven ones were placed in the pre-intermediate proficiency reading level; three student participants were placed in the initial intermediate proficiency reading level; and one student was placed in the upper-intermediate proficiency reading level. As regards final scores on this Reading Comprehension and Rate Test in Spanish (Shaw & Rohrer, 2007), it can be reported that the lowest one was 2.25, while the highest one was 4, with a Mean of 3.06. This improvement was also notable in the Spanish reading rate so that all student participants increased significantly the average words per minute when reading in this language, being the lowest one 118 words per minute, and the highest one 212.4 words per minute. In the same way, it is worthy to say that the results on initial and final Spanish reading comprehension tests and rates were given to the student participants so that they could see, compare, and analyze their initial and final performance, along with the results gotten in the EFL reading comprehension initial and final tests. All student participants were excited for this surprising progress and mostly agreed that those results were unexpected because until then they had not noticed how the fact of being a good reader in a foreign language might have positive results on being a good reader in L1. These results replicate the study carried out by Kecskes and Papp (1997) about foreign language learning encouraging learners' mother tongue development as well as motivation and exposure as criteria for positive transfer from L2 to L1.

Some interesting findings emerged as a result of this analysis. To begin with, it is obvious that this research supports that of Samalieva (2001) in that reading is an analogous process in both a native and a foreign language; therefore, the experiences produced when reading either in L1 or L2 let readers integrate cognitive and subjective knowledge. This is the reason why, by means of the EFL self-help reading material, all student participants could also develop and enhance their Spanish reading comprehension and reading rates. In the same way, “intensive and successful foreign language learning can facilitate L1 development” (Kecskes & Papp, 1997, p. 10). As expected, this process takes place in line with individual learning and educational needs. Then, the strategy of reading from self-reflection and others reading techniques used by student participants in this course also had positive results in increasing reading comprehension levels and reading rates in their mother tongue, i.e. Spanish. Finally, students began to realize that reading is a universal experience, either in EFL or Spanish, and it becomes the ideal means not only to read faster with higher comprehension levels, but also to gain more meaning, insight, and self-understanding.

To conclude, the teacher-researcher considers it necessary to remark that the last activity accomplished inside the classroom, in which each student participant was given a small but meaningful gift for his/her active participation, engagement, and motivation shown during this EFL self-help reading course along with the individual letters with anonymous compliments given by partners, which were beautifully printed in high quality and lasting paper. Feelings of happiness, friendship, respect, and surprise were evident in every case. About this lovely moment the teacher-researcher wrote down in her journal “the spontaneity of these adolescents is touching. Never did I expect such as open expressions of affection and gratitude towards me.”

Implications for Teaching and Future Research



The current ethnographic case study may offer some recommendations and implications for future research on teaching EFL therapeutic reading in Ecuadorian learning environments. In the first place, it is expected other Ecuadorian EFL teachers to carry out future research studies on bibliotherapy, either qualitative or quantitative, not only to replicate the present study, but also to enable them to learn about the importance of teaching students -as holistic human beings- through appropriate therapeutic reading materials, because this way students can value foreign languages, cultures, viewpoints, and experiences, while enhancing not only their own ethnic and cultural identity, but also their motivation and positive attitudes towards EFL reading. Similarly, it is highly recommended for teacher-researchers to continue their investigations into efficacy of bibliotherapy by using methodologies that let them evaluate its effectiveness and usefulness on students' lives in the mid and long-term.

In the second place, in spite of the fact that bibliotherapy is a practice highly employed as a beneficial learning resource all over the world, Ecuadorian EFL teachers should know about the limitations and skills/qualifications needed to apply it inside the classroom, e.g. bibliotherapy is time-consuming and all its activities require thoughtful planning and facilitation. Therefore, in every case teachers are responsible for selecting, evaluating, and recommending all the self-help reading material to be used. In the same way, they should have not only a light-enough tone in discussing problems that students do not become upset, but also a thoughtful-enough manner to allow for comfortable discussions. That is the reason why; it would be excellent for Ecuadorian EFL teachers to develop follow-up studies on designing a model program to train them to use therapeutic reading; so that they could include this knowledge into regular EFL programs and apply it with their students to meet better their needs and problems, while enhancing their overall performance and proficiency as EFL learners. This program should also include titles of books to read with students, as

well as other materials and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) such videos, audio books, computer software, and other printed materials in bibliotherapy practice to help learners of various ages find solutions to the problems they may be facing

Last but not least, it is hoped that this ethnographic case study may act as a means to enable other EFL teachers to reflect on the importance of bibliotherapy as an enlightening approach to introduce hope and security into their students' lives, while fostering their pleasure for authentic and meaningful reading in EFL.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

This ethnographic case study explored and described the process of using therapeutic reading to address EFL teenaged learners' social and emotional problems and needs while developing their EFL reading comprehension. The findings suggest that therapeutic reading is indeed a useful tool for addressing the significant needs of teenaged students given that it provides them with accurate information about several issues of daily life mainly related to their social, emotional, and learning needs (Cook, Earles-Vollrath, & Ganz, 2006; Forrest, 1998), all of which certainly foster their self-reflection and a better understanding of real-life challenges. Nevertheless, therapeutic reading is not "an exact science" (Forrest, 1998 p. 162); for this reason its successful application into learning settings depends on several factors. Accordingly, the teacher-researcher found that over the course of a nine-week period, the successful application of therapeutic reading into an EFL learning setting relied on her student participants' self-motivation, reading habits, and interest in the selected stories. These factors helped student participants develop and increase their social, coping, and learning skills, in line with their individual learning styles. The fact that this learning has taken place in a safe and familiar environment, where the teacher-researcher performed as a trustworthy motivator/facilitator, who knew her students as well as their needs and interests, was decisive in this regard.

From this view, it is also possible to suggest that therapeutic reading implied responsive teaching (Celce-Murcia, 2001) in this research study because on the one hand, this kind of reading enabled the teacher-researcher to learn about her students' backgrounds and experiences; and on the other hand it activated student participants' schemata based upon their experiences, problems, and needs, all of which fostered self-reflection and analytical skills on behalf of students. In this respect, the themes and

stories, either fictitious or real, selected for this EFL therapeutic reading course, as well as the different topics that student participants chose individually to develop and deliver their oral presentations were valuable because they provided them with realistic expectations and information about their current problems (Allen, Sheen, Leavy, Young, & Money, 2005), and encouraged a better understanding of everyday life issues. They also encouraged group discussions in which student participants shared their understanding about diverse themes with their classmates and teacher, and were able to talk about themselves and their personal connections to stories and characters in a respectful way.

Accordingly, it is possible to say that therapeutic reading helped these student participants become more reflective and strategic readers because they had numerous opportunities to share opinions and comments and to give their own personal and clever solutions to the different problems presented in the different stories. In the same way, therapeutic reading helped them overcome some discipline problems inside the classroom because they were respectful and tolerant to others' ideas, and tried hard to keep that behavior as much as possible. On the other hand, these therapeutic reading stories helped student participants understand that in spite of individual differences, teenagers all over the world share some common problems that permeate their lives. In other words, student participants realized some problems they were going through were predictable given that other teens have already dealt with them successfully. The teacher-researcher found that all this could be accomplished through the different stories, as well as strategies and interactive activities used in this EFL reading course such as prereading, reading, discussions, mind maps, oral presentations, and double-entry journals, among others. Without a doubt, the choice of suitable reading activities and materials is fundamental in a successful application of therapeutic reading in school settings, as it plays a major role on students' motivation and engagement to read and process information effectively while increasing personal pleasure

for reading. Consequently, the teacher-researcher found most student participants thought that the stories they read in this course did relate to their personal lives and did find them very helpful to the personal issues they were facing. Furthermore, these readings had simple and clear story lines that not only made student participants understand main ideas and characters, but also helped them reach their own conclusions about them in an accessible way.

Reading is useful for language acquisition; results confirm this statement, too because therapeutic reading had positive and steady outcomes on student participants' reading ability and comprehension skills, not only in EFL but also in Spanish as their mother tongue. In this aspect, it is necessary to consider the positive effect that "foreign language learning has on the development of mother tongue skills" as stated by Kecskes and Papp (1997, p. 380). In line with these authors, "foreign language learning helps the internalization of L1 because linguistic operations based on conscious ways of thinking used in foreign language learning can be transferred to L1 activities" (p. 384). That is the reason why, therapeutic reading had a helpful effect on increasing students' vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension, and reading rates both in EFL and Spanish. The initial and final reading comprehension tests administered to student participants were an excellent tool for reaching this conclusion. In the same way, the teacher-researcher found that therapeutic reading had a gradual and positive effect on student participants' attitudes towards EFL because they showed to have more confident and enthusiastic feelings when reading or speaking about the selected stories in this foreign language.

These positive outcomes on student participants' social, coping, and learning skills confirm the social nature of learning. However, as stated every student-participant had his/her own needs, concerns, and learning styles all of which played a subjective but significant role in their process of learning. Thus, even though self-reflection and honesty

characterized most student participants' final attitudes towards their problems and needs; the teacher-researcher has regarded it necessary to include individual conclusions as follows:

Andrea's final attitude towards her problems was more self-reflective. So, she could develop a sense of self-reflection that enabled her to recognize that perhaps one of the reasons why she felt alone at that high-school was her own behavior, which prevented her partners from being friendlier with her. Thanks to the selected stories and oral presentations, she began to know her classmates much better and avoided judging them when they seemed to have hard days. She could perceive an atmosphere of partnership and oneness in her classroom. As regards her EFL learning problems, Andrea could perceive minor but noticeable improvements in this area as well, because her understanding of the selected stories as well as her vocabulary increased in every reading session.

China's final attitude towards her problems was more honest and self-reflective. She knew she did not used to be as responsible as she should be. However, the selected stories helped her gain insights on the importance of being responsible; so, she had the opportunity to reflect on the consequences of being an irresponsible person and student in her life, in the short, mid, and long term. On the other hand, the selected stories enabled China not only to understand better when reading in EFL, but also to be able to produce better utterances to convey her ideas. That security made her feel better with herself as a person and as an EFL learner. From these results, the teacher-researcher concluded that her initial elite stance to select friends among her classmates was not real, but a way to hide her insecurity as a student and EFL learner.

Johanny's final attitude towards her problems was more thoughtful. For this teen, the story "*All the Good Things*" was decisive in her desire for change her old behavior of making practical jokes. So, once she realized her behavior was rude to most of her classmates, she tried hard to avoid making jokes or comments that might hurt her classmates' feelings. For

Johanny, the stories were a great way not only to learn values about how to be a better person with others by being respectful and considerate towards their feelings, but also to develop her EFL skills. As a result, she could recognize that her knowledge of EFL improved in the areas of vocabulary, reading comprehension, and pronunciation due to the positive effects of therapeutic reading on language learning, and seriously expressed her desire to use the therapeutic reading approach to learn other foreign languages.

Kristen's final attitude towards her problems was very self-reflective. This teenager used to experience strong feelings of untrustworthiness in her partners at school and in her mother at home. From the stories, Kristen could see that with constancy and positive thoughts about herself, she could improve her own vision of the world and her confidence in others. She could realize she has never been alone in this world because her mother has always been there to support her in every sense. This was evidenced by her desire to share the story "*A Step to Healing*" with her mother, giving in this way the first steps to build a more lovely and trustworthy relationship with her. Even though Kristen did not speak about her relationship with her classmates, she displayed appropriate behavior with them. As regards her EFL learning process, Kristen became a responsible reader who used "*constancy*" to develop her EFL skills of reading comprehension and speaking considerably.

Luna's final attitude towards her problems was thoughtful. She could see that by changing her own vision of the world she was opening the door to many people who really appreciated and loved her with her strengths and weaknesses. In this last aspect, she was working hard to increase her sense of responsibility both at home and school. As regards her sense of insufficiency as "the worst EFL student in the classroom," Luna could see that by improving her vocabulary she was improving her reading

comprehension and reasoning skills. That situation gave her an optimistic feeling that made her feel she could be a successful EFL learner too.

Alex's final attitude towards his problems was more open and relaxed. This teenager could see and value positive aspects of this therapeutic EFL reading course that enabled him to be grateful for all the good people and things in his life. Alex could open his mind to a new way of learning EFL that allowed him to express his thoughts and feelings aloud and to exchange opinions with his classmates and teacher in a learning environment of equality and respect. However, there were two main reasons for Alex's refusal to do homework in line with the teacher-researcher's view. In the first place, Alex made continuous excuses for not doing homework as a way to hide his anxiety as an EFL student who was indeed learning this foreign language by means of a new approach such as bibliotherapy, in spite of his initial reluctance for this reading course. And in the second place, Alex decided to evade some academic responsibilities by not doing important and purposeful homework, such as double-entry journals, which required him to think and write about the different selected stories from a deeper and more personal perspective. He knew that the teacher-researcher would read those journals and he wanted to prevent that from happening. So, the teacher-researcher concluded that Alex did not want to share with her his most cherished feelings and thoughts in such a close and intimate way. But, even though Alex's reluctance to do outside assignments was resistant to therapeutic reading intervention, it deserves to be mentioned his cooperation to carry out activities inside the classroom, situation that made him feel more secure about his own performance and achievement as an excellent EFL student.

Chuck's final attitude towards his problems was full of self-reflection and optimistic originality. So, for this teen that cherishes respect and self-learning, this therapeutic reading course represented an enlightening and instructive opportunity in which values, technology, and EFL were joined together with a common goal, i.e. to learn values and good habits of



life. In this respect, every one of his senses and vivid imagination played a major role to help him get not only real messages, but also authentic mental pictures of the main characters of the selected stories and the problems they were going through. His analytical sense allowed him to recognize that learning EFL in this way was providing him with enjoyable moments to increase vocabulary and reading comprehension skills, and to appreciate the value of reading for pleasure while reflecting on the importance of fostering lifetime values.

Dan's final attitude towards his problems was sincere. This teen used to be irresponsible and used to use his age to make excuses for that behavior. He was not disrespectful, but his honesty was overwhelming. Thanks to the growing and reflective comprehension demonstrated by Dan when reading the selected stories, he could understand honesty goes hand in hand with respect, and that one of the best ways of being respectful is by being responsible for his own acts and words. It is clear then, that this teen did give *a chance* to this EFL therapeutic reading course so that he tried hard to replace his old behavior and his initial view of EFL with new ones, that gave him the opportunity to appreciate his own potential as a responsible person and student, and a renewed sense of confidence and pleasure when reading and understanding in EFL.

El Barto's final attitude towards his problems was practical and positive. This student had read a single therapeutic reading book in Spanish *Recetas para el Alma* [Recipes for the Soul] by Diana Kennedy. By means of this course, he was given the chance to expand his knowledge of therapeutic reading by dealing with other themes directly related to his age and problems. His sense of reflection led him to see that respect, honesty, and friendships are fundamental values to be always applied in his daily life. So, he began to deeply think about putting them into practice wherever he goes. This teen recognizes that

it is due to this aspect that his view of his EFL classes is good and positive too. He is more secure and confident when speaking or reading in EFL.

J.T.'s final attitude towards his problems was encouraging and optimistic. The difference between the initial very shy teen and the still somewhat shy but more talkative and expressive J.T. was evident. The stories included in this course gave him the opportunity to reflect and think deeply about his own problems and about his partners' too. His sense of self-awareness helped him strengthen his self-esteem and confidence to look for personal and common wellbeing. Even though as a person and as an EFL student, J.T.'s progress was amazing -in fact, he was the best in the class and he was aware of that- his humility kept intact. This happened because J.T. was able to recognize that learning English is more than getting good scores; for him learning English was a new way to express his feelings and concerns. Hence, J.T. understood that his new vision of EFL along with his attitude towards this language have been decisive in his noticeable and productive change.

Roy's final attitude towards his problems was courageous and honest. This teen recognized his mistakes and had the self-confidence to admit he was wrong when thinking that by being rude he would be respected. That is why Roy's new vision of respect is totally different; for him authentic respect and friendship are far away from fear. He was able to analyze and discuss the different themes and stories with his classmates in a more respectful way. At the same time, his sense of responsibility with the activities programmed for this course improved considerably after his performance on his oral presentation. His sense of productivity and efficiency when reading in English was increased too, mainly due to his personalized way of guessing meanings from contexts. For this teen, it was amazing not being dependent on a bilingual dictionary or translator to understand every single word when reading in English. On the other hand, as regards his psychological problems about his deceased mother, the teacher-researcher thinks it is necessary to say that even though the

matter of death was dealt with as a sub-topic in the story "*All the Good Things*," she realized that Roy's psychological problem went beyond the purpose of this research study and decided not to deal with that issue inside the classroom anymore. According to her, it was the best for Roy to continue his therapy and counseling with the psychologist of that high-school to deal with that traumatic problem.

In summary, it is evident that student participants' final attitudes towards their problems and needs confirm how unique and susceptible teens are to the environment in which they live and study. Given that teenaged students spend a great amount of time at school, the teacher-researcher concluded that it is teachers' responsibility to assist their students when they experience social, emotional, or educational problems by establishing open and trustworthy communication that supports free expression so that authentic and purposeful learning can occur within a safe and encouraging classroom. Accordingly, students need to be given opportunities to read about real life issues, and reflect and talk about their life experiences and learning process without fear or anxiety. Hence, the teacher-researcher advocates for the use of therapeutic reading as an enlightening pedagogical and healing practice to assist students through those personal problems because it underlines the importance of reading from the perspective of self-reflection mainly during hard times and can produce positive changes in students' self-concept, reading readiness, and achievement that will allow them to reach a better understanding of sensitive life issues.

## Chapter 6

## Personal Reflections on the Research Process

This chapter summarizes all what I have learned in this ethnographic case study, which has given insights to the theoretical and practical research on the subject of therapeutic reading and encouraged a careful comprehension of this experience from my vision as an EFL teacher-researcher and from my students' perspective, as regards the difficult years of adolescence. Hence, my personal reflections are the result of my thoughts, ideas, and feelings carefully expressed in my reflective journals over a nine-week research period. Thus, after several hours and days of investigation, it was clear to me that bibliotherapy, as a pedagogical and healing practice, had grown from the idea that reading could affect people's attitudes and behavior. The deep understanding of this concept placed a lot of responsibility on my shoulders from the very beginning of the research process, mainly when selecting the self-help reading materials, which were truly based on my teenaged students' realistic expectations and needs, so that they could be given positive and authentic feedback.

With every passing day, the concept of bibliotherapy stopped being so scientific and became more familiar to me. Hence, I began to feel that bibliotherapy was as an antidote that my students used to relieve their emotional tensions, fears, and doubts, and that I used to teach them EFL reading and problem-solving skills. Throughout this process, I learnt that I was a trustworthy facilitator who needed to work really hard to build upon my students' enthusiasm and motivation for EFL reading.

I also learnt that by teaching patiently but steadily, my teenaged students could build their comprehension of several real-life challenges when reading either in EFL or in Spanish. This way, they were able, in most of the cases, to deal with their lives and EFL learning problems because our classroom had become the ideal means not only for enhancing their academic potential to learn EFL but also for enhancing their emotional progression by

providing them with the knowledge and skills to adapt and cope with the social and emotional changes that naturally occurred in their lives, so that they could self-reflect about their participation and contribution in our community and world as excellent and holistic human beings.

Accordingly, this EFL self-help reading course enabled me to teach with awareness, so that I could provide my students with pathways to healing and emotional growth. I could witness the veracity of these words for the way in which my students were able to rediscover values so important to grow socially and emotionally such as respect, friendship, tolerance, responsibility, and generosity. Thanks to them, I will never forget adolescents can also be honest and generous with their words and reactions to recognize when others' performance is better than theirs without a trace of envy or selfishness.

As an EFL teacher I have also realized that if my students want or need to talk, I should be there to listen to them in order to guide and support them through hard times. The support and confidence of family members, other teachers, counselors, therapists, and friends is highly valuable to reach this desired goal. In every case, it is best to provide teenagers with opportunities to express themselves as freely as possible. I feel that our guided discussions and their questions and responses about the readings or peers' comments, along with their nonverbal or written reactions to them were so important for this reason. However, I have to say that their double-entry journals provided me with amazing feedback that I would be unlikely to receive in any other way. I just loved the way in which this information nourished my teacher's soul and my research project on bibliotherapy every single day.

On the other hand, from my personal experience in this project, I have understood that that the correct implementation of bibliotherapy inside the classroom implies not only effort and responsibility but also specific qualifications on behalf of teachers. Therefore, I feel that by training us to develop both reading literacy skills and critical thinking with comprehensive

bibliotherapy programs that incorporate relevant and meaningful self-help reading materials, our students' developmental needs will be met more efficiently.

At this final point, I have to say that in spite of the positive effects of bibliotherapy on my teenaged students, I am aware it is not a panacea or perfect teaching practice to get all students to develop and increase their social, coping, and learning skills in the same way. I know students' individual needs and differences along with their willingness and motivation play a major role in this sense. In my research study, cases such as Alex's reluctance to do homework that persisted in spite of this practice, as well as Roy's psychological problems that were beyond the scope of this research, are good examples of these individualities. However, I do expect this study increases other EFL teachers' awareness of the importance of educating our students integrally, providing them with intellectual, social, and emotional guidance.

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APPENDIX A  
SEFL-HELP READING LIST ON STUDENTS' PROBLEMS

Emotions and feelings

Book: How Are You Peeling? Foods with Moods (48 pages)

Authors: Saxton Freymann and Joost Elffers

Date of publication: 1999, 2004

Publisher: Scholastic

Age range: 3–7, but fun for all ages

Summary: Questions about emotions are cleverly illustrated with photographs featuring facial expressions made from vegetables and fruits.

Book: Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day (28 pages)

Author: Judith Viorst

Date of publication: 1972

Publisher: Simon and Schuster

Age range: 5–9, but fun for all ages

Summary: Everybody has an occasional ‘bad day’. This story follows the irritations in Alexander’s day. It is ‘one of those days’ and nothing is going right. Facing frustration, disappointment, and anger, Alexander is eventually able to accept the fact that although he had a ‘terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day . . . some days are just like that’.

Book: When Sophie Gets Angry – Really, Really Angry . . . (40 pages)

Author: Molly Bang

Date of publication: 1999, 2004

Publisher: Scholastic, Inc.

Age range: 3–7

Summary: Sophie is upset and doesn’t know how to express her anger. She learns to take time for cooling off and getting control of her anger so it does not control her.

She is in control of how she expresses her anger.

Death and loss

Book: A Taste of Blackberries (96 pages)

Author: Doris Buchanan Smith

Date of publication: 1973

Publisher: Harper Trophy

Age range: 9–12

Summary: A young boy adjusts to the accidental death of his best friend.

Book: Badger’s Parting Gifts (32 pages)

Author: Susan Varley

Date of publication: 1992

Publisher: Morrow, William and Co

Age range: 4–8

Summary: Although Badger’s friends are sad when he dies, they have special memories of him and the many things he taught them.

Book: I Had a Friend Named Peter: Talking to Children about the Death of a Friend (32 pages)

Author: Janice Cohn

Date of publication: 1995

Publisher: Morrow, William and Co

Age range: 5–7

Summary: After the death of a friend, Betsy's parents and kindergarten teacher answer questions about dying, funerals and burial of the deceased.

Book: Geranium Morning (40 pages)

Author: E. Sandy Powell

Date of publication: 1990

Publisher: Lerner Publishing Group

Age range: 5–8

Summary: Two friends learn to deal with grief after their parents die, one suddenly in an accident and one by illness.

Book: Nana Upstairs and Nana Downstairs (32 pages)

Author: Tomiede Paola

Date of publication: 1978, 2000

Publisher: Putnam

Age range: 4–8

Summary: Four-year-old Tommy enjoys his relationship with both his grandmother and great-grandmother. He begins to understand that old people eventually die.

Book: Bridge to Terabithia (144 pages)

Author: Katherine Paterson

Date of publication: 1987

Publisher: Harper Trophy

Age Range: 10–14

Summary: Jesse, a ten-year-old boy, becomes best friends with a girl, Leslie. Unexpectedly, Leslie dies while on her way to their forest hide out, Terabithia.

Family instability

Book: Eclipse (158 pages)

Author: Kristine L. Franklin

Date of publication: 1998

Publisher: Econo-Clad Books

Age range: 11–15

Summary: Trina's father falls into a severe depression after losing his job. He contemplates and unsuccessfully attempts suicide. Trina's mother, pregnant at age 48, feels overwhelmed with another child joining their family. Faced with all these difficulties, Trina with the help of her good friend Miranda copes with difficult challenges. Although this book deals with extreme issues, this book would be helpful for those coping with family issues involving parents who have attempted or successfully completed suicide. This would not be a 'fun' book to read, but rather a story that would provide therapeutic support.

Book: Visiting Day (32 pages)

Author: Jacqueline Woodson

Publisher: Scholastic, Inc.

Date of publication: 2002

Age range: 5–8

Summary: A young black girl and her grandma visit the girl's father in prison. This would be a good book to assist a child in coping with a parent's incarceration and strengthening reconnections with the parent.

Caution: this book would not be appropriate if the parent was imprisoned for abusing the child.

Book: Good Night Mr. Tom (318 pages)

Author: Michelle Magorian

Date of publication: 1981

Publisher: Harper Trophy

Age range: 12 and older

Summary: Staged in England right before World War II, an older man and young boy develop a wonderful friendship.

The young boy learns to hope for a better future, despite his harsh past of abuse and isolation.

Divorce

Book: How It Feels when Parents Divorce (128 pages)

Author: Jill Krementz

Date of publication: 1988

Publisher: Alfred A. Knopf

Age range: 7–17

Summary: Children and youth, ages 7–17, share their personal experiences and feelings about divorce.

Book: Dinosaurs Divorce: A Guide for Changing Families (32 pages)

Author: Laurene Krasny Brown

Date of publication: 1986

Publisher: Little, Brown and Company

Age range: 5–8

Summary: Families of dinosaurs introduce the challenging aspects of divorce: its causes and effects; living with only one parent; spending holidays in two different homes; and adjusting to new family arrangements . . . even step parents.

Book: Dear Mr. Henshaw (133 pages)

Author: Beverly Cleary

Date of publication: 1983

Publisher: Morrow, William and Co

Age range: 9–12

Summary: In letters to his favorite author, ten-year-old Leigh shares his feelings about coping with his parents' divorce, moving to a new school and finding new ways to adjust to divorce and a changing life.

Book: Strider (179 pages)

Author: Beverly Cleary

Date of publication: 1991

Publisher: Morrow, William and Co

Age range: 10– young adult

Summary: In his diary, Leigh describes the ongoing adjustment to his parents' divorce. He also explains how his life is getting better. He befriends an abandoned dog and joins the school's track team.

Community and national disasters

Book: September 12th: We Knew Everything Would Be All

Right (32 pages)

Authors: H. Byron Masterson Elementary School First Graders

Date of publication: 2002

Publisher: Tangerine Press

Age range: 4–8

Summary: Children offer their sense of hope and comfort found in the routine of daily activity following the 9/11/2001 terrorist attacks.

Book: One April Morning: Children Remember the  
Oklahoma City Bombing (48 pages)

Author: Nancy Lamb

Publisher: Harper Collins Children's Books

Date of publication: 1996

Age range: 10–young adult

Summary: Children from Oklahoma City share their feelings about the bombing of the Federal Building and how they adjusted to this disaster.

Book: Why Did It Happen? Helping Children Cope in a  
Violent World (32 pages)

Author: Janice I. Cohn

Publisher: Morrow, William and Co

Date of publication: 1994

Age range: 4–6

Summary: With the help of his parents and teacher, a young boy copes with his feelings about a neighborhood grocery store robbery. The book also includes information for parents.

Book: The Christmas Menorahs: How a Town Fought Hate  
(40 pages)

Author: Janice I. Cohn

Date of publication: 1995

Publisher: Albert Whitman

Age range: 7–11

Summary: A small community in Billings, Montana joins together to support a Jewish family, the target of a series of hate crimes.

School Psychology International (2005), Vol. 26(5)

578

Downloaded from

Bullying

Book: Big Bad Bruce (40 pages)

Author: Bill Peet

Date of publication: 1977, 1982

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Company

Age range: 5–8

Summary: The biggest bear in the forest, Bruce, bullies everyone smaller than himself. The tables turn when Bruce is magically shrunk to the size of a field mouse. Pictures and clever language keep children's attention.

Book: Stop Picking on Me: A First Look at Bullying (24 pages)

Author: Pat Thomas

Date of publication: 2000, 2001

Publisher: Barron's

Age range: 5–10

Summary: This book helps children understand what bullying is and what it looks like. It also helps children understand reasons why a person bullies others.

Discussion questions are included to accompany the story and involve the listener. Children are given practical and appropriate options of how to react to bullies.

Book: Nobody Knew What to Do (32 pages)

Author: Becky Ray McCain

Date of publication: 2001

Publisher: Albert Whitman and Co.

Age range: 4–9

Summary: A new boy moves in and a group of boys start to pick on him. While everyone is aware of the problem, no one knows what to do about it until one child gains the courage to tell a teacher

Social skills

Book: It's Mine (32 pages)

Author: Leo Lionni

Date of publication: 1986

Publisher: Alfred K. Knopf

Age range: 4–8

Summary: Three selfish frogs are not willing to share their pond and island, until a storm forces them to pull together and survive.

Book: The Kweeks of Kookatumdee (32 pages)

Author: Bill Peet

Date of publication: 1988

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Company

Age range: 5–8

Summary: An island of hungry birds does not have enough 'ploppolop' fruit trees. Jed, the biggest and meanest bird, does not want to share. Small Quentin provides leadership to solve the problem.

Internet resources

(1) A great resource list of books for bibliotherapy

<http://www.ci.eugene.or.us/Library/staffref/therapy.htm>

(2) An extensive list of children's books on death and dying

[http://www.penpages.psu.edu/penpages\\_reference/28507/285072304.html](http://www.penpages.psu.edu/penpages_reference/28507/285072304.html)

(3) An extensive and highly organized search vehicle developed by the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

<http://www.clpgh.org/kids/booknook/bibliotherapy/>

School Psychology International (2005), Vol. 26(5) 580 / Allen et al. (2005).



APPENDIX B  
PERMISSION LETTER

Portoviejo, Octubre 7 de 2009

Máster

Valerie Montesdeoca Coloma de Mendoza

Rectora del Colegio Liceo de las Américas

Ciudad

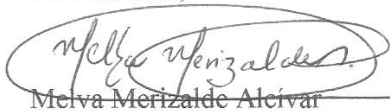
De mi consideración

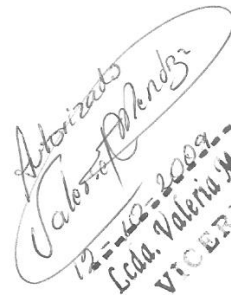
Habiendo culminado todas las materias y tareas contempladas en la malla curricular del Programa de Maestría en Enseñanza de Inglés como Idioma Extranjero de la Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral (ESPOL), y siendo uno de los requisitos previo a la obtención del título de Máster en Enseñanza de Inglés, la elaboración de un proyecto investigativo en este campo, solicito a Usted de la manera más comedida se me autorice realizar el proyecto de investigación cualitativa que sustenta mi tesis de postgrado con los alumnos del Décimo Año Básico del plantel educativo que tan dignamente dirige.

Para llevar a cabo este proyecto de investigación he considerado el área de la Biblioterapia y su título en inglés es "APPLICATION OF SELF-HELP READING AS A WAY TO ADDRESS EFL LEARNERS' SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS WHILE DEVELOPING THEIR READING COMPREHENSION". Las sesiones tendrían lugar dos veces por semana (martes y jueves) en el horario asignado a la cátedra de inglés como idioma extranjero por un período de dos meses; esto es, desde el 20 de Octubre hasta el 17 de Diciembre del presente año en las instalaciones del Liceo de las Américas.

Por la favorable atención que brinde a la presente le anticipo mi gratitud y estima. Con mis consideraciones especiales para Usted.

Atentamente,

  
Melva Merizalde Alcívar

  
12-10-2009  
Lda. Valerie Montesdeoca C.  
VICERECTORA

APPENDIX C  
PACKET OF INFORMATION INCLUDING COVER LETTER TO PARENTS AND  
PARTICIPANTS, DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE, FIRST INTERVIEW  
QUESTIONS, AND CONSENT AGREEMENT FORM IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

Dear Parents and Participants:

My name is Melba Merizalde Alcívar and I am a student of the Master's Program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) at Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral (ESPOL). Currently, I am working on my thesis project reason why I am recruiting participants for a qualitative study on the application of self-help reading as a way to foster participants' self-reflection and a better understanding of everyday life while developing their EFL reading comprehension. I have chosen this topic since I truly believe that self-help reading material, either in the way of didactic or imaginative literature, is a valuable tool to teach students how to read from the perspective of self-reflection to deal with sensitive matters and how to help them increase their reading skills in EFL.

Accordingly, during this study there will be employed different reading strategies such as intensive and extensive reading, reading aloud, critical reading, discussions, summarizing key ideas in difficult sessions, examining emotions and attitudes of key characters, keeping reflective journals, among others. Primary means of data will be interviews, observations, recordings, and field notes, which will be collected by teacher-researcher throughout class sessions with participants twice a week during two consecutive months. As representatives of your sons and daughters I really hope you may be interested in letting them to take an active and participative role in this study.

This packet includes a consent form and a demographic questionnaire to get important data about your son/daughter that you will need to complete and give me back if you allow them to take part in this research project. Also, there are included the questions corresponding to the first interview that has been scheduled for next Tuesday, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009. The location of interview will be at Liceo de las Américas High School and it will take place during the EFL class time. All information will be held confidential to protect participants' identities and only demographic information such as age and gender and a chosen name (pseudonym) will be reported in the results of this study. If you have further doubts or questions about this study or these forms, please do not hesitate to contact me via mail at [melva7777@hotmail.com](mailto:melva7777@hotmail.com).

Sincerely,

Melba Merizalde Alcívar, BA in Applied English Linguistics

Master Candidate

Demographic Questionnaire

Instructions: This questionnaire has been intended to gather significant information about your son/daughter. Keep in mind that all your answers will remain confidential.

1. Participant's name:
2. Gender:
3. Age:
4. E-mail
5. Nationality:
6. Education level:
7. Current EFL level / course:
8. Would your son or daughter be able to participate in 18 class sessions of reading self-help material in EFL, on Tuesdays and Thursdays during the EFL class sessions each one lasting 90 minutes a day from October 20<sup>th</sup> through December 23<sup>rd</sup> 2009, to find out how self-reflection may help them increase their understanding of everyday issues while improving their EFL reading comprehension?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

First Interview Questions

11. Could you please describe yourself as a person in terms of traits or characteristics?
12. What are your personal expectations for reading?
13. Have you ever read any kind of self-help material in the past?
14. What was it like? Could you briefly describe this experience?
15. What situation(s) led you to choose and read self-help material? Could you briefly describe this time in your life?
16. Do you feel you were helped by this self-help reading material? Please explain.
17. Did you share what you learned from the book with others? Please explain.
18. Did you choose to read this self-help reading material under the recommendation or guidance of your parents, friends, teachers, others?
19. How would you define the experience of reading in EFL?
20. Do you enjoy reading in EFL? Please explain.

Participant Consent Form

APPLICATION OF THERAPEUTIC READING AS A WAY TO ADDRESS EFL LEARNERS' SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS WHILE DEVELOPING THEIR READING COMPREHENSION

Please indicate your relationship to the under 18-year-old student participant: \_\_\_\_\_  
I \_\_\_\_\_ in my quality as representative of the student participant \_\_\_\_\_, give my son/daughter authorization to participate in this qualitative research study in agreement with the specifications provided by **Melba A. Merizalde A.**

This research is being conducted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the postgraduate degree in the **Master's Program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language at ESPOL.** The purpose of this research study is to apply self-help reading material to address participants' social and emotional needs while developing their reading comprehension in EFL.

Description of the research study methods

The participants will be taught how to read self-help reading material in English from the perspective of self-reflection to get a better understanding of daily life confronting personal, social, and emotional issues using both didactic and imaginative literature from chapter books, short stories, and other reading sources that will also assist participants increase their reading skills. Hence, reading strategies such as intensive and extensive reading, reading aloud, critical reading, discussions, summarizing key ideas in difficult sessions, examining emotions and attitudes of key characters, keeping reflective journals, among others will be used during this study. Data will be collected by teacher-researcher throughout class sessions with participants twice a week during two consecutive months by means of interviews, observations, recordings, and field notes.

Requirements of the participants

Participants will need to attend their EFL course of level four twice a week during 90 minutes a day, from October 20 through December 23 2009. Participants will be given the self-help reading material to carry out this research study for free as well as the strategies they need to do assignments.

Benefits to the participants

Participants will be given the opportunity to increase their awareness of sensitive matters and to improve their reading skills in EFL. Additionally, they will be given incentives to increase their motivation and engagement.

Risks and Discomforts

No risks are found in this study. However, to avoid discomforts on behalf of the participants all the self-help reading material will be chosen in line with their proficiency in EFL.

Contact persons

Researcher can be contacted any time during this study via email at melva7777@hotmail.com

Confidentiality

I understand that all information will be held confidential to protect my son/daughter's identity and only demographic information such as his/her age and gender and a chosen name (pseudonym) will be reported in the results of this study.

Voluntary participation

I allow my son/daughter to participate in this research study. I know what my son/daughter will have to do and that he/she can stop at any time. I also understand that my son/daughter's scores in their regular classes of EFL will not be affected if I decided not to allow him/her to take part in this study. By signing this consent form, I signify I understand and agree with the specifications of this study. Upon signing this consent form, I will get a copy of it. I willingly agree to allow my son/daughter to take part in this project

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Participant's Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Queridos Padres y Estudiantes:

Mi nombre es Melba Merizalde Alcívar y soy estudiante del Programa de Maestría en Enseñanza de Inglés como Idioma Extranjero de la Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral (ESPOL). Actualmente, estoy trabajando en mi proyecto de tesis, razón por la cual me encuentro en la búsqueda de participantes para mi estudio de investigación cualitativa el cual se basa en la aplicación de material de lectura de auto-ayuda en inglés para fomentar la reflexión y comprensión por parte de los participantes considerando temas de la vida diaria mientras se incrementan sus niveles de lectura comprensiva en este idioma extranjero.

He escogido este tema porque estoy plenamente convencida de que la lectura de este tipo de material, ya sea didáctico o de ficción, es una valiosa herramienta de enseñanza que permite a los estudiantes leer desde una perspectiva de reflexión personalizada que los capacita para tratar exitosamente situaciones cotidianas considerando los aspectos sociales y emocionales.

En consecuencia, durante este estudio serán empleadas diferentes estrategias de lectura tales como lectura intensiva, lectura extensiva, lectura crítica, debates en clases, diarios de reflexión, entre otras. Las fuentes primarias para la colección de datos serán entrevistas, observaciones, grabaciones y notas de campo. Dicha información será recogida por la profesora-investigadora durante las clases con los estudiantes, las cuales tendrán lugar dos veces por semana por un periodo dos meses consecutivos. Realmente espero que como representantes de sus hijos(as) encuentren este estudio de interés y valor y permitan a sus representados tomar un rol activo-participativo en el mismo. Junto a esta carta se incluye un cuestionario demográfico que permitirá obtener datos relevantes acerca de su representado(a) y un formulario de autorización que usted deberá completar, firmar y entregar en caso de permitir la participación de su representado(a) en este proyecto de investigación. Además, he incluido las preguntas que conforman la primera entrevista con los participantes, misma que tendrá lugar el próximo martes 20 de octubre del presente en las instalaciones del Liceo de las Américas, en el horario asignado a la cátedra de inglés como idioma extranjero.

Toda la información recogida en este estudio se manejará con absoluta confidencialidad para proteger la identidad de los participantes y solamente información demográfica como la edad y el género de los participantes así como un nombre escogido (seudónimo) serán comunicados en los resultados obtenidos en este estudio. Si tiene alguna duda o preguntas acerca de este estudio y/o formularios, por favor no dude en contactarme a través del siguiente correo electrónico: [melva7777@hotmail.com](mailto:melva7777@hotmail.com)

Atentamente,

Melba Merizalde Alcívar, Licenciada en Lingüística Aplicada al Idioma Inglés  
Maestrante



Cuestionario Demográfico

Instrucciones: Este cuestionario ha sido formulado para recopilar información importante acerca de su representado(a). Recuerde que todas sus respuestas serán manejadas con absoluta confidencialidad.

1. Nombre de su representado:
2. Género:
3. Edad:
4. E-mail:
5. Nacionalidad:
6. Nivel de Educación:
7. Nivel/Curso actual de Inglés como Idioma Extranjero:
8. ¿Permitiría Usted a su representado(a) participar en 18 sesiones de clases de lectura de material de auto-ayuda los días Martes y Jueves en el horario asignado a la cátedra de inglés con una duración de 90 minutos diarios desde el 20 de octubre hasta el 23 de diciembre de 2009, con la finalidad de establecer como la reflexión puede ayudarlo(a) a incrementar su comprensión sobre temas del diario vivir mientras mejora su lectura comprensiva en inglés?  
Sí \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Preguntas de la Primera Entrevista

1. ¿Podría por favor describirse a sí mismo(a) considerando sus características individuales?
2. ¿Cuáles son sus expectativas personales acerca de la lectura?
3. ¿Ha leído alguna vez algún tipo de material de auto-ayuda?
4. ¿Cómo fue esta experiencia? ¿Podría describirla brevemente?
5. ¿Qué situación o situaciones lo(a) llevaron a escoger y leer este tipo de material? ¿Podría describir brevemente este episodio en su vida?
6. ¿Siente que fue ayudado por este tipo de lectura? Por favor explique su respuesta.
7. ¿Compartió con otra(s) persona(s) lo que aprendió al leer material de auto-ayuda? Por favor, explique su respuesta.
8. ¿Escogió leer este tipo de material de auto-ayuda por recomendación o sugerencia de sus padres, amigos, profesores, u otros?
9. ¿Cómo definiría la experiencia de leer en idioma inglés?
10. ¿Disfrutó la lectura en idioma inglés? Por favor explique su respuesta.

**Formulario de Autorización para Participantes**

**APLICACIÓN DE MATERIAL DE LECTURA DE AUTO-AYUDA PARA TRATAR LAS NECESIDADES EMOCIONALES Y SOCIALES DE ESTUDIANTES DE INGLÉS MIENTRAS SE INCREMENTAN SUS NIVELES DE LECTURA COMPRESIVA EN ESTE IDIOMA EXTRANJERO**

Por favor indique su relación con el estudiante-participante menor de edad:

Yo, \_\_\_\_\_ en calidad de representante legal del estudiante-participante \_\_\_\_\_ autorizo a mi representado(a) a participar en este estudio de investigación cualitativo de acuerdo con las especificaciones facilitadas por **Melba A. Merizalde A.**

Esta investigación se lleva a cabo en cumplimiento parcial de los requisitos para la obtención del título de postgrado en la **Maestría en Enseñanza de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera en la ESPOL.**

El objetivo de este estudio de investigación es emplear material de lectura de auto-ayuda para tratar las necesidades sociales y emocionales de los participantes mientras se incrementan sus niveles de lectura comprensiva en idioma inglés.

Descripción de los métodos de investigación

Los participantes aprenderán a leer material de auto-ayuda ya sea didáctico o de ficción en idioma inglés desde una perspectiva de auto-reflexión a fin de mejorar su comprensión de problemas personales, sociales, y emocionales a través de la lectura de diferentes capítulos, historias cortas, cuentos y otras fuentes. De esta forma se espera también incrementar su lectura comprensiva en inglés. Estrategias de lectura tales como lectura intensiva y extensiva, lectura en voz alta, lectura crítica, debates, diarios de reflexión entre otras serán utilizadas durante este estudio. Los datos serán recogidos por el profesor-investigador por medio de entrevistas, observaciones, grabaciones y notas de campo durante las clases con los participantes las cuales tendrán lugar dos veces por semana durante dos meses consecutivos.

Requisitos de los participantes

Los participantes deberán asistir normalmente a sus clases de inglés como idioma extranjero dos veces por semana durante 90 minutos al día, desde el 20 de octubre al 23 de diciembre de 2009. Los participantes recibirán completamente gratis todo el material de lectura de auto-ayuda para llevar a cabo este estudio de investigación así como las estrategias necesarias para el cumplimiento de sus tareas.

Beneficios para los participantes

Los participantes tendrán la oportunidad de incrementar su conocimiento sobre temas del diario vivir y podrán mejorar sus habilidades de lectura comprensiva en idioma inglés. Además, se les darán incentivos para acrecentar su motivación y compromiso.

Riesgos y molestias

No existen riesgos en este estudio. Sin embargo, para evitar molestias por parte de los estudiantes-participantes todo el material de lectura de auto-ayuda será elegido considerando su suficiencia en idioma inglés como lengua extranjera.

Persona a contactar

La profesora-investigadora puede ser contactada en cualquier momento durante el periodo de estudio a través del correo electrónico: [melva7777@hotmail.com](mailto:melva7777@hotmail.com)

Confidencialidad

Entiendo que toda la información se manejará con absoluta confidencialidad para proteger la identidad de mi representado(a) y solamente información demográfica como su edad y género y un nombre escogido (seudónimo) se comunicarán en los resultados de este estudio.

Participación voluntaria

Voluntariamente permito a mi representado(a) participar en este estudio de investigación. Sé lo que mi representado(a) tendrá que hacer y que él/ella puede retirarse de este estudio en el momento en que así lo considere oportuno. Comprendo que las calificaciones correspondientes a la cátedra de idioma inglés de mi representado(a) no se verán perjudicadas de ninguna manera si decidiera no permitirle participar en este estudio. Al firmar este formulario de autorización, expreso que estoy de acuerdo con las especificaciones de este estudio y que recibiré una copia del mismo.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del Representante

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del Investigador

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

APPENDIX D

READING COMPREHENSION AND RATE TESTS IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

EFL READING COMPREHENSION STARTER TEST 2  
OXFORD BOOKWORMS

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Every day lots of different people come to Happy Hills, because there are lots of exciting things to do. Sally Brown \_\_\_\_\_ (WALKS, WAITS, WORKS, WANTS) at Happy Hills in her holiday. \_\_\_\_\_ (SHE, IT, HER, HERS) is a student and she wants \_\_\_\_\_ (FOR, TO, AT, OF) be a teacher.

“I need the \_\_\_\_\_ (MONEY, CAR, HOUSE, CLOTHES) she tells her family, and it’s \_\_\_\_\_ (an, a, the, that) interesting job.” But she always \_\_\_\_\_ (MUCH, MORE, SUCH, VERY) tired in the evening.

The workers \_\_\_\_\_ (ON, AT, TO, WITH) Happy Hills arrive early in the \_\_\_\_\_ (work, time, morning, night). They all wear clean green trousers \_\_\_\_\_ (ALSO, BUT, SO, AND) yellow shirts. They must smile a \_\_\_\_\_ (lot, lots, not, little) and be nice to all the \_\_\_\_\_ (SCHOOLS, CARS, CLOTHES, VISITORS).

Every morning Mr. Parry puts a \_\_\_\_\_ (EMAIL, LIST, PAPER, LETTER) of *Jobs for Today* in the \_\_\_\_\_ (WORKERS’, SALLY’S, MR. PARRY’S, FAMILY’S) canteen. Mr. Parry wears different clothes. \_\_\_\_\_ (HER, OUR, THEIR, HIS) shirt is green and his trousers \_\_\_\_\_ (ARE, IS, WAS, ARM) white, and he wears a read \_\_\_\_\_ (SHOES, COAT, TROUSERS, BAG) with *I’, Ken Parry. Can I \_\_\_\_\_ (PLAY, SEE, HELP, TALK) you?* on his pocket. The visitors \_\_\_\_\_ (NAME, CALL, TELL, SAY) him Ken, but all the workers \_\_\_\_\_ (NAME, CALL, TELL, SAY) him Mr. Parry.

Today Sally arrives \_\_\_\_\_ (OF, TO, FOR, AT) Happy Hills at eight o’clock. On her shirt there is a picture of a smiling face and *Have a Happy Day* in black and red writing. She goes to the canteen and looks for Mr. Parry’s list.

“What job am I doing today?” Sally thinks. “Am I making tea, or helping in the children’s play house? But Sally is wrong. The list says “Sally Brown – Connie Cat. Break: eleven o’clock.”

EFL READING COMPREHENSION TEST IN ENGLISH

*A Good Reason to Look Up*

*Much is required from those to whom much is given, for their responsibility is greater.*

- Luke 12:48

When I was in junior high school, what my friends thought of me was really important to me. During those years I grew much taller than most of my peers. Being so tall made me feel uncomfortable. In order to keep the focus off of me and my unusual height, I went along with the crowd who would play practical jokes on other kids at school. Being one of the class clowns gave me a way to make sure that the jokes were directed at others, and not at me.

I would pull all kinds of pranks that were hurtful, and sometimes even harmful, to others. Once before gym class, my friends and I put Icy Hot in the gym shorts of one of the kids on the basketball team. Not only was he terribly embarrassed, but he also had to go to the school nurse's office. I thought it was going to be funny, but it ended up that no one thought it was – least of all my father.

My parents didn't always think that my behavior was funny. They reminded me about The Golden Rule: to treat others as I would like to be treated. Many times, I was disciplined for the hurtful way that I was treating others. What I was doing was hurting other kids, and in turn hurting my reputation as someone to be looked up to. My friends were looking up to me because I was tall, but what did they see?

My parents wanted me to be a leader who was a good example to others – to be a decent human being. They taught me to set my own goals, and to do the best at everything that I set out to do. During the lectures I got from my father, he told me over and over again to be the leader that I was meant to be – to be a big man in my heart and actions, as well as in my body. I had to question myself whether or not it was important to be the kind of leader and

person my father believed I was inside. I knew in my heart that he was right. So I tried my best to follow my father's advice.

Once I focused on being the best that I could be at basketball and became a leader in the game, I took my responsibility to set a good example more seriously. I sometimes have to stop and think before I act, and I make mistakes occasionally – everyone is human. But I continue to look for opportunities where I can make a difference, and to set a good example because of my father's advice. I now pass it on to you.

“Be a leader, Shaq, not a follower. Since people already have to look up to you, give them a *good* reason to do so.”

*Shaquille O'Neal*

1. Comprehension Questions

1. The author played practical jokes on other kids to attract attention to himself. T/F
2. His father thought that putting Icy Hot in someone's gym shorts was funny. T/F
3. Because he was taller than them, the author's friends looked up to him. T/F
4. The author wanted to be a good person and a good example to others. T/F
5. The author feels that making mistakes is part of being human. T/F
6. His father wanted him to be a good leader by being good at basketball. T/F

2. Vocabulary words and phrases for “A Good Reason to Look Up”. Translate the following words or phrases into Spanish or paraphrase them accordingly.

1. Junior high school
2. Peers
3. Uncomfortable
4. Unusual
5. Height
6. To go along with the crowd
7. Practical jokes

8. Pranks
9. Clown
10. Hurtful
11. Harmful
12. Gym; gym shorts
13. Behavior
14. To be disciplined
15. To look up to someone
16. Human being
17. Goal
18. To set out to do something
19. To set a good example



## TEST ON READING AND COMPREHENSION IN SPANISH

### Reading and Comprehension Article in Spanish

Lea cuidadosamente el siguiente artículo y responda las preguntas de comprensión.

#### Hacia un modelo de desarrollo para el siglo XXI

La Cumbre Mundial para el Desarrollo Social es en sí misma prueba palpable del fracaso del actual modelo de desarrollo en cuanto garante de la seguridad y bienestar de los pueblos y naciones tanto del Norte como del Sur. La esencia de este modelo fallido se asienta en una arraigada visión materialista del propósito y naturaleza fundamentales de la persona y de la sociedad.

Satisfacer las necesidades materiales, asegurar la educación universal, crear las instituciones democráticas y los códigos de leyes en todos los niveles de nuestra sociedad mundial en aras del progreso económico y de la justicia social; todos éstos son elementos esenciales de un modelo de desarrollo universal digno del siglo XXI. Pero no son suficientes.

Hasta que las necesidades tanto materiales como espirituales y las aspiraciones de las personas no reciban su debido reconocimiento, los esfuerzos por el desarrollo continuarán viéndose frustrados en su mayor parte. La felicidad, la seguridad y bienestar, la cohesión social y la justicia económica no son meros subproductos de los logros materiales. Antes bien, éstos surgen de la interacción entre la satisfacción de las necesidades materiales y sociales y la realización espiritual de la persona.

Al vincular el progreso material a las aspiraciones espirituales fundamentales, y al apelar a los valores universales que permiten a las personas trascender sus intereses más inmediatos, los pueblos de la tierra se verán facultados para traducir los ideales y principios más elevados en actividades constructivas y constantes para su propio bienestar y el de sus comunidades.

Así pues, un modelo que aspire a procurar la prosperidad universal debe tener en cuenta la naturaleza espiritual y material de la persona y de la sociedad, y al mismo tiempo atender a la interdependencia creciente de los pueblos y naciones del planeta. Los Escritos Bahá'ís prevén el surgimiento de un nuevo modelo de desarrollo en que las regiones del mundo se "unan para compartir aquello de lo que las demás carezcan. Esta unión -se nos asegura- traerá consigo la verdadera civilización, aquella en que lo espiritual se expresa y realiza en lo material".

La Comunidad Internacional Bahá'í cree que la Declaración y el Programa de Acción pueden contribuir significativamente a un desarrollo social genuino, como demanda el siglo XXI, a condición de que tanto las necesidades espirituales como materiales y las aspiraciones de los pueblos del mundo reciban cumplido tratamiento.

Hoy en día, a las puertas del nuevo milenio, la marcha hacia la unidad mundial se ha convertido en una de los rasgos dominantes de la vida social. Está surgiendo de manera evidente una conciencia mundial. Crece el número de personas convencidas de que la construcción de un planeta pacífico y justo no sólo es posible, sino que, en verdad, resulta esencial para la supervivencia misma de la humanidad.

Simultáneamente, coexisten sectores significativos de la comunidad mundial -entre ellos muchos teóricos sociales, economistas líderes religiosos y seculares, que adoptan el punto de vista según el cual los hombres son seres incorregiblemente egoístas y agresivos, y por tanto incapaces de erigir un orden social pacífico, progresivo y mundial en sus alcances. Tan cínico punto de vista sobre la naturaleza humana, con su corolario de actitudes y comportamientos, ha contribuido enormemente a los males que azotan a la sociedad actual: la pobreza, el desempleo, la lucha social, el consumismo, el nacionalismo chauvinista, la guerra, y la apatía moral y espiritual.

Si la Cumbre Mundial para el Desarrollo Social ha de "sentar las bases del trabajo de las Naciones Unidas en la esfera del desarrollo social de las generaciones venideras", tal y como el Secretario General de las Naciones Unidas ha sugerido, habrá de examinar las dos cosmovisiones mencionadas, y reconocer en consecuencia que mientras que la primera de ellas proporciona inspiración e impulso a un progreso social sin precedentes, la segunda sólo alienta la sospecha y la división.

Debe lograrse que una manera de pensar y un espíritu integrador nuevos arrojen luz sobre los puntos centrales de la Cumbre. No debe permitirse que el proceso de la Cumbre se desvíe con llamadas a estrechos intereses materiales y nacionales, no importa de qué lado vengan ni en qué términos se expresen. En este punto hará falta practicar una vigilancia constante.

Para superar el particularismo y la mentalidad provinciana se necesitará contar con iniciativas audaces y gran valor por parte del Comité Preparatorio. La responsabilidad por fomentar el bienestar de todos los miembros de una sociedad particular -principio elemental del bienestar social moderno- debe ampliarse hasta abarcar a todos los pueblos de la tierra. Sólo al aceptar el principio de la unidad de la humanidad puede el Comité Preparatorio garantizar que las deliberaciones del proceso preparatorio se centren en el bienestar de la familia humana entera, ampliando el concepto de bienestar social, que de esta manera superaría las fronteras nacionales para aplicarse a la totalidad del mundo. Por lo tanto, urgimos a que el Comité Preparatorio convierta el principio de unidad de la humanidad en el "tema central y vertebrador de la Cumbre", y a que explore sus consecuencias para los pueblos y naciones de la tierra, y a que lo transforme en programas realizables y compromisos prácticos.

La unidad de la humanidad, y su corolario, la unidad en la diversidad, son de aplicación tanto para las personas como para las naciones. Constituye un criterio práctico,

y a decir verdad esencial, para el reordenamiento de la vida a escala planetaria. La unidad de la humanidad es tanto una declaración de principio como meta última de la existencia humana. Implica, pues, mucho más que una predisposición a cooperar; trasluce la añoranza que sienten las personas por un mundo impregnado de tal espíritu de comunidad, compañerismo y compasión, que torna intolerables y en su día impensables la miseria, la degradación, la violencia y la opresión. En un mundo así la paz, la justicia social y económica, la prosperidad y la libertad, estarán a la orden del día. La aceptación creciente de la unidad de la humanidad es la fuerza más poderosa que impulsa al mundo hacia la unidad.

En un mundo cuya interdependencia se intensifica día a día, ya no es posible que un pueblo o una nación logren la prosperidad a expensas de la de otros pueblos y naciones. Por tanto, el avance en los temas centrales de la Cumbre -logro de una integración social duradera, paliación de las causas básicas de la pobreza, y la expansión del empleo productivo y constante- sólo puede conseguirse mediante estrategias y actuaciones que fomenten la unidad interna y externa de las naciones de la tierra. Un compromiso firme con el principio de unidad de la humanidad servirá en gran medida para que el Comité Preparatorio elabore una "estrategia global y un plan de acción" eficaces que brinden respuesta a estos temas centrales.

Indudablemente, la educación y los programas de formación contarán con una presencia significativa en esta estrategia global y plan de acción. Dichos programas deben promover el principio de la unidad de la humanidad y hacer comprender lo inexorable, por más que turbulento, del avance de la civilización hacia una integración global. Sólo en la medida en que los pueblos del planeta hagan suyo este principio, discerniendo en los grandes cambios que afectan a la sociedad los signos de integración, podrán desarrollar su confianza en el futuro, mostrarse dispuestos a sacrificarse por el bien común, y verse facultados para desempeñar un papel activo y constructivo a nivel local, nacional y, finalmente, mundial. La

capacidad de pensar globalmente se está convirtiendo en un requisito del desarrollo económico y social de toda nación y pueblo. Pues es en tal reconocimiento en donde el conocimiento, las actitudes y las destrezas necesarias para operar eficazmente en un mundo que avanza velozmente hacia su integración.

Por consiguiente, la Comunidad Internacional Bahá'í insta a que el Comité Preparatorio rechace las justificaciones de intereses nacionales y materiales de miras cortas, y a que adopte la unidad de la humanidad como piedra de toque moral para la estrategia global y plan de acción para el desarrollo social. La aceptación de tal principio integrador ha de facilitar el descubrimiento y puesta en marcha de soluciones duraderas a los abrumadores problemas sociales que tiene ante sí la Cumbre. Pues únicamente a medida que los pueblos del mundo empiecen a mirar el planeta como un solo hogar y a sus habitantes como un solo pueblo, empezarán a tomar forma la visión, la entereza moral y el compromiso necesarios para enfrentarse a los complejos retos del desarrollo social. Entonces, y sólo entonces, podrá la humanidad erigir un orden social cuyas fronteras sean los confines mismos del planeta. Dirigiéndose a esta época, Bahá'u'lláh escribió: "No te gloríes de que amas tu país, sino de que amas a toda la humanidad".

#### Preguntas de Comprensión

1. El artículo implica que los modelos de desarrollo social hasta 1995 fracasaron. V/F
2. Un modelo Nuevo de desarrollo total requiere justicia y progreso económico. V/F
3. Según el artículo la felicidad, la seguridad, y el bienestar dependen solamente del progreso económico. V/F
4. El idea principal del artículo es:
5. ¿Qué requiere el modelo de la prosperidad universal?
6. La interdependencia es más necesaria que la independencia en el mundo hoy en día.

V/F

7. Según el artículo, ¿qué pasa ahora en este milenio que no hay pasado en tiempos antiguos?
8. Según el artículo, ¿qué partes de la sociedad son obstáculos al progreso de la humanidad?

APPENDIX E  
EFL THERAPEUTIC READING COURSE FOR BEGINNER LEVEL BASED ON A  
LEARNER-CENTERED APPROACH

Course Handbook  
EFL Therapeutic Reading Course  
Beginner Level

First Year of High School

Ecuador, 2009



### 1. Instructor Information

Professor: Melba Merizalde Alcívar, BA in Applied English Linguistics

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### 2. Purpose of the Course

Reading is a challenging, enjoyable, and rewarding activity that not only gives people knowledge but also provides them with amazing tools to deal with daily matters. In this respect, understanding the meaning of the selected reading material is a crucial reading skill. Accordingly, the main purpose of this course is to apply self-help reading as a way to foster students' self-reflection and a better understanding of everyday life while developing their EFL reading comprehension.

### 3. Course Description

This syllabus includes all the activities, assignments, self-help reading material, schedule, grading procedures, and evaluation criteria to be used in the EFL self-help reading course for beginner level developed for students of first year of high school for a 9-week period. Accordingly, this is an EFL course intended for teenager learners that will encourage them to become active, reflective, analytical, and responsible participant readers. So, the different topics and situations included in this course will be in line with their social and emotional needs.

This syllabus employs a learning-centered approach as a way to get students/participants to increase self-reflection and their engagement with the contents to be dealt. So, there will be topics, vocabulary, conversation, reading strategies, and reading and writing assignments to be carried out either inside and outside the classroom consonant with the scope and sophistication of lexical and syntactical items employed at a low EFL proficiency level.

### 4. Course and Unit Objectives

#### Goal

- To promote self-reflection by means of reading self-help material as a way to address students' social and emotional needs while developing their EFL reading comprehension in a purposeful, communicative, and supportive learning environment.

#### Objectives

When students have completed this course, they should be able to:

- Read self-help reading material such as: short stories, chapters, poems, fables, and articles from the Internet about personal items that lead to realistic writing tasks.
- Develop self-reflection regarding their social and emotional needs.
- Explore and use some reading strategies/techniques as a way to improve their reading rate and reading comprehension.
- Carry out written assignments such as reflective journals and double-entry journals.
- Keep a vocabulary notebook.
- Develop and deliver individual oral presentations according to selected topics.
- Draw and present mind maps (bubble diagram) of what some terms mean to them. To draw their mind maps they should go to [www.mymindmeister.com](http://www.mymindmeister.com), draw their web diagrams, and submit the link in teacher's mail.
- Monitor and self-assess their progress.
- Do peer revision.
- Make suggestions to improve the course.

#### 5. Course Material and Resources

Students will be provided with all the self-help reading material. Hence, different sources include:

Canfield, J. & Hansen, M. (1993). Chicken soup for the soul. *All the good things*.

Health Communications, Inc. Retrieved October 24, 2009, from

[http://www.chickensoup.com/file/All\\_Good\\_Things\\_All\\_Levels.pdf](http://www.chickensoup.com/file/All_Good_Things_All_Levels.pdf)

Canfield, J.; Hansen, M.; Hansen, P., & Dunlap, I. (2004). Chicken soup for the teen

soul 4. *A step to healing*. Health Communications, Inc. Retrieved October 22, 2009,

from [http://books.google.com.ec/books?id=mDn8Z7\\_Ce7wC&pg=PA234&lpg=PA234&dq=a+step+to+healing+chicken+soup&source=bl&ots=DGgIIf\\_ZHP&sig=J2TFQpkQCipF0otVSbYxIjzB\\_E&hl=es&ei=WZBbTLKYCMH88AborOyDAg&sa=X&oi=book\\_res](http://books.google.com.ec/books?id=mDn8Z7_Ce7wC&pg=PA234&lpg=PA234&dq=a+step+to+healing+chicken+soup&source=bl&ots=DGgIIf_ZHP&sig=J2TFQpkQCipF0otVSbYxIjzB_E&hl=es&ei=WZBbTLKYCMH88AborOyDAg&sa=X&oi=book_res)

[ult&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CCUQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com.ec/books?id=mDn8Z7_Ce7wC&pg=PA234&lpg=PA234&dq=a+step+to+healing+chicken+soup&source=bl&ots=DGgIIf_ZHP&sig=J2TFQpkQCipF0otVSbYxIjzB_E&hl=es&ei=WZBbTLKYCMH88AborOyDAg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CCUQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Sacristan, P. (2008). *An insignificant task*. Retrieved October 24, 2009, from

<http://freestoriesforkids.com/children/stories-and-tales/insignificant-task>

Additionally, students will need to have:

- Access to the Internet.
- An e-mail account.

## 6. Readings

This EFL course for Beginner Level includes selected self-help reading materials; two of them from the series of books *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, and one from the author Pedro Sacristan. These appealing readings have been chosen since I really think reading and reading comprehension skills require a lot of motivation, as well as suitable study techniques. So, when reading students should pay attention to supporting cues; highlight, summarize, review important ideas, and demonstrate sensitivity to or empathy with characters or events; monitor effectiveness; create motivation and interest; and be as critical and self-reflective as possible.

## 7. Course Calendar

This syllabus will be covered in a nine-week term on Tuesdays and Thursdays for 90 minutes a day. Hence, the schedule and assignments are the following ones:

<i>Week</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Assignment*</i>
1	20 and 22/10/2009	First Interview	
1	27 and 29/10/2009	Reading Comprehension Tests-Guidelines	
2	5/11/2009	First Reading: All the Good Things	Notebook
3	10 and 12/11/2009	First Reading: All the Good Things	Double-Entry Journal 1 / Notebook
4	17 and 19/11/2009	Second Reading: An Insignificant Task	Double-Entry Journal 2 / Notebook
5	24 and 26/11/2009	Internet Activity from <a href="http://www.mywebspiration.com">www.mywebspiration.com</a>	Draw and present mind maps (bubble diagram) of what the above mentioned readings mean to you.
6	1 and 3/11/2009	Oral Presentations: Individual topics	Notebook
7	8 and 10/12/2009	Mid-Term Evaluation	
8	15 and 17/12/2009	Third Reading: A Step to Healing	Double-Entry Journal 3 / Notebook
9	22 and 23/12/2009	Final Evaluation – Final Interview	

\*Additional assignments will be given.

\*Holiday on October 3 and December 24, 2009.

## 8. Course Requirements

### Writing the Papers

This EFL course requires learners to write three two-entry journals as thoughtfully and critically as possible from the readings accomplished inside the classroom. They should be handwritten and should include the following points:

- On the front of the page they should divide their paper in half by drawing a vertical line down the middle of the page.
- In the left-hand column they will need to write a summary and include key points, specific examples, quotations, and important things.
- In the right-hand column they will need to give personal opinions, react to the subject, personalize their reaction, and write process paragraphs with advice on the problem presented in the reading.
- On the back of the page, they should list new vocabulary words found in the reading. For each new word they should include the following information: part of speech, connotation (positive, negative, or neutral), definition of the word, and a sentence using the new vocabulary words.

Students will also need to keep a vocabulary notebook in which they should include all the words that they do not know based on readings accomplished either inside or outside the classroom. As a minimum students will need to complete ten entries every week. They will be test individually on their words.

Finally, students will be required to develop and deliver individual oral presentations in which they will need to explain their mind maps. Topics will be up to them. Students will give their presentation (15 minutes in length) in oral form and will use visual aids from their mywebspiration.com page. In every case, the tenure-track position EFL teacher and the teacher-researcher will give formative and summative assessment. Additionally, partners will write final comments for each presentation. Last but not least, in order to motivate and engage students, teachers will choose the best three oral presentations. Individual prizes will be awarded to them.

## 9. Evaluation

Evaluation will be ongoing either in formative or summative way. Learners will be given feedback on their participation, performance, assignments, oral presentations, two-entry journals, tests, and mid-term and final examinations, either

orally or in written form regarding global concerns (content, ideas, and organization) and form concerns (mechanics).

Finally, since one of the general goals of this EFL course is to get learners to self-evaluate their learning process, there has been included a capstone activity which requires learners to respond to the following questions in the final interview: What were your expectations at the beginning of this course? Now looking back at everything you have done: How did you like your experience reading self-help material? What value if any have you gotten from reading self-help material? Have you reflected on its value? Students will need to use reasons and specific examples to support their answers.

Hence, the parameters to be considered when evaluating students' performance are as follows:

1. Class attendance, punctuality, and participation.
2. One oral presentation.
3. Activities inside and outside the classroom.
4. Three double-entry journals in response to selected readings accomplished in the classroom.
5. Mid-term tests and final exam.

#### 10. Grading Procedures

Grades for students' performance and work will be based on the criteria outlined below.

- Class attendance, punctuality, and participation. (2.5 points). In this parameter, there will be evaluated the following criteria: learners' attendance and promptness; level of engagement in class; listening skills (that is, if students listen when others talk and incorporate their ideas); behavior; and preparation for class with assignments and required materials.
- Vocabulary notebook (3.5 points).
- One oral presentation (4 points).
- Three double-entry journals in response to the readings accomplished inside the classroom. (5 points). In this parameter, there will be evaluated the following criteria: learners' knowledge and recognition of the vocabulary,

concepts, and themes presented in the readings; comprehension; analysis that shows their ability to make a distinction between key concepts expressed in the readings; synthesis that illustrates their ability to modify or translate the concepts presented in readings into possible situations by integrating hypothetical ideas, and past experiences; and evaluation that shows evidence of well thought out appraisal of information presented in readings.

- Mid-term and final examinations (5 points).

Finally, it is significant to say that:

- Academic dishonesty is not allowed.
- Late assignments will be penalized one grade point per day.

### 11. How to Study for this Course

You will be studying the material for this course independently and in groups. All the information required for you to succeed in this course is detailed in this handbook.

In addition, you should follow these requirements:

- Do all your assignments as critically and thoughtfully as possible on time.
- Carry out all the inside classroom exercises.
- Keep your vocabulary notebook updated.
- Make notes on stories and other readings to highlight main idea(s).
- Browse the Internet for looking for further information when necessary.
- Plan your double-entry journals on time.
- Gather together notes and ideas for your double-entry journals.
- Plan your oral presentation on time in line with the topic you are interested in.
- Self-revise your grammar, vocabulary, and conversation strategies by means of the checkpoint activities.

### 12. Content Information

#### A Note on Terminology

In this course, “EFL” refers to English as a Foreign Language. The “double-entry journal” refers to graphic organizers intended to help students learn the critical art of close reading as a means to record their responses to text as they read, to express their thoughts and become engaged with the material they read. “Self-help reading

material” refers to the use of reading from the perspective of self-reflection and a better understanding of everyday life. “Learning-centered syllabus” refers to a new approach to education that helps and challenges students become truly responsible for their own learning in authentic learning communities.

### 13. Learning Tools

This learning-centered syllabus aims to help you develop a wider range of study skills and a flexible attitude to your studies. In this section, there will be included five effective study skills to promote learning:

#### 1) Self-Management

You should make more productive use of your time when studying. So you should:

- Set your own targets and decide your own priorities
- Manage your time so that you can find time to accomplish all your assignments by planning out your week and can use time effectively by doing work of different kinds in the most suitable time.
- Define tasks for yourself and then allocate time to them and monitor your progress as you attempt to complete them.
- Set up a place to study where you can have access to all the required material(s) and can organize things where you can find them.
- Explore libraries and browse the Internet.
- Think about how you learn, reflect on the usefulness of your newly acquired knowledge, and try to apply it into real life situations.

#### 2) Reading to Learn

Reading is a central activity in this EFL course and it is intended as an active process that will enable you to engage with the ideas in the different texts. That is why you should:

- Define your tasks as you set out to read (setting a target).
- Underline or highlight main idea(s).
- Take useful notes as and when appropriate.
- Stop to look ahead or back in the text when you lose the thread of the argument.



- Check across the other sources as necessary.
- Summarize in your own words.
- Monitor your progress.

### 3) Feelings and Motivation

You should be able to manage your feelings towards your work. So, you should:

- Build upon your enthusiasm.
- Avoid sinking into despair when you hit hard times.
- Make the topic(s) interesting.

### 4) Learning in Groups

Group learning and group discussions are a widely used mode of studying. Hence, you should:

- Share in the responsibility for keeping the group going.
- Keep in short and simple.
- Use examples to illustrate your points.
- Enjoy taking part in group discussions.

### 5) Examinations and Tests

Tests and examinations will let us see how well you have learned. So, the following tips will help you improve your test-taking skills:

#### Before the test

- Start preparing for your tests and exams the very first day of class; so by reading your syllabus carefully you will find out when your exams will be, how many there will be, and how much they are weighed into your grade.
- Select the parts of the course you intend to revise or study carefully.
- Team up with other partners for your revision.
- Seek out the central questions in each of the parts of the course you have chosen to revise.
- Condense the content of your chosen sections into very brief summarizing notes.

- Think up questions you might be asked or try to predict exam questions by turning the main points of the different topics into questions and check to see if the answers come to you quickly and correctly.

#### During the Test

- Relax. Do not be nervous!
- Read the directions carefully given that tests will be either on individual or global language skills and final exam will be on all language skills.
- Do your best to write legibly.
- Try to save time at the end of the exam to review your test and make sure you have answered all the questions accordingly.
- Have your own material, i.e. pen, pencil, eraser, sharpener, etc., to take your tests and final exam.

Adapted from: *The Good Study Guide*. The Open University, Andrew Northedge, (1990).

APPENDIX F  
FINAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Final Interview Questions

1. How did you experience reading the self-help material chosen for your EFL reading classes? Explain your answer.
2. What value if any have you gotten from reading the self-help material included in this reading course? If yes, have you reflected on its value?
3. Do you feel the self-help reading material chosen for this EFL reading module has helped you overcome and/or improve some social and emotional needs? Why?
4. Do you regard the role of the self-help reading material included in this course as having helped you improve your EFL reading skills? Give reasons to support your answer.
5. At this point, how would you define the experience of reading in EFL? Why?
6. From your personal viewpoint, what were the best and worst aspects of this EFL reading course? Give reasons to support your answer.

APPENDIX G  
ANALYTICAL MEMOS

Extract from Analytical Memos

Observation data were transcribed and analyzed after each lesson. Key episodes were identified and a list of questions generated by these episodes compiled. Questions were collated by category and summarized in analytical memos.

1. Learning new vocabulary: The students-participants seem to believe they have to look for new words, idioms, phrasal verbs, among others in bilingual dictionaries or translators by themselves.

How do they feel with the methodology used to present and learn new vocabulary? Can they see or experience benefits and advantages from this learning way? Do they use these new words in purposeful and meaningful situations inside the classroom? Would they be able to infer some meanings from context?

2. Pre-reading questions: The students-participants seem to answer this type of questions with sincerity and ease.

How do students-participants feel these questions help them activate mental patterns and predict the type of story they are to read? How do students-participants' schemata increase their reading comprehension? How do students-participants feel these questions are productive and helpful in the process of understanding main ideas of the story? Can students-participants discover sub-topics in the story effortlessly? Can these questions elicit students-participants' feelings and emotion?

3. While-reading process: The students-participants seem to recognize main character and his/her situation or problem without problems.

Do reading aloud sessions provide students participants with a sense of understanding the message of the input given? Do students-participants feel they get a better understanding when reading silently and individually? How do students-participants feel this process is helpful for them to identify with the main character of the story and his/her problem or situation? Do students-participants find this process is helpful so that they can improve their EFL reading comprehension levels?

4. Post-reading questions: The student participants seem to remember specific details on the characters involved in the story effortlessly.

What are students-participants' attitudes towards post-reading activities? Are their viewpoints openly expressed during group and class discussions? How do students-

participants feel these questions help them interact with the text in order to construct meaning and think as critically as possible? How do students-participants feel when giving their own ways to solve similar situations or problems? Do they feel they are in a supportive and encouraging environment to do that?

5. Outside activities and homework: Some students-participants seem to be reluctant to carry out these activities:

Do they feel homework is overwhelming and boring? How do they feel when writing double-entry journals? In which section of the double-entry journals do the students-participants find more troubles, i.e. in the summary section or in the personal opinion section? Can the personal opinion section elicit students-participants' truly thoughtful ideas or reactions? Is the vocabulary notebook fulfilling its purpose of helping students-participants learn and remember new words? Do these outside activities let students-participants monitor and self-assess their progress? Do these activities promote self-reflection so that students-participants can address their social and emotional needs while developing their EFL reading comprehension?

6. Students-participants choose topics to draw mind maps and develop and deliver individual oral presentations from them:

How do students-participants feel the selected topics on values can help them overcome certain social, emotional, or learning problems? Can they develop self-reflection regarding the selected topics in line with their needs or problems? Do they find problems when drawing their mind maps in the Mindmeister web page? Is this the first time they accomplish an activity from the Internet to learn EFL?

7. Students-participants make comments and ask questions about stories and personal items:

"Teens are supposed to be irresponsible." "My parents interfere a lot in my life and decisions." "These readings are light in my life." "Suicide is a definite solution to a temporary problem." "Death is terrible and unfair." "Friendship is not such an important and durable value." "I don't want to be a bad person." "Good teachers make good students." "Parents always want the best for their kids." "Teacher do you have a best friend from your childhood or adolescence?" "Teacher, do you treasure any letter from a friend who passed away or from a friend you haven't seen in many years?"

8. Teacher-researcher's reflective journals:

"Teaching slowly but steadily is necessary for my students to know how to deal with life and EFL learning problems." "My students need right guidance and support."

"Today I was surprised by Kristen's mother in our EFL classroom." "My students are overwhelmingly honest and sometimes they may be rude." "Alex's unwillingness to do homework is really worrying." "Double-entry journals provide me with student feedback that I would be unlikely to receive in any other way."



APPENDIX H

DETAILED LESSON PLANS OF TWO READING CLASS SESSIONS

*All the Good Things***Lesson Plan No. 2**


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**Reading:** 1  
**Book:** Chicken Soup for the Soul  
**Paragraphs:** 7-13  
**Topics:** Friendship  
**Sub-Topics:** Tough stuff-death  
**Course:** EFL Self-Help Reading Course  
**Teacher:** Melba Merizalde Alcívar  
**Email:** melva7777@hotmail.com  
**Date:** October 10, 2009

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**Level:** Low

**Time required:** 90 minutes

**Description:** Students read about validating each other.

**Goal:** Students will be able to cherish, value, and respect true friends.

**Objectives:** By the end of the class students will be able to:

1. Develop self-reflection regarding the topic of friendship.
2. Increase their vocabulary.
3. Improve their oral and written production.
4. Keep a vocabulary notebook.
5. Underline or highlight main idea(s) or word(s) as a way to improve their reading comprehension.
6. Take useful notes as and when appropriate.
7. Use new vocabulary in real-life situations.
8. Monitor and self-assess their progress.

**Materials:**

- Story: *All The Good Things* from the Book Chicken Soup for the Soul
- Dictionary
- Whiteboard, markers
- Notebook, pencil, highlighters

**Previous Lesson:** Reading 1: *All the Good Things* / Paragraphs 1-6

STAGE/TIME	LESSON PLAN STEP	TEACHER'S ACTIVITY	STUDENTS' ACTIVITIES	ASSESSMENT	FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES
15'	Warm up Motivation	Pre-Questions Name three people important to you.  Explain why you selected them.	SS individually answer these questions	Observation by teacher of: SS' participation, attitudes, and behavior. Ss' performance and criteria.	T. remembers students to keep their vocabulary notebook.  T. asks students to summarize in their own words the paragraphs they have read and to make connections with the first six paragraphs of the story.
15'	Anticipation to problems	T. asks students what they think about friends and friendship T. asks students to underline new vocabulary T. gives students meaning of new vocabulary	SS think carefully and answer this question openly.  SS write down new words.	SS' motivation and participation.  SS' questions about the new vocabulary.	
20'	Presentation	While Reading Story T. reads the story from paragraphs 7 through 13 as slowly as possible for the first time. T. asks students to read these paragraphs individually and silently.  T. asks students to take turns to read the paragraphs.	SS underline or highlight key words or phrases while T. reads.  SS read silently and slowly without interruptions to get a global understanding of the paragraphs.  SS read aloud with attention.	SS' participation, motivation, and behavior.  SS' performance.	
20'	Controlled Practice / Classroom Discussion	T. performs as a facilitator and asks students to answer some post-reading questions. T. asks students to give their viewpoints.	SS answer the questions.  SS offer their opinions and give other ways to solve similar situations.	SS' responses and personal criteria in line with the required information.  Peer revision. T. monitors and checks students' reading comprehension and oral production.	

15'	Free Practice	T. asks students to discuss the story among them.	SS discuss their answers with partners and find similar or different ideas in oral form.	Peer feedback. SS' participation.	
5'	Closure	T. emphasizes the importance of respect and tolerance between friends.	SS' final remarks.		

*All the Good Things***Lesson Plan No. 3**


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**Reading:** 1  
**Book:** Chicken Soup for the Soul  
**Paragraphs:** 14-18  
**Topics:** Acceptance and belonging  
**Sub-Topics:** Tough stuff-death  
**Course:** EFL Self-Help Reading Course  
**Teacher:** Melba Merizalde Alcívar  
**Email:** melva7777@hotmail.com  
**Date:** October 12, 2009

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**Level:** Low

**Time required:** 90 minutes

**Description:** Students read about validating each other.

**Goal:** Students will be able to give and receive positive feedback from peers.

**Objectives:** By the end of the class students will be able to:

1. Develop self-reflection regarding the topic of acceptance and belonging, and the subtopic of death.
2. Increase their vocabulary.
3. Improve their oral and written production.
4. Keep a vocabulary notebook.
5. Underline or highlight main idea(s) or word(s) as a way to improve their reading comprehension.
6. Take useful notes as and when appropriate.
7. Use new vocabulary in real-life situations.
8. Monitor and self-assess their progress.

**Materials:**

- Story: *All The Good Things* from the Book Chicken Soup for the Soul
- Dictionary
- Whiteboard, markers
- Notebook, pencil, highlighters

**Previous Lesson:** Reading 1: *All the Good Things* / Paragraphs 7-13

STAGE/TIME	LESSON PLAN STEP	TEACHER'S ACTIVITY	STUDENTS' ACTIVITIES	ASSESSMENT	FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES
15'	Warm up Motivation	Pre-Questions Name things important to you.  Explain why you selected them.	SS individually answer these questions	Observation by teacher of: SS' participation, attitudes, and behavior. Ss' performance and criteria.	T. remembers students to keep their vocabulary notebook.  T. asks students to write their reflective journals (double-entry journals).
15'	Anticipation to problems	T. asks students if they could choose one item that is so important to them that they would carry to their grave, what they would choose. T. asks students to underline new vocabulary and gives students meaning of new vocabulary	SS think carefully and answer this question openly.  SS write down new words.	SS' motivation and participation. SS' nonverbal reactions.  SS' questions about the new vocabulary.	T. asks students to complete the following warm fuzzy assignment: Be honest and write anonymous compliments to everyone else in the classroom. To receive full credit, you should use a different word to describe each partner.
20'	Presentation	While Reading Story T. reads the story from paragraphs 14 through 18 as slowly as possible for the first time. T. asks students to read these paragraphs individually and silently.  T. asks students to take turns to read the all paragraphs of the story.	SS underline or highlight key words or phrases while T. reads.  SS read silently and slowly without interruptions to get a global understanding of the paragraphs.  SS read aloud with attention.	SS' participation, motivation, and behavior.  SS' performance.	
20'	Controlled Practice / Classroom Discussion	T. performs as a facilitator and asks students to answer some	SS answer the questions.	SS' responses and personal criteria in line with the	

<p>15'</p>	<p>Free Practice</p>	<p>post-reading questions. T. asks students to give their viewpoints.</p>	<p>SS offer their opinions and give other ways to solve similar situations.</p>	<p>required information. Peer revision. T. monitors and checks students' reading comprehension and oral production.</p>	
<p>5'</p>	<p>Closure</p>	<p>T. asks students to discuss the story among them.  T. emphasizes the importance of respect and tolerance between friends.</p>	<p>SS discuss their answers with partners and find similar or different ideas in oral form.</p>	<p>Peer feedback SS' nonverbal reactions.</p>	

APPENDIX I  
STUDENT PARTICIPANTS' LETTERS OF COMPLIMENTS EDITED BY THE  
TEACHER-RESEARCHER



*"Some things will always be stronger than time and distance.  
Deeper than languages and ways.  
Like following your dreams.  
And learning to be yourself.  
Sharing with others the magic they have found in you."*

*By: Sergio Bambarén  
From: "The Dolphin ≈ Story of a Dreamer"*

*"Algunas cosas siempre serán más fuertes que el tiempo y la distancia.  
Más profundas que los lenguajes y las costumbres.  
Como el hecho de seguir tus sueños.  
Y aprender a ser tú misma.  
Comparte con otros la magia que ellos han descubierto en ti."*

*Sergio Bambarén  
"El Delfín ≈ La Historia de un Soñador"*

*Dear Johanny:*

*This is what your classmates think about you:*

- She is an excellent and funny person and is one of my best friends. I love her!*
- She is a nice person who is a good friend of mine.*
- She is so amusing.*
- She is so funny.*
- She is respectful and unpredictable.*
- She is a good and friendly person.*
- She is an outstanding and nice friend of mine.*
- She is so funny.*
- She is a happy girl.*
- She is a nice girl.*

*Regards,  
Your EFL Teacher*

*"Some things will always be stronger than time and distance.  
Deeper than languages and ways.  
Like following your dreams.  
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*Sergio Bambarén  
"El Delfín ≈ La Historia de un Soñador"*

Dear Alex:

This is what your classmates think about you:

- *He is a funny friend who makes me laugh. He is really comic. I love him!*
- *He is such a humorous boy!*
- *He is a good friend of mine who is funny and quiet at the same time.*
- *He is absolutely respectful.*
- *He is amusing and full of a splendid sense of humor.*
- *He is really cool and I like him just the way he is. Sometimes he can be a little weird but I really like it!*
- *He is full of fun and happiness.*
- *He is nice, very funny, and is my best friend in the whole world!*
- *He is a happy and joyful boy.*
- *He is cheerful and positive.*

Regards,  
Your EFL Teacher

*"Some things will always be stronger than time and distance.  
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"El Delfín ≈ La Historia de un Soñador"*

Dear J.T.:

*This is what your classmates think about you:*

- *He is an exceptional friend. I enjoy doing my homework with him. I love him!*
- *He is so intelligent and funny. He is a good friend of mine.*
- *He is a quiet, funny, polite, and good friend of mine.*
- *He is my best ever friend. He works hard every single day to achieve his goals.*
- *He is very intelligent and respectful. In spite of being a shy guy he is a great and kind friend of mine.*
- *He is very bright and responsible.*
- *He is one of the most respectful persons I have ever met in my life.*
- *He is one of my best ever friends in my life.*
- *He is an incredible friend.*
- *He is nice. Sometimes he can be shy, but he is an excellent student.*

Regards,  
Your EFL Teacher

*"Some things will always be stronger than time and distance.  
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"El Delfín ≈ La Historia de un Soñador"*

Dear Dan:

This is what your classmates think about you:

- *He is a good friend. I love him!*
- *He is such a funny guy.*
- *He is an interesting and good friend of mine.*
- *He is an amusing friend who always values true friendship.*
- *He is respectful.*
- *He is so nice and outgoing.*
- *He is so smart and brilliant.*
- *He is super funny and nice. He is also my second best friend in the whole world. He really is good at playing football.*
- *He is trustworthy.*
- *He is very happy and joyful.*

Regards,  
Your EFL Teacher

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*Dear El Barto:*

*This is what your classmates think about you:*

- He is a good friend whom I really enjoy talking to. He is so funny. I love him!*
- He is so natural and spontaneous.*
- He is a funny friend with tender feelings of authentic friendship.*
- He is a good person who is also an outstanding and amusing friend of mine.*
- He is a nice and valuable friend.*
- He is the kind of person you are glad to meet. He is very funny.*
- He is so respectful in every sense!*
- He is so thoughtful and kind with his friends.*
- He is a true friend.*
- He is funny and a very good student.*

*Regards,  
Your EFL Teacher*

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*Dear Andrea:*

*This is what your classmates think about you:*

- *She is a very good person who likes to help other people.*
- *She is so kind and absolutely respectful.*
- *She is incredibly honest and truthful.*
- *She is quiet, polite, and absolutely sincere.*
- *She is a quiet, responsible, respectful, and affectionate person.*
- *She is quite friendly and worried about all her friends. She always does good things.*
- *She is so polite, good, and nice as a friend and person.*
- *She is amazingly trustworthy.*
- *She is a shy girl who is an outstanding student.*
- *She is full of fun and happiness.*

*Regards,  
Your EFL Teacher*

*"Some things will always be stronger than time and distance.  
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*Sergio Bambarén  
"El Delfín ≈ La Historia de un Soñador"*

*Dear Kristen:*

*This is what your classmates think about you:*

- She is kind and genial.*
- She is a good human being.*
- She is so respectful, polite, and nice.*
- She is quiet and absolutely respectful with her tasks and assignments.*
- She is affectionate towards her friends even though it does not seem to be true at first sight. She is amazingly intelligent!*
- She is such a good friend of mine. She is so kind!*
- She is a shy and nice friend.*
- She is so friendly.*
- She is a nice and excellent student.*
- She is a cute person.*

*Regards,  
Your EFL Teacher*

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*Sergio Bambarén  
"El Delfín ≈ La Historia de un Soñador"*

*Dear Luna:*

*This is what your classmates think about you:*

- She is a very good person who continuously helps others in need.*
- She is a very organized person.*
- She is a good and funny friend. She is also polite in every sense.*
- She is so quiet but is absolutely devoted to reach her goals.*
- She is a very good friend and person.*
- She is a good confidant to me.*
- She is quiet and peaceful friend of mine.*
- She is a good human being.*
- She is full of fun and happiness.*
- She is a happy friend of mine.*

*Regards,  
Your EFL Teacher*



*"Some things will always be stronger than time and distance.  
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"El Delfín ≈ La Historia de un Soñador"*

*Dear Roy:*

*This is what your classmates think about you:*

- *He is friendly.*
- *He is kind and supportive.*
- *He is a good friend with a high sense of loyalty.*
- *He is affectionate towards his friends and is really charismatic.*
- *He is not just an excellent friend of mine, but also a great person.*
- *He is an awesome friend.*
- *He is a very good friend of mine.*
- *He is really smart.*
- *He is a good person and wonderful friend of mine.*
- *He is a shy guy with extraordinary feelings.*

*Regards,  
Your EFL Teacher*

*"Some things will always be stronger than time and distance.  
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*Sergio Bambarén  
"El Delfín ≈ La Historia de un Soñador"*

*Dear Chuck:*

*This is what your classmates think about you:*

- *He is a very happy and good person.*
- *He is a great friend who is really funny.*
- *He is affectionate towards his friends.*
- *He is so respectful.*
- *He is an amazing and funny friend of mine.*
- *He is a little bit crazy in a good sense. He is just a great person!*
- *He is a nice and good friend of mine.*
- *He is very lovely and smart.*
- *He is kind and funny all the time.*
- *He is a good person and friend.*

*Regards,  
Your EFL Teacher*

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*Sergio Bambarén  
"El Delfín ≈ La Historia de un Soñador"*

*Dear China:*

*This is what your classmates think about you:*

- *Happiness is the best word to describe her.*
- *She is constant to reach her goals.*
- *She has amusing ideas.*
- *She is a good and smart person who always supports her ideas and viewpoints.*
- *She is kind and incredibly intelligent.*
- *She is a little bit shy.*
- *She is getting friendlier and friendlier.*
- *She is cute.*
- *She is sweet and nice.*
- *She is a good student.*

*Regards,  
Your EFL Teacher*