



# “What’s Going to Happen?”: Exploring the Influence of Literature-to-film Adaptations in EFL Reading Interest

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## Abstract

This qualitative study examines the influence of literature-to-film adaptations as a pre-reading material to enhance reading interest in EFL. Twenty pre-service teachers (PSTs), within an EFL teacher education programme in Santiago, Chile, participated in this study. Participants engaged in two extensive reading (ER) sessions. They were allocated to either a film group that watched extracts of literature-to-film adaptations of two short stories, or a no-film group that read brief descriptions of these texts, before reading the full written source texts. Both questionnaire and focus group data were collected to examine participants’ experiences of reading interest in the intervention. Data analysis included descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Findings reveal that participants from both groups felt equally interested in reading the source, written texts in both ER sessions. Both pre-reading activities enhanced participants’ imagination and curiosity; their main driving factors to read in class. Nevertheless, the quality of their experiences differed in relation to surprise and engagement, intrinsically related to the nature of each of the pre-reading materials. This article discusses the benefits and limitations of literature-to-film adaptations in EFL classrooms regarding feasibility and impact on learners’ interest to read. This study and suggests that reading interest may not be exclusively dependent on multimodality in this specific context.

**Keywords:** EFL reading interest, extensive reading, literature-to-film adaptations, multimodality, pre-service teacher education.

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# «¿Qué va a pasar?»: Explorando la influencia de las adaptaciones literarias al cine en el interés por la lectura en inglés como lengua extranjera

## Resumen

Este estudio cualitativo examina la influencia de las adaptaciones de literatura a cine como material pedagógico para potenciar el interés lector en inglés como lengua extranjera. Veinte estudiantes de pedagogía de un programa de formación docente de inglés en Santiago, Chile, participaron en este estudio. Los participantes se asignaron a un grupo de 'adaptación', que vio extractos de adaptaciones de dos cuentos cortos, o a un grupo 'sin adaptación', que leyó una breve descripción sobre estos cuentos antes de leer los textos escritos. Ambos grupos participaron en dos sesiones de lectura extensiva. Se recopiló datos mediante cuestionarios y entrevistas grupales para analizar las experiencias de los participantes respecto a su interés lector durante la intervención. El análisis de datos incluyó estadística descriptiva y análisis temático. Los resultados revelan que ambos grupos mostraron un interés similar en la lectura de los textos fuente en ambas sesiones de lectura. Ambas actividades previas a la lectura facilitaron la imaginación y la curiosidad de los participantes, siendo estos los principales motivos para leer en clase. Sin embargo, sus experiencias difirieron en relación con la sorpresa e inmersión, aspectos intrínsecamente relacionados con la naturaleza de cada uno de los materiales pedagógicos. Este artículo discute los beneficios y limitaciones de las adaptaciones de literatura a cine en las aulas de inglés, en relación con su viabilidad e impacto en el interés lector, concluyendo que el interés por la lectura no depende exclusivamente de la multimodalidad.

*Palabras claves:* Interés por la lectura en inglés como lengua extranjera, lectura extensiva; adaptaciones literarias al cine; multimodalidad; formación inicial docente.

## Introduction

Films have been widely used in EFL classrooms (Li & Wang, 2015; Shing & Yin, 2017), either to engage students with narratives in literature classrooms (Beloufa, 2023) or develop language skills ([Goctu, 2017](#); [Sinyashina, 2022](#)).

Existing literature acknowledges the benefits of multimodality for fostering language or literary skills in second (SL) or foreign language (FL) contexts ([Damanik & Katemba, 2021](#); [Farías et al., 2007](#); [Nguyen & Stracke, 2020](#); [Robert & Marpaung, 2022](#); [Sinyashina, 2022](#); [Beloufa, 2023](#)), particularly in reading comprehension ([Meneses et al., 2018](#)). However, there is little empirical evidence on employing literature-to-film adaptations as pre-reading materials to specifically enhance EFL reading interest. This qualitative study addresses this gap by examining the influence of literature-to-film adaptations in EFL reading interest. This study took place via Zoom, in October 2021, and reports qualitative data from 20 EFL PSTs about their interest in reading two short stories during two consecutive, routine EFL, ER sessions at an EFL teacher education programme in Santiago, Chile. Participants were allocated to either a film or no-film group to assess the effects of literature-to-film adaptations vs. brief, written descriptions. This study was guided by these research questions (RQs):

RQ1. What do participants self-report on their experiences of reading interest during the intervention?

RQ2. How, if at all, does their interest change when extracts from a literature-to-film adaptation of the EFL text are proposed?

Findings reveal that both groups experienced engagement towards both pre-reading materials. While literature-to-film adaptations fostered participants' interest to read the selected short stories in this intervention, the brief, written descriptions were similarly impactful in their reading interest. This article discusses the benefits and drawbacks of using literature-to-film adaptations and brief, written descriptions, including the feasibility and the potential challenges of employing these materials in EFL contexts. Lastly, I argue that fostering affective and cognitive responses are key for enhancing learners' reading interest.

## Review of the Literature

### *Literature-to-Film Adaptations: Multimodality in FL Reading*

Multimodality refers to the 'combination of different 'forms' of communication' ([Bateman et al., 2017, p. 7](#)), used for articulating and organising meaning ([Kress et al., 2001](#)). Films are a good example of multimodal texts, as they display and communicate stories, experiences and realities through simultaneous and synchronised modes of communication ([Bateman et al., 2017](#)). Within films, literature-to-film adaptations, as another good example of multimodality, have been vastly employed in language classrooms for their accessibility ([Paran & Robinson, 2016](#)), their potential to engage learners ([Gareis et al., 1998](#)) and to foster comprehension of narratives through the experience of varied semiotic systems.

Despite the benefits of literature-to-film adaptations in language classrooms, they are oftentimes perceived as inferior or minor materials ([Marciniak, 2007](#)) due to a faulty understanding of their artistic aims. The main source of criticism is fidelity ([Stam, 2005](#)), a stance suggesting that adaptations should be accurate in representing the narrative worlds of the source texts to preserve its authenticity ([Marciniak, 2007](#); [McFarlane, 1996](#)). This argument neglects the readers' active role in interpreting source texts, denying the endless possibilities of interpretation that can emerge from engaging with a source text. Therefore, it is not only controversial to state that adaptations should reflect the authenticity of the source texts, but also defiant to assume that one reader's interpretation is better or superior to others' ([Marciniak, 2007](#)). Overall,

the concern with fidelity has relegated adaptations to a secondary status, creating a gap in research that overlooks their potential as catalysts for interest. Consequently, this perception of inferiority has stagnated pedagogical innovation, and a shift in perception is needed to maximise the potential of adaptations as valid multimodal texts that can foster volitional reading and enhance a more holistic and engagement-oriented approach.

Benefits of literature-to-film adaptations also relate to ellipsis and its potential to enhance interest in storylines. [Hanich \(2018b\)](#) describes ellipsis as a 'triad of elision, evocation and imagination' (p. 2). In the case of films, these are intentional omissions that encourage the audience to engage in the activity of filling in narrative gaps ([Hanich, 2022](#)). The role of ellipsis in activating sensory imagination allows viewers to create mental visualisations of the storylines, which can be successfully used in classrooms to trigger interest in reading source texts.

Additionally, literature-to-film adaptations could extend a reader's desire to engage or reengage with a story, while providing opportunities to examine the director's portrayal ([Marciniak, 2007](#)). As pedagogical tools, they can also foster positive multimedia experiences ([Cremin, 2007](#)) and enhance both linguistic competence and reading comprehension by providing authentic, multimodal input ([Sturm, 2012](#); [Kaiser, 2011](#)). Literature-to-film adaptations can also allow students to develop critical thinking skills through the analysis of form, including sound and movement. Despite these benefits, EFL teachers should be mindful of potential audio-visual distractions. If the primary goal is to enhance reading interest for the source text, the cinematic experience might be too absorbing, unintentionally discouraging the student's desire to engage with the written word.

### *Reading Motivation: Promoting Engagement and Interest to Read in EFL Contexts*

Awareness of grapheme-phoneme correspondence rules, letter and word recognition, and semantic knowledge are key components of reading for comprehension ([Marsh et al., 1981](#)). Automatization of these cognitive skills requires explicit instruction and sufficient exposure to reading. Similarly to L1 reading, L2 reading entails similar processes. L1 reading provides the basic cognitive skills and mechanisms that are transferable in L2 reading ([Alderson et al., 2014](#)). Nevertheless, L2 reading difficulty cannot be exclusively associated with the automatization of the skills, but also to motivation, vocabulary size, and construal differences across languages.

Reading competence is internationally assessed by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) or The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). Reading competence in Chile has remained stable since 2018. Nevertheless, the latest measured levels of reading comprehension in the country have remained significantly below the OECD average ([Agencia de Calidad de la Educación, 2024](#)). Mastering reading skills is key for fluency and comprehension and considering that reading performance depends on readers' L1 reading skills ([Alderson et al., 2014](#)), it is of vital importance to foster reading motivation to enhance and sustain reading habits.

The question on how to foster reading interest in the EFL classroom has been of large interest for many scholars. [Renninger and Hidi's \(2015\)](#) model is particularly relevant in this context, as they theorised on the four phases of interest development, describing how interest transforms from situational to well-developed, individual interest. The literature reports that reading engagement and interest depends on a reader's ability to reach a state of deep narrative absorption, often called transportation ([Hanich, 2018a](#)), where the fictional world feels convincing enough for the reader to lose awareness of their physical surroundings ([Metz, 1976](#)). This intense level of immersion is possible due to sustained attention and a focus on processing narratives, both of which can be fostered by the inclusion of multimodal experiences ([Hanich, 2018b](#)). In EFL contexts, deep reading engagement is usually sparked by curiosity, which can be triggered by unexpected or novel elements in a classroom activity ([Worthy, 1996](#)).

Nevertheless, what determines a reader to feel interest in reading or what factors trigger situational interest into developing a long-term individual interest remain unclear due to the dynamicity of this construct. Reading interest is domain specific ([Wigfield, 1997](#)), and specifically L2 reading interest, it is associated with ER or reading for enjoyment ([Nation, 2009](#)). Day and Bamford (1998) proposed the ER approach, which has been of tremendous importance for promoting reading motivation in L2 contexts. They advocate for promoting positive L2 reading experiences, including selecting suitable reading materials in relation to language level and topic interest, to prevent frustration.

Nevertheless, the more empirical studies are needed to examine the inclusion of both this reading approach in EFL classroom ([Leather & Uden, 2021](#)), particularly the role of ellipsis and suspense in reading engagement, and the use of literature-to-film adaptations to assess whether these can facilitate immersive reading experiences. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the use of multimodality in this regard, specifically literature-to-film adaptations, as a pre-reading material to spark EFL learners' curiosity to engage with storylines and sustain interest in reading source texts.

## Methodology

### *Research Design*

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive design ([Kim et al., 2017](#); [Sandelowski, 2010](#)), exploring the experiences of reading interest among 20 EFL PSTs within an EFL Teacher training programme in Chile. This study included quasi-experimental elements, i.e., the creation of two groups (film and no-film groups) to examine and discuss similarities or differences in their experiences. From a qualitative descriptive perspective, reality is understood as multifaceted and context-bound, shaped by participants' diverse social and cultural environments. Epistemologically, this study adopts a constructionist and interpretivist stance ([Lincoln et al., 2017](#)) to explore experiences that remain largely under-researched in the current literature ([Sandelowski, 2010](#)). This design is well-suited to the exploratory nature of the current study, given that the EFL reading motivations of pre-service teachers are uniquely individual and deeply informed by their immediate environment.

### *Context*

This study took place at an EFL teacher education programme which aims to prepare students to become qualified primary and secondary EFL teachers in the country. It lasts five years, and it includes modules of English linguistics, second language acquisition, British, American and contemporary literature, methodological principles for EFL teaching, among others. Students are exposed to a rich array of texts, topics and genres. Precisely in the literature modules, they mostly read and explore canonical texts, similar to other EFL teacher education programmes in the country ([Romero, 2016](#)). Regarding the instruction of EFL reading within English language skills modules, this is approached through Intensive Reading (IR), mostly tackling reading comprehension strategies.

### *Participants*

20 EFL PSTs voluntarily consented to take part in this study. Participants were recruited following these criteria: a) enrolment in an EFL teaching programme at the time of the study, and b) being in their fourth year to ensure advanced English skills and considerable experience with EFL reading.

Before the intervention, participants reported their English proficiency levels, which were all at the C1-C2 level of reading proficiency, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages ([CEFR; Council of Europe, 2020](#)). Their proficiency levels were assessed using the Aptis exam. A summary of participants' characteristics is presented in [table 1](#) below. Participants' names were anonymised to protect their identities.

**Table 1.** *Summary of Participants' Characteristics.*

| Participant | Age | Reported level of English |
|-------------|-----|---------------------------|
| María       | 23  | C1                        |
| Alberto     | 21  | C1                        |
| Carolina    | 24  | C1                        |
| Catalina    | 25  | C1                        |
| Sofia       | 24  | C1                        |
| Andrea      | 24  | C1                        |
| Isabel      | 24  | C1                        |
| Marcela     | 23  | C1                        |
| Enrique     | 26  | C1                        |
| José        | 37  | C2                        |
| Josefina    | 26  | C1                        |
| Alejandra   | 24  | C1                        |
| Teresa      | 24  | C1                        |
| Andrés      | 26  | C1                        |
| Eva         | 23  | C1                        |
| Luz         | 26  | C1                        |
| Alejandro   | 22  | C1                        |
| Héctor      | 28  | C1                        |
| Daniel      | 23  | C1                        |
| Sara        | 22  | C1                        |

**Source:** Own elaboration.

### *Procedure*

Participants were allocated to either a film or no-film group. As this intervention occurred during routine, ER sessions within an English Language Skill module. Participants were not individually randomised; instead, intact groups, pre-arranged by the module coordinator, were used. To account for potential pre-existing differences in relation to language proficiency levels, the researcher verified all participants shared similar levels of reading proficiency in English and shared similar academic background (all being fourth-year undergraduates), prior to the study.

The researcher randomly assigned the groups to either the film or no-film condition ([table 2](#)). The film group watched a series of extracts of literature-to-film adaptations of two short stories (one per ER session), and the no-film group read brief, written descriptions of the same short stories before participants read the corresponding written, source texts.

### *Selected Materials*

Two short stories were chosen for this intervention: 'The Father Thing' by [Philip K. Dick \(2014\)](#) and 'Zima Blue' by [Alastair Reynolds \(2009\)](#). The former was employed in session one and the latter in session two. Both texts are relatively short (approx. 10 pages) and fall within participants' reading levels (B2).

Short stories are generally a preferable genre for ER. They not only offer a wide range of topics under all levels of proficiency but also varied options for literature-to-film adaptations, and due to their length, they can be easily read in class ([Ghazali et al., 2009](#); [Tseng, 2010](#)). Although the selection of texts was mostly guided by the premises of ER, some other factors were considered. The selection criteria were: a) availability of texts which have been adapted to films or TV series b) texts' level of proficiency in the English language, to enhance comprehension and avoid the use of dictionaries, which interrupt reading engagement c) texts'

**Table 2.** *Group Arrangement.*

| Group   | Participants                  |
|---------|-------------------------------|
| Film    | Maria<br>Alberto<br>Carolina  |
| No-film | Catalina<br>Sofia<br>Andrea   |
| No-film | Isabel<br>Marcela<br>Enrique  |
| Film    | José<br>Josefina<br>Alejandra |
| Film    | Teresa<br>Andrés<br>Eva       |
| No-film | Luz<br>Alejandro<br>Héctor    |
| Film    | Daniel<br>Sara                |

**Source:** Table created by the author.

length, to enable participants to complete the texts in class, either fully or nearly fully, and d) topic or genre interest, i.e., texts would align with participants' topic or genre interest. To ensure texts aligned with participants' topic or genre interests, the researcher held informal meetings with teachers at the host university to learn participants' topic and/or genre interests.

The selection process involved reading a variety of texts and systematically analysing their language levels by using the Text Inspector software 1.0 and watching their adaptations. The text analyses focused not only on syntactical, but also on vocabulary, complexity. By using the English Vocabulary Profile (EVP) tool on the Text Inspector 1.0 software, vocabulary items that fell within the C2 level were substituted with B2 synonyms to ensure full comprehension. The researcher also ensured that this vocabulary substitution did not alter, or altered as minimally as possible, the original intended meaning of the text.

As for the literature-to-film adaptations, the selection criteria were a) access to the literature-to-film adaptations, and b) adaptations to be from 2010 onwards. The chosen adaptations were 'The Father Thing' (Dinner, 2018) from 'Electric Dreams', an Amazon Prime TV series, and 'Zima Blue' (Pennacchioli & Valley, 2019) from 'Love, Death and Robots', a Netflix TV series. The selection criteria for the literature-to-film adaptations' extracts were a) degree of suspense, and b) relevance in relation to the storyline.

### *Data Collection*

Qualitative data were gathered through two surveys and seven focus groups. Surveys collected quantifiable, descriptive data on participants' reading motivation (curiosity and engagement), and reading interest (attention and curiosity). Both surveys were developed by the researcher, although informed by Motivations for Reading Questionnaire (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997), The Situational Interest Scale (Chen et al., 1999) and the Reading Interest Log (Guthrie et al., 2005). Given the qualitative nature of this study, it was not considered necessary to employ traditional quantitative strategies for psychometric validation. Instead, a pilot study was designed to assess whether the survey questions provided sufficiently relevant information to address the research questions. The pilot study replicated the main study in similar conditions, with two qualified EFL teachers and 14 EFL PSTs.

While survey one ([appendix A](#)), that focused on participants' curiosity and engagement when reading in English, was administered before the intervention, survey two ([appendix B](#)), which focused on their reading interest, was administered immediately after the intervention.

Focus groups were suitable to collect participants' both individual and collective experiences in the intervention. Seven focus groups were arranged by the researcher, and to collect rich data, groups consisted of three participants except for one group which consisted of two ([table 3](#)).

**Table 3.** *Description of Focus Group Arrangements,*

| Focus group | Group   | Participants                  |
|-------------|---------|-------------------------------|
| I           | Film    | Maria<br>Alberto<br>Carolina  |
| II          | No-film | Catalina<br>Sofia<br>Andrea   |
| III         | No-film | Isabel<br>Marcela<br>Enrique  |
| IV          | Film    | José<br>Josefina<br>Alejandra |
| V           | Film    | Teresa<br>Andrés<br>Eva       |
| VI          | No-film | Luz<br>Alejandro<br>Héctor    |
| VII         | Film    | Daniel<br>Sara                |

**Source:** Own elaboration.

### *Data Analysis*

Data were analysed through descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and thematic analysis (TA) ([Braun & Clarke, 2021](#)). TA was applied, following Braun and Clarke's approach (2021). It is a theoretically flexible method of enquiry appropriate for qualitative research. TA allows the researcher to interact deeply with the data to identify and reflect upon patterns of meaning. This approach provides a nuanced and theoretically versatile approach for understanding how EFL reading interest is experienced within the classroom, aligning with the study's exploratory nature and its constructionist and interpretivist position. Importantly, TA does not prioritise inter-rater reliability but rather views the researcher's subjectivity as a central resource for analysis. Following the work of [Braun and Clarke \(2021\)](#), themes are understood as being constructed through a reflexive engagement with the data, rather than simply emerging independently.

To discern broad patterns and the intensity of participants' interest, descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were employed. These initial quantifiable insights provided a necessary baseline for the reflexive thematic analysis, which sought to investigate the nuanced reasons behind the reported levels of reading motivation and interest. This integrated approach allowed the researcher to contextualise the construction of themes from the reported experiences, ensuring a transition from broad trends to individual experiences.

Researcher reflexivity was maintained throughout the study. Given the researcher's background as an EFL teacher, they remained mindful of personal preconceptions regarding the use of literature-to-film

adaptations in ER sessions in EFL contexts by registering thoughts, impressions, and personal experiences that could have influenced the analysis. This reflexive approach ensured that the themes were constructed from the participants' experiences rather than being shaped by the researcher's own pedagogical expectations or preconceptions.

Focus group data were coded part-deductively and part-inductively. At an initial stage, a codebook was developed through inductive coding, although while data were processed, the initial codes were applied deductively. Later, themes and discern patterns were identified across the data set ([table 4](#)).

**Table 4.** *Codebook.*

| Reading engagement in class<br>(both groups)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Interest to read in class<br>(film group)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Interest to read in class<br>(No-film group)                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time was needed to finish text</li> <li>• Vocabulary in Zima Blue was hard</li> <li>• The Father Thing was easier to understand</li> <li>• Zima Blue was harder to understand</li> <li>• Plot in Zima Blue is engaging</li> <li>• Plot in The Father Thing is engaging</li> <li>• In medias res is engaging in The Father Thing</li> <li>• In extrema res is less engaging in Zima Blue</li> <li>• Long descriptions disengage</li> <li>• Writing style enhances interest</li> <li>• Reading on a laptop is demotivating/ tiring</li> <li>• Mood influences reading engagement</li> <li>• Comprehension enhances engagement</li> <li>• The writing style of The Father Thing was more engaging</li> <li>• The writing style of The Father Thing was less engaging</li> <li>• The writing style in Zima Blue was less engaging</li> <li>• The writing style in Zima Blue was more engaging</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I felt interested to read</li> <li>• I liked the texts</li> <li>• I read the texts</li> <li>• Scenes enhanced reading interest</li> <li>• Watching scenes before reading was different (surprising)</li> <li>• Reading sessions were surprising</li> <li>• Classroom activities enhanced interest</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I felt interested to read</li> <li>• I liked the texts</li> <li>• I read the texts</li> <li>• Short description of stories enhanced interest</li> <li>• Classroom activities enhanced interest</li> </ul> |

**Source:** Own elaboration.

### *Ethical Approval*

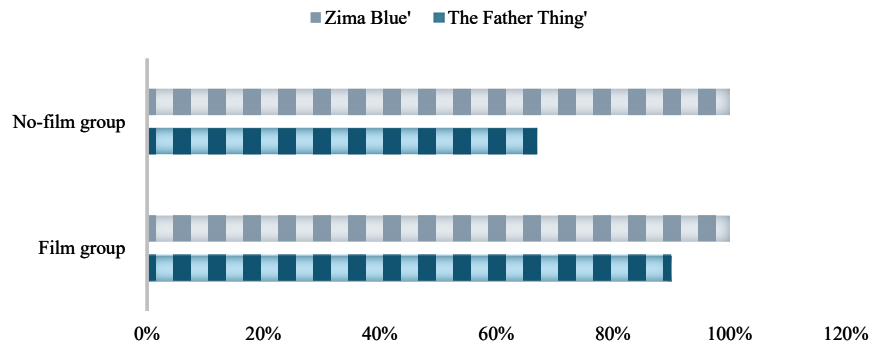
Ethical approval was obtained from the University of York (RE: 205040388/1). After the ethical approval was granted, permission was requested from both the head of the English department and the English Language Skills module coordinator at the host university, and both accepted.

To avoid conflict of interest, two qualified EFL teachers were invited to conduct the intervention. These 2 qualified teachers voluntarily accepted to deliver two ER sessions to either the film or no-film groups. To ensure rigour and systematicity of the intervention, the researcher designed two lesson plans, including the materials, given to the EFL teachers in advance. A series of meetings were held before the intervention to explain aims of the project, the intervention procedure and clarify queries.

## **Findings and Discussion**

Participants from both groups reported feeling interested in reading both stories in the intervention ([figure 1](#)). In detail, 90% of participants felt interested in 'The Father Thing' and 100% in 'Zima Blue'. Only one participant, Alejandra (film group), did not feel interested, although still read the story in class.

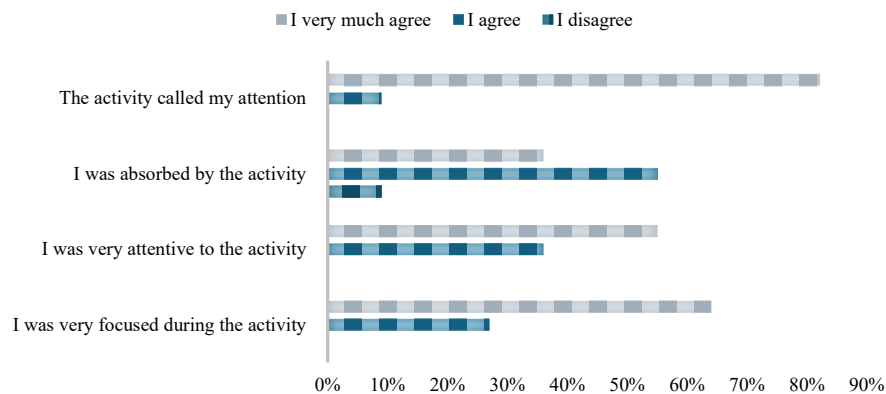
**Figure 1.** *Participants' interests to read the written, source texts in the intervention.*



Source: Own elaboration.

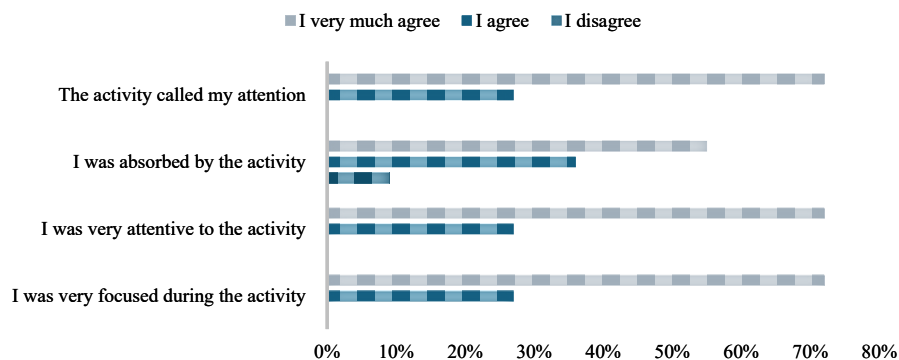
In the film group, participants' attention in the pre-reading materials was high, meaning that literature-to-film adaptations captured their focus in both sessions.

**Figure 2.** *Summary of Film Group Participants' Attention in the extracts of literature-to-film adaptations of The Father Thing.*



Source: Own elaboration.

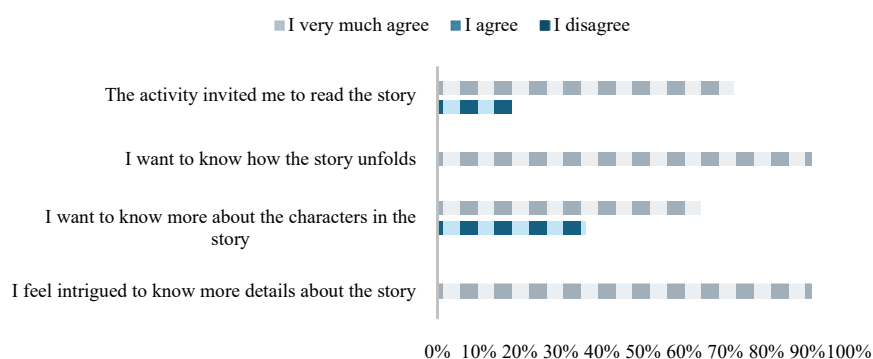
**Figure 3.** *Summary of Film Group Participants' Attention in the extracts of literature-to-film adaptations of 'Zima Blue'.*



Source: Own elaboration.

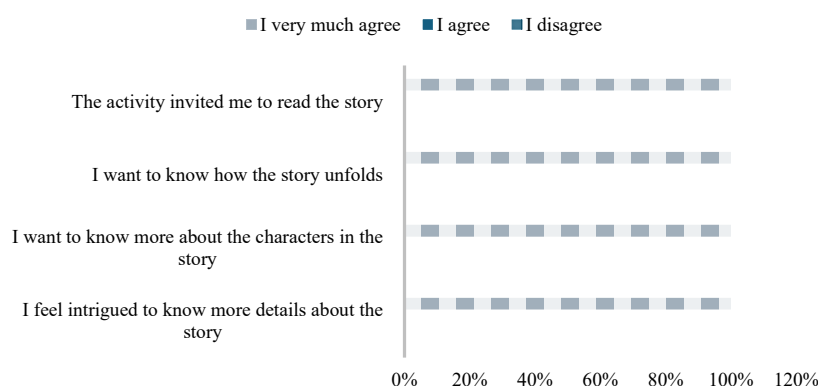
The film group reported feeling interested in reading 'The Father Thing' and 'Zima Blue', because of the literature-to-film adaptations.

**Figure 4.** Summary of Film Group Participants' Curiosity/interest to read 'The Father Thing'.



Source: Own elaboration.

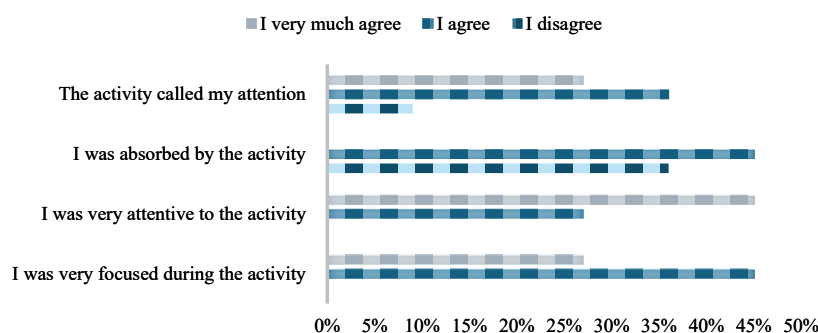
**Figure 5.** Summary of Film Group Participants' Curiosity/Interest to read 'Zima Blue'



Source: Own elaboration.

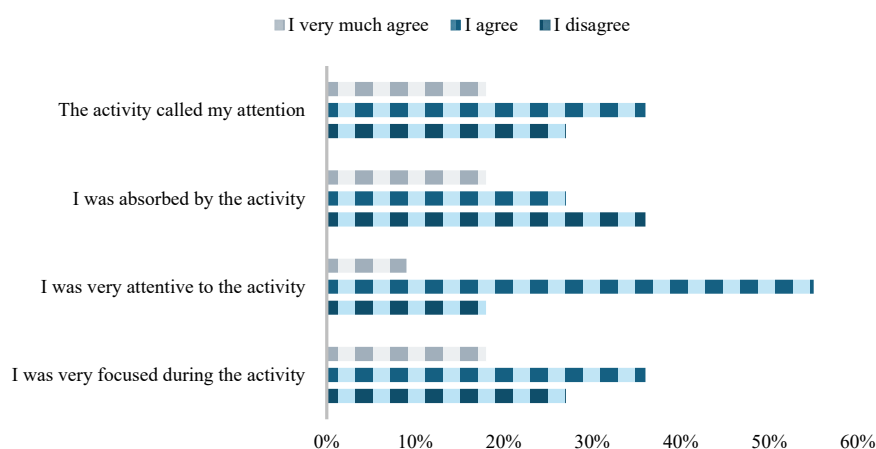
In the no-film group, participants reported a similar experience concerning attention in the pre-reading materials, meaning that the brief, written descriptions captured their focus in both sessions.

**Figure 6.** Summary of No-Film Group Participants' Attention in the brief descriptions of 'The Father Thing'.



Source: Own elaboration.

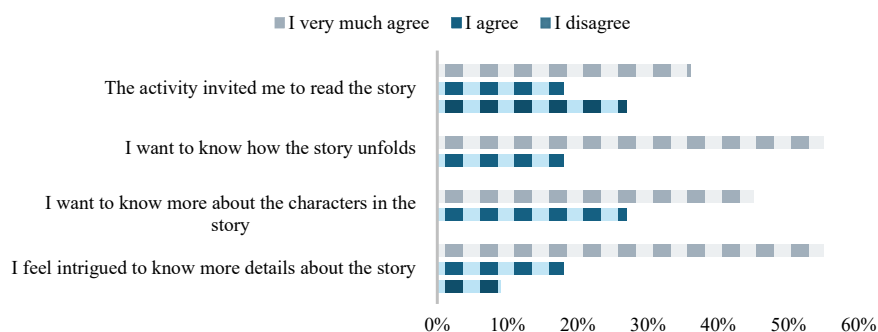
**Figure 7** Summary of No-Film Group Participants' Attention in the brief descriptions of Zima Blue.



Source: Own elaboration.

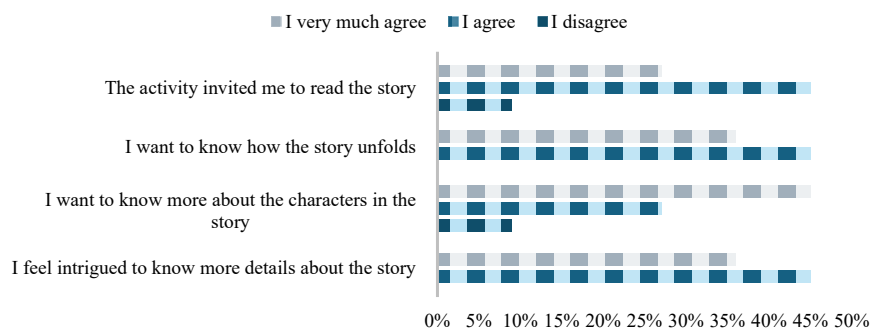
The no-film group reported feeling interested in reading 'The Father Thing' and 'Zima Blue', because of the brief, written descriptions.

**Figure 8.** Summary of No-Film Group Participants' Curiosity/ Interest to read 'The Father Thing'.



Source: Own elaboration.

**Figure 9.** Summary of No-Film Group Participants' Curiosity/Interest to read 'Zima Blue'.



Source: Own elaboration.

As illustrated in the figures, participants from both groups reported similar levels of attention in the pre-reading materials, and of interest to read both 'The Father Thing' and 'Zima Blue'. Nevertheless, the no-film group reported slightly lower levels in comparison to the film group. Additionally, levels of attention and interest dropped in ER session two ('Zima Blue'). It can be hypothesised that levels of surprise were lower in the session, slightly affecting interest to read, as activity and class dynamics became known for participants.

Although both pre-reading materials employed in the film and no-film groups had a positive effect on participants' interests to read the written, source texts in each ER session, participants experienced different reading experiences. Focus group data are discussed in the subsections below:

### *Ellipsis: the seeds of curiosity*

Most of the film group reported that the extracts of literature-to-film adaptations triggered their curiosity to read the written, source text. Carolina describes this:

The clips were useful. It was like watching a trailer, like when you go on YouTube. You watch some scenes, without much context, but they help you know what the story is about. It's engaging.

The scenes fed Carolina's appetite to learn more about the storyline. Nevertheless, her curiosity seems to be caused by ellipsis. She adds:

They made us want to know more and see how the story unfolded, and to know what happened to the characters. They helped to know what the story was about. Because sometimes we go on blind dates with books, watching some scenes before reading helps to imagine what's going to happen. It's a good hook.

The extracts of literature-to-film adaptations provided information gaps; successfully capturing Carolina's curiosity and imagination, which is a state typically 'associated with moderate levels of knowledge' ([Renninger & Hidi, 2015, p. 100](#)).

The use of ellipsis also sparked curiosity in Daniel and José. Nevertheless, their curiosity was also sparked by the effects of multimodality:

**Daniel:** the clips were very interesting, but I thought... 'why are they clipping the scenes?', 'I want to know what happens in between!', 'how did this person end up here!'. When we were asked to read the story, it felt good because I could then know what happened in between the scenes!

**José:** in 'The Father Thing', after watching those few scenes, I felt very motivated to read the story. I loved its visuals in 'Zima Blue'; the style of the film, and for that reason, I felt more interested in watching the film than reading the story.

Daniel's and José's curiosity and interest also emerged from ellipsis. However, José's reading interest in 'Zima Blue' was specifically sparked by the audio-visual input, which fostered a stronger desire to engage with the adaptations rather than the text. This suggests that while literature-to-film adaptations can successfully spark curiosity, this is not always directed toward reading the source material. This finding aligns with [Torabian and Tajadini's study \(2017\)](#) on film animation in an Iranian EFL reading class, which reported that learners experienced high levels of attention and interest in audio-visual materials. Ultimately, literature-to-film adaptations can carry a potential risk: highly engaging multimodal content that becomes very absorbing may inadvertently distract from or discourage engagement with the written source text.

José elaborated on how the adaptation influenced his engagement with the narrative:

I loved the animation in 'Zima Blue'. While reading it, I imagined the story with this style; I compared the story with the adaptation the whole time and I think the adaptation limited my imagination. This is what happens when you watch a film adaptation before reading the text. I knew what 'Zima Blue' looked like, and I didn't have the chance to create my own image of him.

The adaptation of 'Zima Blue' had a tremendous effect on José's engagement and his visualisation of the story. This response was likely due to transportation, or a 'response to narratives' that is 'psychologically similar to flow' ([Green et al., 2008, p. 513](#)), making the adaptation a powerful source of reading absorption. Nevertheless, it can be argued that although films may reduce imagination by limiting the scope of the reading experience, the adaptation successfully maintained José's reading interest and motivation ([Renninger & Hidi, 2015](#)). José's report invites EFL teachers to reflect on the risks of using adaptations as pre-reading materials to enhance cognitive engagement. Concrete film visuals can neutralise a learner's mental visualisations before they could create the narrative world.

Catalina, Isabel and Héctor, from the no-film group, reported that the narratives' descriptions sparked their reading interest:

**Catalina:** Descriptions were like 2 lines long; they were engaging and gave us context. I felt like reading the stories. 'Why did this happen? how strange!', kind of thing.

**Isabel:** I felt curious too. The title of the stories and the descriptions were suspenseful, like... 'what's going to happen?'

**Héctor:** They gave me context, and it helped me predict the storylines.

The short stories' descriptions had a similar effect on their reading curiosity or interest. These findings reinforce the argument that ellipsis, caused by both pre-reading materials, triggered reading curiosity, interest, and their willingness to predict the unknown gaps in the storylines.

Although both groups experienced reading curiosity and interest for 'The Father Thing' and 'Zima Blue', such experiences differed in their quality. Since identifying specific multimodal factors encouraging reading interest was beyond the scope of this study, it is difficult to determine if multimodality or sensorial experiences provided a more powerful effect on attention and engagement compared to reading a brief story description. Additionally, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, existing studies adaptations, films or animations primarily examine reading comprehension, thus unfortunately, the presented findings cannot be compared to any other similar study.

### *Writing style and story line: foundations for reading engagement*

Despite the success of the pre-reading materials in sparking both groups' reading interest, reading engagement was not always sustained. Textual factors, such as writing style and storyline structure, proved to be key in maintaining participants' attention. Maria's experience illustrates this:

'The Father Thing' started from a climatic point of the story; we knew immediately what was happening, and I was intrigued from the beginning. But in 'Zima Blue', the story started with the journalist talking about 'Zima Blue', so it started from the end. I think that made the story difficult to hold to it, unlike 'The Father Thing'.

For Maria, *in medias res* served as a primary engagement driver. In contrast to *in extrema res*, placing the reader immediately within the story's climax proves to be more captivating. This narrative strategy caused a strong emotional response in Maria, mostly excitement, which effectively sustained her attention and reading engagement ([Berger et al., 2023](#)).

Similarly, Alberto and José say:

**Alberto:** the structure of 'The Father Thing' made it more interesting. How the actions were described, the way characters interacted with each other helped to create this tension and suspense that triggered my interest.

**José:** I loved the writing style of 'The Father Thing'. It was very easy to get immersed in the story. The language was very accessible, and it showed the point of view of the kids very realistically, how a kid would speak. I liked the style; the short sentences gave the feeling that something was going to happen...

'The Father Thing' is written in short dialogues. It has succinct descriptions and uses tildes (~) to mark the end and beginning of scenes. These stylistic devices convey an urgent tone, aligned with the story's suspenseful plot. Short sentences generally require less effort to cognitively process the content ([Berger et al., 2023](#)), likely explaining the Alberto's and José's engagement due to the accessible storyline.

This point is reinforced by Carolina's and Andrea's experiences:

**Carolina:** 'Zima Blue' was difficult because of its long descriptions. There were instances where I had to skip some lines to continue. Some descriptions were a bit confusing, but I still found the text interesting.

**Andrea:** I liked 'Zima Blue' better because it was more detailed; more descriptive, and I was more engaged. 'The Father Thing' had these tildes I didn't know what they meant; I didn't know whether these were for new chapters or change of scene; I was a bit puzzled. But ('Zima Blue') was more 'complete' and kept me more engaged.

Comprehension was both Carolina's and Andrea's engagement driver ([Day & Bamford, 1998](#)). Here, textual elements facilitated and hindered comprehension. While Carolina's engagement was not sustained potentially due to her limited vocabulary, Andrea's lack of understanding of punctuation and fragmented writing style, which conveyed ambiguity, affected her engagement while reading 'The Father Thing'.

### *Surprise and imagination: the spark of reading interest*

Surprise and novelty were central to the participants' reading experiences, significantly influencing their levels of reading interest. Carolina's reflections highlight how the shift from routine academic tasks to multimodal exposure fostered a sense of immersion:

We usually read in class, but watching scenes...? The scenes got me immersed in the stories, to know who the characters were, their motifs, their personal stories. The scenes helped me imagine the events while I was reading. It was something different! Sometimes reading sessions are very monotonous because everything is academic.

Although survey data indicated that novelty and surprise were the primary sources of reading curiosity, with these levels being highest in the first session, participants' interest remained stable during the second session, despite their familiarity with the activity dynamic. This sustained engagement can be attributed to more than just the unusual exposure to film adaptations. The researcher's decision to intentionally withhold the titles of the short stories until the pre-reading activity prevented participants from discovering the plots or adaptations online in advance. This preserved the information gaps ([Hanich, 2018b](#)), maximizing the affective influence of the initial encounter and ensuring that curiosity remained a hook throughout the intervention.

### *Reading interest in an online classroom environment*

Due to the restrictions of Covid-19, this intervention took place online. Via Zoom, students engaged in these ER sessions and read each story in their laptops. Although participants generally responded positively to the online element of the intervention, José pointed out that his online reading experience affected his engagement while reading 'Zima Blue':

Reading from the screen tired my eyes. It was a bit demotivating because I felt like ‘oh, my eyes hurt’, ‘I can’t read anymore- I’d love to, but I can’t’. I’m not used to reading from a laptop.

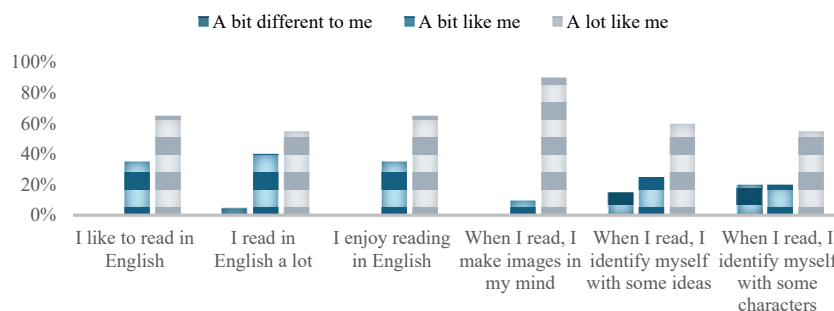
Even though José was the only participant who reported having interrupted his reading of ‘Zima Blue’, his experience suggests that even though curiosity and interest can motivate reading, engagement can be negatively affected by external elements, such as the platform or channel where reading takes place. Considering the increase of digital reading in classroom settings (Van der Weel & Mangen, 2022), further research is needed to look at the effect of digital reading on engagement, precisely on ocular symptoms. As Chu et al. (2011) found, eye symptoms differ between reading printed texts and screens, with negative eye symptoms being higher in screen reading. Therefore, platforms for reading become an important factor when fostering reading engagement among learners as screens might hinder flow, and foster reading withdrawal.

### *Motivations for Reading in English: The Internal Propellers of Reading Interest*

Affective factors, such as motivation, are key components of reading interest. Although this article neither explores readers’ internal landscapes in depth nor examines how these affective components potentially influence reading interest, this study acknowledges the importance of investigating participants’ reading motivation to observe their predisposition to read in the intervention.

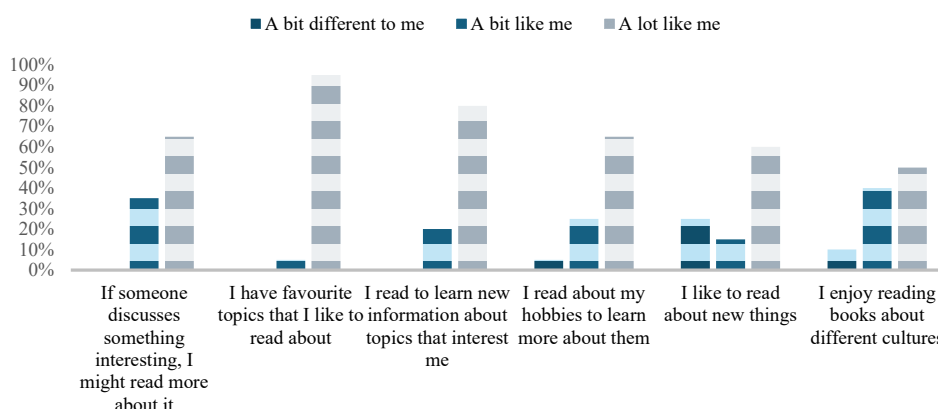
Survey one was administered before the intervention. Survey data reported positive levels of reading engagement in English in both film and no-film participants, as illustrated in figure 10 and 11.

**Figure 10.** Summary of Participants’ levels of engagement in EFL reading.



Source: Own elaboration.

**Figure 11.** Summary of Participants’ levels of interest in EFL reading.



Source: Own elaboration.

Regarding reading engagement, the average ranges from  $M = 3.25$  to  $M = 3.9$ , suggesting that at least 81% and approximately 98% of all participants feel engaged while reading in English. Specifically, 90% of participants reported visualising images in their minds during reading, 65% expressed enjoyment for reading in English and 55% stated they read in English frequently.

In terms of reading interest, the averages range from  $M = 3.35$  to  $M = 3.95$ , meaning that at least 84% and nearly 99% of all participants reported feeling curious about reading in English. Half of participants enjoy reading about different cultures; however, topic interest appears to be a relevant factor, as 95% have favourite topics they prefer to read about, and 80% read to acquire new information on topics they find engaging. Overall, most of the participants reported high levels of interest and engagement in reading in English, driven mainly by academic interests. This suggests participants had a strong inclination to engage with ER during the intervention. It can also be inferred that their motivation to read in English significantly contributed to their interest in reading the stories presented in each ER session. Furthermore, since short stories were partly chosen based on participants' preferences for certain topics and genres, survey data supports this idea, indicating that their willingness to read was likely influenced by the themes and genres of the stories.

## Conclusion

This article explored the effects of literature-to-film adaptations vs. brief descriptions of two short stories, as pre-reading materials, employed in two ER sessions at an EFL teacher education programme in Santiago, Chile. The intervention consisted of two groups of participants, film and no-film groups, who respectively engaged with some extracts of literature-to-film adaptations and brief, written descriptions of 'The Father Thing' and 'Zima Blue' before reading the full written, source texts.

Descriptive quantifiable data, gathered through surveys one and two, disclosed that participants from both groups experienced similar, positive levels of attention for the pre-reading materials, and of interest to read both short stories in class, resulting in all participants reading both short stories during the intervention. Qualitative data, collected from seven focus groups, suggested that both pre-reading materials enhanced similar levels of attention and interest in both film and no-film groups due to ellipsis. Additionally, ellipses enhanced overlapping responses in participants from both groups, such as surprise and imagination, which led to predictions of the storylines.

Participants from both groups identified writing style as a key factor for sustaining attention and maintaining engagement. Accessible and digestible narratives, enhanced by vivid descriptions, dialogues, punctuation, and writing tone, foster engagement. Nevertheless, because engagement is intrinsically linked to the reader's ability to comprehend the text, a specific writing style can prove either stimulating or frustrating depending on individual vocabulary size and literacy skills (Alderson et al., 2014). Consequently, writing style is linked to learners' proficiency and prior reading experience (Day & Bamford, 1998).

The online setting of the intervention influenced participants' reading engagement. Reading from a screen can hinder attention and engagement, due to eye tiredness, and ultimately result in reading withdrawal. Broader EFL settings should therefore weigh the benefits of multimodal pre-reading activities against the potential for reading withdrawal. Considering the common use of screens as main platforms of reading, further research is needed to examine the influence of such platforms in reading interest and engagement.

In conclusion, literature-to-film adaptations proved successful in sparking participants' interest in extensive reading during the intervention. Nevertheless, the brief, written descriptions enhanced similar reading experiences in the no-film group. Discussions around the benefits of literature-to-film adaptations are wide and well-reported in this article. Nevertheless, from this study, some challenges can be accounted. Firstly, the use of literature-to-film adaptations in ER can be demanding for EFL teachers, as selection of literature-to-film adaptations, as well as the written, source texts, which would align with learners' language

proficiencies, length, topic and genre interests, can be tremendously time-consuming. Additionally, as discussed in this article, reading interest does not seem to be exclusively dependent on multimodality. A more practical alternative could be the use of vivid spoken or written summaries, which in this study showed a similar influence in stimulating reading interest, intentionally withholding the resolution of a scene or description. The findings suggest that curiosity is not tied to a specific medium, such as a film. Instead, curiosity seems to be largely influenced by affective and cognitive factors, i.e., as surprise, imagination and attention, enhanced by narrative gaps.

It is important to mention that motivation has been reported to be key in readers' predisposition to engage with a text. Therefore, as participants reported positive levels of reading motivation, it can be equally concluded that their motivation significantly encouraged their reading interest in the intervention, which can explain the similar outcomes in both groups.

One significant limitation of this study is its small and uniform sample of PSTs with advanced English proficiency. This high level of competence likely allowed them to experience transportation, or deep narrative absorption (Hanich, 2018a), while engaging with the stories more effortlessly than lower-level learners might. In broader EFL settings with mixed-proficiency classrooms, learners may require more explicit visual support to bridge narrative gaps, for example, by using graphic organisers (Manoli & Papadopoulou, 2012). Providing such scaffolding is essential, as the ability to resolve narrative ellipsis may significantly contribute to enhancing comprehension (Bayat, 2020), engagement, and avoiding frustration.

Lastly, findings invite EFL teachers to reflect on the aims for reading and decide the timing of using literature-to-film adaptations. Depending on the reading purpose, using literature-to-film adaptations as a pre-reading material can effectively trigger transportation into the story (Hanich, 2018a) and spark initial curiosity to engage with the written source texts. However, if the objective is to enhance imagination and cognitive engagement, EFL teachers might consider showing film extracts after reading. This allows learners to first enjoy a sense of authorship over their mental visualisations (Hanich, 2018a) and subsequently allow richer classroom discussions regarding world representations and varying interpretations of the narratives.

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## Appendixes

### Appendix A

#### Survey one

(Survey informed by the Motivations for Reading Questionnaire by [Wigfield and Guthrie, 1997](#))

El siguiente cuestionario busca averiguar tus motivaciones para leer en inglés (ya sea cuando lees para tus estudios universitarios o cuando lees por placer). Lee cada uno de los ítems y decide si describen a alguien similar o diferente a ti. Para esto debes utilizar la siguiente escala (1 al 4). Recuerda que tus respuestas son en base a tus motivaciones para leer en inglés, por lo tanto, no existen respuestas correctas o incorrectas.

| Muy diferente a mi<br>1                                                      | Un poco diferente a mi<br>2 | Un tanto parecido a mi<br>3 | Muy parecido a mi<br>4 |   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|---|
| <b>¿Como describes tu curiosidad por leer en inglés?</b>                     |                             |                             |                        |   |
| 1. Si alguien habla sobre un tema interesante, podría leer más sobre el tema | 1                           | 2                           | 3                      | 4 |
| 2. Tengo temas favoritos de los cuales me gusta leer                         | 1                           | 2                           | 3                      | 4 |
| 3. Leo para aprender información nueva sobre temas que me interesan          | 1                           | 2                           | 3                      | 4 |
| 4. Leo sobre mis pasatiempos para aprender más sobre ellos                   | 1                           | 2                           | 3                      | 4 |
| 5. Me gusta leer nuevas cosas o sobre nuevos temas                           | 1                           | 2                           | 3                      | 4 |
| 6. Disfruto leer sobre diferentes culturas                                   | 1                           | 2                           | 3                      | 4 |
| <b>¿Como describes tu involucramiento por leer?</b>                          |                             |                             |                        |   |
| 7. Me gusta leer en ingles                                                   | 1                           | 2                           | 3                      | 4 |
| 8. Leo mucho en ingles                                                       | 1                           | 2                           | 3                      | 4 |
| 9. Disfruto mucho cuando leo en ingles                                       | 1                           | 2                           | 3                      | 4 |
| 10. Cuando leo en inglés, me imagino imágenes de lo que estoy leyendo        | 1                           | 2                           | 3                      | 4 |
| 11. Cuando leo, me identifico con algunas ideas o hay ideas que me 'hablan'  | 1                           | 2                           | 3                      | 4 |
| 12. Cuando leo historias, siento que me identifico con (algunos) personajes. | 1                           | 2                           | 3                      | 4 |

Source: Own elaboration, adapted from [Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997](#).

### Appendix B

#### Survey two

(Survey informed by The Situational Interest Scale by [Chen et al., 1999](#))

Este cuestionario busca averiguar sobre **tu nivel interés en la actividad** recién realizada en clase y sobre **el nivel de interés que sientes ahora por leer el cuento corto**. Lee los siguientes ítems y decide la opción que más te represente. Para esto, utiliza la escala (1 al 4). Recuerda que este cuestionario busca conocer **tu experiencia**, por lo que **no existen respuestas correctas o incorrectas**.

| Muy en desacuerdo<br>1                                               | En desacuerdo<br>2 | De acuerdo<br>3 | Muy de acuerdo<br>4 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| <b>¿Cómo describirías tu nivel de atención en la actividad?</b>      |                    |                 |                     |
| 1. Estuve muy concentrada durante la actividad                       |                    |                 |                     |
| 2. Estaba muy atenta a la actividad                                  |                    |                 |                     |
| 3. Estaba absorbida por la actividad                                 |                    |                 |                     |
| 5. Me llamo mucho la atención la actividad                           |                    |                 |                     |
| <b>¿Como describirías la actividad?</b>                              |                    |                 |                     |
| 10. La actividad fue muy entretenida                                 |                    |                 |                     |
| 11. La actividad me llamo mucho la atención                          |                    |                 |                     |
| 12. La actividad fue fascinante                                      |                    |                 |                     |
| 13. Me sentí a gusto con la actividad                                |                    |                 |                     |
| 14. Me sentí entusiasmada con la actividad                           |                    |                 |                     |
| 15. La actividad fue muy placentera                                  |                    |                 |                     |
| <b>¿Como describirías tu interés por leer el cuento corto ahora?</b> |                    |                 |                     |
| 16. Me siento intrigado por conocer más detalles de la historia      |                    |                 |                     |
| 17. Quiero conocer más sobre los personajes de la historia           |                    |                 |                     |
| 18. Quiero saber cómo la historia se desarrolla y termina            |                    |                 |                     |
| 19. La actividad me invito a leer y a disfrutar de ella              |                    |                 |                     |

Source: Own elaboration, adapted from [Chen et al., 1999](#).

### (Questionnaire informed by the Reading Interest log by [Guthrie et al., 2005](#))

Este cuestionario busca averiguar sobre tu interés lector por los cuentos leídos en clase. Para esto, me gustaría saber si leíste los cuentos cortos en clase. Para el propósito de este estudio, leer cada cuento significa haber leído durante 15 minutos o haber leído por lo menos 5 páginas de cada historia. Si leíste uno o ambos cuentos, por favor marca la alternativa SI. Si no leíste uno o ninguno, marca la alternativa NO. Además, en caso de haber leído los textos, ¿Qué tan interesado/a te sentiste? Para responder a esta pregunta, por favor marca la alternativa que más te represente utilizando la siguiente escala (1 al 4). Recuerda que no existen respuestas correctas o incorrectas.

- Leí 'The Father Thing' Si ..... No .....
- Leí 'Zima Blue' Si ..... No .....

**De las dos historias, ¿Cuál te pareció más interesante, o con cuál de los dos cuentos te sentiste más interesado por leer?**

- The Father Thing .....
- Zima Blue .....

### ¿Cuáles fueron los motivos que fomentaron tu lectura de los cuentos en clase?

Por favor, marca todas las alternativas que te representen (puedes marcar más de una opción). Recuerda que no existen respuestas correctas o incorrectas.

1. Me gusta comentar lo que leo con mis amigos
2. El profesor nos dijo que lo leyéramos
3. Me sentí interesado por el género literario
4. Toda la clase tuvo que leerlos
5. Se veían fáciles de leer
6. Me sentí interesado por el tema del cuento
7. Me sentí muy curioso por saber más de la historia
8. La actividad antes de la lectura me pareció interesante
9. No me sentí interesado por leer los cuentos
10. OTRO

**Source:** Own elaboration, adapted from [Guthrie et al., 2005](#).

| Me pareció para nada interesante<br>1 | No me pareció interesante<br>2 | Me pareció interesante<br>3 | Me pareció muy interesante<br>4 |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 'The Father Thing'                    | 1                              | 2                           | 3                               |
| 'Zima Blue'                           | 1                              | 2                           | 3                               |

**Source:** Own elaboration.

