

TEACHING PROFESSIONALLY ORIENTED READING STRATEGIES TO PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS

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The purpose of our paper was to add to the available body of research regarding teaching university students professionally oriented reading, in particular teaching master's level students, pre-service English teachers, professionally oriented reading. We found that reading for professional development does not appear to be a popular activity among the students who participated in our survey. We also found that the main reasons which hinder professionally oriented reading are lack of time and relevancy of the literature, the level of linguistic difficulty professional reading has, and lack of information about availability of professionally oriented reading materials. To alleviate these problems, we suggest teaching strategies for enhancing reading professional literature by pre-service English teachers, such as suggesting relevant readings and other professional resources; prompting annotations and reflections; inspiring connections between theory and practice; championing experimentation. We believe these strategies will work with master's level students at universities offering a degree in teaching as well because academic subjects' teachers and theses supervisors can act as coaches and mentors when it comes to engaging students into professional reading, suggest meaningful reading tasks for their students, and provide ongoing personalized and explicit encouragement and support. The article discusses implications for professional development, concludes about the positive impact of reading professional literature on the professional development of pre-service teachers of the English language.

Key words: *professionally oriented reading, pre-service English teachers, reading strategies, professional literature, reading tasks.*

НАВЧАННЯ СТРАТЕГІЙ ПРОФЕСІЙНО ОРІЄНТОВАНОГО ЧИТАННЯ МАЙБУТНІХ УЧИТЕЛІВ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ

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Мета дослідження полягала в тому, щоб доповнити масив наукової літератури щодо навчання професійно орієнтованого читання студентів закладів вищої освіти, зокрема навчання професійно орієнтованого читання магістрантів – майбутніх учителів англійської мови. Ми виявили, що читання для професійного розвитку не є поширеною діяльністю серед здобувачів вищої освіти, які взяли участь у нашому опитуванні. Ми також з'ясували, що основними причинами, які перешкоджають професійно орієнтованому читанню студентів, є брак часу та актуальності літератури, рівень лінгвістичної складності матеріалів для професійно орієнтованого читання, недостатній рівень проінформованості студентів про наявні в університеті матеріали для професійного читання. З метою вирішення цих проблем, ми пропонуємо навчальні стратегії для покращення читання фахової літератури майбутніми вчителями англійської мови, зокрема, орієнтування у наявних джерелах і пропонування відповідної літератури та інших професійних ресурсів здобувачам вищої освіти; поширення практики написання анотацій і здійснення рефлексії стосовно прочитаної літератури; підтримання зв'язку між теорією та практикою; заохочення дослідницької діяльності студентів, які навчаються на другому (магістерському) рівні та отримують педагогічну спеціальність у закладах вищої освіти, оскільки викладачі навчальних дисциплін та наукові керівники магістерських робіт можуть виконувати функції тренерів і наставників, коли йдеться про залучення студентів до професійного читання, пропонувати студентам змістовні завдання з читання і забезпечувати постійне персоналізоване заохочення та підтримку. У статті зроблено висновок про ефективний вплив читання фахової літератури на професійний розвиток майбутніх учителів англійської мови.

Ключові слова: *професійно орієнтоване читання, майбутні вчителі англійської мови, стратегії читання, фахова література, завдання з читання.*

Introduction. The world is developing at a fast pace. New information is constantly emerging, and education requires professionals who will be able to use new research in their daily practice. Thus, the importance of engagement in professional reading

cannot be underestimated. At a time when educational policy in Ukraine is introducing fast-paced changes in school-based procedures and practices, teachers should engage in professionally oriented reading, have positive attitudes towards this option for their professional development, foster the habit of professionally oriented reading in themselves and encourage their students to read. The goal can be achieved if pursued early at the time when pre-service teachers are studying at universities.

A large body of research exists on the reading habits of teachers and the role of professionally oriented reading in professional development of teachers [1; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 10]. The studies established a direct correlation between teacher reading habits and student learning and achievement. According to Carroll and Simmons, teachers' professional reading habits demonstrate interest in the career [4, p. 3]. Focusing on creating a reason to read, Sawatzki, Tour and Marangio suggest creating coaching strategies that support teachers to establish reading as a professional practice [14], Nathanson, Pruslow, and Levitt investigate the reading habits and literacy attitudes of in-service and prospective teachers [9].

Equally well researched is the issue of professionally oriented reading competence of Ukrainian university students – prospective teachers of foreign languages [14; 15; 16; 19], IT specialists [17], economists [21], engineers [20; 22].

Several studies have investigated the impact of reading habits on academic achievement [12; 2] though most papers have researched “professional reading.” Pryke defined professional literature as a “periodical or publication (journal, book, magazine) which presents up-to-date information about contemporary practices, trends and philosophies in education” [10, p. 4].

The results of the study by Carroll and Simmons on English teachers' reading habits found that relatively few teachers actually engage in professional reading [4, p. 3]. Those who do are more often secondary teachers. The researchers found that degree attainment and teaching experience did not influence professional reading. Teachers involved with professional organizations may be more likely to engage in reading, especially if membership in the organization provides access to professional reading materials [3, p. 4].

However, despite existing studies which shed light on developing professionally oriented reading competence of pre-service and in-service foreign languages teachers, as well as specialists in other fields, there is the need for new studies examining reading habits and attitudes of English teachers and suggesting teaching strategies for professionally oriented reading.

Hence, the research questions of this study are as follows: Do pre-service English teachers engage in professional reading? Does university provide students with professional literature? What reading strategies can be taught to pre-service English teachers to facilitate their professional reading?

Research methodology

The **purpose** of this study was to examine how pre-service teachers view and participate in professional reading. We also intended to find information related to the

types of professional materials pre-service teachers are reading, the school's provision on professional reading and effective reading strategies which can be taught to pre-service English teachers.

The participants were 30 master's level students of Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University in Ukraine. The students were in the first year of the master's programme "Secondary Education (The English Language and Literature)" at the faculty of Foreign Languages (Department of English Philology and Methods of Teaching English). 25 participants were females and 5 were males. The participants' age ranged from 21 to 26 years.

The 14-question survey (Appendix A) was designed to provide insight into pre-service teachers' professional reading habits and the kinds of professional materials they read. The survey was a modified version of the 22-question survey by Broemmel et al (2019) used for researching reading habits of American teachers. In seven closed-ended questions respondents had to choose one of possible responses (e.g. "Identify the types of professional literature you've read.", "Have you read a professional journal within the past week, month, year, 5 years?", "In the past 6 months, how many times on average have you read educational literature (e.g., blog, book, journal article)?"). Seven open-ended questions expected respondents to provide short answers (e.g. "What books on teaching have you found helpful?", "When do you typically do your professional reading?").

Prior to launching the survey, we asked 4 students (which were not a part of the surveyed sample) to read and respond to the survey with the intention of providing clarifying feedback. These respondents provided information intended to clarify questions and reported the amount of time the survey took to respond. After receiving the feedback, the final version of the survey made available via a Google form at the end of the first (autumn) semester, when the link was sent to the participants, and the form remained available for a week.

The research was conducted in accordance with ethical considerations. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study and could withdraw their participation at any time.

Research results

Our analysis of the survey data used common survey data analysis techniques. The responses have been standardized, incomplete responses have been removed, frequencies and percentages for each survey question have been calculated. A content analysis of the open-ended survey questions has been conducted.

Professional reading appears to be a common activity for the survey participants. 98% of the respondents indicated that they read professional literature. Further analysis showed the types of publications that the students were reading, the frequency and the locations of their reading activities.

Responding to question 2 about the types of professional literature they read, 49.5% of respondents indicated that they primarily read books, 22.1% read professional journals, and 14.9% read magazines and/or professional materials provided by the university.

The responses suggest that students choose e-publications as their primary source for obtaining professional information. Blogs and websites appeared to be the least read publications. 5.8% of the respondents indicated that they read one or both of these types of electronic publications. Answering question 7, 76 % of respondents said they did not read e-journals, while 34% responded in the affirmative. This result seems to indicate a perceived difficulty of this type of publications among survey respondents. 32% of respondents answered “yes” to question 10 (“Have you read a professional journal within the past week, month, year, 5 years?”). One student wrote a comment “The articles in these journals are very difficult to understand” 87% of the surveyed students read books about teaching, which might indicate the students’ preference of this type of literature.

53 % of the participants indicated that they read during the evenings and on weekends (question 5). 85.6% of the respondents indicated they engaged in professional reading at home (question 6).

In response to question 8, 32% of participants stated that the university provides professional literature for their use, and 68% answered in the negative. These results suggest the need for developing and implementing teaching strategies aimed at fostering reading habits and competence of pre-service English teachers.

Responses to the open-ended question 14 “Why do you choose to engage in professional reading?” gave the reasons students stated, such as (1) being required to read by subject teachers or thesis advisors, (2) informing their tutoring or classroom teaching, and (3) learning for personal growth. The main reasons explaining why students didn’t read professional literature included (1) lack of time, (2) lack of relevant reading materials, and (3) lack of access to professional reading materials.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how pre-service English teachers view and participate in professionally oriented reading. Our research findings are consistent with the research which has been done before [2; 14; 15; 16; 19], adding to the body of literature on pre-service teachers’ professional reading.

It is worth mentioning that both limited time and perceptions of difficulty and irrelevancy influence students’ decisions not to engage in professional reading. Although some past studies on reading habits of university students suggest that they don’t read much [2, p. 188], our survey results imply that despite several reasons for not reading, students are indeed engaging in reading of the professional literature.

The findings in this study are consistent with the findings by Broemmel et al. [3], Carroll and Simmonds [4], Sawatzki, Tour and Marangio [14] in that reasons for reading professional literature should be clear, it is difficult for students to understand the language of academic publications, and students often do not realize their practical implications in the classroom.

The findings of this study also show that the problem of pre-service teacher engagement into professional reading can be addressed. Sawatzki, Tour and Marangio suggest four coaching strategies to encourage reading by in-service teachers: suggesting relevant

readings and other professional resources; prompting annotations and reflections; inspiring connections between theory and practice; and championing experimentation [11]. We believe these strategies will work with master's level students at pedagogical universities as well because their research advisors and academic subjects' teachers can act as coaches and mentors when it comes to engaging students into professional reading, and provide ongoing personalized and explicit encouragement and support.

Reading professional literature is crucial for the professional development of pre-service English language teachers. It can have several implications that can impact their future teaching practices and enhance their skills.

Reading professional literature can help pre-service English language teachers to build foundational knowledge about language teaching, namely language acquisition theories, teaching methodologies, and assessment practices which can provide a strong foundation for their future teaching practices. Professional literature often presents different perspectives on language teaching issues, thus helping novice teachers to develop their critical thinking skills and consider different approaches to teaching. This exposure to different viewpoints can help them to develop their own teaching philosophy and approach.

Engaging with professional literature develops a passion for teaching and a love of learning. Reading about the latest research and best practices in the field, pre-service teachers learn about the possibilities of teaching and the impact they can have on their students. Reading professional literature helps pre-service teachers to prepare for the challenges they may face in the classroom. They can learn about classroom management strategies, lesson planning, and adapting their teaching to the needs of different learners.

Finally, reading professional literature new teachers can connect with others in the field and build relationships with experienced teachers and scholars. These relationships can provide mentorship and support as they begin their careers.

Conclusions

The findings have important implications for the development of foreign language teacher education courses and programmes. Reading professional literature is essential for pre-service foreign language teachers who need to build foundational knowledge, develop critical thinking skills, and prepare for their future teaching practices. It can help them to develop a passion for teaching, prepare for the classroom, and build relationships with others in the field. While professional reading is a beneficial professional development tool, it does take time, and, therefore, should be organized effectively. If pre-service teachers of foreign languages are to be engaged in professional reading, it is necessary to implement reading strategies into practice. Further research is required to explore the potential of these strategies for students of other specialties.

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Appendix A. Survey questions

1. Do you read professional literature?
2. Identify the types of professional literature you've read.
3. What educational magazines or journals do you read?
4. What books on teaching have you found helpful?

5. When do you typically do your professional reading?
6. Where do you typically do your professional reading?
7. Do you read any electronic journals? If so, which ones?
8. Does your school provide professional literature for your use?
9. If you answered yes to 8, please describe the kinds of professional/educational literature your school provides. Be as specific as possible (e.g., journals, magazines, books).
10. Have you read a professional journal within the past week, month, year, 5 years?
11. Have you read a book about teaching within the past week, month, year, 5 years?
12. In the past 6 months, how many times on average have you read educational literature (e.g., blog, book, journal article)?
 - 0 times per month
 - 1 time per month
 - 2 times
 - 3 times
 - 4 times
 - 5 times
 - more than 5 times
13. If you answered 0 times, how long ago did you last read a book about teaching?
14. Why do you choose to engage in professional reading?