IMPACT OF TRADITIONAL NARRATIVES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING SKILLS DURING SCHOOL

IMPACTO DE LAS NARRATIVAS TRADICIONALES EN EL DESARROLLO DE LAS COMPETENCIAS LECTORAS DURANTE LA ETAPA ESCOLAR

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Resumen

El propósito de este estudio fue analizar el nivel de comprensión lectora en estudiantes de séptimo año de Educación General Básica, así como identificar las estrategias pedagógicas implementadas por los docentes de la asignatura de Lengua y Literatura para fomentar dicha competencia. La investigación se desarrolló en la Unidad Educativa Agustín Cueva Dávila, y se enmarcó en un enfoque metodológico de corte mixto con predominio cualitativo, utilizando la técnica de la encuesta como principal instrumento de recolección de información. Participaron cuarenta y cinco estudiantes y quince docentes pertenecientes a los subniveles de Educación General Básica. Los datos obtenidos permitieron evidenciar una limitada comprensión de los textos leídos por parte de los educandos. Las estrategias más utilizadas por los docentes incluyeron el trabajo con vocabulario, la predicción y la identificación de ideas principales; sin embargo, estas prácticas no demostraron ser suficientes para garantizar avances sostenidos en la comprensión lectora. Entre los factores que incidieron negativamente en el desarrollo de esta habilidad se identificaron el escaso hábito lector en el hogar, la falta de motivación y el uso limitado de recursos didácticos interactivos. Como conclusión general, se estableció que la comprensión lectora continúa siendo un desafío educativo, cuyo abordaje requiere un rediseño de las prácticas pedagógicas, una mayor articulación entre la escuela y familia, así como la incorporación de estrategias centradas en los intereses del estudiantado y en la utilización de materiales motivadores. Estos hallazgos aportan elementos relevantes para el fortalecimiento de la enseñanza de la lectura en los distintos niveles formativos.

Palabras clave: Comprensión, Docentes, Educación, Estrategias, Estudiantes, Lectura, Leyendas, Mitos.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyze the level of reading comprehension in seventh grade students of General Basic Education, as well as to identify the pedagogical strategies implemented by Language and Literature teachers to promote this competence. The research was carried out at the Agustín Cueva Dávila Educational Unit and was framed in a mixed methodological approach with a qualitative predominance, using the survey technique as the main instrument for data collection. Forty-five students and fifteen teachers belonging to the sub-levels of General Basic Education participated. The data obtained showed a limited comprehension of

the texts read by the students. The strategies most used by teachers included working with vocabulary, prediction and identification of main ideas; however, these practices did not prove to be sufficient to guarantee sustained progress in reading comprehension. Among the factors that had a negative impact on the development of this skill were identified as poor reading habits at home, lack of motivation and the limited use of interactive didactic resources. As a general conclusion, it was established that reading comprehension continues to be an educational challenge, whose approach requires a redesign of pedagogical practices, greater articulation between school and family, as well as the incorporation of strategies focused on the students' interests and the use of motivating materials. These findings provide relevant elements for strengthening the teaching of reading at different educational levels.

Keywords: Comprehension, Teachers, Education, Strategies, Students, Reading, Legends, Myths.

Sumário

O objetivo deste estudo foi analisar o nível de compreensão leitora dos alunos do sétimo ano do Ensino Básico Geral, bem como identificar as estratégias pedagógicas implementados pelos professores de Língua e Literatura para promover esta competência. A investigação foi realizada na Unidade Educativa Agustín Cueva Dávila e enquadrou-se numa abordagem metodológica mista com um enfoque predominantemente qualitativo, utilizando a técnica de inquérito como principal instrumento de recolha de informação. Participaram quarenta e cinco alunos e quinze professores pertencentes aos subníveis do Ensino Básico Geral. Os dados obtidos revelaram uma compreensão limitada dos textos lidos pelos alunos. As estratégias mais

utilizadas pelos professores incluíram o trabalho com o vocabulário, a previsão e a identificação das ideias principais; no entanto, estas práticas não se revelaram suficientes para garantir um progresso sustentado na compreensão da leitura. Entre os factores que tiveram um impacto negativo no desenvolvimento desta competência foram identificados os maus hábitos de leitura em casa, a falta de motivação e a utilização limitada de recursos didácticos interactivos. Como conclusão geral, constatou-se que a compreensão da leitura continua sendo um desafio educacional, cuja abordagem requer um redesenho das práticas pedagógicas, uma maior articulação entre escola e família, bem como a incorporação de estratégias centradas nos interesses dos alunos e o uso de materiais motivadores. Esses achados fornecem elementos relevantes para o fortalecimento do ensino da leitura nos diferentes níveis de ensino.

Palavras-chave: Compreensão, Professores, Educação, Estratégias, Alunos, Leitura, Lendas, Mitos.

Introduction

Reading constitutes a complex process of meaning construction in which the reader interacts with the text, establishing connections between his previous knowledge and the new information he or she receives. This act involves the interpretation, analysis and appropriation of the content from an individual and contextualized perspective. In this sense, reading experience not only enables the acquisition of knowledge, but also fosters the development of thought and imagination. According to Torres (2003), reading can transport the reader to alternative realities, stimulate his creativity and re−signify his previous conceptions based on new ideas and perspectives. Reading implies an intellectual

exercise that makes it possible to evaluate both what is explicitly expressed and the underlying intentions of the discourse. However, in the school environment, this transformative potential is often limited due to pedagogical practices that reduce it to a mechanical or instrumental activity, stripping it of its reflective dimension (Lerner, 2012). This denaturalization of the act of reading, far from encouraging autonomous thinking, can turn reading into a meaningless obligation, which affects the construction of genuine reading habits and the development of a critical attitude towards texts.

Therefore, early access to reading plays a fundamental role in the cognitive and emotional development of children. Given that reading ability is not innate, but the result of a progressive learning process, it is essential to foster in students a sensitivity that leads them to experience reading not as an academic obligation, but as a source of enjoyment and personal enrichment (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2019). Reading is not static, but dynamic. Each new interaction with the text broadens the ways of understanding the world. Thus, it fosters a permanent dialogue between the reader's subjectivity and the multiple voices contained in the texts, which enriches his perception of himself and his environment (Ramírez Leyva, 2009). It becomes a tool for the formation of critical thinking and the consolidation of their identity. Despite the role that reading plays in intellectual and social development, Ecuador is among the countries with the lowest rates of reading habits in the region, which significantly limits access to the benefits of interacting with texts (Pino, 2021). As a result, the potential that reading offers as a tool for the integral formation of individuals and the strengthening of the cultural and social fabric is wasted.

In Ecuadorian territory, the average annual reading per person is one completed book and two unfinished books, a figure that shows the low reading practice in the country (Ministerio de Cultura y Patrimonio, 2022). This phenomenon responds to multiple social, cultural and educational factors. In this sense, Crespo (2022) points out that, in the case of children and adolescents, specifically those in the 5 to 11 and 12 to 17 age ranges, the scarcity of reading materials that are attractive to their interests and the absence of adequate spaces for recreational reading constitute obstacles to the consolidation of the reading habit. In addition, it is noted that the reading activity of these age groups is mostly limited to school texts, which reduces their perception of reading as a pleasurable activity and associates it, instead, with an academic obligation. The use of traditional narratives, deeply rooted in the history, culture and traditions of peoples, offers an invaluable pedagogical resource for teaching and learning dynamics. These narratives, being novel material and in many cases, little explored by students, awaken their curiosity and encourage reading motivation, promoting a deeper exploration of knowledge.

At the same time, this literature connects with the receiver, generating an affective response that enriches the reading experience. Through these stories, it transforms and leaves traces in the memory and sensitivity of those who read it, becoming a vehicle for introspection and the development of emotional intelligence (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2018). Myths and legends are valuable pedagogical tools that, in addition to transmitting cultural knowledge and collective values, favor the construction of deep and meaningful learning. Their impact on education lies in their ability to generate an emotionally enriching experience in the recipients, which enhances the assimilation

and retention of knowledge. From a psychoeducational perspective, this process is aligned with the principles of meaningful learning, in which new concepts are integrated in a structured manner into the individual's pre−existing cognitive schemas, thus facilitating a more durable and applicable understanding (Coral, 2020). In this sense, reading myths and legends from an early age contributes to the development of imagination, expression and the ability to experience and understand emotions. Likewise, this type of story allows schoolchildren to train creative thinking, face symbolic dilemmas that reflect problems of everyday life and formulate solutions from a narrative perspective. In the area of reading comprehension, Palma Campos (2023) points out that access to these texts favors the development of skills that transcend literal comprehension, favoring the acquisition of advanced competencies that are difficult to achieve with informative and instructive texts. Approaching a critical perspective, since they require an analysis of symbols, metaphors and values implicit in the discursive structure.

According to Quevedo (2023), Ecuador, with its cultural diversity, embodies a vast collection of traditions that are manifested in its mythological stories. These narratives, constructed from the cosmovision and collective imaginary of its peoples, represent a literary resource of great educational value, since they can be approached at different levels of education from multiple dimensions: semantic, syntactic and pragmatic. A linguistic and symbolic richness that, in turn, contributes to the construction of a solid cultural identity. To enhance their impact on learning, it is essential that these stories are presented in a creative and contextualized way, so that students do not perceive them as expressions of

the past, but as living elements of their cultural heritage.

Materials and Methods

The present study was developed under a mixed methodological approach, which, according to Núñez (2017), is based on the interaction between qualitative and quantitative methods, a complementarity that enriches the research process and allows understanding the complexity of the phenomenon with greater precision. A decision that facilitated a better understanding of the object of study, ensuring that the results reflect both quantifiable dimensions and their qualitative aspects, which are often fundamental for the interpretation of the underlying dynamics. The survey technique was used in its execution, which, according to Obez et al. (2018), is a widely used tool in the mixed approach. In accordance with what the authors point out, its application in the educational field is relevant, since it allows gathering information in a structured manner from specific groups, such as students and teachers, with the purpose of analyzing their problems and obtaining data on their perceptions and experiences.

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire, designed in printed format, whose main function was to facilitate the collection of standardized responses that contributed to the understanding of the phenomenon studied. In this case, the personal survey modality was chosen, which implied the direct application of the questionnaire to the participants (Feria et al., 2020). The sample was selected using a non−probabilistic purposive method (Otzen y Manterola, 2017), where participants with specific characteristics were registered within the population universe of the Agustín Cueva Dávila School, located in the city of Ibarra, province of Imbabura, northern

Ecuador. In the case of the students, those who were in the last grade of the intermediate basic education sub−level, aged between 10 and 11 years, who are at a key stage for the development of reading competence, were selected (Crisóstomo et al., 2024). On the other hand, the sample of teachers included professionals with experience in teaching the sub−levels of General Basic Education, selected for their experience in didactic strategies for the promotion of reading and their knowledge of classroom challenges. In this way, 45 students from the seventh year of General Basic Education and 15 teachers from the high school, elementary, middle and high school sub−levels participated. For the collection of information, two different questionnaires were designed and applied according to the target population. The first, addressed to students, consisted of three multiple−choice questions aimed at exploring the frequency with which they practice reading in the context of the subject of Language and Literature, their level of reading comprehension and the types of texts they usually approach in the classroom. The second questionnaire, intended for teachers, also consisted of three multiple choice questions and its purpose was to inquire about the pedagogical strategies implemented to strengthen reading comprehension in the classroom, to identify the literary genres and topics that generate greater interest among students and to analyze the factors that represent an obstacle to the development of this competence.

Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of data obtained using the previously described instrument. First, it examines the responses to the questionnaire administered to students, followed by the responses provided by faculty. At the same time, in addition to processing the data, a contrasting process was carried out with the theoretical contributions of various authors specialized in the field of education. This triangulation made it possible to support the empirical findings with conceptual foundations, strengthening the validity and reliability of the interpretations formulated.
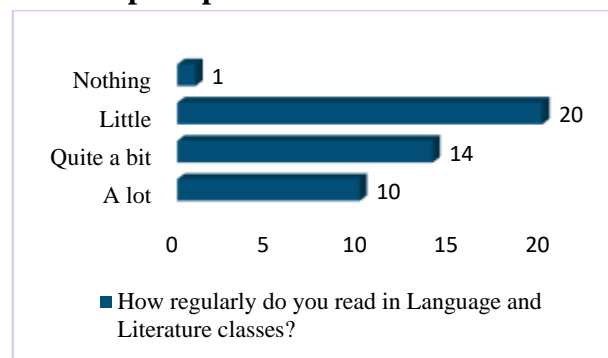
Student perceptions

Figure 1: reading frequency

The analysis of the data showed that 20 students reported reading infrequently in the subject of Language and Literature, which represented most of the selected samples. Additionally, one student indicated that he did not read at all. On the other hand, the responses corresponded to the categories quite a bit and a lot were distributed between 14 and 10 participants, without surpassing the predominant group that indicated a low level of reading. These findings were worrisome, since they showed that, even in a subject whose nature is intrinsically linked to the promotion of reading, there were not enough incentives to consolidate this habit among students. This situation is especially relevant, given that reading in the school environment not only facilitates access to and comprehension of contents in Language and Literature but also acts as a transversal tool that allows structuring thinking and developing competencies in other disciplines. In relation to this problem, Barboza & Peña (2014) emphasized that reading, in addition to constituting a fundamental skill within the educational system, should be promoted as a

pleasurable and habitual activity. Along these lines, to foster interest in reading, it is necessary for schoolchildren to discover texts in line with their personal preferences and motivations.
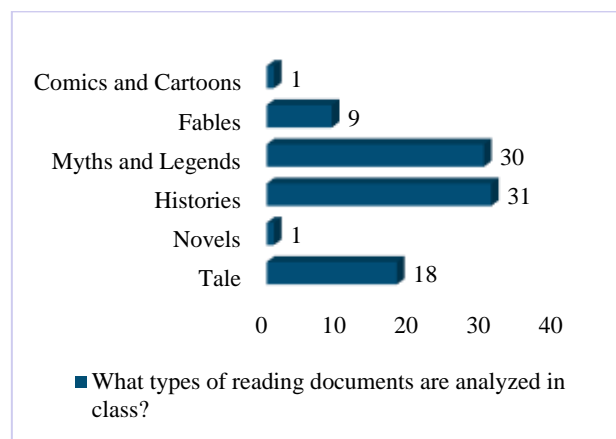

Figure 2: type of reading documents

The texts with the greatest acceptance in the Language and Literature classes were stories, selected on 31 occasions, followed by myths and legends, which obtained 30. Novels, as well as comics and cartoons, registered the lowest reception, with only one selection each. These results suggested that students showed a marked inclination towards short narrative texts with a traditional or fictional component. As was argued in the initial section of this study, multiple researchers have emphasized that narrative texts represent an essential pedagogical resource to enhance reading comprehension. Their effectiveness lies in their ability to stimulate key cognitive processes, such as imagination, reflection and critical thinking. Likewise, the incorporation of this type of text in the educational environment favors the development and consolidation of literacy skills. This is because they allow the exploration of different discursive structures, thus promoting greater flexibility in the use of language and a deeper understanding of textual interpretation.

In this way, narrative texts not only enrich students' linguistic background, but also provide them with tools to interact critically with knowledge, strengthening their analytical capacity and written expression.
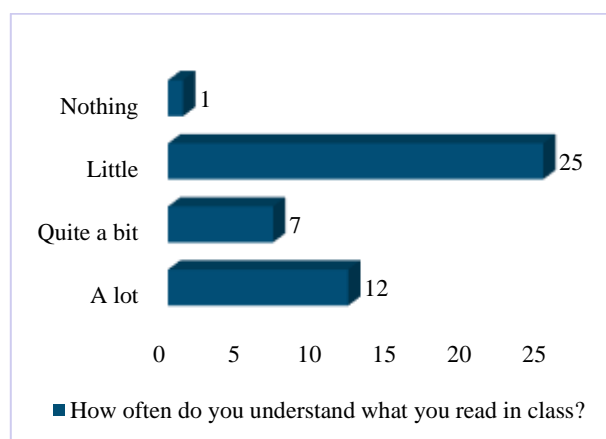

Figure 3: text comprehension

25 students reported limited comprehension of the texts they read in the school environment, which is an alarming indicator in terms of the development of reading skills. This result suggests that reading, beyond the mere decoding of linguistic signs, is not being approached as a process of meaning construction. That is, the ability to interpret, analyze and make critical judgments about the content read is not being promoted. Likewise, one case was identified in which the student stated that he did not understand the texts he read at all. 12 participants stated that they understood a lot of what they read, while 7 indicated that they reached a level of comprehension of quite a bit. From a theoretical perspective, González (2019) emphasized that the teaching of reading cannot be dissociated from the processes of textual production, comprehension and interpretation, given that these aspects constitute the central axis of the subject of Language and Literature.
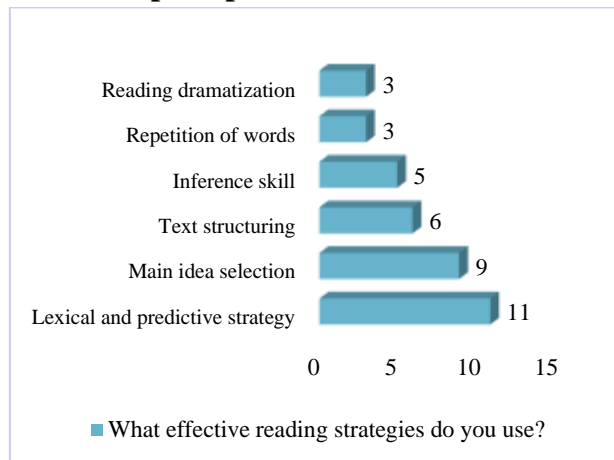
Teachers' perceptions

Figure 4: Techniques to improve reading comprehension

11 teachers reported using strategies focused on vocabulary, language and prediction, which suggests an intention to anticipate and contextualize textual content. On the other hand, 9 educators indicated resorting to the identification of main ideas as a comprehension technique, while 6 focused on the structural organization of the text, narrative or story to facilitate the global interpretation of the content. Likewise, 5 teachers prioritized the development of inference as a critical skill, 3 used word repetition −a traditional strategy− and 3 opted for text dramatization, which introduces an expressive and performative component in reading. However, despite the application of these strategies, it was found that there are still unattractive and unmotivating pedagogical practices, which limit the effective development of reading comprehension, particularly at school levels. This situation is worrisome, given that the success of any literacy process depends primarily on methodologies that capture the student's attention and actively involve him.

The gap between the strategies implemented by teachers and the results perceived by students in terms of comprehension suggests a dissonance that should be addressed through a critical

review of teaching practices. Along these lines, Borbua & Rueda (2019) emphasized the need to articulate pedagogical strategies with relevant resources and didactic methods aligned with the communicative competencies intended to be developed in the classroom.
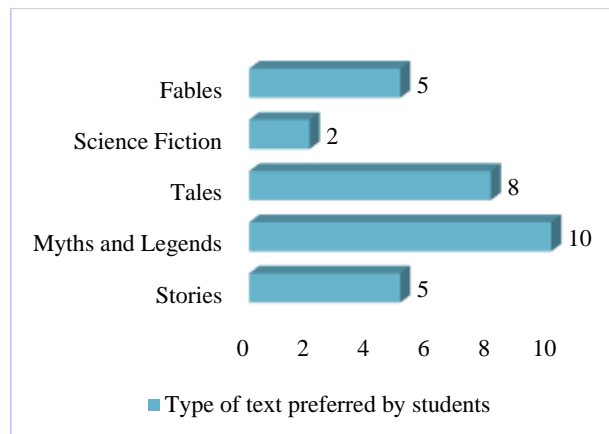

Figure 5: Readings that generate more interest among students

The results showed that most respondents (10) identified myths and legends as the narrative genres that generate the greatest interest among students, followed by stories, selected by 8 teachers. At a slightly lower level were stories and fables, with 5 mentions each, while science fiction works obtained a lower reception, being chosen by only 2 teachers. This pattern of preferences coincides with the answers provided by the students themselves, which reinforces the validity of the findings and suggests a shared tendency between both actors in the educational process regarding the literary genres of greatest attraction. Faced with this panorama, it is essential that educators diversify the strategies through which they promote reading habit, considering not only the instrumental function of reading, but also its formative and affective dimension. The inclusion of narrative texts appropriate to the age, interests and socio−cultural environment of students is an effective way to foster a meaningful relationship with reading.

In this sense, myths and legends not only offer the possibility of exploring imaginary worlds and symbolic realities but also contribute to the development of the capacity for critical reflection. In this regard, Cardozo (2015) argues that schoolchildren tend to show an attitude of apathy towards reading, especially when faced with materials imposed by the educational system. However, it is stressed that this disinterest can be reversed by selecting works that are more stimulating and closer to their daily experiences.
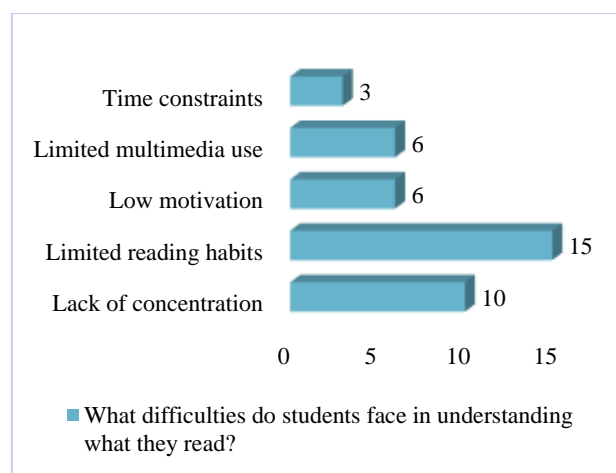

Figure 6: Barriers to reading comprehension

One of the factors most frequently mentioned by the teaching staff was the lack of reading habits in the family environment, which was supported by 15 participants. This problem reveals an extracurricular dimension that directly affects the formative processes, since the practice of reading at home constitutes an essential support to consolidate the skills acquired in the classroom. In a second line of frequency, the limited concentration capacity of students was identified, pointed out by 10 teachers, which highlights the need to implement pedagogical strategies that promote sustained attention and cognitive focus during reading exercises. Likewise, the low motivation towards reading, as well as the insufficient use of digital and interactive resources −tools

currently considered fundamental to capture student's interest and diversify learning channels−, were pointed out by 6 teachers in each case. Finally, the lack of time to develop reading activities appeared as the least mentioned cause, with only 3 selections, suggesting that the problem of reading comprehension does not derive primarily from a time constraint, but rather from attitudinal factors linked to both the family context and school pedagogical dynamics. This set of findings confirms what has been pointed out by contemporary studies, which highlight reading as a social practice mediated by multiple dimensions −emotional, cultural, technological and scholastic−, whose coherent articulation is indispensable to strengthen critical thinking and literacy competence (Lozano Díaz, 2014).

Conclusions

From the results shown, that is, from their analysis and discussion, the following conclusions can be drawn: 1) reading comprehension in General Basic Education students evidences a structural fragility, linked to both pedagogical and contextual factors, which has a direct impact on their ability to construct meaning from the texts read; 2) the didactic strategies applied in the classroom, although varied in their formulation, still fail to respond effectively to the real needs of the student body, suggesting a gap between teacher planning and the experience of learning to read; 3) the students' preference for narrative texts, such as myths, legends and stories, reveals a significant pedagogical opportunity, since incorporating this type of reading with a high formative and emotional value (aligned with their interests) can become an effective way to promote a taste for reading and improve comprehension; 4) although there is a teacher's intention to incorporate strategies to strengthen reading comprehension, it is imperative to

review, update and contextualize these practices, integrating contemporary resources, educational technologies and active methodologies that favor transformative learning; 5) student motivation towards reading continues to be a determining component in the development of their reading skills, therefore, any educational intervention should consider both the affective and cognitive components, promoting a freer, critical and pleasurable relationship with texts.

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