High school students' reading comprehension

Comprensión lectora en estudiantes de educación general básica media

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ABSTRACT

This research focused on analyzing high school students' reading comprehension in the area of Language and Literature in Portoviejo, Ecuador. Moreover, the study was based on the quantitative approach through a non-experimental descriptive type. To do that, it was necessary to analyze a sample of 46 students who answered a test with open and closed questions that allowed the researcher to get important information about descriptive statistics. The results showed that just 17% of students understood the text; it meant that they comprehended the written messages and gave them meaning. As a conclusion, it is important to emphasize that reading comprehension is necessary to achieve students' optimal performance; that is, giving meaning to what they read, on the contrary, it is not reading because the reading process involves comprehension according to previous experiences or knowledge.
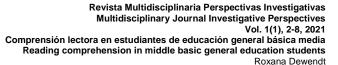
Descriptors: reading instruction; reading promotion; reading guidance. (Source: UNESCO Thesaurus).

RESUMEN

La investigación tiene por objetivo analizar la comprensión lectora en estudiantes de educación general básica media del área de Lengua y Literatura, ubicados en la ciudad de Portoviejo – Ecuador. Se desarrolló en función del enfoque cuantitativo, mediante un tipo descriptivo no experimental, en una muestra poblacional de 46 estudiantes a quienes se les aplicó un instrumento tipo prueba, con la finalidad de recopilar información, siendo procesada en función de la estadística descriptiva. Como resultado central, se tiene que el 17% de la muestra poblacional, logró comprender el texto. Como conclusión, es importante indicar que, para lograr un óptimo rendimiento en los discentes, es necesario que estos lean, es decir, que comprendan los mensajes escritos y les den significado, de lo contrario, no hay lectura, por cuanto el proceso lector es compresión de acuerdo con las experiencias o conocimiento previos.

Descriptores: enseñanza de la lectura; promoción de la lectura; orientación para la lectura. (Fuente: Tesauro UNESCO).

INTRODUCTION

The incorporation of pedagogical reading strategies in the educational process introduce certain modifications to the way of teaching, considering these strategic actions as one of the viable alternatives to help the student to be creative and participative in the teaching-learning process. Likewise, academic performance depends, in part, on such strategies, according to the criteria of authors like (Valverde & Valverde, 2019). In addition, this concept determines teaching actions that rely on a great variety of factors, such as: motivation, creativity, the initiative, among others.

However, many of these influencing factors on academic performance, unlike teaching strategies, are considered complex and not very measurable, for example, the student's social level or personality. Hence, as a scientific proof, the pedagogy approach used by the teacher to project a better academic performance in their students is most relevant. In the teaching-learning process, reading plays a fundamental role in the development of the human being; conceiving it as a thought activity that encompasses the creative intelligence, as well as the process that involves the perception of symbols and their association with experience, the extraction of the meaning of what is read and, in addition, the possible application of what is read.

It is necessary to consider the development of reading as a continuous process in which reading skills and abilities are interrelated and whose development occurs in a systematic way. That is why, when teaching to read, the student must be provided with methodical learning experiences for their comprehensive training (Hoyos- Flórez & Gallego, 2017). In this sense, a series of factors, such as: social culture, prior knowledge, linguistic control, attitudes, and conceptual schemes are important in the conception of ability. In this regard, the ability to read would also depend on the way in which the readers approach the language in their schemas related to the concept and life experiences.

In other words, the search for meaning is one of the most relevant characteristics of the reading process allowing everything to take its value in the semantic cycle. According to this, meaning is constructed while reading, but it is also reconstructed, since new information must be continuously accommodated and the sense of meaning, in training, must be adapted (Zárate-Pérez, 2019). In this way, throughout the reading of a text, and even later, the reader is reassessing and reconstructing the meaning as new insights are gained. For this reason, reading should be appreciated as a tool that provides results throughout the learning process and in later moments, even when it is not being done at the time of the educational act. (García-Dussan, 2016).

According to the above, reading with greater understanding means generating the meaning of written language, relating it to knowledge and memory of reading experiences; for this reason, it is necessary to find a configuration of mental schemes within the text for the individuals to provide an adequate explanation and, in this way, see the interaction between the text and the readers. As a result, the meaning is provided by the readers themselves in relation to the knowledge and experiences stored in their memory (Núñez-Lira, et al., 2019).

Therefore, the teaching of reading must be oriented towards comprehension, fluency and the development of skills in order to obtain, organize and reproduce information, since reading allows the acquisition of knowledge, the consolidation of reading habits and the development of comprehension skills, which requires mental effort to interpret a text. In addition, the reading process contributes to improving pronunciation and intonation, enriching vocabulary, developing expressive capacities, among others. It implies broad educational applications and leads the teachers to include it in the different techniques and instruments that make up their planning. All the aforementioned will motivate the teaching professional to include reading comprehension as an effective and productive strategy for learning in areas not directly related to reading (Ramírez-Peña, et al., 2015).

Due to the above, the research aims to analyze general basic education students' reading comprehension in the area of Language and Literature, located in the city of Portoviejo - Ecuador.

METHOD

The research was developed based on the quantitative approach, using a non-experimental descriptive type, with the support of the field design for the collection of information, as they were developed in reality. The bibliographic was also used in order to contribute to the theoretical discussion of the results. The population sample was made up of 46 students of general basic secondary education in the area of language and literature in Portoviejo - Ecuador.

It is noteworthy that the population sample regularly attends private counseling in Psychopedagogy, in order to learn specific strategies to improve their reading comprehension. To achieve this, a simple random sampling was considered and a test-type questionnaire was applied by virtue of knowing the relation among the indicators: extraction of meaning, reading comprehension and text interpretation. The results obtained were processed through descriptive statistics, in order to be presented in frequencies and percentages. These were analyzed regarding previously published works and theories in order to compare the results, projecting to amplify the knowledge about the subject under study.

RESULTS

With reference to the methodological procedure, the results of the research are presented:

Table 1: Reading

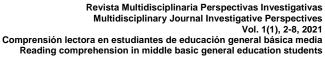| Alternatives	Frequency	Percentage
Meaning extraction	18	39%
Reading comprehension	08	17%
Text interpretation	20	44%
TOTAL	46	100%

Source: Own elaboration, 2020.

According to the statistical sample analyzed, 44% managed to interpret the text, 39% managed to efficiently extract the meaning of the text, only 17% of those involved managed to understand the text.

Discussion

Comprehensive critical reading is a complex act that involves various processes, such as: "phonological awareness", which underlies the ability to divide and analyze speech; likewise, it has particular relevance to decode unknown words (Gutiérrez-Fresneda & Díez-Mediavilla, 2018). Therefore, it is of utmost importance for the readers to form a phonological awareness, since this will allow them to understand the message of the text in depth. For this, the reader must resort to strategies that facilitate the understanding of the text; for example: searching for the meaning of ambiguous words (Esquivel-Gámez, et al., 2016).

In the educational field, the teacher, as a guide, must promote reading for better learning, but must take into account the position of (Solé, 1992) who explains that the readers must have phonological awareness in order to better understand the text they read. For this reason, the teacher must encourage the search for word meanings, as this allows the text to be decoded in lexical depth, providing breadth of knowledge to the readers. However, little promotion of reading is perceived from a reflective point of view, since the readers' phonological awareness is not being formed through the extraction of meanings, which means that the reader only performs a process of literal reading of the text and not a learning process from a critical and reflective vision.

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Therefore, it is essential to apply strategies to locate synonyms in the dictionary in order to refine reading comprehension (Zapico & Vivas, 2015). In this way, word awareness includes the abilities to divide sentences or phrases into words, separate words from their referents, appreciate jokes that involve lexical ambiguity, equate words with others, recognize synonyms and antonyms and also, substitute words."

The orthographic awareness allows the readers to better comprehend the reading, since they are in a position of breadth of knowledge, because they spend time in deepening the meaning of the message that the reading intends to convey; besides, they are in the ability to substitute words for others of equal meaning that allow decorating the text or simply make it less ambiguous to facilitate its understanding, without losing the depth of the idea it transmits (Rodríguez-Muñoz & Sánchez-Fernández, 2018). Hence, a promotion of reading strategies that foster lexical growth and improve students' spelling must be encouraged.

As a result, to achieve students' optimal performance, it is necessary that they not only read but also understand the written messages and give them meaning; otherwise, there is no reading, since the reading process is comprehension according to previous experiences or knowledge (Castellano-Gil, et al., 2018). Therefore, if a good reading process is not carried out, it will be difficult to understand the true meaning that reading wants to convey. In this regard, the promotion of rereading is essential, in order to encourage a better learning process through good reading to develop a critical- reflective growth.

The teacher must promote a process of reflection through reading with the purpose of achieving critical - academic - social autonomy (Núñez-López, et al., 2017), which contributes to the search for information in various bibliographic sources that allow the students to broaden their knowledge by giving them the opportunity to make comparisons in relation to what they investigate. In this way, they will understand what is stated by different authors in relation to their previous knowledge. Likewise, they will carry out a restructuring and construction of schemes that will help them to expand their knowledge and, with this, promote better learning.
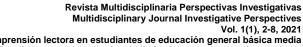
This brings with it the stimulation of students for research in order to expand the knowledge discussed in class; hence, it is necessary to promote the search in bibliographic sources, as this encourages the acquisition of new knowledge that leads to meaningful learning, because they are the ones who are discovering the information and then go through a restructuring process to become reflective and critical agents.

In addition, (Agama-Sarabia & Crespo-Knopfler, 2016) consider that constructivist teaching strategies constitute, today, a very effective and influential means in the motivation of students, managing to maintain their interests during the reading process, where its prolonged use, provides well-being and benefit to accelerate the learning process. One of these strategies is the individual interpretation that a student may make and then present it in a group.

This activity promotes the participation and intellectual growth of the students, since it is not properly an analysis, but it is a primary step to reach this. Such activity will allow them to grow in the reflection process and thus develop into a critical thinking, facing the social environment that surrounds them. This practice of interpretation is important, not only because it helps to better understand the reading itself, but also because the students, by making it a habit, learn to be critical of the situations that happen in daily life.

On the other hand, (Neira-Martínez, et al., 2015) state that underlining is a reading organization technique that aims to identify what is most important and organize it in order to study and learn it. It is a supplement for reading comprehension and the basis for its organization in personal synthesis instruments. Students are advised to underline after they have understood each reading unit mechanically.

In this sense, Solé (1992) affirms that among the reading processes there is attention and concentration, which are achieved by performing an exploratory reading of the text. This, with the purpose of achieving the general vision of the reader about such text, preparing the understanding of it or looking for some isolated data of interest. That reading allows the learners to study before the class, that is, they may read and have a prior idea of what is going to be discussed in the classroom to promote learning.

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According to statistics, there is evidence of a mismanagement of this procedure, which affects students' learning, since reading is not only based on reading, but on a process of psychological level that the person has in order to assimilate and accommodate new information, that is, with a diagnostic reading, the students may have better learning, on the other hand, they may have better attention and concentration to comprehend the text.

Awareness of semantic or syntactic form includes the abilities to detect structural ambiguity in sentences, correct word order violations, and complete sentences when words are missing. This awareness is achieved through the search for linguistic meanings, that is, the student must interpret the messages or abstract words present in the text, in order to go through a deep process in the reading carried out and do not remain at the literal level of this (Mariángel & Jiménez, 2016).

On the other hand, the identification of linguistic theories that make up the text constitutes a way of organizing the knowledge present in it. It is important that the students may identify these theories because, in this way, they will be able to carry out a better analysis process. (Silva-Trujillo, 2014). To reach this goal, students have to grow in their academic training, without having their intellectual conscience immersed behind any text, generally, they must keep in mind that there is a linguistic theory that supports it.

It is not a question of measuring the students' knowledge regarding linguistic theories, but rather generating students' level of awareness regarding the existence of these theories, in order to encourage an analysis that allows them to break down the text into its parts and from there organize their ideas. Through reading comprehension, the teachers may help the students to create psychological constructs that allow them to go beyond the literal lines of the text, thus encouraging their literary creativity. Therefore, reading must not only stay at a literal level but must go further, that is, promote a creative level from a content analysis that leads to better learning.

CONCLUSION

As a central result, 17% of the population sample managed to understand the text. Regarding this percentage, students should read in order to achieve optimal performance, that is, to understand the written messages and give them meaning. Otherwise, there is no reading, since the reading process is comprehension according to experiences or prior knowledge. Therefore, the teacher must promote a process of reflection through reading, with the purpose of achieving critical-academic autonomy supported by individual interpretation as a strategy that may then be exposed in a group, because this encourage participation and intellectual growth. In summary, reading comprehension must be seen as the fundamental axis that, from the classrooms, brings the students closer to their social reality.

FINANCING

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest with people or institutions linked to the research.

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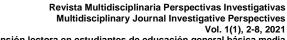
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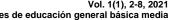Comprensión lectora en estudiantes de educación general básica media
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