

Didactic strategy to improve reading comprehension

Estrategia didáctica para mejorar la comprensión lectora

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to strengthen reading comprehension through a didactic strategy in the seventh grade students of the IE San Juan Bautista de Caimito Sucre, with the purpose of providing the required knowledge to develop the research skills in the Master's degree in education. A field diary was made and then an interview was conducted with the authorization and consent of the students' parents. According to the results obtained, a didactic strategy for reading comprehension was built, which allowed the students to adapt to new learning styles, appropriating several didactic means, which made the learning process in text comprehension easier. Finally, the activities implemented, determined a change in the learning of the students, showing creativity and imagination, contributing positively to a better reading comprehension.

Key words: reading, strategy, didactics, pedagogy, creativity and evaluation.

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Resumen

La presente investigación estuvo como objetivo, fortalecer la comprensión lectora por medio de una estrategia didáctica en los estudiantes del grado séptimo de la IE San Juan Bautista de Caimito Sucre, con el propósito de brindar los conocimientos requeridos, para desarrollar la habilidad investigativa en el paso de la Maestría en educación. se realizado con base a un enfoque cualitativo de investigación acción participativa. Se realizó un diario de campo y luego se aplicó una entrevista estudiantes, bajo la autorización y consentimiento de sus padres. De acuerdo a los resultados obtenidos, se construye una estrategia didáctica para la comprensión lectora, el cual permitió a los estudiantes adaptarse a nuevos estilos de aprendizaje, apropiándose de varios medios didáctico, que hicieran más fácil el proceso de aprendizaje en la comprensión de textos. Finalmente, las actividades implementadas, determinaron un cambio en el aprendizaje de los educandos, evidenciándose creatividad e imaginación, contribuyendo positivamente una mejor forma de comprensión lectora.

Palabras clave: lectura, estrategia, didáctica, pedagogía, creatividad y evaluación

Introduction

In education, one of the most crucial challenges lies in the development of reading and writing skills in students. The ability to understand and analyze texts is considered essential in contemporary education, since this skill is applied transversally in all areas of knowledge. Colombia, like many other countries, regulates its educational system through a specific regulatory framework, where the Political Constitution of 1991 and the General Education Law (Law 115 of 1994) establish the fundamental principles and rights in the field of education, guaranteeing quality, equity and free basic and secondary education for all Colombian citizens. These laws clearly state that the State has the responsibility to ensure equal access to quality education throughout the country.

Within this normative context, concern arises about the challenges students face in reading comprehension, especially in the lower

grades. The ability to comprehend texts effectively is fundamental for the learning process and the cognitive development of students. It is in this scenario that the need arises to implement effective pedagogical strategies, such as mind maps, in order to improve reading comprehension and stimulate critical and creative thinking in students.

The challenges in the academic spaces within the classroom, is the ability for students to reach the levels of reading and writing. In such a way that they have the ability to understand and analyze texts in such a way that they become an opportunity for learning in all areas of knowledge and is considered one of the most important competencies in today's education.

In Colombia, education is regulated by the Political Constitution of 1991 and by the General Education Law (Law 115 of 1994). These norms establish the general guidelines for the operation of the educational system in the country, define the obligations and responsibilities of the different entities and actors involved, and establish the rights and duties of students, parents and teachers.

Regarding basic and secondary education, the General Education Law establishes that it is compulsory and free for all Colombian citizens, and guarantees quality, equity and relevance in the education of students. It also establishes that the State is primarily responsible for guaranteeing access to and quality of education throughout the country, and that it must ensure that all students have the same opportunities to access quality education.

In Colombia, the specific regulatory framework for teacher training is established in Law 115 of 1994 and Decree 1278 of 2002, which define the requirements and competencies that educators must meet in order to work in the education system. Standards for the evaluation and quality of education are also established, and mechanisms for the participation of society in the educational system are defined.

One of the roles of the teacher, as pointed out by Pérez and Ricardo (2022): "to develop reading comprehension competencies in students by explicitly teaching them cognitive and metacognitive strategies" (p. 350). This means that students must be taught

specifically and in detail how to use mental techniques and thinking strategies to comprehend the text.

This research project is oriented to identify the reading comprehension problems that are being presented in the seventh grade of the San Juan Bautista Educational Institution of the Municipality of Caimito Sucre. Among the possible causes can be identified the lack of commitment to reading habits, which, among these reasons, may be due to the fact that they do not have interesting topics to read, thus decreasing the motivation to perform this type of activities.

Another reason that has been analyzed is that students have difficulty identifying main ideas in the text and distinguishing them from secondary or complementary ideas. Students may not have sufficient strategies to comprehend a text, which could limit their ability to process and retain information.

The seventh grade students of the San Juan Bautista de Caimito Educational Institution are between 11 and 13 years old, which implies that they are in an important stage of cognitive and emotional development. Therefore, didactic and pedagogical strategies are required to help them advance in their formation process.

With respect to the organizational characteristics, the students of the population selected for the study belong to the socioeconomic stratum level one. Some of the parents did not finish high school, and are dedicated to farming and all the activities offered by the context of the municipality.

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill for learning in all areas of knowledge and is considered one of the most important competencies in today's education. However, in many occasions students present difficulties in this skill, which can affect their academic performance and cognitive development.

In this context, reading comprehension strategies are educational approaches that have proven to be effective in improving reading comprehension and fostering critical and creative thinking in students. These strategies focus on specific methods to help students better comprehend and assimilate the content of a text.

Among some of the strategies that can be used are mind maps, which provide different advantages for the learning process of students, as

Arocutipá and Platero (2022) point out: "the construction of mind maps as a technique or tool produces significant changes in the acquisition and appropriation of knowledge, as they help to better order the contents" (p. 20). Therefore, we seek to use a novel didactic tool that allows improving students' reading comprehension.

The limits of the research project are the size of the sample, given that it is a specific study in a particular educational institution, it is possible that the sample of students involved in the study is limited and not representative of the general population. This could limit the generalizability of the results. On the other hand, the success of didactic strategies depends on students' motivation and commitment to learn. If students are not motivated or engaged in the learning process, the strategy may not have the desired effect in improving reading comprehension.

The scope of the project focuses on developing skills and abilities in critical reading, comprehension, analysis, interpretation and synthesis, through the implementation of mind maps in the classroom. It is expected that by using this strategy, students will be able to improve their ability to organize and visualize information, which will allow them to better understand texts and develop their learning capacity.

In addition, the project seeks to encourage the use of technology and creativity in the educational process by using digital tools for the creation and presentation of mind maps, and by allowing students to express their ideas and knowledge in a more visual and attractive way.

The summarizing strategy has been used in education as an effective tool to improve reading comprehension. Summaries are a technique for condensing key information from a text into a shorter, more concise format. This tool is useful for capturing essential ideas and relationships between concepts, which can help students better understand the content of texts.

the challenge of fostering reading comprehension in seventh grade students at the San Juan Bautista de Caimito Educational Institution, Colombia, stands as a priority in the current educational context. The difficulties identified, such as the lack of reading habits and limitations in the identification of key ideas in texts, underline the

need to address this problem in a comprehensive manner. The implementation of pedagogical strategies, in particular the use of mind maps, promises to be a valuable tool to improve students' ability to process and comprehend information effectively.

The success of this initiative will depend to a large extent on the motivation and commitment of the students, as well as the ability of the teachers to properly apply the teaching techniques. However, if these challenges can be overcome, this project will not only contribute to strengthening students' reading comprehension skills, but will also open the door to a more creative and technological approach to the educational process, which will benefit their academic and personal development in the future.

Materials and methods

The research was developed following a qualitative approach, as indicated by Hernández, Fernández and Baptista (2010), which is characterized by using data collection methods that do not involve numerical measurements, with the aim of describing and understanding social and human phenomena in depth. This approach seeks to understand the experiences, perceptions and meanings of people in the study context. In addition, a descriptive design has been selected, which seeks to describe and characterize phenomena or situations as they are, without intervening in them or establishing causal relationships (Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, 2010).

The population under study in this research is made up of the seventh grade students of the San Juan Bautista de Caimito Sucre Educational Institution. This choice was made without any type of discrimination based on socioeconomic, ethnic, religious or gender factors. The students come from different villages of Caimito Sucre, and their ages range between 11 and 13 years old. Most of the parents of these students are engaged in agricultural activities and, in some cases, the mothers are the heads of household. School transportation is an important part of their routine, supported by the municipality's Secretary of Education.

The categories of analysis play a fundamental role in this research, since they allow us to organize and group the data collected into

specific themes. These categories focus on crucial aspects related to reading comprehension in seventh grade students.

One of the key categories is "teaching-learning", which seeks to understand how the pedagogical strategies used in the classroom affect students' reading comprehension. This involves analyzing teaching methods, classroom interactions and the use of didactic resources.

Another important category is "creativity and learning," which focuses on how to foster creativity in the reading comprehension process. This includes exploring activities that stimulate students' imagination and self-expression to improve text comprehension. These categories are essential for addressing the research problem related to improving reading comprehension in seventh grade students and provide a solid framework for analyzing the data collected.

Within the framework of this research, several procedures and instruments have been used to collect data. One of the main methods is direct observation in the classroom, which allows us to analyze students' interactions during reading comprehension activities. This technique is based on the systematic and detailed observation of students' behaviors and expressions in their school environment.

In addition, a semi-structured interview with a group of seventh grade students has been used to explore their experiences and perceptions related to reading and reading comprehension. The interview questions have been carefully designed to address specific aspects, such as their literary interests, reading practices, and strategies used. Finally, an evaluation of the students will be conducted after the application of the didactic strategy designed in this research. This evaluation aims to measure the impact of the strategy on students' reading comprehension.

Results

In the observations made in the reading comprehension classes at the San Juan Bautista de Caimito Sucre Educational Institution, a series of significant aspects were evidenced that have a positive impact on the students' learning process, particularly in their development of

reading comprehension skills. The following is a broad analysis of the three observations, without mentioning the tables, focusing on the findings and implications:

In the first reading comprehension class, the variety of pedagogical strategies employed by the teacher was highlighted. These strategies included individual reading, group discussions and comprehension activities. This allowed for addressing diverse learning styles and skill levels among the students. The teacher's willingness to provide personalized support when needed demonstrated his commitment to student progress. In addition, the group discussion dynamic promoted diversity of perspectives and enriched the collective understanding of the content.

This finding suggests that the inclusion of varied pedagogical strategies and personalized attention to students' needs can be effective in fostering active participation and improving reading comprehension. It highlights the importance of maintaining a collaborative environment where students can learn from each other. In the second reading comprehension class, it was observed that students took the opportunity to share their concerns about environmental issues in their community and expressed their opinions on possible ways to contribute to environmental conservation. The teacher played a key role in fostering an environment of respect and active listening, which facilitated students feeling comfortable sharing their ideas and perspectives.

This finding highlights the importance of selecting relevant content that connects with the students' local reality. The teacher was able to generate greater interest and commitment on the part of the students by addressing topics that affect them directly. In addition, it highlights the importance of maintaining an environment of respect and openness to encourage active student participation.

In the third reading comprehension class, an excerpt from a local history book was used as the main resource. This allowed a meaningful connection to be made between the content and the historical identity of the community. The focus on local history generated greater interest among the students, who were more engaged in group discussions.

This finding highlights the effectiveness of relating reading comprehension to community identity and history. This practice can be a valuable strategy for fostering greater student engagement and participation, as it allows students to see the relevance of what they are learning in their local context.

In summary, observations in reading comprehension classes indicate that the inclusion of varied pedagogical strategies, personalized attention to students' needs, and connection to the local reality are key elements to improve reading comprehension and promote active and meaningful participation of students in the learning process. These findings provide important insights for the continuous improvement of the teaching of reading comprehension in the context of the San Juan Bautista de Caimito Sucre Educational Institution.

The analysis of the three reading comprehension classes at the San Juan Bautista de Caimito Educational Institution in Caimito, Sucre, shows an effective pedagogical approach that has had a positive impact on student learning. These activities stand out for their successful choice of didactic material, which included an excerpt from a local history book, allowing for a relevant connection between the content and the local community. This sparked greater interest among students and encouraged active participation and engagement during group discussions.

Importantly, the students demonstrated solid development of reading comprehension skills, as they were able to relate the reading passage to current events. Contextualized teaching that integrates academic content with the local history of the community seems to be an effective strategy to motivate students and have them find relevance in what they are learning in their daily lives.

Analysis of the results of the student interviews reveals several key aspects regarding their level of interest in reading and their reading comprehension skills.

First, it stands out that the majority of students show a moderate or low level of interest in reading. This could indicate a generalized lack of motivation to engage with written texts, which is important to keep in mind, since interest in reading can significantly influence students' willingness to read and comprehend texts.

As for the time dedicated to reading outside school hours, most students dedicate at least one hour daily to this activity, although some do not dedicate time to it outside their studies. This variability in reading practices could be related to their level of interest in reading and the influence of external factors in their lives.

Regarding favorite literary genres, a preference for narrative, fables, novels and short stories is observed. This inclination towards fiction and stories with moral messages could influence the choice of readings and, ultimately, the comprehension of texts.

Regarding comprehension strategies, it is found that many students do not seem to use specific strategies to improve their reading comprehension. Some mention simple strategies, such as reading in a quiet place or reading more slowly. This lack of awareness of comprehension strategies could limit their ability to tackle more challenging texts.

Challenges they face when reading include concentration problems, reading quickly without comprehension, difficulty understanding teacher lectures, and problems with fine print. These obstacles can contribute to lack of interest and comprehension of texts and must be addressed to improve reading skills.

As for reactions to long or complex texts, responses varied from feeling comfortable reading them to experiencing nervousness and difficulty. This could indicate different levels of confidence in comprehending more difficult texts, underscoring the importance of adapting reading material to students' needs and ability levels.

None of the students appear to have used mind maps as a study or comprehension strategy, suggesting that this tool is not part of their current learning methods. This could be an opportunity to introduce an effective comprehension strategy.

Regarding the perceived benefits of using mind maps, there is a general lack of understanding about their advantages, although some responses suggest that they could help in memorization and retention of information. This indicates that more education about the advantages of this technique is needed.

Finally, students' suggestions for improving the reading experience include differentiating words, slower reading, and providing clearer

explanations. These recommendations underscore the importance of more effective teaching strategies tailored to students' needs.

The "Creative Story Travelers" strategy is an effective educational methodology that focuses on empowering students by allowing them to select books that interest them. This personalized choice of readings increases their motivation and engagement with reading. In addition, it incorporates creative activities such as summaries, mind maps and drawings, which deepens understanding of book content and encourages personal expression.

Key benefits of this strategy include increased interest in reading, development of reading comprehension skills, stimulation of creativity, active participation in the classroom, and improved oral and written communication skills. It also promotes inclusion by allowing students to work at their own pace and use approaches that suit their individual learning styles.

This diversified approach to reading has proven to have a positive impact on strengthening reading comprehension. Students reported that the strategy was beneficial to them and improved their ability to comprehend and analyze texts. Students' active participation in activities such as summaries, mind maps and drawings facilitated classroom interaction and generated enriching discussions.

In conclusion, the "Creative Story Travelers" strategy is highly effective in encouraging reading, improving reading comprehension and promoting active student participation in the classroom. Its focus on student empowerment and creativity provides an enriching learning experience that benefits both academically and personally.

Discussion

According to the field diaries conducted in different classes of the Spanish language teacher, it can be determined that the approach of the didactic strategy applied at the San Juan Bautista de Caimito Educational Institution in Caimito, Sucre, has proven to be effective in strengthening the reading comprehension of seventh grade students.

The choice of using an excerpt from a local history book as didactic material is aligned with the principle of meaningful learning, as

indicated by Moreno (2009) and Rodriguez (2013). Both authors emphasize that learning becomes more effective when students can relate new information to their prior knowledge and personal experience, which generated greater interest and engagement with reading.

Strategies for reading and writing, such as creating mind maps and selective underlining, have proven to be effective in improving reading comprehension, as mentioned by Zubillaga and Zavala (2017) in their research. These strategies helped students to organize and visualize information more effectively, which contributed to a deeper understanding of the content.

The didactic strategy involving students' choice of books and creative activities such as summaries, mind maps and drawings promoted active participation in the classroom and enriched understanding of the content. This diversified methodology in reading allowed students to approach the books from different perspectives and adapt to their individual learning styles.

The incorporation of creativity in learning processes, as highlighted in the theoretical framework and mentioned by Mena and Vargas (2015), has proven to be fundamental. Fostering creativity provides students with the opportunity to think unconventionally and generate original ideas, which enriches their learning process.

The use of didactic tools such as mind maps promoted the visual representation of concepts and stimulated the generation of new ideas and connections between concepts, as noted by Aguilera (2017). This enriched the educational experience by encouraging the innovative use of these tools.

Finally, the field diaries show that the didactic strategy applied at the San Juan Bautista Educational Institution in Caimito, Sucre, has had a positive impact on strengthening students' reading comprehension. By aligning the choice of didactic materials, the strategies for reading and writing, and the promotion of creativity, an effective pedagogical approach has been achieved that benefits both academically and in the development of students' skills, supported by the cited authors.

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