

The teaching of reading from a sociocultural perspective in the New Mexican school

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ABSTRACT

The article presents a systematic review of the knowledge generated in recent years related to the teaching of reading to build the state of knowledge of the research project “The teaching of reading in first and second grade of elementary school: Pachuca de Soto, School Year 2024 - 2025”. The objective is to analyze the process of teaching reading and to understand how students' knowledge and socio-cultural context influence it. The study employs a mixed methodology that reflects the processes of socialization of written language from an ontological vision of the students' reading reality. Within the framework of the New Mexican School.

Keywords: Teaching of reading; Teachers, Social context

Introduction

According to the General Education Law in the (Diario Oficial de la Federación (DOF), 2019) the New Mexican School is an educational model that seeks to form critical, supportive and responsible citizens with a social conscience to achieve a more equitable development of the country.

The main objectives of the New Mexican School NEM, are to guarantee the integral development of students, reorient the National Education System, foster educational co-responsibility and promote social transformations inside and outside the school. Its objective is to form autonomous people, with a human and critical sense, capable of building their future in society through dialogue, personal appreciation, the acquisition of ethical and democratic values, and community integration for social transformation.

To achieve these objectives, the subjects of mathematics, Spanish and science were assigned to formative fields related to languages, knowledge and scientific thought, ethics, nature and societies, and the human and the community, so that students receive an education that is not only academic, but also social, emotional and ethical, and are aware of their social reality and are able to transform it (National Commission for the Continuous Improvement of Education (Mejoredu), 2023).

The approach of these formative fields focuses on integrating knowledge from different areas to better understand the reality taking into account the problems of students in their community. The suggested teaching methodologies are problem-based learning and project-based learning.

Taking into account the characteristics and objectives of the new Mexican school, it is possible to observe the close relationship that exists between it and the sociocultural paradigm of education. According to Hernández Rojas (1998), learning is related to social and cultural aspects, and development processes are linked to social interactions in the transmission of culture through other adults or peers by means of language.

From this approach, the objective is to promote sociocultural and cognitive development through collaboration and interaction with others, where the teacher influences students through cultural instruments that permeate their system of beliefs and values. In this approach, social interaction and language are highlighted as fundamental elements for student development.

The teaching of reading is related to both oral and written languages; communication at this stage should be learned gradually, playfully, artistically and through inquiry, in order to develop communication skills and critical thinking. It is characterized by providing intentional and spontaneous opportunities for students to integrate diverse languages and play and learning situations, fostering creativity, free expression and

participation in communicative activities with written language, even when they do not fully master alphabetic writing (Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP), 2024).

Problem- and project-centered pedagogical approaches aim to make learning active and closely related to the daily life of students and their culture, with language as the main tool for its development.

Vygotsky's theory is part of the foundations of the sociocultural paradigm, so it is important to recognize the points of interaction between this and the New Mexican School regarding the teaching of reading, in which students play a vital role in the development of cognitive skills that allow them to internalize culture through language as a communicative tool. Language is fundamental to cognitive development, as it connects the sociocultural world with the student's mental functioning. Language, both external and internal speech, plays a crucial role in learning to read, as external speech facilitates communication and social learning, while internal speech enables reflection and abstract thinking Vygotsky (2007).

From this perspective, teachers must be prepared to adapt their pedagogical strategies to the changing demands of the educational environment and take into account students' prior knowledge. Teachers are seen as key agents in this process, as they must be aware of the individual needs of their students and the sociocultural context in which learning takes place.

Development

A wide range of research on reading has been generated from different disciplines to explain the changes in conceptions, practices and ways of approaching reading. The review of the papers highlights that the teaching of reading is a skill acquired at school, so it has been studied in that context. However, in recent years, the family and social context have been taken into account as spaces that influence the teaching and learning of reading, since it is there where the student has his or her first experiences with reading, in this sense, the term they propose is literacy, a concept adopted in the NEM to characterize the new educational approach. The review shows that the scientific

community is inclined towards pedagogical, psychological, historical and social aspects in order to understand the difficulties of reading and to answer questions such as: how do teachers teach from their training, experience and educational practice; what are the necessary factors for reading to be achieved; how has reading been taught in specific contexts such as marginalized areas or developed economic environments; what have been the approaches, methods, theories or paradigms of education that have been applied in the teaching of reading; and what have been the approaches, methods, theories or paradigms of education applied in the teaching of reading?

With respect to methodology, it was observed that most of the research reviewed is aligned with the qualitative paradigm, with an ethnographic approach, a strategy of discursive analysis, action research and documentary work. The instruments used to collect information were observation, in-depth interviews, field diary, focus groups and case studies. It should be noted that the research that used standardized instruments did so with the purpose of evaluating reading to measure the development of students' skills, as well as the efficiency of strategies and instruments to improve reading. On the other hand, what was frequent in the research was that no interest was shown in the students' and teachers' conception of reading; they concentrated more on describing processes and skills.

In the formal educational context, it is recommended that teachers recognize the fundamental aspects of reading instruction, such as fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, phonemic awareness and phonics instruction, in order to generate reading strategies that train students to function in a social and academic life that every day requires skills to discriminate information in a deep reading of texts and critical content, since the reading environment has moved to digital contexts where the reliability and veracity of the information must be corroborated (Stole, 2020).

In the research "La lectura en la primera infancia", by Ramírez and Castro (2013), reference is made to the importance of promoting reading at an early age, since it is at this stage when language begins to permeate people's lives. This work shows that reading transcends simple decoding to become a phenomenon that allows human beings to find meaning in texts. The objective of the research is to observe how interactions between children, adults and texts take place, emphasizing the importance of teachers and caregivers in the process of reading mediation. The research is based on Vygotsky's

theory, who conceptualizes reading as an act of construction of meanings and resignification of experiences. It is argued that reading not only develops linguistic skills, but also fosters emotional and cognitive development in a process of communication in a socio-historical context. The results and findings of the research show that reading in early childhood allows the construction of new knowledge from internal speech, as long as it is meaningful to the reader. It is also mentioned that the interaction with texts mediated by adults promotes the desire to read and encourages a deep understanding of it. For Ramírez and Castro (2013), reading is:

An instance that continues the immersion of the subject in a symbolic world that at some point begins to be dominated by the word, giving rise to a new way of relating to and understanding the environment, which appears as a reflection of the historical and cultural facts brought by adults or peers who accompany the encounter and meaning of reality (p. 9).

Understanding how reading is taught makes it possible to create educational and social policies that respond to the problems related to the low level of reading development. According to the (National Institute for Literacy (NIL), 2022) there are problems related to teaching such as: premature start in teaching, outdatedness and resistance to changes in teaching practice, lack of initial and continuous training, social pressure to start teaching early, lack of consensus on prerequisites for reading, gap between research and educational practice, materials and methods not adequate for the reading level, insufficient planning and evaluation of the reading process, lack of knowledge and little application of key language skills.

In addition, the students' prior knowledge is not taken into account. These observations are the result of a review by NIL (2022) of more than 100,000 studies with a carefully developed selection procedure that considered the high quality of the studies, the effectiveness of the teaching approach, their application to large populations of students, and their addressing of one or more reading skills in order to identify key skills and methodologies fundamental to reading achievement. Although the causes related to the teaching of reading are diverse, the social approach emphasizes addressing the object of study as a complex phenomenon that requires a thorough analysis to help improve teaching from a social perspective that emphasizes reading as a transversal tool for the

cognitive development of students, social, economic and cultural development of individuals and the welfare of society as a whole.

According to Guevara et al. (2007), (Puñales et al. 2017), Castedo, (2019) and García and Aguilera (2020), teachers must have skills to adapt the curriculum, manage socioemotional skills, use educational technology and encourage the active participation of students. According to Tardif (2004), this is necessary knowledge that teachers acquire throughout their professional career in personal, social and professional contexts. In the research by García and Aguilera (2020), teaching skills or competencies in the teaching of reading are analyzed from the perspective of early childhood and primary education teachers, using as a reference the dimensions of Delors' knowledge (1996), related to knowing, knowing how to do, knowing how to be and knowing how to be. This exploratory and descriptive study was based on the responses of 56 teachers, which revealed that, although teachers positively value the importance of these skills, they perceive an insufficient level of preparation, especially in knowledge and specific skills related to reading development and its difficulties. In addition, a generalized dissatisfaction with initial training in this area and a demand for more specific, practical and updated training programs are highlighted. The research proposes new lines of study to deepen the improvement of teacher training and strengthen the competencies necessary for effective teaching of reading.

The following are the fundamental concepts for teaching reading according to the guide: "Reading comes first. The fundamental pillars for teaching reading, based on evidence" which aims to guide teachers, parents and policymakers to identify key skills and methodologies to successfully teach students to read. To achieve this purpose, research on the teaching of reading in preschool through third grade was reviewed and five areas of reading instruction were identified. The text offers evidence of methods and strategies that have given good results in teaching reading, which allows us to consider key aspects in the teaching process so that the teacher has references that have worked well and have improved the reading process of the students. The areas are phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, fluency, vocabulary and reading comprehension.

This guide is intended not only for teachers, but also for the educational community that is interested in improving the reading process, the first fundamental pillar in teaching reading. Phonemic awareness is defined as the ability to identify, manipulate and think

about the individual sounds of spoken words. The goal is for children to recognize spoken language before they begin to handle written language, where words are composed of elementary sounds (phonemes). It is important to note that phonemic awareness and phonics instruction should not be confused, as they are not the same. Specifically, phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words (oral language). Phonics instruction, on the other hand, focuses on understanding that there is a direct relationship between phoneme and grapheme, i.e., the letters that represent the sounds of written language. In order for children to work on phonics instruction, they must first have acquired phonemic awareness. One reason is that children who cannot hear and manipulate the phonemes of spoken words will have difficulty identifying the relationship between phoneme and grapheme in written words.

Teaching phonemic awareness improves children's ability to learn to read words. It also improves reading comprehension, primarily through its influence on word recognition, which allows for more fluent reading and greater focus on the meaning of words. Another benefit of teaching phonemic awareness is that it helps children learn to write especially to segment words. It is recommended that phonemic awareness be taught along with letter names and letter shapes if children do not know them. It is important to recognize that phonemic awareness is the basis or background for efficiently teaching reading and word recognition. From oral language, in particular, this aspect offers a more concrete perspective on how to teach reading with proven strategies.

The next pillar for teaching reading is phonemic instruction that is, teaching the relationships between letters (graphemes) and sounds (phonemes), with the goal that students learn to use these relationships to read and write words. The goal of teaching phonics is to support students in learning and using the alphabetic principle and understanding that there are systematic and predictable relationships between written letters and spoken sounds. Knowing these relationships helps students accurately and automatically recognize familiar words and decode new words. The NIL (2022) states that phonics is a strategy that facilitates learners to use an efficient system for remembering how words are read. According to the authors of the text, the teaching of phonics should be systematic and explicit, and it is recommended that a teaching sequence be developed to carefully show the relationships between grapheme and phoneme. This activity is suggested to be applied to third grade in kindergarten or

preschool and first grade of elementary education, since this is when words begin to be used more regularly.

Specific recommendations are made on a systematic teaching of phonics, this to generate a more efficient learning by highlighting the relationships between letters and sounds in a clear and defined sequence, including the main relationships between grapheme and phoneme of consonants and vowels, which will facilitate the students' decoding of the words learned and in the process of learning. It is recommended that students be simultaneously taught the alphabet, be made to listen to stories and informative texts that are read aloud. It is also recommended that letters, words, messages and stories be written and read aloud. This process facilitates word recognition, writing and reading comprehension.

The third pillar of the text refers to fluency and its importance in reading instruction, the concept is aligned with the ability to read text accurately and quickly. Fluency enables students to recognize and comprehend words, and allows them to focus more on the meaning of words than on decoding. Fluent readers are able to focus on the meaning of the text, making connections between the ideas present in the text and their knowledge, as they are able to recognize words and make sense of them at the same time. A direct relationship is also shown between fluency and reading comprehension: the greater the fluency, the greater the reading comprehension, and vice versa. Related to this, repeated and supervised read-aloud reading activities, called repeated reading, are proposed, and read-aloud reading practiced by students on their own is recommended.

Fluency is achieved through abundant reading, which allows for greater accuracy and speed. Fluent readers focus more on text comprehension than decoding. The greater the fluency, the greater the expressiveness when reading aloud, emphasizing the tone of voice, pausing at periods and commas, modulating the voice and conveying emotion. The level of emotion expressed by a fluent reader is higher. Scientific research highlights two main approaches to teaching fluency: the first is to practice repeated and supervised oral reading aloud (repeated reading) and the second is to read silently and independently. Students are encouraged to read at length on their own. Teachers who apply these strategies with students comment that readers, who practice reading aloud, are supervised and given feedback, and become better readers. Also, reading aloud increases word recognition, reading speed and accuracy.

The fourth pillar talks about vocabulary in the literacy stage, which is nurtured through children's interaction with adults with greater cultural backgrounds who have more vocabulary, vocabulary allows for more effective communication, it is not limited to written language, but begins with oral language. Researchers at the National Literacy Institute refer to four types of vocabulary. The first is used to know and understand words that are heard and is called auditory vocabulary. The second is spoken vocabulary related to the words used when speaking. Reading vocabulary is related to the words needed to understand what is read. Finally, there is the written vocabulary, which are the words used to write.

Learning to read occurs indirectly through everyday experiences with oral and written language, which is closely related to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and his concept of external speech, which is produced by interacting with the social environment, family, friends, and community. One of the ways of learning new vocabulary is through daily communication through oral language, which reinforces Vygotsky's hypothesis that the greater the interaction with the social environment, the greater the learning.

In this case, children acquire new vocabulary by talking and interacting with and listening to other people, especially adults. Another way to acquire new vocabulary is when adults read aloud, which allows them to learn the meaning of words through pauses in reading to explain the meaning. Children also acquire new vocabulary on their own, through prolonged reading and making associations of ideas, concepts and definitions.

Here the teacher uses strategies to learn new words with a higher level of comprehension, more difficult words, concepts related to specific areas such as mathematics, ethics, physics, biology, and vocabulary that they do not use in their daily lives. The use of this vocabulary occurs in the school context, but its use transcends this school context and reaches the family and social environment. It is recommended to first read a more complex text, review and create a list of words that are new or difficult, as it allows a better understanding of the text. Suggested strategies include using the dictionary and repeated exposure to the words. While the reading model within the classroom is the teacher, in the social context it is recommended that those good readers at home practice reading aloud at home so that children are more in touch with oral and written language.

The last pillar proposed by the researchers is related to reading comprehension. The goal of reading is to understand what is read, and it is active. It is important for the teacher to provide comprehension strategies so that students can understand what they read. These can be explained through cooperative learning. Some of these are asking questions of the text to guide and monitor learning, as well as creating graphic and semantic organizers, which can help in understanding concepts and how they relate to each other. Another strategy is to ask questions while reading to reinforce and answer questions about the text. Recognizing the form and structure of the text allows you to create scenarios, create events, and organize your thinking in relation to the theme or story.

Comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading, and to achieve it requires a complex process, as has already been observed. According to the evidence, the five pillars are the basis for teaching reading, without forgetting that it is a systematic process that requires many hours of work by teachers, students and parents or guardians in general. The more exposure, the greater the interaction with the texts, the greater the understanding of the world.

The review of the state of knowledge on the teaching of reading shows a variety of approaches and objects of study to understand how it occurs and what factors intervene in the teaching and learning process. Among the most significant articles, those of a descriptive nature stand out in the first place. These articles seek to explain how reading has been taught from the theories used, among which constructivism, socio-constructivism, innatism, behaviorism, psycholinguism and maturationism stand out.

This is reflected in the research article entitled “Theories on the teaching of reading from a sociohistorical perspective” by (Suárez et al. 2014) whose objective is to identify how teachers align themselves to this or that theory through their pedagogical practice. The research shows that teachers know about the theories and apply to some extent the approaches of each one, but they do not only rely on that to teach, but also on beliefs, experience, their intelligence and creativity.

Conclusions

Reading from the perspective of researchers allows us to understand its role in Mexico and Latin America, as well as to observe its functions and applications in formal and informal contexts from different theoretical, methodological and curricular approaches, which seek to respond to specific needs such as literacy, communication, comprehension, socialization and knowledge acquisition.

Undoubtedly, reading from an active perspective significantly transforms students, since it restructures their thinking when interacting with texts, and favors their personal, academic and emotional development. Reading is an essential activity that not only nurtures the intellect and creativity, but also has a positive impact on people's mental and emotional health.

Interpretations and concepts of reading allow us to characterize and define it. The review of research articles, congresses, reports and theses shows how reading is understood and interpreted in Mexico, taking into account its evolution. The sources were selected in order to show the perception and interpretation of reading, with the objective of having conceptual bases with which to approach the field of study with elementary school teachers.

Finally, the findings are related to the fact that reading is conditioned by the characteristics of the students and the teachers' practices. It is concluded that reading is a social practice that is transferred to the reality of schools; however, studies follow a tradition oriented to investigate the production of knowledge and not to describe it from a sociocultural perspective.

In contemporary societies, reading is taught to prepare people to face a changing world, full of technologies and communications. In this context, it is important to highlight the infodemia on the Internet, where it is easy to get lost. To avoid this, it is essential that teachers and families work together to create a solid foundation for reading.

These foundations will allow them to recognize and handle texts, which leads to better reading comprehension. For this purpose, strategies of inference, prediction, critical reading, reading aloud, reading in paper books and information management skills can be used, with which false or irrelevant information can be discriminated from relevant information.