

MENDIVE



REVISTA DE EDUCACIÓN

Original article

Reading habits in the communication development of ninth grade students

Los hábitos de lectura en el desarrollo comunicacional de estudiantes de noveno grado

Hábitos de leitura no desenvolvimento da comunicação de alunos do nono ano

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Received: May 24, 2024

Accepted: December 3, 2024

ABSTRACT

This article reflects on reading as one of the skills that has the greatest influence on the academic, intellectual and social development of human beings throughout life. The proposed objective is to analyze the influence of the reading habit on

the communication development of ninth grade students of the "Dr. Gonzalo Abad Grijalva" Educational Unit, located in Chone, Ecuador. To do so, theoretical and empirical methods were applied. In the first case, the methods: historical, systemic and dialectical; and, of an empirical type, observation, through a survey questionnaire and measurement, applying non-parametric descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, specifically the Spearman Rho correlation coefficient. The applied survey, after the respective validation by experts, allowed to determine the behavior of certain parameters related to the reading habit and the communicative aspect of the students. It was evident that both variables have a low to medium behavior and that the influences of the reading habit on communication development are limited. In general, it was concluded that the influence of the reading habit on the communication development of students is limited, which is why it is necessary to reinforce curricular and extracurricular strategies, in which the participation of the family and other external actors is key, as well as the use of recreational and digital options.

Keywords: communication; academic development; communication development; reading habit; reading.

RESUMEN

En el presente artículo se reflexiona sobre la lectura como una de las habilidades que a lo largo de la vida tiene mayor influencia sobre el desarrollo académico, intelectual y social de los seres humanos. El objetivo propuesto es analizar la influencia del hábito lector en el desarrollo comunicacional de los estudiantes de noveno grado de la Unidad Educativa "Dr. Gonzalo Abad Grijalva", ubicada en Chone, Ecuador. Para ello se aplicaron métodos teóricos y empíricos. En el primer caso, los métodos: histórico, sistémico y dialéctico; y, de tipo empírico, la observación, a través de un cuestionario de encuesta y la medición, aplicando técnicas estadísticas descriptivas e inferenciales no paramétricas,

especificamente el coeficiente de correlación Rho de Spearman. La encuesta aplicada, luego de la validación respectiva por expertos, permitió determinar el comportamiento de determinados parámetros relacionados con el hábito lector y el aspecto comunicativo de los estudiantes. Se evidenció que ambas variables tienen un comportamiento entre bajo a medio y que las influencias del hábito lector sobre el desarrollo comunicacional son limitadas. De forma general, se pudo concluir que la influencia del hábito lector en el desarrollo comunicacional de los estudiantes es limitada, por lo cual se hace necesario reforzar las estrategias curriculares y extracurriculares, en lo cual es clave la participación de la familia y otros actores externos, así como el empleo de opciones lúdicas y digitales.

Palabras clave: comunicación; desarrollo académico; desarrollo comunicacional; hábito lector; lectura.

RESUMO

Este artigo reflete sobre a leitura como uma das competências que ao longo da vida tem maior influência no desenvolvimento acadêmico, intelectual e social do ser humano. O objetivo proposto é analisar a influência do hábito de leitura no desenvolvimento da comunicação de alunos do nono ano do curso "Dr. Gonzalo Abad Grijalva", localizado em Chone, Equador. Para isso, foram aplicados métodos teóricos e empíricos. No primeiro caso, os métodos: histórico, sistêmico e dialético; e, empiricamente, observação, por meio de questionário de pesquisa e medição, aplicando técnicas estatísticas descritivas e inferenciais não paramétricas, especificamente o coeficiente de correlação Rho de Spearman. O inquérito aplicado, após a respectiva validação por especialistas, permitiu determinar o comportamento de determinados parâmetros relacionados com o hábito de leitura e a vertente comunicativa dos alunos. Ficou evidente que ambas as variáveis apresentam comportamento baixo a médio e que as influências do hábito de

leitura no desenvolvimento da comunicação são limitadas. De uma forma geral, concluiu-se que a influência do hábito de leitura no desenvolvimento da comunicação dos alunos é limitada, razão pela qual é necessário reforçar estratégias curriculares e extracurriculares, nas quais a participação da família e de outros atores externos é fundamental. Bem como o uso de opções recreativas e digitais.

Palavras-chave: comunicação; desenvolvimento acadêmico; desenvolvimento da comunicação; hábito de leitura; leitura.

INTRODUCTION

One of the main skills that is promoted throughout educational training is reading, which becomes an important competence over time. As a mental process, reading requires specific teaching methods from an early age, and becomes a permanent tool, given its influence on the levels of comprehension, communication, and performance of children and young people over time. Up to the university level, deficits in critical reading, text comprehension, and communication development persist in a significant percentage of students (Cabrera-Pommiez *et al.*, 2021), and become a concern for different educational and social actors (Pinchao, 2020).

The teaching of reading is specific to each educational context; however, at an international level, the importance of the teaching-learning process being carried out in an active way and with the protagonism of the students in the acquisition and continuous improvement of knowledge, skills and values, led by teachers, in a positive psychosocial environment, is recognized. In this, the use of innovative strategies is key to meet the objectives associated with reading in the different school stages (Chacha-Supe y Rosero-Morales, 2020), ranging from the acquisition of the skill to achieving the levels of comprehensive

and critical reading; all this to lead to the achievement of educational purposes and to advances in the personal and social development of children and young people, associated with their age and environmental requirements.

Motivation towards reading is one of the most general purposes in basic education, not only because it improves the skill itself, but because of its general effects in terms of reading comprehension and communication development. The task of motivating reading transcends the classroom and school environment, encompassing the family and society in general. In the work of Ayala Mendoza and Arcos Tasigchana (2021), for example, the influence of reading on the academic quality of students and the fundamental role of the teacher as a motivating actor were demonstrated, together with family influences and the reader's previous experiences. Likewise, it is recognized that the reading habit has a high capacity to improve knowledge and the transformation of the human being and his environment, through the manifestations that young people have in their process of social interaction (Blandón Ruiz, 2020). This author indicates that the possibilities of cognitive and metacognitive development generated by reading have a high influence on the worldview that the student achieves in his development as a biopsychosocial being.

According to Cabrera-Pommiez *et al.* (2021), one of the elements with which reading is most closely related is communication development, so the teaching process of this would always have the purpose of improving communication competence, a key aspect in the professional and social development of students. This is a teaching process in which, under the leadership of the teacher, student participation in their own learning must be generated, through strategies aimed at achieving high levels of reading comprehension (Blandón Ruiz, 2020); and with influences also on other skills such as writing, conceiving the integrality of training in the different educational stages.

Likewise, the scope of reading and its impacts transcend the scope of the language and literature teaching curriculum, which is why it is possible, from other school spaces, to carry out actions to promote it. Recreational spaces and the application of information and communication technologies are useful to promote the habit of reading. In the research by Venegas *et al.* (2021), for example, the usefulness of games to motivate students to read is addressed, in connection with their emotional development.

In this sense, reading and the habit of reading are recognized as a general purpose of teachers, students, managers, families and society in general; in the face of the challenge of making children and young people increasingly free and prosperous, based on the role that books and the act of reading have in the process of expanding knowledge, the democratization of culture and the improvement of new generations in the face of the challenges of sustainable development, as recognized by international organizations such as the UN and UNESCO, among others.

The development of an active reader throughout life is one of the goals of educational systems, which focuses from the curricular point of view on the epistemology of language and literature teaching, but which transcends to other non-curricular areas that involve various actors in the environment.

The effects over time of improved reading skills are recognized in the ability to read, communicate, and analyze abstraction and analysis, and therefore, the development of critical thinking. Salazar and Carlosama (2023) state that "promoting and acquiring a reading habit improves social and human conditions, and also contributes to the development of cognitive aspects and active participation in daily life" (p. 59).

In this regard, the usefulness of different strategies and means such as technology to promote spaces inside and outside of classes

that promote the habit of reading is increasingly recognized.

The usefulness of reading is specifically related to the expansion of vocabulary and the improvement in communication development (Salazar and Carlosama, 2023). To address the challenge of communication development, Giler Figueroa *et al.* (2023) indicate that a comprehensive and effective approach is required, which considers the implementation of projects and experiences, based on social interaction and the use of digital tools. These authors recognize that one of the key elements for communication development is precisely reading comprehension, which, as analyzed in the work, has a direct correlation with the reading habit.

In general, recent research indicates that the level of development of communication skills in children and young people is low, due, among other reasons, to insufficient reading and writing habits. Considering that communication has a high influence on social interaction and is in turn a result of it (Barría *et al.*, 2022), it is an educational challenge to optimize the processes that contribute to the effective development of these skills.

In Ecuador, reading is part of one of the fundamental educational policies, called "Juntos leemos" (Together we read), which has been implemented since 2021, under the direction of the Ministry of Education, whose main objective is to make reading a common practice in all subjects, given its effects on the intellectual and personal development of students at different levels. Hence, in all educational institutions in the country, including the city of study (Chone), both in the curricular and extracurricular fields, there are projects aimed at improving reading skills, through motivational actions in relation to students' reading habits.

In particular, in the "Dr. Gonzalo Abad Grijalva" Educational Unit of said city, difficulties are evident in the quality of reading by students, as well as a low impact of this on their

communication development, which was identified as the research problem to be addressed. In this sense, the objective of this work is to analyze the influence of the reading habit on the communication development of ninth grade students of the "Dr. Gonzalo Abad Grijalva" Educational Unit.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research carried out had a mixed approach, using both qualitative and quantitative techniques, non-experimental, due to the non-manipulation of variables and correlational, given the objective stated with which it is expected to evaluate the relationships between the two study variables. Theoretical methods were applied for the analysis of the variables under study, such as historical, systemic and dialectical, carrying out the theoretical analysis presented below. From the empirical point of view, the observation method was applied, through a survey questionnaire to the 29 ninth grade students of the "Dr. Gonzalo Abad Grijalva" Educational Institution, located in the city of Chone, Ecuador, during the period from December 2023 to January 2024. The census technique was applied to the student population of the aforementioned school year, of which 55% correspond to the male sex.

The questionnaire was adapted by the authors based on Rodríguez's proposal (2022), to which questions were added to evaluate the influence of reading on the communication development of students, with a total of 20 questions, which was applied through Google Forms. The questionnaire proposal was validated by five experts in Educational Sciences, applying Conbrach's Alpha statistic of 0.84.

The measurement was performed using Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25, applying non-parametric descriptive and inferential statistics (Spearman's Rho correlation coefficient).

RESULTS

In the validation of the survey questionnaire, a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.84 was obtained, which indicates that the consistency of the instrument is acceptable.

Table 1 presents the results of calculating the mean and standard deviation of some of the questions considered in the questionnaire.

Table 1- Descriptive data. Part 1

Question	Average	Standard deviation
Reading habits		
Time spent reading weekly	2.8	1.19
Teachers' incentive to read	2.7	1.47
Sharing reading impressions	3.1	1.19
Influence of reading habits on academic performance	2.8	1.77
Benefits of reading in personal life	3.4	1.25
Communication development		
Attention and interest when listening to others	3.1	1.17
Clear and fluent oral expression	3.1	1.16
Vocabulary level	2.8	1.18
Understanding instructions and following them correctly	2.9	1.36
Using gestures, facial expressions and body postures effectively to communicate	2.9	1.29
Participation in conversations, asking questions and responding appropriately	2.6	1.38
Ability to tell a story in a coherent and sequential manner	2.6	1.2
Listening comprehension and answering questions about a text or conversation	2.9	1.23
Ability to adapt language and communication style according to the context in which one finds oneself	2.6	1.27

Source: Own elaboration based on statistical results

The descriptive analysis of the questions related to reading habits, based on the calculation of means, indicates that all values are less than 3, except for the recognition of the importance of reading for personal life and the ability to pay attention to others and to express oneself orally in a clear and fluent manner. In general, the performance of these indicators was low, with high standard deviations.

On the other hand, table 2 presents the results of the frequency calculation for other questions related to reading habits.

Table 2- Descriptive data. Part 2

Question	Absolute frequency (%)
Types of books frequently read	
School texts	44.9
Newspapers or periodicals	10.3
Magazines	6.9
Fiction books	3.4
Other literature	34.5
Who motivates you to read frequently?	
Parents	37.9
Siblings	0
Other relatives	6.9
Teachers	27.6
Classmates	10.4
Others	17.2
Motivations to read	
Recommendations from friends or family	41.4
Positive reviews or critiques	10.3
Interest in the author	13.7
Topic or genre you like	3.5
Others	31.1
Limitations when reading	
Read very slowly	37.9
He doesn't understand what he reads	13.8
He doesn't concentrate when reading	6.9
He pronounces words with difficulty	17.2
Others	24.2
Reading Rating	
A mandatory activity	13.8

A boring activity	10.3
An academic activity	58.6
A pleasurable activity	17.2
Most used option for reading	
Physical	34.5
Digital	13.8
Both equally	51.7

Source: Own elaboration based on statistical results

As can be seen, students read most of all textbooks (44.9%) and other literature (34.5%); while those who encourage them the most to read are their parents in 37.9% of cases, followed by teachers (27.6% of respondents). 41.4% of students read based on recommendations from friends or family, while 31.1% do so for other reasons. The main difficulties when reading are: reading very slowly (37.9%) and others (24.2%). 58.6% of students consider reading as an academic activity and 51.7% use physical and digital media to read equally.

The Spearman Rho correlation coefficient was calculated to determine relationships between the questions considered in the questionnaire. Table 3 shows the significant correlations of medium or high order of both tests.

Table 3- Correlations between variables

Variable 1	Variable 2	Level of significance	Description
Time spent reading weekly	Understanding instructions and following them correctly	.805**	High positive relationship
	Listening comprehension and answering questions about a text or conversation	.758**	High positive relationship
Teachers' incentive to read	Understanding instructions and following them correctly	.725**	High positive relationship

Influence of reading habits on academic performance	Participation in conversations, asking questions and responding appropriately	.402**	Average positive relationship
	Ability to tell a story in a coherent and sequential manner	.558**	Average positive relationship
Benefits of reading in personal life	Ability to adapt language and communication style according to the context in which one finds oneself	.847**	High positive relationship

Source: Own elaboration based on statistical results

A significant relationship was found between certain aspects related to reading habits and others related to communication development, as shown in the table above; highlighting the influence of the time spent reading and the teachers' incentive on the understanding of instructions and following them correctly, and others whose analysis will be further explored below, due to their relevance to the identified problem.

DISCUSSION

The research showed that ninth grade students from the "Dr. Gonzalo Abad Grijalva" Educational Institution have low to medium levels in the indicators evaluated regarding reading habits. Practices related to sharing impressions of reading and the recognition of its benefits in personal life stand out positively. Of both aspects, only the second was significantly correlated with two of the indicators related to communication development: the ability to tell a story in a coherent and sequential way and to adapt the language and style of communication

according to the context in which the student finds himself.

The time spent on reading and the teacher incentive perceived by students are low, with positive impacts only on understanding instructions and following them correctly, and understanding when listening and answering questions about a text or a conversation, according to the calculation of Spearman's Rho correlation test. It should be noted that the role of the teacher is fundamental in the mission of stimulating reading habits, developing from the curricular point of view the reading process: preparation, execution and subsequent phase (Blandón Ruiz, 2020), where sharing reading experiences becomes an effective practice for students to reinforce what they have learned, as well as their communication.

Additionally, teachers must establish strategies to stimulate this habit, and, therefore, reinforce its positive effects on academic, communication, and personal development aspects. In this sense, Ayala Mendoza and Arcos Tasigchana (2021) indicate that there are no magic methods to motivate students. In this sense, games and recreational activities can have a very positive effect on increasing motivation and stimulating students' competitiveness in relation to reading, as stated by Venegas *et al.* (2021).

The results obtained regarding the influence of parents and other family members on motivation to read (44.8% of respondents) and the fact that the main incentive to read is due to family and friends (41.4%) indicate that teachers and schools should promote joint participation strategies to take advantage of these influences. The family is undoubtedly a key player in achieving the objectives of the educational process and elevating the academic development of students, and their shared participation and responsibility should be encouraged.

The influence of the reading habit on academic performance, also with a low behavior in students, was significantly related to

participation in conversations, asking questions and responding appropriately, as one of the dimensions of communicative development evaluated. Therefore, teachers should take advantage of students' perception of the usefulness of reading in the academic field to reinforce certain aspects of communicative development that also have low behaviors, such as: vocabulary level, understanding instructions and their fulfillment, using gestures, facial expressions and body postures effectively to communicate; participation in conversations; the ability to tell a story in a coherent and sequential way; understanding when listening to and answering questions about a text or a conversation and the ability to adapt language and communication style according to the context. The low levels of communication development in children and young people is one of the causes of socio-emotional development that in the school environment must be worked on from a curricular and extracurricular perspective, through "active, focused, explicit and sequenced learning programs" (Espinoza *et al.*, 2022, p. 151).

In the curricular field, the main difficulties shown by students must be taken into account, especially slow reading indicated by 37.9% of respondents. In this regard, Niño (2021) indicates that the main deficiencies in reading (word recognition, speed, fluency and comprehension) are due to the poor development of cognitive and metacognitive, visual and auditory skills, due to limited teaching-learning and emotion regulation strategies.

Of the aspects evaluated on communication development, only attention and interest in listening to others and clear and fluent oral expression show an average level in students; however, they are not significantly correlated with any of the reading habit indicators included in the questionnaire. It should be noted that according to Maina and Papalini (2021) the dimensions of reading are "aesthetic; playful; cognitive; sociocultural; subjective and bodily-affective" (p. 1); therefore, its effects are integral for the human being and in the school

environment it should be sought to take advantage of its full potential.

As can be seen, there are no significant influences between the reading habit and the communication development of students, which could be explained by the fact that 58.6% consider it only an academic activity and 44.9% mainly read school texts; coinciding with what Pinchao (2020) says that most students read "(...) in an elementary, superficial and forced way, driven more by the desire to pass (...)" (p. 3).

In this situation, it is mandatory for teachers and the educational institution to manage strategies to improve reading habits, which must be carried out in an integrated manner from the subjects (curricular) and in extracurricular areas. In general, activities should be promoted that take advantage of the playful, recreational, and use of Information and Communication Technologies aspects (consider that only 34.5% of students prefer physical books). Many experiences of the use of games to improve reading are documented, due to the fact that the reader can be associated as a player and this facilitates the use of playful and recreational spaces and activities such as clubs, interest groups and other spaces within the school that can include the participation of actors such as family, friends and others (Maina y Papalini, 2021).

Furthermore, the use of technologies and the digital field to promote reading is imperative in today's society, from the initiation stages of reading (Orellana-Fernández *et al.*, 2020) to higher stages in the educational process, which imperatively require the use of educational practices that integrate technological tools and digital services.

In the age of ninth grade students, strategies in the curricular field must transcend towards the purpose of reading comprehension, which requires both cognitive and metacognitive aspects, seeking "the construction and use by students of general procedures that can be

transferred without major difficulties to multiple and varied reading situations" (Solé, 1998, p. 6).

Research on topics related to reading and its impact on different aspects of academic, personal and social development is essential for education professionals.

Reading is a skill that becomes an important professional competence over time, with impacts on the personal life and emotional development of children and young people, especially in improving communication skills.

The research addressed the relationship between reading habits and the communication development of ninth grade students at the "Dr. Gonzalo Abad Grijalva" Educational Unit, who present low to medium levels in all the indicators analyzed.

He highlighted the students' view of reading as a purely academic activity, which limits their influence on aspects that are so important for their communication development.

It was shown that the influence of reading habits on communication development is limited in the case study; therefore, it is necessary to reinforce the strategies that the school manages from the curricular and extracurricular spheres. The participation of the family and other external actors, as well as the use of playful, recreational and digital options, will be fundamental in this.

The research developed allowed to show how the development of the reading habit and its influence on communication development is manifested in ninth grade students of the "Dr. Gonzalo Abad Grijalva" Educational Unit, which will allow to improve the strategies used by the school in connection with the rest of the actors involved in the educational teaching process. The present study should serve as a basis for generalization in other school years, with the purpose of generating a comprehensive process that allows to raise the performance in these important competencies for the future development of the students.

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Conflict of interests:

The authors declare not to have any interest conflicts.

Authors' contribution:

The authors participated in the design and writing of the article, in the search and analysis of the information contained in the consulted bibliography.

Cite as

Cedeño Moreira, O. S., Samundio Granados, M. (2024). Reading habits in the communication development of ninth grade students. *Mendive. Journal on Education*, 22(4), e3876.
<https://mendive.upr.edu.cu/index.php/MendiveUPR/article/view/3876>



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