



The Active Method in the Development of Reading and Writing in Middle School Students



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Abstract

Literacy is a basic process in developing cognitive skills that begins in the first years of education; sometimes it presents as a deficit in the first years of learning since it is where they acquire basic skills such as reading and writing. The objective was to analyze the active methods in the development of reading and writing in secondary basic education students. The methodology used was quantitative and qualitative, experts carried out the validation of the instruments, an observation sheet and a survey were applied to a sample of 35 fifth-year students and 6 teachers from the same sublevel of the Dr. Gonzalo Abad Grijalva Educational Unit of the Chone-Manabí canton, Ecuador, school year 2023-2024. The result was that 89% of the observed students did not read at an adequate speed for the educational level and 83% did not read with fluency and intonation; 27% do not review or correct errors when writing and 23% do not have originality when writing. In contrast, 21% show interest in reading and writing and 33% prefer to work with the active approach. Regarding the application of the active method, 67% of teachers use the synthetic method in their classes, but the use of various methods is evident depending on the subject, content, activities and social groups with which they work. They agree that the application of the active method gives positive results in the academic performance of students.

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1 Introduction

The development of reading and writing is one of the skills that present the most problems in teaching-learning. The use of traditional teaching methodologies has created real gaps between the acquisition of skills and their spontaneous application. The importance of reading and writing is not only part of vocational training, it is essential to create habits of reflection, analysis, effort, concentration, recreation and enjoyment, which makes language more fluid (Domínguez et al., 2015). The active method, on the other hand, develops processes where the student learns from the guidance or accompaniment of the teacher. These teaching techniques and strategies are used for an educational purpose, achieving effective learning in the students.

According to Nogales (2023) “an active methodology is an interactive process based on teacher-student, student-student, student-teaching material and student-media communication, which enhances the responsible involvement of the latter and leads to the satisfaction and enrichment of teachers and students.” The poor level of literacy development in students who should have already acquired the skills and abilities raises the question about how the implementation of the active method affects the development of literacy in students who are in the process of basic learning.

Research such as the one carried out in Madrid, Spain on the LEO Program for the initiation of reading and writing: initial evaluation of stories is a work presented by Martín & Imbernón (2018), who propose that: “the reading of stories as an activity that facilitates the development of communicative skills and emerging literacy”, aimed to create an application for mobile devices, which integrates stories, learning activities and that, in addition, allows the analysis and evaluation of the contents of the story, concluding that the program is effective to achieve literacy learning objectives.

In Costa Rica, Villamizar (2021) carried out a research titled: “Active methodologies through play and the interest of boys and girls aged 5 to 6 in Preschool”, in which he proposes this methodology as a strategy for the construction of learning, which through play awakens interest and participation within the first years of learning, accompanied by the adaptation of the curriculum for the construction of new knowledge; reaching the conclusion that with the application of new strategies accompanied by active methodologies, significant learning is achieved, which transcends life and marks a milestone in the development of students.

Regarding the development of comprehensive reading, in Colombia, an analysis of the real situation was carried out regarding the development of reading ability in students who presented limitations in understanding texts, presenting a spelled reading that was difficult to understand. With the application of theoretical and empirical methods, a diagnostic test, an observation sheet and an interview were applied to students and teachers respectively, in which they determined the impossibility of the students to infer the intention of the text read, that the students have a positive attitude towards learning and that it is necessary to include technology in the activities. Finally, they propose stages: motivation, content information, content assimilation, content mastery, acquisition of new content and evaluation of learning (Rojas, 2023).

In Ecuador, the research titled: “Reading and writing as a fundamental element in the teaching-learning process of Basic High School students” was developed, with the objective of analysis; We sought to complete it through the analysis of the variables and, through the quantitative approach and the collection of the opinion of 10 teachers; In observing the students they concluded that the students have the greatest difficulties in reading; but not in reasoning, since in the conversation the students expressed their ideas and thoughts clearly and precisely (Pisco-Román & Bailón-Panta, 2023)

The implementation of active teaching methods has a positive impact on the development of reading and writing skills. This approach means improvement in academic performance, both for the student and the educational professional; They benefit from a tool that strengthens the teaching of the subject of Language and Literature, which is one of the most important subjects in the curriculum and that allows them to acquire knowledge and skills essential for the integral development of any human being (Philippe et al., 2020).

It was studied how the implementation of active teaching methods affects its impact on the development of reading and writing skills in fifth-year Secondary School students of the Dr. Gonzalo Abad Grijalva Educational Unit.

The community of the Dr. Gonzalo Abad Grijalva Educational Unit, from the students, to the teachers, authorities and parents, who on many occasions do not have the appropriate knowledge to carry out the homework that corresponds to them, benefit from this research that reveals the deficiencies in the basic skills that fifth-year students must acquire. This work also serves as a guide for professional researchers who every day look for new ways to improve teaching processes, in this case, teachers who teach the subject of Language and Literature (Gallardo-Lozano et al., 2014).

2 Materials and Methods

This research was developed under the mixed approach, which involves a process of collecting, analyzing, and linking quantitative and qualitative data to respond to the approach according to (Hernández et al., 2014). The analysis of the information was quantitative, expressed in frequency tables, percentages, and graphic representation. The qualitative research used content analysis, identifying key arguments and ideas expressed in the survey.

The instruments were validated by the judgment of experts, teachers of Language and Literature and Scientific Research, prestigious teachers of the Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro: Mg. Bella Barreiro, Mg. Magaly Avellan, Mg. Teodoro Barros Astudillo and Mg. Marisol Dueñas, teacher at the Dr. Gonzalo Abad Grijalva Educational Unit. Observation and survey were used as research techniques, applied to 5th year Secondary School students and sublevel teachers respectively.

The observation sheet consists of student data, grade/year of education, date, questions about the reading and writing skills that the student demonstrates, questions about the motivational skills that the student shows when carrying out the activities, finally, questions about the methods that the teacher uses when guiding the activities, each of these questions has the options: Yes, No, sometimes.

On the other hand, there is the survey carried out on sublevel teachers, which consisted of a battery of 10 closed questions with multiple options, in which the teaching processes and the application of methods and techniques applied in the classroom were investigated.

The population is made up of 108 fifth, sixth, and seventh-year students of Basic General Education, of which 35 fifth-year students were chosen, in addition to the 6 middle-level teachers who were considered for the survey. Non-probabilistic sampling was applied for convenience or intention, according to inclusion and feasibility criteria.

3 Results and Discussions

Literacy is the ability to read and write that allows you to interpret texts with the use of an alphabet. Part of these skills is also being able to capture language permanently. These skills, which are acquired easily for some, do not simply stop at being able to do so, but go further with the interpretation of texts at the time of reading and development with writing (Arteaga & Carrión, 2022). Mastering reading and writing opens up new communication possibilities for the individual who possesses it.

The process of acquiring reading and writing skills begins from the earliest age with the practices of fine motor skills, visual-motor coordination, painting, and creativity. Satisfactory mastery of reading and writing opens new avenues of communication and development of other skills essential for the comprehensive development of students (González, 2018). In this way, reading and writing become one of the most important processes in educational life, being the basis of subsequent learning, which also predominates in thought, language and intelligence.

The importance of reading and writing is usually partly ignored due to everyday life, but in reality, the ability to read and write is crucial for people, since it plays a key role in the development of certain cognitive skills that help in the development of daily life. Through reading, not only are humans able to obtain information, but habits are created and techniques are learned that help communicate correctly and improve oral and written comprehension (Cervantes et al., 2017).

Likewise, reading is an intellectual resource that launches our intellectual functions, honing intelligence and developing creativity, which allows us to structure concepts, reinforcing critical thinking and the ability to generate complex ideas (Osorio et al., 2018). The connection that exists between teaching that focuses on reading, writing and positive academic performance is established by demonstrating its ability to increase students' concentration. Literacy proficiency not only improves academic skills, but also fosters empathy and interpersonal understanding, serving as a multifaceted tool for student development.

Regarding literacy learning strategies, there are different methods when teaching literacy, depending on the knowledge of the students and the teacher's pedagogy, some strategies or others are followed, which can be, according to Rugel et al., (2023) as follows: Phonetics: vowels and consonants are learned with the constant use of illustrations to teach each of the letters of the alphabet. Global: is the method that starts with the word and shows what it means. In addition, the complete phrase or statement and its meaning are also formed. Syllabic: it begins with the construction of the syllable together with a vowel and a series of consonants. Consonants are combined with vowels to give rise to syllables, such as: ba, be, bi, bo, bu. Generating a word: in this method, the word is the starting point of the literacy process. Furthermore, an image is usually associated with words, and then disentangled into syllables, phonemes, and

letters. Alphabetical: it starts with the alphabet. Vowels and consonants are combined to form words. Memorization predominates over understanding (Bartlett, 2008).

About the role of the teacher and how the Dynamic Model of Active Learning (MoDAA), is a methodology that is based on constructivist theories with aspects in the cognitive part of David Ausubel and memory systems. This model is also evident in the instructional materials that teachers can design and adapt in the academic and pedagogical context, concluding that during the evolutionary process, mistakes become a source of analysis for the student since it strengthens the levels of consciousness that foster verbal meaning among students (Castillo & Cabral, 2022).

Difficulties in learning to read and write in many cases have as their source failures in phonological awareness, which is the ability to recognize and use sounds in spoken language, and also includes phonemic awareness, which is the ability to identify the sounds that combine to form words (Johnson, 2022). Intellectual disability is also recognized as part of the difficulties, which entails several limitations in personal, family, social and educational life, which vary according to the degree of disability that the student presents; Reading comprehension is a complex process and even more so if it is about developing it in people with intellectual disabilities, this should not be a limitation for them to access this knowledge that helps them improve other areas of their development (Miranda, 2018).

The cognitive development of the human being in the early stages gave birth to knowledge about cognitive development; Jean Piaget (1896-1980) presents it as a process that is carried out due to biological maturation and the interaction with the environment in which it develops, as pointed out by Falvell (2019) and these stages or periods are analyzed: Sensory-motor or sensorimotor stage (from birth to 2 years), preoperational stage (from 2 to 7 years), stage of concrete operations (from 7 to 11 years) and the stage of formal operations (adolescence to adulthood). The stage that concerns the present investigation includes students of the concrete operations stage. In this period of development, children begin to think more logically, they have limitations with abstract and hypothetical concepts, children begin to be more egocentric, but they can be empathetic (Vergara, 2023).

Active methods

A methodology is a set of decisions that are made about the process and the resources that are used in planning. In the educational field, traditional methods and active methodology are differentiated. The first places the focus of learning on the teacher and, on the contrary, the second allows the curriculum to be made more flexible to adapt it to the interests of the student. Here, academic performance and evaluation are no longer the only indicator that values the knowledge that the student acquires and has a leading role in learning by competencies and the skills that will be applied throughout the course life (Moreno et al., 2021).

According to Restrepo & Waks (2018), active learning:

“It requires students to consider not only subject matter content, but also the relationship of that content to broader issues such as social, existential, or conceptual concerns. It implies, therefore, a much broader process of thought and reflection on the part of the students. Teachers, for their part, are often presented with a false dilemma about active learning: give a keynote talk or use active learning techniques.”

The incorporation of the active method is of great importance within the teaching processes where the aim is for students to be active and not passive, to be participatory at all times, developing capacities and skills (Moncayo-Bermúdez 7 Prieto-López, 2022). These characteristics are related to the positive attitude that the student has and the desire to improve, characteristics that middle school children have, they are always encouraged to know and discover new things. Below is an illustration where a comparison of the types of learning is made according to their approach, in Table 1: Comparative approach: active method vs. passive method.

Table 1
Comparative approach: active method vs. passive method

Active learning	Passive learning
Focused on the student	Focused on the teacher
Personalized assessment	Limited assessment
Understanding is guaranteed	Understanding cannot be assured
Teachers know what students are learning	Teachers don't get feedback
Deeper learning	Surface processing
The students make	The students are waiting
Practical applications of what has been learned	Less ability to use what has been learned
Lower failure rates (21%)*	Higher failure rates (32%)

Source: (Ministry of Culture and Sports, 2022)

As a dynamic strategy, it is being applied in classrooms with positive results, positioning itself as meaningful, active and constructive learning, as well as the perception of student satisfaction and generating knowledge for teachers to reinvent their traditional educational practices in innovative actions in line with social, labor and technological demands (Escamilla & Muriel, 2022).

The results are evident when new ways of teaching are sought, technology-native students feel motivated when a teacher applies dynamic ways to teach a topic. Cano et al. (2019), make an important contribution when they state that:

“Methods alone do not allow the objectives to be met, so it is necessary to complement them with teaching techniques. These are considered as the actions that each teacher develops that tend to cause certain modifications in the students depending on the achievement of the proposed objectives.

Connectivism as an active methodology, states that knowledge is framed in a group of connections that results in a person acquiring learning to navigate the networks. This method makes use of the learning techniques necessary for students to function in the digital era, it should be noted that its process involves the use of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), in addition, it strengthens skills such as analysis, creativity, collaborative work and negotiation (Villalobos-López, 2022).

Among the active methodologies proposed by Pertusa (2020), we can mention: gamification, simulation, role-playing, Project-Based Learning (PBL), Challenge- or Problem-Based Learning (ABR), theatricalization, Visual Thinking, Design Thinking and Flipped Classroom.

Among the advantages and benefits of the active method in the learning process, the Claudio Coello (2021) states that with this method: they put an end to teaching that is based on master classes and memorization, it allows learning through inquiry and discovery, it focuses on observation and the issuance of judgments based on facts and actions, it guides work towards problem solving, improves the retention of concepts and promotes autonomous learning.

Among the limitations that the application of the active method presents and that affect both the teacher in the teaching process and the student in the learning process and, according to Hernández (2014), it requires time, dedication and knowledge in the field of analysis, development, criteria are considered such as: pace of demanding classes for both the teacher and the student, difficulty in covering the contents, without the experience of inquiry, difference in the traditional form of evaluation and inequitable work for students. Based on the observation carried out on the students of the 5th year of Secondary Education, the results shown in table 2 are determined:

Table 2
Results of the observation sheet for reading ability students

Reading skill	AND		NO		Sometimes		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Do you read at a speed appropriate for your level?	4	11	31	89	0	0	35	100
Do you read with fluency and intonation?	2	6	29	83	4	11	35	100
Do you understand the general meaning of the text?	4	12	26	74	5	14	35	100

In the first question about the appropriate speed for their level: 88.57% do not read at an appropriate speed for their level. However, 11.42% do. In the second question about fluency and intonation: 82.85% do not read with fluency and intonation, however, 5.71% do, and 11.42% only do it sometimes. Regarding the third question related to whether they understand the general meaning of the text: 74.10% do not understand the general meaning of the text, 11.40% do, while 14.28% understand it only sometimes. Which leads to the conclusion there is considerable room for improvement in reading skills in terms of speed, fluency, intonation, and understanding of the overall meaning of the text. Therefore, it is recommended to implement reading improvement strategies to address the areas identified with difficulties shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Results of the observation sheet for students' skill – writing

Writing skill	AND		NO		Sometimes		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Do you organize your ideas clearly and coherently?	12	34	17	49	6	17	35	100
Do you review and correct errors when writing?	2	6	27	77	6	17	35	100
Do you write originally?	2	6	23	66	10	28	35	100

Regarding the first question, it can be determined that 49% of those observed do not organize their ideas in a clear and coherent manner, 34% do, and 17% do so sometimes; Regarding the second question, 77% do not review or correct errors when writing, however, 6% do and 17% do it sometimes; Regarding originality in writing, 66% do not do it, 28% do it sometimes and 6% do.

Which leads to the conclusion that the majority do not read at an adequate speed for the sublevel in which they are located, fluency and intonation must be improved, and comprehension must be improved. Therefore, it is recommended to implement strategies to improve reading. Table 4 shows the results of the observation sheet on students' ability-motivation.

Table 4
Results of the observation sheet for students' ability-motivation

Motivation skill	AND		NO		Sometimes		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Do you show interest in reading and writing?	21	60	6	17	8	23	35	100
Do you actively participate in the proposed activities?	18	51	2	6	15	43	35	100

In the first question, 60% show interest in reading and writing, 8% show interest only sometimes and 17% do not show interest in developing skills; Regarding the second question, 51% actively participate in the proposed activities, 43% participate only sometimes and 6% participate, but actively in the proposed activities. The data suggests that there is interest in reading and writing in a high percentage, however, there are also children who require motivation to be interested in acquiring the skills. Therefore, it would be beneficial to determine the reasons for the lack of enthusiasm

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for learning and look for ways to encourage student participation. Table 5 presents an analysis of the results of the survey carried out on teachers

Table 5
Results survey of teachers

Questions	Alternative
Which of the following methods do you use to teach literacy?	Synthetic 67% Analytical 33% Reading with illustrations 50%
Which of the activities apply in the classroom to develop literacy?	Listening to stories and stories 17% Games 17% Story creation 16% The use of technology 67%
How do you integrate the teaching of literacy?	The story 33% Adjust content, methods and materials 67%
How do you adapt teaching methods based on students' skill level?	Carry out group activities 17% Provides additional resources 16% Diagnostic evaluation 50%
How do you assess students' progress in literacy?	Formative evaluation 33% Summative evaluation 1% Feedback 0%
Do you participate in continuing professional training?	Almost always 67% Always 33%
What level of knowledge do you have about the use of the active method in the teaching process?	High level 67% Average level 33%
¿Considera los estilos de aprendizaje de sus estudiantes al elegir las actividades de lectoescritura?	Siempre 67% Casi siempre 33%
¿Considera que la participación de sus estudiantes es activa en las actividades de lectoescritura?	Muy de acuerdo 83% De acuerdo 17%
¿Cómo evalúa la efectividad de la aplicación de los métodos que aplica para desarrollar la lectoescritura?,	Trabajos individuales 83% Trabajos grupales 17%

The processes of acquiring skills such as reading and writing within the considerations of the Ecuadorian Curriculum approach, the flexibility of methodological strategies is proposed following the context and based on the skills present in the various areas of development proposed by the Curriculum ([Villón, 2019](#)). This suggests that this praxiological perspective includes the participation of the family and the needs of the context, responding to a highly relevant socio-cognitive approach that involves values and skills to achieve the learning objectives. In teaching practice, complexity is lowered, even if the group does not have special educational needs, especially due to the flexibility that is talked about so much.

Regarding student participation, in the observation sheet it was considered as one of the points to be evaluated since it is one of the requirements to achieve meaningful learning. This is suggested by [Wisker et al. \(2018\)](#), when they state that “it is likely that tasks that require the active participation of the student lead to deep learning. Such as group discussion, problem solving, and designing and conducting research,” this reaffirms that the active method is not specific to individual activities, but also involves group work.

underline the importance of using methods with adequate professional support to achieve significant achievements in students. This is stated by [Arteaga et al. \(2019\)](#), regarding reading: “learning to read requires special attention, this skill allows the acquisition of other knowledge; the application of a globalizing method and timely psychopedagogical intervention are actions that must be considered in the development of linguistic skills.”

There is a divergence of ideas when analyzing the position that the method is not sufficient to achieve the goals that a teacher sets in an educational year and this is stated by [Medina-Díaz & Verdejo-Carrión \(2020\)](#), when talking about the evaluation of knowledge: “it is not enough for teachers to build and manage better instruments, if they do not use the information appropriately and fairly in the evaluation of student learning.” The fact is that educational

processes are a set of real situations in which these are mixed and there are no exact formulas when it comes to human participation

Regarding the activities used in classes, there is no doubt that they must be active, dynamic, engaging the student and allowing him to actively participate, making him feel that he is the protagonist of what he learns. Active learning is one of the constructivist learning methodology that uses techniques where through activities such as writing, reading, speaking, discussing, researching, manipulating materials, making observations, collecting and analyzing data, synthesizing or evaluating elements that are related to the content, it allows them to carry out activities that lead them to analysis and acquire significant learning (Restrepo & Waks, 2018).

Reading has a fundamental role in Basic General Education by contributing to the development of communicative skills, written and spoken language are the basis for the acquisition of all knowledge, as stated by Macas et al. (2022), in his research entitled: "Active methodology in the reading and writing process from Lev Vygotsky's approach, to strengthen critical thinking in secondary school students", where from a case study he proposes the improvement of pedagogical practices in the reading and writing process, concluding that by working on the emotional area of students, the expression of their feelings, communication and interaction with the people around them is facilitated.

Within the limitations found, we point out that the identification of active strategies and the use of active methods may vary depending on the educational and cultural context. These bases may not be generalizable in all situations and adaptation is required according to the specific characteristics of the students and the educational environment. Based on the population investigated, there could be a bias in the findings that were expected to be found at the educational level. It is recommended to consider cultural and contextual diversity when identifying active strategies and effective methods of teaching and learning to read and write. In addition, it is suggested to carry out additional research to thoroughly understand the use and effectiveness of active methods in teaching reading and writing.

4 Conclusion

There are solid theoretical bases on the use, characteristics, application, and results of the active method in the teaching processes of reading and writing, as well as on synthetic and analytical approaches, as well as strategies that involve the active participation of students, supported by research from various fields in which they develop teaching and learning processes, which supports the ideas and concepts of this work.

The most relevant active strategies that could be identified include reading with illustrations, listening to stories, games, and participation in group activities, in addition to individual activities that promote self-training. All of these strategies encourage the active participation of students and provide significant contexts in the development of reading and writing skills, essential skills in all areas of knowledge.

The widespread use of active methods in teaching reading and writing to fifth-year students of secondary school was identified: teachers seek active participation of students; in their planning they consider activities that promote participation and that adapt to the cognitive characteristics of the group, the educational needs and the learning styles of the students; supporting the effectiveness and relevance of the active method in teaching reading and writing.

Conflict of interest statement

The author declared that she has no competing interests.

Statement of authorship

The author has a responsibility for the conception and design of the study. The author has approved the final article.

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