

# Students' reading comprehension: An educational case about a methodological proposal in education

Comprensión lectora en los estudiantes: caso educativo sobre una propuesta metodológica en educación  
Compreensão leitora em escolares: um caso educacional sobre uma proposta metodológica em educação

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** The intention of this article is to show the experience of an eclectic proposal implementation in first grade students. **Objective:** To deeply know how in elementary school students are beginning to work on an ability that will become very important during their learning process, which will be the reading skill in a second language. **Method:** As they are developing this skill through the use of reproductive skills, in this study it is proposed to use an alternative methodology to this language development, which will be an eclectic methodological proposal with a qualitative approach, in order to take advantage of this skill acquisition process to begin growing reading comprehension and second language learning as well. **Results:** It could be demonstrated that an eclectic methodological proposal could help students to improve their reading comprehension. **Conclusion:** Teachers can feel confident about using eclectic methodologies in the classroom as it can become a success along the learning sessions.

**Keywords:** Cognitive processes; Language development; Reading instruction; Comprehension.  
(Source: Unesco Thesaurus)

## Resumen

**Introducción:** El objetivo de este artículo es mostrar la experiencia en la implementación de una propuesta ecléctica en estudiantes de primer grado. **Objetivo:** Conocer a fondo cómo en los estudiantes de primaria se empieza a trabajar una habilidad que cobrará mucha importancia durante su proceso de aprendizaje, que es precisamente la capacidad lectora en una segunda lengua. **Método:** Teniendo presente que los los estudiantes están desarrollando esta destreza a través del uso de habilidades reproductivas, se propone utilizar una metodología alternativa para el desarrollo del lenguaje, la cual será una propuesta metodológica ecléctica con un enfoque cualitativo, con el fin de aprovechar este proceso de adquisición de habilidades para comenzar a mejorar la comprensión de lectura y también el aprendizaje de un segundo idioma. **Resultados:** Se pudo demostrar que una propuesta metodológica ecléctica tiene la posibilidad de ayudar a los estudiantes en el mejoramiento de su comprensión lectora. **Conclusión:** Los docentes pueden sentirse seguros al utilizar metodologías eclécticas en el aula, ya que esto puede convertirse en un éxito a lo largo de las sesiones de aprendizaje.

**Palabras clave:** Procesos cognitivos; Desarrollo del lenguaje; Enseñanza de la lectura; Comprensión.

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## Resumo

**Introdução:** A intenção deste artigo é mostrar a experiência na implementação de uma proposta eclética em alunos da primeira série. **Objetivo:** Conhecer em profundidade como os alunos do ensino fundamental começam a trabalhar uma habilidade que se tornará muito importante durante seu processo de aprendizagem, que é justamente a capacidade de ler em um segundo idioma. **Método:** Tendo em vista que eles estão desenvolvendo essa destreza por meio do uso de capacidades reprodutivas, este estudo se propõe a utilizar uma metodologia alternativa para o desenvolvimento da linguagem, que será uma proposta metodológica eclética com abordagem qualitativa, todo isso a fim de aproveitar esse processo de aquisição da habilidade para começar a melhorar a compreensão de leitura e aprendizagem da segunda língua também. **Resultados:** Foi possível demonstrar que uma proposta metodológica eclética tem a possibilidade de ajudar os alunos a melhorar sua compreensão de leitura. **Conclusão:** Os professores podem se sentir seguros ao utilizar metodologias ecléticas em sala de aula, uma vez que isso pode se tornar um sucesso ao longo das sessões de aprendizagem.

**Palavras-chave:** Processos cognitivos; Desenvolvimento da linguagem; Ensino da leitura; Compreensão.



## Introduction

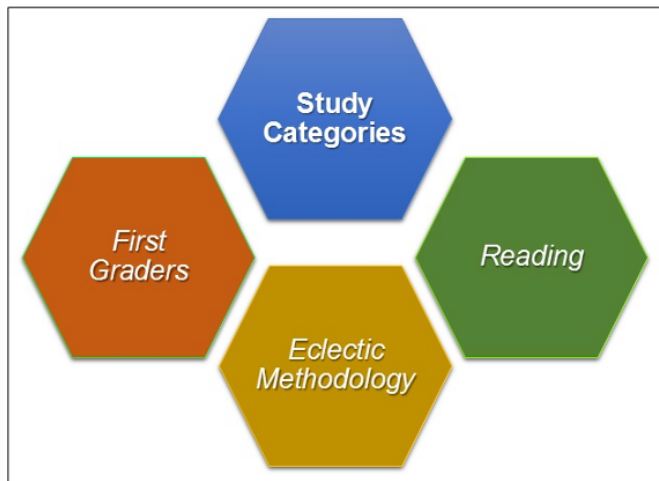
Reading comprehension becomes a major skill in the academic activity during the most of the educational cycles. Its development is a complex process which each person begins to build little by little as it is put into practice by several demands a person has; this skill will not only be crucial to carry on the learning process during the rest of the student's life, but it will also be tested at the end of different cycles and be the basis to develop other complex cognitive procedures such as critical reasoning and problem solving, competences that will be used by students during different stages of their lives (Calle Álvarez, 2019). As reading comprehension is a skill that is accomplished by learners as it is developed, in this study it is established to instead build the basis teaching by using a reproductive way of reading—where students will be just repeating—to involve also the recognition and comprehension of what is being read, in order for students to begin reading skill acquisition with this comprehension approach, instead of a repetition practice with the intention of a better performance, not only of reading comprehension competences, but also of the second language altogether (Chabla Sarabia & Álvarez Lozano, 2018). In this inquiry it is shown how an alternative approach can improve learners' knowledge acquisition and learning skills development, rising their academic success probability.

## Theoretical Framework

In this study three categories were chosen as main concepts to clarify the path for developing this research project, being briefly described as follow:

**Figure 1.**

*Categorical elements that guided the inquiry accomplishment*



Source: Personal design.

### *Academic dynamics in first graders*

As first notion to be described ('First Graders'), it is important to understand some features regarding it. First grade is considered the first step in academic educational levels. As Reupert et al., (2023) mention, students are initially integrating to the learning process and they are starting their acquisition



of some competences. It is important to know what competences are starting to get into account the students' previous knowledge no matter what competences are used in the classroom; they will learn very easily if the curriculum is suitable for their better understanding through all the learning process along the year. Mentioning one part of first graders, they are experiencing a Multitask Experience, then they have in total 18 subjects. It is important to know that they are getting into account those subjects, as Cao et al., (2023) claim that this situation takes places since many first-grade students do not perceive the school as a familiar context compared to their previous semi-academic experiences.

It is possible that some students start thinking about their feelings, so they may wonder: "why is it too hard to learn?" Consequently, teachers and parents might demonstrate them they can do it and learn new things. According to Bellows et al., (2022), most of them are great oral writers, they can share stories, experiences, opinions, information, big lies and family secrets. That is their way to communicate with others, they would write aloud verbally and spontaneously. When teachers teach new topics, first graders tend to be so curious about it, they usually jump and raise their hands excitingly for giving the answer, even if the answer is correct or incorrect. They have a very good and dynamic way to discover, and when teachers give them the correct answer, that fact might be considered part of their initial knowledge. Furthermore, students would get some points of view that are given just like the first time life as what they learn in pre-k, and getting into account about how they learn at home with parents; hence, they can practice about everything that they receive in the classroom (Cardona et al., 2019).

Additionally—and having in mind first graders' attitude— Keenan (2022) states that it is imperative to recognize first-grade students' characteristics; for example, many of them have a competitive attitude that teachers may bear in mind when planning their classes. It is because some students may not have their thinking ability focused on learning new experiences, therefore some people would criticize about how they learn and how they get their knowledge.

### *What does an eclectic methodology mean?*

About the second category, which is 'eclectic methodology'—for means of achieving a better development of reading skills from the early childhood— the purpose is to make use of an eclectic practice in order to design a plan that is suitable in the chosen context, and also to get a deeper understanding in kids that are beginning learning how to read. The use of an eclectic methodological proposal is commonly decided for getting multiple benefits in the educational field; likewise, Mok et al., (2023) declare that eclectic methods are perceived as an alternative option that links specific educational approaches through critical teachers' criteria. In this way, an alternative methodology can be designed having into account the students' needs as they are learning to read in their first language; for instance, by emphasizing their learning not only in mechanic and reproductive reading abilities, but in their learning for a deeper analysis of reading and the acquisition of a second language (Jaramillo Valencia, 2020).

An eclectic methodology is found useful for this study as it allows an alternative pedagogy design, using the more suitable parts of other methods and approaches that are already established, all of this by articulating them in a single functional methodology that fits the specific context and curriculum needs, so these methodological proposal are made for the learning process to being more accessible in students as the designers (teachers) have the possibility to integrate different strategies, according to the purpose of learning and students' expectations as well as curricular needs. Hew et al., (2021) remark that an important feature while implementing eclectic methodologies is making emphasis on



the logical combination between pedagogical techniques to adjust a clear idea for the class. According to what this authors refer, there is a relation between the information (input) and the different human factors that usually affect the learning process. In the eclectic methodology, these elements are taken into account when designing the curricular adaptations to get a better response from students when they are taught through this manner (Gil Vera et al., 2019).

### ***Reading as a remarkable skill***

This category (reading) is considered as a very important skill that people have to pay attention to. It is the ability that must be learned in order to integrate the speaking ability. According to Korevaar et al., (2023), this skill is so usual and daily, then it is important to develop it in early ages, because it is nearly linked to speaking. Sometimes, reading is being performed in pre-k then, hence some children begin “to read” so fast. Today, reading is not only learned at schools; thus, Rao and Banerjee (2023) mention that reading goes beyond recognizing a quantity of words, hence when somebody reads, it is being employed many cognitive strategies as well as skills. It could be seen as the most meaningful skill that would be given, because it is quite reflexive and involves many other complex capacities compared to the other language skills.

To sum up, regarding Ochoa Londoño et al., (2022), the reading comprehension concept, which goes further than getting to a reading skill —that in the beginning seems to be a mere mechanic skill focused on repeating what is written and reproduce it—, has as an aim to get a more analytic and reflexive reading comprehension for students, specifically from the beginning as they are learning this ability. According to Marx et al., (2023), comprehending written production is a hard process that takes into consideration many cognitive aspects. Therefore, when learning from reading comprehension, students get to read in order not to reproduce phonemes, but to analyze and comprehend all readings assigned. They also strengthen the development of a second language, work on reading skills and get intrinsic motivation for reading. In words of Weng and Chiu (2023), humans’ activities are directed by people’s objectives declared efficiently; it is not the same if people just read to see as if they keep on reading to comprehend and analyze simultaneously. Reading happens when one is looking for a specific information or when needing to construct a global idea of the content for transmitting to another person. With this differentiation, it is possible to establish that —if learners are taught to read looking for specific objectives in texts, more than just repeating what is written— students will be more focused and engaged with academic activities as well as reading itself, since they are also developing reading strategies to achieve different goals throughout reading tasks, as reading comprehension skill is developed along reading with specific purposes.

### **Research methodology**

This research is going to be developed having into account multiple aspects that affect the sample proficiency at acquiring the expected results. Hence, Paiva et al., (2023) state that qualitative paradigms are set to integrate ideas related to the significance while interpreting subjects in their contexts. This statement remarks how important it is —in qualitative studies— to analyze the issue through a core and keys of interpretation, therefore it is important to get to a deeper understanding of all specific factors that affect students’ reading learning proficiency. The qualitative approach counts with charac-



teristics that are needed in order to get this comprehension of particularities in context and sample.

This type of studies allows in-depth interpretations of the multiple factors, as Constantine et al., (2023) suggest that qualitative studies have a deep understanding about participants, their culture and their historical scenarios. According to this affirmation, the qualitative approach recognizes several subjectivities that affect this study and its sample. It also permits a better understanding of particular situations which will lead to a better grasp of the issue; as a consequence, it makes easier to look for possible solutions and strategies in order to intervene.

The intention in designing an eclectic methodological proposal is to improve the life conditions of students, as well as when they begin to adopt and develop reading strategies. This new perspective is intended to lead students to transform their current reality as they will have a more democratic access to knowledge and education. In order to turn this reality, the researchers are having into consideration that students in Colombian public schools may have a lower emphasis in deeper-study-skills development, as the socio political context demonstrate it. This comparison is made when designing this proposal; consequently, this study is using a critical-social paradigm, which is recognized by understanding a specific context in order to be intervened by the researchers, so the units of analysis can have the resources to change themselves as well as their realities (Van Der Leij et al., 2022). Indeed, the critical-social paradigm is found appropriate for this research due to the impact that the use of the methodological propose will have on the students' life quality, as getting to a democratic access to education and the fostering of the reading strategies. Similarly, intrinsic reading and educational motivation could mean for them the development of their critical thinking and the increase of opportunities in the job market. In addition to the intention behind —basing the research as a critical-social study— using this paradigm is found useful as according to Eilam (2022), insomuch as critical-social research focuses on meaning of social behaviors and also has in mind objective facts. Then, as in this paradigm the singularities are contrasted to factual information, this development can bring the study closer to a reality that is comprehended and explained through concrete theoretical support, increasing the validity of this study and making possible for other interested researchers or teachers to review this inquiry, in order to adapt it to their particular contexts.

Lastly, the action research was chosen as a fundamental feature in this research as the democratic access to education is one goal to be achieved through the proposal. Accordingly, Fernández-Toro and Duensing (2021) affirm that action research makes emphasis on people's emancipation through a collaborative human process. Being one of the intentions for this research to intervene in the students' reality —and thus make changes in the way they learn and perceive reading and education activities— they will definitely be able to have the same access to education as others that are in better socio-economic conditions. As a result, this research lets learners have a better development of critical thinking and therefore creates situations of emancipation. In words of Carr and Sun (2022), action research invites participants to be an active part along the inquiry itself, then they have a complete recognition of the whole research process. This describes how action research is developed through organized interactions, designed by the researcher in order to make an impact in the social actors with the intention of making significant changes in both, the participants' way of perceiving phenomena and the method used by the researchers to expand presupposes about these actors as well as the issues treated in the investigation.

The unit of analysis for this research was composed by 25 students from first grade who studied



in the Institución educativa Javiera Londoño, Antonia Santos Section (Medellín, Antioquia); ten girls and fifteen boys whose ages were between 6 and 7 years old. This participants were selected under a probability sampling with 90% of confidence level and 10% in margin of error; similarly, the population was 40 students in total in the year 2021. The techniques used to achieve the goals from this research were: a pre-test, a Task Based Learning (TBL) activity, and a post-test; later, after applying them, all the information was gathered in categorical matrixes in order to encode and select the most remarkable data, which is presented in the following section.

## Results and Discussion

In this section all the process is described by beginning with a pre-test and finishing with a post-test, both about the reading skill through some specific topics. Likewise, during the pre-test application the students seemed to be confused when performing the task, as they had voids in their knowledge so they were not prepared to resolve the test, but after the TBL activity application, they shown an improvement in the post-test scores:

**Table 1.**

*The scores of the students during the test*

Students	Pre-test	Post-test
Student 1	2.5	3.1
Student 2	1.4	3.9
Student 3	2.5	3.2
Student 4	3.2	3.6
Student 5	2.1	3.2
Student 6	2.5	4.2
Student 7	2.8	3.2
Student 8	2.8	3.8
Student 9	1.3	3.6
Student 10	2.9	4.0
Student 11	2.4	3.3
Student 12	2.7	3.9
Student 13	3.0	4.1
Student 14	2.0	3.3
Student 15	2.6	3.5
Student 16	2.3	3.3
Student 17	3.3	4.2
Student 18	1.7	1.5
Student 19	2.0	3.3
Student 20	1.7	2.7
Student 21	2.8	4.4
Student 22	2.2	3.6
Student 23	3.1	4.0
Student 24	3.3	3.8
Student 25	2.9	3.5

*Source.* Personal design.



As presented in the graph, the students had a low score in the pre-test, actually it was about a topic that was already taught and most of them did not even pass it. After presenting that exam, a TBL activity was applied by using the Dorman Method; therefore, it was adapted the use of flash-cards with the vocabulary and the continuous repetition of the words. It was also used the global method through the implementation of appealing material and images that they can relate to the concepts in order to generate a word comprehension. As a result, the students showed an improvement in the post-test scores, in which only one student happened to get a lower rate than in the pre-test.

The students were not only motivated during the project performance but also it was reflected how meaningful it was for them in the results and their performing. Similarly –as presented in an analog research accomplished in 2017– it was concluded a first practicum term and with the integration of the conduction methods, with reinforces on the new way of working, the students already started to develop the potential, the students' academic level improved in a short time and they accepted the new way of working (Salazar-Chávez, 2017). From this experience, it was found a relation with this project outcome, in which it does not matter how the content is presented (methodology), as the teachers use “reinforcers” taking into consideration how the students' previous knowledge generates a motivation. Consequently, the students usually feel confident with the concepts understanding as the knowledge that was already there was used in the development of different techniques. Motivation is a meaningful element in any educational process; therefore, Wilson and Trainin (2007) mention about the importance of motivation in students and how they perceive the consequence of it: “The confirmatory factor analysis was evaluated against two more parsimonious models: a generalized motivation one-factor model and a two-factor solution separating attributions from self-efficacy and perceived competence” (p. 272). Students' motivation is one important part of this research, because this learners feel motivation towards this purposed methodology, using the knowledge that is already taken in English classes at school.

During the achievement of the research instruments (pre-test, TBL activity and post-test), the participants showed attentive processing during the instruments implementation: they were participating all the time, they had a good disposition and they also followed the instructions explained by the researchers. As it was used an eclectic methodology to design the TBL activity, there were not only taken into consideration one educational method, but two with some other educational approaches. Nevertheless, when creating the pre-test, there was not usage of a specific method, as the intention of this technique was to find the students' current level using topics they were already taught, which were: the animals, colors and verbs. The results of this test is shown in the chart 1, and the result of it is contrasted to the post-test. In both instruments the test was the same in order to register their progress compared to the first performance of the same technique. In a parallel inquiry about reading comprehension, it was found that there are some elements when having in mind the fact of testing a specific skill; hence, Gentaz et al., (2015) claim in their corresponding research the following: “we have considered the scores in reading comprehension and its main predictors: listening comprehension, vocabulary, decoding skills (assessed with pseudoword reading), and phonemic awareness (assessed with a control task on syllabic awareness)” (p. 10). Therefore, it could be found –on the pre-test and the post-test– how the students could understand any story, answer questions of them and also refer about the importance in terms of content. To illustrate some more about how the eclectic methodological proposal was performed, the following descriptive chart is presented:





**Table 2.***Proposal representation*

Sessions descriptions	Achievement report
1) The students individually report their respective likes when getting familiar with literary material. 2) Likewise, everyone begins to explore this literary material and share among themselves. 3) The search concludes with the selection of some topics related to their preferences.	Preliminary reading time
1) The students perform readings of these selected texts. 2) They use several strategies to locate, select and understand the information that was found by the researchers' tutoring. 3) The work concludes with the implementation of the Global and Dorman's Method through the eclectic proposal.	Dynamic reading practices
1) After practicing reading under the eclectic methodological proposal, the students focus on the similarities and differences from semantic fields. 2) The students relate different pictures with different texts to demonstrate reading comprehension beyond just memorizing graphics and words. 3) The process concludes with the students' deeply understanding of some readings performed by the researchers during the sessions.	Analyzing reading comprehension

Source. Personal design.

On the TBL activity design, it was used two methods (the Dorman Method and the Global Method), this in order to design an own eclectic methodological proposal for this specific context and population. The researchers used flashcards and TIC resources to develop the second instrument with the institution authorization to use electronic devices on the school. When it comes to eclectic Methodologies, Ghayyem et al., (2014) remark the importance of using them in the educational field:

The findings revealed that eclectic learning approach has a positive effect on students' academic achievement and retention in English at elementary level. Eclectic approach was found more rewarding, effective and productive in teaching English as compared to traditional learning approach at elementary level as the teachers modify their teaching style according to the situation and need of students in eclectic learning approach. (p. 36)

During the TBL activity, the students received so well the implemented methodological proposal; thus, they read the words that the researchers showed on the flashcards, and then they repeated all the words that were already learned in English classes.

During this sessions, the students were receptive with language input as they showed words comprehension while perceiving meaning in the flashcards; but when producing language, they needed a reinforcement, specifically on the pronunciation as they used the mother tongue phonemics to pronounce when the words were written in English. This aspect was not taken into account to determine the success of the project, it was used in the learning process as one of the strategies for the participants was to repeat the words in order for them to get used to the vocabulary through memorization. For the TBL activity, it was used the same topics as in the test design, which were: the animals, colors and verbs. Regarding the matter of pronunciation, Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2011) refer about the improvement of pronunciation in reading:

Today, internet-based materials are viewed as not only technological but also pedagogical devices to improve pronunciation teaching and the learning process. Because internet-based materials offer minimal pairs, tongue twisters, songs, sound animations, step-by step phonetic descriptions,



and video animations specific to segmental (i.e. consonant and vowel phonemes of English). (p. 24)

When applying the post test, the students showed confused as they did not expect for it to be the same as the pre-test, and for having the same instructions and development as well. Nonetheless, when the intention technique was explained, they changed the disposition to do it by showing interest in this kind of exercise. With this situation, not only the students were ready enough —after the TBL-activity implementation— but also they got a lot of confidence. The obtained results reflected an improvement on the students' performance and topics comprehension; moreover, they manifested an interest on keeping learning English after this project.

After finishing this inquiry, the researchers considered to put more effort in the verbs topic, as it was the one that these students perform the worst during the whole process and even in the post-test performance. Also, regarding the second topic (The Animals), even though the students were taught on this before, they did not show a significant progress in this specific thematic until the project was finished. Likewise, they can improve more if it is still used in other teaching experiences. About the color, it was the item where the most of the learners got a high rate —in both the pre-test and post-test— although in the post-test they also showed an improvement in the answers.

## Conclusions

After this project concluded, it could be claimed a success as it demonstrated not only that an eclectic methodological proposal could help students to improve their reading comprehension, specifically when after showing a low level of performance on a topic that they were already taught. Similarly, at the end of the TBL activity they could not only accomplish better but show a lot of interest in the tasks development and in learning more about English.

Designing an eclectic methodology —according to interests and students' needs— can make a difference in how significant the learning experience become for them. Correspondingly, teachers can feel confident about using eclectic methodologies in the classroom as, if it is well planned, it can become a success along the learning sessions.

During the activity development, it was used a visual appealing graphic material to exemplify the concepts taught and concrete situations. The use of this kind of material not only make possible to obtain an interest in these students, as they are young learners and very visual as well, but also it allows to reflect active participation, so this motivation got the students to easily achieve a better reading comprehension level as the items taught could be explained and related with the participants' disposition to attend to the explanations.

After explaining the vocabulary that was going to be used throughout the classes, the eclectic proposal let the possibility blend different topics by creating situations using several aspects. After the TBL activity implementation, the students showed they could understand not only isolated concepts, but many situations that involved concepts itself, in order to create a narrative written production over themselves in both their performance and the results on the post-test.



## Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that it does not exist any conflict of interest with any institution or association of any kind. Likewise, the Universidad Católica Luis Amigó is not responsible for the management of copyright that the authors make in their articles.

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