Teaching reading from a sociocultural perspective in rural basic education: a systematic review

Enseñanza de la lectura desde el enfoque sociocultural en la educación básica-rural: una revisión sistemática

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Abstract

Reading literacy has been fundamental to achieving significant advances throughout history, suggesting that these skills can contribute to improving the quality of life, especially among students in rural settings. For this reason, there is interest in conducting a systematic review of reading instruction from a sociocultural perspective in basic education. To carry out this task, the PRISMA method was adopted to analyze research papers and scientific articles published between 2020 and 2025, available in specialized databases such as Google Scholar and Dialnet. In this process, language and location limitations were not considered, allowing for the selection and analysis of 21 highly relevant works related to the topic at hand. The findings concluded that reading instruction continues to be imposed in a predominantly mechanical manner, focused on formal aspects. This indicates the need to rethink educational strategies to integrate approaches that foster a deeper and more meaningful understanding of reading in basic education.

Keywords: rural education, reading, motivation, sociocultural.

Resumen

La competencia lectora ha sido fundamental para lograr avances significativos a lo largo de la historia, lo que sugiere que estas habilidades pueden contribuir a mejorar la calidad de vida, especialmente entre los educandos en contextos rurales. Por este motivo, surge el interés en realizar una revisión sistemática sobre la enseñanza de la lectura desde una perspectiva sociocultural en la educación básica. Para llevar a cabo esta tarea, se adoptó el método PRISMA como enfoque para analizar los trabajos de investigación y artículos científicos publicados entre 2020 y 2025, disponibles en bases de datos especializadas como Google Académico y Dialnet. En este proceso, no se consideraron limitaciones de idioma ni localización, lo que permitió seleccionar y analizar 21 trabajos de alta relevancia en relación con el tema en cuestión. A través de los hallazgos obtenidos, se concluyó que la enseñanza de la lectura sigue siendo impuesta de manera predominantemente mecánica, centrada en aspectos formales. Esto indica la necesidad de replantear las estrategias educativas para integrar enfoques que fomenten una comprensión más profunda y significativa de la lectura en la educación básica.

Palabras clave: educación rural, lectura, motivación, sociocultural.

Introduction

Since ancient times, reading has been regarded as a highly valued activity, as it brings individuals closer to intelligence and wisdom. However, it is essential to recognize that the formative power of reading transcends academic success or grades, involving a deeper dimension that leaves imprints on the neurons. Therefore, it is crucial to engage in activities that stimulate intellectual development, with reading being one of the most recommended for this purpose.

Through reading, not only is critical thinking stimulated, but intellectual skills are also strengthened by challenging comprehension and analytical capacity. Consequently, reading becomes a fundamental tool in the learning process. Additionally, it allows for the acquisition of knowledge on a wide variety of topics, such as economic and political issues, facilitating updates in an ever-changing world. Thus, it constitutes a "transcendental learning process for education and the intellectual growth of the individual" (Cassany, 2001, p. 193). Beyond its educational value, reading also has a pleasurable aspect, as it can entertain, inspire, and spark curiosity about the pursuit of new knowledge and experiences.

In this context, reading plays an essential role in the development and maturation of children and youth, as it not only multiplies knowledge but also presents new opportunities. In a society where the ability to read and comprehend written texts is essential for successfully facing challenges and effectively navigating the world (Kalman, 2018), the importance of teaching reading within a sociocultural framework is highlighted. This approach establishes a bridge between school and community, facilitating the exchange of life experiences and strengthening connections with everyday activities that influence learning. In this way, the process becomes a social and collaborative experience, where interaction with others plays a crucial role. As noted, "these types of activities offer new opportunities for learning and knowledge beyond the confines of what is currently known as formal education" (Kalman, 2018, p. 148).

Given the above, it is necessary to acknowledge that reading transcends mere decoding and is not purely an individual skill. Instead, it develops in social contexts, where the sociocultural approach argues that reading involves more than knowledge of the alphabetic code. According to Caorsi (2013), a person can be functional in their social context without knowing the alphabet, suggesting that the reader is both an interpreter and a creator of meaning. Therefore, reading is mediated by context, and there are different modes of reading depending on the communicative intent of the text and its relationship with the reader's context.

From this perspective, it is necessary to transform the reading instruction process by redefining these skills, adopting a more analytical, motivating, and effective approach. According to Hernando & Esteve (2014, p. 42), effective reading instruction should be based on "establishing objectives and purposes." Consequently, this article aims to contribute through an academic discussion to identify the common thread in the reading instruction process. This objective is pursued not to negatively question the effort and dedication of educators but rather to recognize and value their work through a systematic review of reading instruction within the sociocultural approach in basic education.

Methodology

This article is based on a systematic review that includes formulating the research question and defining inclusion and exclusion criteria to delineate inquiries related to the addressed topic. In this sense, a systematic

search was conducted in academic databases such as Google Scholar and Dialnet, using key terms such as “reading,” “sociocultural approach,” and “rural basic education.”

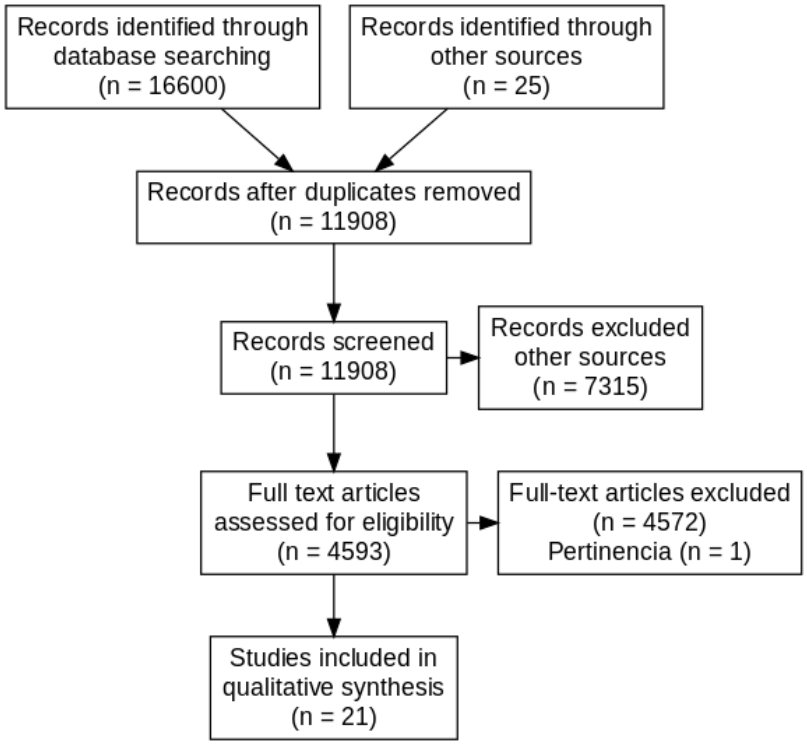
Following the PRISMA method established by Moher et al. (2009), specific criteria for inclusion and exclusion of studies were defined, ensuring a rigorous and transparent process. This approach allowed for the identification of relevant research that meets the stated objectives, ensuring the quality and relevance of the selected studies.

Table 1
Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Criteria	Description
Inclusion Criteria	
1. Publication range	Studies published between 2020 and 2025 in indexed journals.
2. Area of study	Research within the field of social sciences.
3. Language	Publications in English or Spanish.
Exclusion Criteria	
1. Type of publication	Non-peer-reviewed documents (newsletters, blogs, non-academic reports).
2. Thematic relevance	Studies not belonging to the educational field or lacking a clear focus on applied scientific research.
3. Content duplication	Documents appearing in multiple databases without providing additional information.

To ensure a comprehensive search, Boolean operators such as AND and OR were employed in selecting studies published between 2020 and 2025 in indexed journals, both in English and Spanish. No geographical limitations were imposed to ensure the inclusion of diverse research. After applying the PRISMA method, the analysis focused on 21 selected articles (see Figure 1). This process was carried out using a qualitative approach that allowed the identification of significant patterns and trends regarding the research topic.

Figure 1
PRISMA Diagram



Results and discussion

Beginning with the findings presented by Pérez (2025) regarding the educational situation in Colombia, it is highlighted that, in recent decades, the global educational field has strongly adopted a perspective on the teaching of reading and writing known as the sociocultural approach. Although this approach is recognized in Colombian basic education as one of the three main methods for teaching reading and writing, linguistic and communicative approaches have historically predominated. The latter emphasize the need for students to master linguistic knowledge before they can read and write. However, unlike the sociocultural approach, these methods have resulted in the teaching of comprehension and text production becoming mechanical, repetitive, and decontextualized, limiting their effectiveness in the holistic formation of students.

In a similar tone, the work of Morales & Perozo (2021), also conducted in Colombia, describes the processes of teaching reading and writing in rural basic education, specifically in the early grades of Antioquia. The results indicated that most educators employ synthetic methods based on traditional methodologies of repetition and memorization for code acquisition, which influences the reading process. On the other hand, Gélvez, Rincón & Villamizar (2023) conducted a documentary review to explore literacy in rural Colombian and Latin American contexts. They concluded that language teaching in rural areas is integral and is better framed within social practices, although economic, historical, and political factors limit its reach to the entire population.

Meanwhile, Jiménez & Villegas (2022) examined understandings of teaching practices for reading comprehension in developing a didactic sequence for reading chronicles about tourism for third and fifth-grade students in La Guajira, Colombia. This study considered geographical location and cultural diversity as influential factors in the educational process. The results showed that teachers were able to transform their teaching practices, positively reflecting on students' reading comprehension.

Another notable study is the research by Herrera & Rivera (2020), who, through classroom observation, identified that teachers need adequate preparation to provide effective support in the literacy process. This lack of preparation could be one reason why rural students face greater difficulties accessing higher education. Additionally, in Colombia, Suárez, López & Hinestroza (2023) analyzed reading and writing practices promoted by the Escuela Nueva manuals in first grade, finding that these reduce writing to mechanical processes of copying

and transcription, with readings primarily focusing on literal comprehension. This suggests the need for pedagogical-didactic guidance for teachers to adopt a constructivist approach to teaching reading and writing.

On another front, Rodríguez (2021) evaluated the impact of Transmedia Narratives on critical reading comprehension among fifth-grade students in a rural area, using the Escuela Nueva pedagogical model. The results showed significant progress in critical reading comprehension, as students were able to identify differences between two or more texts, understand the underlying intentions of the stories, and recognize stereotypes or violent events within them as part of the sociocultural dimension. This led to the conclusion that Transmedia Narratives had a positive impact on students' critical reading comprehension, broadening their reading horizons and generating multiple opportunities to express their learning.

Aguirre, Hernández & Vásquez (2022) analyzed the results of a study conducted with a group of teachers in the municipality of Aranzazu (Caldas, Colombia), focusing on the knowledge, tensions, and significant experiences within the pedagogical approach in rural contexts under the framework of inclusive education. The findings revealed that pedagogical knowledge oriented toward diversity is seen as both a possibility and a challenge, as it requires reflective and critical reading not only of texts but also of sociocultural contexts. This implies proposing actions that transcend mere content transmission and contribute to the holistic formation of individuals, integrating their local realities and specific educational needs.

Similarly, Calle & Ecavarría (2022) analyzed the development of cognitive skills during the reading of digital multimodal texts among primary school students in rural areas. The results showed average performance in cognitive skills of observation, description, retention, and comparison, although difficulties were found in recognizing modes of representation for comprehension. This suggests the need to integrate resources from the Flexible Escuela Nueva - Active School model that leverage digital multimodal communication.

As part of a systematic review with regional scope, Gélvez, Rincón & Villamizar (2022) conducted a documentary review on language to explore literacy or literate practices in the rural Colombian and Latin American context. They concluded that language teaching in rural areas is integral and better situated within social practices, although economic, historical, and political factors limit its reach to the entire population. In a similar context, Salgado (2022) identified success factors for teaching reading comprehension in emergency remote education modalities in schools in Honduras and Nicaragua, both urban and rural. The results highlighted the need to analyze how these success factors interact in diverse contexts and realities in order to improve reading comprehension instruction.

In the Mexican context, Corral (2024) presented an experience of constructing, developing, and systematizing a linguistic self-documentation exercise with indigenous education teachers at the basic level. This exercise led to the creation of a linguistic repository that includes 18 hours of audio and video recordings, which were used to analyze indigenous languages, design and create pedagogical strategies, and educational materials based on evidence from social language practices. On the other hand, Capulín (2021) analyzed research related to reading and writing among basic education students, highlighting experiences, projects, educational materials, and various methodologies for teaching. However, educational actors continue to associate reading and writing primarily with the coding or decoding of letters during the early years of schooling, which limits their approach to a deeper and more contextualized understanding.

In the case of Ecuador, Ordoñez et al. (2022) implemented a sociocultural reading promotion project at the "Miguel Prieto" educational center using ICT. The results showed an increase in reading motivation in two of the four groups targeted by the project, as well as development in levels of inferential and critical reading comprehension. On the other hand, Bermeo (2024) developed reading competency among third-year students through a didactic sequence within the sociocultural approach, although the results did not show significant progress in reading comprehension due to the lack of direct interaction and counterproductive practices from the substitute teacher.

In this same context, Curay & Loyola (2024) applied parental reading mediation using the critical children's canon to enhance reading in early childhood. The results indicated that parents can select a contextual literary corpus, implement reading promotion strategies through play and magic, and create reading corners in their homes. Additionally, Barrera et al. (2023) implemented a sociocultural reading promotion project at a public educational center in Cuenca, Ecuador, utilizing ICT, which led to an increase in reading motivation and greater development of inferential and critical abilities regarding the readings experienced.

In Peru, Rodríguez (2022) proposed a pedagogical model to improve the teaching of the Language and Communication course, based on Vygotsky's sociocultural approach. This model was deemed valid for experimental implementation. Furthermore, Cahuina & Ponce De León Chucuya (2024) explained the

communicative approach and its contribution to the development of reading and writing skills among primary education children, based on the proposed content.

Finally, in Argentina, Tapia (2021) investigated how children read and wrote on their own initiative during the school day from a sociocultural approach, utilizing insights from New Literacy Studies. The results questioned the emphasis on cognitive processes and outcomes, suggesting that a sociocultural approach should be transcended to better understand the meanings children attribute to writing. Additionally, Herrera (2021) compiled linguistic learning strategies for children and the scaffolding provided by caregivers in their interactions, aiding educators in understanding the foundations for linguistic development.

Conclusions

As a result of this systematic review, it has been found that reading communicative competence has often been addressed in a mechanical and artificial manner, frequently lacking meaning and at times being punitive. Traditional practices have led students to be passive recipients of information without questioning it. However, educators are aware that reading should not focus solely on formal aspects. The end of traditional practice is anticipated when students are able to read autonomously and enthusiastically, having sufficient motivation to read and write. This requires the joint participation of schools, teachers, parents, and society as a whole. It is essential to recognize that, in a highly literate world, everyone can participate in a culture of reading.

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