Training program with ELC reading strategies to improve reading comprehension in teachers

Programa formativo con estrategias de lectura ELC para mejorar la comprensión lectora en los docentes

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to demonstrate that the ELC reading strategies-based training program significantly contributes to improving teachers' reading comprehension, aligning with UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 4, Quality Education. To this end, a baseline study was conducted with a quantitative approach and an experimental design. The population consisted of 44 Communication teachers, from whom a convenience sample of 22 participants was selected. To measure the variables of interest, a reading test was designed, administered in two stages: pretest and posttest. This test was validated by three experts and piloted, obtaining a reliability coefficient of 0.893, ensuring the consistency of the results. Statistical analyses showed a significant improvement in reading comprehension after the program's implementation, supporting the alternative hypothesis that establishes a positive relationship between ELC reading strategies and teachers' reading performance. It is concluded that the application of these strategies not only enhances reading skills but also contributes to quality teacher training, reaffirming its effectiveness and educational relevance.

Keywords: reading strategies, reading comprehension, literacy level.

Resumen

Esta investigación tiene como propósito demostrar que el programa formativo basado en estrategias de lectura ELC contribuye significativamente a mejorar la comprensión lectora de los docentes, alineándose con el Objetivo de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS) N°4 de la ONU, Educación de Calidad. Para ello, se desarrolló un estudio básico con enfoque cuantitativo y diseño experimental. La población estuvo conformada por 44 docentes del área de Comunicación, de los cuales se seleccionó una muestra por conveniencia de 22 participantes. Para medir las variables de interés, se diseñó una prueba de lectura aplicada en dos momentos: pretest y postest. Esta prueba fue validada por tres expertos y sometida a una prueba piloto, obteniendo un coeficiente de confiabilidad de 0.893, lo que garantiza la consistencia de los resultados. Los análisis estadísticos evidenciaron una mejora significativa en la comprensión lectora tras la implementación del programa, respaldando la hipótesis alternativa que establece una relación positiva entre las estrategias de lectura ELC y el rendimiento lector de los docentes. Se concluye que la aplicación de estas estrategias no solo potencia las habilidades lectoras, sino que también contribuye a la formación docente de calidad, reafirmando su efectividad y pertinencia educativa.

Palabras clave: estrategias de lectura, comprensión lectora, nivel literal.

Introduction

Reading comprehension is recognized as an essential factor for achieving meaningful learning across all areas of knowledge. Improving reading comprehension should be a priority for both the educational sector and society as a whole. For this reason, researching the reading comprehension of educators is fundamental to enhancing educational quality, as students' comprehension levels are directly influenced by their teachers' training, many of whom lack specific preparation in this area. Thus, a deeper exploration of this topic can significantly contribute to University Social Responsibility (USR) by helping to reduce gaps and deficiencies in education at all levels, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 4: Quality Education.

In this context, international studies have highlighted a concerning reality regarding adult reading habits in various countries. For example, in Chile, the lack of reading comprehension is attributed to deficiencies in state education. The results from the second edition of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) by the OECD (2022-2023) reveal that Chilean adults exhibit a low level of reading comprehension compared to other evaluated countries, with Chile being the only South American country included in the study.

On the other hand, the National Center for Strategic Planning (CEPLAN) projects a strengthening of the educational system by 2050, based on the training of more qualified teachers. However, it has been noted that many educators lack a deep understanding of reading comprehension models, or adopt an excessively simplified view, limiting comprehension to the accumulation of linguistic data and textual knowledge, which restricts the development of critical thinking in students. In response to this situation, the Peruvian government has promoted various initiatives to improve reading comprehension, such as the national contest “El Perú Lee,” which encourages the participation of both students and teachers interested in enhancing their reading skills. Additionally, the Educational Management Unit of Tarma has demonstrated valuable experience by organizing the X Latin American Congress on Reading Comprehension, aimed at teacher training and the promotion of reading culture.

In the province of Casma, both public and private educational institutions have shown low levels of reading comprehension, according to the results of the 2021 Sample Evaluation, falling below the national average in satisfactory and in-progress achievement levels. Among the factors influencing reading comprehension, the appropriate use of reading strategies is particularly relevant for individuals of all ages.

In this context, the present work contributes to reducing deficiencies and gaps at all educational levels, as it seeks to address the inequalities and shortcomings affecting reading comprehension in our country, particularly concerning teacher training. Achieving satisfactory levels of reading comprehension involves ensuring that all students, regardless of their personal or social circumstances, have access to quality education that enables them to develop their potential and positively contribute to society. In light of this reality, the following question arises: To what extent does the training program based on ELC reading strategies improve teachers' reading comprehension?

The justification for this research lies in the necessity for educators in the Communication field to strengthen their knowledge of reading comprehension, which directly contributes to their professional development within the UGEL framework. From a practical perspective, the proposed set of strategies is aimed at improving reading comprehension at literal, inferential, and critical levels. Socially, the relevance of the study manifests in

the enhancement of learning for both teachers and students, by promoting the understanding of various types of texts across all three reading levels, thereby benefiting the overall improvement of the educational system.

From a theoretical standpoint, the research encourages reflection and academic debate regarding reading strategies, allowing for the definition, explanation, and characterization of the involved variables. Therefore, this analysis is grounded in the contributions of distinguished theorists such as Goodman (1986), Vygotsky (1978), Kintsch (1998), and Piaget (1937).

Methodologically, the proposed strategy is distinguished by its innovative, challenging, and sequential nature, with high potential to generate valid and reliable knowledge. Consequently, it represents a significant contribution for future research that aims to replicate the training program based on ELC reading strategies.

The overall objective of this project is to demonstrate that the training program based on ELC reading strategies significantly improves teachers' reading comprehension. Specific objectives include evaluating the program's effectiveness, comparing pre-test and post-test results, and verifying improvements in literal, inferential, and critical reading comprehension levels as a result of applying ELC strategies.

To theoretically support the proposed research, a thorough review of relevant studies in the field was conducted. In this regard, Le et al. (2024) indicated that university students tend to rely mainly on basic cognitive skills, and that various factors hinder the development of effective critical reading. De la Peña & Luque (2021), along with Valero et al. (2024), observed that most university students demonstrate a good level of literal comprehension but exhibit low to intermediate levels in inferential and critical comprehension. Furthermore, Ormeño et al. (2021) identified that a lack of strategies, limited vocabulary, lack of interest, and poor reading habits are the main weaknesses of university students. Recent research by Bangeni (2024), Baki (2024), Guerra et al. (2022), and Mekuria et al. (2024) shows that both students and teachers in training who participated in reading strategy programs experienced significant improvements in their use of such strategies and their critical reading skills, thereby contributing to the development of essential life skills.

On the other hand, Castillo et al. (2023) concluded that there is a weak correlation between reading comprehension and processes such as assumption, deduction, and inference, although a slight improvement is observed in the relationship between reading comprehension and logical thinking. The research conducted by Campos et al. (2021) demonstrated that the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) can enhance reading comprehension up to the inferential level, though not necessarily at the critical level. In contrast, Mory et al. (2020) noted that interruptions caused by online education did not always prove beneficial for reading comprehension in higher education.

Regarding the state of the art supporting the variables “ELC reading strategies” and “reading comprehension,” it is important to highlight that it is grounded in various essential theories. ELC reading strategies are primarily supported by the psycholinguistic theory of Kenneth Goodman (1986), which emphasizes the dynamic interaction between the reader's prior knowledge and the information contained in the text. It is also based on the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky (1978), which stresses the influence of the social and cultural environment on the development of reading skills. Additionally, reading comprehension is founded on the Construction-Integration theory of Walter Kintsch (1998), which posits that the comprehension process involves constructing mental representations of the text, which are integrated with the reader's prior knowledge. Furthermore, this perspective is complemented by the cognitive development theory of Piaget (1937), which provides insights into how cognitive capabilities necessary for comprehension are developed. Together, this multidimensional approach offers a solid and coherent theoretical framework for understanding the complex dynamics of reading and its impact on comprehension.

According to Solé (1998), reading strategies constitute a set of planned and conscious actions that readers employ to understand and learn from texts. These strategies transcend mere word decoding, involving an active and complex process of interaction with the text. Moreover, their application varies according to the type of text, the purpose of reading, and the individual characteristics of the reader. Ferreiro (2002) points out that developing reading comprehension requires a complex process that goes beyond the application of simple strategies, involving consideration of the multiple dimensions present in reading tasks. In this vein, Samayoa et al. (2023) argue that when adults face new tasks, they often act intuitively, which can hinder the systematization of their steps. Frequently, educators assume that their students already possess the necessary techniques and knowledge to acquire new learning, which can increase the effort required to achieve it.

In terms of defining reading comprehension, Solé (1998) conceives it as a constructive cognitive process through which the reader not only assimilates the content of the text but also its logical structure. This process involves interpreting written language and attributing meanings based on the reader's prior knowledge.

Considering the above, to measure the dependent variable “reading comprehension,” the dimensions proposed by Alliende & Condemarín (2002) were adopted, distinguishing three levels: literal, inferential, and

critical. According to Setia & Zuhro (2023), the literal level corresponds to the understanding of the explicit information in the text, being the most basic. The inferential level, defined by Solé (1996), requires the reader to reconstruct the meaning of the text by connecting their experiences and prior knowledge, formulating hypotheses and inferences. Finally, the critical level, described by Cárdenas et al. (2021), refers to the reader's ability to make value judgments about the text, integrating the previous levels and adding their personal opinion.

Methodology

Given that the research is applied in nature, a quantitative approach predominates. According to Mazur (2021), this approach is characterized by guiding researchers towards scientific knowledge through precise measurements, necessitating rigorous statistical support. Regarding the research design, a pre-experimental design was chosen. Hernández & Mendoza (2018) explain that this type of design encompasses studies in which one variable is manipulated (experiment) to observe its effect on another variable (measurement), paying special attention to intervening variables (control). Essentially, these are investigations aimed at improving or modifying some aspect of reality.

Concerning the population, Salazar & Del Castillo (2018) define it as the total set of elements sharing perceptible and delineated characteristics. For this study, the entire population of Communication area teachers from the 17 educational institutions in the jurisdiction was considered, totaling 44 teachers, according to data provided by the corresponding UGEL. Regarding the sample, Benites & Villanueva (2015) describe it as a representative subset of the population under study. In this research, the sample consisted of 22 teachers, selected through non-probabilistic convenience sampling, according to the study's needs.

In terms of technique, a convenience survey was employed. Arias (2020) considers it suitable and precise when seeking to gather perceptions or positions on specific topics. As an instrument, a test with evaluative scales was designed for each measurement (pre-test and post-test): literal comprehension with 3 items, inferential comprehension with 5 items, and critical comprehension with 7 items. In each case, three alternatives were offered, of which only one was correct.

Finally, regarding the data analysis method, López et al. (2019) state that once data collection is complete, the data should be stored digitally for subsequent analysis according to the established objectives. For this purpose, the researcher utilized SPSS version 27 software. With this tool, descriptive analyses were conducted to obtain percentage illustrations, as well as inferential analyses to carry out the corresponding hypothesis tests.

Results and discussion

Table 1

Hypothesis test for the mean difference in scores between Post-Test and Pre-Test in teachers' reading comprehension

Comparison	Hypothesis	Sign. Level	Student's t Test	DF	Sig. Exp.	Decision p > 0,05
Post-Test vs. Pre-Test	$H_0 : \mu_d = 0$ $H_1 : \mu_d > 0$	$\alpha = 0,05$	t = 9,429	21	p = 0,000	Reject H_0

Table 1 presents the hypothesis test corresponding to the mean difference in scores obtained in the post-test and pre-test by the teachers in Casma. The results show an experimental significance level (p = 0.000), which is below the established significance level (α = 0.05), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0) and the acceptance of the research hypothesis (Hi). Therefore, it can be concluded that the ELC reading strategies program significantly improves teachers' reading comprehension.

Table 2

Level of reading comprehension of teachers in Casma

	Score Interval	PRE-TEST		POST-TEST	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Good Level	[22 – 30]	6	27.3	15	68.2
Regular Level	[11 – 21]	13	59.1	7	31.8
Poor Level	[00 – 10]	3	13.6	0	0.0
Total		**22**	**100.0**	**22**	**100.0**

Table 2 shows the level of reading comprehension characterizing the teachers in Casma before and after the application of the ELC reading strategies training program. The results indicate that the experimental group completely eliminated the poor level, reducing it from 13.6% in the pre-test to 0% in the post-test. A significant decrease in the regular level was also observed, dropping from 59.1% in the pre-test to 31.8% in the post-test. Lastly, the good level experienced a considerable increase, rising from 27.3% in the pre-test to 68.2% in the post-test.

Table 3

ELC reading strategies at the literal level for teachers

	Score Interval	PRE-TEST		POST-TEST	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Good Level	[05 – 06]	4	18.2	10	45.5
Regular Level	[03 – 04]	5	22.7	10	45.5
Poor Level	[00 – 02]	13	59.1	2	9.0
Total		**22**	**100.0**	**22**	**100.0**

Table 3 illustrates the impact of using ELC reading strategies on improving the literal comprehension level of the teachers, showing the following results: the poor level significantly decreased from 59.1% to 9%. Additionally, the regular level increased from 22.7% to 45.5%, and the good level rose from 18.2% to 45.5% in the post-test. Thus, it can be concluded that before the program's implementation, most teachers were at the poor and regular levels (54.5%). However, after the program's implementation, a notable advancement was observed, with 91% of teachers achieving regular and good levels.

Table 4

ELC reading strategies at the inferential level for teachers

	Score Interval	PRE-TEST		POST-TEST	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Good Level	[08 – 10]	12	54.5	15	68.2
Regular Level	[04 – 07]	6	27.3	07	31.8
Poor Level	[00 – 03]	4	18.2	0	0.0
Total		**22**	**100.0**	**22**	**100.0**

Table 4 presents the impact of ELC reading strategies on improving the inferential comprehension level of the teachers, yielding the following results: the poor level was completely eliminated, dropping from 18.2% to 0%. The regular level experienced a slight increase, rising from 27.3% to 31.8%, while the good level increased from 54.5% to 68.2% in the post-test. Consequently, it can be concluded that before the program's implementation, 45.5% of teachers were at the poor and regular levels; however, after the program was implemented, a significant advancement was noted, with 100% of teachers reaching regular and good levels.

Table 5

ELC reading strategies at the critical level for teachers

	Score Interval	PRE-TEST		POST-TEST	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Good Level	[08 – 10]	2	9.1	5	22.7
Regular Level	[04 – 07]	20	90.90	17	77.3
Poor Level	[00 – 03]	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total		**22**	**100.0**	**22**	**100.0**

Table 5 illustrates the impact of ELC reading strategies on the improvement of the critical comprehension level of the teachers. The results show a total elimination of the poor level, which decreased from 9.1% in the pre-test to 0% in the post-test. Additionally, the regular level decreased from 90.9% to 77.3%, while the good level increased from 0% to 22.7%. Consequently, it can be concluded that after the program's implementation, teachers made significant progress, with 100% located between the regular and good levels.

This evaluation leads to an important reflection: demonstrating that the training program with ELC reading strategies significantly improves teachers' reading comprehension. The post-test results compared to the pre-test

yielded a t = 9.429, with a significance level of 5%, which supports the program's effectiveness. The training program, focused on critical reading strategies, serves as a pedagogical tool designed to strengthen advanced reading competencies among educators. As mediators of learning, teachers play a crucial role in shaping critical readers in their classrooms.

Furthermore, the program offers strategies that transcend mere text decoding, including techniques for analysis, inference, and synthesis that enable teachers to comprehend materials more deeply and apply this knowledge in planning and developing teaching activities. These skills are essential for interpreting complex texts across diverse educational contexts, leading to higher quality teaching.

These findings align with reports from Bangeni (2024), Baki (2024), Guerra et al. (2022), and Mekuria et al. (2024), who identified that university students and in-training teachers participating in reading strategy programs experienced significant improvements in both the use of these strategies and their critical reading abilities. Additionally, they noted that this instruction contributes notably to the development of essential life skills.

The training program with ELC reading strategies also promotes metacognition, enabling educators to reflect on their reading processes. By integrating activities such as self-assessment and reflective discussion, teachers can identify their strengths and areas for improvement, resulting in continuous and meaningful learning. This empowers them to become models of critical readers for their students.

Another significant aspect is the immediate applicability of the program. By focusing on practical cases and materials relevant to teaching, participants can directly transfer the learned strategies to their work environment, enhancing not only their reading comprehension but also that of their students. Recent studies have shown that improvements in teachers' reading comprehension are directly related to increased academic performance among students. Therefore, investing in teacher training through programs like the ELC reading strategies program has a multiplier effect on educational quality.

Finally, this approach is grounded in the theoretical support of Jean Piaget, a prominent Swiss psychologist of the 20th century who revolutionized psychology with his theory of cognitive development in children. According to Piaget (1952), reading comprehension develops in parallel with children’s cognitive skills, progressing through four stages: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operations, and formal operations. At each stage, children acquire new abilities, such as symbolic thinking, logical reasoning, and problem-solving skills, which are fundamental for deciphering texts, interpreting their meanings, and relating them to prior knowledge. As Piaget noted, “Cognitive development is a continuous and dynamic process based on the interaction between the child and their environment.”

Conclusions

The implementation of the program demonstrated a highly significant improvement in the reading comprehension of participating teachers, evidenced by the post-test results compared to the pre-test, with a t value of 9.429 and a significance level of 5%. This corroborates the program's effectiveness in enhancing reading comprehension. Moreover, the development of reading strategies enhances teachers' ability to guide students toward a deeper understanding of texts. Incorporating innovative and updated techniques, such as active reading, the use of graphic organizers, and inference strategies, ensures that teaching methods align with current learning needs.

Additionally, it was verified that the implementation of the ELC reading strategies training program significantly improved the literal level of reading comprehension, with a t value of 5.555 and a significance level of 5%. Strengthening mastery of these strategies allows teachers to develop metacognitive skills, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating their own comprehension and that of their students, facilitating the modeling of these competencies for students to incorporate into their reading processes.

Furthermore, a significant improvement was observed in the inferential level of reading comprehension, with a t value of 3.309 and a significance level of 5%. This underscores the importance of teachers evaluating each student through information processing and the application of ELC reading strategies, enabling them to adapt their teaching to various learning styles. This contributes to educational inclusion and ensures that all students enhance their reading comprehension.

Finally, the application of the program also significantly improved the critical level of reading comprehension, with a t value of 8.386 and a significance level of 5%. In this case, it is emphasized that the use of ELC reading strategies fosters critical thinking skills in students, understanding that good reading comprehension involves not only decoding but also analyzing, comparing, and reflecting on the texts read.

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