

# Unlocking reading comprehension: psychological and pedagogical innovations for academic success in university education

## Abstract

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill in the educational process, as it goes beyond the simple decoding of words; it involves the interpretation and critical analysis of texts. This work examines the importance of reading comprehension from the perspective of educational psychology, highlighting approaches and strategies that can be implemented by teachers and undergraduate students. A recent diagnosis has revealed deficiencies in the comprehension of different types of texts in university education, using theoretical, empirical, and statistical methods that support these shortcomings. To address these needs, a teaching material will be developed that will serve as a working tool, characterized by its objectivity and balance between theory and practice. This resource will promote collaborative work and critical reflection among students. The novelty of this proposal lies in the integration of content from various subjects within the Spanish Literature program, which will allow for the development of new strategies to approach text comprehension. Preliminary results suggest that this initiative has significantly improved students' academic performance, contributing to the advancement of pedagogical sciences through a scientific-pedagogical approach. Thus, the aim is not only to enhance reading skills but also to prepare future professionals to face academic and labor challenges with a solid capacity for critical understanding.

**Keywords:** text comprehension, Reading, writing, system of activities

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Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill in the educational process, because it goes beyond simple word decoding; involves interpretation and critical analysis of texts. This work examines the importance of reading comprehension from the perspective of educational psychology, highlighting approaches and strategies that can be implemented by teachers and graduate students. A recent diagnosis evidenced deficiencies in the understanding of different types of texts in university training, using theoretical, empirical and statistical methods that support these deficiencies.

To meet these needs, a teaching material will be developed that will function as a work tool, characterized by its objectivity and its balance between theory and practice. This resource will promote collaborative work and critical reflection among students. The novelty of this proposal lies in the integration of content from various disciplines within the Spanish Literature course, which will allow the development of new strategies to address textual comprehension.

The preliminary results suggest that this initiative significantly improved the academic performance of students, contributing to the advancement of pedagogical sciences through a scientific-pedagogical approach. Thus, it seeks not only to enhance reading skills, but also to prepare future professionals to face academic and labor challenges with a solid capacity for critical understanding.

## Introduction

Reading comprehension is an essential skill that goes beyond the academic field; it becomes a fundamental pillar for the comprehensive development of students. In the Cuban educational context, where the challenges in learning are evident, it is crucial that both teachers and undergraduate students recognize the importance of this skill.

From the perspective of educational psychology, reading comprehension is not limited to the simple decoding of words. It

involves complex cognitive processes that include the interpretation, analysis and synthesis of information. These processes are vital for students to be able to relate what they read to their own experiences and prior knowledge, which facilitates deeper and more meaningful learning.

Furthermore, this approach not only seeks to improve reading skills, but also to prepare teachers and undergraduate students to face the challenges of the contemporary world. It is essential to equip them with the necessary tools for meaningful and lasting learning, which will allow them to function successfully in different contexts.

In this regard, several effective strategies are proposed to promote reading comprehension in the classroom. One recommended technique is the formulation of guided questions before, during, and after reading. This practice helps students focus on key aspects of the text, promoting more critical and reflective reading.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the incorporation of technological resources can make the reading process more dynamic and engaging for students, as suggested by Hernández<sup>2</sup> Tools such as digital platforms, interactive applications, and multimedia materials can capture students' interest and facilitate their active participation.

Implementing these strategies not only ensures more efficient educational work, but also promotes greater development in the understanding of the texts studied. This contributes to strengthening the sense of national and cultural identity of our students, while stimulating the creativity of the teacher by transforming the personality and critical thinking of the students.

In conclusion, it is essential that both teachers and students recognize the relevance of reading comprehension as a key skill for their comprehensive education. By adopting innovative and student-centered pedagogical approaches, we can move towards a more

effective and meaningful education that prepares future professionals for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The teaching-learning processes in all subjects depend on language, both oral and written, as a fundamental tool for transmitting information, expressing opinions, reflecting and constructing knowledge. This reality invites us to rethink, from a comprehensive approach, the improvement of language teaching, especially with regard to reading, comprehension, analysis and construction of texts.

When exploring text comprehension in the undergraduate training process of students in the Bachelor's Degree in Spanish and Literature, several shortcomings were identified through the application of different methods. Among these deficiencies are:

- I. Underutilization of Content: The potential of some subject content is not always exploited to promote adequate textual understanding. This limits the students' comprehensive development.
- II. Disconnection from Society: Students often do not recognize the importance of integrating into society in all its aspects, which is crucial for their training as learners and future professionals.
- III. Lack of Motivation to Read: Many students show little motivation to read, which can be attributed to factors such as limited access to diverse and attractive materials that capture their interest.

These problems can directly affect students' academic performance and motivation. Faced with this situation, many educators are exploring new strategies to make reading more relevant and attractive for the new generations.

Furthermore, it is vital to consider the crucial role that families play in this process. Research conducted by González<sup>3</sup> highlights how the family environment influences attitudes towards reading. Shared reading practices within the home can foster a richer and more stimulating literary culture.

The arguments presented allow us to clearly define the objective of this research: the development of a teaching strategy focused on the understanding of texts according to their typology in the undergraduate training process.

To achieve this goal, it is essential that the training of new teachers includes a combination of actions that promote new attitudes and approaches. This should reflect the comprehensiveness they acquire throughout their years of professional development and upgrading. By doing so, not only will their teaching practice be enriched, but it will also contribute to the development of students who are more critical and committed to their learning and their social environment.

Reading comprehension is an essential skill in the educational field, as it is not limited to the ability to decode words, but also encompasses the capacity to interpret and analyze information critically. This article examines reading comprehension from the perspective of educational psychology, highlighting its importance for both teachers and students in their undergraduate education.

According to Martínez<sup>4</sup> reading comprehension is a cognitive process that is enriched by the activation of prior knowledge. This means that when students can connect what they already know with new information, their ability to understand and assimilate texts is significantly improved. This connection not only facilitates comprehension, but also allows students to integrate and apply new knowledge in diverse contexts.

On the other hand, Rodríguez<sup>5</sup> underlines the relevance of metacognitive strategies in this process. These strategies allow students to reflect on their own learning, monitor their progress, and adjust their study methods as needed. By fostering a metacognitive mindset, teachers can help students develop critical analysis skills that are vital not only in the academic field, but also in their daily lives.

In a world where information is abundant and varied, reading comprehension has become a central issue in contemporary education. González<sup>1</sup> points out that the ability to understand what is read is fundamental for the academic and personal development of the student. In Cuba, where education has historically been valued, it is crucial for teachers to understand the psychological dimensions that influence this process. This implies recognizing that each student has a unique context that affects their way of learning and understanding.

Most teaching-learning activities in any subject are based on reading and writing tasks. These activities include comprehension, reflection, analysis and construction of texts, and are fundamental in any educational process. They are designed and organized taking into account their usefulness and relevance within the training process. In addition, these activities are interrelated, which favors a more effective acquisition of knowledge.

Therefore, it is imperative that educators adopt pedagogical approaches that integrate effective reading practices. This will not only enrich students' educational experience, but will also provide them with valuable tools to meet the academic and personal challenges of the future. By prioritizing reading comprehension in the classroom, teachers will be developing not only competent students, but also critical and reflective citizens capable of navigating a complex world.

The teaching of the Mother Tongue, through the subject of Spanish and Literature, has as its fundamental aspiration to develop in students the ability to communicate effectively, as well as to promote the enjoyment, understanding and analysis of literary works. In this context, reading is presented as the ideal component to achieve these objectives. Therefore, it is imperative to strengthen this habit in students, since many suffer from it, which hinders their ability to understand. It is important to highlight that learning through reading must begin from the first years of life, as emphasized by authors such as Hernández<sup>2</sup> who underline that early reading training is crucial for the integral development of the individual.

Over the years, various pedagogical approaches have influenced the evolution of reading comprehension in Cuba. The constructivist model, promoted by authors such as José Antonio Fernández-Bravo (2010), has been fundamental to understanding that learning is an active process where students build their own knowledge based on previous experiences. This approach has led to the implementation of teaching strategies that encourage active student participation and interaction with texts, thus promoting a deeper and more meaningful understanding.

It is also important to highlight the significant role that the Cuban education system has played in teacher training. According to Pacheco<sup>6</sup> teacher training institutions have integrated specific methods into their curricula to develop critical reading skills, adapting international approaches to the particularities of the Cuban context. This adaptation is essential to ensure that future educators are equipped with the necessary tools to cultivate a love of reading in their students.

However, recent studies, such as the one carried out by Martínez<sup>7</sup> show that, despite the progress made, challenges related to motivation and interest in reading among young Cubans persist. The need to

create more attractive and meaningful environments for reading is presented as a crucial challenge for Cuban educators. In this sense, it is essential to promote spaces where reading is not only an academic activity, but also a source of pleasure and discovery.

Talking about the importance of reading and writing in all curricular areas and school subjects does not imply that every teacher or professor should become a linguistics specialist, but rather it is about raising awareness about the need to train people who express themselves appropriately, both orally and in writing.

In the course of this work, we will address the relevance of José Martí's thought: "To know how to read is to know how to walk; to know how to write is to know how to ascend." This thought highlights that reading is not only a mechanical act, but implies a deep understanding of the text. As we elevate the act of reading, we will form young people who meet the demands of our socialist society: young people who are happy but profound, capable of opening up to the world and becoming examples to follow.

The reasons given allow us to delve deeper into the essential references of this research on the understanding of texts according to their typology, thus contributing to an educator being more complete and capable of preparing new generations to face the challenges of the future. The comprehensive training of the student must include not only technical skills, but also critical and reflective development that allows them to interact with the world in an effective and conscious way.

In summary, the background of reading comprehension in Cuba shows a historical commitment to literacy and the integral development of the individual. Although significant progress has been made in this area, it is essential to continue to face current challenges to ensure that all Cubans have access to a reading education that is both meaningful and critical. This implies not only promoting the habit of reading from an early age, but also creating educational environments that stimulate interest and motivation to read, thus preparing new generations to face the challenges of the future with solid communication skills and well-developed critical thinking.

## Reading comprehension: perspectives from educational psychology

In the vast field of education, reading comprehension stands as a fundamental pillar for the academic and cognitive development of students. From the perspective of educational psychology, it is essential to understand how individuals process, retain, and use the information they read. This understanding is crucial to design teaching strategies that align with the specific needs and abilities of each student.

Exploring the various psychoeducational theories and approaches that support the teaching and improvement of reading comprehension in the undergraduate setting offers teachers and students an integrative and applied vision. Reading comprehension is not limited to the mere decoding of written symbols; it is a dynamic process that involves a complex interaction between the text and the reader's prior knowledge. This process also encompasses the ability to make inferences and the ability to apply various cognitive strategies.

From the perspective of educational psychology, a valuable framework is offered for understanding how students process written information. According to Jean Piaget (1970), learning is an active process in which students construct their knowledge through experiences. In this sense, reading comprehension should not be considered solely as a technical skill, but as a complex cognitive

process that requires the activation of prior knowledge and the integration of new information.

UNESCO<sup>8</sup> defines reading comprehension as a process that goes beyond the simple decoding of words; it involves constructing meaning from the text. This definition highlights the importance of developing critical skills that allow students to interpret and make sense of what they read.

In the Cuban educational context, where the integral formation of the student is emphasized, the development of this skill is fundamental for learning in various disciplines. Reading comprehension is directly correlated with academic performance; students who are able to better understand what they read tend to obtain better results in their evaluations (López, 2018). Therefore, fostering a solid reading comprehension not only benefits the student in their academic career, but also contributes to their personal and social development.

Furthermore, it is important to consider that exposure to different literary genres and types of texts broadens reading skills. Teachers must carefully select materials that are relevant to the disciplines they teach, but it is also essential to include contemporary literature, critical essays, and multimedia texts. This diversity not only enriches the reading experience, but also stimulates critical thinking and creativity in students.

In conclusion, approaching reading comprehension from an educational psychology perspective allows us not only to identify the most effective strategies for teaching it, but also to understand its crucial role in the student's comprehensive development. By integrating psychoeducational theories with effective pedagogical practices, we can significantly enhance students' ability to interact with texts in a critical and meaningful way, thus preparing them to face the academic and professional challenges of the future.

## Background of reading comprehension in Cuba

Reading comprehension in Cuba has been a topic of interest and study for several decades, framed within an educational context that has sought to transform and improve reading and comprehension skills in its students. The history of Cuban education shows a constant commitment to literacy and the development of reading skills. The Cuban State has prioritized education and literacy as fundamental pillars for the social and cultural development of the country.

One of the most important milestones in this area was the National Literacy Campaign of 1961, which not only sought to eradicate illiteracy, but also to foster a culture of critical reading. According to Cuban educator Luis Felipe Rodríguez (2007), this campaign laid the groundwork for a more comprehensive approach to teaching reading, which considered not only the decoding of the text, but also its understanding and analysis.

Establishing a foundation on which more complex skills such as reading comprehension could be built. Over time, educational strategies began to incorporate more dynamic approaches.

Constructivist theory, widely promoted by authors such as Vygotsky<sup>9</sup> has had a notable influence on the way reading is taught in Cuba. This approach maintains that learning is an active process where the student builds his or her knowledge from previous experiences and social contexts.

In this sense, Fernández-Bravo<sup>10</sup> argues that pedagogical practices should focus on the student's interaction with the texts, promoting a critical analysis that goes beyond simple decoding.

Beginning in the 1990s, Cuba faced significant economic challenges that impacted its educational system. However, the reforms implemented continued to prioritize the teaching of reading and writing. According to Pacheco<sup>6</sup> educational institutions began to develop specific programs to strengthen reading skills, integrating cultural and contextual elements that resonated with students.

This included the use of Cuban literature and texts related to national identity. In recent years, studies by researchers such as Martínez<sup>7</sup> have shown that although significant progress has been made in terms of literacy, important challenges remain.

The teaching of literature encourages the conjugation of all the components of the subject and especially the fields in which language is materialized: oral expression, writing and reading. Among the most outstanding teachers who introduced innovations in teaching methods, we have Félix Varela y Morales (1787-1853) - "the first who taught us to think."

He adopted a modern rationalist orientation and suppressed the use of Latin in teaching. His method consisted in making his students think and not accept any truth without first having reasoned, observed and reflected. Many of his ideas about education are still fully valid.

Regarding José de la Luz y Caballero (1800-1862), the successor of Varela's ideas, José Martí would say that "he knew everything that was known in his time, but not to teach that he knew it but to transmit it." Varela and Luz demonstrated that, in the midst of an era permeated by profound mnemonic and scholastic precepts, a galaxy of personalities had successively emerged in Cuba who, above all, made the scientific knowledge of their thought prevail, always opposed to dogmatic education.

These figures marked the origin of Cuban pedagogy, they knew how to value the importance of reading, highlighting the need to master the mother tongue perfectly.

In short, the history of reading comprehension in Cuba reflects a historical commitment to literacy and the integral development of the individual. Despite the progress made, it is essential to continue addressing current challenges to ensure that all Cubans have access to meaningful and critical reading education.

## Reading comprehension: perspectives from educational psychology

In the vast field of education, reading comprehension emerges as a fundamental pillar for the academic and cognitive development of students. From the perspective of educational psychology, understanding how individuals process, retain, and use the information they read is crucial to designing teaching strategies that align with the needs and capabilities of each student.

Explore the various psychoeducational theories and approaches that support the teaching and improvement of reading comprehension in the undergraduate field, offering teachers and students an integrative and applied vision.

Reading comprehension does not only involve decoding written symbols to transform them into words; it is a dynamic process that involves the interaction between the text and the reader's prior knowledge, his or her ability to make inferences, and his or her ability to use various cognitive strategies.

Educational psychology offers a valuable framework for understanding how students process written information. According to Piaget (1970), learning is an active process where students

construct their knowledge through experiences. In this sense, reading comprehension is not just a technical skill, but a complex cognitive process that involves the activation of prior knowledge and the integration of new information.

Reading comprehension is a cognitive process that enables individuals to interpret and make sense of written information. According to UNESCO's definition,<sup>8</sup> reading comprehension involves not only decoding words, but also constructing meaning from the text.

In the Cuban educational context, where the comprehensive education of the student is emphasized, developing this skill is fundamental for learning in various disciplines. Reading comprehension is directly correlated with academic performance; students who better understand what they read tend to have better results in their evaluations (López, 2018).

Different literary genres and types of texts broaden reading skills. Teachers should carefully select materials that are relevant to the disciplines they teach but also include contemporary literature, critical essays, and multimedia texts.

## Strategies to improve reading comprehension

Recently, authors such as Martínez<sup>4</sup> have emphasized the importance of metacognitive strategies in reading comprehension. These strategies allow students to monitor and regulate their own learning process, resulting in greater effectiveness when reading.

From an educational psychology perspective, various strategies can be implemented to address these problems and improve reading comprehension:

- I. Formulating Guided Questions: This technique allows students to reflect on the text and connect ideas.
- II. Use of Technological Resources: The integration of digital tools in the classroom can facilitate access to diverse texts and encourage interaction.
- III. Collaborative Learning Environment: Encouraging group work can help students discuss and analyze texts together, which enriches their understanding.
- IV. Activating Prior Knowledge: Before approaching a text, it is critical for students to connect what they already know to the new content. This can be accomplished through group discussions or pre-reading activities.
- V. Promoting Critical Reading: Teachers should teach students to analyze and evaluate the information presented in texts, promoting a critical stance towards what they read.

Not only does this make the reading experience more engaging, but it also helps students develop skills to understand different styles and contexts.<sup>3</sup> Continuing teacher training is equally essential. Constant training on new pedagogical methodologies and approaches to teaching reading comprehension allows teachers to update themselves and improve their educational practices According to Martínez.<sup>7</sup>

Universities should offer professional development programs that specifically address needs related to reading instruction. Finally, assessment of the reading process should be comprehensive and formative. Instead of focusing solely on traditional tests, instructors can use alternative assessments such as portfolios or oral presentations that allow students to demonstrate their understanding and critical analysis (Rodríguez, 2007).

This diversity in assessments helps to better capture students' actual reading skills; the role of the university professor in Cuba is fundamental to foster reading comprehension among undergraduate students. Through active teaching strategies, positive models, textual diversity, and ongoing training, teachers can help their students develop solid reading skills that will be essential for their academic and professional future.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that considers both direct classroom interventions and adaptive strategies that students can apply autonomously. Thus, this work seeks not only to define and describe the problems associated with reading comprehension, but also to propose practical and effective solutions based on current psychoeducational evidence.

In doing so, it is hoped that this strategy will serve as a valuable tool to improve teaching and learning practices in the university context, fostering a more inclusive and effective academic environment in the training of future professionals.

Another essential characteristic of this approach is that it does not pay attention to how the learning process takes place in the students; only the result is taken into account and, consequently, control is directed at the latter, through essentially reproductive exercises with the absence of emphasis on analysis and reasoning.

This has led, in school practice, to passive, limited learning, with little significance for the student, resulting in limitations in the assimilation of knowledge and in the development of students' skills and abilities.

### **Below is a summary of the ideas offered by authors on the topic**

In the psychological field, Liliana Morenza Padilla stands out, who analyzes the structure of movement in the human brain, according to cognitive psychology as a psychological paradigm, she states that: "the modes of organization of reading knowledge refer to the articulation and compaction of elementary knowledge into more complex symbolic entities."

This author criticizes the separation established between the encoding process during reading and the comprehension processes. One of her most significant considerations is to expose that the difficulties that children and young people present are based on the lack of understanding of the texts read, which is evident from the beginning in Cuba.

The importance of the socio-cultural context as an edge that regulates individual development and the need for the reader to assume an attitude of respect for the written text is an idea of inestimable value. This is achieved if, when understanding the text, the reader successfully goes through the three levels of comprehension.

During this period, Angelina Romeu Escobar's contributions stand out in terms of her teaching, which refers to taking into account the three levels for a favorable understanding of the text.

Translation level. The receiver captures the meaning and translates it into his code, that is, he expresses in his words what the text means both explicitly and implicitly; according to the author, three types of meanings correspond to this level.

- I. Explicit meaning: it is literal, what is expressed by the author, what is seen directly in the text.
- II. Implicit meaning: the reader infers it, it is not observed directly, so it is necessary for the reader to decode the text.

III. Complementary meaning: this is where the literary and historical knowledge that appears in the text and the experiences that the author has, his entire universe of knowledge that he contributes and compares with the content that he is analyzing, are complemented.

Level of interpretation: The receiver makes his or her judgments and assessments about what the text says, assuming positions.

Level of extrapolation: The receiver takes advantage of the content, uses it, applies it in other contexts, reacts to what he reads, modifies his behavior and assumes an independent and creative attitude.

Marina Parra suggests that there are three levels of text comprehension, but uses the following terminology.

- I. Semantic level: (Meaning)
- II. Morphosyntactic level: (Directed to oral expression)
- III. Pragmatic level: (Communicative function taking into account the intention and the situation in which the communication occurs).

### **Élida grass defines these three levels as**

Literal level. The reader examines the writer's words and determines what is being expressed directly. The literal level is the one that refers explicitly, openly, to the content of the text.

Interpretive level. The reader establishes the relationships between the ideas expressed by the author to derive those that are implicit in the text, the ideas that are not expressed but are silent, which are found between the lines in the reading.

Application level. The reader relates the ideas expressed by the author with his or her own personal experiences and establishes generalizations regarding social reality, including all the knowledge that, in his or her opinion, enriches the meaning of the text.

Such knowledge can be acquired through personal experience, through reading, or through other people's stories. The extent of this knowledge depends on the reader's cultural development, and the reading will undoubtedly be much richer in terms of its degree of use.

The above definitions attempt to specify what the understanding of a text is, and a common feature in them is the presence of the processes of analysis and synthesis, comparison, identification, induction, deduction and others that, integrated into the linguistic processes, guarantee lasting understanding and incorporate them as modes of action.

The author agrees with the different criteria and assumes his own: understanding is the result of a process that involves the ability to relate the previous knowledge and skills provided by the subject and the information transmitted depending on the characteristics of the text and the meaning it acquires for the reader.

In the process of understanding a text, possible interpretations are anticipated that are the result of knowledge and cognitive operations of various kinds: those that the reader carries with him and that are the result of his life experience in life and the knowledge that the text contains. It is establishing relationships between the knowledge that the text hides and the previous knowledge that the reader has accumulated; it is establishing that marriage between his culture, his experience, his universe, and that of the specific text with which it merges.

In Cuba there are other authors of relevant prestige in the study of the subject of teaching reading such as María Isabel González Alvear and Dr. Ofelia Gasso, who offers a work algorithm for the understanding of texts characterized by its flexibility in correspondence with the content being studied.

Comprehension problems in undergraduate students have not been sufficiently investigated, therefore, it is a requirement to design methodological alternatives that promote the comprehensive potential of the text in students at this level.

When the process of textual comprehension has a communicative orientation, enhancing the construction of knowledge, the cognitive, affective, motivational, axiological and creative springs of the student are activated, then he interconnects them with general knowledge, vocabulary, the structure of the text, social and human relations.

To the extent that the student establishes a link with other texts, the greater and better will be its imprint on memory and the deepening of its meaning, so that they can establish convergences or divergences between characters, conflicts, solutions, among others.

In practice, it is evident that students handle very simple decoding skills and lack the complex pathways as a result of the type of traditional training they have received in previous educational stages.

Taking into account the above, we refer to the theoretical contributions that have supported the process of text comprehension:

**Contribution of cognitive theories:** Identify the textual organization, which implies: observing the theme, identifying the plot, re-recognizing the macro structure of said organization according to specific schemes, recognition of “superstructural strategies” the studies carried out on discursive markers highlight that they “are clues for the reader to better interpret the text.

**Contributions of textual linguistics and textual typologies:** The particularities of the text modality are known and this will imply that the speaker: What position does he/she assume to say what he/she says, in what way does he/she approach or distance himself/herself from what he/she says, how does he/she position himself/herself in relation to time, space, and social relations?

**Contributions of pragmatics. Speech act theory. Discourse analysis:** Construct a meaning of the text, which involves interpreting the text based on the interaction between the text and the reader, that is, based on the projection of knowledge.

**Contributions of Reception Theory, Discourse Analysis and Relevance Theory:** According to this last theory (that of relevance), it must be taken into account that in the process of interpreting statements, those that are more “relevant” are favored, in the sense that they trigger an inferential process that with a minimum of effort achieves broader contextual effects.

The process of comprehension has been one of the pressing problems of the Ministry of Higher Education (MES). The proposals to address the problem have had followers in the teaching of Foreign Languages (Hernández, E, 1999) and in the teaching of Spanish as a mother tongue (Romeu, A, 1994, 2003, 2004, Havana) (Cisneros, S, 1996; Bravo, A, 2003, Santiago de Cuba).

Understanding a text cannot be analyzed as a simple sum of ideas, but is achieved when the reader manages to integrate them in a global way, in order to reach the essence of the meaning and its expression in the form of a synthesis, which is manifested in skills such as summarizing a text, extracting the central idea, proposing a title. We must therefore focus on the fundamental principles that support the

teaching-learning process of reading and understanding texts. The principles are the following:

**Continuous:** The teaching and learning of reading is a continuous and permanent process, it begins at a very early age, it is evolutionary and its progression depends on its systematic and systemic practice in functional reading situations. It is a process that occurs in all school subjects.

**Theorist:** The school must help students understand what the reading process is, what it consists of and what its characteristics are. Knowing how to read and understand is an essential condition for improving the quality of the process.

**Practical:** It is only possible to advance in the reading and comprehension process in functional reading situations. Those who learn to read must be able to distinguish between reading acts whose purpose is to understand and use a text and training exercises whose purpose is to help master a technique or develop a meta-reading activity.

**Extensive and intensive:** It must cover all types of texts, writings, all strategies and must be trained in all areas and subjects of the curriculum.

Systematizing the trajectory of research on reading and textual comprehension, three periods can be identified that correspond to three different approaches:

**(1960-1974)** The subject of reading appears as a basically pedagogical problem and, therefore, its study was carried out by education specialists who placed emphasis on the understanding of smaller units (vocabulary and sentences).

The activities considered basic in the teaching of reading then are those of reception and decoding, with the conception that the reader was a passive subject who only discovered what the text “hid” and with the consideration of a reading process of a basically linear nature.

**(1975-1989)** There is a strong influence of psycholinguistics (the science that studies the processes of language acquisition and the mechanisms involved in the activities of linguistic comprehension and production).

Research in this period is carried out by psychologists and psycholinguists, who work on the mental operations required by the reading comprehension process and the activities to be applied in the classroom. They place emphasis on these cognitive processes.

**(1990-present)** The research is located within the framework of the new interdisciplinary paradigm and becomes the object of knowledge of researchers belonging to different disciplines: neurologists, linguists, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, among others.

Within this framework, two main lines of research are opened: the first, cognitive and metacognitive, and the second, sociocultural. From here, the reader is conceived as an active subject, who not only decodes the content of the text he reads, but also produces or constructs the meaning of what he reads in a process of productive interaction with the text and its contexts. In this case, the processing is interactive and both the context and the inferences made by the reader guide the most effective interpretation of the text in question.

Consequently, studying the problem of reading involves addressing the functioning of language in the interaction between text and reader; that is, it is essential to analyze and assess what the text and the reader contribute to the complex, rich and dialectical process of understanding what is read.

## The role of the university professor in promoting reading comprehension in undergraduate students

Reading comprehension is an essential skill that directly impacts students' academic and professional success. In the Cuban context, the role of the university professor becomes crucial in developing this skill in undergraduate students, who must face an educational environment that requires not only the acquisition of knowledge, but also the ability to analyze, interpret and use it critically.

Higher education in Cuba faces the challenge of training professionals capable of functioning in an increasingly complex and dynamic world. In this sense, one of the main objectives of the university professor is to guide students in the active construction of their knowledge. According to Vygotsky<sup>9</sup> learning occurs through social interaction and dialogue. Therefore, it is imperative that the professor creates an environment that encourages active participation and the exchange of ideas, where the transmission of information is complemented by the promotion of critical and reflective thinking.

To achieve this goal, it is essential that teachers implement teaching strategies that encourage in-depth analysis of texts. A study by Fernández-Bravo<sup>10</sup> highlights that student-centered teaching allows students to become the protagonists of their own learning. Thus, teachers must adopt active methodologies that involve students in reading and analyzing academic, literary, and scientific texts. This can include debates, group work, collaborative projects, and activities that require searching for and synthesizing information. By fostering a collaborative approach, not only is reading comprehension improved, but interpersonal skills are also developed and teamwork is strengthened.

Furthermore, it is crucial for university professors to act as role models regarding reading practices. According to Pacheco<sup>6</sup> a professor's attitude toward reading significantly influences the reading motivations and habits of his or her students. If a professor demonstrates a passion for reading and shares his or her personal experiences with books, articles, or research, he or she will inspire his or her students to adopt a similar attitude toward reading. Creating reading clubs or discussion groups can be an effective strategy to cultivate this interest and foster an environment where reading is valued and enjoyed.

Another relevant aspect is textual diversity. Exposure to different literary genres and types of texts broadens reading skills. Teachers should carefully select materials that are relevant to the disciplines they teach, but also include contemporary literature, critical essays, and multimedia texts. This variety not only makes the reading experience more engaging, but also helps students develop skills to understand different styles and contexts.<sup>3</sup>

Continuing teacher training is equally essential. Constant training on new pedagogical methodologies and approaches to teaching reading comprehension allows teachers to update and improve their educational practices. According to Martínez<sup>7</sup> universities should offer professional development programs that specifically address needs related to teaching reading. This not only contributes to the professional growth of the teacher, but also translates into a direct improvement in the quality of the teaching provided.

Finally, assessment of the reading process should be comprehensive and formative. Instead of focusing solely on traditional tests, teachers can use alternative assessments such as portfolios, oral presentations, or creative projects that allow students to demonstrate their understanding and critical analysis.<sup>5</sup> This diversity in assessments

helps to better capture students' actual reading skills and promotes a richer and more meaningful learning culture.

In conclusion, the role of the university professor in Cuba is fundamental to foster reading comprehension among undergraduate students. By creating an educational environment that values dialogue, textual diversity, and active learning, teachers not only contribute to the academic development of their students, but also prepare them to face the challenges of the contemporary world with confidence and competence.<sup>11-32</sup>

## Conclusion

The review of various authors has allowed us to broaden and deepen the trends, concepts and theoretical and methodological requirements that currently support the process of text comprehension in pre-university education.

The theoretical and practical study carried out on the educational reality in this subject has led to the development of a system of activities designed to improve reading comprehension. This system is based on cognitive, communicative and sociocultural approaches, with the aim of strengthening work in the subject. In addition, it responds to the needs and demands of today's Cuban society, adapting to the purposes of the teaching for which it is intended. In summary, reading comprehension is a fundamental competence that not only affects the academic performance of undergraduate students, but also influences their comprehensive development as critical and autonomous learners. Throughout this essay, we have analyzed how educational psychology offers a theoretical and practical framework to address the difficulties faced by students in this area. By incorporating technological resources and fostering a collaborative environment, it is possible to develop skills that go beyond the simple decoding of texts, promoting more meaningful and lasting learning.

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## Conflicts of interest

The autor declares there is no conflict of interest.

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