

Reading Habits And Communication Skills In Elementary Education During The Pandemic

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Abstract

In Peru, there is an arduous task to improve the development of communication skills, especially during the pandemic, in order to reverse the CMU figures. Therefore, the objective of this study was to determine the relationship between reading habits and communication skills in students in the sixth grade of primary education (Puno). The methodology was basic, correlational, non-experimental, cross-sectional design. A documentary analysis guide and a reading habits questionnaire were applied to 71 students. The results indicated a regular level in reading habits (91.5%), and a very good level (73.2%) in the development of competencies. There is a positive relationship between reading habits and oral expression competence ($Rho=0.801$), reading comprehension ($Rho= 0.739$) and text production ($Rho = 0.733$). In conclusion, a direct and significant relationship was demonstrated between reading habits and competencies in the area of communication (Spearman's $Rho 0.828$). The promotion of these habits is positively associated with the strengthening of competencies in the area of communication, allowing the production of pertinent texts, with adequate levels of reading comprehension and better levels of oral expression.

Keywords: Reading comprehension, oral expression, reading habits, text production, communicative competencies.

Introduction

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) indicated that by May 2020, more than 1.2 billion students at all levels of education around the world will no longer be enrolled in school (CEPAL, 2020). Total or partial closure of schools in Latin America and the Caribbean left some 114 million students without on-site schooling (UNICEF, 2021).

As a result, countries adopted the closure of schools in order to propose a virtual education system according to their possibilities. Thus, three fields of action emerged: the deployment of distance learning modalities.

Through the use of a variety of formats and platforms (with or without the use of technology); the support and mobilization of educational staff and communities; and

attention to the health and well-being of students (CEPAL, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic made us see the conditions of social inequality existing in the educational system. Families faced this educational period, under compulsory confinement, where many students gave up the habit of reading because they did not have the necessary technological equipment. For example, during the COVID-19 blockade with the closure of schools in Greece and Cyprus, book reading was minimal (Chalari & Vryonides, 2022), preferred more leisure reading, including print reading compared to digital reading (Sun et al., 2021).

Access problems may have caused adolescents from lower income and rural areas to choose other activities, decreasing the time allocated to their education. This is evidenced by the increase in the number of workers between 14 and 18 years old in rural areas of Peru since the beginning of the state of emergency in 2020. The average number of adolescent workers in rural areas increased from 388 thousand in the first quarter of 2020 to 485 thousand in the first quarter of 2021 (IPE, 2021).

In 2018, on average 80% of 15-year-old students participating in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) test in Latin America had Internet access at home and only 61% had access to a computer. Only 30% of the students had educational software at home, compared to more than half of the students, on average, in the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In Peru, 53% had a computer, 57% had an Internet connection, and only 28% used educational software (CEPAL, 2020). Under these circumstances it was more chaotic to develop a virtual education.

According to figures from the National Household Survey (ENAHU) of INEI, the

percentage of students who took classes in 2020 by any modality decreased with respect to 2019, from 92% to 87%. In other words, more than 400 thousand students dropped out of school in 2020 as a result of the pandemic. Higher incidence at the pre-school level, where the proportion of children who attended classes fell from 93% to 81% (IPE, 2021).

Regarding learning problems, they start from the first steps in the educational level due to various social and personal causes. In times of the Pandemic, speaking, reading and writing had to be restricted in some cases. However, in parallel, the use of technology was arranged. In Peru, through the educational program *Aprendo en casa* (AeC), 95.3% of families declared that their daughters and sons accessed the AeC program. access to resources was through television (71%), WhatsApp (43.5%), the website (24.2%), radio (15.1%) or email (0.1%). When asked about the most used medium, 42.9% indicated television, followed by WhatsApp (32.5%), the website (17.5%) and radio (6.7%). The reasons for not having access were not having television, radio or internet, having a bad signal (58.5%) or "other" (35.9%); Likewise, the responses "I used other educational resources" (10.3%), "I don't know how to use it, it is difficult to understand" (6.1%) and "the child does not want" or "does not like it" (4.9%) (Miranda, 2020).

In addition, "there is a complaint that in the classes, both online and on television, only readings and questionnaires were left for the students to solve" (Diaz-Barriga, 2020). However; With a little more guidance, in a confinement situation, reading and writing could have been promoted, activities that allow time to be spent in a profitable and rewarding way. It was possible to channel the anxiety caused by confinement by writing a diary in which all the emotions,

ideas or life projects that may arise are captured. (Carbajosa, 2020).

On the reading habit in a survey conducted in Canada by IPSOS, 630 Canadian parents were reviewed on their children's reading habits and found that the majority of Canadian children are readers. 27% of Canadian children are considered to be enthusiastic readers, and enthusiasm tends to be highest when parents start reading to their children before the age of 1. Only 6% of Canadian children are considered "reluctant" readers by their parents, although this rises to 28% when "undecided" readers are included. Children tend to read more as their skills increase and new interests develop, and are found to read less when distractions intervene. Electronics are the biggest barrier at 40% (INDIGO, 2019).

In research conducted by the National Literacy Trust, it was found that, significantly fewer children and young people say they like to read or read every day. Worryingly, the new findings suggest that this decline is in fact a trend, with just over half (52.5%) of 8–18-year-olds reading for pleasure in 2019, down from 58.8% in 2016, and only a quarter (25.7%) reading daily, down from 43% in 2015 (FMCM, 2019).

Regarding reading habits in Peru, less than one book per person is read annually. The average is 0.86, according to the National Education Council (CNE) in 2019, and it is considerably lower than that of neighboring Latin American countries, such as Colombia or Chile, where their citizens read 2.2 and 4.6 books a year, respectively. When comparing with other countries, such as Spain, it has an average of 11 books a year and Japan an average of 47 books per person, ranking first in the world (Tello, 2021). However, a Vietnamese only reads an average of four books a year (Vuong et al., 2021).

These behaviors are reflected in international evaluations. Peru ranked 64th out of 77 countries in the results of the 2018 PISA test, conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In 2018, Peru scored an average of 401 points in the reading comprehension test, improving three points compared to 2015. (La República, 2019).

According to the PISA and ECE results, it can be deduced that the majority of Peruvian students do not reach the expected performance levels, both nationally and regionally, calling into question Peruvian education, in a scenario where Peru seeks to join the first world economy by 2021, especially when the OECD has pointed out that "when a large proportion of the population lacks basic skills, a country's economic growth is threatened" (2016, p. 3).

Creating the habit of reading throughout the different educational stages brings innumerable very important benefits, which translate into an improvement of communicative competence (Delgado et al., 2020). The timing of their preference for reading should be understood, as well as the choice of the type of text the student chooses.

Primary school children engage in a wide range of reading activities, but we lack information on why children choose to read different types of text (McGeown et al., 2020). For Crisanto Pérez, reading is key to fostering cognitive capacity in schoolchildren; as they advance in their studies, the percentage of knowledge and skills to be achieved depends on reading, and he believes that a student with reading comprehension problems will have serious problems in the university world (Talledo, 2012).

It must be recognized that the inclination to read (or not to read) is cultivated through daily reading practices during early

childhood, which allows students to become autonomous in their choice of books (Chalari & Vryonides, 2022). That is why shared reading should be promoted in the family between parents and children (Vuong et al., 2021). In turn, teachers are influential in motivating and improving attitudes toward reading (Fletcher et al., 2012). It should also be noted that although technology is continually improving to facilitate digital reading, parents, educators and schools should be aware of the benefits and challenges of using print versus digital resources (Sun et al., 2021). One study indicates that students on average scored lower on the digital test than on the paper version (Stole et al., 2020).

The habit of reading is a constant practice that favors the favorable execution of the act of reading performed spontaneously and for pleasure (MINCUL, 2022). Reading competence is an indispensable attribute for a person to be able to function in the social environment; it is a key element for intellectual enrichment, learning acquisition and access to culture (Gil, 2011). Reading is a fundamental end and a fundamental means to expand the possibilities and opportunities for individual development and for society in general (Márquez, 2017). Therefore, creating the habit of reading throughout the different educational stages brings innumerable benefits that translate into improved communicative competence and progress in all areas of knowledge (Delgado et al., 2020).

The purpose of the Communication area in the national curriculum is for students to develop communicative competencies to interact with people, understand and construct reality, and represent the world in a real or imaginary way; this through the use of language, a fundamental tool for the formation of people (MINEDU, 2016). According to the Ministry of Education (2016), the achievement of the Basic

Education students' exit profile is favored by the development of various competencies. Through the communicative approach, the area of Communication promotes and facilitates students to develop the following competencies: communicates orally; reads different types of written texts; writes different types of texts.

Regarding text comprehension, learning to comprehend a text goes beyond the mastery of decoding skills and involves the knowledge and use of various reading strategies; comprehension requires cognitive effort (Solé, 1998).

In this sense, the objective of this research was to determine the relationship between reading habits and competencies in the area of communication in elementary school students.

Methodology

The present study was carried out in the Public Educational Institution N°70025 Independencia Nacional located in the department of Puno, province of Puno and district of Puno; at 3810 m.a.s.l., located in the southeast of Peru, in the El Collao Plateau at 15°49'35.70 "S and 70° 1'1.74 "W of the Greenwich meridian.

The population consisted of 74 sixth grade students, distributed in three sections. Three students who did not meet the assigned criteria were excluded in order to collect a range of data to determine the relationship between reading habits and competence in the area of communication in students. Therefore, the sample was 71 students.

The methodology was basic, correlational level, non-experimental design, cross-sectional. A documentary analysis guide and a questionnaire for reading habits were used, which consisted of 29 items distributed in the following dimensions: reading activity (11 items), reading enjoyment (9 items) and anxiety or difficulty in reading (9 items), whose measurement scale concerns Likert, that is, 5 corresponds to totally agree, 4 =

Agree, 3= Uncertain, 2= Disagree and 1= Totally disagree. With respect to the reading comprehension variable, the three competencies were evaluated: 1. oral expression and written communication competency, 2. reading comprehension competency and 3. text production competency.

The instrument was validated by expert judgment, with three opinions that qualified it as suitable for application. The informed consent of the students and the informed consent of the parents were obtained for the research procedure.

For the statistical analysis, an evaluation of normality was made by means of the Shapiro Wilk test, which showed that the probabilities of the dimensions of the reading habits variable register a value less than 5%, which indicates the adjustment to a

non-normal distribution, except for the reading activity dimension ($p > 0.297$). In addition, the dimensions of the competency's variable in the area of communication show probabilities lower than 1%, which indicates their adjustment to a non-normal distribution. Consequently, nonparametric statistics such as Spearman's Rho were used to analyze the correlations.

Results and discussion

The results obtained in the present research on the determination of the relationship between reading habits and competencies in the area of communication, indicate according to descriptive and inferential statistics the following:

Results corresponding to the variable reading habits

Table 1. Reading habits of elementary school students

Categories	Number of students	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Poor	0	0.0	0.0
Regular	65	91.5	91.5
Good	6	8.5	100
Total	71	100	

Note. This table shows the number of students in the sixth grade for each level of reading habits.

Table 1 shows that 91.5% of the total of 71 students register a regular level of reading habits, evidencing that child do not read frequently, do not practice the pleasure of reading and only 8.5% of respondents show a good level of reading habits due to the frequency of reading activities at home, they enjoy these moments and read on their own initiative, also, they show less anxiety and problems when reading the assigned or chosen texts. However, in relation to these results, a study indicates that participants read for pleasure, although their level of reading engagement differed. The findings

also reveal that reading engagement may have been influenced by different factors such as reading pedagogy, access to reading materials, environment, and the availability of social networks that support leisure reading (Awah, 2021). For this reason, it is important to create a healthy and friendly atmosphere for reading, where the student feels so motivated to pick up a text or can have available several and different reading options, being able to be physical or virtual to reinforce each space and moment in the development of the reading habit.

Results corresponding to the variable competencies in the area of communication

Table 2. Level of development of the 3 competencies in the area of communication

Categories	Number of students	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Poor (C)	0	0	0
Regular (B)	0	0	0
Good (A)	19	26.8	26.8
Very good (AD)	52	73.2	100
Total	71	100	

Note. This table shows the number of students in the sixth grade of primary school for each level of development of competencies in the area of communication.

Table 2 shows that 73.2% of students in the sixth grade of primary school show a very good level in the development of competencies in the area of communication, which indicates adequate oral expression, suitable written communication, appropriate text comprehension and correct text production, and therefore it can be affirmed that students who are in the very good level develop communication competencies adequately, finally we arrive at the situation that when the student shows a level higher than expected with respect to the competency, it implies that he/she demonstrates learning that goes beyond the expected level.

Likewise, 26.8% of students present a good level, which indicates that they are close to achieving adequate oral expression and written communication. With respect to text comprehension, it is not affirmed that they are excellent students in understanding texts, but they do present a taste for reading and this is significant in their reading comprehension. In the production of texts, it can be intuited that there are still difficulties in aspects that are not very relevant to this competence, finally, these are aspects that affirm the strengthening of competencies required in the area of communication in

students close to the secondary level. This can be strengthened with greater development and practice of reading activities to continue the reading habit.

Similarly, there is a finding of a study that indicates that high school students read books of different typologies, their number of voluntary readings is high and they read more when the readings are obligatory than during their vacations (Moreno, 2018). Therefore, teachers play an important role in promoting the reading habit through sessions or learning activities in the area of communication, and even more so if they develop educational projects, all curricular areas can be approached with reading in an integrated manner. Another creative way indicated by a study is to help the comprehension of literary texts to awaken interest and motivation for reading through the use of light and manipulable materials, favoring the pleasure of reading (Marín et al., 2022). We leave it to the creativity of the teacher to continue promoting the reading habit.

Correlation between reading habits and oral expression and written communication competence in students

Table 3. Correlation between reading habits and oral expression and written communication competency

		Oral expression and written communication
Reading habits	Spearman's Rho	0.801***
	r ²	0.64
	p-value	0.000

n

71

Note: p: significance level; r^2 : effect size; n: sample

The previous table shows the existence of a positive and significant correlation between reading habits and oral expression and written communication competence, which indicates the importance of reading activity in verbal and written expression; therefore, we perceive that if we practice reading habits, we will express ourselves in a pertinent way and we will have a good written communication, whose result is confirmed with a Spearman's r corresponding to 0.801 with a probability of less than 5% and 1%. In addition, it is stated that both study variables are associated with a considerable intensity and report an effect size of 0.64, which translates into a large impact because it is within the range proposed by Cohen (1992). In this sense, the

proposed hypothesis about the direct relationship between reading habits and oral expression and written communication competence in sixth grade students is affirmed.

One study had similar results, indicating that there is a positive and significant relationship between reading habits and characterization of students' oral expression (López & Tito, 2020).

It is said that literature plays a fundamental role in the development of the socialization of boys and girls and their identification with different gender roles (Rodríguez, 2022).

Correlation between reading habits and reading comprehension competency in students

Table 4. Correlation between reading habits and reading comprehension competence

		Reading comprehension
	Spearman's Rho	0.739***
Reading habits	r^2	0.55
	p-value	0.000
	n	71

Note: p: significance level; r^2 : effect size; n: sample

The table above shows a positive and significant correlation between the variable reading habits and reading comprehension, which indicates that students with reading habits present high levels of reading comprehension, where the greater the taste for reading, the easier it is to comprehend texts and thus be eloquent people, as well as having the ability to understand the levels of literal, inferential and critical comprehension in an efficient manner, since a Spearman's Rho coefficient of 0.739 with a probability of less than 5% is reported. In addition, it is shown that both variables sustain a correlation of considerable

intensity and register an effect size of 0.55 that asserts a large impact by exceeding the value of 0.5 according to the scale proposed by Cohen (1992), which contrasts the hypothesis formulated of the existence of a relationship between reading habits and reading comprehension of sixth grade students. Similar studies had positive results showing the existence of a relationship $r=0.482$ between the variables: reading habits and reading comprehension (Bautista, 2019).

Correlation between reading habits and text production competence in students

Table 5. Correlation between reading habits and text production competence

		Text production
Reading habits	Spearman's Rho	0.733***
	r^2	0.54
	p-value	0.000
	n	71

Note: p: significance level; r^2 : effect size; n: sample

According to Table 6, there is a positive and significant correlation (Spearman's Rho of 0.7333 with a probability of less than 5%) between the variable reading habits and text production, a result that indicates the presence of high text production as reading habits develop; the more students like reading, the more pertinent their writing is because they recognize the types of texts, the structure, grammatical signs and spelling, and thus produce sentences, paragraphs and texts in a pertinent manner. Both variables maintain a correlation with a considerable intensity, likewise, it reports an effect size of 0.54 that asserts a large impact by exceeding the value of 0.5 according to the scale given

by Cohen (1992). Similar results are found as a positive average correlation between reading habits and the elaboration of texts (Spearman's rho 0.720, $\alpha p = 0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$) (Socorro et al., 2021). Thus, another study affirms that by applying motivational activities in the reading process, students approach texts affectively and intellectually, find them enjoyable and meaningful, thus satisfying their own knowledge needs and awakening their interest in a free and autonomous manner (Velasco, 2020).

Correlation between reading habits and competencies in the area of communication in students

Table 6. Correlation between reading habits and competencies in the area of communication

		Competencies in the area of communication
Reading habits	Spearman's Rho	0.828***
	r^2	0.69
	p-value	0.000
	n	71

Note: p: significance level; r^2 : effect size; n: sample

Table 6 shows the presence of a direct and significant correlation between reading habits and competencies in the area of communication, which indicates that students who read for pleasure, have an attitude when reading, are called to have notable reading habits, manifest greater capacity in the competencies in the area of communication so that they can perform

pertinently and vice versa, a result affirmed with a Spearman's Rho of 0.828 and a p-value of less than 5%. 828 and p-value of less than 5%. It also indicates that both variables have a high intensity correlation and register an effect size of 0.69, which demonstrates the existence of a large impact between variables because it exceeds the value of 0.5. Thus, Lima (2018)

demonstrated in his study that there is a significant direct relationship between the reading habit and academic performance in the area of communication in high school students, inferring that if we have a taste for reading we will be able to perform in a relevant way in the area of communication. The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.578 with a significance lower than 0.05 was verified. Verifying itself in the study of Vilca & Mamani (2017), that the key to success is to have a good academic performance and for this, the types of habits are studied, where reading at home, the accompaniment of the parents are important factors to have a good academic performance.

Therefore, it can be affirmed that students who have predominant reading habits are those who possess greater competencies in the area of communication, since they tend to understand texts better and infer from them.

Conclusions

It is concluded that the promotion of reading habits in sixth grade students is a key and effective tool, since in this way the student will have a good strengthening of competencies in the area of communication because they will be able to respond to the competencies of oral expression and written communication, text comprehension and text production, which will contribute to improve their performance and academic training, whose direct and significant correlation, with a Spearman's Rho of 0.828 and p - value less than 5%, also indicates that both variables sustain a correlation of high intensity and register an effect size of 0.69. The promotion of continuous reading habits will favor the development of adequate oral expression and pertinent written communication. It was possible to investigate that a taste for reading will help us to a sophisticated oral expression where we will use new terms and recognize

unknown words, whose result is confirmed with a Spearman's r corresponding to 0.801. The teaching of reading habits favors a better reading comprehension, strengthening the imagination and development of critical and reflective thinking skills. A Spearman's Rho coefficient of 0.739 is reported, showing that both variables sustain a correlation of considerable intensity and register an effect size of 0.55, which asserts a large impact by exceeding the value of 0.5.

The incorporation of reading habits in the teaching methodology will favor the development of the competence of producing texts of different genres with an original style, objectivity, clarity and imagination that strengthens the abilities and skills at the time of writing a text. A positive and significant correlation is corroborated with a Spearman's Rho =0.7333 with a probability of less than 5%. The variables maintain a correlation with considerable intensity.

Therefore, the management team and teachers should incorporate group reading workshops and learning dynamics every month, which encourage reading habits in students, in order to develop and strengthen their competencies in the area of communication, following up on the results obtained after each workshop or dynamic. In addition, they must promote the publication of texts written by the students in the institutional page of the institution, where the consistency, writing, grammar and spelling of the document is measured.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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