Language In The Early Years Of Schooling

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ABSTRACT

This article shows a series of reflections arising from mixed research, which is based on strategies from the Urban Active School model, EAU, concerning the pedagogical factors that could be influencing the low results of the Saber Tests, in the language area of the third grade of primary school, in a Colombian District Educational Institution. The importance of constantly reviewing the educational practice itself is highlighted so that it leads to the strengthening of the educational processes of children and young people. Incorporate learning spaces and experiences in educational scenarios. Ongoing training for teachers and administrators that contributes to the acquisition of reading, writing, and teamwork skills, with specific pedagogical strategies.

Keywords: language; reading; writing; student, training.

RESUMEN

Este artículo muestra una serie de reflexiones suscitadas de una investigación mixta, que fundamentó estrategias a partir del modelo Escuela Activa Urbana, EAU, con respecto a los factores pedagógicos que pudieron estar incidiendo en los bajos resultados de las Pruebas Saber, en el área lenguaje del grado tercero de primaria, de una Institución Educativa Distrital Colombiana. Se resalta la importancia de revisar constantemente la propia práctica educativa, para que ésta conlleve al fortalecimiento de procesos educativos de niños y jóvenes. Incorporar en los escenarios educativos, espacios para el aprendizaje y experiencias. Una formación permanente de docentes y directivos, que contribuya a adquirir competencias lectoras, escritoras y de trabajo en equipo, con estrategias pedagógicas concretas.

Palabras clave: lenguaje; lectura; escritura; estudiante; formación.

INTRODUCTION

In today's society, competent professionals are required to respond to the problems of a complex and dynamic reality, with a reflective and critical attitude, to transform it creatively. As Freire (1995) rightly mentions, it is necessary to have professionals who see themselves as thinkers, and who permanently redefine reality, questioning and asking themselves about what is detected every day and seems evident.

The Colombian Institute for the Promotion of Higher Education showed in the usual national evaluations that, in 2017, at the level of Colombia in the third grade, in the area of language 18% of the student body has

insufficient academic performance, and 36% minimum (ICFES, 2018).

The results of the Saber Tests, which are the usual evaluation mechanism, invite to review the methodologies, strategies, and approaches that are usually applied in classrooms from the first years of schooling. It is necessary to explore how much prominence students are having and the role of teachers in the way they guide learning, to strengthen the environments that allow children to develop the essential competencies in the area of Language.

With all this, the research problem identified was: How to contribute to promoting the development of basic competencies in the area of language in primary school students in the Colombian capital, to propose alternatives from the Urban Active School model, which could favor the learning of students from the first years of schooling, considering the pedagogical factors that may be influencing the low results of the Saber Tests, in the area of language in the third grade of primary school in an IED, taken as a case study.

The research was carried out using a mixed method, exploratory type, with quantitative data and simultaneous qualitative analysis. Documentary review and analysis, surveys with open and closed questions, and semi-structured interviews with students and teachers were carried out.

The research work showed an overview of the scientific literature regarding language acquisition, and how throughout history explanations have emerged through theories or perspectives, from the evolutionary and/or pedagogical point of view and from the role of the subject during the process, for which an approach was made on how Skinner (1970), conceived learning from behaviorism and verbal behavior, explanations of the theory of language from the perspective of Noam Chomsky (2005), with biolinguistics, the cognitive development of the child from the perspective of Jean Piaget (Flavell, 1990), contributions of Vigotsky (1986), from his socio-historical theory and the zone of proximal development; representation systems from the approaches of Bruner and Linaza

(2007) and Ausubel's theory of meaningful learning (1968).

Different pedagogical models were described, which in some ways have defined ways of teaching and learning the language. The traditional model originated in scholasticism, a philosophy that prevailed from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries, strongly influencing teaching processes and educational systems, where the primary purpose was the recovery of classical thought, which was taken up again as a result of the Renaissance (Delgado, 1993). This model has been interpreted as an encyclopedist since the content of teaching consists of a series of knowledge and social values accumulated over time by adult generations, and it is they who transmit this knowledge to students as absolute truths, dissociated from the students' experience and social realities. In this model, memorization, repetition, and drill, teacher-centered curriculum, verbalist teaching methods, and discipline as a means to educate predominate (Canfux, 2000).

The behaviorist model, like the traditional one, considers that the function of the school is to transmit knowledge. It was developed in parallel with capitalism, under the meticulous molding of the productive behavior of individuals, through observation, operationalization, measurement, and control, in which the method is the setting and control of instructional objectives (Flórez, 1994).

The progressive model based on pragmatism was a philosophical movement developed in the United States during the 19th century by Charles Sanders Peirce, which originally sustained the validity of an idea or doctrine based on its success in practice and thus the possibility of replicating experiences based on it; also influenced by the ideas of Pestalozzi and Froebel in Europe. In opposition to the dominant ideas of Herbat in the 19th century, Dewey proposed the concept of progressive education, called Active or New School in Europe at the end of the 19th century and the first third of the 20th century (González, 2001). Montessori, Ovide Decroly, Georg Kerschensteiner, Edouard Claparède, Adolphe Ferrière, Roger Cousinet, Célestin Freinet, and John Dewey made significant

contributions to the New School, based on continuous and extensive observations that attempted to establish educational systems centered on concrete techniques and methods, with more studied conceptions of man (Gal, 1978, p. 36).

In the cognoscitive model, the approach consists of the individual's progressive and sequential access to the stage of intellectual development, according to his/her needs and conditions, with theoretical foundations originating from the ideas of Jean Piaget's Genetic Psychology (Flórez, 1994). Mones (1988) considers that this pedagogical current is a variant of the New School.

Piaget's contributions are a valuable theoretical element that makes it possible to appreciate and demonstrate the levels of cognitive and moral development of individuals are a useful tool for reorganizing curricular content according to children's levels of development and are the basis for the method of learning by the discovery (Flavell, 1990).

From the socio-historical approach, the development of the mind is social by the mere fact that the mental activities of the child are conditioned by social relations with adults, in which he acquires new knowledge and modes of behavior, as a cultural-historical being (Vigotsky, 1984).

The radical critical model is interested in the development of critical-reflective thinking skills to transform society (Flórez, 1994). Critical pedagogy studies schools both in their historical and social environment as a social and political product that characterizes the dominant society, thus presenting a language of criticism and a language of possibilities (McLaren, 1984).

Pedagogue Freire argues that education should be based on an integrating conception between educators and learners, and this implies a critical understanding of their world and their actions, for which it is essential to take into account the other and see in him his creative and transforming power of reality, he states that the educator's thinking only gains authenticity in the authenticity of the thinking of the learners, influenced by

reality and intercommunication (Freire, 1995, p. 86).

Throughout the history of education and pedagogy, several theories and approaches have been used for teaching reading and writing, which lead to creating a type of relationship between students, between the student and the teacher, and likewise, a type of pedagogical practice, therefore, an inquiry was made about the synthetic and analytical methods, the literacy processes of reading and writing, the constitution of learning environments, which characterizes the pedagogical practice and teacher training.

The synthetic methods focus on the contents related to the knowledge of letters, words, syllables, and sounds, which, besides being difficult and late, the child intones combinations, little or no comprehensible and meaningless. These methods, as well as the alphabetic ones, make reading fluency difficult since the combinations end up being repetitive rhetoric to memorize, lacking in meaning. From the phonetic point of view, it is even more difficult to understand what is read, since the sounds generate confusion, especially when they are not accompanied by syllables; it is a mechanical process, meaningless, and easily leads to losing the taste for reading and writing.

These methods respond to the traditional and behaviorist pedagogical models in which memorization, repetition, and mechanical exercise predominate, with a fragmented curriculum that focuses on the teacher, that does not involve topics related to the child's context, with learning associated to stimuli with answers, with passive classes and student receivers, since experiences, experiences, and knowledge that they have already built are not taken up, so learning is not lasting and between the teacher and the student an authoritarian, vertical relationship predominates.

Among the synthetic methods, the Montessori method could be highlighted, which is a proposal from the progressive pedagogical model, in which the proper use of materials is of great importance since the manipulation of didactic resources contributes to educating the senses for learning and

development of intellectual capacities, taking into account, in addition, the spontaneous interests of the children, arising from their homes and environment, giving room for an active role of the student and transforming the functions of the teacher in the educational process, motivating and encouraging more the formative process of the student, from the interaction with the material.

Although analytical methods retake oral expression and drawing, they are still conceived from traditional and behaviorist models; it is a very long and confusing process because of the sounds. It has simplistic conceptions of reading and writing, leaving aside comprehension and textual production processes. The dynamic is centered on the teacher and the student is a passive receiver. It does not work on the child's motivation, his interests, or the knowledge he has acquired from the culture in which he is immersed, nor on the media to which he has more and more accessible.

The global method associated with the centers of interest and curricular integrity, from the principles of Escuela Nueva and of course to the progressive pedagogical model, allows working on semantic, functional, and pragmatic elements, so that it goes beyond morpho-syntactic, decoding, and perceptive-motor elements in the process of reading and writing, leaving aside the instrumental conception of language. This confirms that the progressive pedagogical model is the one that initially establishes a different way of seeing and working with language and that was the basis for other developments in the reading and writing process since schooling.

The work of the teacher who is trained linguistically should focus on promoting a communicative and democratic culture in the school as a habit and exercise. And the teacher must be trained in the knowledge of language processes, as well as of the various theoretical conceptions that attempt to explain them, since training, in theory, is what provides the teacher with the possibility of questioning, controlling, and regulating his or her pedagogical intervention (Serrón, 2001).

It is not enough for the teacher to understand what language processes consist of, but it is also necessary to experience them to understand how they develop and thus be able to help others to develop them. It is possible to know a lot about these processes and not know enough about what language unfolds and that goes beyond theory, that is, experience and experience, since only by knowing one's linguistic processes can one help others to develop them (Martín, 2013, p. 45).

The evolution of the conceptualization of writing is influenced by sociocultural experiences, such as variations in oral and written language, political and socio-economic aspects, personal experiences, and learning practices themselves (Báez, 2019).

Therefore, to the extent that teachers know and conceptualize how students learn oral and written language by nature and how child development occurs, better conditions will be created to perceive and dynamize the evolutionary moments of writing that occur in children, likewise, teachers discover that children learn to read and write while using reading and writing to learn about the world and knowledge is put into action through social practices that take place in institutions (Op. cit., 2019, p. 118).

Concerning educational environments, these not only consider the physical environment, but also the interactions that occur in that environment, therefore, the organization and spatial arrangement, the relationships established between the elements of its structure, but also the patterns of behavior that develop in it, the type of relationships that people maintain with objects, the interactions that occur between people, the roles that are established, the criteria that prevail and the activities that are carried out, configure or not an appropriate environment for teaching and learning (Duarte, 2003).

The environment is a living, changing, and dynamic concept, which implies that it must change as children, their interests, their needs, and their age change and also as we, the adults and the environment in which we are all immersed, change (Flórez et al., 2017). The educational environment must be planned and is composed of educational processes that

involve actions, experiences, and experiences by each of the participants, in which attitudes, socio-affective conditions, and multiple relationships with the environment and infrastructure are taken into account, which allows the construction and strengthening of school coexistence, with a teacher who accompanies the learning process and the construction of citizenship (Arias, 2018).

The above is closely related to the teacher's practice; therefore, it is important to review various possibilities for thinking about pedagogical practice. Teaching practice is characterized by being: a predefined activity (inscribed in institutional and policy frameworks, which regulate, delimit or demarcate modes and meanings of teaching), an indeterminate process (given its social nature, the efforts of teaching programming), has limits in the daily evolution of the classroom, is complex and does not admit many simplifications. In the classroom, there are diverse interests, experiences, and universes, the interrelations produced in the act of teaching prevent predicting and controlling the interrelationships between subjects (Gimeno, 1998).

Pedagogical practice and pedagogical knowledge contribute to trying to answer how teacher training is, oriented on two planes; the first refers to the academic training received in universities and higher education institutions that provisionally concludes with the undergraduate and/or postgraduate academic degree and the second plane is given by the training given in the exercise of the teaching profession (Imbernon and Canto, 2013). The effectiveness of teacher training (both initial and continuous), constitutes perhaps one of the greatest concerns of an educational system interested in achieving quality in the teaching practice and learning of its students (Avalos, 2017).

The Colombian Ministry of Education has issued a series of provisions for educational work in different areas of knowledge. Concerning the area of language would be the curricular guidelines in compliance with Article 78 of Law 115 of 1994 that position the teacher as a guide and facilitator of environments with participation,

so that educational communities develop creativity and autonomy, from a personal and institutional commitment from what is lived in the classroom.

For the elaboration of the Spanish Language Curricular Guidelines, the Ministry of Education (1998) took into account approaches to curricular development, concepts of text linguistics, cognitive psychology, pragmatics, semiotics, and sociology of language, as well as conceptualizations of the results of the evaluations developed by the National System for the Evaluation of Education (SNE) in the field of language.

The Basic Competency Standards (EBC), published by the MEN in 2006, are intended to provide a guide to what students should know and know how to do with what they learn, understood as clear and public criteria, with which one could judge whether common quality expectations are being met, concerning what students are expected to learn in each of the areas, during basic and secondary education (MEN, 2006, p. 11).

Thus, the basic competency standards invite teachers to develop pedagogical work planning processes to develop plans, programs, and pedagogical and evaluative practices so that students can intentionally reach and surpass the basic standards, gradually and comprehensively, at levels of increasing complexity (Op. cit., p. 14).

And the basic learning rights (DBA), published by the MEN in 2016, present a group of structuring learning from grade to grade, from first to eleven, and for a particular area. It defines learning as the conjunction of knowledge and social and personal practices that favor cognitive and qualitative transformations of the individual's relationships with himself, with others, and with the environment (physical, cultural, and social), following what is described in the document Basic Learning Rights v.2 of language (Op. cit., p. 6).

Year after year, with various standardized tests, it has been evidenced that the quality of education in Colombia, especially public education, does not meet the standards expected both nationally and

internationally, as supported by Ayala (2015). The OECD states that, despite transforming the education system during the last two decades, Colombia faces high levels of inequality from the first years of education and a low level of quality in the education system (OECD, 2016, p. 1).

Latin American education is an indispensable element for the development of individuals and an engine for the development of the economy, which is why investment in education would be one of the factors that would contribute the most to social growth. It is essential to take up the influence of economic factors, such as poverty and social exclusion, counting on historical, cultural, and demographic aspects, as well as investment in the education sector and public policies related to ongoing teacher training (Escribano, 2017).

The Saber Language Tests, according to the document of the foundation of the Language area (MEN, 2017) are organized around the following factors: textual production, textual comprehension and interpretation, literature that contains an approach from the aesthetic perspective of language, the media, and other symbolic systems, and communication ethics, which is addressed as a transversal aspect to the four previous factors. It evaluates two competencies: communicative-reading and communicative-writing and takes into account the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic components (Op. Cit., 2017).

What has been found in the IED, is that the pedagogical practice in the area of language highlights elements that focus on synthetic, alphabetic, and phonetic methods, highlighting as the most important in language, the knowledge of letters and sounds, making combinations to form syllables, words, phrases, and simple sentences, as well as the teaching of the shape and names of letters in alphabetical order, reducing the teaching-learning to obtain perceptual-motor skills.

This instrumental emphasis on language, with magisterial instructions supported by activities that fractionate the comprehension and production processes, focuses the dynamics on the teacher as the possessor of knowledge and the student as a passive receiver, a reproducer of perceptual-motor exercises, overlooking the interactions and knowledge of students, an emphasis on a traditional model in which memorization, repetition, and drill predominate, where reality is seen as static, the experiences and experiences of students are not taken into account and the contents are given in a fragmented way.

Students are being provided with elements that allow them to approach the literal reading of short texts with a simple structure, to extract explicit information about themes, events, and characteristics of characters, to relate characters and actions, only from some types of texts, and in communicative situations, they would have an approach to identify the relevance of a text according to the purpose, but these elements would lead students to have a level between insufficient and minimum, according to what is intended to be evaluated with the Saber Tests.

Most teachers associate the reading and writing problems of their students with agents external to their pedagogical practice, which although they are factors that do not favor the development of reading and writing skills and greatly influence the students' learning process and academic performance, it is also how teachers conceive language, the role they give to the student and how they assume their role as teachers, but there is no critical look at their pedagogical practices.

In addition to the above, regarding the answers given by the IED teachers about the learning that they consider that children should acquire in their courses, it is evident in great percentage, the lack of knowledge of the total competencies that should be developed in the students according to the MEN parameters, additionally, little or scarce knowledge is had about what the knowledge tests evaluate.

Concerning what was found in the network of scopes and sequences of the Urban Active School Model, adapted from the New Active School Model (Colbert, 2016), a coherent and articulated work is shown from a perspective of a language that allows understanding and interpreting reality, that

facilitates the communication of ideas and feelings and that invites to build and generate experiences from the first grade. Taking into account the competencies that are intended to be evaluated with the Saber Tests in the area of language in the third grade, the proposal manages to develop the elements in a transversal way in the three grades, since it is based on the Basic Standards of Competence and integrates different semantic, syntactic and pragmatic elements.

Escuela Nueva Activa emerged as a local innovation in the mid-1970s and became a national policy in the late 1980s when it was implemented in more than 20,000 rural schools. Through continuous processes of evaluation and monitoring of the development of learning, in particular, and of the experience, in general, it has managed to improve the quality of education in Colombia and in multiple countries where it has been adapted and contextualized, which has been evidenced through evaluation studies conducted by various national and international agencies (Bayona and Herrera, 2018).

The findings show that the EAU model can be a great reference for the IED, not only to achieve greater academic achievements with curricular and training strategies but also with the development of non-cognitive skills such as interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Based on the progressive pedagogical model, promotes seeing children as active beings within their learning process, in which the work, use, and manipulation of concrete material becomes very important, which allows the generation of spontaneous interests and a process of freedom and autonomy that are developed from a proposal of cooperative and social work of education, with a focus on the formation of citizens as children, in which strategies are proposed to learn to work in groups, with appropriate materials and the generation of meaningful experiences.

In synthesis, this research promotes the conversion of the learner into a subject and not an object of learning. For this purpose, it has been mentioned that the way to reach the mentioned competencies (semantic, syntactic, pragmatic), is necessary to rely on the most advanced theoretical studies on contemporary pedagogy and the learning of language and communication mentioned above. The interaction between teacher and student, which cannot omit the national regulations in this regard, must be adapted to an infinity of didactic and even technological resources available, allowing the classroom to be a learning laboratory, from the necessary experiential and practical training of the teacher in pedagogy and linguistics to the joint construction of the learning process, stimulating intellectual potentials with efficient and effective methods according to the critical approaches presented here.

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