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TELL ME HOW YOU READ AND I WILL TELL YOU HOW MUCH YOU LEARN

WHAT DOES RESEARCH BRING TO THE TEACHING OF READING?

DIME CÓMO LEES Y TE DIRÉ CUÁNTO APRENDES

¿QUÉ NOS APORTA LA INVESTIGACIÓN A LA ENSEÑANZA DE LA LECTURA?

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Resumen

Es ampliamente reconocido y aceptado que la lectura desempeña un papel fundamental en el proceso de aprendizaje y en el progreso académico, puesto que permite el acceso a la cultura y al conocimiento, además de contribuir al desarrollo personal, social e intelectual. La enseñanza de la lectura es un proceso lento y gradual que sienta sus bases en la educación infantil y se desarrolla a lo largo de toda la educación básica, en un continuo en el que el alumno transita de "aprender a leer" a "leer para aprender". El objetivo de este artículo es seleccionar y sintetizar los aspectos que se han demostrado efectivos en el aprendizaje de la lectura para que, de esta manera, los centros docentes

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puedan tomar decisiones basadas en la investigación para una mejor planificación de su enseñanza. Toda la fundamentación desarrollada puede ser de utilidad a los inspectores de educación en su esencial función de asesoramiento dirigido a la mejora de un aprendizaje tan decisivo para el progreso educativo y el éxito escolar.

Palabras clave: *lectura, literacidad, comprensión lectora, decodificación, lenguaje, bagaje cultural.*

Abstract

It is widely recognized and accepted that reading plays a fundamental role in the learning process and in academic progress, since it allows access to culture and knowledge, as well as contributing to personal, social and intellectual development. The teaching of reading is a slow and gradual process that starts in early childhood education and develops throughout basic education, in a continuum in which the student moves from "learning to read" to "reading to learn". The aim of this article is to select and synthesize the aspects that have been shown to be effective in the learning of reading so that, in this way, schools can make decisions based on research for better planning of their teaching. All the rationale developed may be of use to education inspectors in their essential advisory role aimed at improving learning that is so crucial to educational progress and school success.

Keywords: *reading, literacy, reading comprehension, decoding, language, cultural background.*

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INTRODUCTION

Time in school is limited, so everything that happens in school should be relevant to students' academic, personal and social development. In this context, teaching reading and writing should be a high priority, as these skills underpin the main goals of a truly equitable education. Reading is an essential tool for acquiring new knowledge and for developing critical thinking because it allows one to broaden one's perspective, reflect on different points of view, evaluate the validity of ideas and arguments, and form one's own informed judgements. On the other hand, there is ample evidence that reading literacy is essential for adequate academic progress because it significantly influences many aspects of learning and is key to most subjects. Indeed, the relationship between reading and school success has been extensively studied and researched, not only from an academic perspective (Pascual-Gómez and Carril-Martínez, 2017; Sánchez-García, 2019), but also in relation to the development of social skills (Oslund et al. 2018). Moreover, learning to read is especially meaningful and relevant for children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds (Herbers et al., 2012; Hecht, 2000; Kennedy, 2018) and for students with learning difficulties (Sánchez Fuentes et al., 2018; Gilmour et al., 2019). It is a fact that reading and writing go hand in hand and that their learning and improvement feeds back on each other, constantly supporting one another. However, in this article we will focus on reading.

In the Anglo-Saxon world, where the language is opaque (unlike Spanish, where words are pronounced as they are written), it became popular in the 1990s to differentiate between "learning to read" and "learning by reading" (*National Center to Improve the Tools of Educators*, 1996). The main idea behind this expression is that schools should develop reading skills in the early years of education to ensure that students can continue to learn normally at higher levels. This differentiation is useful to point out the importance of automating decoding in the early years of primary education. However, it is important to bear in mind that comprehension does not develop automatically after some reading fluency has been acquired. Therefore, the process of learning to decode must be accompanied, from early childhood onwards, by systematic and intentional development of oral language, as well as by students' acquisition of

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relevant knowledge on a variety of subjects, since it is their cultural knowledge and the breadth and depth of their vocabulary that will enable them to comprehend once they are able to decode fluently.

Although the transition between learning to read and learning through reading occurs gradually, decades of research point to the third year of primary education as a key grade in the acquisition of basic reading skills (Fiester, 2010; Hernández, 2011; Zakariya, 2015). So much so that reading proficiency at this stage predicts academic performance in secondary education (Lesnick et al., 2010; Walz, 2020), especially for students from low-income families (Chall and Jacobs, 2003). Research in this field supports a bottom-up causal relationship: children with better reading comprehension and better spelling tend to read more, and this increased exposure to print reading, in turn, contributes to strengthening their comprehension and spelling (Mol and Bus, 2011). For this reason, it is not surprising that reading proficiency in the early grades of schooling is such a key determinant of school progress, because the academic gap between children who have strong reading skills and those who have more difficulties widens as the grades go on. This is known as the 'Matthew effect', a metaphor to describe a gap that widens over time between good and poor readers (Stanovich, 1986; Duff et al., 2015; Kempe et al., 2011). This effect explains that good readers have superiority in acquiring new knowledge and more advanced reading skills because they can comprehend more complex texts more easily and thus gradually increase their advantage over more difficult peers. Fortunately, this achievement gap is not necessarily permanent and can (and should) be addressed through early detection of difficulties, prevention and individualised, immediate support tailored to identified needs (Lovett et al., 2017).

Therefore, the aim of this article is to point out the key elements in learning to read (Figure 1) and to suggest research-based strategies for schools to make informed decisions on how to teach this skill.

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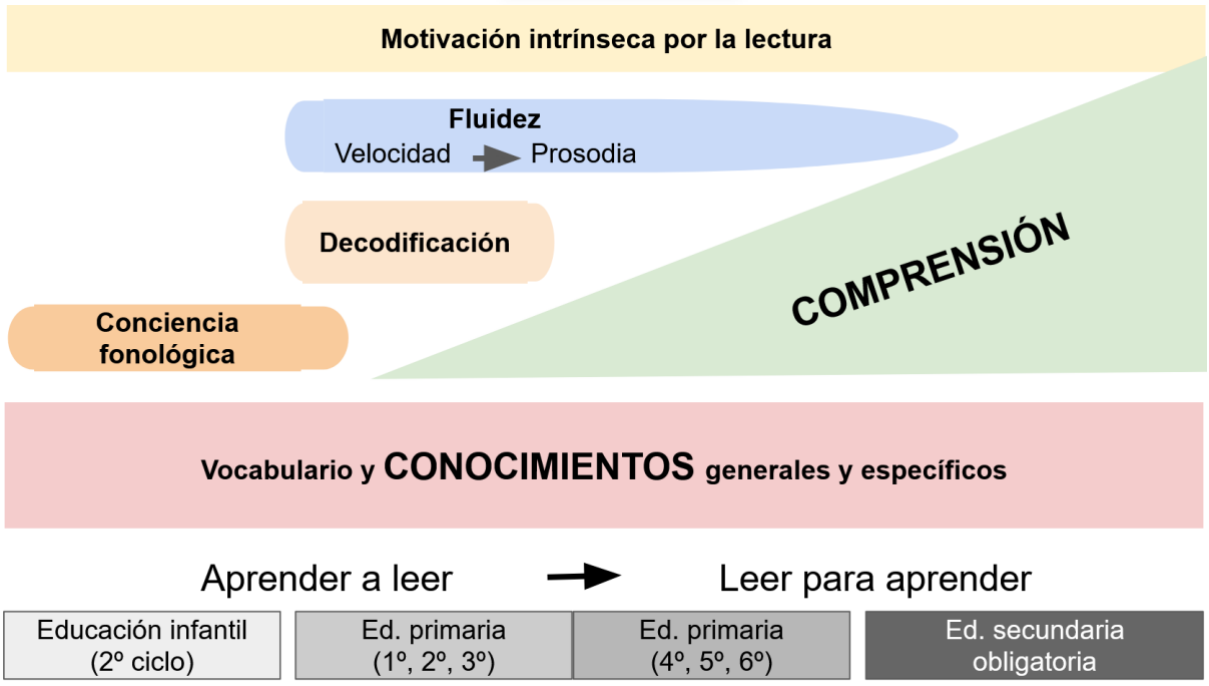

Figure 1. Key elements in learning to read.

1. Phonological awareness: the foundations of learning to read.

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognise, identify and manipulate the sounds in spoken words, and forms the basis on which reading skills are developed in the early stages of learning. In order to decode written language, children need to distinguish the sounds of speech and associate them with the letters that make up words. However, the development of phonological awareness does not arise innately, but requires progressive training at different levels (Gutiérrez-Fresneda et al., 2020). In fact, it has been shown that the explicit and systematic teaching of phonological awareness in children in early childhood education is highly effective for learning to read (Caravolas et al., 2019; Ciesielski et al., 2020; Gillon, 2017; González Seijas et al., 2017; Hulme et al., 2012; Philips, 2008; Míguez, 2018; Soto et al., 2019). Such is the relevance that its development is included in the treatment of a wide variety of learning disorders and difficulties, regardless of the causes: children with dyslexia (de la Peña, 2016; Etchepareborda, 2003; Knoop-van et al., 2018; Galuschka et al., 2020), with attention deficit (Martins et al., 2020), with delayed reading acquisition (Favila and Seda, 2010), with

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decoding learning difficulties (Snowling and Hulme, 2011) or with language development disorder (Gillon, 2000; Godoy et al., 2021). Its importance has also been highlighted in children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and poorly literate environments (Porta, 2012). Naming speed, i.e., the speed with which the student correctly names very familiar stimuli such as letters, colours, numbers, figures or pictures, is also an excellent predictor of learning to read and is useful for the identification and prevention of difficulties (López-Escribano, 2014).

Since learning to decode is strongly influenced by phonological awareness and naming speed, detecting difficulties in these areas allows us to anticipate future problems in learning to read. So why wait until an educational need becomes evident and is diagnosed? Why delay the educational response? Detecting pre-school students at risk of presenting specific difficulties in learning to read and write is key to carrying out preventive actions for those who present risk indicators (Panalés and Palazón, 2020). To this end, schools should systematise the development of phonological awareness and its assessment in the second cycle of pre-school education and the first years of primary education, with a coherent and coordinated approach between educational stages (pre-school-primary).

Phonological awareness programmes are currently available which can be used as a reference for planning. Among them is PROCONFO, from the Centro Aragonés para la Comunicación Aumentativa y Alternativa [Aragonese Center of Augmentative and Alternative Communication] (https://arasaac.org/materials/es/2672), which includes free activities and materials for the development of phonological awareness (lexical awareness in 4th year of pre-school education, syllabic awareness in 5th year and phonemic awareness in 6th year of this stage) and activities for naming speed and auditory memory. Its interest lies not only in the planning of activities and the free provision of materials and guidance for classroom practice, but also in the 'Response to *Intervention*' (RTI) model aimed at identifying and supporting students with learning needs (Hughes, 2011; Hattie, 2012). For its part, the Department of Education of the Generalitat de Catalunya (2004) published a book containing a set of didactic proposals for phonological development in the classroom and in small groups with activities and educational situations in all subject areas. For the evaluation of these programmes, the

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Educational Telematic Network of Catalonia provides the "Assessment Test of the Basic Components of Learning to Read" known as PACBAL (Font et al., 2016).

2. Decoding: from letters to speech sounds.

We were not born to read. Although it may seem a simple and even intuitive activity, reading is a highly complex task and learning to read is by no means natural. The brain is factory-programmed for speech, but it is not programmed for reading. It learns to read thanks to the plasticity of this organ to establish new connections between structures and circuits originally dedicated to other more basic brain processes, such as vision and speech (Wolf, 2008). This is what Dehaene (2022) calls "neuronal recycling". It is unlikely, therefore, that children will ever be "naturally" prepared to decode written language. In fact, they will not learn to read if they are simply immersed in an environment rich in reading experiences, because reading is not an innate skill that can be developed by discovery, but must be taught explicitly, systematically and in a suitably planned and organised way.

Reading necessarily involves recognising written symbols. Of course, decoding these symbols does not mean that we understand the text. We will most likely decode *Înțelegi asta doar dacă știi limba* without too much effort, even if we do not understand its meaning (unless we know Romanian). The ability to convert letters into sounds and to recognise and name words does not imply that we understand them. In any case, decoding is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for understanding, since in order to understand a written message we must at least be able to interpret the system of signs in which it is written. Decoding and comprehension are therefore two different cognitive processes that feed back on each other as we read.

There is a broad scientific consensus that when we read, two pathways operate in parallel, reinforcing each other after a shared period of visual processing: the phonological (indirect) pathway and the lexical (direct) pathway. The neuroscientist Stanislas Dehaene, in his renowned work *Reading in the Brain*, explains and justifies from a neurological perspective how these two information processing pathways coexist and complement each other to achieve fluent reading. Thus, when we read unusual or

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unfamiliar words (e.g., *burr*), we convert the string of letters into speech sounds to pronounce the word and try to access the meaning mainly through the phonological route. On the other hand, if the word is frequent (e.g., *history*), we identify it directly through our mental lexicon, thus accessing its pronunciation and meaning in a few tenths of a second via the lexical route. Logically, the larger our lexical repository, the less the phonological pathway is involved in reading. In fact, this double network of cortical circuits, one dedicated to the sound and the other to the meaning of words, only supports the models proposed by cognitive psychology in recent decades, where decoding and linguistic comprehension are established as two essential reading processes (Gough and Tunmer, 1986; Perfetti and Hart, 2002; Perfetti, 2017; Andrews and Bond, 2009). In this regard, it is worth adding a truism that has also been experimentally corroborated: an expert reader does not read in the same way as a beginner, as is the case with any complex activity. As reading skills are acquired, the mechanical part (the phonological route) becomes progressively less important in a long and demanding learning process (LCFL, 2017).

But how do we teach decoding written language? The choice of method for teaching reading is one of the most important decisions in a school. However, despite its importance, this choice has been - and continues to be - the subject of heated discussions between those who advocate a "global" approach and those who advocate a "phonetic" approach. This is what was known in the Anglo-Saxon world as *the reading wars* in the last century. The global method focuses on comprehension from the beginning, using meaningful words for the students in relation to their reality and stimulating their interest in knowing their meaning (for this purpose they use posters with the names of the students, the spaces, etc.). Visual recognition of the shapes of words is sought, as if they were images, to later arrive at the syllables and letters that make them up ("from the whole to the part"). Phonetic systems do the reverse process, evolving "from the part to the whole", where comprehension emerges a posteriori thanks to the reader's ability to decode the words and understand their meaning. That is, the phonetic method focuses on teaching decoding and recognition of letters and sounds, while the global method focuses on understanding words as whole units and where decoding rules are inferred by the child with little explicit teaching.

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Although global systems may seem more logical and appealing because of their emphasis on comprehension - we read to comprehend - and their parallels with oral language acquisition, they have not been shown to be more effective. Surprisingly, despite ample scientific evidence showing the superiority of learning alphabetic decoding skills as a basis for learning to read, resistance to the use of the phonetic approach persists (Castles et al., 2018). Research is conclusive on this issue: whole language programmes have negligible effects on learning to read and are less efficient than phonics methods; instead, performance is better when children are taught how letters are projected into speech sounds - and the greatest beneficiaries are students with reading difficulties (Dehaene, 2022; Hattie, 2009).

In conclusion, decoding is not reading, but without the former, the latter is not possible. For this reason, fluent decoding is indispensable for comprehension and, consequently, the faster learners automate the conversion of graphemes into phonemes, the more likely they are to focus their attention on understanding what they read. Moreover, its systematic teaching and assessment makes it possible to prevent, identify and remedy difficulties in learning to read (Ehri et al. 2001). The implications for schools are clear: it is necessary to systematise the teaching of decoding through phonetic learning systems as the main focus in the first years of primary education, which in no case should exclude - on the contrary - the effort to encourage engagement with literature and interest in reading, the recognition and comprehension of meaningful and common words, and the stimulation of imagination with which the overall method justifies its approach. In this sense, Cuetos et al. (2003) demonstrated that the phonetic method, in combination with some strategies of other methods and together with phonological awareness work, was highly effective in the learning of reading in the last year of pre-school education, obtaining superior results with respect to the control group, even in comparison with the average of students in the first year of primary school. For all these reasons, it is essential that pre-school and primary schools agree on and systematise the method with which they teach reading and establish assessment mechanisms that allow them to gather information on the progress of each student, detect difficulties and act accordingly.

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3. Fluency: the bridge between decoding and comprehension.

Fluency is the bridge between decoding and comprehension (Pikulski and Chard, 2005). But what do we mean when we talk about fluent reading? In fact, although there are different approaches to the concept of fluency, there is a broad consensus that it basically consists of two components: reading speed and prosody (Calero, 2014; Kuhn et al. 2010; Godde et al., 2020; Rasinski et al., 2009). Reading speed refers to the automatic recognition of words, with precision and accuracy, while the latter encompasses rhythm, phrasing and intonation, in short, the expressiveness with which we read. As we practice, the decoding of written language becomes faster and faster and with fewer errors; we progressively move from slow, stumbling reading to automatic, fast and accurate word recognition, which in turn facilitates comprehension.

3.1. Reading speed: the indicator of controversy.

Empirical evidence has demonstrated the relationship between reading speed and comprehension, although it is important to note that this association is not linear (García & Cain, 2014; Florit & Cain, 2011; Hoover & Gough, 1990). This means that when we learn to read, the speed at which we read a text facilitates comprehension, but only up to a certain number of words per unit of time. In other words, there is a point at which reading speed ceases to be relevant to comprehension, although up to that point, it is a substantial aspect. This point is what Wang et al. (2019) call the "decoding threshold", which is consistent with the Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller et al., 2019): when the learner still has a slow reading speed (syllables, pauses where they do not belong, stumbles over certain words, ignores punctuation marks, and so on), their working memory is so busy identifying letters, assigning them the relevant phoneme, decoding each word and assembling sentences, that devoting cognitive resources to making meaning of what they read becomes a challenge. It is therefore appropriate that initial efforts in teaching reading focus on achieving the automaticity of decoding, which will enable the learner to read accurately and effortlessly, both known and unknown words, because this automaticity "unloads" their working memory and leaves free space in their attention to address higher order thinking, such as comprehension.

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There is certainly no consensus in the scientific community as to how many words per minute a learner should be able to decode in order to be able to extract meaning from a text without difficulty. This is logical, since multiple factors come into play in the comprehension of a text: the student's knowledge of the content of the text and his or her general culture, its morphosyntactic and lexical complexity, the type of text (narrative, instructional, expository, argumentative, etc.), the attention and motivation with which he or she reads, the purpose of the reading, the format and support of the text (on paper or on screen), among others. However, irrespective of these factors, the automation of word recognition must be achieved in the early stages of learning to read as a necessary stepping stone to comprehension.

In this context the controversy arises: should we measure reading speed? Like any other assessment, it depends on whether the information it provides is useful to teachers in making decisions for the benefit of student learning. If we know that comprehension of what a student is reading is compromised when decoding is in the process of automation, knowing objectively how fast the student is reading can help us to monitor progress in order to provide support, as well as to detect and prevent problems early. Indeed, empirical evidence has shown that slow decoding speed is a characteristic of students who have difficulties in learning to read (Kuhn et al., 2003) and that targeted intervention to improve the reading fluency of these students significantly improves their reading proficiency (Rasinski et al., 2017).

But what is the benchmark reading speed that would be expected at each age? Paradoxically, although measuring reading speed in the first years of primary school can be a valuable tool when teaching reading, there are no standardised measures that can serve as a guide. However, a simple Internet search offers numerous tables of reading speed in Spanish for primary education, although it is difficult to find the rationale and methodology behind the values provided. In this context, the proposal made by Ripoll et al. (2020) is of particular interest. As a result of a meta-analysis, these authors propose indicative speed ranges, both in reading aloud and silently, for the different grades of basic education. In the entry *Referencias de velocidad lectora* [Reading speed references] on the *Intralíneas* blog, Ripoll (2020) provides other reading speed tables that can serve as a reference.

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1st year of primary school	2nd year of primary school	3rd year of primary school	4th year of primary school	5th year of primary school	6th year of primary school
25 to 72	45 to 101	58 to 111	75 to 134	83 to 145	95 to 154

Table 1. Reading aloud speed benchmarks (Ripoll et al., 2020)

3.2. Prosody: expressiveness in reading.

Prosody plays a critical factor in comprehension (Fuchs et al., 2001; Kuhn et al., 2010). As students increase their speed and accuracy in word recognition and decoding, the second component of fluency - prosody - becomes critically important. It is important to note that fast reading does not always ensure fluent reading, as speed is no guarantee of adequate expression. A learner reads fluently when reading occurs at a natural language pace, using appropriate phrasing and intonation. This includes the correct use of pauses in accordance with punctuation marks, speeding up or slowing down the reading of a sentence when necessary or emphasising certain words to improve comprehension of the text. Given the close relationship between fluency and comprehension, it is essential that schools plan systematic interventions and assess students' progress to help them acquire both automaticity and expressiveness in reading.

The assessment of fluency can only be qualitative through specific indicators. The *Escala de Fluidez Lectora en Español* [Spanish Reading Fluency Scale] (González-Trujillo et al., 2014) covers four key aspects: (1) reading volume, which should be appropriate for the interpretation of the text; (2) intonation, which should be melodic and appropriate to the type of sentence, clearly highlighting dialogue and intonation changes at the end of sentences; (3) pause management and, complementarily, (4) segmentation, which refers to paying attention to the syntactic boundaries that define the meaning of the sentence and respecting punctuation marks. Undoubtedly, reading fluency is improved by reading, just as playing an instrument is improved by playing. Practice is essential, as is

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having a model of expressive reading that students can imitate. In addition, as in music, during practice it is essential to provide feedback to students, tell them what areas to focus on and help them identify errors in both accuracy and punctuation, which involves modelling intonation, use of pauses, voice inflections and vocalisation, among other things.

There are numerous strategies that can be employed, such as assisted reading, repeated reading, paired reading, readers' theatre or choral reading (Ferrada and Outón, 2017; Padeliadu and Giazitzidou, 2018; Ripoll and Aguado, 2016). There are also effective techniques, such as reading aloud poetry, dialogue interpretation and echo reading, among others. For successful results, it is essential that the teacher: provides a high-quality expressive reading model; selects appropriate texts and materials according to the students' level and abilities; provides feedback that allows students to improve their fluency; creates a trusting learning environment where students feel safe to make mistakes and are motivated to practise. Research contributions on effective fluency improvement practices can be found in the entry *Nuevos datos sobre la mejora de la fluidez lectora* [New findings on improving reading fluency] (Ripoll, 2023).

4. Vocabulary: the building blocks of understanding.

Reading comprehension is based on mastery of words and knowledge of the world (Hirsch, 2003). We understand what we read from what we already know, because it is our knowledge, stored in long-term memory, that enables us to confer meaning on both what we read and what we hear. Without this basis, we can decode words, but we cannot read in a complete sense, since reading comprehension is determined by the depth and breadth of the vocabulary we possess (Anderson and Freebody, 1981; Qian, 1999, 2002; Moghadam et al., 2012; Okkinga et al., 2022). Our lexical repertoire allows us to interpret more accurately the ideas expressed in a text. In fact, it has been shown that comprehension is severely limited if we do not know more than 95% of the words in a text (Schmitt et al., 2011). However, even if the number of words known is relevant for comprehension, the degree to which we know them is even more decisive (Perfetti, 2017). In this sense, the greater our knowledge of a word, the more active our brain is when reading it and, therefore, the more levels of meaning we have at our disposal

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(Wolf, 2020). A reader who possesses a deeper knowledge of the words and subject matter of a text enjoys a significant advantage in reading it, as he or she can pick up nuances, discern semantic relationships, understand the text more accurately and completely, infer what it does not say, and intuit the circumstances surrounding its creation and the motivations of its author.

Reading and knowledge acquisition feed back on each other. Students who read regularly tend to develop a larger vocabulary compared to those who read less frequently (Mol and Bus, 2011). In this way, an upward spiral of improvement is established in which reading comprehension and the expansion of cultural knowledge accumulate and reinforce each other. In other words, the more one reads, the better one reads and the more one learns, which in turn improves the act of reading itself. For this reason, children who establish a solid reading foundation in the early years of their education are more likely to comprehend more complex texts and to enrich their vocabulary as they progress through school. This dynamic is particularly important for students from disadvantaged social backgrounds (Sinatra, 2008) and for students with reading difficulties (Oslund et al., 2018; Spencer et al., 2019). In this context, the breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge becomes a central element in reading instruction. So much so that more than a century of research in this field has yielded clear and categorical conclusions (Table 2):

1. Vocabulary knowledge stands out as one of the strongest indicators of oral expression.
2. Vocabulary knowledge contributes to the development of phonological awareness in young children, which in turn influences their ability to recognise words.
3. Vocabulary proficiency in pre-school and early stages of primary education is a significant predictor of reading comprehension at later levels, such as secondary and upper secondary education.
4. Difficulty in vocabulary management has a negative influence on

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reading comprehension.

5. Vocabulary building is an effective strategy for improving reading comprehension in both native speakers and language learners.

6. Growing up in impoverished environments can substantially limit the vocabulary that children acquire before they enter formal schooling, which in turn hinders their ability to attain an adequate level of vocabulary.

7. Students from more disadvantaged backgrounds have a significantly smaller vocabulary compared to their peers from more privileged backgrounds.

8. Vocabulary learning proves to be one of the most relevant tasks for learners.

9. Lack of vocabulary may be a critical factor underlying school failure in students living in vulnerable contexts.

Table 2: Summary of key findings from vocabulary research (Graves, 2016).

There is no doubt that the process of acquiring vocabulary is gradual and continuous. We cannot consider a word to be learned when we have only just learned its meaning. It is its use in various situations and contexts that allows us to understand both its connotations and denotations. However, it is important to bear in mind that words can have multiple meanings and that their interpretation in a specific context depends largely on the reader's knowledge of the subject matter of the text. To give an example, specific basketball slang words such as: *flop*, *pressure*, *dunk, walk*, *pick* or *layup* can only be understood with specialised knowledge of the sport. In this sense, Luri's (2019a, p. 49) statement makes perfect sense: "Reading is the art of fitting a text into a context".

Similarly, the comprehension of metaphors, allegories, ironies or sarcasm depends to a large extent on the reader's store of knowledge. As Aitchison (2012) suggests in his *Words in the mind*, words are not stored randomly in our minds, but are part of a web of connections that links words to their meanings and to other related words, associating them with conceptual representations (semantic categories and relationships). This approach recognises the dynamic and organised nature of vocabulary acquisition and

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use, which is consistent with what cognitive psychology has shown: human memory is malleable and expandable, as long as the information is well structured (Schneider and Stern, 2010). For this reason, the transmission of general culture and domain-specific knowledge is fundamental in education, since the ability to make inferences depends more on what one knows than on the ability to make inferences per se. In this respect, school subjects represent structured bodies of knowledge that facilitate the assimilation of information and concepts in an organised manner, providing networks of connections and conceptual representations that support the acquisition of vocabulary.

Although most vocabulary is acquired indirectly or implicitly through immersion in the world of language and knowledge, Graves (2006) organises vocabulary teaching strategies into four blocks: (1) frequent, vocabulary-rich and varied language experiences; (2) word teaching (in context); (3) teaching word learning strategies; and (4) fostering interest in words and their meanings. This categorisation is useful for us to present some of the empirically supported vocabulary learning strategies (Figure 2):

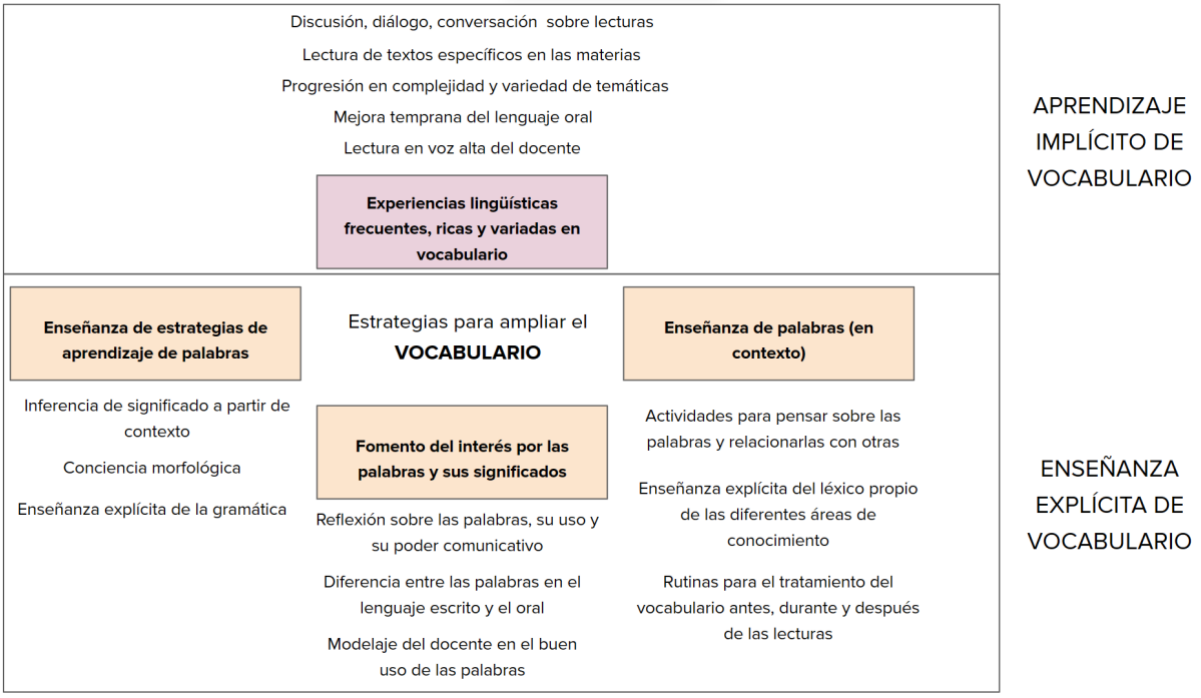

Figure 2. Vocabulary learning strategies.

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1) Frequent, vocabulary-rich and varied language experiences: During early childhood and primary education, listening and speaking are key to promoting vocabulary acquisition and the building of a rich cultural repertoire. Every increase in knowledge and vocabulary through oral interaction leads to an improvement in reading comprehension, even if the student has not yet developed reading skills (Hirsch, 2006). This is particularly relevant for students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds because students' language experiences in their family and social environment play a key role in the development of their reading skills (Becker, 2011). For example, it has been estimated that parents who read a picture book with their children every day expose their children to about 78,000 words each year (Logan, 2019).

These differences in early exposure to reading can have a significant impact on language development. For this reason, according to Asegurado (2022), schools should strive to provide children from vulnerable backgrounds with the kind of literacy-enhancing language experiences that children from more favourable socio-cultural contexts do enjoy. To this end, teacher reading aloud has been shown to be highly effective (Elley, 1989; Robbins and Ehri, 1994; Cabell et al., 2016; Baker et al., 2020). Similarly, early improvement of oral language skills (Griffin et al., 2004) is valuable as it expands knowledge, which is the cornerstone of comprehension both when students read and when they listen. Indeed, numerous studies support that difficulties in reading comprehension, even when students have acquired decoding skills, are often related to deficits in oral language (Colenbrander et al., 2016). For this reason, teacher read-alouds are essential for students' vocabulary expansion. In this context, the appropriate selection of thematic reading materials plays an important role, as vocabulary acquisition is based on word associations. In addition, progressively increasing their complexity and conducting activities aimed at having children evoke what they have learned from the teacher's read-alouds has proven to be highly effective (Cabell et al., 2016).

In secondary education, conversation continues to be essential, especially through thoughtful and structured discussions on a variety of topics. Reading increasingly complex texts and writing plays a key role in expanding students' vocabulary (Quigley and Coleman, 2019). Therefore, it is crucial that the different subjects promote the

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reading of specific texts with which to develop and deepen the content of each subject area. Sometimes, with the best intentions, teachers provide students with condensed or simplified presentation materials as study resources. However, these practices should not replace the reading of specific and extensive texts.

(2) Word teaching (in context): Effective vocabulary building is achieved when students receive information about the meaning of a word in the context in which it is used, when they are actively involved in processing the new word, and when they experience multiple exposures to the words learned (Stahl and Fairbanks, 1986). There are a variety of activities that can involve students in learning new words, including: defining them in their own words, imagining situations where they are used, assessing their appropriateness in a given context, looking for synonyms or antonyms, creating semantic maps, writing short texts or sentences, explaining their relationship to other words, and establishing categories. In short, the aim is to encourage students to think about the words they learn.

In secondary education, because students need to acquire specialised vocabulary that differs from everyday language and varies between subjects - for example, the word 'factor' has a different meaning in mathematics than in history - explicit teaching of academic vocabulary is essential (Quigley and Coleman, 2019). This requires selecting words and grouping them into lexical domains (subject-specific vocabulary) and establishing routines for processing them before, during and after reading (Zucker et al., 2021).

3) Teaching word learning strategies: In addition to teaching how to effectively look up the meaning of words, two strategies supported by research are: teaching how to infer meanings from the context in which words are used and developing morphological awareness (Graves, 2006). General knowledge of grammar correlates with reading comprehension (Zheng et al., 2023). Specifically, knowing how words are formed through the analysis of roots, suffixes and prefixes (morphology) and the way in which sentences are structured and their elements are related to give meaning (syntax), has been shown to be predictive of reading comprehension (Mata et al., 2007; Rodríguez-Ortiz et al., 2021); also in students with learning difficulties (Kuder, 2017). To this end, teaching methodology is relevant. In this regard, significant differences in

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learning outcomes have been found between students who receive explicit instruction on the underlying regularities of a writing system and those who discover these regularities only through experience with the text, with the former proving more effective (Rastle et al., 2021). It is clear that, although reading goes beyond simply identifying grammatical rules, grammatical knowledge enables a deeper and more accurate understanding of content. This knowledge makes it easier to recognise structures and relationships in sentences and paragraphs, identify relationships between ideas, resolve ambiguities, infer more complex meanings, interpret the precise meaning of words in context, and transcend the literalness of what is written.

4) Fostering interest in words and their meanings: The development of what some authors call *word awareness* has been shown to be effective for vocabulary acquisition (Scott and Nagy, 2012): it involves promoting reflection on words, both those we read and hear and those we write and pronounce. It also involves questioning why some words are chosen over others and understanding the differences between spoken and written language in the words we choose. In this context, modelling by teachers plays a key role in developing a cognitive and affective attitude towards words and in recognising their communicative power.

5. Comprehension is the essence of reading: we understand from what we already know.

Comprehension does not come automatically after being able to decode a text. In fact, there are students who, despite reading quickly and fluently, fail to comprehend what they are reading (Colenbrander et al., 2016). To understand a text, once we have acquired the ability to decode it fluently, two elements are essential: our prior knowledge and our attention. Let us analyse them.

5.1 Deep understanding is bounded by the knowledge base.

Understanding a text involves not only extracting its literal meaning but, above all, deducing what it suggests between the lines or what the author assumes the reader knows. When reading, we make inferences by extracting non-explicit information, which

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allows us to contextualise, interpret, draw conclusions and form critical judgements, thus enriching our understanding beyond the written words. Because of their important role in comprehension (not only reading, but also oral comprehension), inferences have been studied from numerous perspectives, giving rise to a large body of literature. Similarly, different taxonomies have been proposed to classify them, although there is no scientific consensus on the matter, while proposals have been made to develop strategies to improve comprehension (Kispal, 2008). In a competence approach to education, a strong emphasis is placed on teaching reading strategies - making predictions, identifying main ideas or making generalisations - with the idea that learners can apply these skills to a variety of texts, both print and digital, and become competent, autonomous and critical readers, regardless of text type or subject matter. However, the focus is on knowing how to do (the how) and not so much on knowing itself (the what).

However, research has not demonstrated the existence of transferable reading skills across contexts that allow readers to make inferences about what they read, since it is their prior knowledge about the text topic and their cultural background that condition comprehension (McNamara and Kintsch, W., 1996, Elbro and Buch-Iversen, 2013; Noordman and Vonk, 2015; Recht and Leslie, 1988). In other words, we do not draw inferences in a vacuum; we understand from what we know. Thus, for example, a good reader who is a botany enthusiast can be expected to understand a journalistic text on plants without any difficulty and will be able to easily distinguish main ideas from secondary ones, disentangle facts from opinions, interpret its content (even question it) and critically reflect on the subject, but will she transfer such reading skills to a short essay on the construction of the European Union and its current state if she is ignorant of the concepts, ideas and vocabulary of that subject? Undoubtedly, your prior knowledge - and your general knowledge - will play a crucial role in your understanding of the text, and your competence to reason about what it says (and what it does not say) will depend on it.

There is no doubt that, when we have a broad knowledge of a subject, we are more likely to be able to make more accurate inferences about the explicit and implicit information in a text, analyse it, evaluate it, relate ideas, reach deeper conclusions, assess the veracity of information and the reliability of sources, identify its intentionality,

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make a better argued critique, and retain the main ideas. Conversely, when we lack relevant knowledge or assume misconceptions about the issue, our deductions may be incorrect, limited or superficial. For this reason, beyond the attention or intentionality with which we read, the degree of depth or superficiality in reading is determined by knowledge, not by know-how. The latter, although important, is not possible without the former. However, together with them, the desire to know, the desire to think and the desire to learn through reading are essential attitudes that imply a mental predisposition and an active and reflective stance towards the information we consume and produce, which teachers must encourage, promote and model in their classrooms. The ability to read and write critically and reflectively, to analyse and evaluate the information presented to us considering the social, cultural and political context in which it is produced, requires relevant and profound knowledge of the world that school cannot fail to provide. If we intend to develop *critical literacy*, a concept that derives - among others - from the postulates of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, the acquisition of a general culture at school is fundamental. Freire proposed going beyond the learning of basic reading and writing skills and developing students' ability to read the world critically, questioning power structures and social inequalities and adopting an active commitment to the improvement of society (*Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*, Freire and Macedo, 1987).

In this context, I agree with Hirsch (2006) when he refers to reading as a content-rich skill. I agree with the author that the excessive focus on basic reading skills -which in Spain we have translated as competences-, without sufficient emphasis on cultural knowledge, is what leads to the educational gap, because reading (and listening) requires the reader to make inferences that depend on their prior knowledge, not on decontextualised inferential skills. We understand what we read because of what we know about what we read, not because of inferential strategies or predictive skills, since these require specific knowledge to be applied effectively. In the words of Wolf (2020, p. 20): "The more we know, the more we can draw analogies, and the more we can use those analogies to infer, deduce, analyze, and evaluate our past assumptions—all of which increases and refines our growing internal platform of knowledge".

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For this reason, it would be a mistake to conclude that the worrying reading comprehension results of the international studies PIRLS (INEE, 2023) and PISA (OECD, 2023) are only a lack of reading skills, because it is knowledge, vocabulary and cultural background that limit or expand intellection. In this context, the reading crisis is, in reality, a crisis of culture. If schools reduce the importance of knowledge acquisition in favour of supposedly transferable skills, they are actually putting up barriers to deep understanding and, consequently, to critical thinking itself. Undoubtedly, those who suffer most from this approach are students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, due to the decisive influence of context on their vocabulary and cultural knowledge, key elements in reading and learning.

5.2 Reading strategies to deepen knowledge.

The above does not mean that working on inferential reading in the classroom is irrelevant. Quite the contrary. Strategies for reading improvement are empty tools when you lack the knowledge to exercise them, but they are very useful for making richer and more accurate connections when reading, going deeper into texts and processing, and converting information into new knowledge. It is to this end that they have a fundamental educational role. In any case, it is essential to be clear about the purpose of reading, what is being read and who is reading it, as the specificity of the purpose has been shown to influence what we remember (Quigley, 2020). Furthermore, when strategies are appropriately modelled and directed by the teacher, they are particularly effective in activating prior knowledge, guiding reflection, stimulating deeper reading and facilitating new learning. However, it is essential to select texts that are enriched with relevant knowledge in a well-organised, structured, coherent, cumulative and graded curriculum (Grissmer et al., 2023; Hirsch, 2006; Quigley, 2020).

In this respect, approaches such as the *Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction* (CORI) model have proven to be highly effective. CORI combines the use of reading strategies and collaboration among students, but taking as its main reference the content developed in the texts. It is based on the premise that deep comprehension is enhanced when readers have a solid understanding of the key concepts present in the reading. This involves explicitly teaching these concepts, connecting them to students' prior

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knowledge, promoting dialogue about the text and discussing ideas to understand their underlying meaning (Guthrie, et al., 2004; Guthrie and Klauda, 2014). Therefore, it is of utmost importance that different curricular disciplines include text-specific reading activities to develop their own content (Quigley, 2020; Lemov et al., 2016).

At this point, the question arises: what are the strategies that have been shown to be effective in improving reading comprehension? Although the literature on this subject is extensive, we can group them into three main blocks (Figure 3):

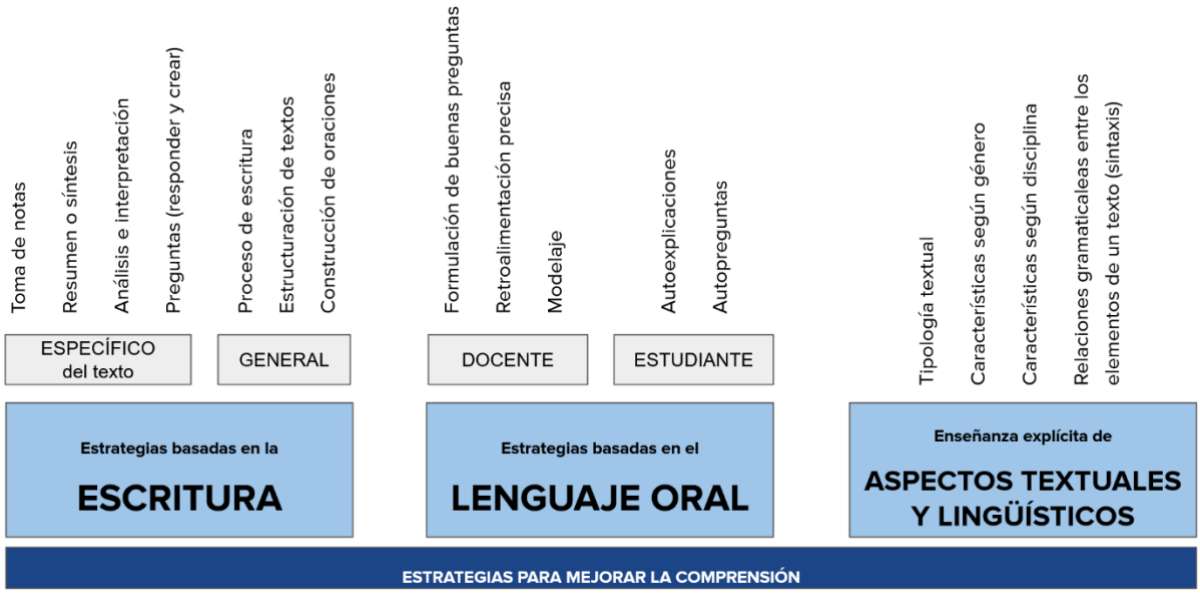

Figure 3: Strategies for deepening reading comprehension.

1. **Writing-based strategies**: Comprehension has been shown to improve when students write about what they read (Graham and Hebert, 2010). This includes analysing and interpreting a text in writing, writing personal reactions, synthesising information, taking notes and answering or creating written questions. In addition, learning the writing process, text structures and sentence and paragraph construction also contributes to better comprehension. These approaches require explicit and sequenced instruction, ideally beginning in the early primary years (Hochman and Wexler, 2017).

2. **Oral language-based strategies**: If writing is highly effective in improving comprehension, so is talking about texts. The teacher's ability to ask

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effective questions and provide accurate feedback to students is essential to achieve a fuller and more reflective understanding of the concepts and ideas in a text (Hattie, 2019). This helps students connect what they read to their prior knowledge and draw conclusions, while providing the teacher with valuable information about what students understand and what they do not. In this sense, Ripoll's (2015) taxonomical proposal offers practical guidance to teachers on how to pose questions to achieve different types of inferences: (type 1) what (or who) does the text refer to, what (who) is the text talking about when it says...; (type 2) why? what is the relationship between... and...; (type 3) what will happen, what can be predicted knowing that..., what for?; (type 4) what else can be said about this; (type 5) what am I being told here, what does it all mean? Moreover, in addition to asking good questions, modelling is an effective strategy that helps students improve their comprehension (Hattie, 2009): having teachers read aloud and verbalise their thoughts allows students to see how an experienced reader analyses, interprets and organises information as they read.

Finally, if we look at oral language-based strategies from the learner's perspective, there is a fundamental principle that should guide classroom practice: having the learner explain his or her thinking aloud can contribute to better comprehension of a text because it helps to process information, integrate it with what is already known and identify gaps in understanding. In this respect, self-explanations and self-questioning, when properly guided, are effective strategies for improving comprehension (Ozuru et al., 2010; Chi et al., 1994).

3. **Knowledge of textual and linguistic aspects**: In line with the *Schema-based Theory of Reading* formulated by Van Dijk and Kintsch (1983), knowledge of how texts are structured and their main functions in relation to their typology (instructional, narrative, expository, descriptive, argumentative, etc.) and genre (literary, journalistic, scientific, technical...) facilitates anticipation of the purpose of the text, prediction of its content, identification of key parts and inference. For this reason, reading in the context of the various disciplines (science, history, geography, literature, music...) is fundamental, since the way we

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read differs according to the text, the purpose and the field of content knowledge (Quigley, 2020).

Moreover, knowledge of grammar also influences reading comprehension (Zheng et al., 2023). Understanding how sentences and paragraphs are structured in a text, as well as the grammatical relationships between their elements (syntax), improves comprehension of complex texts and helps readers to follow the flow of ideas, the sequence of events or arguments, and to resolve ambiguities or confusions.

One effective way to plan and implement the above strategies is through the widely studied *Reciprocal Teaching (*Palinscar and Brown, 1984; Rosenshine and Meister, 1994; McAllum, 2014). In this approach, classroom reading action revolves around four elements: (1) prediction, (2) question generation, (3) clarification, and (4) summarisation. These skills are developed through teacher modelling, teacher-student dialogue and the use of collaborative techniques, either in pairs or small groups, to encourage the collective construction of meaning. A simple way to organise these strategies is to divide the reading of a text into three phases: pre-reading, while reading and after reading.

A) **Pre-reading strategies**: Quick review of the text to get a general idea of content, structure and purpose; activate prior knowledge related to the subject matter of the text; predict the content of the text; generate questions or set the purpose of the reading (e.g. determine whether general information, specific details, arguments, etc. are sought).

B) **Strategies during reading**: Underlining key ideas, taking notes, identifying unknown words or concepts and clarifying their meaning or deducing it from the context, synthesising or outlining as we read, connecting ideas within the text or with the knowledge we have worked on, asking specific questions about the content, among others.

C) **Strategies after reading**: Identify the purpose of the text; synthesise or outline its content (in writing or orally); analyse it through questions that encourage deeper understanding and drawing conclusions; apply the

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knowledge acquired to reflect on issues related to the text; discuss or debate with others about its content; evaluate the validity and objectivity of the reading, considering the source, authorship and possible presence of bias; place the text in its social, political, cultural context; and so on.

5.3 Without attention there can be no comprehension: does the medium on which one reads have an influence?

Once learners decode fluently and effortlessly, apart from their knowledge, the attention with which they read is decisive for the comprehension of a text. Logically, the student's attention during reading depends on numerous factors: interest and motivation - where prior knowledge again plays an important role -, the purpose of the reading, the complexity of the text, the environment in which he/she reads and possible distractions, fatigue, emotional state and the strategies used during reading, among others. However, because of its relevance for decision-making in schools, there is one factor that deserves special attention: the medium in which students approach reading. In this respect, it is pertinent to ask how the format in which we read (analogue or digital) influences comprehension.

The mechanisms by which we humans learn do not seem to have changed because screens have appeared, or at least there is no evidence of this. Attention to what we do, to what we hear, to what we see, to what we read, continues to be an essential element for learning. We could consider that attention is the gateway to learning, which is why its impoverishment limits the ability to learn. Research has shown that the medium (screen or paper) conditions how reading a text is approached (Clinton, 2019; Delgado et al. 2018; Delgado and Salmerón, 2021; Mangen et al., 2013; Sidi et al., 2017). Almost two decades ago, Liu (2005) observed a decrease in sustained attention when reading on screen and found that we tend to read non-linearly and more selectively, searching for keywords and spending more time navigating and scanning the text, while spending less time on more concentrated, in-depth reading and making fewer annotations. When the text is on screen, there is an overconfidence in the reader, who reads in a more superficial way, overestimating their comprehension capacity, which leads to less deep processing, regardless of whether it is a long or short text (Sidi

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et al., 2017). This aspect is particularly relevant if we consider that our students are in the midst of a developmental and learning process. In this regard, the *Stavanger Declaration on the Future of Reading* (2018) highlighted that:

> Teachers and other educators must be made aware that rapid and indiscriminate swaps of print, paper, and pencils for digital technologies in primary education are not neutral. Unless accompanied by carefully developed digital learning tools and strategies, they may cause a setback in the development of children's reading comprehension and emerging critical thinking skills (para. 15).

Being aware that the medium is not neutral is the first and essential step in school decision-making. Attention, concentration and deep comprehension are more stimulated by reading on paper. On the other hand, reading in digital media favours more dispersion of attention, scanning reading and fragmented and superficial reading. Obviously, depending on the purpose, we need one type of reading or another and, naturally, both can occur on screen and on paper. Although both types of reading are necessary, without consolidating the former, we can hardly use the latter effectively. And certainly, the latter does not lead to the former, which is indispensable for intellectual development: "Depending on which processes dominate in the formation of the child's reading circuit, there will be profound differences in the way we read and think" (Wolf, 2020, p. 14).

For these reasons, from an educational perspective, it is essential to take into consideration that each format serves different purposes. None of this prevents the essential development of the *digital literacy* that schools must promote. *Digital literacy* refers not only to technical proficiency in digital environments, but also to using them and participating critically and reflexively in the information society (Castellví, 2020), which implies developing a deep understanding of how information is created, shared and consumed in the digital context. It is clear that reading in digital media is more complex than reading in linear texts on paper, not only because of the dispersion of attention inherent in the multimedia world, but also because accessing the information itself involves making relevant decisions prior to the act of reading: which entries do I select from the thousands offered by the search engine? What are the sources? Are they reliable? Are they valid? Do they serve my purpose? Does their complexity match my

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knowledge? Is the information of quality? And if the information is provided by an artificial intelligence programme, do I know which sources it is based on, can I verify the information through external sources, does it omit relevant information, does it show any bias, etc.? As we can see, there are many decisions to be made before even beginning to carefully read the digital information that the student has accessed. Clearly, the school must also teach how to make these decisions, but it must determine the most appropriate time and, ultimately, consider the reading format as a factor to be taken into consideration in the planning of reading instruction.

6. Conveying the pleasure of reading: an unavoidable objective of the school.

The latest PIRLS international reading survey (INEE, 2023) confirms what research has validated for decades: the greater the enjoyment of reading, the better the reading comprehension results. It is therefore essential to promote independent enjoyment of reading as a means of learning and entertainment. This objective should cover all educational stages, from early childhood education to the end of basic education, due to the innumerable benefits it brings to the personal, social and academic development of students. The scientific literature provides us with some strategies that have shown effectiveness in the promotion of intrinsic motivation towards the act of reading, which we have divided into four blocks:

(1) The family reading context: It is widely acknowledged that parents who enjoy reading and practice reading regularly are important role models for their children. Moreover, their own behaviours and beliefs can stimulate children's and adolescents' motivation to read (Mullis and Martin, 2020). Although schools have limited room for manoeuvre in this regard, they can undertake initiatives to create a supportive environment that promotes reading at home. These initiatives can include: providing parents with recommended reading lists for different ages and levels, facilitating book lending for students and families, raising parents' awareness of the importance of reading at home and providing them with resources and advice on how to create a reading-friendly environment, collaborating with municipal libraries, among others.

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(2) The subjective value of what is read: When students find the activities they do meaningful, such as reading a particular text, their interest in doing them increases (Eccles, 2005). At this point, prior knowledge plays a crucial role. According to Luri (2019b), knowledge is the major driver of attention and interest because it is what you already know that makes an activity an interesting educational experience - and not the activity itself. Knowledge acts as a driver of motivation to read. In fact, reading for meaningful content learning, knowledge acquisition and deep comprehension has been shown not only to improve comprehension, but also to stimulate reading motivation (Guthrie et al., 2004). However, to achieve this, as in any other teaching, it is essential that teachers have mastery of the content and pedagogical knowledge of it (Van Driel and Berry, 2010); and I would add that the way they interact with students and their ability to convey a passion for reading and knowledge are also catalysts for reading motivation. In this context, literary education acquires a relevant pedagogical function, since exposing students to a variety of genres, styles and authors through the teaching of literature gives them the opportunity to open new horizons, broaden their cultural background and cultivate a love of reading:

> The greatest difficulty in teaching literature stems from the simple fact that it has to reconcile two enormous tasks that seem to be, moreover, relatively opposed: to transmit to students, on the one hand, the importance of a literary tradition and a centuries-old cultural heritage, and to show them, on the other hand, the extraordinary value of literary texts for the analysis of society in all periods, for the development of the imagination and creativity of readers, as well as for improving their self-knowledge and personal growth (Real Academia Española, 2023, p. 38).

(3) Social interaction around reading: The way we act is strongly influenced by our social relationships (Resnick, 1991), so promoting social interaction through reading can have a significant impact on students' intrinsic motivation, as reading is perceived as an act of a social nature (Wigfield and Gladstone, 2016). In this sense, conversations about books and collaboration among students have been shown to be effective in increasing interest in reading (Schiefele et al., 2012). To this end, discussion groups, book

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clubs (Whittingham and Huffman, 2009), collaborative activities, literary events and other similar initiatives can be encouraged.

(4) Perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993): Students who perceive themselves as good readers are more likely to engage in reading activities, which in turn enables them to develop more advanced reading strategies and access more effective, interactive, strategic and rapid text comprehension (Yoğurtçu, K., 2013). In order to encourage students to perceive themselves as good readers, it is essential to select texts appropriate to their level. Providing them with options to choose from, setting clear and achievable reading goals for each student, encouraging independent reading, highlighting their achievements and efforts to build self-confidence and recognising knowledge gained through reading are essential strategies (Guthrie and Klauda, 2014; van der Sande et al., 2023). In this context, it is particularly relevant that students have access to a wide variety of readings in terms of topics and genres and that they are appropriate to their level.

Finally, in addition to the strategies outlined above, an increasing number of schools are using *Sustained Silent Reading* to encourage reading habits. This consists of dedicating a period of time each day to independent reading by students of books of their choice. While it is true that there has been controversy and a lack of consensus about the effectiveness of this approach in improving reading (Garan and DeVoogd, 2008), research provides some guidelines that reflect many of the considerations mentioned above (Hiebert and Reutzel, 2010). In particular, the effectiveness of these reading programmes can be increased if they include actions such as:

(1) Guide students in the autonomous selection of books, especially those with reading difficulties. Books should be of interest to them, cover a variety of genres and topics, and be appropriate to their reading level.

(2) Encourage conversations about the books they are reading, both between teacher and student, and among the students themselves.

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(3) Take advantage of the time dedicated to silent reading, clearly establishing the rules and expectations for this reading space, emphasising the importance of this activity.

(4) Supervise independent reading and promote accountability and follow-up by students, including reading logs, short reviews and anecdotal observations.

On the other hand, as not all students benefit equally from these periods of silent reading, this time can be used to provide direct and systematic instruction to students with reading difficulties to help them overcome their obstacles.

Conclusions

Reading should be considered one of the highest priorities at school because it conditions the acquisition of knowledge and skills in all areas and subjects. For this reason, learning to read is essential for the academic success of all students, especially those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds or with specific educational needs. In this article, we have presented and supported the aspects that have an impact on this crucial learning, as well as the strategies that have been shown to be most effective. According to the above, the efforts of a school that is clearly and resolutely committed to reading should be focused on:

1. To systematise the development of phonological awareness and naming speed in pre-school education and in the first years of primary education in order to facilitate the learning of decoding.

2. Promote children's oral language and expand their knowledge and vocabulary from pre-school education, as it is their cultural background that will enable them to understand texts when they automatically decode them.

3. Explicitly and systematically teach decoding, mainly through phonetic methods, and focus on reading practice to improve fluency, both reading speed in the early stages and prosody later on, because fluency is an essential bridge between decoding and comprehension.

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4. To assess students' progress systematically, objectively and reliably in order to detect learning difficulties and to address them appropriately as soon as the first signs appear.

5. Develop a knowledge-rich, well-organised, structured, coherent, cumulative and gradual curriculum, with plenty of reading, since reading comprehension is based on mastery of vocabulary and the repertoire of general and specific knowledge.

6. Plan the teaching of vocabulary, both through implicit learning through frequent, varied and rich linguistic experiences, and through explicit teaching of words and strategies for learning them and promoting interest in words and their meanings.

7. Model reading and carry out strategies that help a better and deeper understanding of texts, mainly those based on writing, oral language and knowledge of textual and linguistic aspects, both individually and collaboratively.

8. To make a special effort to select quality books, with the maximum variety of subjects and genres, organising them in a clear progression of difficulty, both in terms of lexical-semantic and grammatical issues.

9. Promote independent reading for pleasure and intrinsic motivation to read as a means of learning and entertainment.

10. Prioritise reading on paper over reading on screen in the literacy process and be aware that the medium (digital or print) conditions the way in which one reads. Also, plan the development of digital literacy in order to achieve maximum reading competence in both formats by the end of basic education.

11. Especially in secondary education, include reading activities with specific texts in all subjects to develop content specific to the subject area and explicitly support students' comprehension.

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