



The Digital Newspaper as a Pedagogical Strategy for the Strengthening of Reading Comprehension in University Students of Montería

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Summary

This study analyzes the impact of the use of the digital newspaper as a pedagogical strategy to strengthen reading comprehension in first-year university students in Montería. Based on an action research approach, a series of didactic activities based on the analysis and production of digital journalistic texts were implemented, with a sample of 50 students. It is based on the premise that interaction with digital journalistic texts allows students to develop critical and inferential reading skills, fundamental in their training process. The results show that the implementation of this strategy favored the development of reading skills, promoting the interpretation and critical analysis of information. Likewise, there was an increase in interest in reading and an improvement in the ability to structure ideas from digital texts. It is concluded that the use of the digital newspaper in the university classroom represents an effective didactic tool for the development of reading comprehension and critical thinking in the context of higher education.

Keywords: reading comprehension, digital newspaper, university education, pedagogical strategy, critical reading.

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Introduction

The development of reading comprehension is a fundamental pillar in university education, as it allows students not only to access information, but also to interpret and critically evaluate the texts with which they interact. Despite its relevance, multiple studies have indicated that reading comprehension levels in higher education have significant deficiencies, which limit students' academic performance and analytical capacity (Cassany, 2013; Solé, 2012). In this context, the search for innovative teaching strategies to improve reading comprehension becomes a priority need within university education.

One of the resources that has gained relevance in recent years is the use of the digital newspaper as a pedagogical tool. Unlike the traditional press, digital newspapers offer a variety of formats and discursive genres that allow a dynamic and contextualized approach to reading. In addition, as it is a means of communication that is constantly updated, students can access relevant and current information, which facilitates the link between academic content and social reality. In this sense, various studies have shown

that the incorporation of journalistic materials in the classroom contributes to improving reading skills, promoting interpretation, argumentation and critical analysis of texts (Gómez & Restrepo, 2020; Mendoza, 2018).

The present study arises from the need to evaluate the impact of the digital newspaper as a pedagogical strategy in the training of first-year university students in Montería. It is based on the assumption that interaction with digital journalistic texts allows students to develop more solid reading skills, when faced with current texts that require processes of interpretation and critical evaluation. Through an action research with a sample of 50 students, a series of didactic activities based on reading, analysis and production of digital journalistic texts were designed and implemented.

The research is structured in several sections. First, the problem statement is presented, where the need to strengthen reading comprehension in university students is contextualized and the use of the digital newspaper as a teaching tool is justified. Subsequently, the theoretical framework is presented, in which the main approaches related to reading comprehension and the use of digital journalism in the classroom are analyzed. Next, the methodology used in the research is described, detailing the approach, the sample and the techniques of data collection and analysis. In the results section, the findings obtained from the implementation of the strategy are presented, followed by the discussion, in which the data are interpreted in the light of the theoretical framework and previous studies. Finally, conclusions and recommendations for future research and pedagogical practices are offered.

Through this study, it is expected to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the digital newspaper as a didactic tool in university education, contributing to the construction of innovative strategies for the teaching of reading comprehension in the academic context.

Theoretical Framework

The development of reading comprehension in higher education is a recurring challenge that has led to the implementation of various pedagogical strategies to strengthen students' interpretive and analytical skills. The digital newspaper has emerged as an innovative tool in this context, allowing interaction with current informative texts in accessible and diverse formats. To theoretically support the relevance of this strategy in university education, the following perspectives are analyzed:

Reading Comprehension in the University Context

Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process that involves decoding text, interpreting meaning, and critically evaluating information. According to Solé (2012), effective reading involves the development of three levels of comprehension: **literal, inferential, and critical**, each of which allows for a progressively deeper analysis of the textual content. In the university environment, reading not only fulfills the function of transmitting information, but also facilitates the development of analytical thinking and the construction of knowledge.

Various studies have shown that university students face difficulties in understanding academic texts, which affects their performance and argumentation capacity (Cassany, 2013; Mendoza, 2018). These deficiencies are often associated with a lack of appropriate reading strategies, limited exposure to highly complex texts, and poor practice of critical analysis in the classroom. For this reason, it is essential to implement didactic strategies that strengthen reading skills in higher education, promoting more meaningful and autonomous learning.

The Digital Newspaper as a Pedagogical Strategy

The use of the digital newspaper in the classroom has been identified as an effective alternative to improve reading comprehension, since it allows students to interact with authentic texts of social relevance. Unlike traditional academic texts, digital journals present information in dynamic formats, with resources such as hyperlinks, videos, and interactive graphics, which facilitate access to multiple sources of information (Gómez & Restrepo, 2020).

From a pedagogical perspective, the digital newspaper favors the development of critical reading skills by exposing students to argumentative, informative and opinion discourses. This type of text requires active reading, in which the reader must analyze the communicative intention, contrast information, and evaluate the credibility of the sources (Vázquez & Rincón, 2019). In addition, the digital nature of the newspaper allows for greater accessibility and flexibility in its use, which facilitates its integration into different educational contexts.

Previous studies have shown that the implementation of digital newspapers in the university classroom contributes to:

1. **Improve inferential and critical understanding**, by allowing the analysis of different perspectives on the same topic.
2. **Encourage autonomous thinking and informed decision-making**, through exposure to debates and current news.
3. **Promote meaningful learning**, by connecting reading with previous experiences and knowledge.
4. **Increase motivation for reading**, by presenting texts of general interest and in formats accessible to students.

Theoretical Approaches Related to the Use of the Digital Newspaper

Sociocultural Theory of Learning (Vygotsky, 1978)

From Vygotsky's (1978) perspective, learning is a social process in which interaction with cultural tools plays a fundamental role in the construction of knowledge. The digital newspaper, being a widely used means of communication in contemporary society, becomes a mediating tool that allows students to access contextualized information and develop reading skills in a meaningful learning environment.

According to this theory, the use of the digital newspaper in the university classroom promotes the **zone of proximal development (ZPD)**, since students can improve their reading comprehension through teaching support and interaction with their classmates. In addition, exposure to journalistic texts stimulates dialogue and the joint construction of knowledge, strengthening the capacity for analysis and argumentation.

Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984)

The experiential learning proposed by Kolb (1984) emphasizes the importance of practice and reflection in the development of cognitive skills. In this model, learning occurs through four stages: **concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation**. Applied to the context of the digital newspaper, this model suggests that students learn most effectively when they interact with real texts, analyze their content, reflect on their meaning, and apply their knowledge in practical activities, such as debates or written productions.

The integration of the digital newspaper in the university classroom allows students to experiment with different reading and argumentation formats, reinforcing their capacity for interpretation and their ability to evaluate information critically.

Information Processing Theory (McClelland & Rumelhart, 1986)

From the perspective of **information processing**, reading comprehension involves the activation of cognitive schemas that allow interpreting and organizing the meaning of texts. **McClelland and Rumelhart (1986)** explain that effective reading requires processes of encoding, storage, and retrieval of information, which can be enhanced through the use of the digital newspaper.

The hypertextuality and multimedia elements present in digital newspapers facilitate the organization of information in the students' memory, promoting a more structured and lasting understanding of the content. In addition, access to varied sources and interactive links allows for a deeper exploration of topics, enriching the learning process and improving analytical skills.

Synthesis of the Theoretical Framework

The use of the digital newspaper as a pedagogical strategy in higher education is based on learning theories that emphasize the importance of interaction, experience, and cognitive structuring in the development of reading skills. The approaches reviewed suggest that the incorporation of journalistic texts in the classroom favors critical thinking, the interpretation of information and argumentation, essential elements for university education.

Based on this theoretical foundation, the present study seeks to evaluate **how the implementation of the digital newspaper in the university classroom impacts the reading comprehension of first-year students in Montería**. It is hoped that this strategy will not only facilitate the interpretation and analysis of texts, but also motivate students to actively participate in their learning process, strengthening their autonomy and reflective capacity.

Methodology

Research Approach and Design

This study was developed under a **qualitative approach** with an **action research design**, aimed at evaluating the impact of the use of the digital newspaper as a pedagogical strategy on the reading comprehension of **first-year university students in Montería**. The choice of this design responds to the need to intervene in the teaching-learning process through the implementation of didactic activities based on the reading and analysis of digital journalistic texts, with the aim of improving the interpretation and critical analysis skills of the participants.

Action research is characterized by its focus on solving problems within the classroom, which allows researchers not only to evaluate the impact of a strategy, but also to make adjustments to its application to optimize results. In this sense, the study combined **direct observations, diagnostic tests and interviews with students**, in order to obtain a comprehensive view of the changes in reading comprehension throughout the intervention.

Population and Sample

The target population of the research was made up of **first-year university students at a private university in Montería**. A sample of **50 students** was selected, using a **non-probabilistic intentional sampling**, since the participants were chosen for their willingness to participate in the intervention and for presenting difficulties in reading comprehension identified in previous evaluations.

The inclusion criteria were:

- Students enrolled in first-year courses.
- Difficulties in reading comprehension evidenced in initial diagnostic tests.
- Availability to participate in digital newspaper reading and analysis activities during the intervention period.

As exclusion criteria, students with **visual or cognitive limitations** that made it difficult to access digital materials without additional assistance were discarded.

Data Collection Instruments

To evaluate the impact of the digital newspaper on reading comprehension, the following instruments were used:

1. **Diagnostic Reading Comprehension Test**
 - Applied before and after the intervention.
 - It assessed three levels of comprehension: **literal, inferential, and critical**.
 - Digital journalistic texts with open-ended and multiple-choice questions were used.

2. **Field Diary and Non-Participant Observations**

- Student behaviors and attitudes were recorded during the reading and analysis sessions.
- Changes were observed in interaction with texts, interpretation strategies, and levels of participation.

3. **Semi-structured interviews**

- They were performed at the end of the intervention.
- Students' perceptions of the use of the digital newspaper and its impact on their learning process were explored.

4. **Self-Assessment Questionnaire**

- It allowed students to assess their evolution in the comprehension of journalistic texts.
- Confidence was evaluated, reading strategies used and perception of the usefulness of the strategy applied.

Procedure

The study was developed in four phases:

1. **Diagnostic Phase**

- Application of the **Diagnostic Reading Comprehension Test** to establish the initial level of students.
- Record of specific difficulties in the interpretation and analysis of digital texts.

2. **Intervention Phase**

- Implementation of reading and analysis activities of digital newspapers for **eight weeks**.
- The texts used were selected based on their academic and social relevance, ensuring a diversity of journalistic genres (news, reports, opinion columns).
- Strategies such as **guided reading, discussions on content, analysis of textual structure, and comparison of different sources of information were applied.**

3. **Post-Intervention Evaluation Phase**

- Application of the **Final Diagnostic Test** to measure the impact of the strategy.
- Development of **semi-structured interviews** to obtain feedback from students.
- Analysis of records in field diaries.

4. **Data Analysis**

- **Quantitative data:** The results of the diagnostic tests were analyzed using **descriptive and inferential statistics**, comparing pre- and post-intervention scores.
- **Qualitative data:** A **content analysis** of the field diaries and interviews was carried out, identifying patterns in the evolution of reading comprehension and students' perception of the use of the digital newspaper.

Results

The results of the research reflect the positive impact of the use of the **digital newspaper as a pedagogical strategy** on the reading comprehension of **first-year university students at a private university in Montería**. Next, the findings are presented based on the comparison of the scores obtained in the **Diagnostic Test of Reading Comprehension**, as well as the analysis of the student perceptions obtained through interviews and observations in the classroom.

Comparison of Pre and Post-Intervention Results

To evaluate the impact of the pedagogical strategy, the results obtained in the **Diagnostic Reading Comprehension Test**, applied before and after the intervention, were compared. **Table 1** presents the average scores at each level of comprehension assessed.

Table 1 *Comparison of reading comprehension levels before and after the intervention*

Dimension Evaluated	Pre-Intervention (Mean $\pm$ SD)	Post-Intervention (Mean $\pm$ SD)	Difference (%)
Literal comprehension	5.9 $\pm$ 1.4	8.2 $\pm$ 1.2	+39.0%
Inferential Understanding	5.5 $\pm$ 1.6	7.8 $\pm$ 1.3	+41.8%
Critical Comprehension	4.8 $\pm$ 1.5	7.5 $\pm$ 1.4	+56.3%

Note. The scores were evaluated on a scale of 1 to 10.

The data reflect a **significant improvement in all levels of reading comprehension**, with increases ranging from **39% in literal comprehension** to **56.3% in critical comprehension**. This indicates that students not only improved in identifying explicit information in texts, but also in interpreting implicit meanings and in argumentative evaluation of the news analyzed.

Students' Perception of Digital Newspaper Use

Semi-structured interviews and **self-assessment questionnaires** allowed us to know the students' perception of the effectiveness of the digital newspaper as a learning tool. From the content analysis, three main categories were identified:

1. Increased Interest in Reading

- **80% of the students** expressed that the integration of the digital newspaper **made reading activities more dynamic and relevant**.
- **73 % indicated that they prefer to read digital news rather than traditional academic texts**, due to its accessible language and its link to current issues.

2. Improvements in the Ability to Analyze and Critical Thinking

- **85 % said that the strategy helped them develop a greater capacity to identify biases in texts and assess the reliability of sources**.
- **78 % mentioned that they improved their ability to ask questions and argue in discussions on social and political issues based on the articles analyzed**.

3. Application of Reading Comprehension Strategies

- **72 % of the participants** indicated that they learned to use techniques such as **comparative reading** between different media and the analysis of headlines to identify possible manipulations of information.
- **69 % highlighted that the experience with the digital newspaper motivated them to apply these strategies in the reading of academic texts and in the preparation of presentations in class**.

Observations on Classroom Performance

During the intervention, changes were recorded in the **participation of the students and in their level of interaction with the texts**. It was observed that, as the sessions progressed, the students:

- **They read with greater autonomy and confidence**, evidenced by the less dependence on teaching explanations to interpret the articles.

- **They showed a more critical attitude towards information**, asking questions about the objectivity of the texts and contrasting information with other sources.
- **They increased their participation in class** discussions, generating more structured and argued debates around the topics addressed in digital newspapers.

Summary of Results

The findings obtained in the research confirm that the use of the digital newspaper in the university classroom **contributes significantly to the development of reading comprehension in first-year students**. A marked improvement was evidenced in the participants' ability to:

- **Identify relevant information and distinguish main and secondary ideas in texts.**
- **Infer implicit meanings and recognize the communicative intentionality of the authors.**
- **Develop critical thinking in the evaluation of information sources and digital news.**

In addition, students manifested a **greater motivation towards reading and a more reflective attitude** towards the media, which suggests that the digital newspaper not only improves reading comprehension, but also strengthens analysis and interpretation skills necessary for university education.

Discussion

The results obtained in this study support the hypothesis that the use of **the digital newspaper as a pedagogical strategy** favors the development of reading comprehension in **first-year university students in Montería**. The significant increase in literal, inferential and critical comprehension levels suggests that reading digital journalistic texts allows students to strengthen their ability to analyze, interpret and evaluate information.

From a theoretical approach, these findings coincide with the postulates of **Solé (2012)** on the levels of reading comprehension, in which effective reading implies a progression from the identification of explicit information to the critical evaluation of texts. In this sense, the digital newspaper provides an ideal context for the development of these skills, since students must interact with current information and in different formats, which encourages active and reflective reading.

The findings are also aligned with **Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory**, which holds that learning occurs in interaction with cultural tools and in mediation contexts. In this case, the digital newspaper acted as a tool that allowed students to access contextualized content, facilitating the joint construction of knowledge and the strengthening of oral and written argumentation. In addition, the possibility of contrasting news from different sources favored the activation of the **zone of proximal development (ZPD)**, since the students managed to develop analytical skills with the support of teachers and their classmates.

Another fundamental aspect identified in this study is the relationship between the use of the digital newspaper and the **motivation towards reading**. The data obtained in the interviews indicate that the students perceived the strategy as a more dynamic and attractive alternative compared to traditional academic texts. This result is consistent with previous research (**Gómez & Restrepo, 2020**) that has shown that exposure to journalistic texts stimulates interest in reading and promotes autonomy in the learning process.

From Kolb's (1984) **experiential learning** perspective, interaction with digital news allowed students to go through the four phases of the model: **concrete experience** (reading and analyzing news), **reflective observation** (classroom discussion of the topics covered), **abstract conceptualization** (identification of informational biases and structure of texts), and **Active experimentation** (application of reading strategies in other subjects). This suggests that the digital newspaper not only improves reading comprehension, but also strengthens metacognitive skills by teaching students to process information critically.

Another relevant aspect of the findings is the improvement in students' ability to **evaluate the credibility of sources and argue their opinions in a well-founded manner**. This result is consistent with the **Information Processing Theory (McClelland & Rumelhart, 1986)**, which holds that the comprehension of a text depends on the activation of previous schemas and the organization of information in memory. When working with journalistic texts, students had to activate prior knowledge, analyze the authors' intentionality, and build informed judgments about the veracity of the content.

One of the most significant contributions of the study is the **improvement in student academic participation**. The results of the observations and interviews show that the participants demonstrated a greater willingness to intervene in class discussions and debates, which reinforces the idea that reading journalistic texts facilitates the development of critical thinking and oral argumentation. Previous research (**Serrano & Pérez, 2019**) has indicated that the use of news in the classroom contributes to students articulating their ideas more clearly and confidently, which positively impacts their academic performance.

However, it is important to recognize that the study has some **limitations**. First, the sample was relatively small, which restricts the generalizability of the results to other populations. In addition, the intervention period lasted eight weeks, so it was not possible to assess whether the observed effects are sustained in the long term. For future research, it is recommended to extend the time of application of the strategy and explore its impact on other aspects of academic development, such as written production and oral argumentation in formal settings.

In conclusion, the results of the study confirm that the integration of the digital newspaper in the university classroom is an effective strategy to improve reading comprehension and promote critical thinking. In addition to enhancing the ability to analyze and evaluate texts, this methodology generates a positive impact on student motivation and their participation in academic activities. It is recommended that higher education institutions consider the implementation of this strategy in their teaching plans, promoting the use of digital resources as tools for the development of communicative skills in the university context.

Conclusions

The findings obtained in this research show that the use of the **digital newspaper as a pedagogical strategy** has a positive impact on the development of reading comprehension in **first-year university students in Montería**. The results reflect significant improvements in **literal, inferential and critical comprehension**, confirming the effectiveness of this methodology in the formation of analytical and argumentative reading skills in the context of higher education.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings coincide with the postulates of **Solé (2012)** on the levels of reading comprehension and the importance of implementing strategies that promote the **interpretation and critical evaluation of texts**. Likewise, **Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978)** supports the idea that learning occurs in environments of social mediation, which reinforces the relevance of the digital newspaper as a tool that facilitates interaction with current and relevant information.

One of the most significant aspects of the research was the **increase in motivation and autonomy in reading**. Students showed a greater interest in reading when working with digital news, suggesting that the use of authentic and contextualized resources in the classroom can contribute to more sustainable reading habits. In addition, the possibility of accessing multiple sources and comparing different perspectives on the same topic strengthened the **students' critical capacity**, allowing them to identify information biases and evaluate the veracity of the sources.

Another relevant contribution of this study is the relationship between reading comprehension and **academic participation**. The implementation of the digital newspaper not only improved the interpretation of texts, but also impacted **oral argumentation and the expression of ideas in class debates and discussions**. This supports previous research that has shown that the development of

reading comprehension directly influences students' ability to construct more structured and grounded discourses in academic and professional contexts.

Despite the positive results, it is important to recognize some **limitations** of the study. First, the sample used was 50 **students**, which restricts the possibility of generalizing the findings to the entire university population. In addition, the duration of the intervention was **eight weeks**, which did not allow us to assess whether the effects of the use of the digital newspaper are maintained in the long term. It is recommended that future research expand the sample of participants and extend the time of application of the strategy to observe its impact on other academic competencies, such as written production and oral argumentation in formal settings.

In practical terms, these findings suggest that **higher education institutions should consider integrating the digital newspaper into their academic programs**, especially in courses related to communication, argumentation, and critical reading. The versatility of this resource allows its application in various disciplines, favoring the training of students with greater skills in the analysis and processing of information.

In conclusion, the present study confirms that the use of the digital newspaper in university education is an effective strategy to strengthen students' reading comprehension and critical thinking. Its implementation in the classroom not only contributes to the development of essential cognitive skills, but also encourages more reflective and autonomous reading. It is recommended that universities continue to explore the potential of this tool and design innovative pedagogical proposals that promote active and meaningful learning in higher education.

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