



**TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF COTOPAXI
PUJILI EXTENSION**

**PEDAGOGY OF NATIONAL AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM**

RESEARCH REPORT

READING COMPREHENSION IN EFL YOUNG LEARNERS

Research report before obtaining the bachelor degree in National and Foreign language
Pedagogy, English Major

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**ECUADOR - PUJILÍ
AUGUST 2025**

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Además, certifico que las ideas, conceptos, procedimientos y resultados vertidos en el presente trabajo investigativo, son de mi exclusiva responsabilidad.

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“READING COMPREHENSION IN EFL YOUNG LEARNERS”, de Guerra Taipe Adriana Gabriela, Márquez García Camila Milena, de la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros, considero que dicho Informe Investigativo es merecedor del aval de aprobación al cumplir las normas técnicas, traducción y formatos previstos, así como también ha incorporado las observaciones y recomendaciones propuestas en la pre-defensa.

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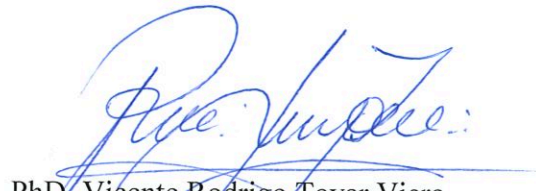
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I thank God for always giving me the strength to continue in the face of adversity, for guiding me along the path of prudence, and for giving me wisdom to improve day by day in my professional work. I also want to sincerely thank my thesis tutor, Mg. Sonia Castro, for her hard work and dedication. Her knowledge, guidance, work ethic, persistence, patience, and motivation have been fundamental to my development as a researcher. I express my sincere gratitude to the members of my thesis committee for their dedication of time, their constructive observations, and their valuable recommendations that significantly contributed to enriching this work. Last but not least, I want to express my sincere gratitude to our families, whose words of encouragement have motivated us to persevere and achieve our goals. This accomplishment would not have been possible without them.

Guerra Taipe Adriana Gabriela

Marquez Garcia Camila Milena

DEDICATION

It has been a year full of effort and sacrifice. Now that this stage is over, I must first thank God for giving me the health to achieve my goals, for allowing me to reach this point on my journey, where I have become a true professional, and I hope to never let go of his hand. To my beloved mother, Marcia Taipe, my eternal gratitude for her unconditional support, her wise advice, the values she instilled in me, her constant motivation, her patience, and her inexhaustible love. Her help has been fundamental; she has been by my side even in the most difficult moments. This work was not easy, but her encouragement and companionship gave me the strength to continue. I dedicate this project to her as a token of gratitude for all her love and dedication. To my beloved aunt, Nancy Taipe, thank you for being there for me during the most important moments of my life, for believing in me, and for being a constant example of effort, perseverance, and courage. Your love and faith in me have been an invaluable source of inspiration.

Guerra Taipe Adriana Gabriela

DEDICATION

With deep gratitude, I dedicate this thesis to those who have been my greatest strength throughout this journey. To my husband, for his unconditional love, understanding, and constant support, even in the most difficult moments. To my daughter, my greatest inspiration, for motivating me every day to keep going and give my best. To my mother, for her emotional support, her words of encouragement, and for teaching me to never give up. To my entire family, for their love, patience, and faith in me. To God, for giving me the strength, wisdom, and health necessary to complete this stage. And to all my teachers, who generously shared their knowledge and left their mark on my professional training. Thank you for being part of this achievement.

Camila Milena Márquez García

PEDAGOGY OF NATIONAL AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

THEME: READING COMPREHENSION IN EFL YOUNG LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill in second language acquisition, especially for young learners speaking English as a foreign language (EFL). The present study, “Reading Comprehension in Young EFL Learners,” focuses on understanding children’s comprehension at the four established levels: literal, interpretive, critical, and creative. The main objective is to analyze the reading comprehension level of young EFL learners from the Calvario neighborhood of Guaytacama, which emerged from the community service practices of “Escuelas populares de Inglés.” The research adopts a quantitative and descriptive approach. A questionnaire was designed based on an adapted Cambridge reading questionnaire, composed of ten items classified according to the four aforementioned levels of comprehension. The results are categorized into performance levels such as high, medium, and low. The sample consisted of 40 students who take English classes at the “Salvando Vidas” Christian Center. The results of the statistical analysis indicate that students performed best at the literal and creative levels, demonstrating skills in recalling explicit information and expressing ideas imaginatively. In contrast, the interpretive level was moderate, and the critical level presented the lowest results, suggesting difficulties in inference and evaluative thinking. The findings also underscore the need for teachers to implement specific strategies that strengthen complex thinking, especially at the interpretive and critical levels. It is recommended that motivation and engagement be fostered through reading strategies that progressively strengthen comprehension at all levels, thus contributing to long-term academic success.

Keywords: Reading comprehension levels, EFL students, Performance levels, Cambridge Assessment.

UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA DE COTOPAXI
PEDAGOGÍA DE LOS IDIOMAS NACIONALES Y EXTRANJEROS
PROGRAMA DE PREGRADO

TEMA: COMPRENSIÓN LECTORA EN JÓVENES ESTUDIANTES DE INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA

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RESUMEN

La comprensión lectora es una habilidad fundamental en la adquisición de una segunda lengua, especialmente para los jóvenes estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL). El presente estudio, "Comprensión Lectora en Jóvenes Estudiantes de EFL", se centra en comprender la comprensión de los niños en los cuatro niveles establecidos: literal, interpretativo, crítico y creativo. El objetivo principal es analizar el nivel de comprensión lectora de los jóvenes estudiantes de EFL del barrio Calvario de Guaytacama, surgidos de las prácticas de servicio comunitario de las "Escuelas Populares de Inglés". La investigación adopta un enfoque cuantitativo y descriptivo. Se diseñó un cuestionario basado en un cuestionario de lectura de Cambridge adaptado, compuesto por diez ítems clasificados según los cuatro niveles de comprensión mencionados. Los resultados se categorizan en niveles de rendimiento como alto, medio y bajo. La muestra consistió en 40 estudiantes que toman clases de inglés en el Centro Cristiano "Salvando Vidas". Los resultados del análisis estadístico indican que los estudiantes se desempeñaron mejor en los niveles literal y creativo, demostrando habilidades para recordar información explícita y expresar ideas con imaginación. En contraste, el nivel interpretativo fue moderado, y el nivel crítico presentó los resultados más bajos, lo que sugiere dificultades en la inferencia y el pensamiento evaluativo. Los hallazgos también subrayan la necesidad de que los docentes implementen estrategias específicas que fortalezcan el pensamiento complejo, especialmente en los niveles interpretativo y crítico. Se recomienda fomentar la motivación y el compromiso mediante estrategias de lectura que fortalezcan progresivamente la comprensión en todos los niveles, contribuyendo así al éxito académico a largo plazo.

Palabras Clave: Niveles de comprensión lectora, estudiantes de EFL, niveles de rendimiento, evaluación de Cambridge.

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1. General Information

Project Title:

Reading Comprehension in EFL Young Learners

Starting date:

April 2025

Ending date:

August 2025

Place of Research:

Technical University of Cotopaxi

Sponsoring Faculty:

Extension Pujilí

Sponsoring career:

National and Foreign Languages Pedagogy English

Macro project of the career:

Academic discourse: A transdisciplinary study of education and linguistics in linguistic-communicative contexts for teaching English.

Research Group:

Guerra Taipe Adriana Gabriela

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Mg. Castro Bungacho Sonia Jimena

Knowledge Area:

Education

Line of research:

Education, communication, and graphic design for human and social development.

Sublines of research of the Extension:

Teacher professional development, school management, and learning communities.

2. Problem Statement

Globally, the reading comprehension levels of young English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners is essential, as it is a key determinant of their overall language proficiency and academic success. Despite the increasing integration of English into educational systems worldwide, many learners fail to achieve satisfactory reading comprehension levels (Mullis et al., 2017). This issue is particularly relevant in countries like Ecuador, where English has been a mandatory subject since 2016. However, national evaluations reveal that students' English proficiency levels, particularly in reading, often fall below the standards expected for their grade level, reflecting the need for focused assessment and improvement initiatives.

In Ecuador, the province of Cotopaxi faces significant challenges in elevating the reading comprehension levels of young EFL learners. Urban and rural disparities are evident, with rural areas experiencing greater difficulties due to limited resources, underqualified teachers, and insufficient exposure to English texts (Education, 2021). For instance, in cities such as Latacunga, diagnostic studies reveal that many students struggle with basic reading skills, such as identifying the main idea, understanding context, and making inferences. Without an accurate understanding of students' current reading comprehension levels, targeted interventions to enhance their learning outcomes remain ineffective.

The Calvario neighborhood, which is part of the Community Service internship project called "Escuelas populares de Inglés," located in the parish of Guaytacama in Cotopaxi, exemplifies the need for localized of reading comprehension levels among young EFL learners. Preliminary observations suggest that students in this neighborhood may struggle with fundamental reading skills in English, but there is no concrete data to confirm their proficiency levels. This research will assess the reading comprehension level of young EFL learners in the Calvario neighborhood, part of the Community Service internship project called "Escuelas populares de Inglés" focusing on their ability to understand texts, identify key ideas, and interpret information. By diagnosing their current level, the study aims to provide data-driven insights that inform tailored interventions to improve their reading comprehension and overall EFL proficiency.

3. Objectives

3.1 General Objective:

To analyze the reading level comprehension in EFL young learners from the Calvario neighborhood of Guaytacama, which arose from community service practices, “Escuelas Populares de Inglés”.

3.2 Specific Objectives:

- To identify the main levels of reading comprehension demonstrated by EFL young learners.
- To analyze the instruments to collect data about the student's level.
- To describe the level of knowledge in reading comprehension.

4. Activities and Task System in Relation to the Objectives Proposed

Table 1

Activities and task System

Specific Objectives	Activities (tasks)	Result of the activity	Evidence
To identify the main levels of reading comprehension demonstrated by EFL young learners.	Theoretical Framework Enlist topics and subtopics	Clear understanding of key theoretical foundations supporting EFL reading comprehension.	Theoretical framework chapter draft with APA references.

<p>To analyze the instruments to collect data about the student's level.</p>	<p>Selection and review of existing instruments (questionnaire, reading comprehension)</p>	<p>Appropriately designed or adapted instruments for data collection.</p>	<p>Selected instruments: a comprehensive reading taken from Cambridge's pre-A1 starters level, modified according to the sector environment, containing multiple-choice questions and paragraph recognition with justification. Statistical analysis (tables/charts) and descriptive analysis.</p>
<p>To describe the level of knowledge in reading comprehension.</p>	<p>Application of a questionnaire-based instrument to students.</p>	<p>Detailed description of students' reading comprehension levels and challenges.</p>	<p>Conclusions and recommendations.</p>

5. Research Question

The following question evaluates the students' reading comprehension level, which is essential to identify difficulties, improve pedagogical strategies and promote more effective learning.

- What is the level of reading comprehension in EFL learners?

6. Justification

Reading comprehension is a crucial skill for young learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Research suggests that difficulties in reading comprehension are often linked to various factors, including vocabulary knowledge, decoding skills, and the ability to understand the text's meaning in context (Snow, 2002). This skill is essential not only for academic success

but also for overall language development (Grabe and Stoller, 2019). Reading comprehension is an essential skill in learning a foreign language, particularly in the case of English as a foreign language (EFL). This research is of particular importance due to its direct influence on the development of young learners' general language competence and their academic success, because in the initial stage of language learning, reading serves as a fundamental tool for acquiring vocabulary, improving grammar, and developing critical skills such as inference and contextual analysis. For example, a study by Hezam et al. (2022), reveals that English as a foreign language (EFL) learner face various challenges in reading comprehension, especially when faced with complex texts. These challenges include a lack of adequate skills to decode text, limitations in vocabulary knowledge, and difficulties in inferring meaning in specific contexts. Many students reported feeling frustrated or overwhelmed, indicating that a lack of confidence and limited exposure to the target language can significantly hamper their ability to fully understand written texts, resulting in significantly poor reading comprehension levels, emphasizing the severity of underachievement and lack of progress in their ability to understand written texts.

The impact of this research could be significant for both students and educators. By improving reading comprehension levels, young EFL learners can strengthen their ability to grasp and interpret texts, fostering greater confidence in their language abilities and enhancing their academic performance. For educators, understanding the elements that affect reading comprehension helps them better evaluate and support students' development, ensuring that learners achieve proficiency in reading within a foreign language.

This research is important because it provides a clear diagnosis of students' strengths and weaknesses in Reading and it can serve as a basis for implementing pedagogical strategies specifically designed to counteract these difficulties. Common challenges in reading comprehension include limited vocabulary, difficulty making inferences, trouble identifying main ideas, and challenges understanding complex sentence structures. These problems can hinder students' ability to fully grasp the meaning of texts and affect their overall comprehension. By identifying these specific difficulties, educators can develop targeted interventions to address gaps in students' skills, offering personalized support that improves their ability to effectively understand and interpret written content. By pinpointing the areas in which students struggle, educators can develop targeted interventions and reinforcement activities that improve their reading comprehension skills. This research not only have a direct

impact on young students, but also provide local educators with a deeper understanding of the specific needs of students, allowing them to offer more appropriate and effective support. As Grabe (2009) points out, increased reading comprehension not only improves academic performance, but also expands learners cognitive and social opportunities. Furthermore, the success of this project will contribute to the empowerment of the community, fostering a more inclusive and accessible educational environment for all.

The direct beneficiaries are the elementary school students of the Calvario neighborhood of the Guaytacama parish since this project aims to implement an evaluation test to analyze the students' current level of foreign language proficiency in the English area. The importance of this study presents some limitations. The limitations of this research on the level of reading comprehension in young learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) in the Calvario neighborhood, parish of Guaytacama, are aspects that must be considered in order to understand the scope and possible challenges of the study. One of the main limitations is the availability and accessibility of educational resources since in rural or less favored communities, such as the Calvario, pedagogical and technological materials may be limited, which could hinder the teaching and learning process. In addition, the heterogeneity in the level of English of the students may influence the results, since some may have greater exposure to the language outside the classroom, while others may have minimal access to it.

7. Scientific and technical foundation

7.1 Background

Ramírez Sierra and Fernández-Reina (2022) explain that reading comprehension is an interactive process involving multiple factors that allow for the construction of a coherent and structured representation of the text's content. They point out that to achieve complete comprehension, it is essential to develop three levels: literal, inferential, and critical. In their study with third grade students at a public institution in Riohacha, Colombia, they employed a quantitative approach with a descriptive field and cross-sectional design. The sample consisted of 37 students, who were assessed using an estimation scale. The results showed average performance at the literal level and poor performance at the inferential and critical levels, suggesting the need to implement pedagogical interventions to strengthen these aspects.

Lesaux and Harris (2017) conducted a mixed-method study in which they analyzed the reading comprehension skills and processes of Latino adolescents learning English as a second language and experiencing comprehension difficulties. The sample included 41 students with an average age of 13 years. Word decoding skills and vocabulary knowledge were assessed using standardized tests, while interviews explored the comprehension processes used when reading and responding to a text appropriate for their grade level. The results showed that while the students possessed acceptable word reading skills and displayed active engagement in processes such as paraphrasing and inference, their overall understanding of the text was imprecise, with significant errors in interpretation. The authors conclude that comprehension processes must be accompanied by relevant prior knowledge and adequate language skills to construct effective mental representations of the text.

According to Sari et al. (2020), reading comprehension is an essential skill in the Indonesian language curriculum. However, the observed results reflect a low level of comprehension among students, especially regarding the interpretation of the meaning and context of texts. Faced with this problem, a mixed-method study was conducted with seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 06 School, Rejang Lebong, with the aim of describing their level of reading comprehension and identifying the causes of their difficulties. The study included 28 students and used tests, observation, interviews, and documentary analysis as data collection instruments, which were qualitative and quantitative analyses. The findings revealed that students had little familiarity with written texts and difficulties in reading fluency, highlighting the need to strengthen reading instruction and address the factors that limit their comprehension.

Sari (2016) conducted a study whose main objective was to describe the reading comprehension skills of second-year secondary school students when faced with texts in English, based on the four levels of comprehension: literal, interpretive, critical, and creative. The research, using a descriptive quantitative approach, was carried out with a sample of 30 students from SMAN 10 Bengkulu school during the 2014/2015 academic year. A reading test specifically designed to assess the four levels mentioned was used. The results revealed that most students managed to respond correctly at the literal and creative levels, which is attributed to the ease of the text and the fact that the information is presented explicitly. In contrast, poor performance was observed at the interpretive and critical levels, as students showed difficulty in identifying main ideas and making inferences. The average scores were: literal level 93.33 (very good), interpretive level 53.33 (low), critical level 36.67 (insufficient), and creative level 72.00 (moderate). These

findings reflect that students understand better when texts present explicit information, compared to those that require more in-depth analysis or interpretation.

SakoIrak (2014) conducted research to develop a strategy to address the three most critical problems in learning reading comprehension in primary education. Through quantitative data obtained from a focus group, three main difficulties were identified: students do not have the habit of reading or read long questions on tests; they present deficiencies in reading comprehension; and teachers lack adequate strategies to teach this skill. The study was implemented in a private school in Bangkok, Thailand, and involved 35 primary school teachers. To address these difficulties, it was decided to strengthen teacher competence through two main strategies: (1) a 10-hour school workshop focused on instructional design to diagnose reading comprehension using the QRI-3 instrument, which included activities such as reading aloud, questions, and storytelling; and (2) external mentoring by a university professor, focused on lesson planning. The diagnostic instruments used included reading process forms (QRI-3), anecdotal observational records, and think-aloud retelling activities. The findings suggest that, in addition to improving teacher competence, there is a need to foster greater awareness about integrating reading comprehension across all subjects.

Previous studies on reading achievement have shown that students learning English as an additional language (EAL) tend to score higher in word reading accuracy compared to monolingual children. However, their performance in vocabulary and reading comprehension is often lower. This indicates that, although EAL students generally read fluently and decode well, their text comprehension is limited. One possible strategy to address this gap is to pair these students with older peers who can provide support or scaffolding during reading. This interaction would not only contribute to better text comprehension but would also encourage dialogue between students and demonstrate their language knowledge (The Development of Young Learners' Reading Skills, 2020).

Suganda (2016) points out that all young children are highly motivated to learn a language and that millions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students are developing reading skills as part of their language learning process. In this context, many teachers are seeking effective approaches to teaching reading. One of the most notable motivating elements is the use of children's literature, whose content can spark interest in learning a new language. However, the author emphasizes that there is no single ideal approach for all students, as each child learns

differently and requires different strategies. Therefore, teachers must use diverse methodologies and enrich them with their personal experience. Furthermore, the author highlights the fundamental role played by both teachers and parents in children's reading progress. In conclusion, three factors are essential for the success of children's readers: an innovative and appropriate approach effective materials and the active support of parents or teachers.

7.2 Theoretical Framework

Reading comprehension in EFL

Reading comprehension is a multifaceted process involving the coordination of various cognitive and linguistic skills to extract and construct meaning from written text. Cain et al. (2004) describe it as the integration of language abilities, word recognition, lexical knowledge, and fluency. Paris (2005) emphasizes that successful comprehension requires not only decoding skills but also higher-order thinking processes to interpret and analyze the content effectively.

Reading comprehension in young learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) is fundamental for their academic, social, and personal development. Nowadays, many studies highlight the importance of teaching students to read not only as a basic skill, but as a means to acquire knowledge and improve their language skills in a foreign language.

According to Kintsch and Rawson (2005), text comprehension encompasses multiple levels of processing, including shallow decoding, syntactic analysis, and deep semantic integration, all of which contribute to a coherent understanding of the material. The reader engages in building a semantic network, linking ideas, revising interpretations, and maintaining coherence throughout the reading process. This involves using both linguistic and visual skills to decode words, combine them into meaningful sentences, and form syntactic and conceptual connections.

Kintsch and Rawson (2005) further argue that comprehension is not simply the aggregation of these individual processes, but rather a holistic coordination of cognitive and linguistic resources. They emphasize that effective comprehension requires the reader to revise and refine their understanding, ensuring consistency and coherence in their interpretation of the text.

Furthermore, the process of reading comprehension involves active participation, where readers interact with the text by predicting, inferring, and questioning the content. Joffe et al. (2007) point out that this dynamic interaction is crucial for constructing meaning beyond the literal text, allowing readers to derive implications and insights. Similarly, McGrew and Wendling (2010) underline the role of fluency in facilitating these complex processes, as it allows readers to allocate cognitive resources to higher-level comprehension tasks rather than basic decoding.

According to Fonseca et al. (2014) reinforces this perspective by stating that reading comprehension should be seen not only as the ability to understand the literal meaning of a text, but as a critical skill to interpret and reflect on the content, which prepares students for more autonomous learning in English. In this sense, the purpose of reading in EFL is extended towards the development of cognitive skills that allow students to use the language effectively in real communicative situations. The importance of the understanding levels of comprehension skills understanding the different levels of comprehension skills is a critical factor in developing reading abilities, especially in young learners. Comprehension is not a singular skill but a progressive process, involving various cognitive abilities. Recent research emphasizes the importance of recognizing these levels to improve educational outcomes. According to Schadt (2021), comprehension skills evolve from basic understanding to higher-order critical thinking, which are essential for academic and personal growth.

The first level of comprehension, known as literal comprehension, involves the ability to grasp the explicit meaning of the text. This is foundational during the early stages of reading instruction. As learners develop, they move toward inferential comprehension, where they make predictions, connect ideas, and draw conclusions based on implied meanings (Guthrie and Klauda, 2014). At the most advanced level, critical comprehension involves analyzing and evaluating the text, reflecting on its broader implications and relating it to personal experiences and societal issues (Moss et al., 2022).

Furthermore, comprehension is deeply interconnected with vocabulary knowledge, memory, and reasoning skills, which play an important role in how students interact with and comprehend texts. Vocabulary provides the basis for interpreting meaning, while memory helps retain and integrate information across a text. Reasoning allows students to analyze ideas, draw inferences, and assess information critically, all of which are essential for constructing a cohesive understanding of what they read (Smith et al., 2021).

The main factors in measuring the level of understanding among EFL young learners are closely tied to two fundamental components: knowledge of vocabulary and reading fluency. On the one hand, vocabulary knowledge plays a pivotal role in enabling students to recognize and make sense of words within a text. On the other hand, reading fluency ensures that learners can process text smoothly and efficiently. Together, these elements are critical in determining the extent to which students can decode, interpret, and fully comprehend texts in a second language.

Importance skills for reading comprehension

Vocabulary knowledge serves as a foundation for understanding written texts, particularly in EFL contexts. A strong vocabulary provides students with the ability to decode words, grasp meanings, and connect ideas within a text. A recent study highlights that student with limited vocabulary encounter substantial obstacles in identifying main ideas and supporting details in written materials, which directly impacts their ability to effectively comprehend and analyze texts (Ramadhan et al., 2021).

The acquisition of high-frequency vocabulary is essential for young learners, as it facilitates smoother transitions from basic decoding to more advanced comprehension tasks. Educators are therefore encouraged to implement targeted vocabulary instruction that emphasizes contextual learning and repeated exposure to essential terms. The levels of comprehension skills, which include literal, interpretive, critical and creative levels. These levels are closely related to different aspects of cognitive thinking and skill development in young learners of English as a foreign language (EFL).

Reading fluency is a multidimensional skill that encompasses speed, accuracy, and expression, all of which are critical to successful reading comprehension. Fluent readers are able to process words and sentences smoothly, allowing them to focus their cognitive resources on understanding the text rather than decoding individual words. Lack of fluency, on the other hand, significantly impairs a student's ability to process and grasp textual content, leading to difficulties in extracting meaning from English texts (Taş and Zorba, 2022). For young EFL learners, developing fluency is particularly vital as it acts as a bridge between foundational reading skills and higher-order comprehension skills.

Factors affect reading comprehension in young EFL learners

Reading comprehension in young learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is influenced by a variety of factors that extend beyond mere linguistic abilities. The key factors affecting reading comprehension in young EFL learners include vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge. Schema theory, which proposes that prior knowledge plays a vital role in text interpretation, continues to be a central framework in understanding reading comprehension. Rubino's (2024) foundational work in schema theory was expanded upon in recent studies, such as those by Lee and Park (2021), who note that EFL learners with limited exposure to English-speaking cultures and contexts struggle to activate the appropriate background knowledge required for effective comprehension. According to Lee and Park, this lack of contextual understanding can result in misunderstandings or incomplete interpretations of texts. For young learners, integrating culturally relevant materials into the curriculum is essential to enhance comprehension, as it allows students to connect new information to their existing knowledge base.

Literal level

Literal comprehension represents the foundational level of reading understanding, where learners focus on identifying and recalling facts, explicit details, and information directly stated in the text. According to Lastiri (2022), this level involves students' ability to recognize and reproduce textual information by answering basic questions about "what, where, when, and who." The emphasis at this stage is on understanding the content exactly as presented by the author, without inference or interpretation.

Smith et al., (2021) elaborates on this concept, describing literal comprehension as the stage where readers engage with the text to grasp its surface meaning. This includes identifying main ideas, key details, and specific vocabulary explicitly mentioned in the material. Smith highlights that developing strong literal comprehension skills serves as the foundation for progressing to higher levels of understanding, such as inferential and critical thinking.

Both Lastiri (2022) and Smith et al., (2021) agree that literal comprehension requires students to focus on "what the author is really saying," as it enables a clear understanding of ideas, events, and information explicitly expressed. Instruction targeting this level often employs

strategies like direct questioning, vocabulary drills, and text annotation to help students extract specific details from the material. This approach ensures learners build a solid base for interpreting and analyzing texts more deeply in subsequent comprehension stages.

Interpretive level

The interpretive level of reading comprehension goes beyond literal understanding and focuses on students' ability to make inferences and uncover implicit meanings not directly stated in the text. According to Cuesta College (2024), this level requires learners to draw on their prior knowledge to deduce meanings, connect ideas, and apply the information to new contexts. It involves interpreting figurative language, understanding tone, identifying the author's purpose, and recognizing implied relationships within the text.

Paige et al. (2024) expands on this idea, emphasizing that interpretive comprehension is crucial for developing critical thinking and deeper engagement with the text. This stage encourages readers to "read between the lines" and construct meaning by synthesizing information from various parts of the text. Paige highlights that successful interpretive comprehension depends on the reader's ability to integrate new learning with prior experiences and knowledge.

Critical Level

The critical level of reading comprehension involves the ability to analyze, evaluate, and judge the information presented in a text. At this level, learners are encouraged to develop analytical thinking skills to question, compare, and reflect on the content. According to Cleveland State University (n.d.), critical comprehension requires students to evaluate the validity, relevance, and logic of the information, often comparing it to other texts or their own prior experiences. This process fosters a deeper understanding and equips learners to make informed judgments about the text.

Tas and Zorba (2022) further emphasizes the importance of the critical level in cultivating advanced critical thinking skills. Tas and Zorba argues that engaging with texts critically helps learners develop the ability to identify biases, assess arguments, and determine the credibility of sources. Such skills are essential for navigating the complexities of modern information environments.

Creative Level

The creative level of reading comprehension represents the most advanced stage, where students synthesize information and generate new ideas from what they have read. At this level, students are encouraged to combine knowledge, form new perspectives, and apply their understanding in innovative ways. According to Alkema et al. (2023), this level emphasizes the role of instructional design in enhancing students' ability to synthesize information, particularly in scientific and academic contexts. This process fosters critical and creative thinking skills, allowing students to generate original ideas and solutions.

Gómez et al., (2015) expands on the concept, noting that the creative level challenges students to apply their learning to real-world problems and novel situations and highlights that creativity in comprehension does not only involve producing unique interpretations, but also developing practical applications of the text content. Activities such as project-based learning, brainstorming sessions, and collaborative discussions are particularly effective in cultivating creative understanding.

Both Alkema et al., (2023) and Gómez et al., (2015) agree that fostering creativity in reading comprehension equips students with the skills to innovate and adapt in dynamic environments. By encouraging exploration and synthesis, this level ensures that students can transform their understanding into meaningful and impactful contributions.

Reading Comprehension Difficulties in Young EFL Learners

Reading comprehension in young EFL learners presents several challenges. One of the most significant is limited vocabulary knowledge in the target language, which hampers their ability to understand texts and infer meaning (Nation, 2001). Furthermore, these students often struggle with grammatical and syntactical structures that are different from those of their native language, which hinders the formation of coherent mental representations of what they read (Grabe & Stoller, 2011).

According to Koda (2005), reading in a second language involves complex transfer processes, where students must apply skills from their native language while developing proficiency in the new language. This dual demand can lead to cognitive overload, especially when students are

asked to decode unfamiliar words while trying to understand the overall meaning of the text.

Motivation and engagement are crucial factors in this process. Many young students may not feel an intrinsic interest in reading in a foreign language unless the texts are developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant (Linse, 2012). Furthermore, insufficient exposure to English-language texts, a lack of appropriate reading strategies, and a lack of structured instruction further exacerbate these comprehension difficulties (Timperley et al., 2022). Therefore, it is critical that teachers adopt age-appropriate pedagogical approaches that include a variety of strategies to help students overcome these barriers and become proficient readers.

Limited Vocabulary Knowledge in the L2

One of the main obstacles faced by young learners of English as a foreign language is a lack of vocabulary in the target language. Reading comprehension largely depends on a minimum threshold of lexical knowledge that allows students to understand the text comprehensively, without having to constantly refer to context or translation (Nation, 2001). According to Nation (2001), readers need to know at least 95% of a text's vocabulary to understand it effectively, which represents a significant barrier for children who are just acquiring the basics of English. This limitation interferes with their ability to construct meaning, make inferences, or grasp nuances of the text, which can lead to frustration and demotivation.

Native Language (L1) Interference and Language Transfer

English learners tend to transfer knowledge and structures from their native language when reading in English, which can have both positive and negative effects. Koda (2005) points out that the transfer process is inevitable and depends on the degree of similarity between the two languages. While some aspects, such as phonological awareness, may transfer favorably, other grammatical or syntactical structures may lead to comprehension errors. This interference is more pronounced at an early age, when metacognitive skills are not yet fully developed and children are not fully aware of linguistic differences.

Native language interference is especially evident in younger children, who are still in the early stages of developing their metacognitive skills. At this point, they are often not fully aware of the differences between their native language and English. This can lead to misunderstandings

and confusion when trying to interpret texts in the new language. For example, a child who tries to apply the grammatical rules of their native language to English may make mistakes that hinder their understanding of the text, which can be frustrating. Furthermore, this interference not only impacts reading comprehension but can also affect the way students express themselves, both in writing and orally. Children often fall into the trap of literally translating phrases from their native language into English, which can result in incorrect grammatical constructions or the loss of important nuances in their communication.

For this reason, it is critical for educators to recognize this phenomenon and actively work to help students identify and overcome these interferences. Koda (2005) promoting language awareness and offering strategies to help them navigate the differences between their native language and English can be key to improving their proficiency in the new language. Doing so not only helps them develop greater confidence in their language skills but also prepares them to become more proficient readers and speakers. This, in turn, contributes to their academic and personal success in a multilingual environment, where effective communication is essential.

Reading Strategy Deficits

One of the most significant difficulties in reading comprehension is the lack of specific strategies that help students engage with texts. Many readers in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts have not developed essential metacognitive skills, such as prediction, inference, or synthesis, which are critical for effective reading (Timperley et al., 2022). These skills allow readers not only to understand the content of a text, but also to connect ideas, anticipate what is coming next, and reflect on what they have read.

In many school-based language teaching programs, specific instruction in these strategies is often insufficient. This leaves students with limited tools to tackle complex texts. Without adequate guidance, young learners may feel lost when faced with materials that require a deeper level of comprehension. This lack of preparation can lead to frustration and a decrease in motivation to read, which in turn affects their overall language development.

Timperley et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of teaching these strategies in an age-appropriate manner, using concrete examples and guided practices that encourage self-regulation during reading. By providing students with a set of tools and techniques, they are

empowered to become more competent and confident readers, able to face textual challenges with greater confidence. This training not only improves their reading comprehension but can also increase their motivation and interest in reading in a foreign language.

Implementing these strategies in the classroom can transform students' reading experience, allowing them to develop a more active and reflective approach to texts. By learning to apply these metacognitive skills, students not only become more effective in their comprehension but also begin to enjoy the reading process more, which is critical to their success in learning a new language.

Lack of motivation and interest in English texts

Motivation and interest in reading are key elements for developing comprehension, especially in foreign language learning contexts. Linse (2012) argues that when reading materials do not relate to children's experiences and world, they are less likely to engage meaningfully. This means that texts that do not reflect their interests, experiences, or everyday realities may feel alien and unappealing. For example, books that lack relevant content, engaging illustrations, or an accessible narrative approach often generate rejection or apathy among young readers, which can lead to a lack of engagement with reading in English.

Furthermore, a lack of interest can have a domino effect on language learning. If students are not motivated to read, they are likely not to practice enough, which in turn can affect their language skill development and overall understanding of the language. Linse (2012) emphasizes that an emotional and cognitive connection with reading material is essential for students to feel motivated to explore and learn.

On the other hand, when age-appropriate books that address familiar or playful themes are used, students show a greater willingness to read. This connection with the content not only sparks their interest but also improves their comprehension. By choosing texts that resonate with their lives and are fun to read, students are given the opportunity to enjoy reading, which in turn can foster a lasting love of books and language learning.

Linse (2012) suggests that educators should be aware of the importance of selecting materials that are relevant and engaging for their students. This involves considering not only the level

of difficulty of the text, but also its content and presentation. Ultimately, cultivating motivation and interest in reading is essential to helping students become competent and enthusiastic readers, which, in the long run, contributes to their academic and personal success in a multilingual environment.

Poor exposure to English reading

The frequency and quality of exposure to English texts are key factors in the development of reading comprehension. Many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students have limited access to authentic English materials outside of the classroom, which restricts their ability to acquire vocabulary, become familiar with common structures, and develop fluency in the language. Grabe and Stoller (2019) highlight that this lack of exposure can have a significant impact on learning, as students do not have the opportunity to interact with the language in a regular and contextualized manner.

Furthermore, the absence of an English reading culture at both home and school exacerbates this situation. If parents are not fluent speakers of the language or if libraries are unavailable, students may feel unmotivated or unable to explore reading in English on their own. This lack of resources and support can lead to a limited learning experience, where students fail to develop the habit of reading in English, which is critical to improving their comprehension.

Another aspect to consider is that many educational programs tend to focus exclusively on grammar activities, neglecting extensive reading. This practice limits students' opportunities to naturally improve their comprehension. Grabe and Stoller (2019) suggest that extensive reading not only helps students acquire vocabulary and grammatical structures but also allows them to enjoy the reading process, which can increase their motivation and commitment to language learning.

The Role of the Teacher and Inadequate Pedagogical Practices

The role of the teacher in teaching reading in English is crucial, especially in the context of young learners. However, many teachers often lack the necessary training to effectively teach reading comprehension strategies (Linse, 2012). This lack of preparation can limit their ability to guide students in developing critical skills that are essential for deep and meaningful reading.

Furthermore, there is a tendency in some educational settings to focus on decoding or literal translation of texts, rather than encouraging critical reading, character analysis, or event prediction (Timperley, 2008). This approach can result in a superficial understanding of texts, where students fail to learn to engage with the content reflectively. Reading becomes a mechanical exercise, rather than an opportunity to explore ideas, emotions, and contexts.

To address these limitations, it is critical that educators implement task-based teaching approaches, guided reading, and interactive activities. These methodologies can make a significant difference in children's reading development, as they promote more active and participatory learning. By engaging students in discussions about texts, allowing them to make predictions, and analyzing characters they are helped to build a richer and more nuanced understanding.

Linse (2012) emphasizes the importance of teachers receiving ongoing training in reading teaching strategies which will enable them to adapt their methods to their students' needs. Doing so not only improves reading comprehension but also fosters a more dynamic and motivating learning environment. Adequate teacher training is therefore, an essential component in ensuring that young learners develop the skills necessary to become competent and critical readers in English.

Methods of Reading Comprehension

Bottom-up Method

According to Carrell (1989), the bottom-up method begins with the interpretation of linguistic components such as individual words, gradually building meaning into larger structures. Students connect their prior knowledge to information they find in the text. This method, also known as data-driven or text-based reading, emphasizes the analysis of smaller elements of a text, including letters, words, phrases, and sentences. According to Ahmadi and Pourhosein (2012) and Carrell (1989), the bottom-up method requires students to decode linguistic elements accurately and understand how words are interconnected in order to achieve reading success. However, it can be challenging for students to retain the meaning of each word in a text and to make connections between words.

Top-down Method

Nuttall (1996) and Ahmadi and Pourhosein (2012) In this approach, readers rely on their prior knowledge or mental schemas to interact with the text, integrating them with new or unknown information found in it to make sense of the material. The top-down method prioritizes linguistic inference over graphic textual details, encouraging students to focus on predicting the next group of words rather than reading each one individually. As they read, students form hypotheses about the message the writer intended to convey and adjust these assumptions based on the content they encounter. Ahmadi and Pourhosein (2012) explain that comprehension begins with higher-order cognitive processes and progresses to lower-level processing. They further highlight that the top-down method involves breaking down a system step-by-step to understand its individual components, which offers deeper insight into its subsystems.

Interactive Method

Carrell (1989) and Ahmadi and Pourhosein (2012) define the interactive method as the integration of bottom-up and top-down approaches. This method involves processing information from various sources, such as orthographic, lexical, syntactic, semantic knowledge, and schemata. In cases where readers with strong bottom-up skills struggle to comprehend a text when reading word by word, they can utilize their prior knowledge to aid their understanding of an approach referred to as the interactive model. This method is built on the dynamic interaction between bottom-up and top-down processes. According to Nunan (1990) and Ahmadi and Pourhosein (2012), language learners may rely on top-down reading strategies to compensate for weaknesses in bottom-up skills. To achieve comprehension, learners draw on their schemata to address gaps in bottom-up processing. Similarly, Stanovich (1980) notes that learners who depend on the top-down approach use textual cues and predictions to compensate for deficits, such as challenges in word recognition or ineffective bottom-up processing.

The Role of Motivation and Attitudes in Reading Comprehension in Young EFL Learners

The development of reading comprehension in young EFL learners is a multifaceted process that goes beyond cognitive and linguistic aspects. In this context, affective components, such as students' motivation, attitude, and self-perception, play a fundamental role in the acquisition

of second language reading skills. These factors not only affect how students interact with texts but also their willingness to engage in reading activities, which in turn impacts their academic success and personal development, motivation has been identified as a key determinant of reading success. Guthrie et al., (2004) argue that motivated students tend to engage more actively with texts, apply reading strategies more effectively, and consequently demonstrate higher levels of comprehension. This relationship between motivation and achievement suggests that when students' basic psychological needs—such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met their reading performance improves markedly. Deci and Ryan (2013) propose that intrinsic motivation, which refers to engaging in activities for the pleasure and satisfaction they provide, is essential for effective learning. In the EFL context, this means that students are more likely to remain engaged in reading when they can choose materials that align with their personal interests, believe in their ability to succeed, and feel supported by their teachers and peers.

Furthermore, learners' attitudes toward reading and the English language are crucial in shaping their reading behavior and outcomes. Young people who perceive reading in English as a pleasurable and meaningful activity tend to read more frequently. Guthrie et al., (2004) also highlight those positive attitudes toward reading can be fostered through the use of engaging texts, age-appropriate stories, colorful visuals, and interactive reading tasks that incorporate students' cultural backgrounds and preferences. Conversely, negative attitudes which often arise from comprehension difficulties or limited exposure to appropriate materials, can diminish learners' interest and hinder their progress in reading comprehension.

Extensive reading programs have been shown to be effective in fostering both motivation and positive attitudes toward reading. Krashen (2004) emphasizes that allowing students to read freely selected, interesting, and comprehensible texts leads to improved vocabulary acquisition fluency, and comprehension especially in second language contexts. These programs focus on reading for pleasure rather than assessment, which reduces anxiety and strengthens learners' intrinsic motivation. By providing an environment where students can explore texts that truly interest them, they are allowed to develop a deeper connection with reading, which in turn can lead to greater engagement and success in language learning. Day et al., (1998) also emphasize the importance of extensive reading, arguing that this practice not only improves reading skills but also fosters a positive attitude toward reading in general.

The home literacy environment plays an influential role in the development of motivation and positive attitudes toward reading. Sonnenschein and Munsterman (2002) found that children who are exposed to reading practices at home such as being read aloud or seeing family members read are more likely to value reading and show greater motivation to engage with texts, even in a foreign language. This type of home interaction not only fosters motivation but also contributes to the development of early literacy skills creating an environment conducive to learning. The implication of these findings is clear educators and parents must work together to create a nurturing reading environment that supports the development of motivation and positive attitudes toward reading. The teacher's role is equally essential in promoting these affective factors. Educators have the ability to create supportive, low-anxiety classroom environments, which can facilitate a more positive learning experience.

8. Methodology

8.1 Research Approach

The research has a quantitative approach because it allows us to know through measurable data, the level of reading comprehension of young EFL students from the Calvario neighborhood of Guaytacama. This approach facilitates the collection and analysis of objective information, such as performance in reading activities, the identification of specific difficulties and the level of comprehension achieved by students. The results obtained allow us to interpret trends and patterns in reading comprehension, as a basis for designing pedagogical strategies that strengthen reading skills in this group of learners. According to Creswell (1994) described quantitative research as a process of inquiry into a social or human problem, based on the testing of a theory that involves variables, which are measured numerically and analyzed using statistical procedures, in order to verify whether the predictive generalizations of the theory are valid.

8.2 Research Method

The present research uses a descriptive design to identify the reading level comprehension of young English as a foreign language learner from the Calvario neighborhood of Guaytacama. Using quantifiable data, this study seeks to measure and analyze the learners' performance in reading comprehension, focusing on their strengths, weaknesses, and specific difficulties. The

descriptive design allows for an objective and detailed examination of the current state of their reading skills, providing information on patterns and trends within the group.

8.3 Research Context

The student population is 40 students belonging to the Guaytacama neighborhood. These students attend a program. They attend the Christian center “Salvando Vidas”. They attend on Saturday mornings to receive English classes at the church. The students are between 6 and 8 years old. They study at the Guaytacama Educational Unit.

8.4 Data Collection Procedure

This instrument was a reading taken from Cambridge and modified to allow for a questionnaire assessing children's reading comprehension. The aforementioned questionnaire consists of 10 items, each classified according to the four levels of reading comprehension (literal, interpretive, critical, and creative). To ensure its content validity and alignment with the study objectives, the instrument was subjected to expert judgment. It was reviewed and validated by three faculty members from the Technical University of Cotopaxi: MSc. Patricia Mena, PhD. Lorena González, and MSc. Mercedes Abata, who provided feedback on the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the items for the target population. Using a 3-point rule, the questionnaire was categorized as high, intermediate, and low. Participants' responses varied, so 1 point was assigned for each question, depending on the level. Data were collected in person in the Calvario neighborhood of Guaytacama Parish which arose from community service practices "Escuelas populares de Inglés" and taken at the Christian Center. All 40 students were present on the day the questionnaire was administered. (Appendix 1)

The informed consent provided by the legal guardians of the children attending the “Salvando Vidas” Christian Center, located in the Calvario neighborhood, Guaytacama parish, Latacunga canton. Through this document, the parents or legal guardians authorize their children's voluntary participation in a questionnaire designed to assess the reading comprehension level (EFL) students, as part of a research project developed by students at the Technical University of Cotopaxi. (Appendix 2)

The questionnaire was handed out to the chosen students, along with clear guidance from the researchers on how to fill it out. To ensure data reliability, participants were informed that the questionnaire was for research purposes only. Once collected, the responses were coded and

analyzed using statistical methods to generate a frequency distribution presented through descriptive statistics.

8.5 Data Analysis Process

The analysis was quantitative, and Excel was used to obtain the reading comprehension percentage of the 40 participants. Of these 100% were at the creative level and 94.16% at the literal level which were high categories 60% were in the intermediate category with an interpretive reading comprehension level and 40% in the low category with a critical reading comprehension level. Descriptive statistics were used to classify reading comprehension levels, ranking them according to the level of performance achieved by the students, from highest to lowest.

9. Analysis and Discussion of Results

The present study presents a detailed examination of the data gathered in order to understand the performance in relation to their reading comprehension skills of young English as a foreign language (EFL) learner. The questionnaire consisted of 10 items categorized into four levels of comprehension: literal, interpretive, critical and creative. Analysis of the results reveals significant differences in student performance at each level, allowing for the identification of specific reading comprehension level that the children have.

This section attempts to offer a comprehensive analysis of the findings and how the information gathered can contribute to solving the problem posed in the study. It is noteworthy that items 9 and 10 of the questionnaires align with the creative level. Items 7 and 8 belong to the critical level. Items 4, 5, and 6 are representative of the interpretive level. Items 3, 2, and 1 reflect the literal level. The following table shows the distribution of the questionnaire's questions related to their specific area.

Table 2

Questions distribution based on their individual level reading comprehension.

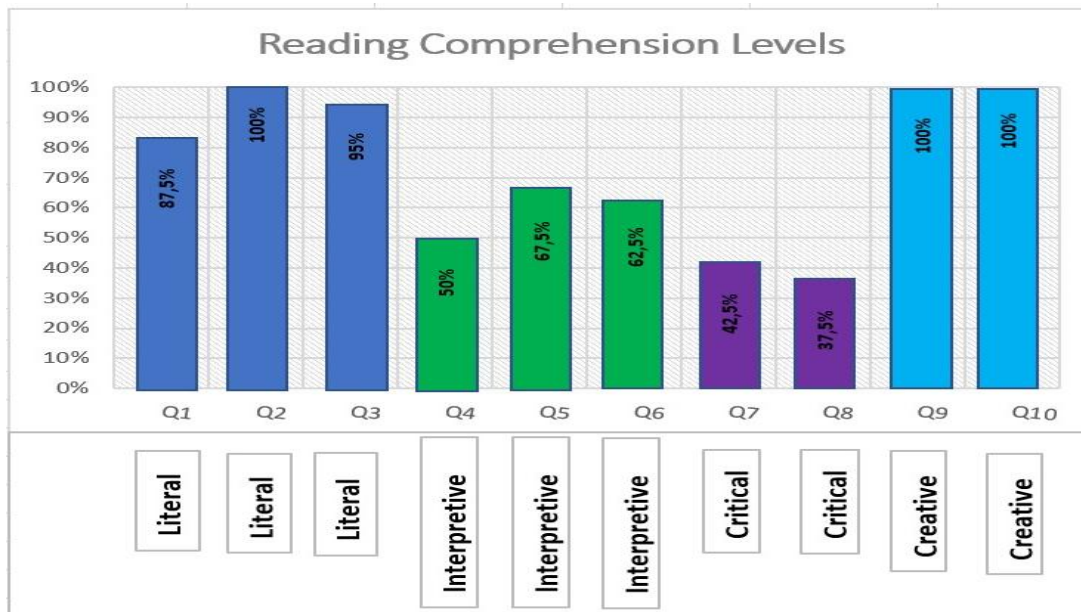
Reading Level Comprehension	Questions
Literal	Q1, Q2, Q3
Interpretive	Q4, Q5, Q6
Critical	Q7, Q8
Creative	Q9, Q10

Elaborated by: The researchers

This section presents the performance of the 40 learners tested, categorized according to the four levels of reading comprehension: literal, interpretive, critical, and creative. The results are ranked according to the number of correct answers to each question, based on each learner’s performance.

Chart 1

Reading comprehension levels of students with correct answers according to each question.



Elaborated by: The researchers

The Literal Reading Comprehension level shown good performance. At this level, students had to identify information explicitly expressed in the text. The question 1 of this type obtained up to 87.5% correct answers, the majority of students correctly identified the option "Green, gray, and yellow." This item presented distractor options with uncommon colors for lizards, such as "Blue and pink" or "Red and purple," which may have misled a minority of students. However, the high rate of correct answers indicates that the children were able to correctly extract literal textual information, likely because it was clearly and visually strikingly mentioned in the reading text or because the colors mentioned are within their familiar vocabulary. This is consistent with Grabe and Stoller (2011), who stated that literal comprehension involves recognizing and remembering ideas and information explicitly expressed in the text, which is essential for reading development.

The question 2 of this type obtained 100% correct answers, all students answered this question correctly, selecting "In the trees and in the sand." This result reflects that the information was clearly delineated in the text and left no room for ambiguity. Furthermore, this knowledge can also be related to prior knowledge from the real world, which facilitated recognition. The presence of unlikely distractors such as "In the ocean" or "In the sky" also helped facilitate discrimination of the correct answer.

The question 3 of this type obtained up to 95% correct answers, in this item, the correct answer was "Spiders and fruit," which was chosen by the majority. Incorrect options included foods that do not belong in an animal's diet, such as "ice cream" or "pizza." Despite their fantastical content, these options could be visually or emotionally appealing to children, which would explain the small error rate. In terms of literal comprehension, the information was clear, but success also depended on students' ability to separate real elements of the text from tempting distractors.

The Interpretive Reading Comprehension level presented some difficulties, the question 4 of this type obtained up to 50% correct answers this level of reading comprehension requires students to make inferences, comprehend meanings, and recognize relationships not directly expressed the purpose of this action "to stay safe" had to be inferred. Here, many students erred by choosing options such as "grow wings" or "make a loud noise," which are not only incorrect but also improbable, this indicates that although they recognized the action, they failed to connect its function. This difficulty suggests a weak understanding of cause-and-effect

relationships and a limited ability to infer intentions. In this sense, Day and Park (2005) explain that interpretive comprehension requires reading between the lines, a skill that can be limited when the student lacks sufficient lexical or contextual knowledge.

The question 5 of this type obtained up to 67.5% correct answers this activity required matching pictures with words like "small," "eat," and "sleep." Although it seemed like a simple task, it involved several mental processes recognizing the picture, recalling the vocabulary, and matching the correct term. The error rate indicates that some students still struggle to match pictures with functional language, suggesting a need for more visual-verbal matching practice.

The question 6 of this type obtained up to 62.5% correct answers, the correct choice was "sand," but many students chose "sun" or "water." This reflects that, although the text included information about the lizards' environment, the relationship between sleeping and the specific location was not explicit and required interpretation. This led to confusion among the children about the places where they live or bask and the places where they sleep. This incorrect choice suggests that students' ability to infer behaviors from the contexts described in the text still needs reinforcement.

The Critical reading comprehension level presented the greatest challenges, this level involves evaluative reading, where the reader must analyze the author's position or compare ideas. The question 7 of this type obtained up to 42.5% correct answers, although the ability to change color was mentioned, understanding that this is a defense mechanism requires a deeper interpretation. The correct answer was "escape predators," but many chose "attract other animals" or "grow larger." These errors show that students have not yet sufficiently developed the ability to justify natural phenomena based on textual clues. It can also be inferred that some selected answers based on intuition or because they sounded logical, even though they were not based on reading. This difficulty is consistent with previous studies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, which indicate that critical reading requires explicit instruction, teacher support, and a greater degree of linguistic maturity (Grabe & Stoller, 2011).

The question 8 of this type obtained up to 37.5% correct answers, identifying the paragraph to which a sentence belongs requires a structural understanding of the text, which means the student must recall the content of several paragraphs, compare them, and decide where the information fits. Poor performance on this task suggests that students have difficulty

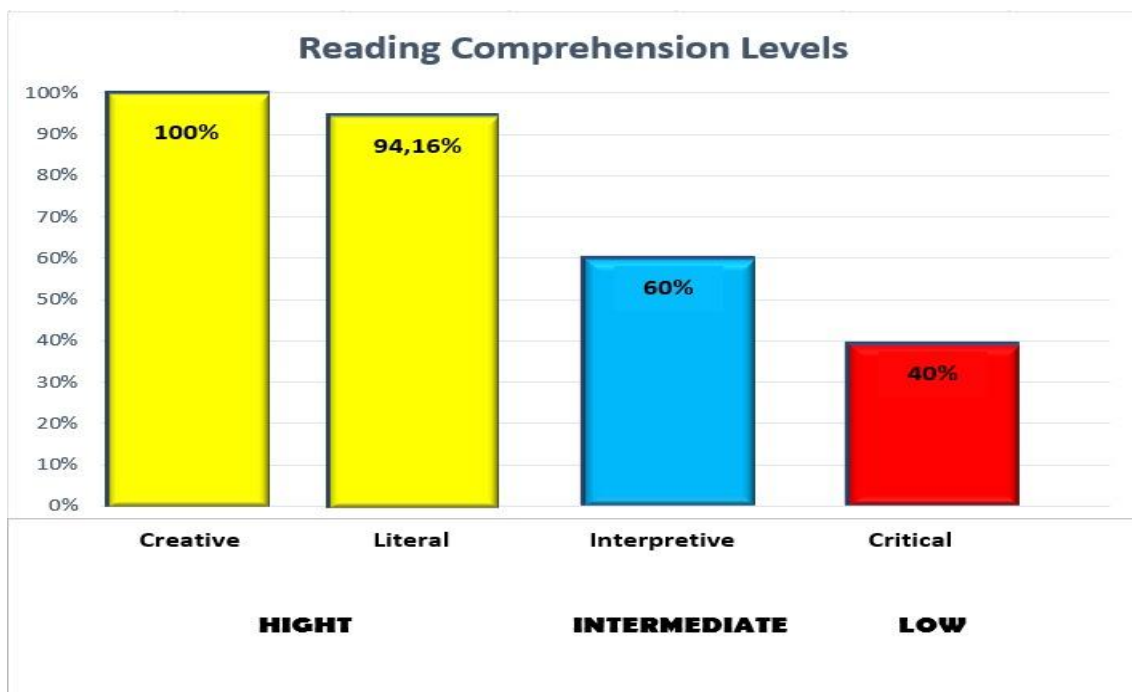
maintaining an organized mental representation of the text, an essential skill for critical thinking. This type of question requires memory textual analysis, and an understanding of the logical progression of content.

The Creative Reading Comprehension level assesses students' ability to go beyond the text, imagining alternatives or generating new ideas based on what they read. The Creative Reading Comprehension level showed the best overall performance, suggesting that students can make personal and creative connections with the texts. The question 9 of this type received 100% correct answers; this activity required students to draw a picture of a lizard hiding in its favorite spot. The fact that all students completed this activity correctly indicates not only a clear understanding of the text content but also the ability to translate the ideas they read into concrete images. To draw the requested scene students needed to understand elements such as the habitat, the behavior of lizards, and their ability to hide. Furthermore, the activity connects to the text content, which mentions that some lizards camouflage or hide implying that the students internalized this information and were able to represent it creatively. As Pardo (2004) points out good readers actively interact with texts, using their imagination and prior knowledge to construct meaning and expand ideas. The question 10 of this type obtained 100% correct answers. This activity invited students to draw an image that visually included the keywords "Lizard," "Eat," "Sleep," and "Sun." To do so students not only had to understand the meaning of each word but also connect them coherently within a single scene. For example, many students drew a lizard eating, sunbathing, resting, or sleeping which is directly related to the content of the reading text.

This section presents student performance according to the four levels of reading comprehension: literal, interpretive, critical, and creative. For each of these levels the total percentage of reading comprehension scores was determined in three performance categories: high, intermediate, and low. Based on these categories the reading comprehension levels were classified allowing for the identification of the most predominant level the intermediate level and the lowest level.

Chart 2

The outcome of using descriptive statistics to analyze data.



Elaborated by: The researchers

The Creative Reading Comprehension level with a percentage of 100%, which results in them having a high category in summary, high performance at the creative level indicates that students will be able to appropriate the content they read and recreate it through their imagination. This is a main indicator of meaningful comprehension at early ages and a valuable resource in the EFL context for fostering motivation, active participation, and independent thinking. As Cassany (2006) highlights that creative comprehension allows students to reimagine and reconstruct what they have read through personal expression, such as drawing or storytelling. This level of comprehension is especially beneficial in EFL contexts, where

visual and artistic outputs provide alternative pathways for demonstrating understanding without relying solely on linguistic production.

The Literal Reading Comprehension level shown good performance. At this level, students had to identify information explicitly expressed in the text. The question 1 of this type obtained up to 87.5% correct answers, the majority of students correctly identified the option "Green, gray, and yellow." This item presented distractor options with uncommon colors for lizards, such as "Blue and pink" or "Red and purple," which may have misled a minority of students. However, the high rate of correct answers indicates that the children were able to correctly extract literal textual information, likely because it was clearly and visually strikingly mentioned in the reading text or because the colors mentioned are within their familiar vocabulary. This aligns with the perspective of Rupley and Blair (1983), who emphasized that literal comprehension entails identifying and recalling information that is directly stated in the text—an ability that plays a fundamental role in the development of reading skills.

The Interpretive Reading Comprehension level they show increasing difficulties at levels that require interpretive processes with a percentage of 60% the interpretive level was located in the intermediate category; this result indicates that students managed to understand some implicit ideas in the text. While some were able to identify logical relationships or infer meanings from the context, a large proportion had difficulty establishing non-literal connections between paragraphs. According to Day and Park (2005), interpretive comprehension requires readers to go beyond the surface meaning of a text and make inferences, draw conclusions, and understand implicit relationships. In young EFL learners, this level often presents challenges, as it demands integration of textual cues with prior knowledge and developing language skills.

The Critical Reading Comprehension level registered the lowest percentage of all the levels of comprehension evaluated, with only 40%, placing it in the low category. This clearly demonstrates the difficulty students have in tackling tasks that require analysis, evaluation, decision-making, or justification of ideas based on the text. As Grabe and Stoller (2011) point out, critical comprehension is one of the most difficult competencies to achieve in academic reading, as it requires metacognitive skills and a deep command of the language. In EFL students, these skills tend to emerge later, once the literal and interpretive levels have been confidently mastered. In conclusion, the analysis by comprehension level demonstrates a downward progression in student performance as the complexity of the cognitive processes

involved increases. These findings underscore the importance of designing activities that promote not only literal comprehension but also the gradual development of inferential and critical skills within the EFL classroom.

10. Research Impacts

Research on reading comprehension in young students learning English as a foreign language contributes significantly to the field of education, as it allows us to identify students' actual levels of comprehension and how to improve their reading skills from an early stage. By applying specific levels, such as literal, interpretive, critical, and creative levels, teachers can adapt their teaching strategies to respond to students' particular needs. This not only optimizes language learning but also strengthens overall reading competence which is essential for academic success in all areas of knowledge.

From a social perspective strengthening reading comprehension in children improves their ability to communicate understand their environment and develop critical thinking skills. In communities where access to educational materials or innovative methodologies is limited research such as ours offers practical alternatives for improving educational quality. Furthermore, by encouraging reading values such as empathy respect for cultural diversity and active participation in society are promoted thus contributing to the formation of more conscious and committed citizens.

The integration of technological tools in the process of teaching and assessing reading comprehension plays a main role in this research. The use of digital platforms, interactive resources and guided reading programs allows for personalized learning and makes it more appealing to young people. In addition, these technologies facilitate data collection and analysis enabling evidence-based decision making. Therefore, combining reading instruction with technological resources not only modernizes teaching practices but also prepares students to face the challenges of the digital world.

11. Conclusions and Recommendations

11.1 Conclusions

The levels applied for teaching reading comprehension in English enable students who enjoy reading to learn effectively and remain motivated through the reading method. The study identifies four levels of reading comprehension: literal level, interpretive level, critical level and creative level. These levels helped us determine the reading comprehension level of the children for each question. Recognizing and adapting to these different learning levels allows students to learn English more effectively, motivating them to optimize their abilities and enhance their overall academic success.

The main results of our community service in the Guaytacama neighborhood revealed important conclusions about students' reading comprehension levels. A questionnaire was administered to 40 children to assess their reading comprehension at four levels. The results showed that students performed particularly well at the literal and creative levels of reading comprehension. The interpretive level showed moderate performance, while the critical level reflected the lowest results. Overall, analysis of the data collected indicates that students have strong reading comprehension skills especially in the literal and creative aspects.

The reading comprehension skills of the participating students were assessed. The results revealed that most achieved adequate levels in the literal and creative stages, while greater difficulties were evident in the critical and interpretative levels. This demonstrates the need to strengthen teaching strategies that encourage reflective thinking and inference to improve performance at higher levels of comprehension.

11.2 Recommendations

Based on the levels applied to teaching reading comprehension in English, it is recommended to design differentiated activities that respond to the specific needs of each level (literal, interpretive, critical, and creative). This will allow for more personalized and meaningful teaching promoting student motivation and enhancing the development of their reading skills in accordance with their abilities.

It is recommended to implement pedagogical strategies that specifically strengthen the interpretive and critical levels of reading comprehension since these are the ones that presented the greatest challenges it is essential to incorporate activities such as guided text analysis the formulation of inferential questions and the comparison of different perspectives within the same reading. Reading projects can be designed where students must argue their opinions and justify their interpretations using evidence from the text.

It is recommended to provide teachers with ongoing training in active and participatory methodologies that promote reflective and inferential thinking. Among these methodologies visible thinking routines, the use of conceptual maps and shared reading with high-order cognitive questions stand out, which allows students not only to understand what they read but also to learn to interpretive, evaluate and argue about the content autonomously. On the other hand, it is key that teachers work with texts appropriate to the students' level but that contain significant themes that promote reflection and dialogue. In addition, training teachers in these practices will strengthen the support they provide to their students thus favoring a substantial improvement in the highest levels of understanding.

12. References

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