

THE EDUCATIONAL, CRITICAL, AND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF USING COMICS TO DEVELOP LITERACY SKILLS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract: *The development of literacy skills requires the effective use of educational resources capable of addressing the challenges of contemporary society and the increasing diversity of communication modes. In this context, comics emerge as multimodal texts that integrate verbal and visual language, offering meaningful opportunities for the development of literacy skills among primary school students. This paper aims to examine the formative, critical, and cultural dimensions of using comics in education by drawing on the literature on literacy, multimodality, and contemporary pedagogy. It highlights the contribution of comics to vocabulary development, reading comprehension, reading motivation, creativity, and critical thinking, while also emphasizing their role in fostering the interpretation of multimodal messages and promoting openness to cultural diversity. To complement the theoretical perspective, the paper also incorporates findings from an exploratory focus group conducted with primary school teachers. The participants' perspectives confirm the educational potential of comics and emphasize the importance of integrating them into instructional practice through a balanced and methodologically sound approach. The analysis suggests that comics should be regarded as complex educational resources that extend beyond their recreational function and can make a valuable contribution to the development of literacy skills, critical thinking, and intercultural competence among primary school students. The findings provide both theoretical and pedagogical arguments supporting the systematic integration of comics into literacy-oriented teaching and learning practices in primary education.*

Keywords: *literacy skills; comics; multimodality; critical thinking; intercultural competence; primary education.*

Introduction

The development of literacy skills is one of the priorities of contemporary education, in the context of the transformations brought about by the knowledge society and the diversification of modes of communication and access to information. Today, literacy goes beyond the traditional concept of reading and writing and is understood as a complex skill that involves identifying, interpreting, evaluating, and using information in various contexts through multiple semiotic systems (Street, 1984; New London Group, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). This perspective highlights the importance of developing multimodal literacy, which capitalizes on the relationship between verbal language, images, symbols, and other forms of representation, contributing to the construction of meaning and the active engagement of students in the learning process (Kress, 2010).

In today's educational context, characterized by the increasingly prominent presence of visual and digital media, it is essential to identify teaching strategies capable of addressing the specific needs of today's generations of students and promoting the development of literacy skills in an accessible and meaningful way. The literature highlights that multimodal texts facilitate comprehension, support meaning-making, and stimulate students' active participation in learning activities (Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Walsh, 2008). In this regard, comic books represent a relevant educational resource, as they combine verbal and visual elements within a narrative structure that promotes the accessibility of the message and the development of authentic reading experiences.

Research in this field highlights that the use of comics can contribute to the development of vocabulary and text comprehension, stimulate motivation for reading and creativity, and foster specific multimodal literacy skills (McCloud, 1993; Eisner, 1996; Jacobs, 2007; Schwarz, 2006). Beyond their educational value, comic books offer opportunities to develop critical thinking, the ability to interpret the relationship between text and image, and reflection on the messages conveyed. At the same time, they can facilitate students' exposure to diverse cultural perspectives and contribute to the formation of values and attitudes compatible with the demands of contemporary education.

Interest in using comic books in teaching is also reflected in the perceptions of elementary school teachers. The results of an exploratory focus group conducted with elementary school teachers highlight their openness to interactive methods and visual aids, as well as their recognition of the potential of comic books to facilitate text comprehension and stimulate students' interest in reading. At the same time, participants noted the need for a balanced use of this resource and its methodical integration into instructional activities.

Based on these considerations, this article aims to highlight the educational, critical, and cultural dimensions of using comic books to develop literacy skills among elementary school students, by drawing on the relevant literature and incorporating insights from an exploratory focus group. The analysis seeks to highlight how comic books can serve as a relevant educational resource for fostering active, reflective readers capable of interpreting the multiple meanings of multimodal texts.

Comics as Multimodal Text and Educational Resource

Multimodal literacy in the context of contemporary education

The transformations brought about by the knowledge society and the rapid development of digital technologies have led to a reevaluation of the concept of literacy, which today goes beyond the traditional dimension of reading and writing to include the ability to interpret, use, and produce messages conveyed through various semiotic systems. From this perspective, literacy is viewed as a complex competency, indispensable for active participation in social and educational life (Street, 1984; Barton, 2007).

New communication contexts have fostered the emergence of the concept of multimodal literacy, as articulated by the New London Group (1996), which emphasizes the need to develop competencies that enable the interpretation and production of meaning through verbal language, images, graphic representations, and other modes of communication. Cope and Kalantzis (2000, 2009) emphasize that contemporary education must capitalize on the diversity of ways in which information is represented, with a view to developing skills adapted to the demands of today's society.

From the perspective of social semiotics, Kress (2010) argues that meanings are constructed through the interaction of multiple modes of communication, and that understanding a message requires the integration of verbal, visual, and symbolic information. Along the same lines, Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) emphasize that images and text do not function independently but complement one another in the process of constructing meaning. Thus, the development of multimodal literacy involves not only the ability to decode written text but also the ability to interpret visual elements and the relationships between them. In the educational setting, the use of multimodal texts helps increase student engagement and facilitates content comprehension by simultaneously drawing on multiple channels of communication. Jewitt and Kress (2003) highlight that the integration of multimodal resources promotes active student participation and supports meaning-making processes, while Walsh (2008) emphasizes that new reading practices require teaching approaches tailored to the specific characteristics of today's generations.

In this context, the literature pays particular attention to educational resources that combine verbal and visual language, including comic books. Through their multimodal structure, they offer students the opportunity to interact with information through complementary forms of representation, promoting the development of literacy skills and facilitating the creation of relevant and accessible learning experiences. The transformations brought about by the knowledge society and the rapid development of digital technologies have led to a reevaluation of the concept of literacy, which today goes beyond the traditional dimension of reading and writing and includes the ability to interpret, use, and produce messages conveyed through various semiotic systems. From this perspective, literacy is viewed as a complex competency, indispensable for active participation in social and educational life (Street, 1984; Barton, 2007).

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The Characteristics of Comics as Multimodal Texts

In the context of the expanding concept of literacy and the emphasis placed on diversifying modes of communication, comics have increasingly been recognized as educational resources with significant educational potential. By their very nature, they are multimodal texts in which meaning is constructed through the interaction between verbal language, images, graphic elements, and the spatial organization of information. This complementarity among the different modes of representation facilitates the process of comprehension and offers the

reader the opportunity to construct meaning by simultaneously integrating visual and textual information.

According to McCloud (1993), the comic strip is a sequential art form in which images and words are deliberately organized to convey information and elicit aesthetic and cognitive responses. The author emphasizes that meaning is not generated exclusively by text or image, but by the relationship between them and by the reader's active participation in filling in the meanings between narrative panels. Thus, reading comics involves complex processes of interpretation, inference, and meaning-making.

Along the same lines, Eisner (1985) argues that comics are a form of visual communication based on the combination of text and graphic representations, capable of facilitating the transmission of messages and stimulating reader engagement. Later, Eisner (1996) highlights the narrative role of images and the importance of sequential structure in developing a dynamic and accessible reading experience. Through this interaction between words and images, the reader is encouraged to actively participate in the process of interpretation and to construct multiple meanings.

The multimodal nature of comics is also highlighted by Jacobs (2007), who asserts that they contribute to the development of "multiple literacies," offering opportunities to interpret and produce messages through multiple semiotic systems. The author believes that the use of comics in education can foster the development of complex reading skills and meet the needs of students familiar with the visual culture specific to contemporary society.

From an educational perspective, comic books stand out for their accessibility, appeal, and ability to support the understanding of information. Carter (2007) highlights that they facilitate connections between text and image and contribute to the development of authentic reading experiences, while Schwarz (2006) emphasizes their potential to expand literacy practices and stimulate interest in reading.

Therefore, comic books should not be viewed solely as a recreational medium, but as complex multimodal texts capable of supporting the development of literacy skills and addressing the cognitive characteristics and interests of elementary school students. Their interdisciplinary nature and the ability to simultaneously integrate

verbal and visual elements make them valuable educational resources for contemporary education and for fostering active and reflective readers.

Insights from the focus group on the role of visual aids in literacy development

The importance of visual aids in the process of developing literacy skills is supported both by the specialized literature and by the perceptions of the teachers involved in the exploratory research conducted as part of this study. The focus group results highlight the fact that elementary school teachers frequently use interactive methods and visual aids in their teaching, considering them effective tools for facilitating text comprehension and stimulating students' interest in reading activities.

Participants emphasized that images help increase attention spans and reinforce memory processes, making it easier for students to grasp the text's meaning. One participant stated that "images help them understand the text better," while another teacher highlighted that "visual aids facilitate memorization and maintain students' interest." These findings are consistent with the perspective of Jewitt and Kress (2003), according to which multimodal resources promote students' active participation and contribute to meaning-making by integrating different modes of representation.

Teachers also highlighted the important role of visual aids in adapting learning activities to the characteristics and interests of today's students. In light of the challenges associated with reduced attention spans and the growing influence of the digital environment, visual methods are seen as effective ways to stimulate student engagement and facilitate the processes of understanding and communication.

Regarding the use of comic strips, most participants found this method appealing and well-suited to the characteristics of elementary school students. Teachers emphasized that combining text with images can transform reading into an enjoyable and accessible activity, fostering active participation and increasing interest in reading. Thus, the perceptions expressed by teachers confirm the conclusions drawn in the specialized literature regarding the role of multimodal texts in the development of literacy skills and support the relevance of comic

books as an educational resource adapted to the demands of contemporary education.

The Educational Benefits of Using Comics in the Development of Literacy Skills

Vocabulary Development and Text Comprehension

One of the most important contributions of using comic books in teaching is their support for the development of vocabulary and text comprehension skills. By combining verbal language with visual representations, comic books offer students the opportunity to construct meaning in an accessible way and to make connections between explicit and implicit information. Their multimodal nature facilitates the comprehension process and helps reduce the difficulties encountered by students who are just beginning to develop literacy skills.

According to McCloud (1993), the relationship between text and image promotes the completion of information and the construction of meaning through the reader's active engagement. During the reading process, students are prompted to interpret both verbal and visual messages, which leads to the development of inferential skills and a better understanding of the narrative content. Similarly, Eisner (1996) highlights the fact that the sequential structure specific to comic strips facilitates the logical organization of information and supports the cognitive processes involved in text comprehension.

Jacobs (2007) argues that comics contribute to the development of multiple forms of literacy, offering students the opportunity to interpret meanings constructed through different semiotic systems. Furthermore, Schwarz (2006) emphasizes that graphic novels and comic books can expand traditional reading practices and facilitate students' access to complex texts, stimulating processes of interpretation and reflection. Carter (2007) highlights that visual media contribute to strengthening text comprehension and to making meaningful connections between prior experiences and new information.

From the perspective of Romanian language and literature pedagogy, Pamfil (2016, 2017) emphasizes the importance of diversifying reading materials and using strategies that promote meaning-making and the development of skills for comprehending written messages. At the

same time, Bocoş (2013) highlights the fact that the use of interactive resources and student-centered methods can contribute to making the learning process more effective and to stimulating students' active participation.

The results of the focus group conducted with elementary school teachers confirm these theoretical perspectives. Participants identified vocabulary development and improved text comprehension as among the main benefits of using comic strips in teaching. Teachers noted that visual aids help students grasp the meaning of the text and clarify information that might be difficult to understand without images. They also highlighted that the association between images and text promotes memorization and helps students make connections between the main ideas and significant details in the text.

Consequently, the multimodal nature of comic strips and the complementarity between their verbal and visual components make these resources a valuable tool for developing vocabulary and comprehension skills, helping to foster reading practices that are accessible and relevant to elementary school students.

Fostering Motivation for Reading and Creativity

In addition to their contribution to vocabulary development and text comprehension, comic books stand out for their ability to stimulate students' interest in reading and to encourage creativity. In the context of the challenges posed by competition from digital media and declining interest in traditional reading, identifying engaging ways to bring students closer to texts is a constant concern for educators.

The literature highlights that comic books can serve as a bridge between the visual world familiar to students and reading activities, contributing to the development of a positive attitude toward books. Norton (2003) emphasizes the motivational role of comic books, showing that they facilitate student engagement in reading activities and increase interest in exploring texts. Similarly, Versaci (2001) argues that comic books can change students' perception of reading, transforming it into an accessible and enjoyable experience capable of stimulating curiosity and the desire to discover new texts.

Carter (2007) points out that incorporating comics into educational activities helps create authentic learning contexts in which students

become active participants in the process of constructing meaning. At the same time, Eisner (1985) emphasizes that the specific language of comics stimulates the imagination and encourages creative expression, offering students the opportunity to become not only recipients of the message but also creators of their own narrative works.

From the perspective of interactive pedagogy, Cerghit (2006), Cucos (2014), and Albulescu (2015) highlight the importance of using student-centered teaching strategies and resources that promote active participation and free expression. Activities such as creating comic strips, filling in dialogues, or continuing narrative sequences stimulate students' imagination, creativity, and ability to organize information logically and express ideas in a personal manner.

The focus group results confirm these theoretical perspectives. The participating teachers noted that the use of comic books helps increase students' interest in reading and makes learning activities a more engaging and accessible experience. Teachers highlighted that students participate with greater enthusiasm in activities based on visual materials and that the combination of images and text encourages active engagement in the learning process. Participants also identified creativity as one of the main benefits of using comic books, noting that they offer numerous opportunities for personal expression and for creating original works.

Therefore, comic books are not merely a tool to facilitate reading but also an educational resource with significant motivational and creative potential. Through their engaging nature and the opportunity, they provide for students' active involvement, they can contribute to fostering positive reading experiences and developing the skills necessary for lifelong learning.

Insights from the focus group on the educational benefits of using comic books

The results of the exploratory focus group conducted with elementary school teachers highlight a predominantly favorable perception of the educational potential of comic books in developing literacy skills. A thematic analysis of the responses identified recurring themes related to vocabulary development and text comprehension, fostering motivation for reading, and encouraging student creativity.

One of the most frequently mentioned educational benefits was the contribution of comic books to vocabulary development and facilitating text comprehension. Teachers noted that the association between images and text supports students in the process of constructing meaning and helps clarify information. In the participants' view, visual aids facilitate memorization and allow students to more easily make connections between the main ideas and relevant details in the text. Some teachers emphasized that "images help them understand the text better," while others noted that "visual aids facilitate memorization and maintain students' interest."

Another aspect highlighted by the participants concerns the positive impact of comic books on reading motivation. Teachers believe that this resource can make reading a more engaging and accessible activity for students, encouraging active involvement and enthusiastic participation in classroom activities. In this regard, one participant stated that comic books are an "attractive and effective method," while another teacher noted that they "turn reading into a pleasurable activity." These perceptions reflect the importance of the affective-motivational dimension in the development of literacy skills and confirm the need to use teaching strategies tailored to students' interests.

Participants also associated the use of comic books with the development of creativity and personal expression. The ability to interpret images, construct dialogues, and create their own narrative sequences was seen as an opportunity to stimulate imagination and free expression. Teachers noted that these activities encourage students' active participation and contribute to the development of meaningful and authentic learning experiences.

Overall, the focus group results confirm the conclusions drawn in the specialized literature and highlight the fact that teachers perceive comic books as a valuable educational resource capable of supporting the development of vocabulary, text comprehension, motivation to read, and creativity. These aspects give comic books significant educational potential and justify their integration into activities designed to develop literacy skills among elementary school students.

Critical Aspects of the Use of Comics

The Text-Image Relationship and the Construction of Meaning

From the perspective of multimodal literacy, the process of reading involves more than simply decoding information conveyed through verbal language; it entails the simultaneous interpretation of different modes of representation and the construction of complex meanings. In this context, comics are distinguished by their multimodal nature, in which text and image function complementarily, contributing together to the transmission of the message and the construction of meaning.

Kress (2010) emphasizes that meanings are generated through the interaction of different semiotic modes, and that understanding a message requires the integration of verbal, visual, and symbolic information. From the same perspective, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that images possess their own grammar and actively participate in the communication process, supplementing and nuancing the information conveyed through text. Thus, the reader is engaged in a complex process of interpretation, in which the construction of meaning arises from the relationship between visual and verbal elements.

McCloud (1993) highlights the fact that one of the fundamental characteristics of comics is sequentiality, which requires the reader to fill in the information between panels and make constant inferences. This process involves the reader's active participation and the use of complex cognitive operations, such as anticipation, interpretation, and integration of information. From this perspective, reading comics is not a passive activity, but an active process of meaning-making.

Jacobs (2007) asserts that comics contribute to the development of multiple forms of literacy and offer students the opportunity to interpret meanings constructed through different semiotic systems. The interaction between images and text stimulates the formulation of hypotheses, the identification of causal relationships, and the establishment of connections between explicit and implicit information, thereby fostering the development of analytical and interpretive skills.

In the context of elementary education, the relationship between text and image can help students engage with complex content and contribute to the development of active and reflective reading. By constantly engaging students in interpretive processes and stimulating

the construction of meaning, comic books transcend their role as mere illustrative aids and become an educational resource that fosters the development of skills specific to multimodal literacy and prepares students to engage with the diverse forms of communication characteristic of contemporary society.

Developing Critical Thinking and Reflection

Beyond their contribution to the development of comprehension skills and to facilitating meaning-making, comic books offer significant potential for stimulating critical thinking and reflection. In the context of contemporary education, critical thinking is an essential skill that involves the ability to analyze information, formulate reasoned judgments, and interpret messages from multiple perspectives. The development of this skill is closely linked to the formation of an active and reflective reader, capable of attributing meaning to information and consciously participating in the learning process.

Freire and Macedo (1987) argue that the act of reading goes beyond the mere decoding of words, involving the critical interpretation of reality and the construction of meaning in relation to individual and social experiences. From this perspective, literacy is associated with the development of reflective capacity and the formation of an active attitude toward knowledge. Along the same lines, Luke (2012) emphasizes that critical literacy involves analyzing messages, identifying multiple perspectives, and formulating reasoned interpretations, thereby contributing to the development of a reflective relationship with the text.

Gee (2015) emphasizes that the understanding and interpretation of messages take place within specific social and cultural contexts, and that readers are actively involved in the process of constructing meaning. In the case of comic books, the relationship between image and text offers numerous opportunities for formulating hypotheses, identifying characters' intentions, anticipating events, and interpreting implicit elements. Thus, students are encouraged to go beyond a literal reading and develop analytical and reflective skills.

Lankshear and Knobel (2011) emphasize that new forms of literacy require complex skills for interpreting and evaluating information, adapted to the diversity of messages specific to contemporary culture.

From this perspective, comic books can provide favorable contexts for developing critical thinking by stimulating dialogue, argumentation, and the expression of personal viewpoints. Analyzing the relationships between characters, identifying implicit messages, and interpreting symbolic meanings are examples of activities that can contribute to the development of reflection and analytical skills.

From an educational perspective, Albulescu (2015) and Păun (2017) highlight the importance of using teaching strategies that encourage students' active participation and the development of higher-order thinking skills. In this regard, comic strips can serve as educational tools that encourage students to ask questions, justify their opinions, and critically interpret messages, thereby helping to foster a reflective attitude toward reading.

Consequently, the use of comic books in teaching activities is not limited to facilitating text comprehension but can also provide a conducive context for the development of critical thinking and reflection. Through their multimodal nature and the complexity of the relationships between images and text, they offer students opportunities for analysis, interpretation, and reasoned expression, contributing to the development of essential skills for active and responsible participation in contemporary social and cultural life.

Limitations and Reservations Identified by Teachers

Although the literature highlights numerous benefits associated with the use of comic books in the development of literacy skills, integrating them into teaching also involves a series of challenges and limitations that require a balanced approach. In this regard, the results of the focus group conducted with elementary school teachers highlight reservations regarding the excessive use of visual aids and their impact on the reading process.

One of the main concerns expressed by participants relates to the risk of superficial reading. Teachers emphasized that an excessive focus on images can lead students to concentrate primarily on visual elements, at the expense of a deeper analysis and understanding of the text. Some participants noted the risk that students might "focus only on the images," while others drew attention to the possibility of a "superficial understanding of the text." These concerns highlight the need to use

comic books as a complementary tool rather than as a substitute for reading the full text.

In the literature, McCloud (1993) emphasizes that the effectiveness of comics depends on the reader's active involvement in the process of constructing meaning and on the reader's ability to make connections between verbal and visual elements. From this perspective, the image should not be viewed as an element that overly simplifies reading, but rather as a means of facilitating interpretation and stimulating reflection. Along the same lines, Kress (2010) emphasizes that the development of multimodal literacy involves learning how different semiotic systems complement one another, without any one of them becoming dominant.

Focus group participants also highlighted the importance of a balanced use and methodical integration of comic books into instructional activities. Teachers believe that the effectiveness of this resource depends on how it is used and how well it aligns with learning objectives. In their view, comic books should not replace traditional methods, but rather complement the teaching process and contribute to the diversification of learning experiences.

Another limitation identified by the participants concerns the need for resources and materials tailored to the students' age groups, as well as the need for methodological training for teachers. Teachers expressed interest in examples of best practices, methodological guides, and materials that would facilitate the effective integration of comic books into activities designed to develop literacy skills.

Therefore, the benefits associated with the use of comic books must be analyzed in close connection with the limitations and challenges involved in integrating them into educational practice. The perspectives expressed by teachers highlight the need for a balanced approach, in which comics are utilized as complementary resources, integrated coherently, and adapted to the specific educational objectives of primary education. Under these conditions, their educational and critical potential can be effectively harnessed without diminishing the importance of direct engagement with the written text and the development of in-depth reading skills.

The Cultural Dimensions of Using Comics

The Formation of Values and Cultural Identity

In addition to their educational and critical dimensions, comics also have significant cultural dimensions, contributing to the formation of values and the development of students' cultural identity. In the context of contemporary education, culture is no longer perceived exclusively as a body of knowledge, but as a dynamic process of constructing meanings, values, and social affiliations. From this perspective, reading is an essential means of shaping identity and developing an active relationship with the social and cultural world.

Freire and Macedo (1987) argue that the act of reading involves a constant interpretation of reality and fosters the development of critical consciousness and a connection to one's own cultural context. Along the same lines, Street (1984) emphasizes that literacy practices are influenced by the social and cultural environment, and that the development of reading skills requires the integration of experiences and values specific to the community to which the student belongs.

Through the themes they address, the characters they feature, and the situations they depict, comic books provide a conducive environment for exploring values such as friendship, empathy, responsibility, respect, and cooperation. At the same time, they facilitate identification with the characters and encourage reflection on one's own experiences and behaviors. In this regard, the use of comic books can contribute to the development of social-emotional skills and to the strengthening of students' personal and cultural identities.

Roman and Castanheira (2015) highlight the importance of the family environment and the values it promotes in fostering positive attitudes toward reading. Thus, reading experiences and interaction with a variety of texts contribute to the development of cultural practices that influence children's personal development and social integration. From this perspective, comic books can serve as a bridge between students' cultural world and the values promoted in the educational setting.

From a pedagogical standpoint, Cucoş (2014) and Păun (2017) emphasize that contemporary education aims to foster autonomous and responsible individuals capable of actively participating in social and cultural life. Through their narrative nature and the diversity of perspectives they offer, comic books can contribute to the development

of cultural sensitivity and the formation of relevant value systems for elementary school students.

Intercultural Education and the Development of the Contemporary Reader

Globalization and the diversification of forms of communication have given rise to new educational demands, including the development of intercultural competencies and the cultivation of readers capable of interpreting and appreciating the diversity of cultural perspectives. In this context, comics can serve as relevant educational resources, offering students the opportunity to engage with characters, contexts, and values from different cultural backgrounds.

Cope and Kalantzis (2009) emphasize that new forms of literacy involve the development of skills that enable active participation in a society characterized by cultural diversity and a proliferation of communication methods. Similarly, Lankshear and Knobel (2011) emphasize that contemporary education must prepare students to engage with a variety of texts and cultural contexts, fostering the development of cognitive flexibility and openness to otherness.

Through narratives and visual representations, comic books provide students with access to different perspectives and can help foster tolerance, empathy, and respect for diversity. At the same time, their engaging and accessible nature encourages students to engage with reading and contributes to the development of cultural practices specific to the contemporary reader.

Roman (2020) highlights the importance of diversifying educational contexts and capitalizing on both formal and non-formal learning experiences in the development of students' competencies. Similarly, Ciolan (2008) emphasizes the need to promote integrated educational approaches that enable connections between different fields of knowledge and address students' current needs.

Therefore, comics may be considered valuable educational resources that foster the development of intercultural competencies and contribute to the formation of a contemporary, active, and reflective reader, capable of understanding and appreciating the diversity of modes of expression and cultural perspectives that characterize contemporary society.

Insights from the focus group on the relationship between students and reading

The results of the focus group conducted with elementary school teachers highlight their concern with adapting teaching strategies to the specific characteristics and interests of students in today's generations. Participants noted difficulties related to declining interest in reading, the influence of the digital environment, and the reduction in time allocated to reading activities at home. In this context, the use of comic books is seen as a potential way to bring students closer to the world of books and to stimulate their interest in reading.

Teachers noted that comic books can make reading a more accessible and engaging experience, helping to foster a positive relationship with the written text. At the same time, participants emphasized that this resource must be integrated into a balanced educational approach that facilitates a gradual transition to reading more complex texts and avoids limiting reading experiences exclusively to visual media.

The teachers also highlighted the need for materials and methodological guidelines that facilitate the efficient integration of comic books into teaching activities. The interest shown by participants in using this method and their openness to interactive strategies confirms the need to identify relevant educational resources for developing literacy skills and fostering a lasting relationship with reading.

Overall, the perspectives expressed by the teachers highlight that comics are perceived not only as tools that facilitate understanding of the text, but also as resources capable of bringing students closer to reading and forming practices compatible with the demands of contemporary education.

Conclusions

The transformations brought about by contemporary society and the diversification of communication modalities require a reconsideration of the teaching strategies employed in the development of literacy skills, as well as the use of educational resources adapted to the characteristics of primary school students. In this context, comics emerge as complex multimodal texts, capable of combining verbal and

visual language in an accessible, engaging, and meaningful way, thus enriching students' learning experiences.

The analysis conducted highlights the multiple educational values associated with the use of comics. From a formative perspective, comics contribute to the development of vocabulary and text comprehension skills, enhance reading motivation, and foster creativity and self-expression. Their multimodal nature facilitates meaning-making and encourages students' active involvement in the learning process, providing favorable contexts for the development of literacy skills.

Regarding the critical dimension, comics create opportunities for developing the ability to interpret the relationship between text and image, to make inferences, and to stimulate reflection and critical thinking. Reading comics requires students' active participation in the construction of meaning and promotes the development of multimodal literacy skills, which are essential in the context of the diversity of communication forms characteristic of contemporary society.

From a cultural perspective, comics can contribute to the formation of values, the development of cultural identity, and the cultivation of openness toward diversity. Through narratives and visual representations, they facilitate students' engagement with reading and support the development of cultural practices and positive attitudes toward written texts.

The results of the exploratory focus group conducted with primary school teachers confirm the conclusions drawn from the literature. Participating teachers highlighted the potential of comics in vocabulary development, text comprehension, and the stimulation of reading interest. At the same time, they emphasized the need for a balanced use of this resource and its methodologically sound integration into the teaching-learning process in order to avoid the risk of superficial understanding.

Therefore, comics should not be viewed solely as recreational materials or as substitutes for traditional reading, but rather as complementary educational resources capable of meeting the demands of contemporary education and contributing to the development of literacy skills among primary school students. Their integration into a coherent pedagogical approach, adapted to students' developmental characteristics, can

support the formation of active, reflective readers who are open to the diversity of forms of expression specific to contemporary culture.

Considering the findings obtained and the perspectives expressed by the teachers involved in the study, it can be concluded that the use of comics represents a promising direction for the development of literacy skills. This justifies further investigation through experimental studies and the development of instructional models and methodological resources aimed at the systematic integration of this educational resource into teaching practice.

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