

Popular narratives: communication techniques as a strategic means for the development of creative writing in primary school students

Narrativas populares: técnicas de comunicación como medio estratégico para el desarrollo de la escritura creativa en estudiantes de educación primaria

Elborin Del Mar Muñoz

Universidad de Panamá

elborin.delmar-m@up.ac.pa

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-3510-695X>

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Abstract

This article presents the progress of an ongoing research project whose general purpose is to develop creative writing through popular narratives, using communication techniques as a strategic means among primary school students. The study is framed within a qualitative approach and follows the Participatory Action Research method. The research was conducted

with a population of fifth-grade students from the Pablo Correa León Educational Institution, María Auxiliadora campus. Data collection was carried out through the application of a pilot test and instruments such as an observation checklist and a semi-structured interview. Preliminary results reveal shortcomings in students' text production skills and a low interest in writing habits, which led to the design of a pedagogical proposal that serves as a strategic means to address these deficiencies.

Key words: Text production, creative writing, popular narratives, communication, techniques, pedagogy.

Resumen

El presente artículo expone los avances de una investigación en curso que tiene como propósito general desarrollar la escritura creativa mediante las narrativas populares usando como medio estratégico las técnicas de comunicación en estudiantes de Primaria de la IE. El estudio se enmarca en un enfoque cualitativo, bajo el método de Investigación Acción Participativa. La investigación se realizó en una población compuesta por estudiantes del grado quinto de primaria de la Institución Educativa Pablo Correa León, sede María Auxiliadora. La extracción de datos se llevó a cabo por medio de la aplicación de una prueba piloto y de instrumentos como lista de observación y entrevista semiestructurada. Los resultados preliminares muestran falencias en el eje de la producción textual en los estudiantes, así como un bajo interés en los hábitos de escritura, por lo que se diseña una propuesta pedagógica que sirva como medio estratégico para desarrollar las falencias encontradas.

Palabras clave: Producción textual, escritura creativa, narrativas populares, comunicación, técnicas, pedagogía.

Introduction

Text production is one of the five axes of Spanish Language in Colombia and

therefore a competence of vital relevance for the acquisition of writing skills, conceived on the one hand as the ability to write and on the other hand, the ability to organize ideas, express thoughts in a coherent and creative way in order to communicate effectively, as mentioned by the Ministry of National Education (MEN, 2020).

During the formulation and implementation of projects in the pedagogical practice, the deficiency in the students' textual production competence was identified as a central problem: that is, the main shortcomings detected were: poor understanding of the structure of texts, lack of narrative coherence, limited application of stylistic and creative resources, as well as the absence of appropriate pedagogical strategies to address these difficulties. In the words of Restrepo (2014), who relates this problem to the limitations present in the traditional pedagogical model used in schools to promote written production.

Such conventional methodologies generally lack effective strategies to foster creativity and fully develop students' writing skills. Faced with this diagnosis, the need arises to implement an innovative proposal based on pedagogical immersion that incorporates creative strategies inspired by the work of Gianni Rodari, especially in his book *Grammar of Fantasy* (1973).

Rodari (1973) has as its main objective to stimulate the imagination and significantly strengthen the students' writing skills. For this reason, students of the Bachelor's degree program in Humanities and Spanish Language - LHLC sought to identify innovative strategies and functional techniques and, at the same time, effective tools to enhance creative writing in elementary school students.

Adding that Claparède's (1940) educational principle is that the learner is the center of every pedagogical process and the motivation to learn is essential in every learner.

Theoretical framework

Several studies have shown that creative writing and popular narratives can be effective pedagogical tools to strengthen

literacy in school contexts. Saucedo (2024) showed that the use of folktales significantly favors writing skills in five-year-old children, while López (2022) highlighted the positive impact of text feedback as a relevant aspect in text quality. Buñay and Machado (2023) emphasized the value of affective communication in learning.

It is necessary to emphasize that the main theoretical basis of this research is that Gianni Rodari (1973) promotes imagination as the axis of writing development and proposes techniques such as the combination of unconnected elements, the formulation of hypothetical scenarios and the rewriting of folk tales.

To this is added the contribution of Frugoni (2006), who points out that fiction writing requires theoretical-literary support to structure creativity in the classroom. In addition, the constructivist theories of Vygotsky (1989) and Bruner (1972), who emphasize the importance of social interaction and the active role of the student in the construction of knowledge, are adhered to.

Method

The approach used was qualitative, understood as a way to observe and analyze natural contexts without modifying them, as stated by Blasco and Pérez (2007). From this perspective, the participatory action research method was adopted, which allows identifying specific problems and acting accordingly to transform the reality of an educational community, and Vidal (2007) highlights it as the type of research that links the analysis of concrete situations with the implementation of social action strategies. The methodological route of the project was developed in a sequential and organized manner, beginning with a classroom observation phase during the initial weeks of pedagogical immersion. Two key instruments were used to collect information: an observation checklist with sixteen criteria distributed in three lines of analysis (pedagogical, behavioral and attitudinal), rated on a scale of 1 to 5; and a semi-structured interview applied to both students and teachers. These tools made it possible to identify classroom dynamics, as well as reading, writing and textual production processes, which served as the basis for the design of the pedagogical proposal. Based on this characterization, a

structured intervention was developed that included diagnostic elements as well as application and evaluation phases.

The target population of this research focused on fifth grade students in the morning session, belonging to the Pablo Correa León Educational Institution, María Auxiliadora, located in the city of Cúcuta. This population was selected due to the evidence of difficulties in textual production observed during the pedagogical practice process. The semi-structured interviews, which included five questions addressed to the students and four to the teacher, provided detailed information on the perceptions and experiences related to reading, writing and the teaching-learning process, thus allowing to adequately contextualize the intervention and adapt the strategies to the real needs of the group.

The pedagogical proposal was designed based on the findings collected and was structured through a didactic sequence based on the creative writing techniques of the author Gianni Rodari (1973). The pedagogical intervention began with an introductory class oriented to the socialization of the concept of popular narratives, followed by a playful activity in

which the students' elaborated stories from random elements, thus favoring creativity and written expression. These techniques were complemented with communicative strategies such as active listening, constructive feedback and collaborative work, consolidating a non-traditional approach that stimulated imagination and strengthened writing skills in a participatory, meaningful and contextualized environment.

Results

From the application of the semi-structured interview with students and teachers (See Table 1), significant results were obtained that allowed characterizing the level of development of textual production in the classroom. The systematization of the testimonies collected showed both strengths and difficulties in the processes of reading, writing and textual comprehension. Through the triangulation of this information, two fundamental emerging categories were identified: popular narratives and writing, which served as a basis for interpreting the pedagogical dynamics, the students' perceptions and the teacher's reflections.

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These categories allow us to deepen the analysis of the observed educational phenomenon and to support the didactic proposal from a contextualized and meaningful perspective.

Table 1. Questions for students and teachers

INSTRUMENT: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW
TO THE STUDENTS-(IPCL1)
DI1. Do you like to write and why? DI1 What stories have you read and which one is your favorite? DI1 What do you understand by fairy tale, legend and fable? DI1 How did you feel writing a story? What did you like the most about the dynamic? DI1, Do you like the Spanish language class and why?
TO THE SPANISH LANGUAGE TEACHER - (DTIEPCL)
DI1. Do you think that the students have an adequate level of textual production according to the grade level they are studying? Why? DI1. What kind of deficiencies do you see or are common in the group regarding comprehension, interpretation and creation of texts? DI1 Do you think that the Spanish language classes should have a higher weekly hourly intensity that allows the achievement of the five axes of the Basic Standards of Competence? Why?

DI1 What do you think is the best way to teach and motivate a student to read and write?

Source: own elaboration

Table 2. Testimonials

STUDENT QUESTIONS IPCL1	
DI1:	IPCL1: Yes, because writing relaxes my mind and I like to do hand exercises. It is very relaxing for me, because it opens my mind more, and I enjoy writing a lot.
DI1:	IPCL1: He leído el principito, he leído Caperucita roja, he leído otros cuentos. He leído Alicia en el país de las maravillas, pero mi favorito, que me gustó mucho es uno que se llama Cristina zanahoria
DI1:	IPCL1: By story, I mean a story with fictitious characters, by legend it is an oral reading and it is not known who started it, but it is told orally, and the fable has a moral.
DI1:	IPCL1: I really liked the activity and I felt free writing the story because I really liked the story I created, and the dynamic was very cool because we all worked as a group, the whole class, and I really liked it.
DI1:	IPCL1: Yes, I really like the language class because I can be dynamic with the teacher, with my friends, I can argue my questions, I can work as a team with my friends and I like the way the teacher teaches, I really like the way she teaches

QUESTIONS TO THE TEACHER DTIEPCL	
DI1:	DTIEPCL: No, they still do not have the capacity for textual production, due to the fact that during the two years of the pandemic that we were in the virtual world, they did not engage in the process of writing and thinking. It is very difficult for them to write and express or communicate their feelings.
DI1:	DTIEPCL: Students are not used to reading, they read out of obligation or because they have to do the reading process, but they are not used to reading and they are not used to analyzing what they are reading due to all this process that we have been going through and logically the shortcomings are being corrected within the process of the classes and in the process of the school year.
DI1:	DTIEPCL: It seems to me that the weekly hourly intensity should be implemented more, since, due to the deficiencies that they have or present as a result of the pandemic, they have many difficulties in the reading and writing process. This year we have increased one hour per week and it is being dedicated to the critical reading process, so we have been working to remedy this inconvenience and the deficiency that the children have in that hour of critical reading, but that hour of critical reading is not enough to complete the whole process. The ideal would be to read it in

	class, to read it at home, develop it and then logically present it student by student, and ask student by student what they have understood in the reading process, but progress has been made, the children take the reading to the classroom, and then they can read it at home.
DI1:	DTIEPCL: Reading and writing is the only way for the student to be motivated to carry out the writing process, they are often not forced to write at that moment, so they are dictated the subject, dictated in class, so that they take the dictation and the same with the reading. Reading and writing.

Source: own elaboration

By collecting the information and analyzing it, it was possible to identify and understand the main difficulties and potentialities presented by the students in the textual production processes, with the purpose of providing a basis for a contextualized pedagogical proposal that responds to their real needs.

Category 1: Popular narratives

The analysis showed that there is a general understanding of the concept of narrative as a fictional story, which was corroborated by the definition provided by the author and by the students' responses,

especially in the case of IPCL1. This student indicated that he understands the relationship between fiction and orality as essential elements of popular narratives. However, DTIEPCL noted that, despite conceptual clarity, significant difficulties persist in the textual production processes related to this type of narratives. This situation suggests that, although students recognize the oral and fictional nature of popular narratives, there are factors that negatively limit their appropriation and application in the classroom in grade 5-02.

Emerging subcategories for category 1.

Story

The story is perceived as an immersive experience that captures the reader's attention and motivates him/her to continue the reading process. Student IPCL1 expressed interest in different stories, many of them of a fantastic nature, which evidences an implicit knowledge of the narrative structure of the story. For his part, the teacher DTIEPCL pointed out shortcomings in reading and writing stories, although he recognized that encouraging a taste for reading stories can be an effective strategy to awaken interest in students.

Folk tale

A connection was found between Rodriguez's theory (2010) and the prior knowledge of the IPCL1 student, who acknowledged having read traditional tales such as Little Red Riding Hood, linking these narratives with orality and cultural tradition. This demonstrates the presence of referents of popular literature in the students' reading formation.

Fantastic story

This type of story remains current in the school environment as a didactic resource. Although IPCL1 showed familiarity and interest in this genre, the teacher DTIEPCL expressed concern about the general lack of interest of the group in reading this type of stories, which suggests that the observed case could be an exception rather than a rule.

Category 2: Writing

Regarding the concept and practice of writing, a correspondence was identified between theory and the personal experience of some students. Writing is a way of expressing ideas that provides moments of relaxation and relief for both

the writer and the reader. This perception was shared by student IPCL1, who affirmed that “writing relaxed him”, which evidences a positive affective link with the act of writing.

However, DTIEPCL noted the existence of a low general motivation on the part of the students towards the writing processes, which is of concern due to the relevance that this competence has in academic and personal development. This tension between individual interest and group disinterest reflects the need to implement innovative pedagogical strategies that foster meaningful writing from an early age.

Emerging subcategory for category 2.

Creativity

Regarding creativity, institutional efforts to promote it through reading and writing spaces are identified, specifically with the inclusion of one hour per week of critical reading in the curriculum. This measure seeks to strengthen reading and writing skills and, thus, the student's creative capacity. However, it is emphasized that such spaces must be truly meaningful in order to favor the development of creative thinking.

In relation to creativity and writing, this is consolidated as a pedagogical tool that favors the expression of emotions, experiences and subjective imaginaries, allowing students to build original narratives from their personal and social realities (Caicedo et al, 2023). At the same time, it is conceived as an enriching process that encourages the exploration of the inner world through fantasy and imagination, generating significant experiences in the school context (Vásquez and Caicedo, 2023).

Imagination

The experience of IPCL1 during a playful activity of story creation allowed observing a genuine expression of imagination. The construction of an original story generated a positive experience, consistent with Osborn (1979), who argues that the generation of ideas can produce personal satisfaction in narrative creation processes.

Creative thinking

Creative thinking is directly associated with dynamic school environments. IPCL1 was able to explore her writing in a personal and fluent manner in a context

that favored expressive freedom. However, DTIEPCL noted that, although there is progress, the pedagogical reinforcements applied do not always generate consistent or immediate effects.

Pedagogical immersion process through the IAP method

The main purpose of the pedagogical proposal entitled “The magic of writing” is to encourage creative writing in fifth grade students, through the application of narrative techniques inspired by the pedagogue Gianni Rodari (1973), who argues that imagination and writing are key elements that should be developed from school through didactic methods. This proposal arises from the need to strengthen textual production in the classroom, also incorporating communicative strategies such as active listening and feedback, framed in a process of pedagogical immersion.

The methodological structure includes moments to diagnose previous knowledge related to narrative texts, as well as a theoretical class that allows students to learn about their characteristics and structure, in line with the Basic

Competency Standards of the Ministry of Education. For this purpose, a didactic sequence organized in seven workshops is proposed: two initial ones with diagnostic activities on communication and narrative texts, one session to approach the theory of narrative texts, two workshops applying Rodari's techniques such as “fantastic binomial, what if, fables in reverse and fable salad” and finally two sessions for the preparation and execution of an internal short story contest (See Table 3).

The linking of Gianni Rodari's proposal (1973) adjusted to the intervention process with the pedagogical proposal sought to generate a creative, playful and formative process that strengthens writing skills and motivates students to explore their imagination through narrative.

Table 3. Action Plan (Workshop didactic sequence)

Session	Workshop Name	Description
Workshop 1	Diagnostic Activity Communication Techniques	Active listening, expression and feedback skills are explored.
Workshop 2	Diagnostic Activity - Narrative texts	Initial assessment of knowledge of

			the narrative genre.
Workshop 3	Types of Narrative Texts		In-depth study of types, structure and characteristics of narrative texts.
Workshop 4	Writing Techniques - Binomio Fantástico and What if...?		Application of techniques proposed by Rodari to stimulate creativity.
Workshop 5	Writing Techniques - Upside Down Fables and Fable Salad		Rewriting and combining traditional narrative structures.
Workshop 6	Internal Short Story Contest - Preparation		Revision, correction and preparation of texts written by students.
Workshop 7	Internal Short Story Contest - Execution		Socialization and presentation of stories in a space for reading and appreciation.

Source: own elaboration

Conclusions

In the current educational context, the teaching of creative writing faces several challenges that hinder its full development in elementary school students. Among these are the lack of adequate spaces to stimulate imagination, the persistence of traditional methodologies focused on repetition and memorization, and the lack

of support at home in the students' formative process.

These conditions limit the students' ability to express themselves freely, diminish their motivation and restrict the development of competencies associated with literary creation. Given this scenario, there is a need to increase and implement innovative pedagogical proposals that promote imagination, divergent thinking and the enjoyment of the writing process, strengthening, on the one hand, the pedagogical practice of the LHLC program and, on the other hand, the mastery of textual production skills.

In this sense, the present research was theoretically based on the work Grammar of Fantasy by Gianni Rodari (1973), whose approach emphasized that fantasy is not only compatible with learning, but essential for the integral development of the student. Through techniques such as the fantastic binomial, the rewriting of stories and the mixing of plots, textual production was encouraged in a playful and reflective environment.

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