Cognitive-Discursive Didactic Sequence to Strengthen Inferential Reading of Elementary School Students

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Abstract

Currently, students in basic secondary school in Colombia have a low performance in reading comprehension at the inferential level. This pedagogical proposal aimed to strengthen the level of inferential reading of students who attend elementary school, through the application of a didactic sequence from the cognitive-discursive perspective. Theoretically, the concepts proposed by Cisneros, Olave and Rojas regarding four types of inferences were assumed. Likewise, the theoretical orientations of Van Dijk (1978), Solé (1992) and Martínez (2002) were taken into account to support the cognitive-discursive perspective adopted in the study. Methodologically, the qualitative approach was used with the action research method, and techniques such as observation, questionnaire, field diary and didactic sequence were used. In relation to the results, it is evident that the participants in the closing questionnaire increased significantly compared to the four types of inference evaluated, thus demonstrating greater interpretation when facing the texts.

Keywords: Reading, Inferential comprehension, didactic sequence, cognitive-discursive perspective.

1. Introduction

Reading comprehension is assumed as the reader's ability to approach a text, establish connections, reflect, give meaning and achieve a deep understanding of it. Within the educational environment, it plays a fundamental role in the teaching-learning process, because during its development, the student faces the text, establishing a relationship with it and enriching it with interpretations and meanings. Now, covering comprehension from the inferential level, it is understood that this process implies the interconnection of the knowledge acquired during reading with the individual's baggage of previous knowledge; In addition, it constitutes a continuous exercise that enables the student to expand their repertoire of cognitive and

metacognitive strategies, this facilitates, in a relevant way, that they can formulate interpretations with an autonomous role and constructions in which they will read and understand in a more elaborate and developed way.

Likewise, this level of comprehension, which requires a high degree of abstraction on the part of the reader, is built as relationships and associations are captured both locally and globally within the text, causing students to retrieve and reconstruct previous knowledge, connecting them with the information obtained in reading, which leads to the creation of relationships that facilitate the making of inferences. Cisneros et al. (2010) argue that this inferential work is related to two fundamental aspects: one of a semantic nature, which enables the generation of new meanings and senses that emerge during reading, and another of a pragmatic nature, which contextualizes and gives meaning to the message based on the experiences lived by the reader.

On the other hand, Cisneros, et al. (2010) state that comprehension at the inferential level has not only been placed at the center of the cognitive discussion on reading, but has also gone beyond the pedagogical field, so actions have been carried out in order to reinforce it in education. It is considered necessary for students to develop their thinking, because through it, the relationship with other areas of knowledge and the creation of new knowledge are favored. Also, the Ministry of National Education (1998) states that its relevance lies in the fact that it leads to permanent deductions and presuppositions, to the completion of textual interstices, that is, to the unsaid elements, and that they are completed through the reader's inferences, likewise, it is recognized as a fundamental and necessary dimension, for students to reach a critical reading.

Therefore, this research considers it essential to impart alternative pedagogies that lead to the formation of students capable of building from their understandings and senses, because through this, reading teaching practices will be strengthened, turning them into enjoyable, emblematic spaces of interaction, in which students and teachers will take their role in a meaningful way; in addition, through the discursive cognitive perspective, implemented in the didactic sequence, they will be able to analyze, relate, and identify in a significant way the micro and macro structure and the situation of enunciation within the text; This will be fundamental for their learning and training as readers, because it will give them a different vision of what is written, assuming an active, reflective and dialoguing role. However, this has become a challenge for teachers in the area of Spanish Language, because currently students have a low academic performance, which is closely related to deficiencies in reading comprehension.

 This is evidenced in the results of PISA 2018, in which it was found that Colombia at level 1B obtained a percentage of 16% and at level 1A 30%, which means that students make simple associations between the text and their everyday knowledge; at level 2 28%, which implies that this percentage has the ability to identify main ideas, explicit aspects and sometimes complex information; in level 3, 16%, that is, the reader who is located here, manages to make associations and evaluate characteristics of the text; at level 4 only 6% achieved it, a worrying figure, because it shows that only 6% have the ability to make hypotheses, inferences, comparisons, build knowledge and relate it to their previous knowledge, and on the other hand, 94% do not have these skills; Finally, only 1% managed to place themselves in levels 5 and 6.

Also, within the framework of this research, attention was focused on 9th grade 4 students of the San José Educational Institution, in Montería Córdoba. Which belong to the same geographical sector and nearby neighborhoods; their ages range from 14 to 16 years old. The initial diagnosis revealed a worrying pattern: the students showed a low level of competence in the field of inferential reading. In addition, a methodological gap was identified in the teaching of the latter. This gap can be attributed to the pedagogical strategies employed by teachers, which, according to initial observations, were not being fully effective in promoting the development of inferential reading skills among students.

This represents a challenge for the country, because often the educational system focuses on literal comprehension, overlooking the importance of inferences for a deeper and more critical understanding, for which it is considered necessary to develop actions that allow to provide competencies and skills to students in basic and secondary education. so that they can face challenges when analyzing complex texts, integrating concepts and applying them in varied contexts, with the aim of breaking down low reading comprehension, specifically at the inferential level, which points to great shortcomings in students, as presented in the low percentage acquired in level 4, which is noted in inferential competence according to PISA.

Given the above, the need arises for a pedagogical strategy that strengthens the teaching of reading in the classroom, therefore, the following research arises taken from a discursive cognitive approach, which becomes a transformative method; On the one hand , cognition makes planning, regulation and evaluation possible, and, consequently, the fulfillment of the objectives proposed in it, also, facilitates the apprehension and intervention of both the text, its form and its content, as well as the reader, his expectations and his previous knowledge (Solé, 1987; Van Dijk, 1983). Now, from the discursive perspective through the different sessions, it will be possible to socially analyze the text in its context of production, in this way, the situation of enunciation is studied: enunciator, enunciator and message within the text (Martínez, 1999). This will be vital, since the reader has the ability to recognize the situation of enunciation, he will be able to relate it to reality. A discursive competence that will enable students to generate knowledge, analyse different contexts and recognise cultural diversity.

Thus, it is relevant to highlight that the main objective of this research is to promote, consolidate and enrich inferential reading competence through the implementation of the aforementioned approach. Similarly, it focuses on prioritizing the development of students' analytical and expressive skills, which, in reading teaching, will not only generate a deeper understanding of texts, but also effective interaction with peers and participation in cultural exchanges. This approach not only benefits students, but also has a positive impact on the academic community as a whole. Future teachers and researchers in the field of education will find in this research a solid knowledge base that will provide them with valuable information and allow them to acquire new knowledge. Through this information base, they will be able to reflect on their pedagogical practices and, ultimately, contribute to the continuous improvement of education and research in the area of inferential reading.
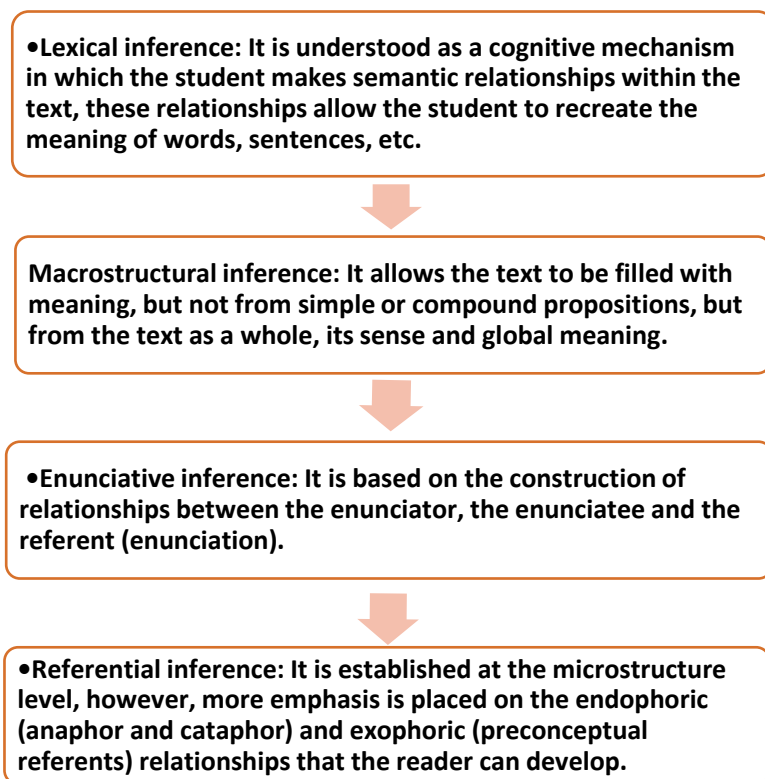
2. Theoretical references

Reading at the inferential level

Reading at the inferential level is of utmost importance because its fundamental role is to develop superior cognitive skills and deep understanding of texts. It involves the extraction of hidden meanings, the deduction of implicit information, and the unraveling of the author's intentions, which leads to interpreting the text in a more complete and contextualized way, and developing a critical perspective on its content. Cisneros et al. (2010) argue that the work of inferences is, on the one hand, semantic, since it allows us to reflect on new meanings and senses aroused during reading; on the other hand, pragmatic, because it makes it possible to contextualize and give meaning to the message, based on the realities experienced, that is, on the knowledge carried by the reader and used according to its significance.

On the other hand, the teaching of inferential reading is fundamental in the educational process, because it encourages students to enter the deepest layers of comprehension, where they must extract hidden meanings, intuit the author's intentions and relate information in a deeper way. This skill is crucial in a world where information is ubiquitous and often subtly presented. In addition, it promotes the development of critical thinking, students must not only assimilate the information provided by the author, but they are also required to evaluate, analyze, and make assumptions based on contextual and linguistic clues. This fosters the ability to question and reflect on information, vital skills in informed decision-making and problem-solving in daily life

Inferential reading also connects students to the real world by encouraging them to relate what they read to their personal experiences and prior knowledge. This contextual approach allows them to better understand the relevance and usefulness of reading in their daily lives, which, in turn, increases the motivation and practical application of these skills. It is worth mentioning that students who master these skills are better prepared to address all types of texts.

Based on the above, this pedagogical proposal takes into consideration the classification proposed by Cisneros et al. (2010) on the different types of inferences, which are divided into: lexical inference, macrostructural inference, enunciative inference and referential inference. Here's a brief explanation of each type.

- **Lexical inference: It is understood as a cognitive mechanism in which the student makes semantic relationships within the text, these relationships allow the student to recreate the meaning of words, sentences, etc.**

Macrostructural inference: It allows the text to be filled with meaning, but not from simple or compound propositions, but from the text as a whole, its sense and global meaning.

- **Enunciative inference: It is based on the construction of relationships between the enunciator, the enunciatee and the referent (enunciation).**

- **Referential inference: It is established at the microstructure level, however, more emphasis is placed on the endophoric (anaphor and cataphor) and exophoric (preconceptual referents) relationships that the reader can develop.**

Taken and adapted from: Cisneros et al. (2010)

Cognitive-discursive didactic sequence

The didactic sequence (hereinafter SD) is understood as a structure of actions and interactions related to each other, intentional, which are organized from specific purposes to favor teaching and learning; it addresses language processes, generally linked to a genre and a specific discursive situation. As can be seen, didactic sequences are units of work that deal with processes and link knowledge and know-how linked to a specific discursive production (Camps, 1995). In accordance with the above, the (SD) becomes a fundamental tool within the process of teaching reading, because through it it will be possible to mainstream reading as a meaningful and enjoyable practice.

Given the previous premise, this research proposes a pedagogical proposal that seeks to develop the teaching and learning of inferential reading through the integration of two approaches that have demonstrated effectiveness in the development of reading skills. First, the cognitive perspective is adopted, supported by researchers such as Solé (1987) and Van Dijk (1983), which presents the reader as an active agent capable of processing the text, analyzing it, decoding it, and orienting its reading towards specific objectives, goals, or tasks. In this view, it is recognized

that reading is always carried out with a defined purpose, which leads to the formulation and testing of hypotheses to build a solid understanding. This approach becomes propitious, since it will generate an interaction between the reader, the subject who carries knowledge, and the text; it will also be an active entity that will take argumentative positions in front of it, in which it will be able to organize, decipher and understand it, becoming an autonomous subject that takes control of its learning.

Secondly, the discursive perspective is incorporated, based on research such as that of Martínez (1999). This perspective recognizes the reader as a subject who participates in the creation of social discourses in significant communicative contexts, influenced both by cognitive factors and by the influence of society and culture. From this perspective, reading is understood to be a process in which enunciation, society and culture play a crucial role in the construction of knowledge, relating it to other forms of non-verbal communication and semiotic practices of meaning. Reading teaching, from this perspective, will forge a pleasant environment in the classroom, which develops interpretations, self-evaluations, constructive criticism, dialogues, which will give rise to motivation, learning and love for reading. This integration of approaches, based on (SD), seeks to enrich the teaching of inferential reading, taking cognizance and discursive aspects, promoting a deeper, dialogical and contextualized understanding of texts, inscribed in a discursive and intersubjective semantics, which is necessarily constituted so that the reader establishes a significant knowledge with reality.

3. Methodology

This pedagogical proposal was carried out through the action research method, since it strengthens educational practice from reinventions and innovations that contribute to social reality, promotes the understanding of teaching praxis, generates planning, actions and continuous evaluations of teaching processes (Elliott, 1993). However, for its development, a mixed methodology was used, which took into account a quantitative experimental cohort study, with a sample of 33 students. A pre-test and a post-test were developed to determine the statistical differences in the sample, before and after the application of the didactic sequence.

Secondly, a qualitative study was applied that consisted of the interpretative phenomenological analysis that was carried out during the application of the didactic sequence, through observations, which were recorded in the field diary.

The didactic sequence I recognize and interpret lines was designed, with the aim of strengthening reading at the inferential level in students. It was developed through eight learning sessions, equivalent to sixteen classes. Each of the inferences was worked on in two sessions, structured as follows: practical activity, theoretical explanations, practical exercise and evaluation. Consequently, the following sessions were designed: Sessions I and II. lexical inference; Sessions III and IV. Macrostructural Inference; Sessions V and VI. Enunciative Inference; and Sessions Vll and VllI. Referential Inference.

4. Analysis and discussion of the results

This section presents the results of the comparative analysis between the diagnostic questionnaire and the closing questionnaire, with the aim of knowing the current level of students in grade 9º4 of the San José Educational Institution, in relation to performance in inferential comprehension.

Lexical Inference

The percentages obtained by the students in the diagnostic questionnaire and closing questionnaire, their traits and corresponding percentages are graphically denoted.
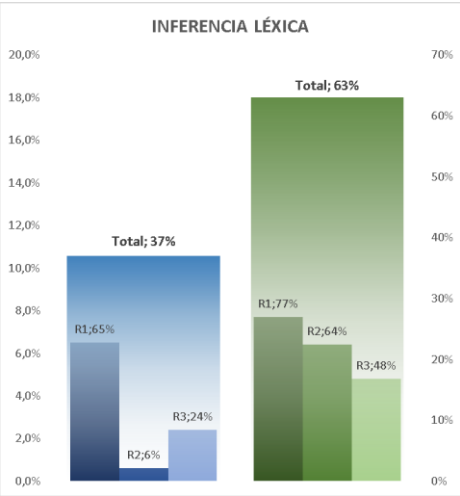
Features
1. Identify semantic relationships to infer the meaning of words from their context.
2. Distinguish the different families of words, the meaning of their roots and through these, deduce their derivatives.
3. Discover the meaning of words through the clues or relationships offered by the other terms that surround them.

In trait 1, students went from 65% to 77%, which indicates that they have greater mastery when it comes to using and understanding semantic relationships and inferring meanings from words. This process is similar to what was proposed by Cisneros et al. (2010), since the strategic reader can infer the meaning of words from the reading of the context.

In trait 2, the students demonstrated shortcomings and obtained 6% in the diagnostic questionnaire; however, this increased by 58%, which is equivalent to 64% in the total average; In trait 3, the students before the application of the didactic sequence reached 24%, and then increased by 24%, which means a 48% approval, which reflects that, from the relationship and inference that the students made of the terms that surrounded the unknown word, they inferred the meaning. The above is equated with what was stated by Cisneros et al. (2010), if the learner knows the meaning of the root he can infer what its derivative alludes to, in the same way, as the words are interdependent, the reader is able to relate the terms that surround the unknown word and from them give it meaning.

Macrostructural Inference

The comparison between the results acquired in the diagnostic questionnaire and the closing questionnaire is presented graphically.
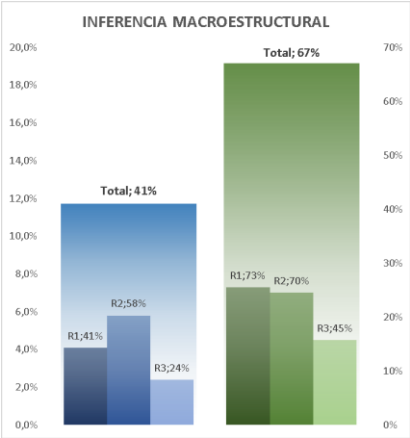
Features
1. It makes use of macro-rules to infer and locate the main ideas of the text and, thus, understand it.
2. Use keywords as a reference to locate themselves in the reading and synthesize general information.
3. Define the title of the text through inference, precision, brevity and phraseological capacity.

The evaluated traits show a positive increase in each one, in trait 1, they went from 41% to 73%, accounting for an increase of 32%, this shows that the learners when implementing the macrorules identify the most important information in a text. This process is related to what was stated by Van Dijk (1978), who proposes the use of macrorules (suppression, generalization, construction) as a process that leads the reader to synthesize the text, based on the discovery of macropropositions.

Trait 2 increased by 12% from 58% to 70%, meaning that they increased the ability to recognize keywords in a text and characterize them as synthesizers of information; in trait 3 it increased by 21%, from 24% to 45%; that is, students define the title through inference with precision and brevity. Progress in each trait makes a transcendental contribution to students' reading comprehension.

Along the same lines, the implementation of the cognitive discursive perspective reveals significant percentages; however, it is proposed in broader research to add a sociocultural perspective. Saldarriaga and Victoria (2017) implement it in their research, stating that the reader will be able to perceive the world in which he or she is immersed, analyze it, and take reflective positions in a constant and didactic process.

Enunciative Inference

The following graph compares the results between the diagnostic questionnaire and the closure questionnaire and the two traits evaluated.
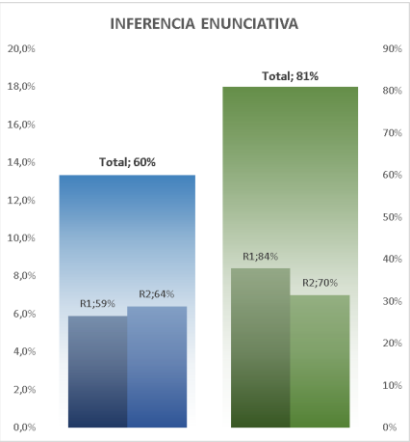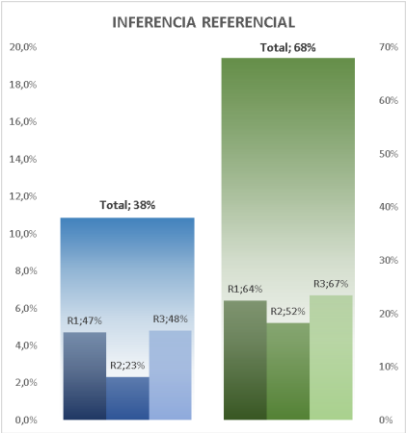
Features
1. Recognize the situation of enunciation present in the text, which allows the reader to intuit the author's perspective, his purpose and understand his point of view.
2. Determine the characteristics or traits of the actors in the enunciation situation.

An average of 59% is observed in trait 1 of the diagnostic questionnaire, the students had difficulties in identifying the author's perspective in the text; however, after the development of the SD I recognize and interpret lines, an advance of 25% is shown in the closing questionnaire, therefore they acquired 84% approval in this trait. strengthening their ability to determine the situation of enunciation of the text, in addition, they learned strategies to recognize the author's perspectives and understand his point of view. This reveals that the didactic sequence is a work strategy that allows the development and deepening of inferences, which contributed to the acquisition of reading comprehension skills (Bustamante, et al. 2018).

As for trait 2, initially there was a percentage of 64%, this progressed by 6%, providing 70% success. Consequently, it is shown that students infer and schematize the different interactions given between the participants of the enunciation situation. This coincides with the appreciations of Cisneros, et al. (2010), who propose that the reader identifies the interactions between the enunciator and the enunciator through the stylistic resources of the text, which implies the decoding and implementation of their preknowledge associated with it.

Referential Inference

The comparison of percentages between the diagnostic questionnaire and the closing questionnaire is detailed below.

| Features |
|---|
| 1. Infer the relationship that exists between the statements in order to understand their meaning. |
| 2. Point out the relationship and function established by the connectors within the statement. |
| 3. Record and specify information that has already been stated or that is intended to be stated subsequently. |

In trait 1 in the diagnostic questionnaire a 47% success rate was obtained, the students did not specify the relationships that are established between the statements of the text, then, in the closing questionnaire it increased by 17%, leaving the percentage measure at 64% of approval, therefore, the participants understand the continuity of the text. It is important to interpret what has been stated from the postulates of Martínez (2002) who establishes that the author of a text builds significant relationships between terms and uses expressions to refer to the same referent or establish relationships between different referents, for which it is necessary to guide the reader to make relational cognitive movements sooner or later to find the meaning.

On the other hand, in trait 2 there was a percentage of 23% which increased by 29%, causing an overall average in the trait of 52%. The students did not recognize or use the semantic relationships that logical connectors establish, both in form and meaning; however, when taking into account the aforementioned percentages, a regulation is demonstrated as an effect of the rigorous work that was carried out in the application of the SD and the impact given.

Regarding trait 3, in the application of the diagnostic questionnaire a 48% success rate was obtained, this increased to 67%, which reflects that the students developed the ability to infer implicit information from the text, the antecedent of a pronoun and the relationship between characters in the text.

General result of the intervention of the didactic sequence I recognize and interpret lines

Students in grade 9°4 of the San José Educational Institution show an increase in the 4 types of inferences evaluated, as shown in the following graph:

Evaluación de la SD Reconozco E Interpretó Líneas
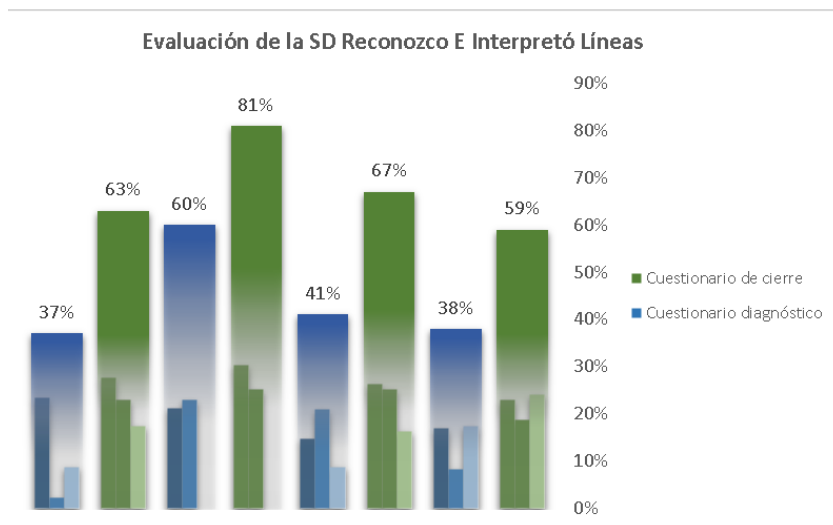
In general, it is considered that the application of the SD I recognize and interpret lines, was positive, since the students significantly increased the average of approval in each of the inferences worked; they recognize the macro and micro structure and situation of enunciation within a text, in addition they increased their motivation, which was evidenced in the increase of their participation in class, because by fully understanding the meaning of the text, they felt more confident when it came to expressing their knowledge.

5. Conclusions

When comparing the results between the diagnostic questionnaire and the closing questionnaire in each of the inferences evaluated, a positive increase in the learners is evidenced. This increase is relevant because students increased their motivation and willingness to work in the classroom, given their greater understanding of the level of inferential reading. The above is a sign that the use of the Didactic Sequence becomes an indispensable tool for the teaching-learning process, hence the strengthening of the inferences worked.

In relation to the above, at the conclusion of the study, it is interpreted that in lexical inference, students assimilated the meaning of unknown words through semantic relationships, context, knowledge of roots and word families; as for macrostructural inference, they more easily identified the global meaning of the texts; They also identified the main and secondary ideas, and distinguished the keywords and the title as clues to identify the central idea. However, in the enunciative inference, they accounted for the aspects involved in the situation of enunciation of the texts used: enunciator-enunciator, communicative intention, author's purpose, among others; In referential inference, students showed progress in recording and understanding intratextual and extratextual references, using them as mechanisms to not lose the common thread of reading.

Finally, it is considered that from the implementation of the cognitive-discursive perspective, didactic environments were consolidated, in which students learned from thinking and doing in a dynamic and reflective way. It is recommended for future research to include a sociocultural perspective, because, apart from generating environments that reinforce the intercommunication between the reader, the text and the context, it will be essential for students to get involved in the social problems of today's world.

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