

ORIGINAL

Traditional stories of the Shuar Culture for the animation of reading in children

Cuentos tradicionales de la Cultura Shuar para la animación a la lectura en niños

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: the traditional tales of the Shuar Culture are an important initiative in promoting reading, as they foster cultural values of the Amazonian indigenous people among students, helping develop their emotions, intellectual capacities, and expressive and creative abilities for learning in their personal and academic growth. This study aimed to propose the application of traditional Shuar Culture tales in reading promotion activities within Circuit 14D02 of the Huamboya canton, Ecuador

Method: it was based on a qualitative-quantitative approach and utilized exploratory and field research methods. Surveys were conducted with teachers, and interviews were held with prominent experts.

Results: the results highlight the need to improve reading promotion activities for children, as incorporating Shuar Culture tales can enrich children's reading habits and enhance their cultural identity. Strategies such as reading tales aloud, using pictograms, theatrical representations, and interactive activities planned in advance by teachers can stimulate students, leveraging both natural and technological resources.

Conclusions: it was concluded that teachers use traditional tales less frequently to develop skills such as sustained concentration, attention, and functional memory, which are essential for a more effective teaching and learning process.

Keywords: Children's Stories; Oral Tradition; Reading Encouragement; Shuar Culture.

RESUMEN

Introducción: los cuentos tradicionales de la Cultura Shuar son una importante iniciativa en la animación a la lectura, que fomenta a los estudiantes los valores culturales del pueblo indígena amazónico en el desarrollo de sus emociones, capacidades intelectuales, expresivos y creativos para el aprendizaje en su formación personal y académico. El presente estudio tuvo como objetivo proponer la aplicación de los cuentos tradicionales de la Cultura Shuar en actividades de animación a la lectura del circuito 14D02 del cantón Huamboya-Ecuador.

Método: estuvo basado en un enfoque cuali-cuantitativo, y en la utilización de la investigación exploratorio y de campo. Se aplicó encuesta a docentes y entrevistas a expertos destacados.

Resultados: los resultados indican la necesidad de mejorar las actividades de animación a la lectura dirigidas a los niños, y el empleo de cuentos de la Cultura Shuar puede enriquecer a niños los hábitos a la lectura y poner en valor su identidad, basados en estrategias de lectura de cuentos en voz alta, pictogramas, representación teatral y actividades interactivas previamente planificadas por los docentes para estimular a estudiantes, utilizando diferentes medios naturales y tecnológico.

Conclusiones: se concluye que los docentes utilizan con menor frecuencia los cuentos tradicionales para desarrollar habilidades de concentración y atención sostenida, desarrollo de la memoria funcional, el mismo

que conlleva a un mejor proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje.

Palabras clave: Cuentos Infantiles; Tradición Oral; Animación a la Lectura; Cultura Shuar.

INTRODUCTION

Encouraging children and young people to read is fundamental to their integral development. Traditional literature, especially that of indigenous cultures, plays an essential role in preserving culture, stimulating the imagination, and promoting literacy. In primary education, the aim is to connect children with their cultural heritage, using the imagination as a tool for learning and creativity, enabling them to project themselves into the future and relive the past through legendary characters.⁽¹⁾

The Shuar culture belongs to an indigenous Amazonian people who live mainly in the Amazon regions of Ecuador and part of northern Peru. The Shuar are known for their rich cultural tradition, close relationship with nature, and historical resistance to colonization and modernization.

In the Huamboya Canton, belonging to circuit 14D02, the Shuar community has kept alive its oral narratives, rich in ancestral wisdom. Integrating these traditional stories into the teaching of reading to Shuar children reinforces cultural identity and can also improve children's reading and writing skills in a context that values the preservation of their cultural legacy.

As Ruiz⁽²⁾ points out, reading is a skill that accompanies us throughout our lives, opening doors to knowledge and imagination and allowing us to travel through time and explore worlds without leaving our place. Although these traditional stories have evolved over the centuries, their essence of teaching and representing reality through fictional characters remains intact.

This research introduces some traditional stories from the Shuar Culture for use in the classroom, such as "Etsa and Iwia," a story of forgiveness in which Iwia, the antagonist, is forgiven by Etsa despite his actions, and "Jempe and Takea," which conveys the importance of honest work and the consequences of laziness and dishonesty.

The educational value of traditional stories in Shuar Culture classrooms is significant. According to Lentisco & Fernández,⁽³⁾ the story is a didactic resource that facilitates the integration of multiple educational contents while transmitting values, bringing children closer to their culture, and satisfying cognitive-affective needs. Crespo & Milán⁽⁴⁾ emphasize that stories enrich the curriculum and are potent transmitters of roles, beliefs, and values, contributing to students' social and affective development.

Encouraging reading is a key strategy in this process. It requires a patient and personalized approach that uses play and reflection. The strategy of encouraging reading should be playful and focused on creative play, stimulating individual reflection, and avoiding dispersion.

The objective of the present study was to propose using traditional stories from the Shuar culture in reading promotion activities in the 14D02 circuit of the Huamboya canton, Ecuador. It explored how to adapt these stories to promote reading and determined their impact on developing skills and appreciating cultural diversity.

METHOD

The methodology of this research integrated qualitative and quantitative approaches to achieve a holistic understanding of the phenomenon studied. Methods of analysis and synthesis, fundamental in mixed research, were applied to deepen the theory and interpretation of the data.⁽⁵⁾ The descriptive and field research allowed a detailed and practical approach to the reality investigated.⁽⁶⁾

The study was conducted in eight educational centers in circuit 14D02 in the Huamboya canton, Morona Santiago, Ecuador. The sample was established for convenience, with 24 early childhood teachers from the investigated centers. These institutions in rural areas offered a diverse and representative context for the study. The inductive method was used to examine specific characteristics, and the deductive method was used to generalize the findings.⁽⁷⁾

For the fieldwork, structured surveys were designed with eight questions aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of the reading promotion strategies implemented by the teachers and the use of traditional stories from the Shuar culture. These surveys were administered using the Google Forms platform. Additionally, interviews were conducted with five professionals selected under inclusion criteria, including a minimum pedagogical experience of five years in early education, specialization in children's literature and reading promotion strategies, and solid knowledge of interculturality.

The triangulation technique was used to contrast and corroborate the information obtained in the field with theoretical sources.⁽⁸⁾ This strategy was fundamental to guarantee the validity and reliability of the data collected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines the frequency and impact of using stories in the classroom, the skills developed through the encouragement of reading, the time spent planning these activities, and the application of traditional stories from the Shuar culture, all in the context of schools in district 14D02.

According to the research data, 50 % of those surveyed frequently use stories to develop various learning activities in the classroom. In this respect, teachers often narrate or read stories during classes because they motivate and awaken children's imagination, creativity, and skills in initial education and also foster the development of multidisciplinary learning in the educational process.

Research reveals that strategies such as reading aloud, using pictograms, performing theatrical performances, and engaging in interactive activities are essential for encouraging reading. When teachers apply these techniques, they not only capture children's attention and stimulate their imagination but also contribute to the development of concentration, working memory, and reading comprehension skills.

It is observed that, despite the effectiveness of traditional stories in education, teachers use them less frequently than ideal. This finding underlines the need to encourage educators to integrate these stories more actively into their teaching, taking advantage of their potential to improve concentration, sustained attention, and memory development in students, leading to a more effective teaching-learning process.

According to Pablos⁽⁹⁾, stories are interdisciplinary tools that introduce students to reading and writing, promoting these skills as a source of pleasure and information. Haro-Guanin Mora-Pérez⁽¹⁰⁾ emphasizes that stories, by addressing cognitive and socio-affective aspects, are flexible educational resources applicable in various areas and cross-curricular topics in education.

According to the data in table 1, 33 % of those surveyed consider that reading encouragement develops skills to promote concentration and sustained attention; likewise, 33 % focus on the development of working memory; as mentioned in the first case, teachers say that children pay more attention despite other distractions and this allows them to maintain concentration for an extended period and in the second case teachers believe that children retain, process and use information, this means that everything they hear is retained more efficiently and for a more extended period.

Alternative	No.	%
Understanding and decoding texts.	2	8 %
Improving reading fluency.	2	8 %
Expanding vocabulary and linguistic enrichment.	4	17 %
Promoting concentration and sustained attention.	8	33 %
Strengthening sentence construction and textual cohesion.	0	0 %
Stimulating critical reasoning and connection with prior knowledge.	0	0 %
Developing memory. functional and retention capacity.	8	33 %
Total	24	100 %

Sustained attention is vital for acquiring school knowledge. In addition, Cedillo⁽¹¹⁾ emphasizes that it is characterized by concentrating on a prolonged activity, facilitating processing, comprehension, and memorization. This skill, essential in the construction of learning, allows for developing didactic strategies and attention to the student's needs.

On the other hand, Bernabéu⁽¹²⁾ mentions that memory is one of the most essential functions of our brain. In biological terms, it refers to the capacity of living beings to acquire and retain information about themselves, their environment, and the consequences of their behavior.

The results to the question about how much time teachers dedicate to developing reading promotion strategies indicate that 63 % carry out reading promotion activities once a week. Reading is essential in the life of human beings because it allows us to acquire more excellent knowledge and improve our abilities to face different circumstances throughout life, considering that most of the information around us involves reading, which enriches understanding and vocabulary.⁽¹³⁾

Reading is a valuable tool in the life of human beings and, therefore, represents an integral part of children's education. Through reading, children develop the skills and abilities that allow them to explore the world of knowledge since it plays a mediating role between the child and organized cultural knowledge. Therefore, it is up to the teacher to ensure that the learning necessary for living in society takes place through active, planned, and intentional intervention. It can be added that reading encompasses tools and strategies aimed at creating a link between reading and the student or student group.⁽¹⁴⁾

According to the data presented in table 2, 75 % of those surveyed apply the traditional story of Nunkui in the learning rooms, it being a narrative that explains the origin of plants, teaches the techniques of sowing,

the making of ceramics, the anent (prayers or sacred songs), human procreation, all these deities coming from Nunkui.

Table 2. Traditional stories from the Shuar culture that have applied

Alternative	No.	%
Etsa and Iwia	6	25 %
Jempe and Takea	0	0 %
Nunkui	18	75 %
Shakaim	0	0 %
Tsunki	0	0 %
None	0	0 %
Total	24	100 %

According to López Vera,⁽¹⁵⁾ traditional stories, as tools that allow us to visualize and understand the environment, play a crucial role in encouraging reading in children who are learning. These stories, by addressing situations and events shared in families, groups, and societies, connect children to reading and prioritize understanding the text. Traditional stories connect the child's experiences with their reality in the community, family, and environment, allowing them to assimilate the benefits of reading, even when they have access to other forms of information.

Relevant data was obtained on the type of reading promotion activities most frequently used by teachers. According to the results observed, 63 % of teachers frequently use reading stories aloud to promote reading. Reading stories aloud awakens children's imagination, attention, communication, comprehension, expression of emotions, and vocabulary enrichment, allowing them cognitive and affective development. It also fosters reading norms such as voice modulation, intonation, and fluency.

For the teacher, reading aloud is a tool that strengthens the integration of children in educational and recreational activities to improve the dialectical relationship since reading aloud is a social activity. 13 % indicated that the least used activities are pictograms, the creation of activities related to stories, and theatrical performances. These fun activities should be considered when telling stories and used in various ways so that the child has a motivating and creative learning experience.

Studies designed by experts in the field show that reading aloud to children is the most effective way to prepare them to learn and become readers. Reading aloud is especially significant for children because it leads them to explore books and become readers on their own. It is also an effective way to engage with the imagination, as it provides knowledge of a conceptual nature (colors, shapes, sounds, letters, numbers).

Negrín⁽¹⁶⁾ highlights the importance of listening to readings or narrations in reading training. It allows for the discovery of literary preferences, encourages independent reading, introduces poetic language, and contributes to establishing the basis for the pleasure of reading. The voice that narrates or reads stories in childhood acts as the first and most enchanting instrument of literary seduction, the origin of lasting passions for books.

In table 3, 33,3 % of teachers use storytelling to encourage reading. In this case, teachers are the main protagonists of this strategy, telling stories to their students to entertain, recreate, rescue, and disseminate stories that relate to our worldview and the environment. In addition, through this, they transmit culture and promote a love of stories and reading.

Table 3. Reading promotion strategies used in the classroom

Alternative	No.	%
Implementation of the reading area	3	13 %
Cultural projects	3	13 %
Guest time	1	4 %
Storytelling	8	33 %
Storytelling art	1	4 %
Mobile library	0	0 %
Work with puppets and shadow theatre	8	33 %
Total	24	100 %

Note: They could select several options.

Zula Colcha⁽¹⁷⁾ emphasizes that reading animation includes activities designed to encourage children to approach reading and develop the habit of reading, taking them from the ability to read to the voluntary desire

to do so. This animation is evident in the autonomous use of the reading corner, where children read texts independently.

Oral narration, or storytelling, involves relating literary stories using para verbal language. It can be based on written narratives, personal reflections or experiences, or adapted from stories heard previously.⁽¹⁸⁾ Beuchat⁽¹⁹⁾ emphasizes that storytelling is an art or a science present in all cultures, used to teach, educate, motivate, record historical events, and transmit culture.

However, about the other reading promotion strategies mentioned, Ramírez Rodríguez⁽²⁰⁾ states that shadow theater, or Chinese shadow theater, is a magical resource used to tell stories, invent them, or adapt them through the body, objects, or both at the same time. Formally, shadow theater is defined as a performing art in which light, shadows, and the body are used to produce and create a spectacle of great beauty for the spectator. This art form allows us to explore and discover the possibility of expression through a language of light, shadow, movement, body language, voice, music, etc. It also helps to identify the shadows of our own body and their interaction in the space around us.

On the other hand, puppets have been used as an essential tool for transmitting knowledge and are found in the distinction between entertainment and learning.⁽¹²⁾ They have been recognized as educational tools for integrating art, communication, and persuasion. The power of puppets lies in their ability to move and speak; through these human skills, they provoke the identification of people who can see themselves or part of themselves in the puppets. It is possible to communicate with a wide range of ages, diverse cultures, and various language registers through puppets. Through puppets, it is possible to influence children, who are considered difficult to reach in the usual way.

Results of the interview with experts

The experts emphasized the importance of instilling a passion for reading in teachers and students. They highlighted the importance of the educator's emotional and engaging expression, emphasizing tone of voice and gestures as key elements in capturing children's attention. They also insisted on the effectiveness of puppets, kamishibai (paper theater), and shadow theater in storytelling. These techniques draw children into the story and encourage concentration and a connection with nature and the environment. The experts agreed on the need to create a calm and conducive environment for storytelling, which contributes to a more immersive and relaxed listening experience.

Regarding applying traditional stories in early education, the experts highlighted their value as a gateway to cultural diversity and critical thinking. They consider traditional stories artistic expressions, inviting children to explore different contexts and cultures.

Using these narratives in early childhood fosters creativity, critical capacity, and the right to art. They emphasize that traditional stories should be a constant in early education, as they serve as a means for children to internalize, recreate, and connect with diverse art forms and cultural expressions.

CONCLUSIONS

The experts emphasized the importance of instilling a passion for reading in teachers and students. They highlighted the importance of the educator's emotional and engaging expression, emphasizing tone of voice and gestures as key elements in capturing children's attention. They also insisted on the effectiveness of puppets, kamishibai (paper theater), and shadow theater in storytelling. These techniques draw children into the story and encourage concentration and a connection with nature and the environment. The experts agreed on the need to create a calm and conducive environment for storytelling, which contributes to a more immersive and relaxed listening experience.

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