

Investigating the Reading Preferences of Second-grade Pupils through Creation Lessons

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Abstract

Keywords:

reading preferences, reading activities, story writing, primary education, interactive learning, creative lessons

It is unanimously accepted that reading activities have positive effects on children's development. Recent research has shown that pupils' interest in reading activities could be enhanced by providing interesting and age-appropriate books. The purpose of the research is to determine whether it is beneficial to organize didactic activities in which pupils use their creativity to establish titles of attractive books for them. At the same time, we were interested in finding out whether pupils want to frequently participate in creative lessons based on story writing. All 54 second-grade pupils who have participated in our research mentioned that they enjoyed participating in the creation lessons, and would like to cooperate with other older peers in the process of writing the stories. The research revealed that could be beneficial to organize lessons based on stimulating students' creativity with the purpose of understanding the reading preferences of the primary school pupils.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

Lesevorlieben, Leseaktivitäten, Geschichten schreiben, Grundschulunterricht, interaktives Lernen, kreativer Unterricht

Es ist ferner anerkannt, dass Leseaktivitäten positive Auswirkungen auf die Entwicklung von Kindern haben. Jüngste Untersuchungen haben gezeigt, dass das Interesse der Schüler an Leseaktivitäten durch die Bereitstellung interessanter und altersgerechter Bücher gesteigert werden kann. Ziel der Untersuchung ist es, festzustellen, ob es vorteilhaft ist, Unterrichtsaktivitäten zu organisieren, bei denen die Schüler ihre Kreativität einsetzen, um attraktive Buchtitel festzulegen. Gleichzeitig wollten wir herausfinden, ob die Schüler häufig an kreativen Unterrichtsstunden teilnehmen, die auf dem Schreiben von Geschichten basieren. Die 54 Schülerinnen und Schüler, die an der Untersuchung teilnahmen, gaben an, dass sie gerne an kreativen Unterrichtsstunden teilnehmen und mit älteren Mitschülern am Prozess des Geschichtenschreibens arbeiten würden. Die Untersuchung ergab, dass es von Vorteil sein könnte, Unterrichtseinheiten zu organisieren, die die Kreativität der Schüler anregen, um die Lesepräferenzen von Grundschulern zu verstehen.

1. Introduction

Reading is a formed and developed skill during primary school level which stays at the base of efficient learning processes. Reading activities are necessary to improve the fluent and conscious reading skills of primary school pupils. These abilities are associated with positive school results (Celik, 2019; Davidovitch & Gerkerova, 2023). Teachers should understand factors that influence the reading behaviours of their pupils and should apply effective strategies to increase pupils' interest in reading activities (Divya, 2023; Marin & Bocoş, 2021b).

Recent studies revealed that some of the pupils are not involved frequently in reading activities because they do not have age-appropriate or attractive books for them (Marin & Bocoş, 2021a). During second grade, pupils should include reading activities in their daily program. Discussion with pupils about books that they read is also a beneficial practice (Merga, 2018). Researchers revealed the benefits of organizing

tutoring activities during which pupils of different ages read together. For example, gymnasium and high school pupils could play the role of mentors for elementary school pupils (Monteiro, 2013). The research question that guided our research was related to establishing the utility of organizing creation lessons during which pupils use their creative potential to establish titles of the stories that they would like to read and also to write the content of some of the stories mentioned by them. It is difficult to establish which are the topics of the books preferred by all primary school pupils, but we consider that each teacher should organize didactic activities during which they can observe the preferences of each pupil. The results of the research could be used by primary school teachers and could increase the quality of the didactic activities that they organize. Also, these didactic approaches based on writing new stories are an age-appropriate way to stimulate pupils' creativity and to develop their reading and writing competencies. The activities



facilitate the creation of a positive learning environment.

2. Theoretical foundation

The family and the school play an important role in forming and developing pupils' interest in reading activities. Reading habits have an important impact on the intellectual development of pupils and their future academic performances (Bano et al., 2018; Chettri, 2013; Lonigan et al., 2000). Reading activities can be associated with the well-being of children, with progress in school, with high abilities of conscious and fluent reading, with a high horizon of knowledge, and with a higher degree of development of emotional skills (Compton-Lilly, 2020; Ortlieb & Schatz, 2020). Some of the researchers were interested in finding the main obstacles that can affect the frequency of the reading activities initiated by the pupils. According to Tella and Akande (2007), possible factors that influence the reading interest of pupils are related to spending time for making other preferred activities (e.g. watching TV) or the inadequate quantity or quality of books that are available for them. Other studies outline the negative influences of inadequate family involvement in the pupil's education (Davidovitch & Gerkerova, 2023; Marin & Bocoș, 2021b).

A recent research conducted in Romania revealed that most of the primary school pupils like to read story books. Other types of books mentioned by primary school pupils are comic books, books with riddles or proverbs, or books with funny content (Marin & Bocoș, 2021a). Also, most of the primary school pupils prefer to read books in print format. The reasons for which children read are various. Most of them mentioned reasons highly related to their intrinsic motivation (e. g. to obtain better school results, to improve their reading skills, or to spend their free time in a constructive and amusing way). It is the responsibility of both educators and the family to make available for children a lot of books in various fields, which are adequate to their age and interests (Marin & Bocoș, 2021b; Marin & Bocoș, 2021a). Book promotion activities should be carried out as frequently as possible (Marin & Bocoș, 2021b).

Lectureships with parents can be organized frequently to highlight the important role of reading activities. During parent-teacher meetings important to outline the positive effects and the importance of systematic organization of these activities (Davidovitch & Gerkerova, 2023; Marin & Bocoș, 2021a).

Library visits have a positive impact on stimulating pupils' interest in reading activities. Nowadays readers are using also new technology tools to read digital books. In this context, the digital competencies of librarians are very important (Wijonarko, 2020).

Technological developments influence pupils' choices regarding the activities they include in their daily program. Although technological developments influence our daily living habits, books continue to be present in our lives. E-books are considered valuable resources, which can be used to determine pupils to read frequently and devote more time to reading activities. (Mahendra, 2020).

The reading abilities should be formed in a positive climate, by encouraging pupils to invest time in reading, presenting the benefits of this type of activity. The reading activities should not be presented to pupils as compulsory (Celik, 2019). Girls and boys may have different reading preferences, and the time allocated by them for reading activities may be different. These aspects should be taken into account by teachers during the didactic activities (Uusen & Mürsepp, 2012).

3. Research methodology

Through this study, we aimed to investigate the reading preferences of second graders. A survey was conducted with 54 second graders, aged 8-9 years old to investigate the pupils' opinions regarding the creation lessons that were organized during the didactic experiment (see Appendix 1) The ethical standard of educational research was respected. The consent of parents or other legal representatives of the pupils was obtained. The parents were informed about aspects regarding the objectives of the research. Also, aspects related to the confidentiality of data collected were taken into account. The climate of the educational activities was positive and the researcher was preoccupied with pupils' well-being during the didactic experiment.

Results of the previous studies revealed that providing pupils with attractive books could increase their interest in reading (Bano et al., 2018; Kuşdemir, & Bulut, 2018; Marin & Bocoș, 2021a). Our research starts with the following hypothesis: The organization of creation lessons at the primary school level facilitates the process of investigation of the reading preferences of the pupils. We have used a didactic experiment in order to establish if the didactic approaches proposed by us are efficient and appreciated by the pupils. The didactic experiment

consisted of two educational activities. The first activity was a creation lesson during which pupils were asked to establish the title of new books that could be published and could be attractive to them. Also, during this creation lesson, pupils participated in group activities during which they analyzed the reasons for which pupils do not read and the possible solutions that could be found to make pupils more frequently involved in reading activities. The second activity consisted of a creation lesson where each of the second-grade pupils wrote a story in cooperation with another pupil from the class. At the final of the lessons, the stories were included in a book, that was distributed to all the pupils from the classroom. The main research questions were related to establish the main advantages or disadvantages of organizing creation lessons in order to investigate the reading preferences of primary school pupils. Also, we were interested to establish the answers to the following questions:

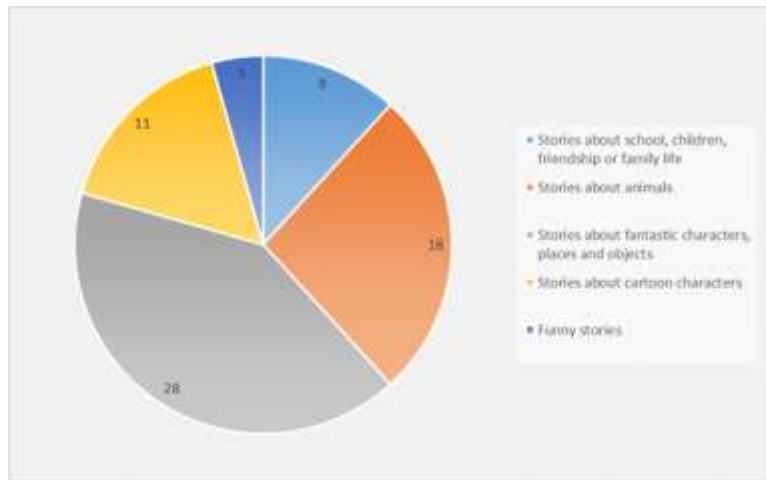
- What is the topic of the books preferred by most of the primary school pupils?
- What are the main reasons for which some of the primary school pupils are not involved frequently in reading activities?
- Could creation lessons be considered an appropriate manner to investigate second-grade pupils' reading preferences? The research was organized during the 2023-2024 school year, in Cluj County, Romania.

4. Results

The two creation lessons organized during the didactic experiment were considered by the teachers as an advantageous way to understand pupils' preferences for reading. During the lessons, pupils have mentioned that the main reasons for which they are not involved in reading activities are: the lack of attractive books that they have access to and the fact that they enjoy doing other activities such as: using mobile phones, playing with their friends or watching TV. Also, they mentioned the following solutions to increase their interest in reading activities: parents should buy more books or borrow books from the library, especially story books (e. g. as presents offered during their birthdays), pupils should devote less time to watching TV or using mobile phones and include reading activities during their reading program). Also, the pupils mentioned that reading with other persons (e.g. pupils or parents) is considered an attractive activity for them. The pupils agreed that reading activities should be organized daily and that is

beneficial for teachers and parents to present the positive effects of daily reading activities on the academic success of the pupils. All the pupils mentioned that they were interested in reading stories in printed format. During the didactic experiment, pupils were also asked to mention the possible titles of books that they will enjoy to read. Second-graders were happy to establish the title of the stories that they would read with pleasure. Most of the titles proposed by pupils are stories about fantastic characters, places, and objects, about animals, and about cartoon characters (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. The topic of the stories that are considered attractive by second-grade pupils involved in the research



The results obtained are similar to those obtained in previous studies (Marin & Bocoș, 2021a), which revealed that storybooks are preferred by most of the primary school pupils and could be often used during teaching activities to increase their interest in reading. All the pupils mentioned that enjoyed the creation lessons that they participated in and would like to be involved as often as possible in this type of educational activities. Most of the pupils mentioned that they would like to receive help in the writing process from other peers, enrolled in higher classes. All the pupils mentioned that consider very attractive the books written by pupils of the same age as they and would like to read these types of books.

Considering the results obtained we consider that is beneficial to:

- involve children in didactic activities meant to develop their creativity by identifying the title of the stories they want to read;
- organizing writing stories ateliers during which children work with their peers or older pupils (e.g. students enrolled in gymnasium or high school) or creation lessons with the purpose of investigating pupils' interest in reading could be beneficial;
- include the activities presented in larger educational projects meant to stimulate the pupils'

interest for reading activities (e.g. eTwinning projects).

5. Discussions

This investigation outlines the possible ways to investigate the reading preferences of the pupils through creation lessons. We have tested the efficiency of two creative lessons that could be organized to stimulate the reading activities of second graders. The final product of the activities consists of creating attractive reading materials for pupils. The results obtained are similar to the ones obtained in previous studies which established that providing interesting reading material to each pupil is beneficial (Marin & Bocoş, 2021a; Tella & Akande, 2007). The main limitation of the study is related to the fact that the results cannot be generalized. The margin of error obtained for a sample size of 54 pupils, at the level of population of second-grade pupils from Cluj County is $\pm 13.32\%$ at 95% confidence level, and 17.51% at 99% confidence level. The other limitations of the study are related to the geographical provenience of the respondents, who live in a single county in Romania. Even if the results cannot be generalized and the national representativeness is not assured, the results of the study have revealed that could be beneficial to organize didactic activities during which pupils establish titles of possible stories that are age-appropriate for them and also didactic activities during which pupils create new stories in cooperation with other peers. These activities are a way to stimulate pupils' creativity and also to understand their reading preferences. They contribute to a better understanding of each pupil's preferences and also are an important mean to stimulate their creativity. The results of this study are useful for primary school teachers and librarians, who could initiate educational projects or didactic activities based on the results obtained.

6. Conclusions

Based on the results of this study, we can affirm that the hypothesis of our research was confirmed on a sample of 54 pupils, aged 8 to 9 years old. The present study can stay at the base of future research that can establish with accuracy on a larger sample of participants the advantages or disadvantages of frequently involving pupils in creation lessons, organized to understand the reading preferences of each pupil. Our research revealed that organizing lessons during which pupils establish the topic and titles of the books that they would like to read is a good modality for the teacher to initiate discussions about the reading preferences of each of their pupils. Also,

involving second-grade pupils in the creation lessons contributes to creating a positive and attractive learning environment. This approach could be beneficial and could allow teachers to better understand the reading preferences of their pupils. Pupils were also interested in discovering the content of the stories written by their peers.

The main advantages of organizing these types of activities are related to understanding the reading interests of second-grade pupils. Future research can analyze the benefits of organizing creative lessons through national or international school partnerships that consist of similar didactic approaches. For example, all the pupils who participate in an eTwinning project could simultaneously be involved in this type of lesson in order to create new and attractive reading materials for pupils.

Authors note: The authors have equal contributions to this article.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1. Questionnaire for pupils

Dear pupils,

Please answer a few questions about the activities that were carried out.

1. How did you feel during the creation lessons that were organized in this period?

2. How often you would like to be involved in creation lessons, similar to the ones you have participated in?

3. Are you interested in reading books written by pupils who are the same age as you?

4. Are you interested in reading books written by pupils who are the same age as you?
