Abstract

Students' profile of 3rd to 5th grade of elementary school in reading comprehension: elaboration of an assessment instrument

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Reading is a complex activity that involves several cognitive processes starting with decoding and extending into comprehension, which is considered a high-level skill and primal and ultimate aim of reading. Difficulties on this skill lead the school-age child to a delay in comparison to his grade level/group, which tends to increase with schooling, because the curriculum content increase in quantity and difficulty. Thus, reading comprehension difficulties should be detected early. This study aimed to develop an assessment procedure of reading comprehension to characterize the profile of students from 3rd to 5th grade of elementary school. The proposed procedure had the aim to assess the comprehension of literal propositions and inferential of micro and macrostructures of narrative and expository texts by means of multiple-choice questions. This study was divided into two parts. Study 1 had the aim to check the validity of the procedure, by means of two collective applications in the classroom. Four different texts were applied, two expository and two narratives, on alternate days. Participants were 381 students from 3rd to 5th grade of elementary school of a municipal school in the city of Marília, SP, Brazil, who were divided into three groups: GI (103 students of 3rd grade level), GII (123 students of 4th grade level), GIII (155 students of 5th grade level), within the age ranges of 8, 9 and 10 years, respectively. Study 2 aimed to verify the applicability of the procedure by characterizing these students' profile in reading comprehension and to detect those with difficulties. For this study, the incorrect responses of the same students who participated in Study 1 were analyzed, and those who presented more than four errors in a text were assessed individually in the same text, in order to confirm the difficulties. For Study 1, the results indicated that the statistical values of Cronbach Alpha were statistically high, with data showing internal consistency for the four texts applied in three school groups, and the sample was considered with 'satisfactory' reliability, which translates this study as coming from a sample with no bias. For Study 2, the results indicated that, between the two applications, the higher averages were for the variables of the first application. In the comparison between literal and inferential questions, the higher averages were for the inferential. In the comparison between the microstructure and macrostructure questions, the higher averages were for the macrostructure. The data proved the validity and reliability of the instrument, which was effective, since it detected students with difficulties in textual comprehension; the students had fewer errors with schooling; the second reading provided to some students to improve their performance; the students presented higher averages for the literal questions of expository texts and for inferential questions of narrative texts, indicating that each type of text presented a specific difficulty for the student.