

TEACHING READING IN GUINEA-BISSAU: ANALYSIS OF TEXTUAL COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES IN 4TH AND 6TH GRADE BOOKS



<https://doi.org/10.56238/arev7n2-091>

Submitted on: 01/10/2025

Publication date: 02/10/2025

Albate Yurna¹ and Claudia Finger-Kratochvil².

ABSTRACT

In this work we analyze reading texts and their comprehension activities in the textbooks of the 4th and 6th grades of Bissau-Guinean basic education, in order to verify the aspects of the development of reading skills and competences in the two reading proposals. For the materialization of the research, we adopted a quantitative-qualitative approach in this documentary research, through which, in addition to the quantification of texts in textual genres and required levels of comprehension, we weighed the microstructures and activities of textual comprehension qualitatively, to observe the aspects of development required for the formation of a competent reader in the two stages of schooling. In the analysis, we found that, unlike the 4th grade book, which contains only narrative texts (tales and fables), the 6th grade book is composed of texts in their various genres. However, in both didactic materials, the reading activities demand a superficial level of comprehension, in addition to the fact that there are no post-reading questions aimed at understanding the textual structure, which highlights the need to improve these two reading proposals for the formation of the reader.

Keywords: Teaching Reading. Reading Texts. Comprehension Activities. Textbooks.

¹ Master in Language Studies
UFFS
Email: yurnaalbate@gmail.com

² Dr. in Linguistics
UFSC
Email: cf-k@uffs.edu.br

INTRODUCTION

This research aims to analyze the reading and textual comprehension activities in the books of the 4th and 6th grades of Bissau-Guinean basic education, in order to verify the aspects of development of reading skills in these stages of schooling. The work results from an excerpt of results from the author's Master's Dissertation, published in the repository of the Graduate Program in Linguistic Studies at UFFS. In this excerpt, we reflect on the proposals of the reading activities, specifically, on the reading texts in textual genres adopted in the textbooks for the formation of the Bissau-Guinean reader, as well as we analyze the levels of textual comprehension required in the two stages of schooling in the reading activities.

Considering that the activity of reading is a great source of learning, particularly of the language, given the range of contents, where linguistic actions and sociocultural and pragmatic values of the language converge, it allows the reader to process the information in depth. Therefore, with regard to the teaching and development of the person as a historical-social subject, reading becomes an inseparable instrument for the teaching and formation of the individual, since it is a means of learning for the reader to enrich his sociocultural repertoire. In addition to being able to enrich the vocabulary and grammatical structures of the language, contact with printed texts increases the graphemic competence of written words (Alliende *et al.*, 2005). This assumption necessarily underlies the understanding that reading would be an activity of fundamental importance in the teaching and learning of the Portuguese language as L2 for the formation of a student/full citizen for the exercise of citizenship, with regard, above all, to the competent use of Portuguese in the Bissau-Guinean multilingual context.

Considering that textbooks are the main organizing sources of school activities (Sacristán, 2000), the reading proposals adopted in the textbooks of the 4th and 6th grades of Bissau-Guinean basic education play a decisive role in the formation and development of reading skills and competences. This is due to the fact that they guide, both in public and private schools, the teaching of Portuguese in Guinea-Bissau. In this case, on the one hand, the quality of the materials can contribute, to a certain extent, to obtain a fruitful result in the teaching and learning of the Portuguese language and, on the other hand, the lack of adequacy of its proposals can bring a negative result to the formation of the reader and, consequently, cause school failure in the country. This is because reading is the only activity that composes, at the same time, the teaching discipline and the instrument for

mastering the other areas of the curriculum. Thus, efficiency in school success is directly linked to school success, just as failure in school can compromise school success (Alliende *et al.*, 2005). Thus, in this present research, we have the following guiding question: *What aspects of text development and comprehension are perceptible in the stages of schooling in their reading activities for the formation of a competent reader?*

We understand that reading proposals should adopt reading texts in their various textual genres that can provide different types of textual knowledge (textual structure), since textual genres are considered important resources for the teaching and formation of competent readers, as they are the means by which human socio-discursive activities materialize (Marcuschi, 2008). Thus, when we master a textual genre, we have knowledge that supports us in understanding the text, that is, it provides us with a subsidy to make a prediction or hypothesis of the possible type of information that we can find in the text (Smith, 2003; Bittencourt *et al.*, 2015; Kleiman, 2016; Oakhill *et al.*, 2017).

Our *corpus* of analysis consists of two Bissau-Guinean basic education books, one entitled *Histórias dos avós*, from the 4th grade, being a reading book accompanied by its activity book published by the Editora Escolar da Guiné-Bissau in 1997; the other is entitled *Comunicar em Português*, from the 6th grade, this is also a reading book accompanied by his notebook of activities published in 1998, by the same publisher in Guinea-Bissau. The two reading books are composed exclusively of reading texts, and their exercise notebooks have activities corresponding to reading.

For our analysis, we based our analysis on Marcuschi (2008), Cavalcante (2012), Kintsch *et al.* (2013), Kleiman (2016), Lopez *et al.* (2016) and Cummins (2017), in order to identify reading texts in textual genres and verify their complex microstructures (structures); as well as relying on Pearson and Johnson (1978), Baretta (2019), Miguel *et al.* (2020) and Oakhill *et al.* (2017), to analyze the text comprehension activities and observe the levels of comprehension required in the two stages of schooling for the development of reading skills and competencies. To this end, we adopted a quantitative-qualitative approach in this documentary research, in which, in addition to quantifying the reading texts and comprehension questions, we qualitatively analyzed the reading activities and the complex microstructures of the texts adopted in these textbooks.

In this excerpt, the article is structured, in addition to the introduction, in four sections. In the first, *Approach to reading and textual comprehension*, we address reading and textual comprehension, highlighting the importance of automatic identification skills of

written words in learning to read and knowledge that contributes to the processing and comprehension of the text. In the second, *Level of textual comprehension in reading tasks*, we discuss the degree of comprehension that a reader can achieve when reading a text, depending on the previous knowledge inherent to reading; then, *in the section Texts in textual genres in 4th and 6th grade books*, we present and discuss the results found in the analyzed texts, highlighting the contribution of these texts in the formation of the Bissau-Guinean reader. And, finally, in the last section, *Textual comprehension activities in 4th and 6th grade books*, we present the results of the analysis of comprehension activities.

READING APPROACH AND TEXTUAL COMPREHENSION

Decoding is recurrent in the process of learning to read. As the reader develops this skill and automates the identification of written words, he is able to free up his cognitive resources to manipulate the information and monitor his comprehension of the text. But this occurs when the reader automates the identification of words, that is, there can be no successful comprehension without the precise identification of words and the recovery of their meanings (Kintsch *et al.*, 2013).

Comprehension of the text occurs when the reader constructs a mental representation of textual information (Van Dijk; Kintsch, 1978; Perfetti *et al.*, 2013). The processes involved that lead the reader to arrive at such a representation occur at different levels and in multiple units of language, such as: at the level of the word, which involves lexical processes; at the sentence level, which refers to syntactic processes; and at the text level, which deals with the interrelations of propositions in the textual units or in the microstructure of the text. These levels involve the processes of "word identification, analysis, referential mapping, and a variety of inferential processes, which interact with the reader's conceptual knowledge in order to produce a mental model of the text" (Perfetti *et al.* (2013, p. 246). Going beyond the basic processes of the word level, it is postulated that there are three higher factors that can hinder the comprehension of the text, among them: sensitivity to the structure of the text, inference, monitoring of comprehension (Perfetti *et al.*, 2013).

Inference plays a crucial role in the comprehension of a text, considering that written or spoken language is not fully explicit, so inference allows us to connect the elements of the text or confer the coherence necessary to reach comprehension (Perfetti *et al.*, 2013). As Kintsch *et al.* (2013, p. 237), when they state that "texts are almost never fully

explicit, so that there are always gaps for the reader to fill". This idea was also reinforced by Oakhill *et al.* (2017, p. 59) when they point out that "texts generally do not provide the complete picture in a few words, and even when a text comprises a single sentence, there is still a very rich basis for the elaboration of inference and interpretation".

In addition to inferences, *comprehension monitoring* plays a fundamental role in understanding the text, as it allows us to verify our understanding of the text, making it possible to make repairs to the parts where there is inconsistency. That is, when we seek coherence in our representation, we must be able to monitor our understanding (Perfetti *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, according to Perfetti *et al.*, (2013), a skilled reader is always in constant monitoring in the act of reading to detect comprehension failures and correct them, as appropriate. The monitoring competence serves to "indicate that there is a missing connection in the text requiring an inference" (Oakhill *et al.*, 2017, p. 29). With this, we understand that this cognitive ability contributes to our understanding of the text, as it allows us to notice parts that are not clearly understood, being able, for example, to reread or resort to the dictionary for consultation, or even to the internet if it is the case or yet another source of consultation.

In addition to monitoring comprehension, *sensitivity to text structure* contributes to textual comprehension, taking into account that each text or textual genre has its own linguistic styles, and these different configurations cause comprehension problems, especially for those beginning readers (Perfetti *et al.*, 2013). As Oakhill *et al.* (2017), the comprehension of a text requires more than the perception of the sentences and their interrelations within the text. But it requires, above all, a general understanding of ideas and the way they are related in the microstructure. To do so, it requires an understanding of the structure of the text to facilitate the identification of the main ideas, which provide "a structure for the mental model" (Oakhill *et al.*, 2017, p. 29). For this reason, some authors defend the importance of prior knowledge in understanding the text. For Kleiman (2016), without the engagement of the reader's prior knowledge, there can be no understanding. Kintsch *et al.* (2013) explain that relevant prior knowledge includes knowledge about the typical structure of texts in textual genre, that is, what we already know about the text, or that we have acquired throughout our lives about the text. In addition, we have *linguistic* and *world knowledge*, as Kleiman (2016) adds. From the interaction of these different knowledges, it is possible to construct the meaning of the text. Linguistic knowledge is understood as the implicit knowledge we have about the use of the rules of the language,

in the surroundings of its complex system, such as: the relationship between the pronunciation and the meaning of words, the syntactic rules of the language and the use of vocabulary. Knowledge of the world (encyclopedic) contributes to our understanding, as it is general knowledge about the world that can be acquired both formally and informally.

LEVEL OF TEXTUAL COMPREHENSION IN READING TASKS

In learning to read, the learning reader goes through different instructions and phases of the development of reading skills and competences, which contribute to the comprehension of the text, being a lasting process that takes years to aggregate a set of knowledge that then becomes the basis of our understanding. Because they are inherent to reading, they contribute to textual processing, enabling the reader to achieve, in their mental representations, a certain degree of comprehension that can be *superficial* or *deep* or *critical-reflective* (Pearson and Johnson, 1978; Baretta, 2019; Miguel *et al.*, 2020). That is, when we retain the words of the text and extract only their meanings, we will reach a *superficial level* of understanding the text, which is enough to reproduce or summarize what is explicitly written on the textual surface (Kintsch *et al.*, 2013). This means that, upon reaching this level of comprehension, the reader is able to understand the explicit information of the text, being able to summarize or even paraphrase it, but not enough to reach the *deep level* of comprehension. To reach this level, it is necessary to elaborate the mental model of the situation described by the text, which requires the generation of inference for the integration of the textual information with the reader's relevant previous knowledge (Kintsch *et al.* (2013). As for the *critical-reflective level* of understanding, it requires the reader to understand more than what is in the text, "through the activation of knowledge of the world" (Baretta, 2019, p. 209).

According to the perspective of Pearson and Johnson (1978), adopted in Baretta (2019), reading activities can be composed of comprehension questions that require these levels of comprehension mentioned above. At the *superficial level*, these would be the questions that require explicit textually comprehension (ET) and are limited to the information expressed between the lines of the text, requiring a shallow, superficial comprehension. These are the literal reading activities consisting of certain words that signal questions for the retrieval of textual information after reading, such as: what, when, who, where. At the *deep level*, the textually implicit comprehension questions (TI) would be those whose answers are found in the text, but their attainment requires the generation of

inferences. That is, the answers are implicit in the textual surface, but to identify them the student-reader needs to read in the lines of the text in order to achieve deep understanding. In this type of question, the question words are recurrent: how, in what way, why. The questions of understanding the *critical-reflective level* are those questions called implicit in the script (TIS), which require the relevant prior knowledge of the reader, who relies on mental schemes to construct answers. In this type of activity, the student-reader needs to have comprehension beyond the information in the text, to respond to propositions, such as: explain, imagine, elaborate, defend, suppose, justify, predict, what the possible consequences are. Thus, in order to respond satisfactorily to this type of proposition, the student-reader needs to reach the level of critical-reflective comprehension of reading (Pearson and Johnson, 1978; Baretta, 2019).

In the view of Miguel *et al.* (2020), when we achieve a superficial understanding, we are able to retain not the words themselves, but the meanings of these words, enabling the reader to remember the content read, being able to summarize it. In deep understanding, we can interpret the text, understanding the explicit and implicit information of the text; and in critical-reflective understanding, the reader is able to critically reflect on the subject dealt with in the text. In another term, when we reach the level of critical-reflective comprehension, we are able to verify possible inconsistencies in statements that appear in the text, being able to judge the quality of the textual content and "its purposes and the degree to which these purposes are achieved" (MIGUEL *et al.*, 2020, p. 57).

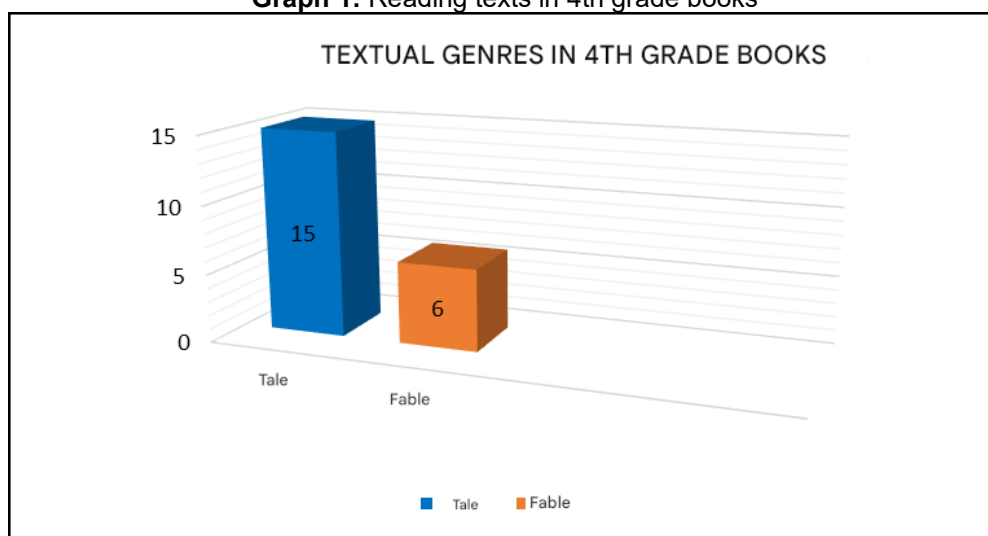
TEXTS IN TEXTUAL GENRES IN 4TH AND 6TH GRADE BOOKS

According to Cavalcante (2012), the text is a communicative event in which cultural, linguistic, social and cognitive actions converge. It is also a "semantic unit where the various elements of meaning are materialized through lexical, syntactic, semantic, structural categories" (Kleiman, 2016, p. 49). Reading is an essential means for familiarization with texts (in textual genres) and understanding their social functions. Genres are conventional empirical entities of the socio-discursive interactive practices of human language. Its mastery, in addition to being able to help in the development of skills and abilities in reading and writing, is intrinsically linked to the capacity of human communication in its various spheres. This is because our verbal communication is effected through language, which is carried out through texts in oral or written textual genres, from our communicative interactions, seeking to achieve certain textual-

communicative purposes (Marcuschi, 2008). From this perspective, it is understood that text genres should be the object par excellence of Portuguese language classes, since they are a crucial resource for the teaching and development of reading skills, since familiarization with different textual structures provides the reader with knowledge of the schemes of the topical structures of texts and their microstructures. It is a mental scheme or mental model of the text that cannot be acquired unless through reading, from the experiences of reading different texts.

However, what we can see in the proposals of the reading activities analyzed, especially in the books *Histórias dos avós*, of the 4th grade, is the lack of textual diversity or texts in textual genres, because, although these manuals adopt 21 reading texts in their proposal, they are only of two genres: short stories (15) and fables (6), both are narrative, as shown in graph 1.

Graph 1: Reading texts in 4th grade books



Source: Survey data

As we can see, the reading texts adopted in the activity proposals of the 4th grade books are narrative. These are small texts that contain, for the most part, 100 to 200 or so words in their textual bases, in addition to being accompanied by illustrations. Without a textual diversification that can provide the understanding of different types or textual structures, as they are only narrative texts for reading activities. We realize that, in this proposal, the student cannot add other textual knowledge, nor different experiences in reading, limiting himself to the narrative structure, the only one promoted in this stage of schooling.

We can see that the reading proposal adopted in these manuals contributes little to the textual knowledge of the student-reader, the knowledge that, in addition to being important for reading and understanding the text, is essential for the competent use of the language. This is because "all verbal manifestation always takes place through texts made in some genre" (Marcuschi, 2008, p.154). Thus, taking into account the context in which Portuguese is learned in Guinea-Bissau, usually in schools (such as L2), promoting textual knowledge would contribute to the formation of competent readers, at the same time, of citizen-users competent of the Portuguese language for social practice, since our verbal communication is materialized through a textual structure.

In this sense, we understand that, in order to form a competent reader, different types of knowledge are required, one of which is textual. The more they are promoted in reading activities, the more they will be promoting the development of reading competence. This is because the student forms the patterns of the structures of the texts, called schemes, the representations that allow us to recognize the text and extract its meaning (Smith, 2003). This is what happens in reading, since the comprehension of a text involves the reader's previous relevant knowledge, which covers both the textual and the subject described in the text. For this reason, a beginner reader who has not yet constructed a complex representation of the scheme of types of textual organization presents the problems of comprehension in reading, due to the lack of schemes of specific genres of the texts, as defended by Smith (2003). In other words, in the author's words, we read:

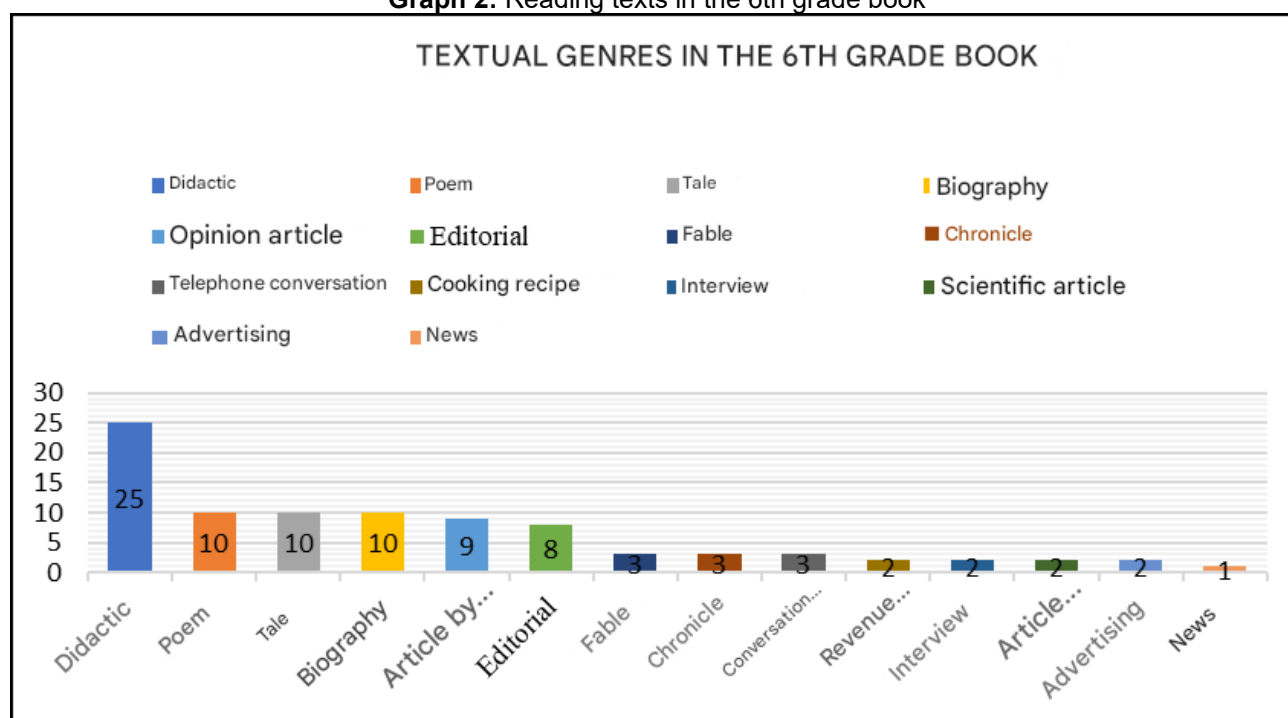
Genre schemes help both readers and writers. Its characteristic forms help readers, providing them with bases for predicting what the text will be like, how a novel will be divided into chapters, in a certain way, how a scientific article will follow a certain format, that a letter will observe certain typical conventions (Smith, 2003, p.60).

We realize that a beginner reader who is not familiar with certain textual structures may fail in comprehension, because he has not yet built a cognitive representation of the genre, that is, the relevant knowledge of the text. This can make it difficult to understand, since each genre of text has its own different discursive structure. According to Cummins (2017), textual knowledge helps the reader to identify the main idea of the text, especially in informative texts, in which the instructive, explanatory, descriptive sequence, etc., may predominate. Based on this view, we argue that, in order to develop reading skills and competencies, one must promote knowledge of text, since it is the basis for our understanding (Smith, 2003). We understand that the 4th grade proposal promotes

narrative knowledge, although it is not explored in comprehension activities, it contributes to the narrative scheme, especially with regard to the knowledge of characters, setting (narrative time and space), causal relationships, problem solution, cause effect, as well as actions for the climax, initial and final situation (Cavalcante, 2012; Lopez *et al.*, 2016).

In the 6th grade books *to communicate*, we found that there is a considerable number of texts, in their various types and textual genres, that address different themes. As an example, see **graph 2**.

Graph 2: Reading texts in the 6th grade book



Source: Survey data

As shown in graph 2, we identified 89 reading texts in the 6th grade books, containing 10 poems, 10 short stories, 3 fables, 3 chronicles, 10 biographies, 1 (one) news item, 2 texts of the culinary recipe genre, 2 (two) interviews, 3 telephone conversations, 25 texts of didactic genre, 9 opinion articles, 8 texts of editorial genre, 2 scientific articles and 2 texts of advertising genre. These texts are also small, containing, for the most part, 100 to 200 and a few words in their textual bases, organized into five themes addressed in these manuals.

In the first theme, *we will travel in time*, we find a set of didactic texts and news, as well as literary texts: short stories and poems. All of these address the discoveries/inventions made by humanity in the remote past (such as the discovery of

electricity, telecommunication networks, as well as the transport and television industries). In addition, the texts address human creativity, advances and curiosities (such as the conquest of the air, space travel). In the second theme, *man makes history*, we find different types of texts, such as biographies of African leaders and didactic texts (which deal with men who contributed with their creativity to humanity); and finally, we find poems and short stories. In the third, *we get to know our land*, we observe that the texts deal with the geographical situation of Guinea-Bissau, the economic situation and subsistence of the Bissau-Guinean people, composed of biographies of the heroes and heroines of Guinea-Bissau, interviews, literary texts (fables, poems) and argumentative texts (opinion and scientific articles). On Wednesday, *we will take care of our land*, we find advertising texts, short stories, fables, interviews, which address the importance of preserving the environment. In the fifth theme, *come and get to know our country*, we found literary texts, such as: short stories, chronicles and didactic texts that also address the geographical situation of Guinea-Bissau, its continental and island zone, its rivers and the linguistic diversity in the country; in addition we found argumentative texts (opinion articles, editorial, scientific article), interview and injunctive texts (culinary recipe).

In short, the last theme deals with the geographical, cultural, linguistic, gastronomic and subsistence activities aspects of Bissau-Guinean society. With this, we can understand that these manuals promote texts of different information and/or knowledge that can increase the encyclopedic knowledge (knowledge of the world) of the student-reader (Cavalcante, 2012; Koch and Elias, 2022; Kleiman, 2016), since it is comprehensive knowledge, focused on historical facts, the environment, as well as the scientific and sociocultural scope of a people.

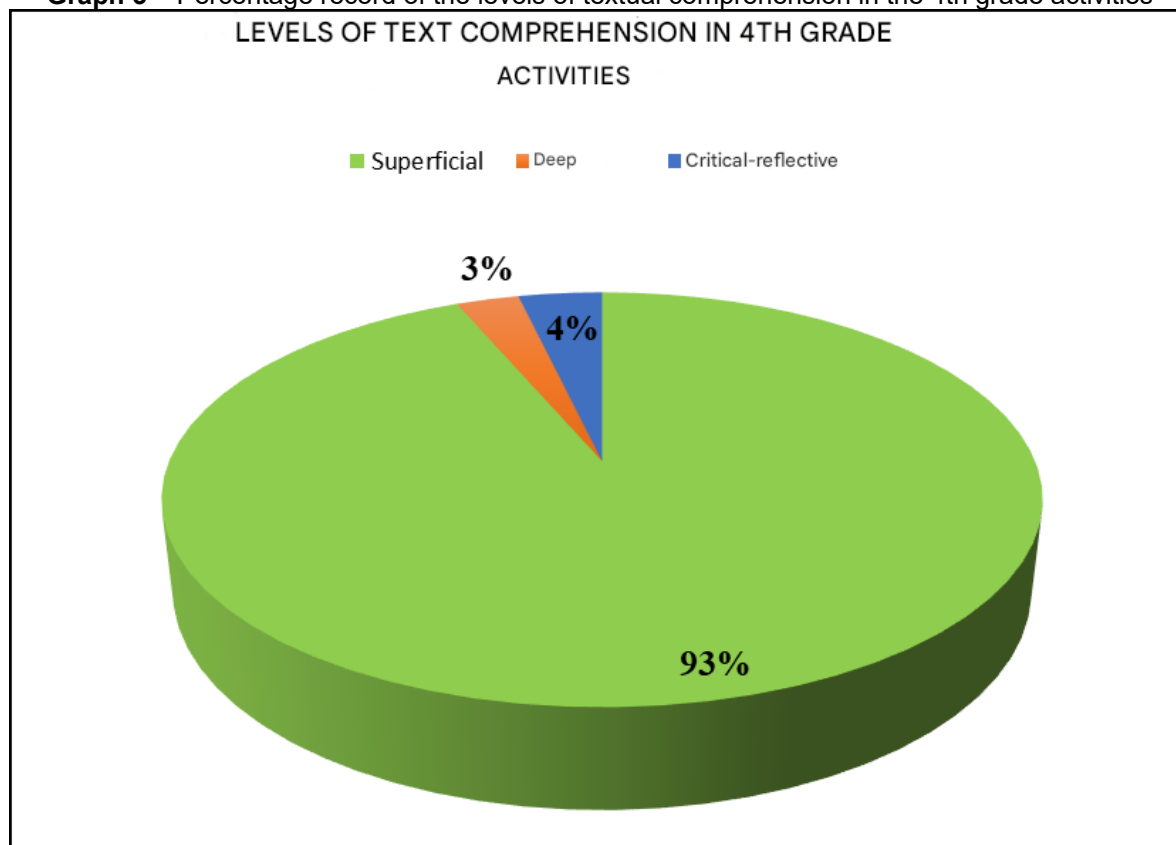
TEXTUAL COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES IN 4TH AND 6TH GRADE BOOKS

In this section we present the analysis of the text comprehension activities proposed for the textbooks *Grandparents' Stories*, for the 4th grade, and the books *Comunicar em Portuguese*, for the 6th grade, having verified the levels of comprehension required for the development of reading skills in the context of the teaching of PL2. Considering that reading activities play a decisive role in the formation of the Bissau-Guinean reader, to the extent that the proposals for activities are elaborated and systematized to stimulate the different reading skills.

In the *Grandparents' Stories manuals*, we found that textual comprehension

activities require superficial comprehension of the text, and an insignificant portion of the questions require the deep and critical-reflective levels of comprehension (Pearson and Johnson, 1978; Baretta, 2019; Miguel *et al.*, 2020), as shown in graph 1.

Graph 3 – Percentage record of the levels of textual comprehension in the 4th grade activities



Source: Survey data

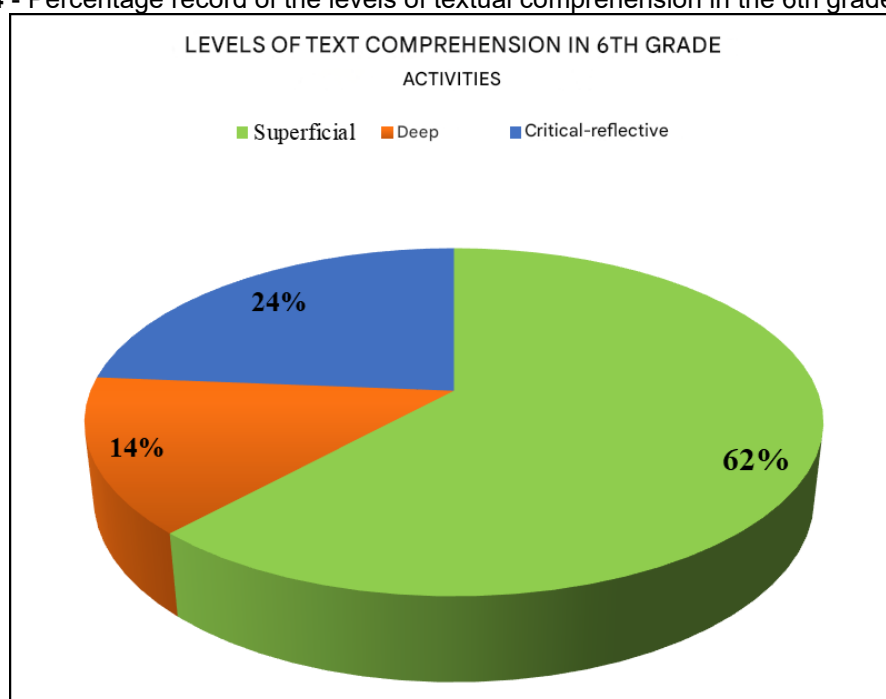
As we can see, the activities analyzed in the 4th grade manuals require 93% for superficial understanding, requiring only 4% for critical-reflective understanding; and 3% for deep understanding. We observed that the questions can be answered from the reading of the text, that is, the information required in them can be located on the textual surface. This does not stimulate reflection or the generation of inferences about the content addressed in the text. According to Baretta (2019), the questions that require a deep understanding are those whose answers are found in the text, but to obtain them, it is necessary to generate inferences, as a way of obtaining implicit information, which requires reading in the lines of the text. In turn, critical-reflective comprehension refers to questions that require relevant prior knowledge from the reader, so that they can use their mental schemes to elaborate the answer. However, we observed that, in this 4th grade reading activity, there is a portion of questions (3%) that require the deep level and another (4%) requires the critical-

reflective level of comprehension (Pearson and Johnson, 1978; Baretta, 2019; Miguel *et al.*, 2020).

With regard to the Basic Law of the Guinean Education System, we realize that this proposal for reading activities is in compliance with this law, as stated in its Article 15, paragraph a), when it considers the initial cycle of the 4th year as an initial phase for learning to read and write. With this, we understand that the lack of a diversity of texts in various genres is due to the fact that this cycle is considered as a phase of reading development. Lopez *et al.* (2016) explain that children find it easy to understand narrative texts, because, from an early age, they become familiar with this narrative structure, "because it is the one that appears in children's stories. This is one of the reasons why most students have no problem understanding a story" (Lopez *et al.*, 2016, p. 198). This leads us to reflect on the reading proposal adopted in the 4th grade textbooks, since it is the first cycle.

The comprehension activities in the books *Comunicar em Portuguese*, although most of the questions require a superficial understanding of the literal information of the text, we observed that there is a considerable diversification of the questions that stimulate and require the levels of deep and critical-reflective comprehension of the text (Baretta, 2019). As an example, we demonstrate their percentages in graph 2, as we can see.

Graph 4 - Percentage record of the levels of textual comprehension in the 6th grade activities



Source: Survey data

We observed that 62% of the questions that require the comprehension of literal/shallow information are in the domain of retrieving or identifying explicit information from the text to complete the blanks with a sentence, mark the false or true option, or answer the questions by locating their answers in the textual base. 14% of the questions lead the student to identify the implicit information; 24% of the questions require an understanding beyond the text, requiring the prior knowledge of the student-reader (Baretta, 2019). Thus, we realized that a large number of information required in these activities of the books *Comunicar em Português* is not in the text. To answer these questions, the student needs to have previous knowledge and retrieve the required information in his memory (Baddeley, 2011; Izquierdo, 2018). In other words, we point out that the questions that require critical-reflective understanding, in addition to requiring the reader's previous knowledge, also demand Communicative Competence (CC). That is, in addition to the student-reader needing to use his cognitive schemes to construct the required answers to these questions, he must have the linguistic and discursive-textual capacity to combine grammatical forms and meanings in order to elaborate the answers (Canale; Swain, 1980; Almeida Filho; Franco, 2009).

Still on the books *Comunicar em Português*, another relevant aspect to highlight is the diversity of textual comprehension activities and textual genres present in the manuals. In addition, it is noteworthy that they contribute with different types of information/knowledge to the student. For example, a little of the history of the national heroes of African countries, the importance of preserving the environment, the geographical location of different ethnic groups in the country, the subsistence and economic activity of the Bissau-Guinean population, as well as providing some knowledge about the music and some musicians of the country itself, and about some scientists and their discoveries for humanity.

With this, we understand that the 6th grade textbooks promote texts of different information and/or knowledge that can increase the encyclopedic knowledge (knowledge of the world) of the student-reader (Cavalcante, 2012; Koch; Elias, 2022; Kleiman, 2016), since it is a comprehensive knowledge focused on the history, the environment, as well as the scientific and sociocultural scope of a people. We realize that the proposal of these textbooks is in compliance with the Basic Law of the Educational System of Guinea-Bissau, in Article 15, paragraph b), in which it is proposed to forge the knowledge of the student in the second cycle (from the 5th to the 6th year of basic education). As it reads:

To forge in the student a set of knowledge constituted by personal and social training, which can encompass sexual and reproductive education, health education, environmental and consumer education, physical and sports training, human rights, civic, artistic, and musical, scientific and technological training and able to awaken in him a critical and creative attitude towards the data received, as well as allowing him to continue his training (Guiné-Bissau, 2010, p.7).

Although some subjects are not addressed in these books, we found that the set of knowledge was promoted in these didactic materials, as we have already emphasized above.

In relation to the two proposals for reading activities, those of the 4th and 6th grades, we observed that there is a lot of difference, perhaps because they are two different stages of schooling, one of the first cycle (4th year) and the other of the second cycle (6th year), a somewhat advanced school level. We noticed that the activities of the 4th grade, in addition to not contributing to a comprehensive knowledge of the text and the world, also do not contribute quantitatively with questions that stimulate the different levels of comprehension of the text (Pearson and Johnson, 1978; Baretta, 2019; Miguel *et al.*, 2020). We found that these activities promote, above all, the ability to locate or extract explicit information from the text. Such capacity, according to Alliende *et al.* (2005), is important in the use of dictionaries, in the consultation of tables of contents and in the use of libraries to consult reference books.

Finally, what we perceive in the two activity proposals is a lack of activities for the explicit instruction of the microstructures or structures of the reading texts. For Lopez *et al.* (2016), to teach the structure of the text is to teach the way the main idea was organized in the text, because it is in the dominant structure that the main ideas of the text are organized. For example, an *argumentative* or *classificative* structure or *cause-effect structure* helps in identifying the central idea of the text. That is, the structure of the text "is the way in which the author organizes his ideas and determines, to a large extent, what constitutes the main idea of the text" (Lopez *et al.*, 2016, p. 18). With this, we realize that there is a need to include, in textbooks, activities aimed at understanding the textual macro and microstructure for the development of reading skills in the domain of identifying the central information of the text and in the way they are interrelated in the textual base.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The proposals for reading and textual comprehension activities adopted in the 4th and 6th grade textbooks for the formation of the reader in the Bissau-Guinean context

contribute to the development of reading competence. Although the 4th grade book did not contribute with texts in diversified genres, which can provide the student with reading experiences in different textual structures, the manuals promote narrative knowledge, perhaps because it is the first cycle of schooling. The proposal of the 6th grade books, in addition to contributing to the texts in their various genres, provides different types of knowledge or themes addressed in the texts that enrich and expand the student's encyclopedic knowledge.

As for comprehension activities, although the books *Comunicar em Portuguese* diversify comprehension questions, most of them predominantly demand the superficial level of comprehension. In the books *Histórias dos avós*, the diversity is very insignificant, because we found that most of the activities require the retrieval of explicit information, which can be located in the text, although some questions stimulate reflection and even the expression of opinion.

In both proposals, we noticed differences in reading and comprehension activities, perhaps due to the fact that they are different stages of schooling. Since the activities of the 4th year lack diversification, both in the texts adopted for reading and in the comprehension questions. With this, we understand that this proposal should be improved by adopting the reading texts in their varieties and restructuring the comprehension questions to require, in a balanced way, different levels of comprehension. The manuals *Comunicar em Portuguese*, although they have improved in the aspect of textual diversity and comprehension activities, we found the need to vary the activity questions to the deep and critical-reflective levels of comprehension, and should adopt post-reading questions aimed at understanding the textual structure.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To the Graduate Program in Linguistic Studies (PPGEL/UFFS), to its professors, to the A2P Study and Research Group (Acquisition, learning and processing of first and second languages) for the training and sharing of knowledge. Certainly, they were enriching for this work.

Special thanks to the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel – Brazil (CAPES) - Financing Code 001, for the financial contribution, which made it possible to carry out this research.

REFERENCES

1. Allende, F., & Condemarín, M. (2005). *A leitura: Teoria, avaliação e desenvolvimento* (E. Rosa, Trad., 8th ed.). Artmed.
2. Almeida Filho, J. C. P. (2009). *O ensino de português como língua não-materna: Concepções e contextos de ensino*. Universidade de Brasília.
3. Almeida Filho, J. C. P., & Franco, M. M. S. (2009). O conceito de competência comunicativa em retrospectiva e perspectiva. *Revista Desempenho*, 10(1), 4–22.
4. Baddeley, A. (2011). O que é memória? In A. Baddeley, M. A. Anderson, & M. W. Eysenck, *Memória* (C. Stolting et al., Trad., pp. 13–36). Artmed.
5. Baretta, L. (2019). As tarefas de leitura, o livro didático e a formação do leitor. In A. C. Souza, C. Seimetz-Rodrigues, C. Finger-Kratochvil, L. Baretta, & A. C. D. P. Back (Eds.), *Diálogos linguísticos para a leitura e a escrita* (pp. 147–166). Editora Insular.
6. Bittencourt, Z. A., Carvalho, R. S., Juhas, S., & Schwartz, S. (2015). *Compreensão leitora nos anos iniciais: Reflexões e propostas de ensino*. Vozes.
7. Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), 1–47. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/1.1.1>
8. Cavalcante, M. M. (2012). *Os sentidos do texto*. Contexto.
9. Cummins, S. (2017). *Princípios e práticas para a compreensão textual no ensino fundamental* (V. Joscelyne, Trad.). Vozes.
10. Guiné-Bissau. (2010). *Lei de Bases do Sistema Educativo*. Bissau.
11. Kintsch, W., & Rawson, K. A. (2013). Compreensão. In M. J. Snowling & C. A. Hulme (Eds.), *Ciência da leitura* (R. C. Costa, Trad., pp. 209–244). Penso.
12. Kleiman, A. (2016). *Texto e leitor: Aspectos cognitivos da leitura* (16th ed.). Pontes.
13. Koch, I. G. V., & Elias, V. M. (2022). *Ler e compreender: Os sentidos do texto* (3rd ed.). Contexto.
14. Izquierdo, I. (2018). *Memória* (3rd ed.). Artmed.
15. Lopez, N. C., & Tapia, J. A. (2016). *Como ensinar a compreender um texto? Um programa de estratégias para treinar a compreensão leitora* (S. Schwartz, Trad.). Vozes.
16. Marcuschi, L. A. (2008). *Produção textual, análise de gêneros e compreensão*. Parábola Editorial.

17. Marconi, M. de A., & Lakatos, E. M. (2003). Fundamentos de metodologia científica (5th ed.). Atlas.
18. Mendes, M. C., Ferreira, V. J., & Machado, C. M. (1996a). História dos avós: Leitura, 4º ano. Editora Escolar.
19. Mendes, M. C., Ferreira, V. J., & Machado, C. M. (1996b). História dos avós: Caderno de exercícios, 4º ano. Editora Escolar.
20. Miguel, E. S., Pérez, J. R. G., & Pardo, J. R. (2020). Leitura na sala de aula: Como ajudar os professores a formar bons leitores. Editorial Graó.
21. Morais, J. (2013). Criar leitores: Para professores e educadores. Minha Editora.
22. Neves, É. P., & de Carvalho, M. de L. G. (2024). Pressupostos teórico-práticos de leitura do ponto de vista da linguística textual. *Aracê*, 6(3), 10123–10141. <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.26071567>
23. Oakhill, J., Cain, K., & Elbro, C. (2017). Compreensão de leitura: Teoria e prática (A. Sobral, Trad.). Hogrefe CETEPP.
24. Pearson, P. D., & Johnson, D. D. (1978). Teaching reading comprehension. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
25. Smith, F. (2003). Compreendendo a leitura: Uma análise psicolinguística na leitura e do aprender a ler (D. Batista, Trad., 4th ed.). Artes Médicas.
26. Sacristán, J. G. (2000). O currículo: Uma reflexão sobre a prática. Artmed.
27. Solla, L., & Cruz, M. M. (1998a). Comunicar em Português 6: Livro de leitura. Editora Escolar.
28. Solla, L., & Cruz, M. M. (1998b). Comunicar em Português 6: Caderno de atividades. Editora Escolar.
29. Van Dijk, T. A., & Kintsch, W. (1978). Toward a model of text comprehension and production. *Psychological Review*, 85(5), 363–394. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.85.5.363>