Abstract

Background: The study of the contribution of language and cognitive skills to reading comprehension is an important goal of current reading research. However, reading comprehension is not easily assessed by a single instrument, as different comprehension tests vary in the type of tasks used and in the cognitive demands required. Method: This study examines the contribution of basic language and cognitive skills (decoding, word recognition, reading speed, verbal and nonverbal intelligence and working memory) to reading comprehension, assessed by two tests utilizing various tasks that require different skill sets in third-grade Spanish-speaking students. Results: Linguistic and cognitive abilities predicted reading comprehension. A measure of reading speed (the reading time of pseudo-words) was the best predictor of reading comprehension when assessed by the PROLEC-R test. However, measures of word recognition (the orthographic choice task) and verbal working memory were the best predictors of reading comprehension when assessed by means of the DARC test. Conclusion: These results show, on the one hand, that reading speed and word recognition are better predictors of Spanish language comprehension than reading accuracy. On the other, the reading comprehension test applied here serves as a critical variable when analyzing and interpreting results regarding this topic.

Keywords
Reading, comprehension, orthography, vocabulary, working memory.