

Family playful practices in the first grade students reading and writing learning

Diana Denisse Ardila Herrera* and Tany Giselle Fernández Guayana

Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios, Cra. 74 #81 C-05, Bogotá, Colombia. *Author for correspondence. E-mail: denissardila@gmail.com

ABSTRACT. This paper shows the results of a Colombia qualitative study with a descriptive correlational scope, and action- research design about the educational practices influences at home when children doing homework. The purpose was to determine the influence of the playful practices that family uses to strengthen reading and writing processes in first grade of the Antonio Nariño Educational Institution, La Cooperativa headquarters, Meta department. The categories that directed the study are Family orientation strategy, Literacy processes, Family play practices, Parent-child relationship and Play strategies. The sample corresponded to 12 participants, including 6 students and 6 parents for a total of 12 participants. The information gathering instruments were participant observation, semi-structured interview, materials and artifacts, and focus group. The information analysis was carried out under triangulation. The results show that parents usually use the same methods with which they learned, such as the syllabic method, the use of the Nacho booklet and the railway notebook. Therefore, pedagogical help is required to apply playful strategies at home that encourage their children's learning. It is recommended to maintain the legitimacy of the families voice around their parenting practices, without skimping on their levels of training, background, limitations or any other characteristic.

Keywords: reading; writing; educational games; educational strategies; parent-child relationship.

As práticas lúdicas em família na aprendizagem da leitura e escrita em alunos do primeiro grau

RESUMO. Este artigo apresenta os resultados de um estudo qualitativo na Colombia, de âmbito descritivo correlacional e com delineamento de pesquisa-ação sobre a influência das práticas educativas domiciliares na realização do dever de casa com crianças. O objetivo foi verificar a influência das práticas lúdicas utilizadas pela família para fortalecer os processos de leitura e escrita em alunos do primeiro ano do Instituição Educacional Antonio Nariño, sede La Cooperativa, Meta departamento. As categorias que direcionaram o estudo são Estratégia de orientação à família, Processos de alfabetização, Práticas lúdicas em família, Relação pais-filhos e Estratégias lúdicas. A amostra correspondeu a 12 participantes, incluindo 6 alunos e 6 pais, num total de 12 participantes. Os instrumentos de coleta de informações foram observação participante, entrevista semi-estruturado, materiais e artefatos e grupo focal. O análise da informação foi realizado sob triangulação. Os resultados mostram que os pais tendem a utilizar os mesmos métodos com os quais aprenderam, como o método silábico, o uso da cartilha Nacho e do caderno ferroviário. Portanto, eles precisam de ajuda pedagógica que lhes permitem aplicar em casa estratégias lúdicas que estimulem a aprendizagem dos filhos. Recomenda-se manter a legitimidade da voz das famílias em torno de suas práticas parentais, sem descuidar de seus níveis de formação, fundo, limitações ou qualquer outra característica.

Palavras-chave: leitura; escrita; jogo educativo; estratégias educacionais; relação pais-filhos.

Las prácticas lúdicas familiares en el aprendizaje de la lectura y escritura en estudiantes del grado primero

RESUMEN. El presente artículo presenta los resultados de un estudio cualitativo en Colombia, de alcance correlacional descriptivo y con diseño de investigación-acción sobre la influencia de las prácticas educativas en el hogar a la hora de hacer las tareas escolares con los niños. Se tuvo como propósito determinar la influencia de las prácticas lúdicas que emplea la familia para el fortalecimiento de los procesos de lectura y escritura en los estudiantes del grado primero de la Institución Educativa Antonio Nariño sede La Cooperativa, del departamento del Meta. Las categorías que direccionaron el estudio son Estrategia de

orientación familiar, Procesos lectoescritores, Prácticas lúdicas familiares, Relación padres e hijos y Estrategias lúdicas. La muestra correspondió a 12 participantes entre ellos 6 estudiantes y 6 padres de familia para un total de 12 participantes. Los instrumentos de recolección de información fueron la observación participante, entrevista semiestructurada, materiales y artefactos, y grupo de enfoque. El análisis de la información se realizó bajo la triangulación. Los resultados arrojan que los padres suelen utilizar los mismos métodos con los cuales aprendieron como el método silábico, el uso de la cartilla Nacho y el cuaderno ferrocarril. Por tanto, requieren de ayuda pedagógica que les permitan aplicar estrategias lúdicas en el hogar que incentiven el aprendizaje de sus hijos. Se recomienda mantener la legitimidad de la voz de las familias en torno a sus prácticas parentales, sin escatimar sus niveles de formación, antecedentes, limitantes o cualquier otra característica.

Palabras clave: lectura; escritura; juego educativo; estrategias educativas; relación padres e hijos.

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Introduction

Parental involvement in each stage of their children's learning process is fundamental to the subsequent acquisition of competencies within the school environment. Emotional, pedagogical, and practical support from families strengthens the work of teachers, particularly during the early years of schooling, which are characterized by literacy development. Establishing a strong connection between family and school is therefore essential for children to build confidence and develop the ability to self-regulate their own learning.

Literacy in first-grade students, through reading and writing, is marked by a phonetic stage in which children seek correspondence between letters and syllables. Reading fluency and comprehension thus require guided and repetitive oral reading. Accordingly, families—recognized as the primary agents of children's education—must be provided with playful-pedagogical guidance and tools that contribute to effective literacy practices within the home.

Portilla Castellanos, Rodríguez, and Vera Silva (2019), in their study *Reading and Writing: A Window into the Universe of Children*, highlight that recreational activities during early childhood, tailored to individual learning differences, facilitate children's preparation for and initiation into reading and writing. Similarly, Ríos Flores and Morales Pérez (2017), in *School-Family Relationship: Participation for Reading*, conclude that achieving academic success requires parental involvement, particularly through participation in school assignments and engagement in school-driven activities.

Coronel (2015), in *Playful Games as a Didactic Strategy for Teaching Reading in First Grade*, establishes that reading guided through playful activities directly influences children's meaning-making experiences. Approaching reading allows learners to discover knowledge and experience emotions, both of which are indispensable for the construction of thought and personality. Likewise, Rincón Rubiano (2017), in *Impact of the Didactic Strategy "Let's Read!" on the Development of Reading Competence in First-Grade Students of the Alfonso Palacio Rudas Educational Institution*, concludes that diverse didactic strategies, accompanied by family interaction, directly influence the acquisition of reading competencies in first-grade students.

Nevertheless, observations at the Antonio Nariño Educational Institution, La Cooperativa campus, reveal shortcomings among parents in guiding and implementing playful practices to support reading and writing in first-grade students. Located in a rural area of Fuentedeoro, Meta, Colombia, this institution serves a small farming population and offers education only at the preschool and primary levels (grades 0–5). Families often face challenges in providing support due to labor demands in the agricultural sector, limited time, and insufficient educational preparation. These conditions contribute to a lack of interest in reading and writing, apathy toward learning, and fear of confronting new challenges. Consequently, it is necessary to reassert the critical role of families in children's learning processes.

From this context emerges the following research question: What family-based playful practices influence the literacy processes of first-grade students at the Antonio Nariño Educational Institution, La Cooperativa campus, in Fuentedeoro, Meta? The study therefore seeks to determine the extent to which family practices contribute to strengthening reading and writing processes within the home.

Framework

Reading and Writing in First Grade

From the moment a child enters school, the task of preparing for communicative processes through reading and writing begins. However, in these early stages of development, the family has already engaged

with the teaching of phonological knowledge, which enables the child to advance in a more structured manner within the school setting.

An example of this can be observed in first-grade children. Generally, they not only perform modulations but also identify phonemes and read a certain number of words within a short period of time (Gutierrez López, Mesa Muneton, & Carvajal, 2014). Likewise, at this stage, they tend to comprehend what they read thanks to reading fluency (Núñez, 2013 apud Gutierrez López et al., 2014). The learning of reading and writing thus becomes the driving force behind the desire to learn: “The learning of reading, when properly guided, should allow the student to manage tools for autonomous, personal, and pleasurable development, because it grants the power to create permanently and enables the student to decide what they need to learn” (Palacios Mazabel, Quinceno Mendez, & Restrepo Soler, 2019, p. 41).

In addition to reading, children progress through levels of writing that facilitate comprehension and knowledge acquisition. According to Ferreiro (2002, p. 49), these levels are conceived as “[...] an attempt at literacy”:

Pre-syllabic level: The child reproduces typical features of writing, such as continuous wavy lines and discontinuous vertical strokes. Generally, no clear distinction is made between drawing and writing. Syllabic level: The child assigns a sound value to each letter, representing one syllable. They use consonants and vowels they know without any particular order. Syllabic-alphabetic level: The child associates each speech sound with one or two letters and discovers that a single letter is insufficient to represent a syllable. Consequently, they attempt to identify differences and similarities among sounds produced by people, animals, and objects. Alphabetic level: The child begins to engage with the writing system, understanding that each letter of the alphabet has independent value, and attempts to write the letters that compose words.

In this sense, literacy is a constructive and complex process that does not begin in school but within the family (De-La-Peña, Parra-Bolaños, & Fernández-Medina, 2018). It is there that children first encounter the world of literacy—a process that is strengthened during the initial cycle of schooling and serves as the foundation for subsequent levels of education.

Playfulness in First-Grade Learning Processes

Educational practice, particularly in early childhood education, requires the creation of pleasant, enjoyable, and nurturing environments that foster the development of personal dimensions, personality formation, and knowledge construction through creativity, experimentation, and social interaction. The preferred tool for achieving this is play, mediated by playfulness (lúdica).

According to Jiménez, Dinello, and Alvarado (2004, p. 42), “playfulness is a space that produces enjoyment and pleasure, accompanied by the relaxation generated by symbolic and imaginary activities through play.” This enables the experience of emotions, all mediated by interaction with others. Similarly, Castilho Beltrán (2009) adds that, in teaching and learning processes, playfulness represents a fundamental human need to feel, express, communicate, and produce, thereby fostering participation, collectivity, creativity, and other essential social principles. Thus, environments rich in participation, experimentation, and creativity are indispensable for enjoyable learning.

Playfulness as a teaching strategy encompasses three particularities: 1) Intrinsic motivation, mediated by the family or educator, which consists of encouraging the child to play; 2) Symbolization, whereby the child transforms activities into enjoyable moments through fantasy and imagination; 3) Means–ends relationship, in which the adult intentionally seeks strategies to guide the child’s learning (Sarlé, 2006).

From these perspectives, playfulness can be understood as an attitude of pleasure and well-being that allows individuals to break with routine and construct knowledge through play and collective work. During playful activity, the child expresses themselves freely, which enables them to mature their thoughts, build knowledge, recall with ease, strengthen personality, increase self-esteem, and prepare for diverse life situations and environmental challenges.

The Family’s Responsibility in Children’s Learning

The family is the fundamental institution for social formation and is profoundly influenced by cultural, religious, economic, social, and ethical factors that shape the upbringing of children. Moreover, the family is the only social institution present across all societies and cultures, as it fulfills a series of essential and basic functions for its members (Guía n° 26, 2006).

The family constitutes the natural environment for personal development, as proposed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989): “The family today must be understood as the organization in which all members participate directly in the upbringing of children, with social responsibility for their well-being and, of course, for that of society” (Guía n° 26, 2006, p. 3).

In line with this, the Political Constitution of the Republic of Colombia (1991), Article 42, establishes that “the family is the fundamental nucleus of society. The State and society guarantee the comprehensive protection of the family. Family relationships are based on equality of rights and duties.” Consequently, the family is the first school of teaching, instilling principles and values that are later reinforced in the school. It is also the primary institution responsible for the education of children and for ensuring the fulfillment of their rights and duties.

Nevertheless, in contemporary contexts, some families have delegated full responsibility to schools, citing lack of time due to work, unfamiliarity with teaching methods, or limited educational preparation. However, it remains the family’s responsibility to guide, support, and demand progress in their children’s learning through tasks, routines, and parenting practices. Only in this way can the desired outcomes be achieved, favoring student learning (Mena Moreno, Soto Miranda, & Soto Miranda, 2016).

Furthermore, family and school share the responsibility of educating children and must complement one another in human and academic formation to achieve the objectives proposed by the educational system (Moreno Acero, Bermúdez Saray, Mora Pacheco, Torres, & Ramos Páez, 2016). This condition underscores the urgency of collective work, establishing close ties between both contexts to ensure coherence, dynamism, and progressivity in the teaching and formation children receive (Palomeque Garcia, Alfonso Moreira, & López Rodríguez del Rei, 2018).

Thus, the influence of the family and its pedagogical support in methodological teaching processes fosters meaningful learning for students, preparing them for life and enabling them to become active members of society capable of transforming their environment.

Methodology

Methodological Approach

The methodology applied in this study corresponds to a qualitative approach, as it allows the researcher to immerse themselves in the experiences of the participants, becoming part of the phenomenon and constructing knowledge (Hernández-Sampieri, Fernández-Collado, & Baptista-Lucio, 2014). The scope adopted was correlational-descriptive, since the variables were defined in order to indicate how they relate to one another—in this case, the relationship between play-based practices and the processes of reading and writing. Finally, the research design employed was action research, as it seeks to identify orientation strategies and thereby design a play-based guide for families. In this way, it becomes possible to describe, understand, and interpret the playful practices that families employ in supporting their children’s reading and writing processes.

Population and Sample

The study population consisted of students and parents from the Antonio Nariño Educational Institution, located in the department of Meta, Colombia. The institution comprises 18 rural campuses distributed across different villages in the municipality of Fuentedeoro and operates under the Escuela Nueva teaching methodology. Collectively, these campuses serve approximately 480 students, ranging in age from 5 to 19 years.

Given the difficulties arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and the nationwide preventive lockdown established under Decree No. 457 of March 22, 2020, the sample was drawn from the La Cooperativa campus, which enrolls 43 students in preschool and primary education. Thus, through non-probabilistic sampling—based on convenience and family availability—six first-grade students were selected to participate in the study. Additionally, either the mother or father of each student, as the primary caregiver and responsible party for guiding homework at home, was included. In total, 12 participants were selected according to accessibility criteria (see Table 1).

Table 1. Sample of Participants. Antonio Nariño Educational Institution, La Cooperativa Campus.

Population (Preschool to Primary)	N°	Sample (First Grade)	N°
Students	43	Students	3
		Girl	

			Boy	3
Parents	36	Parents	Mother	5
			Father	1
Total	79	Total	12	

Source: Author's own work

Categorization

Based on the constructs of the theoretical framework in relation to the study objectives, key content was extracted from which categories and subcategories of analysis were generated to guide the research. In this way, six major categories were established: family orientation strategies, literacy processes, family play-based practices, parent-child relationships, and play-based strategies. These were further subdivided into the following subcategories: homework at home, reading and writing in first grade, play-based literacy activities, communicative dimension, and methods of reading and writing (Table 2).

Table 2. Categorization.

Categories	Subcategories
Family Orientation Strategies	Homework
Literacy Processes	Reading and Writing in First Grade
Family Play-Based Practices	Play-Based Reading and Writing Activities
Parent-Child Relationship	Communicative Dimension
Play-Based Strategies	Reading and Writing in First Grade

Source: Author's own work.

Data collection techniques

For data collection, the following instruments were applied: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, materials and artifacts, and focus groups. These instruments facilitated the detailed gathering of information to identify patterns, experiences, behaviors, relationships, among others (Hernández-Sampieri, Fernández-Collado, & Baptista-Lucio, 2014). Consequently, they enabled the identification of factors influencing the teaching of reading and writing to first-grade children in the home environment. Likewise, they allowed direct interaction with participants, making their application feasible and providing opportunities to experience their practices and perceptions regarding the meaning of studying. It is important to note that the instruments were validated through expert judgment prior to their application, thereby ensuring the relevance and reliability of the results obtained (Table 3).

Table 3. Semi-structured Interview and Focus Group.

Semi-structured Interview	Focus Group
1. What elements or strategies do you consider effective for your child to learn to read? Why?	1. What is a typical day of schoolwork at home like?
2. What strategies do you use when teaching your child reading processes? How do you apply them?	2. What resources would you like to have at home to pedagogically support your children's schoolwork?
3. What strategies do you use when teaching your child writing processes? How do you apply them?	3. What method do you use to teach your child to read and write?
4. How do you think your way of teaching writing influences your child's learning?	4. What strategies would you like to integrate when doing homework with your children?

Source: Author's own work

Analysis procedure

Once the data were obtained, the participants' information was organized by digitizing it while preserving its originality, thereby allowing validation of the data and the generation of codes to explain the phenomenon under study. Triangulation was carried out through an Excel matrix in which all the information gathered from the different instruments applied was consolidated. The responses of each participant were contrasted with the established categories of analysis. Each participant was assigned a code: M# (mother), P# (father), and E# (student). Subsequently, a general analysis was conducted by category, which enabled data saturation and coding, the preparation of tables and graphs, and ultimately the final research report (Figure 1).

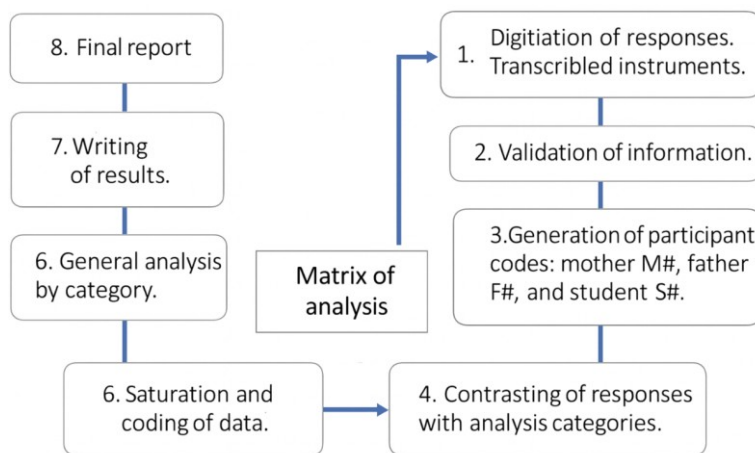


Figure 1. Qualitative Analysis Procedure.

Source: Author's own work

Results

The results presented below were obtained through triangulation using open coding and subsequent interpretation. This process allowed for the identification of trends related to family play-based practices in the literacy development of first-grade children. These findings are organized into the following five categories: (1) family guidance strategies, (2) literacy processes, (3) family play-based practices, (4) parent-child relationships, and (5) play-based strategies.

Family Guidance Strategies

This category addresses the findings derived from observations conducted with the families of first-grade students. These observations revealed the methods employed by each family when assisting with reading and writing homework at home. Accordingly, the findings are presented under the subcategory: homework at home.

Homework at Home

According to Figure 2, 67% of families do not employ play-based strategies to guide their children's reading and writing homework. As a result, they tend to rely on the Nacho primer and the Ferrocarril notebook. Meanwhile, 16% use syllabic flashcards to support word formation and subsequent reading and writing practice. Lastly, 17% utilize visual aids such as alphabet charts and syllables covered in class to facilitate recognition and memorization.

Within the home environment, mothers are typically responsible for supervising and guiding their children's schoolwork, while only one father assumes this role due to his spouse's academic limitations. Furthermore, most participating mothers and fathers rely on the instructions provided by their children's teacher. Finally, it is worth noting that nearly all households offer appropriate learning environments, such as a desk or dining table surrounded by silence, to support the children's concentration.

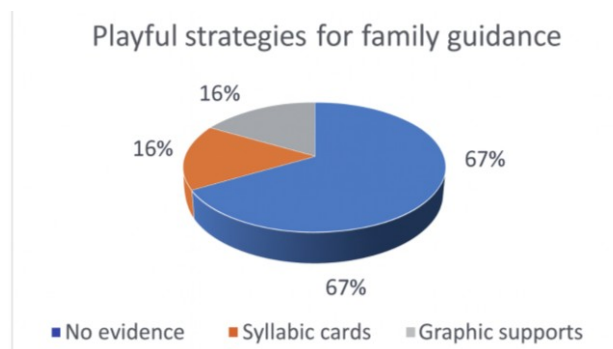


Figure 2. Playful Strategies for Family Guidance.

Source: Author's own work

Literacy Processes

This category presents the results obtained from observations and focus groups conducted with the families of first-grade students, which allowed for the identification of strategies employed for reading and writing through homework activities at home. The findings are described under the following subcategory: reading and writing in first grade.

Reading and Writing in First Grade

Among the participating families, it is evident that both reading and writing practices frequently rely on the syllabic method. In the case of reading, families often teach their children consonant-vowel combinations to form syllables, which are then memorized and ultimately read aloud. Other families employ the global method, whereby the child’s visual memory facilitates word recognition and pronunciation.

With respect to writing, families tend to use word dictation, emphasizing the pronunciation of each syllable, followed by reading the written text. As a result, most children demonstrate correct line management, appropriate use of capital letters, neat handwriting, and effective spacing (Table 4).

Table 4. Findings from Observation and Focus Group.

Literacy Processes in First Grade	
Reading	Writing
At a general level, the use of the syllabic method is evident.	A process that follows reading.
Once the word has been read syllable by syllable, it is repeated so that the student understands what is being said.	Families tend to rely on dictation of sentences.
It is observed that children think carefully before pronouncing.	They employ the syllabic method, as in reading.
Children demonstrate confidence and security when reading.	Once the sentences are written, they read them to ensure comprehension of what has been written.
This process is carried out with the support of the Nacho primer as the sole didactic material.	There is good development of writing skills.
They also use certain aids, such as graphic representations of alphabet letters and syllable cards.	Proper line management.
	Most children make correct use of capital letters and leave appropriate spacing between words.

Source: Author’s own work.

Given the above, families report not having the appropriate didactic and relevant tools to teach their children. Consequently, they find it difficult to guide literacy tasks at home, as these are often accompanied by routine activities or methods that have led to a lack of motivation among children to learn. Among students, there is also a noticeable unfamiliarity with play as a learning tool. For this reason, learning to read and write through play at home is frequently associated with distraction and loss of concentration when completing school assignments.

Family Play-Based Practices

This category addresses the findings derived from the use of materials and artifacts with students (role-play) and a semi-structured interview with parents, in which family play-based practices influencing students’ literacy processes were analyzed. The subcategory to be addressed is: play-based literacy activities.

Play-Based Literacy Activities

Based on the role-play (homework time at home), children reveal that the mother is the one who guides and accompanies the completion of school tasks, using the Nacho primer as support, while the father usually assumes the role of observer. Generally, in the maternal role, attention and correction are evident when the child reads or writes. The mother also uses a ruler to point to the words the child is reading. The role-play thus reveals the almost complete absence of play-based practices in teaching children to read and write (Figure 3).

Nevertheless, in the roles assumed by both father and mother, the use of imagination, creativity, and even the methods learned by parents during their own childhood becomes evident, providing them with confidence when guiding homework. As one mother expressed:

Teacher, I do not use strategies as such; I simply sit with her [my daughter] and say: this is the letter. I go over it several times and then let her do it on her own. That is my way, and it has worked a little. (Personal communication, T1.2, March 25, 2021)¹

Thus, for parents, the teaching of writing and reading proves to be complex, as they must wait for children to memorize syllables, assimilate them, associate them, represent them graphically, and subsequently read them. Nevertheless, the Ferrocarril notebook has been helpful in fostering good handwriting, correct use of uppercase and lowercase consonants, appropriate spacing, and proper letter size.



Figure 3. Photograph of the second group performing the role-play.

Source: Author's own work

Parent–Child Relationship

This category presents the findings obtained from materials and artifacts (drawings) and semi-structured interviews with children, focusing on the subcategory: communicative dimension.

Communicative Dimension

From the drawings produced (homework at home), it was evident that the authority during homework time is exercised by the mother, who tends to be respectful and attentive to her children. Moreover, a positive relationship between mother and child is apparent, without expressions of fear or rejection toward the guidance provided by the mother (Figure 4). It was also observed that the father has limited participation during this moment.

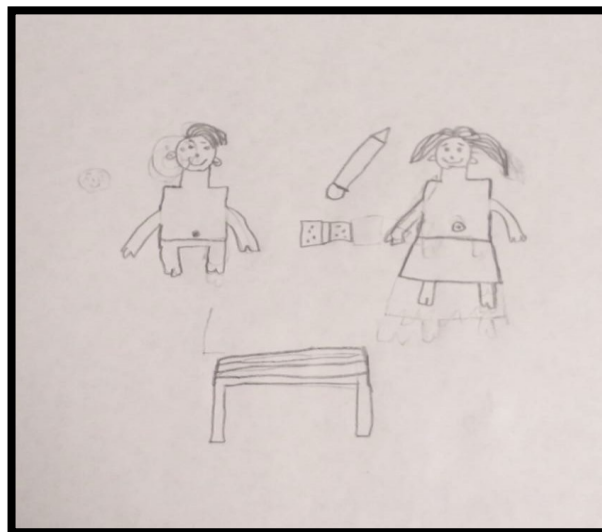


Figure 3. Illustration of a typical homework day at home.

Source: Illustration created by student (S6).

¹ The ethical procedure carried out to conduct the research consisted of the signing of two informed consent forms: one regarding data collection and another concerning the publication of images. To this end, each family of the first-grade children at the La Cooperativa campus of the Antonio Nariño Educational Institution was contacted. The purpose of the study was explained to them, each consent form was read aloud, and finally, their signature and national identification number were requested. Through these consent forms, confidentiality of names was ensured, data were used exclusively for academic purposes, and the photographs taken were blurred to protect identity. The research project is supported by these documents, which were duly completed and signed.

Within this parent–child relationship during the completion of school assignments, it becomes evident that mothers demonstrate willingness and patience in guiding their children’s tasks, a circumstance largely attributable to their presence in the home. In contrast, fathers are often absent due to agricultural work and fatigue. In this regard, some students expressed:

“I like doing homework with my mom because she does not scold me or hit me if I make a mistake. On the other hand, my dad hits me when I do my homework wrong.” (Personal communication, S5.4, March 25, 2021)

“When my mom is busy, my dad helps me with homework, but sometimes he treats me well and other times he scolds me because he does not have patience with me.” (Personal communication, S3.5, March 25, 2021)

In this sense, although fathers face difficulties in guiding their children’s literacy tasks, satisfaction and joy are perceived among all family members as they observe progress in the children. Likewise, there is a prevalence of good communication within the household, which strengthens family bonds and fosters a sense of responsibility for the children’s learning.

Play-Based Strategies

The following section presents the findings obtained from the focus group, in which the needs of both parents and students were identified regarding the teaching of reading and writing at home. These findings made it possible to design a family play-based guide to support them in this process. The subcategories to be developed are: (1) methods of reading and writing, and (2) guide of play-based literacy strategies.

Methods of Reading and Writing

Among the participating children, there is a clear desire for their parents to teach them at home through enjoyable activities and topics that spark their interest. According to the interviews, parents do not explore additional resources but rather adhere strictly to the teacher’s instructions. Reports indicate that there are no games or play-based activities that facilitate learning to read and write more easily, as expressed by some of the children:

“For homework we use the ruler, the notebook, the Nacho primer, and the pencil. We don’t play.” (Personal communication, S4, March 25, 2021)

“Learning through play would be cool and fun.” (Personal communication, S6, March 25, 2021)

In this way, the absence of knowledge and strategies for guiding reading and writing tasks at home is reiterated. Parents often combine their work, household responsibilities, and the supervision of their children’s homework, making use of the limited time available. Nevertheless, it is evident that families establish routines and habits with their children, which are usually carried out in the morning hours. According to parents, the early hours of the day are more conducive to learning, as neither they nor their children feel tired or inclined to play.

Guide of Play-Based Literacy Strategies

Based on the previous results, the initiative emerged to provide families with tools, strategies, or play-based methods that would enable them to motivate their children to learn in an enjoyable way at home. At the same time, such strategies contribute to strengthening the communicative skills appropriate to their age and grade level (Figure 5).

This Family Play-Based Strategies Guide contains the origin of the proposal, a practical explanation of the levels of reading and writing in first-grade children, a letter addressed to parents, instructions for using the guide, and activities organized by levels: pre-syllabic, syllabic, syllabic–alphabetic, and alphabetic. Finally, it presents a series of websites that provide online resources.

Discussion

With regard to family guidance strategies, García Muñoz and Martínez Gil (2014) recognize play-based strategies as elements of transformation and learning that succeed in maintaining motivation in reading and writing. However, the participating families do not possess adequate strategies, since most did not complete primary education. Nevertheless, their empirical way of guiding their children’s homework has fostered progress in reading levels and writing fluency. In response to this situation, Ocaña (2009) considers it indispensable to incorporate families into teaching processes so that educational goals can be achieved from home. In this way, parents are encouraged to better fulfill their roles.



Figure 5. Excerpts from the Guide of Play-Based Literacy Strategies for Parents. Source: Author's own work

In relation to literacy processes, Acevedo, Espinal Gil, and Vargas Villa (2020) emphasize that play is one of the elements that enables a close bond between parents and children, as it promotes interaction, fosters value formation, and supports personality development. Likewise, play encourages joy and creativity for both parties in the acquisition of knowledge. García Muñoz and Martínez Gil (2014, p. 27) state:

“In reading and writing processes, play plays a very important role as it enriches teaching, fostering participation, collectivity, creativity, and other fundamental principles of human development. Structured play is what allows the student to achieve meaningful learning.”

For this reason, in family play-based practices, although participating parents apply common or pre-established methods when helping their children with reading and writing tasks, they show interest in learning alternative teaching methods beyond the traditional ones. They are willing to incorporate play into their educational practices, provided they receive professional guidance. According to Pineda Robayo and Filicetti (2018), the teacher, as a collaborator and actor in the joint task of educating, must introduce parents to their children’s learning through communication, emotions, and expression oriented toward entertainment, enjoyment, and dynamism (Peña Torres, 2019; Balanta Quintero, Díaz Ramírez, & González Torres, 2015). Similarly, Arango Echeverri and Torres Bravo (2016) argue that children need to integrate playful elements to learn to read and write, as these allow them to balance knowledge, skills, and abilities essential at each stage of development, thereby facilitating their social performance.

Regarding the parent–child relationship, participating families demonstrate responsibility in accompanying and guiding their children’s schoolwork. They particularly highlight patience and love as the essential elements for first-grade children to understand what they are being taught. This generates feelings of security and confidence in children, fostering the development of their literacy skills. Navarro Saldaña, Vaccari Jiménez, and Canales Opazo (2001) affirm that family relationships significantly influence the emotional and formative outcomes achieved by learners.

Additionally, families have succeeded in creating habits around homework, given the democratic parenting style applied within the home. This has enabled first-grade children to become responsible, comply with established rules, respect authority, and participate in setting agreements at home. Parenting styles thus exert a strong influence on emotional development, social skills, assertive communication, and social competencies (Cámara Estrella & López González, 2011).

Finally, regarding play-based strategies, it is evident that participating parents need pedagogical training to contribute to the literacy skills of their first-grade children. The absence of play-based strategies in the teaching of reading and writing limits cognitive development, neglecting learning as a process of discovery and enjoyment (Cardozo, 2008). Literacy in first-grade children transcends the mere act of learning to read

and write. At this stage, literacy enables the meaningful engagement of children in all learning processes. For this reason, play-based strategies are required to foster discovery, motivation, and enjoyment, serving as a foundation for communicative skills. Thus, family and school share the responsibility of working synergistically, employing pedagogical knowledge and didactic strategies that lead children to progress appropriate to their age.

Conclusions

Learning to read and write requires play-based strategies that transform these acts into experiences of discovery, motivation, and enjoyment for children in their early stages of learning. From this perspective, playful teaching methods for the development of communicative skills gain relevance, as they provide caregivers with more effective ways of teaching their children and, consequently, strengthen the school–family relationship.

The application of pre-established practices in households for teaching reading and writing—absent of play—limits the learning of first-grade children. Generally, these practices are oriented toward cognitive development, neglecting the holistic dimension brought by play, enjoyment, and creativity. Hence, there arises the need to provide families with play-based strategies that help them guide their children’s literacy processes. Transforming teaching practices enables parents to set goals, seek tools, strengthen bonds, and enjoy homework time with their children.

From the above, the need for parental schooling becomes evident, given their limited knowledge of play-based practices that influence the literacy processes of first-grade students at the Antonio Nariño Educational Institution, La Cooperativa campus in Fuentedeoro–Meta. Traditional practices are still observed in families, such as teaching reading and writing through syllable formation, pointing to them with a finger, pencil, or ruler, and expecting children to memorize, internalize, represent, and finally read them. This absence of strategies stems from parents’ lack of knowledge to guide tasks meaningfully by incorporating play. For this reason, first-grade children show low motivation, requiring home environments that encourage and allow them to enjoy learning to read and write.

A limitation of the study was the global situation caused by COVID-19, which restricted the possibility of including a larger sample. At the time of fieldwork, Colombia had not yet received its first vaccine doses, and only a few families agreed to participate in the research together with their children. This limited the scope of the study, the interaction with participants, and consequently, the results.

At the educational level, it is necessary to establish a strong school–family link in the shared responsibility for children’s educational development, reinforcement, and meaningful learning. For this purpose, educational institutions must engage with parents to train them in pedagogical and didactic tools that facilitate home-based educational support, thereby complementing the work carried out at school. At the scientific level, it is suggested to include a larger sample across different educational levels to deepen the analysis of other family factors influencing literacy learning. Likewise, it is recommended to incorporate the voices of families in their children’s education, since their own experiences can reveal strengths and weaknesses in home-based pedagogical support.

It is worth noting that future researchers should further investigate the influence of parents’ low academic levels on children’s learning, as well as the consequences of the time devoted to guiding homework at home. Similarly, it is recommended to uphold the legitimacy of families’ voices regarding their parenting practices, regardless of their educational background, limitations, or other characteristics, and to include a bibliographic review of public policies established by the Ministry of National Education or local education authorities that address the school–family relationship.

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Diana Denisse Ardila Herrera: Magister en Educación de la Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios - UNIMINUTO. Especialista en Gerencia Informática. Licenciada en Básica con énfasis en Lengua Castellana. Es docente de aula de preescolar y básica primaria de la Institución Educativa Antonio Nariño sede La Cooperativa, departamento del Meta - Colombia.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0972-0904>

E-mail: denissardila@gmail.com - diana.ardila-h@uniminuto.edu.co

Tany Giselle Fernández Guayana: Magíster en Educación y Desarrollo Humano. Especialista en Desarrollo Personal y Familiar. Licenciada en Pedagogía Infantil. Es docente de la asignatura Pedagogía y Currículo, Evaluación del Aprendizaje, Educación para el Desarrollo e investigadora de la Maestría en Educación de la Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios - UNIMINUTO, Bogotá - Colombia.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4726-5028>

E-mail: tany.fernandezg@gmail.com - tany.fernandez.g@uniminuto.edu.co

Note: We declare that the authors Diana Denisse Ardila Herrera and Tany Giselle Fernández Guayana were responsible for the conception, analysis, and interpretation of the data, as well as for the drafting and critical revision of the manuscript's content, and also for the approval of the final version to be published.