READ-COM: Exploring Family Attitudes and Reading Habits

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Abstract

Reading is essential in our daily lives to be able to develop as individuals in the societies in which we live, being relevant its learning at early ages. However, not only the teacher is the driving force behind this learning process, but also the family. The aim of this study is to find out about the attitudes and habits that families have regarding the process of learning reading literacy skills, that is, to know about their involvement degree in this process, as well as, how much the latter affects to this learning process. To this end, the study was conducted through an ad hoc online questionnaire sent to 101 families with the help of the schools of their children. The results indicate that both the attitudes and the habits of the families are very appropriate, and there is a strong positive relationship between the two. Nonetheless, attitudes appear in a higher rate among the responses of parents. For this reason, informative or training actions still need to be developed in order to make families more aware the effect of their involvement in their children's process of learning how to read. Furthermore, these training actions aimed at families can also be a way of improving their reading habits at home.

Keywords: Reading habits, Attitudes, Family, Early Childhood Education, Learning to read

1. Introduction

The academic literature consistently shows that, in the different education systems, differences in children's performance are caused due to multiple factors: educational policies, management of schools, pedagogical leadership, competence and work of teachers and students in the classroom, external evaluations of the schools and, fundamentally, the help and support provided by their families (Bolívar, 2010; Murillo, 2008; Pedró, 2010; Pont, 2010). All these factors are necessary and contribute to the creation of public educational value being all the agents involved co-responsible for the results obtained (García & Del Campo, 2012).

Based on this premise, the various institutions and bodies with competence in Education agree with the relevance of this co-responsibility and this support can be seen in their reports. In this sense, both *the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)*, which is responsible for providing information on the achievement of educational objectives in

different academic areas and in the international context through international studies such as PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), PISA for Schools, TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey), PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies), and *the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA),* responsible for developing large-scale comparative studies that evaluate educational performance as well as other relevant aspects of education, have the aim of understanding the impact that educational policies and practices have within the different educational systems. Among these studies, PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) highlights the essential role of the family in the creation and consolidation of the reading competence, which includes supportive attitudes and habits.

Within this framework, studies have arisen to justify this argument, since creating and encouraging the habit of reading from a young age is the basis for literacy in any of its dimensions, physical, digital and ecological. As Rodríguez Rodríguez and Planchuelo (2004) rightly point out that the mission of the school institution is to provide literacy at all levels and to promote reading as one of the basic competences of the curriculum and one of the transversal objectives of the subjects of each stage. As well as, to favour the training of competent and critical people. However, the family environment is the most relevant factor for initiating children towards a taste for reading (Martínez Día & Torres Soto, 2019; Pérez López & Gómez Narváez, 2011).

Gil Flores (2009) conducted a study in which 3859 families participated with children in the fifth year enrolled in 185 centres. In this study, the main aim was to analyse how the reading habits and attitudes of the families towards reading affect the level of development of their children in mathematics and language. The results were more favourable in those students whose families spent more time on reading and were more motivated towards it. In the study carried out by Strommen and Mates (2004), it was found that adolescents who shared a love of reading with family members and discussed books with them had a more developed reading habit. On the other hand, Del Moral-Barrigüete and Molina-García (2018), in a study carried out with 327 first-year students of the Primary Education Degree of the University of Granada, detected that mothers were the ones who had more influence in the creation of the reading habit. Also, it was proved that if family leisure time was dedicated to reading, the reading habit created was stronger.

Certainly, giving books away, recommending books, investing leisure time in reading books... are some significant actions, visible in society, which are linked to good behaviour (Molina-García & Del Moral-Barrigüete, in press) and home is a pleasant place to undertake this activity which requires learning, especially at the beginning, since the success or failure of the children's future at school will depend on it (Moreno, 2001). However, sometimes families confess that they do not have enough time, attractive resources or quality tools to carry out this activity. For this reason, this study aims to find out about the attitudes and habits of families regarding their involvement in the process of initiating their children to read. Also, to know more about their involvement degree in this process, as well as, how much the latter affects to this learning process.

This research is part of an ERASMUS + project entitled "Reading Communities from paper books to digital era (READ-COM)" included in the KA2 projects - Cooperation for Innovation and Exchange of Good Practices (KA201 - Strategic Partnerships for School

Education) which aims to design and create an App for the development of reading literacy. This project addresses several objectives in the Europe 2020 strategy for economic growth. First of all, improving home reading and school/home liaison will help ensure continued participation in education. This will contribute to a reduction in premature dropout, meeting the EU's goal of reducing it to less than 10%. Moreover, greater participation in reading will lead to a better-qualified workforce, helping the EU meet its university assistance goals (40% of young people aged 30 to 34) and employment (75% of those 20 to 64 years old). In this context, Reading Communities will analyse the habits and attitudes of reading that families have with their children in their mother tongue and in another language of different European countries: Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and United Kingdom, as well as teachers ' teaching practices. The goal is to raise awareness among families and schools and university professors and students on the importance of reading and providing resources to improve reading practices at home and at school.

In the case of Melilla, a border Spanish city in the North of Africa, half of Melilla's citizens speak a second language different from Spanish and most of the schools have students from different ethnic and cultural groups in their classes. These peculiarities regarding cultural and linguistic diversity make Melilla, an interesting context to be studied. Moreover, as a curious fact, Melilla is not present anymore in PISA reports as the results obtained were so negative that it lowered the average of the results of the Spanish context.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to find out about the attitudes and habits that families from the Autonomous city of Melilla (Spain) have regarding the process of learning reading literacy skills, that is, to know about their involvement degree in this process, as well as, how much the latter affects to this learning process. This study will undoubtedly broaden and enrich our understanding of reading habits of these citizens.

2. Method

In order to achieve the intended objective, a quantitative research study was conducted. A questionnaire was used to collect the information. In the following sections, the sample, the instrument, the procedure employed, as well as, the quantitative analysis techniques that were applied are explained.

2.1 Sample

The technique of non-probabilistic convenience sampling was used. To do so, the management teams of the early childhood education centres of Melilla were contacted so that the teachers could send the questionnaire to the families.

A total of 101 families of students enrolled in the Early Childhood Education stage were consulted. Most of the people who completed the questionnaire were mothers (79%), followed by fathers (19%) and both (2%). The majority indicated that their mother tongue was Spanish (91.1%).

Most of the families have Spanish nationality (mothers: 85.7% and fathers: 92.8%), regardless of the cultural group of origin. In relation to family preferences and reading habits, 57.6% of parents indicate that they read at home in paper format, while 42.4% prefer reading

electronically. Within the latter option, the most widely used medium is the mobile phone (41.6%), followed by the tablet (39.6%) and, thirdly, the computer (17.8%).

2.2 Instrument

The questionnaire is a Likert scale constructed ad hoc to collect information on family attitudes and habits towards reading. In our case, the answer options have been reduced to three (never or almost never, sometimes, always or almost always). It consists of 40 items distributed in 4 dimensions, two of them correspond to the attitudes of the relatives and two to their habits (see figure 1). For the study, dimensions 2 and 3 were used.

Figure 1: Dimensions of the Questionnaire on Family Reading Attitudes and Habits in Early Childhood Education
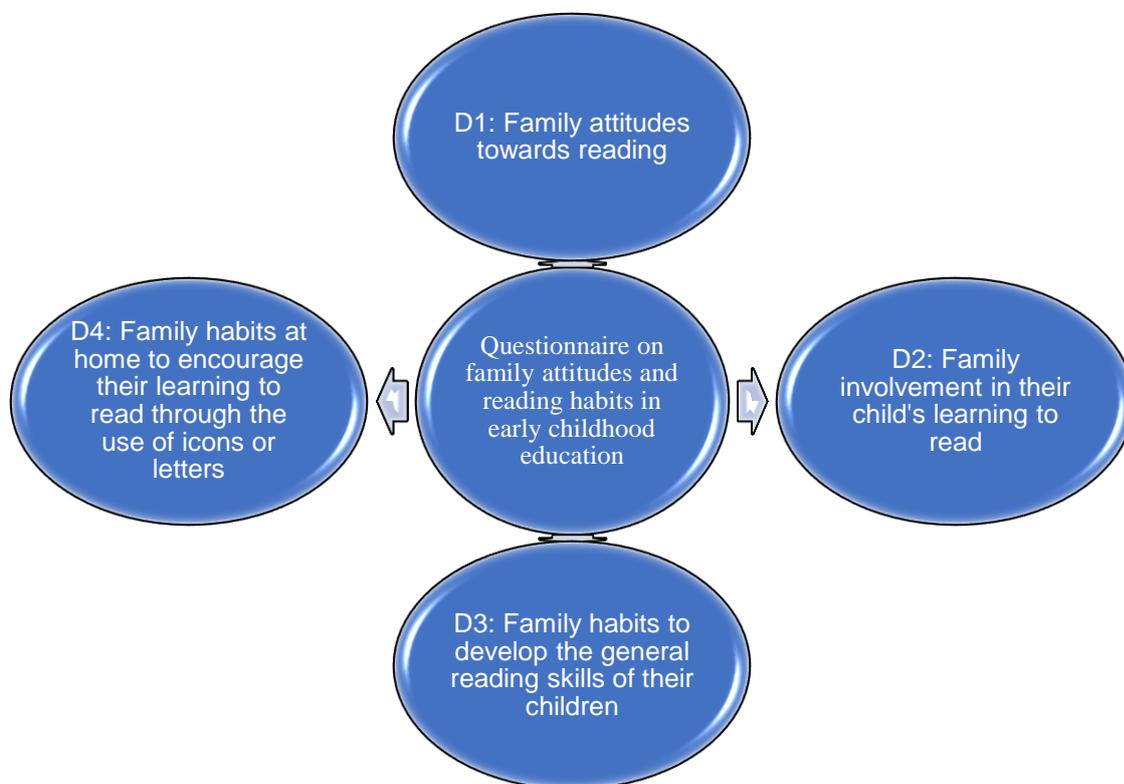
Source: Own elaboration

The instrument employed has adequate psychometric characteristics and it is, therefore, reliable and valid. In particular, for the sample of this study, it has a Cronbach reliability of .89, what indicates a high correlation. Regarding, construct validity, the test Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin for sampling adequacy (KMO) obtained a value of .767 for the items of the instrument, what indicates the correct adequacy of the data for performing the Exploratory Factor Analysis. Bartlett's test of Sphericity was significant ($\chi2$= 2280.033, g.l.= 780 and p<.0001) which means the model is adequate. The Principal Component analysis showed a Total Variance Explained of 71.171%, which exceeds 60%.

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2.3 Process

The necessary permits were requested from the relevant academic and administrative authorities as well as from the relevant public administration in order to have access to schools. Previously, the schools were contacted to request their participation in the study. Once the permits were granted, the schools' management teams were contacted to provide a link to the questionnaire, as it was an online questionnaire.

2.4 Data analysis techniques

Tables of frequencies (percentages), basic position and dispersion statistics (mean, standard deviation and standard error of the mean), and histograms were calculated. For this purpose, the quantitative analysis software IBM SPSS Statistics 23 was used.

3. Family attitudes and habits regarding their involvement in the learning process of reading of their children

The results of the analyses carried out are presented below. Firstly, the correlation between attitudes and family habits is presented. Afterwards, the attitudes and habits are presented in detail.

3.1 Correlation between family attitudes and habits regarding their involvement in the learning process of reading of their children

The results show a positive correlation between the attitudes and the habits in the learning process of reading of their children ($\bar{x}$= 51.15; σ= 6.129 being slightly higher their attitude ($\bar{x}$= 25.59; σ= 2.918) than their habit ($\bar{x}$= 25.56; σ= 3.585) (see table 1 and figure 2, 3 and 4).

Table 1: Description of family attitudes and habits

Family involvement in the learning process of their children	$\bar{x}$ [1]	$σ$ [2]	Std. Error of Mean [3]	Min-Max [4]	Sample Min-Max [5]
Total of attitudes and habits	51.15	6.129	.632	20-60	37-59
Total of family attitudes	25.59	2.918	.296	10-30	19-30
Total of family habits	25.56	3.585	.364	10-30	17-30

[1]*Mean.* [2]*Standar deviation.* [3]*Standard error of the Mean.* [4]*Minimun and maximun values in the questionnaire posibles en el cuestionario.* [5]*Minimum and maximum values obtained in the sample*
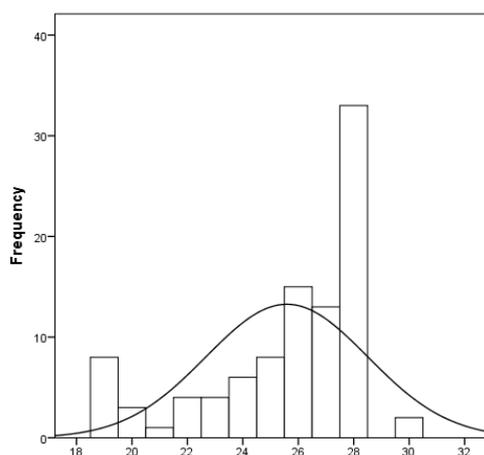*Source: own elaboration*

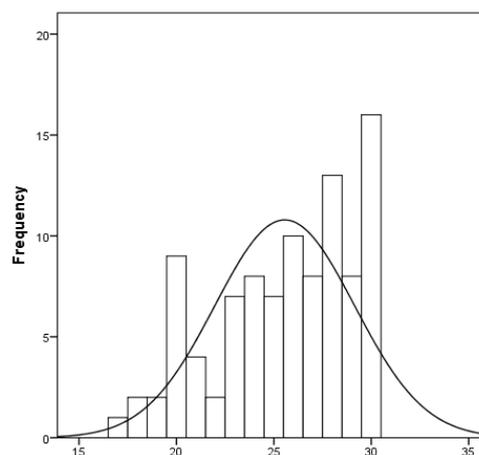*Figure* 2*:* Family attitudes and habits
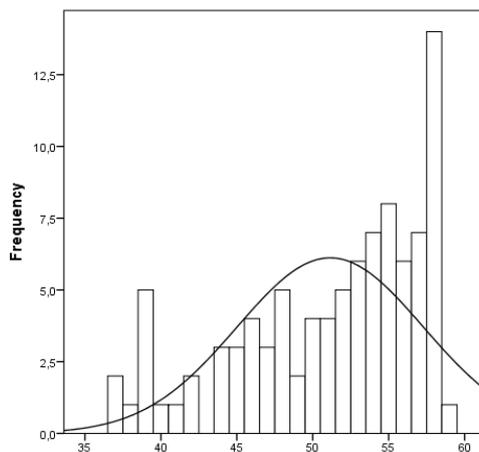
Source: own elaboration

Figure 3: Family attitudes

Figure 4: Family habits

Source: own elaboration

Source: own elaboration

On the other hand, it seems that the data indicate a positive relationship between the families' attitudes and habits regarding their involvement in the process of learning to read of their children (r= 762; *p*< .001). Therefore, it could be said that families with good attitudes have better habits.

3.2 Family attitudes regarding their implication in the learning process of reading of their children

In general, the responses of the families are positioned in the great majority in "always or almost always", having a great difference in the percentages in those who answered "sometimes". Finally, the percentage of responses to "never or almost never" is imperceptible (see table 2 and figure 5).

Thus, families seem to be aware of their own involvement in the development of their children's reading initiation, considering themselves a relevant agent (87% indicate that

"always" or "almost always") (see table 2). For this reason, parents believe that they should be interested in helping their children learn to read (85.1%), and in teaching them the usefulness of reading (83%). Moreover, reading should be an important activity in the family (79.2%) to which a set amount of time should be devoted weekly (74.3%). And for this, there are many moments in their family life that can be used to teach reading, such as during meals, trips or at bedtime (71.7%).

Table 2: Family attitudes regarding their implication in the learning process of reading of their children

Items	Never or almost never	Sometimes	Always or almost always
1. Reading should be an important family activity.	2%	18.8%	79.2%
2. A book is always a good gift for a child.	0%	27.7%	72.3%
3. It is advisable for the family to dedicate a fixed time per week to reading at home.	3%	22.8%	74.3%
4. It is recommended that parents teach their children the usefulness of reading.	0%	17%	83%
5. There are many moments in family life that can be used to teach our child to read (meals, trips, bedtime...).	1%	27.3%	71.7%
6. Parents are not responsible for their children learning to read, that's what school is for. [1]	87%	7%	6%
7. Parents should be interested in helping their children learn to read.	1%	13. 9%	85.1%
8. It is recommended that families select or recommend educational programs (TV, mobile, computer) for their children to learn to read	2%	27.7%	70.3%
9. It is important to have a space dedicated to the use and care of a family library.	5%	30.7%	64.4%
10 It is recommended that the family encourages the correct use of reading with ICT (computer, mobile phone, television...).	2%	36.6%	61.4%

[1]*Negative Item.*

Source: own elaboration

In relation to resources, families consider that a book is always a good gift for a child (72.3%). In the case of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), they consider that they as families should select or recommend educational programmes for their children to encourage them to learn to read, using the television, mobile phones or a computer (70.3%). Finally, they indicate that it is relevant to have a space at home in which there is a library to be used by the family (64.4%).

Figure 5: Items about family attitudes regarding their involvement in their children reading learning process
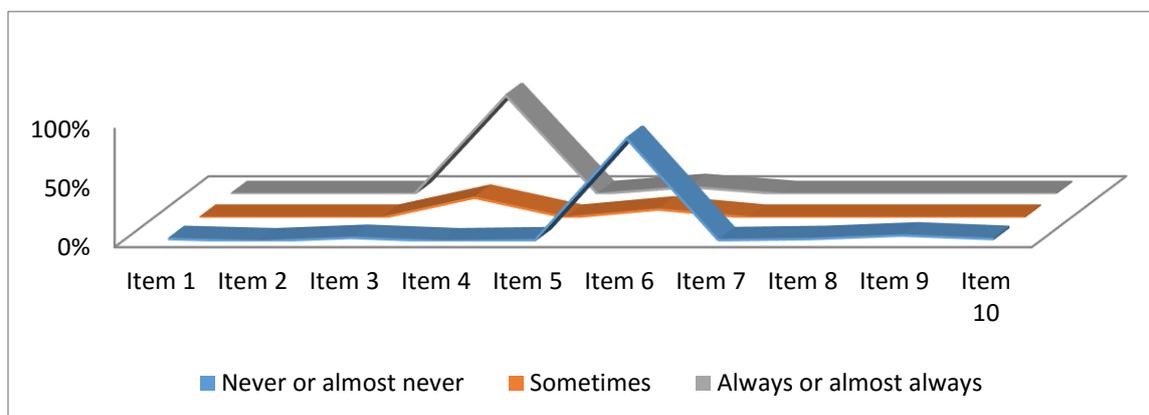
3.3 Family habits regarding their implication in the learning process of reading of their children

As it has been observed above, there is not much discrepancy regarding the attitudes of families; however, this is not the same for their habits (see table 3 and figure 6). There is a great deal of agreement in which they always or almost always respond to their children when asked about what is written somewhere (85.1%). This agreement decreases considerably in terms of family involvement when it comes to talking to their children about things they do (77.2%). However, it decreases even more in other types of actions, such as those described below.

*Table 3: Family habits regarding their implication in the learning process of reading of their children*

Items	Never or almost never	Sometimes	Always or almost always
1.I read in places in the house where my child can see me and/or imitate me.	.9%	25.7%	63.4%
2.I talk to my child about the things we have done.	0%	22.8%	77.2%
3.I turn the pages of a paper book with my child.	5%	43.6%	51.5%
4.I usually answer my child when he/she asks me "what does it say here?	1%	13.9%	85.1%
5.I watch with my child programmes that teach him/her to read (on TV or on the Internet).	13%	26%	61%
6. I do some kind of activity with my child to get him/her to read.	5%	32.7%	62.4%
7. I tell or make up stories orally with my child.	5.1%	34.3%	60.6%
8. I sing nursery rhymes or recite poems, tongue twisters, riddles with my child.	2%	29.7%	68.3%
9. I select educational reading programmes for my child to use on my mobile, television, tablet...	9%	41%	50%
10. I see and/or select with my child the books that are in a bookstore or a library.	14%	40%	46%

Source: own elaboration

A majority of families participate with their children "always" or "almost always", singing children's songs with them, or reciting poems, tongue twisters or riddles (68.3%). Fewer families read in front of their children (63.4%) or do some kind of activity to make their children interested in reading (62.4%). In a similar line, there are families who watch with their child programmes that develop reading learning in an ICT resource (61%). In the same way, they tell or invent stories orally with their child (60.6%).

In the case of selecting ICT resources to read, the results are very similar to those who do it almost always or always (50%) of those who do it sometimes (41%). Similarly, families always or almost always (46%) and sometimes (40%) see and/or select with their child the books available in a bookshop or library.

Figure 6: Items about family habits regarding their involvement in their children reading learning process
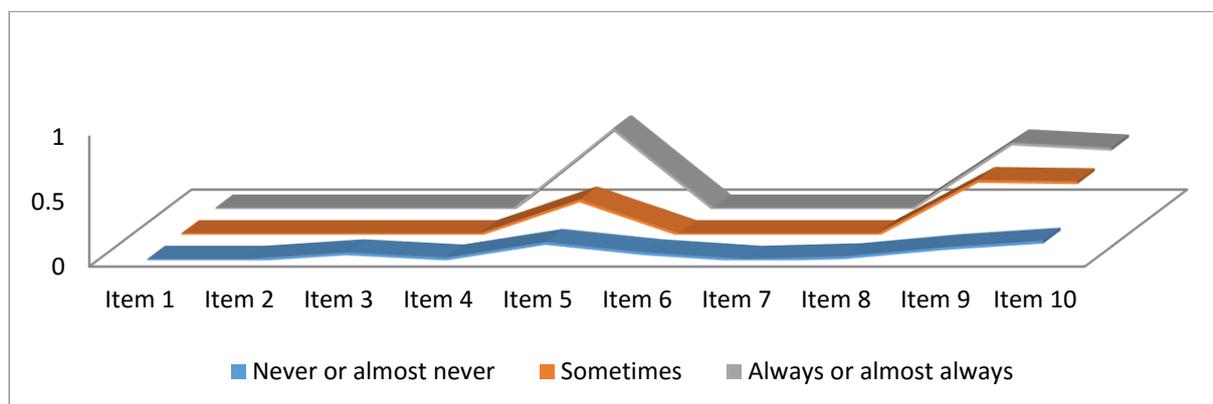
Source: own elaboration

4. Discussion and Conclusion

One of the relevant agents in the reading learning process at an early age is the family (Bolívar, 2010; Martínez Día & Torres Soto, 2019; Murillo, 2008; Pedró, 2010; Pont, 2010; Rodríguez Rodríguez & Planchuelo, 2004), especially when it comes to create assertive behaviours towards the taste for reading (Pérez-López & Gómez Narváez, 2010). Specifically, the role of the mother is usually the most relevant (Del Moral-Barrigüete & Molina-García, 2018), being the one who is most involved, as stated above in our study. In other words, families' homes are a pleasant place for the development of the child's reading skills, since the success or failure of his or her future at school will depend on it (Moreno, 2001).

The attitudes and habits of families towards their children's reading learning process have a positive relationship. In the educational field, this is interesting insofar as it is relevant to intervene with the families to improve their awareness of their involvement in their children's learning (attitudes). Moreover, it is also good for them to know strategies they can develop in their family environment (habits). In this way, by acting on awareness, habits will be improved, and vice versa.

According to Gil Flores (2009), the results regarding the reading skills are more favourable in those students whose families are motivated towards reading and spend more time working on it. In the same vein, in our study we have found that attitudes and habits seem to be favourable to learning to read. Specifically, there are various actions in which families share reading moments with their children. As an example, they read in places in the house where their children can observe them and imitate them. Also, they watch children's television or internet programmes that make them improve their reading skills. Therefore, it can be concluded that family's habits and attitudes help to promote reading skills.

On the other hand, they believe that reading is relevant as a family activity in which a fixed amount of time per week is dedicated to reading at home or giving away books (Molina-García & Del Moral-Barrigüete, in press). They consider that one of their functions is to teach their children the usefulness of reading and that they should be interested in helping them. There is a tendency to think that there are various moments in family life to practice reading or use of a library at home.

However, it is still necessary to organise educational interventions that train parents in other strategies and resources that consolidate such attitudes and habits. In this way, the co-responsibility of the family and the school can be successfully achieved. The teachers themselves can be in contact with the families to find out their needs and motivations to help them in these actions. This is necessary as there is a lack of knowledge about the educational actions carried out by teachers within their classrooms and by families at home (Moreno, 2001). In this way, the learning process initiated in the classroom can be continued in the family environment, thus generating a transfer of knowledge to their daily life.

To this end, future lines of research are needed to continue gathering information on initiatives that favour the process of learning to read, both in their school and family environments.

Acknowledgment

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