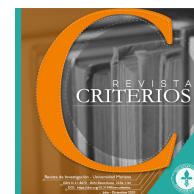



# The game: a didactic strategy to strengthen the reading process

## El juego: una estrategia didáctica para fortalecer el proceso lector

## O jogo: uma estratégia didática para fortalecer o processo de leitura

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**Abstract:** The reading process is multiple since within it complex thinking skills underlie and, through this process, we can have a more critical and reflective look at the world around us. It is also clear that it is necessary to seek strategies that contribute to strengthening the reading process in students. In this article, the game is addressed in different reading situations, and how it can be established as a very important didactic strategy to strengthen the process. In addition, the article gives an account of how various authors have significantly investigated playfulness and its incidence in reading processes. The results showed an improvement in this process of the students, in terms of the literal comprehension of texts at different levels. It was concluded that the playful activities managed to capture their interest and improve concentration when reading or interpreting questions related to the texts.

**Keywords:** strategy, reading, game, strengthening, didactic, process.

**Resumen:** El proceso lector es múltiple; dentro de él subyacen habilidades complejas del pensamiento y, a través del mismo, se puede tener una mirada más crítica y reflexiva del mundo que nos rodea. Es claro también que, se hace necesario buscar estrategias que contribuyan al fortalecimiento del proceso lector en los estudiantes. En este artículo se aborda el juego en diferentes situaciones de lectura y cómo éste se puede establecer como estrategia didáctica de gran importancia para fortalecer el proceso lector. Además, da cuenta de cómo diversos autores han investigado de forma significativa la lúdica y su incidencia en los procesos lectores. Los resultados evidenciaron una mejora en el proceso lector de los estudiantes en cuanto a la comprensión literal de textos en los diferentes niveles. Se concluyó que, las actividades lúdicas lograron captar su interés y mejorar la concentración al leer o interpretar interrogantes relacionados con los textos.

**Palabras clave:** estrategia, lectura, juego, fortalecimiento, didáctica, proceso.

**Resumo:** O processo de leitura é múltiplo, pois nele estão subjacentes habilidades complexas de pensamento e, por meio

desse processo, podemos ter um olhar mais crítico e reflexivo sobre o mundo que nos cerca. Fica claro também que é preciso buscar estratégias que contribuam para fortalecer o processo de leitura nos alunos. Neste artigo, o jogo é abordado em diferentes situações de leitura, e como ele pode ser estabelecido como uma estratégia didática de grande importância para fortalecer o processo de leitura. Além disso, o artigo dá conta de como diversos autores têm investigado significativamente o lúdico e sua incidência nos processos de leitura. Os resultados mostraram uma melhora nesse processo dos alunos quanto à compreensão literal de textos em diferentes níveis. Concluiu-se que as atividades lúdicas conseguiram captar o interesse deles e melhorar a concentração ao ler ou interpretar questões relacionadas aos textos.

**Palavras-chave:** estratégia, leitura, jogo, fortalecimento, didática, processo.

## INTRODUCTION

Reading has been conceived, over the years, as a complex activity in which each human being can find a way to interpret, understand and observe in depth the world around them, in a creative and transforming way; for this reason, it is important that each young person finds in the reading process, a way to critically and reflexively understand their environment, stimulating in this way, the mental abilities to analyze, comparing, classifying, identifying, among others.

Through the direct observation technique, during the Spanish Language, Social, and Natural classes, among others, it was noted that the students in class 5-2 of the Eduardo Suárez Orcasita educational institution are very prone to not reading comprehensible or attentive ways to the texts, having difficulty reading the paragraphs or the instructions, which means that the teacher must explain to them what they have to do in each activity. In the same way, when facing different types of readings, it is difficult for them to understand them, generating a lack of interest that could have repercussions on their reading habits, thus affecting the reading encoding and decoding process. The purpose of the observation was to identify the shortcomings presented by the students, finding the little taste for reading and their little understanding when they carry out this action.

At this point, it can be mentioned that students require a didactic strategy capable of arousing interest in the comprehension and interpretation of texts, highlighting linguistic cognitive skills, thus determining the semantic and, at the same time, syntactic information developed in a good reading. Therefore, the research question arises: How to strengthen the reading process using the game as a didactic strategy in students in class 5-2? Likewise, other questions or subquestions were addressed; to respond, the main objective was to strengthen the reading process using the game as a didactic strategy in reading situations. And, as specific objectives, to identify the reading situations with the didactic strategy of the game and to analyze the reading development through the game.

The study arises through the observations made in the daily work and in the teaching practice of the researcher, a scenario in which, developing the methodological mechanism, she was able to demonstrate little interest on the part of the students when carrying out the reading activities. Taking into account these considerations, it was necessary to propose an investigation that would promote the taste and good habits for reading comprehensively and that, at the same time, would become a tool to develop the formation of criteria and communication skills in students in regarding the interpretation and comprehension of different types of texts.

The research was determined within the constructivist paradigm, being its main exponents Jean Piaget and Vygotsky, whose contributions, terms, and concepts about the subject have influenced psychology and education, particularly in fields such as perception, learning, and personality. It is clear that, when there are social interactions, there is an approach to reality, depending on the assertive relationship between researcher and research subject, from which accurate and coherent data is extracted to that reality. The method is qualitative in nature because this project was based on practical experiences inside the classroom, where the techniques and instruments used were aimed at the human and emotional parts of each of the subjects. Pedagogical Action Research (PAR) was used since this reflective method involves a constant analysis of the educational task, where the improvement of the quality of the teaching-learning process is sought.

For the configuration of this study, a background review was made of books, graduate works and articles on strategies to improve reading, strategies, and learning techniques through play and games as a didactic strategy, resulting in a large number of authors and publications dedicated to the subject. After the review, the following authors and publications can be highlighted:

At the international level, Minerva-Torres (2007) in Venezuela, who conducted research on the play as a learning strategy in the classroom and affirms its importance in the integral development of children in terms of their education, stands out. The general objective was to know what strategies teachers use to facilitate learning. The work methodology was to conduct interviews with students about their tastes and favorite games. The author bets on a significant practice, where the game that has accompanied the lives of boys and girls since ancient times, becomes a fundamental piece in their school process, to strengthen their knowledge. The study, of a descriptive type, was carried out with the help of direct interviews with teachers and students, using the strategy as a fundamental axis. Its most important result was that, through distraction, more dynamism and creativity can be brought to the classes, helping at the same time to improve the academic processes that contribute to remedying weaknesses shown in different aspects of education. Because of its richness in contributions to entertainment as a didactic strategy, this study contributes significantly to the present study, because it substantially supports the theoretical framework.

At the international level, Aquino and Sánchez (1999) in Mexico City, offer some reflections on play and creativity from a constructivist point of view. They define play based on ideas proposed by scholars on the subject, its characteristics, and the stages it goes through, focused especially from a Piagetian perspective. They consider that children's play is valuable for the development of creativity and for better learning. The analytical research shows how the child who has had more opportunities to be creative in play has greater possibilities of solving the problems, unknowns, and challenges that each situation poses. The nature of this study helped to build the theoretical framework of this research, as well as to establish a comparison with the results.

Play is part of the daily life of children; playing, they spend their time between their fantasy, their fun, and their reality. As this activity is important for the human being, studies have shown that it can be involved to strengthen reading in them and thus, little by little, discover a wonderful world that opens the doors to an unknown and interesting world.

On the other hand, the research called *Strategies to promote the pleasure and habit of reading in the first cycle*, developed by Valencia and Osorio (2011) at the Robert F. Kennedy School in Bogotá, highlighted the importance of games as one of the main teaching and learning tools for encouraging reading, showing the dynamics of the game with shared reading, through different activities. The object of study focused on the search for and application of didactic strategies compiled in workshops that had the purpose of facilitating the promotion of reading from a perspective where children were the true protagonists of learning. It is understood that, for the authors, it was fundamental to make a significant approach to language and for the students to have fun reading, taking reading as something habitual in their lives and not as something imposed or uncomfortable. For all of the above reasons, this study was key because it supported the construction and consolidation of strategies to foster a taste for and interest in reading.

At the national level, the research of Baquero (2018) stands out, who presented a didactic design to potentiate reading comprehension through dramatic play, in which the work is proposed from dramatic play workshops, where students of the institution Rafael Valle Meza of Valledupar, Cesar, represented through the characterization of characters, role plays and theatrical plays, the process of comprehension of narrative texts. The study had a qualitative approach, to improve the teaching practice and analyze it from the context and its actors; for this reason, the reality of the context was analyzed at the headquarters, and solutions coherent with the students' needs were proposed, taking into account significant details. For this purpose, instruments such as interviews, surveys, participant observation, and field diaries, among others, were used.

The author concludes that the game strategy becomes an excellent didactic option to favor reading needs, indispensable in all learning processes, promoting collaborative work, linking the context to the classroom, and leaving aside linear classes. This leads her to affirm that the game, through drama, became a facilitating process that significantly and dynamically increased the students' reading levels. Because of its richness in contributions to the game as a didactic strategy, this study serves as a fundamental piece for the present study, because it supports both the theoretical framework and the comparison of analysis results.

At the national level, the research of Bucheli et al. (2015) is appreciated, through which valid instruments were sought that allowed to evaluate in a different way the level of reading comprehension in students. This work was carried out to promote and improve the reading comprehension of sixth-grade students of the INEM educational institution of Pasto, taking into account the theoretical concepts of some authors to try to solve the problem posed. For this, they applied didactic workshops to check the problem and to advance in the same, as well as the execution of different games that helped in the achievement of the proposed objectives. Thus, they observed that the game, as a didactic strategy, can contribute to improving reading comprehension, offering the possibility of promoting positive attitudes towards reading. It is evident, then, the importance of this study in the present research, since it is an essential part of the development of the problem statement and strategies to promote reading.

All these studies show that the child should be presented with different alternatives that lead him/her to be part of the wonderful world of reading so that he/she can broaden his/her panorama.

The research *Development of reading activity based on playful experiences*, by Castañeda and Rosado (2016) states that games offer the student the possibility of becoming an active being, practicing the language in real situations, being creative with the language, and feeling comfortable and enriching environment that gives him/her confidence to express him/herself. The study was of a crosssectional descriptive type, to determine the reading habits of sixth-grade students of the Joaquín Ochoa institution, in a universe of 34 students. The concept of learning strategy is defined as the planning that teachers must constantly carry out, to provide students with a clear explanation at the time of teaching their classes. Thus, as Guerrero (2019) mentions:

It is important that teachers promote the use of learning strategies in students, supported by direct teaching and modeling; likewise, promoting the use of learning strategies in students favors self-regulation, metacognition, self-evaluation, autonomy, and continuous reflection. (para. 6)

Thus, through these playful activities, the students of the Joaquín Ochoa Maestre Educational Institution in the city of Valledupar, improved their reading habits, developing their learning with the procedures adopted by the teacher, achieving strategic, independent, and effective learning, which demonstrates the importance of this type of strategies for the strengthening of learning.

Among the great variety of studies and research related to the game as a knowledge strategy to improve reading levels, we can mention Santiesteban and Velázquez (2012), who state that "the teaching of reading and its comprehension occupies a preponderant place within the curricula, as it is the basis of the rest of the subjects" (p. 104); likewise, they state the importance of reading in all subjects and in the life of each individual; therefore, the game strategy adopted for the research, helped greatly for the development of the study, since it complemented previous research, providing a new analysis and results that helped to improve

the reading process of children in terms of interpretation and understanding of different types of texts; at the same time, this will contribute to future studies related to the topic.

## METHODOLOGY

A detailed description is given of the methodological design that was carried out to gather the necessary and sufficient information for the resolution of the problem to be addressed, as well as the objectives set. Considering its nature and the fundamental principles of its purpose, it can be stated that it is framed in the constructivist paradigm, as Guba and Lincoln (2002) refer: “Its form and content depend on the individuals or groups that sustain those constructions” (p. 113). Thus, the researcher will consider these constructions, not as absolute truths, but as alterable, as the information modifies certain realities and, at the same time, the underlying reality alters the report collected.

To determine the method used in this research, the following considerations were taken into account:

1. The teacher-researcher was an observer and, also, a guide of the process that took place in the classroom.
2. The students were research subjects and active participants in the development of the activities proposed in the implementation of this research.

Therefore, it can be affirmed that the method used was PAR, “seen as a practical inquiry carried out by teachers, in a collaborative manner, with the purpose of improving their educational practice through cycles of action and reflection” (Latorre, 2005, p. 24).

The method of this research, on the other hand, is framed in the qualitative line. Hernández et al. (2014) argue that “qualitative studies can develop questions and hypotheses before, during or after data collection and analysis” (p. 9). Under this foundation, the flexibility of the research questions and the path that leads to the resolution of its objectives is projected.

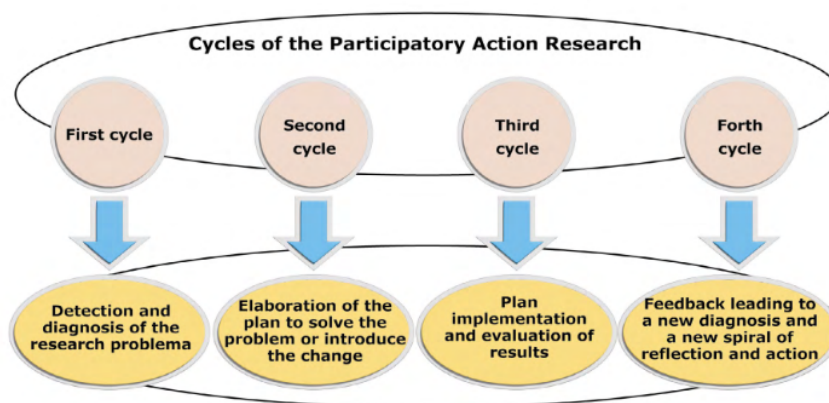


FIGURE 1  
Graphic representation of the methodological design  
Source: Hernández et al. (2014).

As far as the unit of analysis, the present research took the students of the main branch of the Eduardo Suárez Orcasita Educational Institution, to strengthen the skills of the reading process and to be able to develop with them the necessary didactic strategies for strengthening these skills, giving a greater and timely solution to the research problem. Based on the qualitative criteria, the work unit was selected: out of a class of 35 students, 15 students were selected as a sample, due to the health contingency of COVID-19, taking into account those students whose parents decided that they could attend in person in an alternating mode.

Within the framework of the research, it was necessary to have different strategies for collecting information, in the midst of the interaction with the unit of analysis and the work unit. Given the qualitative



nature, we worked with the technique of participant observation and, as an instrument, the field diary; these show a deeper look at the different visions of each of the participants indicated in the work and analysis units. Self-assessment and didactic sequence instruments were also used. Throughout the process, there were three stages that are directly related to each of the specific objectives, as shown below:

TABLE 1  
*Stages of the research*

<b>Stages (Colmenares, 2012)</b>	<b>Actions</b>
Detection and diagnosis of the research problem.	Classroom diagnosis, direct observation of weaknesses in the reading process.
Discovering the subject matter	Research questions Background review Definition of the research topic.
Construction of action and execution plans	Design of research instruments: field diary, self-evaluation, and didactic sequence. Workguides and design of materials for the implementation of the games.
Permanent reflection of those involved in the research (Evaluation of the action).	Collection and Data organization Data analysis Interpretation Partial conclusions of the research

To achieve the proposed objectives, it was necessary to organize the research by stages, each one aiming at a specific objective, as well as to use a technique and an instrument, as shown below:

TABLE 2  
*Stages, techniques, and instruments of gathering information*

<b>Stages, techniques, and instruments of gathering information</b>				
<b>Stage</b>	<b>Specific Objective</b>	<b>Techniques</b>	<b>Instruments</b>	<b>Participants</b>
1	Identify reading situations with the didactic strategy of the game	Participant Observation	Initial Self-assessment (diagnosis)  Didactic sequence	Students of class 5-2
2	To implement games in reading situations as a didactic strategy to strengthen the reading process of students from 5-2.	Participant Observation	Field diary (Implementation of the didactic sequence of the game in reading situations).	Teacher  Students of class 5-2
3	Analyzing reading development through play	Participant Observation	Didactic sequence  Final self-evaluation	Students of class 5-2

Main objective: to strengthen the reading process by using the game as a didactic strategy in reading situations. Specific objectives: to identify reading situations with the didactic strategy of the game and to analyze reading development through the game.

## RESULTS

After going through the different stages of the research, it is necessary to show the results obtained from the analysis of the implementation of the game as a didactic strategy in reading situations; for this purpose, it is necessary to solve the main question through the sub-questions posed based on the specific objectives.

Strauss and Corbin (2002) make an analysis in relation to the collection of information, being fundamental to the achievement of truthful and faithful results to reality, as a characteristic of qualitative research:

Doing open coding is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle. The analyst has to organize, sort the pieces by color (which often requires noticing small differences in hue), and build a picture by putting the individual pieces back in place. (p. 242)

To obtain the results and their corresponding analysis, it was necessary to collect the information by means of the initial and final self-evaluation instruments, didactic sequence, and field diaries; the analysis was carried out using the microanalysis and open coding technique proposed by Strauss and Corbin (2002), as well as the analysis technique of a word cloud generator.

Thus, the resolution of each of the sub-questions posed at the beginning of the research was undertaken, taking as a basis the theories presented in the state of the art and in the theoretical framework. The analysis took place in three moments or stages: 1) Diagnostic or preliminary phase; 2) Project implementation or execution phase; 3) Evaluation or final analysis phase.

**What reading situations do students in class 5-2 need to know to strengthen the reading process?** The analysis for this question considered the objective of strengthening the reading process, using the game as a didactic strategy that was achieved with the diagnosis in which the students expressed their opinion about their tastes, interests, and predilection for certain types of texts. This was the starting point for the development of the texts that would be presented in the second phase of this research. Thus, after applying the instrument to the students, an exhaustive analysis was made based on the microanalysis and open coding proposed by Strauss and Corbin (2002) as well as feedback on the different reading situations; we continued with the development of the objectives, identifying the reading situations with the game strategy and with the analysis of the reading development presented by the students in the different interventions proposed for the study.

However, in the development of the analysis through the word generator called 'Word Cloud', as shown in Figure 2, the preferences of the students were taken into consideration.

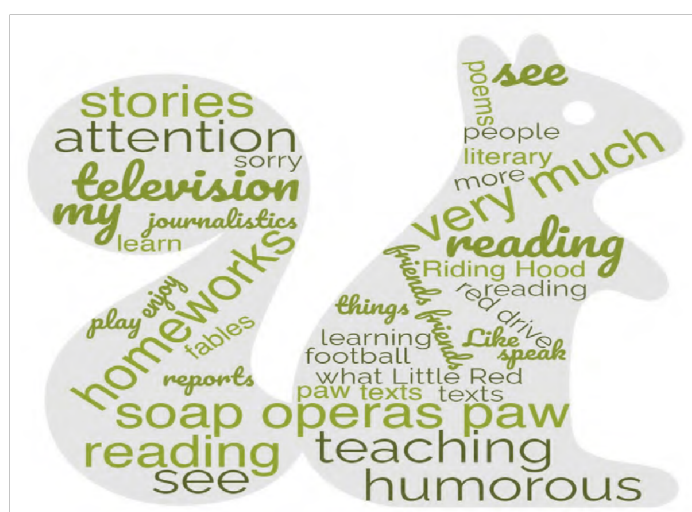


FIGURE 2  
*Word Cloud – Initial self-evaluation*

Figure 2 shows the students' preference for narrative texts, such as stories and legends; they recall classic stories such as 'Little Red Riding Hood' and legends such as 'La Patasola'. The word 'play' stands out, showing a preference for traditional games and the importance of sharing these recreational activities with friends and classmates. With this last finding, it is important to note the relevance of the game within this research and the students' preferences towards this aspect, since it gives them greater interest and motivation, all of which serve as a basis for determining the reading situations that students in class 5-2 need to know to strengthen the reading process.

Following the theory of Strauss and Corbin (2002), some relevant categories emerged. One of them is the textual typology, among which narrative literary texts stand out, of which legends and stories are the students' favorites. This served as the basis for two ludic activities in which narrative texts, both stories and legends, were the main focus.

Another significant category is 'Reading comprehension' and the students' perception of the reading processes throughout their lives; it is clear that they relate reading with learning and through it, they have a source of knowledge; however, it is also clear that it is not one of their favorite activities in their free time, perhaps because it is related to complex or academic processes, and not as a leisure activity.

It was also observed that, through the questions posed, some students had problems understanding what they were being asked, so the teacher had to intervene several times to clarify the questions, which showed the difficulty they have in interpreting texts and questions.



Another fundamental category was: ‘Socio-affective relationships’, in which the importance of friendships and companionship is appreciated. There is evidence of greater enjoyment of activities in the company, from academic to social activities, such as games. Here, again, the importance of play at this age (9-11 years old) is observed, and how essential it is to share all kinds of experiences with their peers, which has a significant impact on their learning.

What characterizes the implementation of the game to strengthen the reading process of students in class 5-2? Continuing with the development of the objectives and the analysis, this question was mediated by the impressions obtained from the field diary, which constituted a key piece in the implementation of the research. The didactic sequences where each of the activities was planned served as a basis for determining the characteristics of the implementation of the game, to strengthen the students’ reading process. For this process, the microanalysis and open coding proposed by Strauss and Corbin (2002) were again taken into account. On the other hand, it was possible to evidence the approach of the categories that emerged in the research in the descriptive matrix, where each situation and category was exhaustively analyzed.

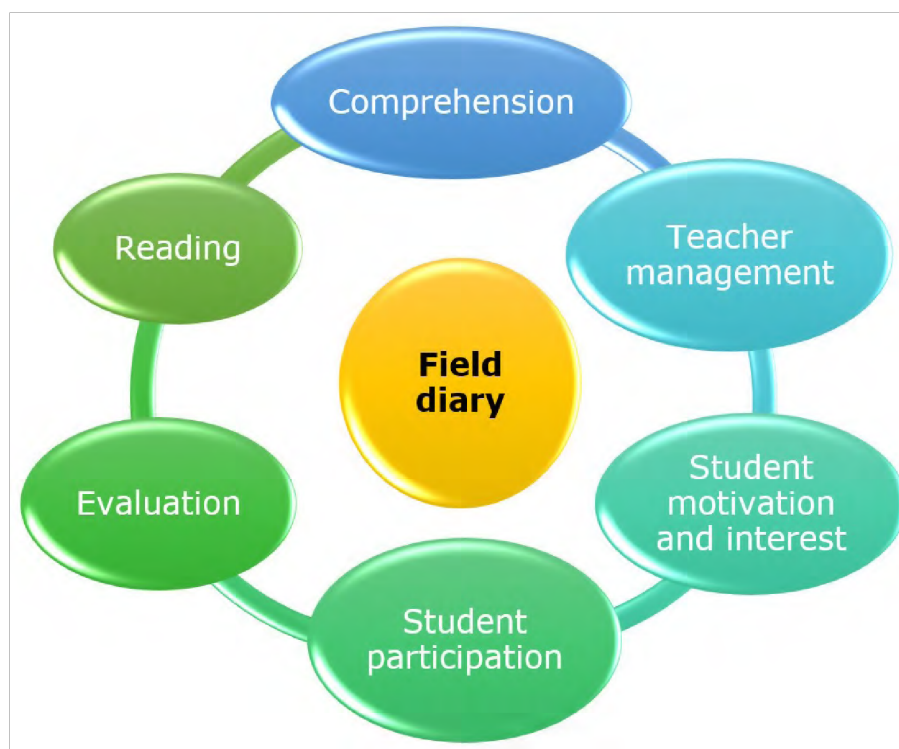


FIGURE 3  
*Categories emerging from the field diary*

**Reading.** In the first sessions of the research, students showed difficulty in intonation and punctuation when reading, which was evidenced and reflected in the field diary. It should be noted that the teacher’s management is key once they begin to read, when they should be taught to read as it should be, with the appropriate tone of voice that allows them to understand the message. The difficulty was also observed when reading mentally. It can be affirmed that the games presented helped them to strengthen their reading process since there were several moments for reading:

1. First reading of recognition of the text.
2. Specific reading to prepare for the game.
3. Final reading to be able to find specific details of the text and answer comprehension questions.

In the first part of the sessions, students’ confusion and difficulty in identifying and differentiating some types of texts, such as narrative, expository, and advertising, as well as establishing concepts related to

literature, could be noticed, and although they recognized a narrative text, it was difficult for them to define its characteristics, and only under the teacher's guidance, they could define them. On the contrary, they showed strength in identifying instructive, descriptive, and journalistic texts.

Given the difficulties in recognizing each type of text at the beginning of the session, the teacher decided to write each of the text types on one side of the board to facilitate the activity. Students had difficulty remembering and relating the words 'expository' and 'biography'; they were confused and did not respond.

The games worked on in this first part allowed us to see the students' shortcomings in understanding a text, either because they were unable to determine the position of an author (critical level) or because they inferred ideas that were not explicit in the text (inferential level). In this regard, it should be remembered what Moreno et al. (2010) expressed that the inferential level highlights the agility in lateral displacements, classification operations, and seriation with a systemic and syntactic approach; as for the critical level, they highlight a characteristic, problem solving, creation of arguments, decoding of codes.

In the development of the second part of the implementation, the students showed a great facility for the comprehension and resolution of questions in narrative, informative, and instructive texts. This allows us to conclude that, although they significantly improved their comprehension of the different types of texts, it is still difficult for them to give a clear concept of what they know, even when they have the ideas and the learning of the text.

At the end of the second part of the sessions, the students showed much more confidence in reading (in the first sessions they had to be chosen to read; in the last sessions, they all raised their hands to participate in the reading).

It could also be seen that reading aloud was especially revealing for them to better understand the texts; a slight improvement in mental reading was observed since they were able to do it with better concentration and without making so many sounds while reading.

**Evaluation.** In this space, students had the opportunity to evaluate their peers, putting into practice the hetero-evaluation, which served as a strategy to assess the different roles played by them. Thus, in this exercise, it was proposed to provide the stimulus of increasing tenths in the grade, as a means of evaluation. During the second part, the process was more constant and the students continued to be a fundamental part; they worked on their capacity for analysis, not only of what was done by their classmates but also at the moment of evaluating themselves.

**Teacher management.** During this category, the role of the teacher was key at the time of directing the different sessions of the research, since she served as a guide to clarify doubts in the moments of confusion of the students in the face of the questions that arose. In many moments of the sessions in this first part, it could be observed that the students were more fearful of participating or expressing their ideas; hence the relevance of her role in motivating them.

Unlike the first part of the sessions, in the second part, the teacher's participation was less, since the students' participation increased considerably. Her role became, then, to be a motivator and guide, to clarify or conclude the ideas given by the children.

**Students' motivation and interest.** In this first category of analysis, throughout the different sessions, the students of class 5-2 were attentive and open to the idea of implementing this research, since when we mentioned that it was based on games, they felt motivated and expectant. Motivation and interest were also evident in all the games presented, especially in those where they had role-playing games such as 'Master Chef' or 'YouTubers'. The activities they remembered the best and therefore enjoyed the most were the ones they worked on in the second part of the sessions.

**Student participation.** In the first part and session of the research, student interventions were scarce, but they increased significantly as the sessions progressed, which went hand in hand with the comprehension process, since the more they understood the texts, the more they participated.

Once the second part of the implementation was completed, it was possible to observe greater participation and motivation than in the previous sessions, mainly because of the type of texts worked on: instructive, narrative, and journalistic that attracted their attention. It can also be said that this personal motivation for this type of texts made them feel more confident to express their opinions and feelings about the whole process that was carried out, which made their participation increase significantly.

**How is the reading process developed through games in reading situations as a didactic strategy?** The analysis of this question was mediated by the answers obtained in the final self-evaluation, in which the students expressed their opinion about their tastes, interests, and preferences for certain types of texts. Thus, after the application of the self-assessment instrument, a thorough analysis was carried out, based on the microanalysis and open coding proposed by Strauss and Corbin (2002). Likewise, in the last session, feedback on the different reading situations and an exercise to identify the types of texts (instructional, journalistic, expository, narrative, descriptive) expressed in the didactic sequence were carried out to verify how much they had learned.

The above served as a basis for determining the impact of learning on students; at the same time, it served as a fundamental basis for strengthening the reading process, resulting in the following categories and findings:

**Text Typology.** At the end of the research, it can be proved that the students of course 5-2 better assimilated the different types of texts, identifying more precisely their characteristics, showing a preference for narrative texts as well as for the type of journalistic informative text. It should be noted that in this reading situation, they played the game 'YouTubers in action', which caught their attention and allowed them to better understand and interpret the message of the texts presented. An interest in the instructional texts, which were worked on in a session through cooking recipes, where they had the opportunity to use costumes related to the topic, made them feel very motivated and happy. Thus, when expressing their preferences for the type of texts, several students chose the instructional texts because they were attracted by the dynamics of the game, in addition to being familiar with the context of this type of text.

**Reading.** The above statements suggest that the reading process was strengthened by the didactic strategy of the proposed game. Within the framework of the research, the students of course 5-2 were satisfied with the activities and there was a general perception of improvement in their concentration and reading skills. It can be assured that they found reading a conspicuous activity to do in their free time, in addition to the other activities they usually develop.

Reading aloud was a strategy that was used throughout the implementation, and it attracted more and more of their attention; the students' perception at the end of the sessions was one of confidence and security in doing it, and it gave them all the opportunity to put it into practice. The fact of working with a small number of students allowed each one to live the experience several times and to hear the recommendations for improving reading skills.

**Reading Comprehension.** The perception of the students regarding their comprehension process of the different texts presented in the research was, for the most part, that their ability to analyze and interpret the texts improved. Their opinion about reading, compared to the one they had before the research, improved because the didactic strategy used (the game) served as an invigorating element of the reading process and allowed them to perceive that their communicative skills improved.

Another aspect to be considered in this category is the cooperative learning that took place among all the participants in interpreting and later solving the questions inherent in each text; when one of them answered a question, the others gave their opinion on the answer and made their own contributions. In this way, a space was created in which everyone collaborated in learning, which at the same time increased the level of reading comprehension.

**Socio-affective relations.** It can be affirmed that socio-affective relationships play a transcendental role in the process of students' reading skills since it is in the game where they find the maximum opportunity to interact with each of their peers and, at the same time, through shared knowledge is produced, where

feedback and listening to their peers is a key part of the process. The final self-evaluation shows how much the students value the fact that they have been able to share each of the games and reading situations with their peers, as it has helped them to deepen and improve their knowledge.

In addition, it is important to mention that although the students were in the midst of a health crisis and were physically distant, this did not prevent them from strengthening their interpersonal relationships with their peers, nor did it prevent them from fully enjoying each of the proposed activities. Thus, the fact of sharing each of the activities in person with their peers, rather than virtually, allowed them to better assimilate the knowledge, as there was a clear motivation in the fact of being able to be together.

**Playfulness.** Although the reading skills of each student were strengthened during the process of conducting the research, it is also necessary to remember the importance of the game as a didactic strategy that allowed the results in the process. In the same context, the students perceived the games as a new and non-traditional way of learning.

**Motivation and interest.** From the evidence obtained in the final self-evaluation, it can be observed that the students of 5-2 showed a growing interest between the first and the last activity, mainly based on their motivation in each of the proposed games, such as 'Youtubers in action' and 'Play to be Master Chef', which strongly captured their attention and increased their interest and understanding of the topics.

Regarding the students' perception of reading now, compared to the one they had at the beginning of the research, it can be affirmed that their motivation and interest have improved, and they have found in the reading process an additional way to entertain themselves and learn at the same time.

## DISCUSSION

**What reading situations do students of 5-2 need to know to strengthen the reading process?** In the first part of the findings and the implementation of the data collection instruments, the testimony provided by the self-evaluation regarding the preferences and tastes of each of the research subjects was relevant because it provided a starting point within the framework of this study. Thus, categories such as play, reading, comprehension, and socioaffective relationships were key within this analysis.

Among the reading situations that have attracted the most attention from students at this stage are narrative texts. In this regard, Solé (1998) clearly shows their differences and characteristics, pointing out that the narrative text "presupposes a chronological development and aims to explain events in a given order" (p. 15); among them, we can highlight stories, legends, novels, fables, etc.

On the other hand, it is necessary to ensure that play is one of the main interests of students of school age, having it as one of their main references when interacting with their environment. In this regard, it is necessary to remember Aquino and Sanchez (1999), who emphasize the importance of play, expressing that "it is fundamental for an adequate and normal development of the child; therefore, it must be present in their daily activities" (p. 64). Thus, it can be seen how the game was used as a didactic strategy to foster in the students a greater interest in reading processes, given their importance at this stage of their lives, and, at the same time, it brought about an improvement in the processes of comprehension and interpretation of texts at the literal, inferential and contextual levels.

Likewise, "respect for their desire to play, invent, and create is one of the fundamental elements from which any education based on respect for the interests and characteristics of the child must start" (Aquino and Sanchez, 1999, p. 64), so the students of course 5-2 had as a basis the various activities presented to have the opportunity to interact with other classmates and reaffirm the socio-affective relationships with them through play and the established didactics.

**What characterizes the implementation of the game to strengthen the reading process of students of 5-2?** During this phase of data collection, through the field diary, the teacher recorded each of the events that took place in the classroom, whose students' impressions of each of the proposed activities were a



fundamental piece of the research exercise since, as Bonilla-Castro and Rodriguez (2005) argue, “the field diary can be a key resource that allows the researcher to have control over the process of scientific inquiry” (p. 244). Thus, important categories such as reading, motivation, student participation, and comprehension emerged as a result of these research records.

It is important to emphasize that the reading process of the students of course 5-2 had a growing development throughout this research, because although in the first sessions, they were self-conscious and less participative, with each session they felt more confident to read aloud and much more familiar with the interpretation of the texts, as evidenced by the correct answers and fluent readings.

Given this aspect, it is worth recalling Barberousse-Alfonso and Vargas-Dengo (2017), who express that:

Reading favors the creation of complex thought structures for learning, language, and communication. [...] one can discover the world, reflect and build a critical spirit to play, expand the vocabulary, learn to think; all reasons that justify the formation of the habit of reading. (p. 130)

Thus, it can be affirmed that the students of course 5-2 found in reading an additional space to be able to communicate with their environment (classmates, teachers, family), and to better understand the world around them, through the different types of texts. By finding a relationship between the texts read and their context, they were able to interpret them and assume reading with much less difficulty.

The process of comprehension and interpretation of texts is a fundamental part of the results shown by each of the students in course 5-2. As could be observed in the analysis of results, they showed difficulties (especially in the first sessions) when interpreting at the inferential and contextual levels, but not at the literal level, where they showed great appropriation of knowledge. Thus, Moreno et al. (2010) refer to reading at textual, intertextual, and contextual levels. Regarding the textual level, it is observed that comprehension occurs through the literal and alludes to basic meanings, so it was very easy for them to solve questions in this sense.

However, the intertextual level responds to literal thinking: operations of classification, seriation, etc., and inter-thematic, and it is here where students showed confusion in some cases, especially at the beginning of the research, since interpretation is not linear, but requires looking beyond the established, detailing and rereading paragraphs to obtain an answer. In addition, there is the contextual level, which represents a real challenge for fifthgrade students, since it is a critical level, where the creation of arguments and the resolution of problems from the text are sought; it was here where the teacher had to guide them to solve the questions of this type; without her guidance, they would not have achieved the objective of the question.

**How is the reading process developed through games in reading situations as a didactic strategy?** In the identification of reading, it was possible to evidence the development of the reading process advanced by the students of course 5-2 where, through their experiences in the academic and personal process, it was necessary to use the instrument of the final diagnosis to analyze the development of the categories of reading and play, which represent the fundamental axis of the research, which were highlighted by the students.

According to the results, it can be inferred that reading is now perceived by students as a less complex skill and more related to meaningful learning experiences, as a result of the incursion of the didactic strategy. This reaffirms that through reading we can discover the world, reflect, build, play, expand vocabulary, and learn to think, which justifies the formation of the reading habit (Barberousse-Alfonso and VargasDengo, 2017). Consequently, the benefits of this practice in the life of the learners constitute an important part of their development, and, for this reason, the children of the course 5-2 managed to obtain, according to the results of this research, a better appropriation of the skills of the reading process.

Regarding the category, it should be remembered that “it is also a learning tool because it uses natural resources and materials from the environment, which allow children to promote their cognitive development through the interaction they have with them” (LeyvaGarzón, 2011, p. 87). Thus, the selection of games for each of the situations is fundamental, as they are an essential part of the process of understanding and



interpreting the different texts presented in the implementation. Likewise, the fact of sharing knowledge with other students allowed a better appropriation of it and reading was perceived not as a complex process, but as accessible and facilitating information.

Within this framework, it can be affirmed that the results of the research point to highlighting the didactic strategy of the game as a scenario for learning, knowledge, social interaction, and fun. It is necessary to remember that “didactics considers the game as entertainment that propitiates knowledge, at the same time that produces satisfaction” (Minerva-Torres, 2002, p. 290); thus, the students of course 5-2 found in the game space to interact with their classmates, but also a fundamental didactic tool that allowed them to increase their knowledge and improve their reading skills, in terms of comprehension and interpretation.

It should be noted that the process of reading comprehension in its literal, inferential, and contextual levels, was strengthened through the different activities presented since there was interaction in various reading situations that led students to analyze the texts and interpret doubts at these levels. As for the first level, the process was reinforced by both oral and written activities; the students were confident and responded appropriately to each of the questions. At the inferential level, the process took them more time in each session, since they had to reread paragraphs and make relationships between ideas to interpret the texts. At the contextual level, they had great difficulties, so the intervention of the teacher was necessary to guide them through the text and solve the questions posed. Given this, it is necessary to ratify that the study significantly strengthened the reading process in the three levels, in each of the children of 5-2 and, at the same time, it meant a continuous improvement to recognize and differentiate reading situations such as instructive, expository, narrative, informative, journalistic texts, which were immersed during this research.

## CONCLUSIONS

It can be said that play has a dual purpose: to promote cognitive abilities in children and to become part of their integral, social, and imaginative development. Nowadays, school becomes a scenario for students to interact with their surroundings through play and help them to stimulate their knowledge of different cognitive skills.

All reading situations are important since each text carries with it a purpose and it is the reader who must decode that message and understand its intention. However, it is also clear how, in the reading process, some levels or instants are key at the moment of interpreting these different types of texts or reading situations.

Under this understanding, it is possible to highlight the importance of reading in school life, which entails the intrinsic need to seek innovative and motivating strategies on the part of teachers to significantly improve the reading process. The game, then, becomes a possible strategy, given its spontaneous nature and, at the same time, a transformative learning tool in the classroom.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors of this article declare that they have no conflict of interest in the work presented.

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