Vivat Academia (2026).
ISSN: 1575-2844

Received: Feb. 02, 2026 **Accepted:** March. 21, 2026 **Published:** Apr. 24, 2026

ESTULETRAS: PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION FOR COMMUNICATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LITERACY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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How to Cite the Article

Villán Rodríguez, Alicia; Aboud Jiménez, Ghada María, & Cortés-Vázquez, Macarena (2025). Estuletras: Innovación pedagógica para el desarrollo comunicativo y la alfabetización temprana en educación infantil [Estuletras: Pedagogical innovation for communicative development and early literacy in early childhood education]. *Vivat Academia,* 159, 1-28. https://doi.org/10.15178/va.2026.159.e1705

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The Estuletras program proposes an innovative methodology to strengthen communication skills and early literacy in early childhood education. Based on experiential learning, Montessori pedagogy, and the Reggio Emilia philosophy, it conceives language as an active, playful, and emotionally meaningful experience that drives the child's integral development. **Methodology:** The qualitative and longitudinal research is part of participatory action research (PAR) and was carried out over three years in real classrooms. Twenty-seven children between the ages of 3 and 6 participated. Participant observations, audiovisual recordings, and field notes were used and systematized using an Estuletras Category Register with phonological, lexical, morphosyntactic, and pragmatic dimensions. **Results:** Notable improvements were observed in articulation, phonological awareness, vocabulary, grammatical structure, and social use of language. The children showed greater autonomy, empathy, and communicative motivation, strengthening emerging literacy. **Discussion:** The results confirmed that multisensory stimulation and experiential learning enhance linguistic and emotional development. The program demonstrates the effectiveness of integrating the neuropsychology of language with active pedagogical approaches, promoting deep and meaningful learning. **Conclusions:** Estuletras is consolidated as an inclusive and replicable model that transforms literacy into an experiential, creative, and humanizing experience, where communicating also involves thinking, feeling, and coexisting.

Keywords: early childhood education; early literacy; experiential learning; sensory stimulation; action research; communication; language; pedagogical innovation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is one of the most complex and crucial processes in human development, enabling social interaction, the construction of meaning, and the formation of personal identity. From the earliest years of life, oral language emerges as the primary means of relating to and symbolizing the world, forming the basis of thought and subsequent literacy (Gutiérrez Duarte & Ruiz León, 2018). Consequently, early childhood education plays a vital role in stimulating communicative competence, as early linguistic experiences shape the neural circuits involved in language perception, memory, and production (Gervain, 2015; Mariani et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2024). In this regard, the literature has repeatedly emphasized the importance of creating educational contexts rich in interaction and meaning to foster early linguistic development. As Marc Monfort (2017) points out, "communication is not just another function of human beings, but the function that allows them to be human," which underlines its structuring role in psychic and relational life from the earliest years.

Early literacy, understood as a multifactorial process integrating cognitive, motor, and socio-emotional aspects, constitutes the foundation upon which subsequent academic learning is built (Gutiérrez Duarte & Ruiz León, 2018). At this stage, oral and written language are conceived not only as instruments of communication but also as means

of symbolic representation and knowledge construction. Thus, the quality and diversity of early communicative experiences directly influence the development of a child's thinking, emotional regulation, and social competence. In this context, different pedagogical approaches have attempted to address this complexity, proposing models that integrate the cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions of language learning. Within this framework, the need for innovative pedagogical approaches that respect developmental rhythms and promote the child's active participation is undeniable.

Estuletras program was developed precisely for this purpose: to offer a playful, experiential, and personalized methodology that fosters communicative development through play, exploration, and emergent literacy in early childhood education. However, beyond its pedagogical formulation, it is relevant to analyze the extent to which this type of approach specifically contributes to children's communicative development compared to other approaches already described in the literature. This educational proposal is based on the idea that language learning—both oral and written—is a living, active, and profoundly relational process that must be grounded in meaningful experience and respectful adult guidance.

From the perspective of experiential learning, knowledge is generated through the transformation of experience in a dynamic cycle that articulates four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984, cited by Landini et al., 2023). This model proposes situated learning, where action and reflection interact dialectically, fostering deep understanding and contextual application of knowledge (Eyler, 2009, cited by Landini et al., 2023; Yardley et al., 2012, cited by Landini, 2023). Several studies have analyzed the application of this approach in educational contexts, highlighting its potential to promote meaningful learning, while also pointing out the need for empirical studies to understand its impact in early stages. In the educational field, as Santos and Pérez (2021) state, experiential learning "connects theory with practice, stimulating student involvement in solving real-world problems" (p. 45). This approach gives prominence to the learner, promoting their autonomy, reflective thinking, and ability to transfer what they have learned to new situations.

In the context of early childhood education, this methodology is especially relevant, as students learn through action, manipulation, and interaction with their environment. Several studies have shown that experiential learning enhances intrinsic motivation, deep understanding, and long-term knowledge retention (Landini et al., 2023; Santos & Pérez, 2021). Furthermore, by linking direct experience with guided reflection, the teacher becomes a mediator of knowledge, facilitating the active construction of meaning.

These premises resonate clearly with Montessori pedagogy, whose conception of learning is based on autonomy, active manipulation of the environment, and respect for individual pace. Montessori conceived of education as a process of self-formation, where the teacher's role is to guide without imposing, creating a prepared environment that stimulates curiosity and exploration (Álvarez-Félix, 2024). While this

approach has been extensively studied in relation to the development of autonomy and early literacy, its integration with other pedagogical models remains a subject of analysis in the educational literature. In the field of literacy, the Montessori method promotes the use of sensory materials—such as rough letters and movable alphabets—that facilitate the association between the graphic symbol and the tactile experience, making learning to read a meaningful and experiential process.

This approach, according to Velastegui (2022, cited by Álvarez-Félix, 2024), integrates the child's cognitive, affective, and social dimensions, generating a personalized educational experience that fosters self-confidence and a sense of competence. In this way, the Montessori methodology promotes self-regulation, sustained attention, and motivation to learn—all crucial factors in language acquisition and early literacy.

In a convergent manner, the Reggio Emilia philosophy is based on the vision of the child as a competent subject, an investigator, and the protagonist of their own learning (Pezoa-Carrasco & Muñoz-Zamora, 2022). Inspired by Loris Malaguzzi, this pedagogy understands the school as a space for relationship and collective construction, where the environment acts as a "third educator" (New, 2007, cited by Pezoa-Carrasco & Muñoz-Zamora, 2022). The literature has highlighted the value of this approach in promoting language as a tool for expression and symbolic construction, although its articulation with other methodologies requires further empirical development. The aesthetically pleasing environment, pedagogical documentation, and project-based learning become essential tools for making children's thinking visible and fostering dialogue between theory and practice (CPCE-UDP, 2015, cited by Pezoa-Carrasco & Muñoz-Zamora, 2022; De Sousa, 2022).

As Giraldo Urrego (2022) argues, the design of the classroom space directly influences pedagogical beliefs and the quality of educational interactions, consolidating a framework where children learn by exploring, communicating, and representing their world. In this sense, the Reggio Emilia approach not only recognizes the importance of the physical environment but also the relevance of pedagogical documentation as a tool for shared reflection between teachers and students, promoting visible, dialogical, and continuous learning.

Estuletras program integrates these three pedagogical pillars—experiential learning, Montessori, and Reggio Emilia—with insights from developmental neuropsychology, proposing an integrative methodology focused on communication and early literacy through play. However, given that the combination of these approaches has been previously described in various studies, it is necessary to examine what distinctive elements this proposal brings and how its implementation is realized in real educational contexts. The approach stems from the observation that oral and written expression are consolidated more effectively when they emerge from meaningful, emotionally positive, and socially interactive situations (Álvarez-Félix, 2024; Durdas, 2024; Landini et al., 2023).

In the neuropsychological basis of the model, language development is understood as a manifestation of the maturation of the cortical systems involved in auditory perception, phonological memory, and orofacial motor skills. These functions evolve progressively through multisensory stimulation and meaningful social interaction, which underscores the need for educational approaches that integrate movement, emotion, and communication from the earliest years (Gutiérrez Duarte & Ruiz León, 2018).

Based on this conceptual framework, this study is proposed as an investigation aimed at analyzing the impact of the Estuletras program on the communicative and linguistic development of Early Childhood Education students, as well as identifying the patterns of evolution in the different dimensions of language in a real pedagogical intervention context. This study is part of a participatory action research project of a qualitative and longitudinal nature, developed over several years in real classrooms, with the purpose of systematically understanding the learning processes associated with the implementation of the program.

2. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study is to analyze the impact of the Estuletras program on the communicative and linguistic development of early childhood education students, as well as to examine the evolution of the different dimensions of language—phonological, lexical, morphosyntactic, and pragmatic—within the context of its implementation in the classroom. It also aims to explore the learning processes that emerge in an early literacy environment based on experiential and play-based approaches.

In accordance with these research objectives, the following guiding questions are formulated:

- How does the communicative development of Early Childhood Education students evolve during the implementation of the Estuletras program?
- What changes are observed in the phonological, lexical, morphosyntactic, and pragmatic dimensions of language?
- What learning patterns emerge in an early literacy context based on play, experience, and communicative interaction?

Finally, and solely for descriptive purposes of the analyzed pedagogical intervention, the Estuletras program is structured around the following didactic objectives:

- To promote the harmonious development of oral and written communication skills from childhood.
- To encourage the gradual development of phonological, lexical, morphosyntactic, and pragmatic awareness.
- To develop expressiveness, auditory comprehension and motivation towards the use of language as a tool for thinking and socialization.

- To enhance emerging literacy through symbolic play, experimentation, and communicative interaction.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study aims to analyze the development of communicative skills in the context of the implementation of the Estuletras teaching program, aimed at early literacy in Early Childhood Education. It is framed within a qualitative design of a longitudinal nature, based on participatory action research (PAR), with the purpose of understanding, improving and analyzing the educational process from the teaching practice (Zúniga - González et al., 2016).

The research was developed by a teacher-researcher over three consecutive years in Early Childhood Education classrooms, simultaneously integrating the functions of teaching, observation and reflective analysis.

Participant observation was used as the primary data collection technique, as it allows the researcher to understand interactions and meanings from within the educational context (Chiusaroli, 2022; Maldonado-Ruiz, 2021; Taylor & Bogdan, 2000). Through direct immersion in classroom dynamics, the teacher-researcher was able to interpret communicative processes, language development, and student attitudes in natural learning situations.

The observations were recorded through audiovisual recordings and field notes, which constituted the empirical basis for the interpretive analysis of observable behaviors during playful literacy activities.

Subsequently, a process of systematizing and categorizing evidence was carried out using an ad hoc categorical record. The development of this record was based on the dimensions of communicative development described in the literature and on observations of the classroom context, allowing for the definition of analytical categories related to communicative intention, auditory discrimination, verbal and nonverbal expression, and motivation.

The data analysis was conducted using a qualitative content analysis approach, aimed at identifying patterns of development in students' communicative competence. The analysis was developed from an interpretive and reflective perspective, integrating three main sources: audiovisual recordings, field notes, and pedagogical reflection derived from practice. This procedure involved segmenting the evidence into units of meaning, coding them into established categories, and then comparing them over time. This approach allowed for the identification of patterns of development in students' communicative competence, as well as the coherence between the theoretical foundations of the Estuletras method and the experiences observed in the classroom.

3.1. Methodological Design

This study adopts a qualitative, participatory action research (PAR) approach, aimed at understanding and improving early literacy and communicative development processes through the Estuletras program. In this sense, the design focuses not only on improving educational practice but also on the systematic analysis of observed learning processes. This design integrates teaching practice with research reflection, generating situated and transformative knowledge within the school context.

The research was conducted over three consecutive school years, allowing for prolonged observation and the collection of longitudinal evidence, thus facilitating the identification of evolutionary processes in the communicative development of the students.

The methodological process was structured in four cyclical phases, typical of the reflective logic of PAR:

1. Diagnosis and program design: Pedagogical needs related to early literacy and communication development in Early Childhood Education were identified. Based on this diagnosis, the Estuletras program was designed, using a playful, experiential, and neurodevelopmental approach, inspired by the principles of Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and the Institución Libre de Enseñanza (Free Institution of Teaching).
2. Implementation and systematic observation: The program was implemented continuously in the classroom, within the regular curriculum. The sessions took place in a structured yet flexible environment, where play, experimentation, and communicative interaction were the primary means of learning. The teacher acted as a participant observer, recording the sessions and preparing detailed descriptions of the observed interactions.
3. Estuletras Category Register, designed to organize qualitative evidence. The observed behaviors were described and grouped around communicative dimensions (communicative intention, auditory discrimination, verbal and nonverbal expression, motivation). This categorization process allowed for the reconstruction of developmental trajectories and learning patterns over time.
4. Evaluation, triangulation, and pedagogical feedback: A comprehensive and interpretive evaluation of the process was conducted, comparing audiovisual recordings, field notes, and teacher reflections. Triangulation among sources and perspectives ensured the credibility of the findings. The conclusions were discussed with other teachers, promoting ongoing feedback on the method and the improvement of pedagogical practices.

This approach made it possible to consolidate a coherent methodological model from an investigative point of view, which integrates qualitative research, pedagogical innovation and teacher reflection in the construction of educational knowledge.

3.2. Description and Pedagogical Structure of the Estuletras program

To contextualize the intervention analyzed in this study, the Estuletras program is conceived as a comprehensive pedagogical proposal aimed at developing communicative skills from early childhood, through early literacy and language stimulation in natural and playful contexts. Its design stems from the recognition that language is a complex human faculty, linked to both cognitive and biological structures as well as to social interaction and experience (Craig, 2001).

The program is based on the idea that language development involves the integration of five essential components: social context, innate language structures, cognitive development, conditioning and imitation, dimensions that the method addresses in a balanced way through meaningful sensory, motor and communicative experiences.

Estuletras assumes the conceptual distinction between language, tongue, speech and communication, understanding that language is the general capacity to represent and communicate thought through signs; tongue, the conventional system of a community; speech, the concrete articulation of sounds; and communication, the interactive process that enables the exchange of meanings (Descals & Ávila, 2006).

Within this framework, the aim is to promote the comprehensive development of language in all its dimensions —phonological, lexical, morphosyntactic and pragmatic— through playful, experiential and symbolic activities, where verbal and non-verbal expression, gesture, music and movement are integrated as mediators of learning.

First, there is the phonological level. This dimension aims to develop auditory discrimination, articulation, and phonemic awareness, essential components for early literacy. Activities begin with physical and sensory play to promote breathing, orofacial control, and sound perception. Among the most frequent activities are:

- Breathing and blowing games: Inflating and deflating objects, making bubbles, blowing out candles or playing wind instruments.
- Orofacial motor exercises: Movements of tongue, lips and cheeks, imitation of gestures or sounds.
- Repetitive songs and rhymes that emphasize phonetic contrasts.
- Tongue twisters, rhymes and short poems, to improve articulatory agility and intonation.
- Intonation games in which the same phrase is pronounced with different intentions (declarative, interrogative, exclamatory).
- Imitation of sounds from the environment or animals, fostering phonological awareness through imitation and exploration.

These activities allow the child to explore their vocal apparatus and become aware of sound as a communicative element, consolidating the foundations of later reading and writing learning.

Second, there is the lexical-semantic dimensión that aims to expand vocabulary and to promote understanding of word meanings through play, observation, and description. Some of the activities include:

- Creation of lexical fields and word families.
- Describing photographs, objects, or classmates, encouraging verbal precision.
- Classification and association of images (dominoes, lotto, cards).
- Games of opposites, riddles and "I spy," which stimulate linguistic reflection.
- Labeling the classroom environment and activities involving observation and naming of elements.

These experiences strengthen the relationship between language and thought, helping students to represent their environment through words, and to recognize the semantic links between concepts.

Third, theure is the morphosyntactic work that focuses on structuring language and developing grammatical and narrative competence. Strategies include:

- Understanding and executing sequential orders, to internalize temporal structures.
- Arrangement of vignettes or stories, favoring cohesion and coherence of the discourse.
- Building progressive sentences from images or questions ("who?", "what?", "where?", "when?").
- Narration of past events or anticipation of future events, introducing verb tenses and connectors.
- Playful repetition of poems and rhymes, to consolidate syntactic structures.
- Grammar association games and sentence construction with pictograms.

The emphasis is on the functional and meaningful use of language, so that grammar is built from experience and interaction, not from rote learning.

Finally, the pragmatic dimension focuses on the social use of language and the child's ability to adapt their speech to the context and the listener. The activities promote authentic communication, empathy, and emotional expression.

- Guided and spontaneous conversations about personal experiences.
- Role-playing games and dramatizations, to explore everyday communicative situations.
- Formulating questions and answers, learning to initiate and maintain dialogues.
- Collective storytelling of tales or experiences, reinforcing group cohesion and creative expression.
- Analysis and anticipation of events or situations, promoting reflection on language and thought.

Through these activities, students develop the ability to understand and produce coherent messages, to express emotions, and to actively participate in the shared construction of meanings.

3.3. Target Population of the Study

Estuletras method was initially implemented with a group of 27 students in the first level of the second cycle of Early Childhood Education (ages 3 to 6). The group consisted of 14 girls and 13 boys, with an average age of 3 years and 3 months.

The sociocultural context was mostly upper-middle class, with families who valued education and early communicative development. The predominant language at home was Spanish, with only one student of Chinese origin. The families had access to cultural and educational materials that promote cognitive and linguistic stimulation.

The school was located in an urban area with a wide range of cultural and technological offerings. The group was characterized by its high motivation, social cohesion, and active participation, conditions that facilitated the implementation of the program.

The continuity of the project over three years allowed us to observe the longitudinal evolution of the group, analyzing the progressive acquisition of communicative and literacy skills in natural learning contexts.

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of educational research. Informed consent was obtained from the families of the participating students, and the confidentiality and anonymization of the data were guaranteed at all times. Audiovisual recordings were used exclusively for research and analysis purposes, ensuring the protection of the minors' identities.

3.4. Pedagogical Characteristics of the Group

Before starting the program, an initial qualitative assessment was carried out through observation and dialogue with the families, in order to identify the levels of maturity, the conditions of development and the learning profiles.

The group showed balanced psycho-evolutionary development, although with individual differences typical of their age. Some students demonstrated greater maturity and verbal fluency, while others exhibited a slower pace in articulation or in familiarity with school routines.

Overall, the group stood out for its curiosity, motivation to learn, and willingness to engage in symbolic and communicative play. Oral language was developing, with good auditory comprehension and the ability to express basic needs and emotions. Peer interactions were frequent and cooperative, and progressive emotional self-regulation and personal autonomy were observed.

During the development of the program, the teacher documented a sustained improvement in communicative intent, lexical richness, gesture-speech coordination, and participation in communicative exchanges.

3.5. Data Collection Instruments

For the systematization and analysis of the information, a Register of Estuletras Categories is developed, a qualitative-descriptive instrument specifically designed for this study.

This record allows for the rigorous organization and description of observed communicative behaviors and emergent literacy processes. It is structured around key dimensions of communicative development, broken down into subcategories and observational indicators defined based on teaching practice and the theoretical framework.

In order to clarify the analysis procedure, Table 1 presents the analytical dimensions of the Estuletras Categories Register, along with its main focuses of observation, coding indicators and types of evidence considered in the interpretive process.

Table 1.

Analytical Categories and Coding Indicators of the Estuletras *Category Register*

Analytical Dimension	Subcategories / Areas of Observation	Coding Indicators	Observable Evidence
Phonological	Auditory discrimination, articulation, breathing, phonemic awareness	Sound identification, articulatory accuracy, breath control, phonetic self-correction	Phoneme production, rhyme repetition, orofacial praxis, sound imitation
Lexico-semantics	Vocabulary expansion, semantic relationships, categorization, symbolic use of language	Incorporation of new vocabulary, verbal classification, use of descriptors, emergence of abstract language	Object naming, category creation, descriptions, lexical associations
Morphosyntactic	Sentence structure, use of connectors, sequencing, narrative coherence	Complexity of the statement, use of temporal markers, syntactic organization, narrative construction	Progressive sentences, sequence narratives, experience narration, use of verb tenses
Pragmatics and communication	Communicative intention, turn-taking, adapting to the interlocutor, emotional expression, conflict resolution	Conversational initiative, maintaining dialogue, assertive language, verbal empathy, emotional regulation	Participation in assembly, dramatizations, dialogue among peers, verbalization of emotions and agreements

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

These categories guided the coding of the communicative episodes identified in the recordings, field notes, and narrative records, allowing the longitudinal analysis of the data to be organized systematically.

Each record is complemented by narrative and less reflective descriptions, in which the teacher-researcher documents the context, interactions, significant gestures, and interpretations derived from each episode.

The instrument was progressively adjusted over the three years of its application, incorporating lessons learned from experience and collaborative reflection with other early childhood education professionals. This continuous adjustment process improved the instrument's suitability to the observed reality and strengthened its internal consistency as an analytical tool.

The process of developing the record combined a review of the literature on communicative development with classroom teaching experience. Furthermore, the instrument was validated through reflective exchange with other early childhood education professionals, which allowed for adjustments to its coherence, relevance, and clarity as a qualitative analysis tool.

3.6. Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis followed the principles of interpretive qualitative methodology, aimed at understanding communication and literacy processes in their natural context. Specifically, a thematic qualitative content analysis approach was adopted, combining inductive and deductive logic in the construction of categories.

The data corpus included audiovisual recordings, field notes, narrative records, and teacher reflections. This material was reviewed, segmented, and coded around communicative episodes, understood as sequences of interaction with functional meaning within the dynamics of the classroom.

The analytical process was developed in three stages:

1. Initial coding: Identification of significant communicative behaviors within the previously defined categories. Narrative descriptions of the behaviors were developed, accompanied by analytical notes that captured emerging interpretations.
2. Categorization and constant comparison: Grouping the data into thematic areas and searching for regularities in learning trajectories. This process made it possible to recognize patterns of communicative evolution throughout the three years of the program's implementation.
3. Triangulation and reflective interpretation: Integration of different sources (records, notes, and reflections) to compare and interpret the findings. Triangulation ensures the credibility and internal consistency of the results, always preserving the qualitative and interpretive perspective of the study.

Finally, an interpretive synthesis of the findings was developed, integrating the description of the observed communicative progress with the theoretical principles of the Estuletras method. This process allowed for a systematic interpretation of the relationship between the implemented pedagogical practices and the evolution of the students' communicative development.

4. RESULTS

The analysis of results was based on the corpus obtained during the implementation of the Estuletras program in the Early Childhood Education classroom. A total of 480 video-recorded sessions, with an average duration of 40 minutes each, were analyzed. The 27 students who made up the study group participated in these sessions, from the beginning of the second cycle of Early Childhood Education until the end of the stage (ages 3 to 6).

From the recordings, significant communicative episodes were identified, segmented, described, and analyzed according to the dimensions of the Estuletras Categories Register. This procedure was complemented by the teacher-researcher's field notes and reflective journals, which provided the interpretive, contextual, and pedagogical perspective necessary for understanding the process. The analysis was organized around the previously defined analytical dimensions (phonological, lexico-semantic, morphosyntactic, and pragmatic), which allowed for structuring the data interpretation in a manner consistent with the methodological procedure.

The corpus as a whole made it possible to document the communicative evolution of the students over three years, observing progressive transformations in their way of expressing themselves, listening, interacting and building shared meanings.

4.1. Phonological Dimension: Sound Awareness, Articulation and Rhythm

The data analyzed in the phonological dimension show a progressive evolution in the students' sound awareness, articulation and respiratory control throughout the study period.

In the first months of intervention, the group's language was characterized by imitative repetition, brief utterances, and generalized articulatory difficulties with plosive and fricative phonemes (/p/, /b/, /s/, /r/). Breathing, blowing, and orofacial motor activities in the motor skills corner—such as inflating balloons, blowing out candles, making bubbles, or imitating sounds with wind instruments—were fundamental in strengthening the orofacial muscles.

As the program progressed, a gradual improvement was observed in respiratory and articulatory coordination, as well as in phonological awareness. Rhymes, tongue twisters, and dramatizations served as a bridge between the physical and the verbal, allowing students to integrate sound, gesture, and emotion into a single communicative experience.

> *Type 1 Record:* During the game "The Wind Blows Hard," the students practice controlled breathing. Sofia, who at the beginning could barely hold her breath, manages to move a light ball across the table. She exclaims, "Now I can do it!" According to the field notes, there is evidence of progress in respiratory coordination and self-confidence in breath control.

> *Type 2 Record:* In the "Theater of Letters," Pablo represents the /s/ sound by moving his body like a snake. His partner imitates him, and both repeat the sound in chorus. The data show that imitation becomes a process of collective sound construction, favoring self-correction and expressive enjoyment.

These findings are interpreted as indicative of the progressive development of phonological awareness and articulatory control in a playful learning context.

In students with functional speech sound disorders, progress was slower but steady. There was evidence of improvement in the articulation of initially distorted phonemes (vibrant /r/, /s/, /ch/). These students showed greater motor effort and attention during phonetic games. Observations indicate that the playful and non-evaluative environment reduced anxiety and facilitated phonetic self-exploration.

> *Type 3 Record:* In an orofacial praxis session in front of a mirror, Marcos, with sigmatic dyslalia, pronounces the /s/ accompanied by an exaggerated gesture. He says, "Now it sounds like the snake!" The recordings demonstrate processes of articulatory self-regulation and awareness of the phoneme.

In both cases involving possible mild hearing impairment, articulatory progress was uneven. These students required visual support (pictograms, lip reading, gestures), and the teacher reinforced their learning through guided repetition and visual cues for phonemes. By the end of the third year, both students had improved their auditory discrimination and pronunciation of initial syllables.

Overall, the phonological dimension showed comprehensive development: improved articulatory accuracy, increased sound awareness, regulation of breathing, and strengthening of communicative self-confidence.

The results suggest a progressive development in the phonological dimension, characterized by improvements in articulatory accuracy, sound awareness, respiratory regulation, and communicative self-confidence.

4.2. Lexical-Semantic Dimension: Expansion of Vocabulary and Conceptual Organization

In the lexical-semantic dimension, the data show a progressive expansion of vocabulary and a greater capacity for conceptual organization. Working with

association games, image classification, word families, and opposites allowed for a progressive expansion of vocabulary and understanding of semantic relationships. In the first few months, the students used concrete, everyday words. With repeated exposure to discovery games and observation activities, they began to construct broader and more abstract semantic fields.

> *Type 1 Record:* In the activity "Find the sound pair," Ana correctly identifies the rhyme "sol–caracol." The records show progress in auditory discrimination and phonemic correspondence.
>
> *Type 2 Record:* In the "Word Box" game, where students classify cards with images, Laura—one of the students with articulation delay—proposes a new category: "foods that are eaten with a spoon." This type of evidence is interpreted as indicative of the emergence of categorical thinking and semantic generalization.

The use of family photographs and personal objects facilitated an emotional connection with the vocabulary and encouraged spontaneous verbalization. For students with expressive difficulties, visual support proved especially effective: it allowed them to name, point, and compare without communicative pressure.

In the final phase, the students' work incorporated descriptive, emotional, and abstract vocabulary. A transition from literal to symbolic language was observed, especially in the narratives: words like "dream," "imagine," and "think" began to appear in their stories.

Students with speech sound disorders showed a vocabulary similar to that of the group, but their oral production was occasionally limited by articulation difficulties. Even so, they actively participated in group interactions and were able to make themselves understood thanks to the complementary use of gestures and facial expressions, demonstrating adaptive communicative intelligence.

4.3. Morphosyntactic Dimension: Grammatical Structure and Narrative Coherence

The results in the morphosyntactic dimension show a progressive increase in the complexity of grammatical structure and discourse organization. This grammatical progression was evident in both comprehension and oral production. In the initial observations, simple sentences predominated ("I want water," "I play"), with limited use of conjunctions and verb tenses. Through activities involving story sequencing, sentence construction with images, and narrative dramatization, the students began to produce longer and more temporally organized statements.

> *Type 1 Record:* In a sequence of three images, Clara narrates, "First the dog runs, then it hides, and then it sleeps." The data demonstrate the spontaneous incorporation of temporal markers and more complex syntactic structures.

> *Type 2 Record*: In the game "Build the Sentence," the group progressively expands the sentence: "The cat" → "The white cat" → "The white cat runs fast." The records show how group interaction fosters syntactic construction and the expansion of discourse.

These findings are interpreted as indicative of the development of narrative competence and discursive coherence.

Students with hearing difficulties initially exhibited errors in verb agreement or preposition selection, stemming from phonological confusion. With repeated exposure to stories and rhythmic games, their grammatical comprehension and fluency in repeating sequences improved.

In students with speech sound disorders, progress was primarily manifested in the structural complexity of their discourse, although some phonetic substitutions persisted. However, their ability to organize sentences, introduce characters, and narrate events developed fully, suggesting that the phonetic impairment did not compromise syntactic competence or comprehension.

In the final stage, the group narratives showed cohesion and a sense of time. The students were able to recount past experiences and anticipate future events. This ability was particularly consolidated in the "Invented Stories" sessions, where the group created collective narratives combining words, gestures, and drawings.

4.4. Pragmatic and Communicative Dimension: Interaction, Empathy, and Emotional Regulation

The pragmatic dimension showed remarkable progress in the functional and social use of language. From the beginning of the program, the teacher promoted daily communicative routines—greetings, assemblies, turn-taking, role-playing—which served as a foundation for learning conversational norms.

As the group gained confidence, language became a means of emotional expression and a tool for conflict resolution. The students learned to take turns, express disagreements, and justify their ideas.

> *Type 1 Record:* During the morning assembly, Daniela says, "I'm angry because yesterday my brother broke my toy." The group listens and comments, "That happens to me too when someone takes something from me." The records show the use of language as an emotional mediator and the emergence of empathetic responses among peers.

> *Type 2 Record:* In the role-playing game "The Doctor's Office," Leo asks, "What hurts?" and his partner replies, "My head, because I have a fever." A functional use of language linked to social roles and coherent communicative structures is observed.

> *Type 3 Record:* In a conflict during free play, Nora expresses: "I don't like it when you push me, I prefer that you ask for my turn." The data demonstrate the development of assertive language and emotional self-regulation.

Students with speech or hearing difficulties actively participated in these activities, using gestures and eye contact as communicative tools. Their gradual integration into group conversations demonstrates the inclusive effectiveness of the program's communicative environment, which valued expressive intent over formal correctness.

At the end of the third year, the students showed conversational initiative, understanding of turn-taking, empathy and verbal cooperation, which translates into a solid and functional communicative competence.

4.5. Longitudinal Evolutionary Synthesis

Throughout the three years of implementation, sustained and consistent development was evident in all dimensions of language. The group progressed from adult-dependent, imitation-based communication to autonomous, expressive, and socially regulated communication.

The most notable observations include:

- Increased communicative initiative and confidence to express oneself.
- Reduction in functional dyslalias and clear improvements in articulation and sound discrimination.
- Semantic expansion and use of emotional and abstract vocabulary.
- Syntactic consolidation with coherent sentence structures.
- Pragmatic mastery in managing dialogue, empathy, and affective expression.

Qualitative analysis confirms that even students with the greatest difficulties progressed significantly within their capabilities, thanks to the playful, affective and inclusive nature of the Estuletras method, which prioritizes meaningful communication over formal correctness.

4.6. Triangulation and Interpretive Consistency

Data triangulation—between recordings, field notes, and teachers' diaries—showed a clear convergence: the observed communication improvements coincided with the pedagogical reflections and the perception of progress recorded by the families.

The theoretical interpretation of the results confirmed the correspondence between the observed progress and the principles of experiential learning (Kolb), autonomy (Montessori) and symbolic participation (Reggio Emilia).

The Estuletras method is thus consolidated as an inclusive, evolutionary and sensitive pedagogical model to the communicative diversity of children, which promotes the integral development of language through reflective practice, play and emotion.

5. DISCUSSION

Longitudinal analysis of the Estuletras program suggests that children's communicative development can be enhanced through a playful, experiential, and personalized methodology. The results indicate that language is not acquired in isolation, but rather as a product of the interaction between cognitive, biological, and social structures, as proposed by Craig (2001), who believes that language is a complex human faculty linked to experience and the environment.

From a neuropsychological perspective, multisensory stimulation—through play, movement, and music—activates cortical circuits involved in auditory perception, phonological memory, and orofacial motor skills (Gutiérrez Duarte & Ruiz León, 2018). In line with existing evidence highlighting the importance of phonological skills as the foundation for learning to read (Bradley & Bryant, 1983; Adams, 1990), the results of this study demonstrate progressive improvements in articulation, phonological awareness, and verbal fluency in meaningful learning contexts. This biological basis results in observable progress in articulation, phonological awareness, and verbal fluency, especially when the educational environment fosters free exploration and spontaneous expression.

The program's experiential approach aligns with Kolb's model (1984, cited by Landini et al., 2023), which proposes a learning cycle based on concrete experience, reflection, conceptualization, and active experimentation. Yardley *et al.* (2012, cited by Landini, 2023) reinforce this idea by pointing out that meaningful learning emerges when theory is connected to practice in real-world contexts, which in the case of Estuletras is achieved through symbolic activities, dramatizations, and phonetic games. In this sense, the study's findings suggest that direct experience and social interaction act as key mediators in language construction during early childhood, consistent with emergent literacy models that highlight the role of context and interaction in early language development (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

Montessori pedagogy brings to the program a vision centered on the child's autonomy, respect for their developmental pace, and the use of sensory materials that link the graphic symbol with the tactile experience (Álvarez-Félix, 2024; Deocares et al., 2025; Velastegui, 2022, cited by Álvarez-Félix, 2024). This conception fosters self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, and the active construction of knowledge, elements that are reflected in the communicative evolution observed in the classroom. The results obtained show convergence with these principles, especially in the progressive development of communicative autonomy and self-regulation among students.

For its part, the Reggio Emilia approach, as described by Pezoa-Carrasco and Muñoz-Zamora (2022) and New (2007), emphasizes the role of the environment as a "third educator" and the importance of pedagogical documentation as a tool for shared reflection. At Estuletras, this influence is manifested in the classroom's aesthetic design, systematic observation, and the child's active participation in constructing meaning. In this study, these elements are related to the development of the pragmatic

dimension of language, particularly the capacity for interaction, emotional expression, and the shared construction of meaning.

From a comparative perspective, the results of this study are relevant to programs focused on phonological awareness, which have proven to be strong predictors of reading acquisition by specifically addressing the relationship between sound and spelling (Compton, 2000; Share, 2004). However, these approaches tend to focus on specific components of language, while the results obtained in Estuletras suggest that an integrated intervention can foster the simultaneous development of multiple communicative dimensions.

Furthermore, in relation to emergent literacy approaches, which consider both "inside-out" skills (phonological processing, letter knowledge) and "outside-in" skills (context, narrativity, interaction) (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998), the findings of the present study reinforce the importance of integrating both dimensions in meaningful educational contexts.

Compared to literacy programs in bilingual contexts or approaches like CLIL in early childhood education, where language development is linked to learning content in another language, the available evidence points to cognitive and linguistic benefits associated with contexts rich in stimulation and linguistic diversity. In this sense, the results of Estuletras suggest that the use of play, experience, and interaction can be an effective mechanism for communicative development, even in the absence of formal instruction focused on specific linguistic content.

The conceptual distinction between language, tongue, speech and communication (Descals & Ávila, 2006; Finders et al., 2023; Zauche et al., 2016) allows the program to be structured around phonological, lexical, morphosyntactic, and pragmatic dimensions, addressed in an integrated and progressive manner. The results obtained support this organization, demonstrating an interrelated development of these dimensions throughout the educational process. This organization fosters emergent literacy that is not limited to decoding, but also promotes comprehension, expressiveness, and social interaction.

The findings of this study provide qualitative evidence on the potential of integrative and experiential approaches in children's communicative development, complementing existing literature focused on specific components of language and opening lines of research on pedagogical models that simultaneously integrate cognitive, social and emotional dimensions of language learning.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to analyze the Estuletras method as a pedagogical approach aimed at enhancing the communicative skills and early literacy of preschool children, based on an experiential, playful, and neurodevelopmental approach. The results obtained

suggest that this approach contributes significantly to improving children's communicative competence.

Regarding the first specific objective, which focused on analyzing the program's impact on the development of oral language and phonological skills, the data show sustained progress in pronunciation, auditory discrimination, and articulatory ability. Students acquired greater phonological awareness, demonstrating progress in identifying and reproducing sounds, as well as in understanding the relationship between phonemes and graphemes. These results are consistent with existing literature on the relevance of phonological skills in early literacy. The sensory activities—rough letters, blowing exercises, phonological games, and rhymes—are interpreted as effective means of stimulating the neurological circuits of language and consolidating the phonetic foundation necessary for later literacy.

Particularly significant, it was found that the systematic promotion of oral expression from an early age, addressing the different dimensions of language, fosters earlier and more natural reading acquisition. Students who participated in the program's oral activities—rhymes, dramatizations, storytelling, and breathing and articulation exercises—learned to read sooner, demonstrating a more intuitive understanding of the written code. These activities can be understood as precursors to the reading process, laying the phonological, semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic foundations that underpin early literacy.

Regarding the second objective, focused on evaluating the evolution of emergent literacy and the first approaches to the written code, the observed evidence indicates progressive development in letter recognition, the association between graphemes and sounds, and the production of spontaneous writing. The students not only recognized the initial letter of their name, but also began to write familiar words and enjoy the reading process. These results reinforce the idea that early literacy is built from experience, orality, and meaningful interaction, and not exclusively from rote instruction.

Regarding the third objective, which was to assess the influence of the experiential and playful approach on motivation and communicative autonomy, the results show that the experiential component of the program played a central role. Learning based action, manipulation, and exploration helped students understand language as a means to think, create, and relate to others, rather than as an academic task. A notable increase was observed in spontaneous participation, communicative initiative, and peer collaboration. In this sense, the data suggest that intrinsic motivation is a key factor in early communicative development, reflected in expressions of enjoyment, persistence, and pride in their achievements.

The fourth objective, aimed at examining the teacher's role as a mediator of communicative learning, highlighted the importance of the adult figure as a respectful companion who guides without imposing. The constant presence of the teacher-researcher, acting as a participant observer, fostered a climate of emotional security

and trust that proved crucial for the development of linguistic autonomy. This support, based on observation, listening, and timely intervention, aligned with the principles of Montessori pedagogy and the Reggio Emilia approach, where the educator is seen as a facilitator of discovery and autonomous thinking (Massimelli et al., 2022; Chicken et al., 2024; Qadafi et al., 2023; Santín & Torruella, 2017; Saputra, 2025).

From a neuropsychological perspective, the Estuletras program stimulated the multisensory integration of language, combining auditory perception, fine motor skills, and phonological memory. The motor and sensory activities—blowing, tracing, manipulation of tactile materials, and gestures—strengthened the cortical mechanisms involved in language production and comprehension, demonstrating the relationship between neuromotor development and communicative competence.

From a pedagogical standpoint, the results suggest that Estuletras constitutes an integrative and coherent methodological proposal, based on three fundamental pillars:

- Experiential learning, which transforms experience into knowledge and promotes reflection on action.
- Montessori pedagogy, which fosters autonomy, self-directed learning, and free exploration in a prepared environment.
- The Reggio Emilia philosophy, which recognizes the child as the protagonist of their own learning and the environment as a "third educator" that stimulates curiosity, expression, and cooperation.

The interaction between these approaches resulted in a coherent, inclusive, and adaptable educational model, where play, emotion, and communication are integrated as the cornerstones of learning. The results suggest that language emerges in the classroom as a living, contextualized, and meaningful phenomenon, closely linked to sensory exploration, social interaction, and the symbolic construction of knowledge.

The evidence gathered from recordings, observational records, and teacher reflections indicates that the Estuletras program contributes to the development of the child's communicative, cognitive, and socio-emotional skills, strengthening the foundations for a solid, comprehensive, and meaningful initial literacy.

However, these results must be interpreted within the framework of a qualitative design and a specific educational context, which limits their direct generalization to other environments without considering the particularities of each context.

The method is thus presented as an educational innovation strategy with the potential to be replicated in other school contexts, by integrating the neuropsychology of language with contemporary active learning pedagogies. In this regard, future research could delve deeper into comparisons with other early literacy programs and incorporate mixed-methods designs to expand the available empirical evidence.

The results achieved allows for the conclusion that Estuletras is not only associated with improvements in linguistic development, but it also contributes to shaping a meaningful educational experience, where learning to communicate is linked to the development of thought, emotion and social interaction.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS, FUNDING AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Funding: This research did not receive external funding.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare that there are none.

Acknowledgments: To the university students and teachers who contribute to the dissemination and promotion of the Estuletras method. To the families and students who made this research possible for so many years.

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