

Development of literacy competencies in pre-primary teacher education

Desarrollo de competencias de lectoescritura en la formación del profesorado de la educación prebásica

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How to cite: Cárcamo López, L., Fiallos Gonzales, M., Suyapa Reyes, N., Bardales, K. (2025). Desarrollo de competencias de lectoescritura en la formación del profesorado de la educación prebásica. *Mujer Andina*, 4(1), e040106. <https://doi.org/10.36881/ma.v4i1.1068>

Mujer Andina, Julio – Diciembre 2025, Vol. 4(1)

Abstract

Literacy is a process that provides the foundation for the development of learning at different educational levels. In this regard, it is important to highlight the vision of initial teacher training in the area of early childhood education, aimed at acquiring and developing the competencies required for the teaching and learning of literacy in early education. These competencies are identified as pre-instructional, co-instructional, post-instructional, and evaluative. The organization of training spaces is planned around these four strategies, allowing for active student participation. To guide the research process, the objective was set to analyze the methodological strategies developed in the classroom for teaching literacy in initial teacher training. Furthermore, a qualitative and descriptive approach was considered, employing document review as a starting point, as well as focus groups with students for data collection. It was concluded that the different strategies implemented in the classroom allow a closer connection to the professional field, strengthening teacher training through the integration of theory and practice in the teaching of literacy in early childhood education. This, in turn, enables the development of the necessary competencies for a curricular design aligned with the level of early childhood education.



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No conflict of interest declared

Received: 18/06/2025
Reviewed: 14/08/2025
Accepted: 26/08/2025
Published: 10/10/2025

Keywords: Teaching, Teacher Training, Literacy, Strategies

Resumen

La lectoescritura es un proceso que sustenta las bases para el desarrollo del aprendizaje en los diferentes niveles educativos, con ello es importante resaltar la visión de la formación inicial docente en el área de la educación prebásica para adquirir y desarrollar las competencias requeridas para la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de la lectoescritura en la educación inicial mismas que se identifican como pre instructivas, co-instructivas, pos instructivas y de evaluación. La organización de los espacios de formación se planifica con estas cuatro estrategias permitiendo una participación del estudiante. Para guiar el proceso de investigación se planteó como objetivo analizar las estrategias metodológicas que se desarrollan en aula para enseñar lectoescritura en la formación inicial docente, además, se ha considerado una investigación cualitativa, descriptiva empleando la revisión documental como punto de partida y grupos focales con estudiantes para el levantamiento de la información. Se ha concluido que las diferentes estrategias desarrolladas en las aulas permiten un acercamiento al campo laboral potenciado la formación docente con la comprensión de la teoría y la práctica en la enseñanza de la lectoescritura prebásica, permitiendo desarrollar las competencias necesarias para un desarrollo curricular conforme al nivel de la educación prebásica.

Palabras clave: enseñanza, formación docente, lectoescritura, estrategias.

Introduction

One of the main goals of pre-primary education is to prepare children for entry into basic education, particularly first grade. Recognizing this age as a fundamental stage for developing potential and acquiring skills is crucial for proper school readiness (Lema et al., 2019). Creating learning experiences that foster imagination and creativity can dynamically enhance literacy, laying the foundation for personality development and adaptation to the environment.

It is important to consider that pedagogical action is not merely the practice of interpreting guidelines and work explanations; it also contains a logical and systematic theoretical foundation. Literacy practice is fundamental to the learning process, as it allows for the holistic development of the young student. In this regard, the training of pre-primary teachers is an essential factor in ensuring the success of didactic practices. The aim is to implement teaching strategies that develop various competencies in student-teachers so that these can be applied in their future careers. This

involves using experiential strategies and bringing planned didactic approaches into the classroom, tailored to the available resources and the educational model of the university.

Considering that every child in pre-primary education is unique and develops their capacities differently, it follows that teachers must be competent in creating resources that facilitate a child's comprehensive development (Dutto, 2021). Teacher training programs for pre-primary education seek to develop the necessary competencies for teaching literacy and emphasize its prerequisites, focusing on readiness. Therefore, it is essential to identify the strategies employed and analyze how they respond to students' needs, enabling them to develop their literacy process and achieve holistic growth.

Theoretical Framework

To facilitate the learning process, it is necessary to utilize various cognitive and metacognitive me-

thods that are appropriate for students' characteristics and intellectual development (Carriazo et al., 2020; Díaz & Hernández, 1998). In the context of pre-primary teacher training, it's essential to consider the different psychomotor skills that benefit children between one and five years old. As Parejo & Araujo (2022, p. 109) state, "it is a process that helps to understand and provoke transformations in the teaching and learning processes," which can improve the quality of instruction in the workplace (Medina et al., 2025; González, 2020).

According to González & Triviño (2018, p. 373), "the selection of one strategy over another is crucial, as it can influence a student's success or failure." Therefore, it must be considered that the development of the necessary competencies to learn and implement literacy strategies is conditioned by the work carried out in university classrooms (González, 2022).

Regarding literacy acquisition, Ezcurra et al. (2021) believe that children need certain levels of psychomotor development, emotional maturity, and symbolic comprehension. Psychomotor skills are vital for establishing a foundation for introducing reading and writing in early childhood (González, 2022; Viera, 2024). Additionally, there is a need to develop strategies focused on gamification as a methodology for literacy development. Through this, reading and writing can ignite imagination and creativity, providing access to knowledge. González (2020, p. 49) considers that "these skills are necessary tools to develop more elaborated levels of thought, communication with others and the environment, and are very valuable instruments for continued learning." Thus, the development of reading and writing skills is essential from an early age.

In this sense, emergent literacy is a stage for acquiring reading and writing because it's the child's first encounter with printed material. According to Veyta & Rodríguez (2021), it is important to include activities that allow for the use of oral language, along with exposure to printed texts, which allows expression through scribbling, constituting a child's unique experience.

According to Cuesta et al. (2016), pre-primary education programs are composed of individual activities that foster a child's creativity, as well as structured activities that help establish habits and skills organized in a didactic sequence. In this sense, Torres (2016) considers that readiness activities establish developmental levels that enhance a child's psychomotor skills, perception, language, and cognitive functions.

Furthermore, it is necessary to consider the training of pre-primary teachers, who play a fundamental role in teaching reading and writing. This requires the development of a curriculum with classroom experiences aimed at identifying different learning styles centered on the learner. These experiences should be geared toward developing skills for independence and problem-solving based on the needs identified in the workplace (Bunk, 1994; Carriazo et al., 2020; Díaz & Hernández, 1998). The strategies, which should be designed and implemented by teachers in the classroom, are identified as "demonstration, simulation, workshops, seminars, and reproductive" (Beltrán et al., 2020, p. 253). These are intended to develop competencies that allow teachers to understand and apply pre-instructional, instructional, and post-instructional strategies for literacy (Carriazo et al., 2020).

Initial teacher training emphasizes the development of both theoretical and practical components, considering elements related to literacy, child development, and the skills and methodologies involved in reading and writing (Calderón, 2024). Strategies are intentional procedures designed to achieve learning outcomes; they must respond to educational needs, which requires a deep understanding of the student.

Methodology

The objective of this study is to describe the methodological strategies that enable the development of literacy teaching competencies in initial teacher training. The research is conducted from the perspective of pre-primary education students at the main campus of the Universidad Pe-

dagogica Nacional Francisco Morazán, located in Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

A qualitative approach was used for this research, which seeks to understand a phenomenon by addressing reality holistically (Cook & Reichardt, 1986; Creswell, 2009; Fiallos & Fiallos, 2024). The phenomenological design was chosen because it allows for the study of lived experiences related to the phenomenon (Abero et al., 2015). Additionally, the study is descriptive, aiming to “identify characteristics of a group of people belonging to a particular population” (Nocedo de León et al., 2015, p. 67). In the field of teacher training, this approach facilitates reflections on educational experiences with the goal of developing skills to improve pedagogical practice (Veyta & Rodríguez, 2021).

For participant selection, a homogeneous case sampling method was considered, where individuals share some common experience related to the research topic (Hernández et al., 2014). Inclusion criteria required participants to have completed training courses in literacy and to be in their third year of study. Twenty-four pre-primary education students who work with third-grade students, following the national basic curriculum, participated in the study. These participants were organized into three focus groups. The data collection was conducted through in-person meetings during the last week of October, the third week of November, and the first week of December 2024.

For the organization and data collection, four analysis categories were established: pre-ins-

tructional strategies, co-instructional strategies, post-instructional strategies, and evaluation strategies. Each of these categories included three subcategories, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the strategies used by the teachers to foster literacy competencies.

Data was collected through a review of study programs, methodological guides, and professional profiles to identify the various competencies to be developed for teaching literacy. The focus groups were guided by a set of questions designed to direct the conversation. For analysis, AQUAD 7 was used, as it is well-suited for coding and developing codes for the categorical analysis.

Results

The information collected for the document analysis pertains to the methodologies of various training modules. It was identified that descriptive course outlines refer to teaching and learning strategies to be developed by the professor. Furthermore, the modules propose strategies for teaching literacy, strengthening participatory, reflective, and practical methodologies. This leads to the demonstration, reproduction, and creation of different techniques necessary for developing the competencies to teach reading and writing to children in the classroom.

Table 1 and Figure 1 show the responses related to pre-instructional strategies used in the training modules. These strategies have facilitated the activation and retrieval of information and have

Table 1.
Pre-instructional strategies

Categoría	Participantes
Pre-instructional strategies	We were always given the opportunity to participate using the knowledge we already had. In this way, we also developed our knowledge as teachers and learned what we might have previously applied incorrectly, until we understood the correct way (P.5 E3A, focus group, October 2024).
	Well, it was basically the knowledge I had before starting pre-reading and pre-writing (P.3, E4B, focus group, November 2024).
	In my case, it was virtual. The program we were going to follow for the entire course was shared on the platform. That's exactly how it was carried out; in fact, we would review it, and I would even highlight the activities we had already completed, just as they were laid out in the program. We were also given the agenda, which had the schedule of what we would be doing in class throughout the academic period (P 10 E2B, focus group, December 2024).

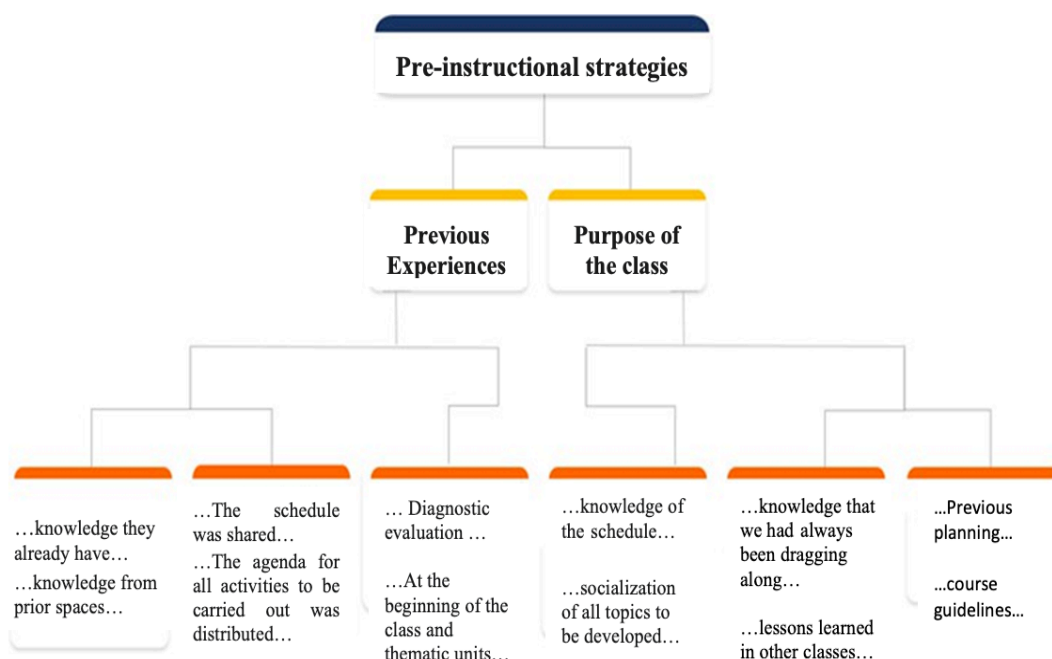


Figure 1.
Strategies from the students' perspective

helped identify strengths noted in the diagnostic evaluation. This data collection process is pre-organized by the classroom teacher and allows for a modification of the initial proposal, which helps to determine the performance the student should achieve to master the competency (Ferreira & Castro, 2021; Sacristán & Pérez, 1998).

Table 2 reports on co-instructional strategies. These include research, presentations, group dis-

cussions, and simulations for developing literacy modules. Additionally, reading and writing workshops for various age groups are used to bridge theory with practice and the professional field.

Figure 2 shows the list of methodological strategies that teachers use to teach reading and writing, from the students' perspective.

Table 2.
Co-teaching strategies used by teachers in the classroom

Category	Participants
Co-teaching strategies	I think we learned, but we first learned how to hold the pencil, how to tear paper, so we could teach it. I would have liked to do it with a child; I think that would've been spectacular, but due to the pandemic as we were returning, we couldn't (P20 E3C, focus group, November, 2024).
	In our case, we made short videos on how to implement the techniques, and that was also very nice; I liked it a lot (P. 2, E2A, focus group, November, 2024).
	In my case, it was when we did the workshops ourselves (P2, E1A, focus group, November, 2024).
	To put into practice what we were learning and, in this way, to use that learned knowledge to teach it later (P.7, E1B, focus group, November, 2024).
	"In this class, specifically at my job, I have realized that every child learns at their own pace, and we understood that in many classes—that each child has their own rhythm. So the learning from the class was significant" (P6, E8c, focus group, October, 2024). "In the geometry class, we were told how reading influences mathematics. We were also told that if a child doesn't learn a basic graphic feature in literacy, they won't be able to have basic skills for any other curricular area. That is to say, literacy is like the fundamental basis for all other areas" (P3, E4C, focus group, December, 2024)

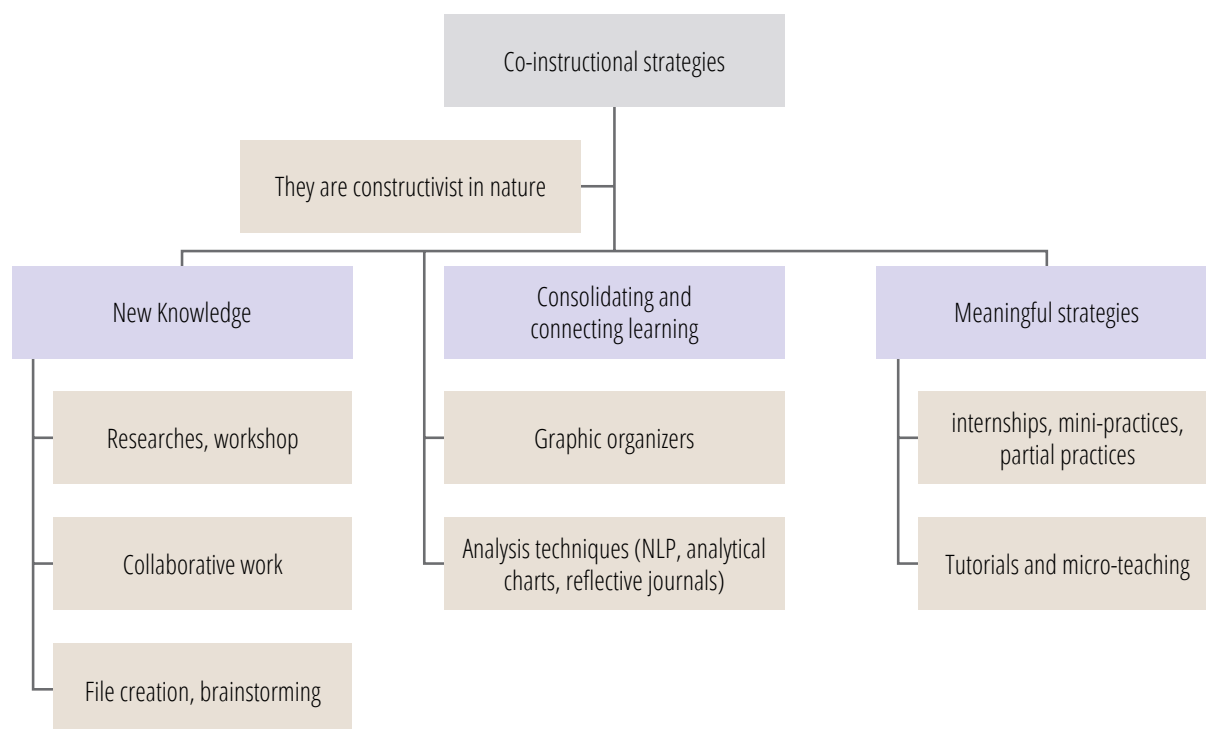


Figure 2.
Strategies for teaching to teach

For post-instructional strategies, Table 3 and Figure 3, which have enabled the application of what has been learned, mention discussions, presentations, reading workshops, reflection, and simulation (Díaz & Hernández, 1998).

Lastly, regarding evaluation strategies, the narratives predominantly indicate that a range of strategies were applied. These included diagnostic evaluations to assess students' prior knowledge, the presentation of a technique file, written exams, student portfolios, workshop execution, and teamwork. Each of these methods allowed the students to first grasp how to perform the processes being taught or learned in relation to literacy. Following this, they were able to apply their new knowledge in various activities with children.

Discussion

Regarding the organization of learning environments, instructors have utilized diagnostic evaluations to identify students' current competency levels. This information is then used to implement

pre-instructional strategies that activate and retrieve prior knowledge and experiences. The goal is to identify strengths and weaknesses acquired in previous educational settings related to literacy (Gonzales, 2020). Furthermore, students expressed that the strategies used to introduce the learning objectives for the literacy modules were effective for their educational process. This is because each learning space provided a detailed breakdown of the curriculum, objectives, and activities that would be carried out during the academic periods, all aligned with the broader curricular planning (Calderón, 2024).

Ultimately, students reported that the strategies used to inform and guide them through the literacy modules were functional. They enabled them to construct knowledge from prior experiences, which in turn helped them adapt to the learning context and actively manage their educational processes (Axman et al., 2018).

The strategies that allowed students to build new knowledge were largely constructivist in nature.

This included research, workshops, creating files, brainstorming, using technology, recreational activities, and collaborative work. To help them connect and consolidate their learning, specific techniques were identified, such as: graphic organizers, creating PNI (Positive-Negative-Interesting) documents, two-column tables, and reflective journals. These strategies fostered reflection on the education received and its application in professional settings (Pimienta, 2012).

It is also important to note that the strategies students found most significant were those that in-

involved applying knowledge in practical contexts, such as internships, practical tutorials, microteaching, and parallel practice.

Knowledge was also consolidated through workshops, and the creation of manuals or files containing strategies to support literacy development. Other relevant strategies included simulations, mini-practices, and microteaching. It is worth mentioning that certain strategies were specific to particular specializations, such as inclusive diagnostics, tutorials, and “learning by doing” alongside children. Each of these strategies empowers stu-

Table 3.
Pos-instructional strategies

Category	Participants
Post-instructional strategies	Making the file box encompassed the learning for the entire class, but the micro-teaching , doing a simulated class, even though we did it with classmates like us, was quite significant. We learned with them as if they were children; for me, that was the most significant part (P19, E2C, December, 2024).
	So, I really think it was about learning different types of strategies so that the child could achieve the objectives (P.1 E2D, October 2024).
	The micro-teaching, when we worked with the children... it was an experience that, in my case, I hadn't had before, and it helped me a lot to realize how they actually work (P.6, E3B, November 2024).
	For me, the experience that stood out as a strategy was play. Why? Because we did many techniques through play. And that's what I liked the most. We actually did scrunch, and we played with the scrunched-up ball, so I love the idea that the child can play with what they are creating, and it's a very beautiful experience for me (P 13, E4D, December, 2024).

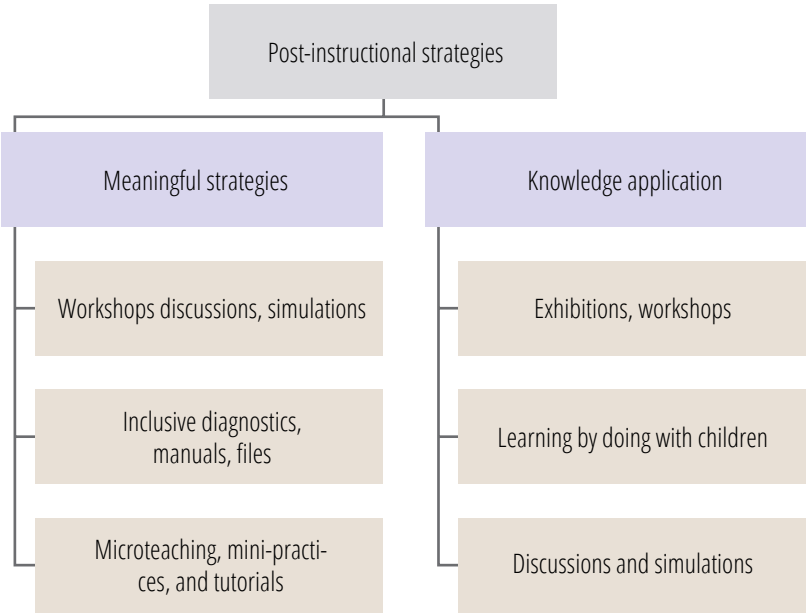


Figura 3.
Post-instructional strategies used in the classroom

dents to take a leading role in their own education, as they learn by doing, reflecting, and consolidating new knowledge (Ortiz, 2015; Patiño, 2018).

The use of various evaluation strategies was also evident, including written exams, feedback from instructors, self-evaluation, and co-evaluation. The student portfolio and the reflective or field journal were highlighted as particularly effective. These methods were used to assess the competencies developed within the educational modules.

Conclusions

The findings indicate that pre-service teachers in early childhood education have significantly benefited from knowledge acquisition and consolidation strategies. These strategies have enabled their participation in developing competencies for teaching literacy, with particular emphasis on those that allow them to apply their learning in practical settings. This practical application is crucial for understanding and analyzing literacy instruction within schools.

Furthermore, there is a clear coherence among the pre-instructional, co-instructional, post-instructional, and evaluation strategies. This is evident in the achievement indicators reported by the students, as each strategy has facilitated their engagement with, theorization, application, reflection, and evaluation of knowledge as a core part of their educational journey.

It is important to consider the need to specify the theoretical or pedagogical framework that underpins the literacy teaching methodologies in the analyzed modules. This framework should be aligned with the specific purpose and graduate profile of the degree program and must reflect current evidence in teacher training within this field. Additionally, a revision and update of each descriptive course syllabus are necessary to ensure a clear articulation between learning outcomes, content, and teaching and evaluation strategies. The current syllabi show a lack of this articulation, which leaves the process open to the interpretation of individual instructors, who make decisions based on their own knowledge and interests.

It is also important to note that this study's participation was limited to a single degree program. Future research should consider other areas of study that include literacy processes to broaden the understanding of this phenomenon from different perspectives.

Author's Contribution

Luz María Cárcamo López: Initial writing, methodology, results analysis.

Melvin Octavio Fiallos Gonzales: Initial writing, methodology, results analysis, final writing.

Nancy Suyapa Reyes: Initial writing, methodology, results analysis.

Karen Florencia Bardales: Initial writing, methodology, results analysis.

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