

Original article



Dilemmas about family literacy: discourses, practices and tensions of early childhood teachers

**Dilemas sobre la alfabetización familiar: discursos, prácticas y tensiones
de docentes de nivel inicial**

**Dilemas sobre alfabetização familiar: discursos, práticas e tensões dos
professores da educação infantil**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to identify and analyze the discourses and practices of early childhood education teachers in the province of Corrientes (Argentina) regarding the development of family literacy. A cross-sectional, descriptive, mixed-methods research design was employed, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data collection included the administration of a questionnaire based on dilemmas to the entire population (teachers of five-year-old kindergarten

classrooms) and a group interview conducted with a subsample from five reputed case institutions. The findings indicate that teachers displayed a strong professional identity and expressed positive views toward family literacy. However, their practices revealed the influence of implicit theories shaped by their training trajectories, prior schooling experiences, and experiential knowledge. The analysis of the dilemmas made it possible to identify tensions between discourses emphasizing shared educational responsibility and practices that assigned families complementary roles that were only weakly integrated into the institutional pedagogical project. Situated within specific contexts, this research sought to provide insights to strengthen early literacy in early childhood education and to promote more inclusive and equitable pedagogical decision-making.

Keywords: early literacy; family literacy environment; teachers; early childhood education; pedagogical practice; family-school relationship.

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este trabajo fue identificar y analizar los discursos y las prácticas de las docentes de nivel inicial de la provincia de Corrientes (Argentina) respecto al desarrollo de la alfabetización familiar. El diseño metodológico fue transversal, descriptivo y mixto -cuantitativo y cualitativo- incluyendo, respectivamente, la administración de un cuestionario con dilemas a toda la población (docentes de sala de cinco años) y de una entrevista grupal a una submuestra de cinco instituciones de casos reputados. Las docentes mostraron una fuerte identidad profesional y expresaron valoraciones positivas hacia la alfabetización familiar. Sin embargo, las prácticas revelaron el peso de teorías implícitas vinculadas con sus trayectorias formativas, experiencias de escolarización previa y saberes experienciales. Los dilemas analizados permitieron identificar tensiones entre discursos, lo que enfatizó la corresponsabilidad educativa y prácticas que asignaron a las familias roles complementarios, pero poco integrados al proyecto pedagógico institucional. Esta investigación, situada en contextos específicos, estuvo orientada a aportar insumos para fortalecer la alfabetización temprana desde el nivel inicial y promover decisiones pedagógicas más inclusivas y equitativas.

Palabras clave: alfabetización temprana; contexto alfabetizador familiar; docentes; educación de la primera infancia; práctica pedagógica; vínculo familia-escuela.

RESUMO

O objetivo deste estudo foi identificar e analisar os discursos e práticas de educadores da primeira infância na província de Corrientes (Argentina) em relação ao desenvolvimento da alfabetização familiar. O desenho metodológico foi transversal, descritivo e misto – quantitativo e qualitativo – incluindo, respectivamente, a aplicação de um questionário com dilemas a toda a população (professores de turmas de cinco anos) e uma entrevista em grupo com uma subamostra de cinco instituições de renome. Os professores demonstraram uma forte identidade profissional e expressaram visões positivas em relação à alfabetização familiar. No entanto, suas práticas revelaram a influência de teorias implícitas ligadas às suas trajetórias de formação, experiências escolares prévias e conhecimento experiencial. Os dilemas analisados permitiram identificar tensões entre discursos que enfatizam a corresponsabilidade educacional e práticas que atribuem às famílias papéis complementares, mas com pouca integração ao projeto pedagógico institucional. Esta pesquisa, situada em contextos específicos, visou fornecer subsídios para o fortalecimento da alfabetização na primeira infância e para a promoção de decisões pedagógicas mais inclusivas e equitativas.

Palavras-chave: alfabetização na primeira infância; contexto da alfabetização familiar; professores; educação infantil; prática pedagógica; parceria família-escola.

INTRODUCTION

Early literacy is currently recognized as a complex, situated, and sociocultural process that begins in the first years of life and is constructed through interaction between diverse contexts, particularly the family and school environments. Contemporary educational research maintains that the development of oral and written language does not depend exclusively on formal schooling, but rather is shaped by practices, beliefs, and mediations that take place at home and significantly influence children's educational trajectories (Stein & Rosemberg, 2011; Orellana *et al.*, 2022).

In the province of Corrientes (Argentina), educational policy has undergone a progressive transformation regarding the conception of early literacy and the family-school relationship, moving towards more comprehensive, inclusive, and culturally situated perspectives. The first jurisdictional curriculum design of 1980 (Resolution No. 21/1980), with its technical and propaedeutic orientation,

conceived of literacy as the acquisition of basic skills in the written code, centered on observable and measurable behaviors, and assigned a hegemonic role to the school, while families were considered passive participants in the educational process. The second curriculum design (Decree No. 3201/1996) introduced a conceptual broadening by situating literacy within a communicative and cultural perspective, organized around oral language, written language, and literature, and by conceiving of the teacher as a mediator in the construction of meaning. However, it maintains an explicit distinction between the school and family environments, assigning the primary responsibility for the construction of systematic learning to the school and defining the educational role of families. Finally, the current 2020 curriculum design (Decree No. 2268/2020) consolidates a sociocultural approach to early literacy, understood as a cultural process that begins before entering preschool and is built in contexts of meaningful interaction, redefining the family-school relationship as an active pedagogical alliance that recognizes and values the linguistic and cultural practices of the home as a constitutive part of the educational process.

Within this framework, and from a perspective focused on teaching practice, it is important to consider that literacy teaching practices cannot be understood solely through normative frameworks or explicitly stated pedagogical approaches. This is because implicit theories, constructed throughout teachers' training, professional experience, and personal educational histories, operate within these practices, often unconsciously guiding their pedagogical decisions (Tenorio Villanueva, 2022). In particular, a gap is observed between discourses promoting shared educational responsibility and practices that continue to assign families a subsidiary role, primarily centered on supporting schoolwork rather than recognizing literacy practices inherent to the home environment (Candia *et al.*, 2019; Maquera-Maquera *et al.*, 2021).

From the perspective of family literacy, it is argued that the home constitutes a privileged space for language development and early approaches to reading and writing. Recent research shows that support for the family environment, the availability of printed materials, and meaningful linguistic interactions have a positive impact on the development of communicative and literacy skills, especially in contexts of social vulnerability (Orellana *et al.*, 2022; Fajardo López *et al.*, 2024).

The role of early childhood educators is especially relevant, as their conceptions, beliefs, and knowledge guide the selection of pedagogical strategies and how family participation is conceived. Some studies show that, while the family-school link is valued discursively, representations persist that tend to underestimate families' capacity to meaningfully support literacy processes (Manosalba

Torres & Arancibia Gutiérrez, 2022; Lugo Cuellar & Fierro Evans, 2022; García Flores & Martínez Amaro, 2025).

Likewise, research focused on intervention strategies highlights experiences aimed at strengthening family literacy through shared reading initiatives, book circulation, and literary activities that connect home and school. While these initiatives demonstrate positive impacts on children's language development, they also reveal the need to review the teaching conceptions underlying their implementation, some of which are prescriptive or deficit-based in their approach to families (Orellana *et al.*, 2022; Paniccia, 2023).

Despite the sustained growth in academic production on early literacy and the family-school link, a specific gap has been identified regarding how early childhood educators reinterpret family literacy policies and translate them into concrete practices within particular sociocultural contexts. This absence is especially significant in the province of Corrientes, whose linguistic and cultural fabric presents unique challenges for early literacy.

This article aims to identify and analyze the discourses and practices of early childhood educators in the province of Corrientes regarding the development of family literacy. It seeks to understand the initial and ongoing training received in relation to the role of families, describe the strategies and resources that teachers employ to strengthen family literacy, and identify their beliefs and values regarding the contribution of the family environment to early literacy processes. The results are expected to provide insights for pedagogical reflection and contribute to the design of more inclusive, contextualized, and equitable proposals at the early childhood level.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross-sectional and descriptive study was proposed with a mixed quantitative and qualitative design that included administering a questionnaire to the entire population and a group interview to a subsample of reputable cases.

A data matrix was constructed based on the proposed objectives and the reference framework as a basis for the construction of the instruments.

The questionnaire was administered via a Google Form and completed by the teachers in charge of the five-year-old classrooms in all kindergartens or their equivalent (the teachers in charge of the

five-year-olds in multi-classroom and multi-level settings). It primarily focused on dilemmas, as this is considered a more appropriate instrument for highlighting, exploring, and analyzing the ideas that teachers express in their work, which correspond to various implicit theories. The fieldwork was conducted during August 2025.

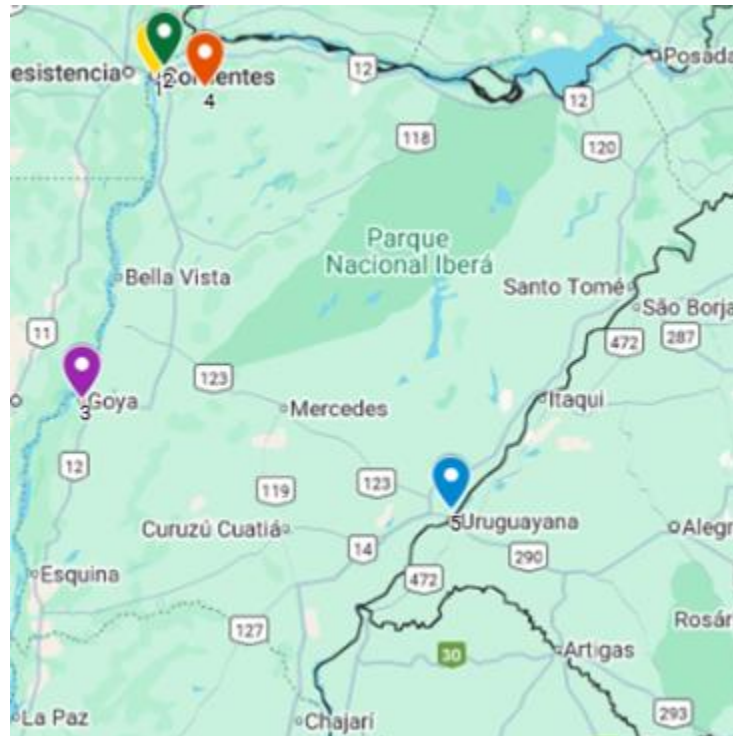
According to information provided by SINIDE (Integrated Digital Educational Information System), in 2024 there were 3,772 teaching positions at the preschool level: 80% in urban areas and 20% in rural areas; 80% in the public sector and 20% in the private sector. Of these positions, 1,191 were for five-year-olds and multi-grade classrooms. Within the public sector, 1,029 positions were held: 724 for five-year-olds and 305 for multi-grade classrooms. However, a teacher may hold more than one position.

The questionnaire was answered by 555 teachers of kindergarten classrooms or their equivalent (in the case of multi-grade or multi-classroom settings). A good response rate was achieved thanks to the collaboration of the supervisors and teaching assistants from the Board of Education, who also facilitated access to the schools. It should be noted that the same level of participation was not received from the institutions that depended on the Teacher Training Colleges and, therefore, on the General Directorate of Secondary Education. These 18 institutions are located in almost all departments.

Subsequently, five educational institutions were selected, and in-depth interviews were conducted with the teachers of five-year-old classrooms or their equivalent. These interviews allowed for a deeper exploration of the responses to the dilemmas posed and opened the debate to arguments that could not be developed through the questionnaire, given its closed-ended nature.

When selecting the sample of institutions for in-depth interviews, the following criteria were considered: inclusion of urban and rural kindergartens, both long-established and recently created, with varying levels of administrative structure, contact with other languages, and participation in the Early Childhood program (which supports teachers in their work with families). Supervisors at each level were consulted based on these criteria. This is a sample of reputable cases, as the selection is based on expert recommendations. Thus, the sample consisted of two kindergartens in the capital city (a long-established EJI - Kindergarten School - in the city center and a new one on the outskirts that was just becoming independent from the primary school), a practice department of a teacher training college in the western part of the province, a kindergarten attached to a rural primary school

in San Luis del Palmar, and a clustered kindergarten in the east, on the banks of the Uruguay River (Map 1).



Map 1. Location of the sample gardens

Source: Prepared by the author using Google Maps

The province of Corrientes is located in the center of the Argentine Mesopotamia region. It borders the Republic of Paraguay to the north; the provinces of Chaco and Santa Fe to the west; the province of Misiones, the Federative Republic of Brazil, and the Oriental Republic of Uruguay to the east; and the province of Entre Ríos to the south.

In Corrientes, the use of Guaraní is unique, especially in rural areas, although its presence is not limited to these zones. In urban contexts, Guaraní is also visible and audible in everyday conversations, signage, media, and cultural expressions, forming a defining characteristic of the province. Furthermore, Corrientes' location fosters another situation of language contact, linked to Portuguese, which circulates in daily interactions, commercial exchanges, and family settings along the border with Brazil.

The quantitative results were processed using SPSS (Statistical Package for The Social Sciences) and the qualitative ones with the Atlas Ti. In addition to the data matrix that was built before the fieldwork, special attention was paid to those emerging categories that made it possible to identify certain characteristic patterns of the province and features that pointed to ruptures or different proposals, so as to consider both traditional and novel practices.

RESULTS

Figure 1 shows that the majority of teachers surveyed (70%) were trained under the second curriculum design in effect between 1997 and 2020, while 25% graduated during the implementation of the first design (1980-1997), and only 5% graduated under the current curriculum design, approved in 2020. This distribution reveals a strong concentration of training trajectories associated with curricular frameworks prior to the current one, which is relevant for contextualizing the pedagogical practices and conceptions present in the institutions. Furthermore, the data from the interviews allow for a deeper understanding of this, as some teachers reported not having immediately entered the profession after graduation, particularly due to reasons related to motherhood; while younger teachers cited the lack of vacancies as a limiting factor. These situations help explain the low representation of graduates from the current curriculum design and highlight the impact of personal and structural factors on teachers' professional trajectories.

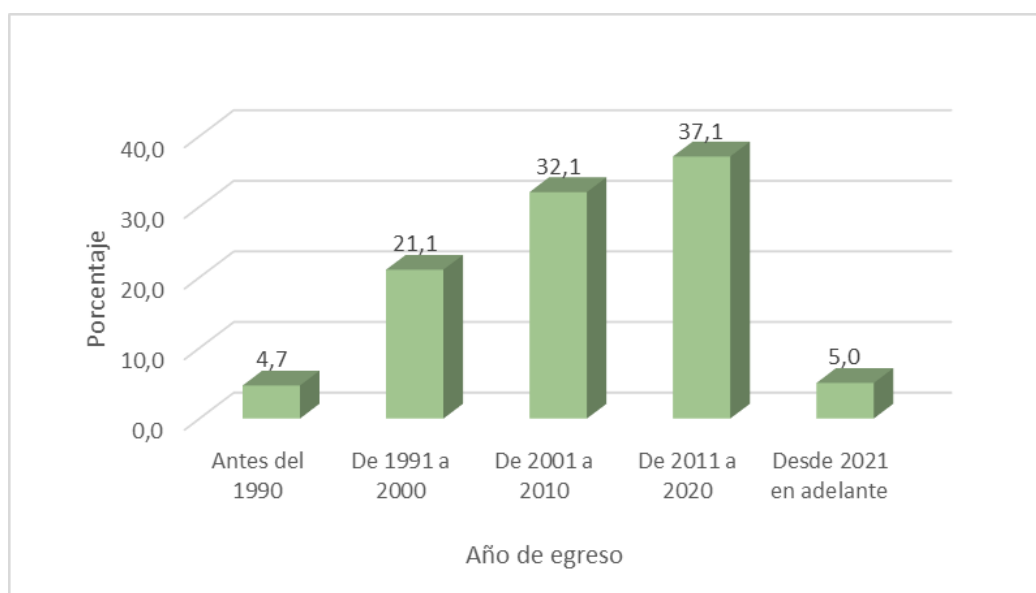


Chart 1. Year of graduation of the surveyed teachers
Source: Prepared by the author based on the questionnaire

But in 1995 I became pregnant with a high-risk pregnancy, so I didn't finish my studies. I did my residency, everything, but I was missing three subjects. I had to travel and receive medical care elsewhere. So it wasn't until 2000 that I was finally qualified with my degree, but my children were small, so I started working in 2005-2006 (teacher, institution 5, personal communication, August 29, 2025).

Most of the teachers surveyed participate in the professional development programs offered by the Ministry of Education. This is highly valued, especially by those with more seniority, who remember having to pay for the courses and, according to them, sometimes the content wasn't useful for teaching, but it was helpful for career advancement and obtaining a position. Some also mentioned courses offered by the National Ministry of Education that took place before the pandemic.

Interviewer: In your initial teacher training, when you were studying, do you remember receiving training related to family literacy?

Teacher: In my case, yes, but with the new training over the last two years, there have been some changes, for example, in how to pronounce the letters of the alphabet. Before, it was traditional to use the name, and now they want the sound. Or when we do the initiation, before everyone would talk a little, and now they ask you to focus specifically on one or two children and then rotate the next day.

Interviewer: And in your relationship with your family?

Teacher: When we first graduated, the topic wasn't discussed much. Yes, obviously, the importance of family, stimulation at home, and how that makes it easier for you to work here, depends on their context. But I think in recent years it's what they've been promoting the most. It's always been there, but I think now it's more... (teacher, institution 2, personal communication, August 22, 2025).

Teacher 4: Well, then I came here for a few years. I finished my law degree and then I decided to start with course, course, course, course. I entered that system where we had to do course, course, course, course.

There were a lot of people from [Mutual] Confianza. At that time, they were being paid, and my husband would say to me, "How do the girls who don't have any income manage to get into

the system?" Because I had their help, but imagine the girls who didn't. And well, I got here, I became a full member.

Interviewer 1: Did those courses cover anything about family literacy?

Teacher 1: In the PNFP (National Program for Permanent Training) there was a lot of participation from parents to tell stories, to work with that (teacher, institution 5, personal communication, August 29, 2025).

The results for the dilemmas are presented below, organized in tables. The responses were arranged according to a preference order, not according to the order in which they were presented in the questionnaire and interview, where they were presented randomly.

The first dilemma concerns the Institutional Educational Project (IEP): "A teacher is interested in strengthening the link between family and language development, but her IEP does not include family literacy as a core element. What would you suggest she do?" Possible responses include: "proposing to the administrative team and her colleagues that they include family literacy as a core element in the IEP; designing an individualized proposal within the classroom project; continuing with the preschool's usual practices without incorporating new activities."

Most teachers chose the first option on the questionnaire (Table 1). However, in the interviews, a significant number stated they would consider an individual proposal for the classroom. This may be because, in many preschools, the Institutional Educational Project (PEI) is not developed, updated, or shared, which means the document does not serve as a guiding reference for content planning. In this context, individual initiatives become the most immediate way to respond to perceived pedagogical needs, even if it means working without institutional coordination. The interviews conducted reinforce this diagnosis: in none of the preschools was family literacy explicitly included as a content area or focus in the PEI.

Table 1. Dilemma 1: PEI (Corrientes, 2025)

Answers	N	%
Propose to the management team and their colleagues to include the family literacy axis in the PEI	495	89.2
Design an individual proposal within the room project	56	10.1
Continue with the usual gardening practices without incorporating new actions	4	0.7
Total	555	100

Source: Prepared by the author based on the questionnaire

Because incorporating it into the PEI (Institutional Educational Project) makes it institutional. It's not like now, for example, now I don't know if we have that incorporated into the PEI, but I have it in my planning. But, suppose, I'm working and in first grade that's cut off; in second grade it no longer has the line it should have. So, if it's incorporated into the PEI, something institutional, it's something we all decided, and because we all know it's important for our students, otherwise we're all having that gap cut there (teacher, institution 4, personal communication, August 28, 2025).

The second dilemma concerns family training and teacher support: "Two months have passed since the family literacy activities began, and one family has never responded to any of the proposals sent. What could the teacher do?" Possible responses include: "finding a meeting to explore what might be happening, without judgment; persisting with the proposals, hoping they will respond eventually; dedicating more time to other families who are actively participating."

Most teachers chose the first option (Table 2). This reflects an understanding of the diversity of families present in the classroom and the importance of personalized support in order to strengthen the family-school bond.

In the in-depth interviews, it became clear that the lack of family involvement is not interpreted as disinterest, but rather as an indicator that the family requires understanding and support. The

teachers see themselves as agents who create conditions for interaction, especially when difficulties arise or there are prolonged absences. Faced with these challenging situations, they prioritize dialogue and provide guidance and concrete alternatives, explaining their contributions and how they help the children, and proposing ideas that can be integrated into daily life.

In institutions, the need arises to investigate, before making judgments, the reasons behind the absence, which can be multiple and diverse: work circumstances, material difficulties or those related to the literacy trajectories of adults.

Table 2. Dilemma 2: Formation of families (Corrientes, 2025)

Answers	N	%
Find a meeting place to explore what might be happening, without judgment.	507	91.4
Keep pushing the proposals, hoping that at some point they will respond.	42	7.6
Dedicate more time to other families who are actively participating	6	1.1
Total	555	100

Source: Prepared by the author based on the questionnaire

And first, we need to involve them, call them, and ask them what the problem is, because perhaps they don't know how to do it and are mistakenly not doing it. Or perhaps, as you asked me, we have a parent who can't read or write, so I think we first need to ask the reason for their absence from that workshop or program and then see how we can help them. Or, if they can't read, we need to involve another family member, an uncle or someone; try to find out as far as we can and then we'll see how it goes, because we might try everything, but well (teacher, institution 4, personal communication, August 28, 2025).

The third dilemma addresses a current and complex pedagogical problem: the relationship between early childhood oral language development and intensive screen use at home: "A teacher notices that a child has limited oral development. Upon speaking with the family, she discovers that the child spends a lot of time with screens (cell phone, tablet, television). What would you suggest?" Possible

responses include: "Suggesting simple ideas to incorporate dialogue into everyday moments (mealtimes, bath time, playtime, reading stories); telling them that this should change because it affects the child's development; not interfering because it's not her place to interfere in what families do."

The majority of teachers chose the first option (Table 3). These results demonstrate a conception of teaching centered on guidance and support, rather than punishment or prescriptive rules. The proposal is to teach families through positive and proactive actions, not by pointing out mistakes.

In in-depth interviews, the same response was nuanced by suggesting the educational use of cell phones through reading or listening to stories followed by discussion. However, the group of teachers who hold a negative view of screen use, which they consider the modern-day "babysitter," is not dismissed.

Table 3. Dilemma 3: Oral development and screen use (Corrientes, 2025)

Answers	N	%
Suggest simple ideas to include dialogue in everyday moments (meals, bath time, playtime, reading stories)	518	93.3
Tell them that this should change because it affects their development.	35	6.3
He shouldn't intervene because it's not his place to interfere in what families do.	2	0.4
Total	555	100

Source: Prepared by the author based on the questionnaire

For example, encouraging dialogue, like I told that dad, while you're walking home, you talk to them about what they did and what they didn't do. And then we now have stories on apps; you can give them stories while also telling them to use the screen, but in a different way. If I say, "Don't use the screen, take away the phone because it's bad for you," yes, but I have to give my reasoning, because nowadays we also instill this, that they work with screens, with QR codes where I might send them little stories, so it's kind of contradictory (teacher, institution 4, personal communication, August 29, 2025).

The fourth dilemma concerns the use of a second language: "A family's native language is something other than Spanish. The teacher promotes spoken Spanish at school but is unsure whether to insist they use it at home. What would you suggest they do?" Possible responses include: "recommending they maintain their native language at home while they work on Spanish at school; asking them to prioritize Spanish so as not to confuse the child; avoiding intervention because she feels she lacks the tools to address the linguistic issue."

Most teachers chose the first option (Table 4). In the in-depth interviews, they agreed that children's native languages should be respected. Two kindergartens reported that no children who spoke other languages had attended. Other institutions indicated that some children use Guarani words, a common practice in the province. However, they did not mention any cases of children whose mother tongue was Guarani. Although Paraguayan children had attended. In Paraguay, Guarani can be a mother tongue or a second language.

The teachers have reported that on occasion they have been responsible for teaching numbers and some words in Guarani and sharing legends. Many agree that the use of Guarani is more common in rural areas.

On the other hand, the kindergarten located near the Brazilian border has a unique history. It's part of the Border Schools program. Because of its proximity to Brazil, the use of Portuguese is frequent. The language and culture are taught there. In this context, Brazilian children attend the kindergarten, learning Spanish, while at home they speak Portuguese with their parents. The teachers noted that it's very common for these parents to speak *Portuñol*; that is, a mixture of Spanish and Portuguese.

They also described a generational difference: currently, children don't speak Portuguese and only learn it formally in kindergarten, but the girls have managed to learn the language thanks to Brazilian television. Only some of the children know a few words, since their parents work in buying and selling Brazilian products.

Unlike Guarani, which is associated with rural areas and carries a negative connotation, Portuguese is highly valued in the border communities. It's not just the language; Brazilian culture permeates every aspect of these populations.

Table 4. Dilemma 4: Second language (Corrientes, 2025)

Answers	N	%
She recommends keeping her native language at home, while she works in the garden in Spanish.	530	95.5
Ask them to prioritize Spanish so as not to confuse the child	21	3.8
Avoid intervening because he believes he lacks the tools to address the linguistic issue.	4	0.7
Total	555	100

Source: Prepared by the author based on the questionnaire

Teacher 1: I lived in Ituzaingó, and there the native culture was very present, especially in my mother's house, where Guaraní permeated daily life. You'd say "sapucay" and everyone knew how to do it. In contrast, here (Paso de los Libres) you say "sapucay" and they don't know what it means.

Teacher 3: Sure, but ask him here if he knows how to samba ...

Teacher 1: Exactly, I have a little girl who moves her feet, tiki, tiki, tiki.

Interviewer 1: You, who were there, do you see any difference between the use of Guaraní and Portuguese?

Teacher 1: Here it's more natural to use Portuguese. I feel discriminated against because I don't know Portuguese.

And regarding Guaraní, Ituzaingó produced one of the leading figures in Guaraní language teaching internationally. I believe this is an aspect that should be more widely recognized. However, in that context, speaking Guaraní was grounds for discrimination; the situation wasn't quite as it's often portrayed.

(...)

Teacher 3: Here in Paso de los Libres, that's very common; it gets mixed up there.

Teacher 5: Portuñol.

Teacher 1: We have the border.

Teacher 2: But it's common with parents, because the kids don't watch Brazilian channels. I'm from the era that watched Brazilian channels, that's why I know how to write, I know how to listen, I understand... Last year I had a little boy, his father was Brazilian, and sometimes I got mixed up, and I followed along. But I tried to make him focus more on one language, otherwise the languages get mixed up (teachers, institution 5, personal communication, August 29, 2025).

The fifth dilemma concerns the availability of books for reading: "A teacher wants to promote reading at home, but there are fewer than 10 books available in her classroom, and there is neither a mobile nor a fixed library. What would you suggest she do?" Possible answers include: "organize a lending schedule with reading prompts; photocopy stories or texts and send them out on a weekly loan; postpone reading activities until the school provides the necessary materials."

Most teachers chose the first option. This preference was also demonstrated in the in-depth interviews (Table 5). Many implemented the "traveling book" program: each child has the opportunity to take a book home and then return it for another child to take. This program facilitates family participation, access to books, and their integration into the home, which can be difficult to achieve in more disadvantaged households. It also fosters parental responsibility regarding reading to children and the return of the book.

Along with reading, some teachers encourage drawing or writing, and in all cases, the development of oral communication skills, since the children have the opportunity to retell the story they read. For their part, the children demonstrate interest, motivation, and enthusiasm for the book itself and for reading. Some children even prefer a physical book to an audiobook.

In general, regarding family reception, there is a diversity of situations, ranging from positive to complex. Active participation has been observed among most parents and other close relatives such

as siblings, but in more unfavorable contexts, there is no participation at all for various reasons, including illiteracy, school dropout, lack of knowledge about handling books, etc.

Table 5. Dilemma 5: Reading (Corrientes, 2025)

Answers	N	%
Organize a loan circuit grid with reading guidelines	429	77.3
Photocopy stories or texts and send them as a weekly loan	112	20.2
Postpone reading activities until the institution provides the necessary materials	14	2.5
Total	555	100

Source: Prepared by the author based on the questionnaire

My group was always willing. The idea of bringing the storybook came from the children themselves, because we started with one book and one of them loved it and said, "Teacher, I want to bring one!" So, I spoke with the mother, and that book will go, and the next day it will come back, because his classmate brought one, so he'll bring one too. "Okay, we'll take them one by one." They wait their turn to bring one. We have lists where the books change. When they come back, during the bulletin board, the sharing time, I often take that moment and say, "Okay, so-and-so who brought the book is going to tell us about it" (teacher, institution 1, personal communication, August 20, 2025).

The sixth dilemma focuses on the writing of first words: "A girl begins to write words spontaneously at home (for example: kasa, abua), and the family asks the teacher whether to correct her or let her write as she wishes. What would you suggest she answer?" Among the possible answers are: "that she explains that these spellings are valid forms in the initial process and that they should support the girl's writing by emphasizing the sounds of the letters that form those words; correct her from the beginning so that she learns well; do not encourage writing at home."

A large percentage of teachers chose the first option (Table 6), revealing the importance they place on phonological awareness. Furthermore, there is a clear trend toward more respectful practices: on

the one hand, spontaneous writing is understood as a gateway to learning, and on the other hand, families are encouraged to support this process.

In the in-depth interviews, the teachers explained and justified this choice, recalling their own practices in the kindergarten and the collaboration of the families.

However, some tension still prevails regarding how to intervene: some teachers emphasize the importance of validating spontaneous writing, while others maintain the need to "correct from the beginning," although always in an affectionate and non-punitive tone.

Table 6. Dilemma 6: Writing 2 (Corrientes, 2025)

Answers	N	%
Explain to them that these forms of writing are valid in the initial process and that they should accompany the girl's writing, emphasizing the sound of the letters that form those words.	517	93.2
Correct them from the beginning so they learn properly.	37	6.7
Do not encourage writing at home	1	0.1
Total	555	100

Source: Prepared by the author based on the questionnaire

Something similar happened to me. My daughter was in elementary school, and I would say to the teacher, "Why don't you correct her? She's misspelled. She has spelling mistakes." And she would say, "Because first she has to understand. She understood what was taught here, and then she'll correct it." And, of course, the thing is, I come from the old school where they would correct you right there and make you write it 200 times (teacher, institution 3, personal communication, August 26, 2025).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that family literacy, even though it is valued positively in teachers' discourse and recognized in current regulations, is configured in practice as a field of tensions marked by situated reinterpretations of educational policy. These reinterpretations do not result from a homogeneous implementation, but are mediated by institutional conditions, the margins of teacher autonomy, and, fundamentally, by the implicit theories that guide everyday pedagogical decisions.

One of the central contributions of this research lies in showing that translating family literacy policy into concrete actions depends less on its normative formulation than on the framework of possibilities from which teachers reconstruct that policy. Most teachers did not receive specific training on family literacy in their initial teacher training. Continuing professional development emerges as a decisive factor.

The results obtained here indicate that the mediations carried out are based, in many cases, on individual initiatives or external programs, rather than on systematic institutional projects. This fragmentation weakens pedagogical continuity and limits the scope of the proposals, even when professional commitment exists.

Teachers' narratives reveal that certain traditional beliefs coexist with more up-to-date perspectives on language development and literacy. In this sense, while Tenorio-Villanueva (2022) conducts a literature review on implicit theories, she argues that, even if teachers are familiar with educational theories or teaching methods, their actions are underpinned by unstated conceptions that decisively influence their pedagogical practices; something that is evident in the execution of their classes. Therefore, investigating these implicit theories allows us to recognize that in daily practice, conceptions emerge that guide how the literacy teaching process is conceived and carried out. The dilemmas analyzed demonstrate how updated conceptions—centered on validating family practices, linguistic diversity, and respectful support of children's development—coexist with more traditional approaches, linked to early correction, the prescription of practices, and the assignment of subsidiary roles to families. Along these lines, a gap is evident between discourses of educational co-responsibility and practices that continue to relegate families to a subsidiary role, limited to school support (Candia *et al.*, 2019; Maquera-Maquera *et al.*, 2021). This coexistence should be interpreted as the result of heterogeneous educational trajectories and knowledge built through experience.

Furthermore, the results show that teachers tend to position themselves as mediators rather than normative agents, especially in dilemmas related to family involvement, screen time, and early writing skills. These choices reflect a pedagogical approach that prioritizes dialogue, guidance, and contextualizing proposals, which aligns with studies highlighting the value of the family-school relationship (Lugo Cuellar & Fierro Evans, 2022; Manosalba Torres & Arancibia Gutiérrez, 2022). However, this approach coexists with structural limitations, such as the scarcity of materials, the lack of institutionalization of family literacy within school programs, and reliance on isolated initiatives.

A particularly relevant aspect of the study is its contribution to understanding family literacy in specific sociolinguistic contexts. The presence of Guaraní and Portuguese introduces challenges that are not always addressed in teacher training, but teachers develop situated pedagogical responses to these challenges. These practices, while valuable, reveal the need for more robust theoretical and pedagogical frameworks that allow us to move beyond intuitive approaches and strengthen an intercultural perspective on early literacy.

From a methodological standpoint, the use of dilemmas proved relevant for accessing teachers' conceptions beyond normative discourse, although it also presents a limitation, as responses may be influenced by professional expectations. Triangulation with in-depth interviews allowed for mitigating this bias and recovering arguments closer to actual practice, thus strengthening the interpretive validity of the results.

In terms of practical implications, the findings suggest the need to promote, in both initial and ongoing teacher training, systematic spaces for reflection on teachers' implicit theories and their impact on the family-school relationship. Working with dilemmas, as a training strategy, emerges as a valuable tool for problematizing beliefs, revising assumptions, and constructing approaches more consistent with sociocultural perspectives on literacy.

In conclusion, this study identified and analyzed the tensions between discourses, policies, and practices surrounding family literacy at the early childhood education level in the province of Corrientes, highlighting the central role of teachers' conceptions in translating educational policy. The teachers demonstrate a strong professional identity and express positive views towards family literacy. However, their practices reveal the influence of implicit theories linked to their training trajectories, prior schooling experiences, and experiential knowledge. While the results are not generalizable, their significance lies in providing analytical input for more contextualized, inclusive,

and reflective pedagogical decision-making, in line with the proposed objective of understanding how teachers redefine family literacy in specific intervention contexts.

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Conflict of interest

Authors declare no conflict of interests.

Authors' contribution

The authors participated in the design and writing of the article, in the search and analysis of the information contained in the consulted bibliography.



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