



## **Directions and Emerging Trends in Teacher-Led Research on the Development of Communication Competences in Early Childhood and Primary Education**

**Oana Stoican**

University of Bucharest, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Bucharest, Romania  
[oana.stoican@fpse.unibuc.ro](mailto:oana.stoican@fpse.unibuc.ro), [ORCID](#)

**DOI:** 10.63467/all16.art10

### **Abstract**

For teachers in pre-university education, the teaching career includes professional development stages marked by teaching degrees: second degree and first degree. The first degree certifies the practice of teaching at an advanced level, on a consistent basis, including teaching based on the exchange of good practices, reflection, and creativity, as well as showing interest in certain aspects of school practice which, through authentic and detailed understanding, can be improved. Thus, educational and psychological research provides the framework for the scientific investigation of educational phenomena.

This study highlights the topics of interest addressed by primary and preschool teachers in the methodological-scientific papers prepared for obtaining the first degree, with a focus on the formation and development of communication competences in children and pupils. In the early cycles of education (preschool and primary), the development of communication competences represents a major goal of the educational process, in accordance with the National Curriculum. Oral and written expression skills, active listening, dialogue, the use of nonverbal language, and the development of digital communication are key benchmarks for the harmonious development of the child.



The sample of our investigation consists of 149 papers written by preschool and primary school teachers during the period 2017-2025, in which we identified the main areas of interest, the most frequently used methodologies, strengths and thematic gaps, and proposed priority directions for future research.

The research objectives were:

1. to identify the main themes addressed in studies on communication carried out by primary and preschool teachers.
2. to analyze the research methods and instruments used in these works.
3. to determine the frequency and thematic trends depending on the level of education (primary vs. preschool).
4. to formulate recommendations for applying research results in educational practice.

The content analysis was carried out using a grid that included the following indicators: research theme, research objectives, methodology used, targeted level of education (primary/preschool), and results/recommendations formulated.

The formation of communication competences in preschool and primary school children represents the foundation of the educational process, serving as the basis for all other areas of learning. Research conducted by teachers in their first degree papers demonstrates an increasing interest in the linguistic, socio-emotional, and digital dimensions of communication. However, there remains a need for more rigorous studies and an expansion into new themes.

**Keywords:** educational research, research topics, communication competences, primary and preschool education

## 1. Introduction

The professional profile of the teaching staff in pre-university education is built by reference to national legislative benchmarks, corroborated with recommendations and regulations at the



European and international level, and is based on a series of references derived from the analysis of recent research and specialized literature.

For the teaching staff in pre-university education, the teaching career includes professional development stages marked by the teaching degrees: teaching degree II and teaching degree I. Teaching degree I certifies the consistent practice of the teaching profession at an advanced level, including teaching based on the exchange of good practices, reflection, and creativity, as well as showing interest in certain aspects of school practice that, through authentic and detailed knowledge, can be improved (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

## **2. Literature Review**

In the *Profile and professional standards of teaching staff in pre-university education, by career stage and education level*, a document drafted by the Romanian Ministry of Education (M.E., 2024), it is indicated that the teacher for primary and pre-school education who reaches the stage of obtaining the Teaching Degree I carries out applied research and deepens the knowledge and understanding of the processes and developmental needs (physical, cognitive, emotional, and social) of children and young students, as well as the way children develop and learn, and the implications thereof for care and learning (Miller, 2011). By testing authentic, innovative learning approaches in school and extracurricular contexts through an investigative process, teachers ascertain the validity of hypotheses and facilitate the transfer of good teaching practices within the teaching collective or in professional communities (Lenoir, 2000; Darling-Hammond, Hyler & Gardner, 2017).

Thus, the psycho-pedagogical research that teachers organize and implement when writing the methodological-scientific paper for obtaining teaching degree I provides an adequate framework for the scientific investigation of educational phenomena. The themes of interest addressed by teachers for primary education and teachers for pre-school education in their methodological-scientific papers for obtaining teaching degree I focus on the formation and development of communication competencies in children and students (Florin & Véronique,



2003; Kalinina, Enova, & Tolkova, 2021). In early education cycles (pre-school and primary), the formation of communication competencies constitutes an important objective of the educational process, according to the National Curriculum. Oral and written expression skills, active listening, dialogue (Mercer & Littleton, 2007), the use of non-verbal language, and the development of digital communication are key benchmarks for the child's harmonious development (Hammond, 2005; Laurent, 2018; Torkos & Pasinszky Bernadett, 2021).

Our ascertaining investigation, which used qualitative and quantitative content analysis, was conducted on a sample consisting of 149 methodological-scientific papers by pre-school and primary education teachers, written between 2017-2025 at the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Focșani Branch, most of them being accessed by us as coordinator or president of the committee for granting the first teaching degree. In these papers, we identified the areas of interest, the most frequently used methodologies, the strengths and thematic gaps, and proposed priority directions for future research. The distribution of titles based on the level of education indicates a slightly greater concentration on the basic stage of language development: out of the 149 papers, 76, representing 51% of the total, targeted the pre-school level, while 73 papers, or 49%, targeted the primary education level. The slight predominance of papers from pre-school education aligns with the critical importance of this period for the correct acquisition of oral language (pronunciation, vocabulary), which underlies subsequent success.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **Objectives**

The research objectives were:

- identifying the main themes addressed in research on communication conducted by primary and pre-school teachers;
- analysing the research methods and instruments used in these papers;
- determining the frequency and thematic trends based on the level of education (primary vs. pre-school);



- formulating recommendations for leveraging research results in educational practice.

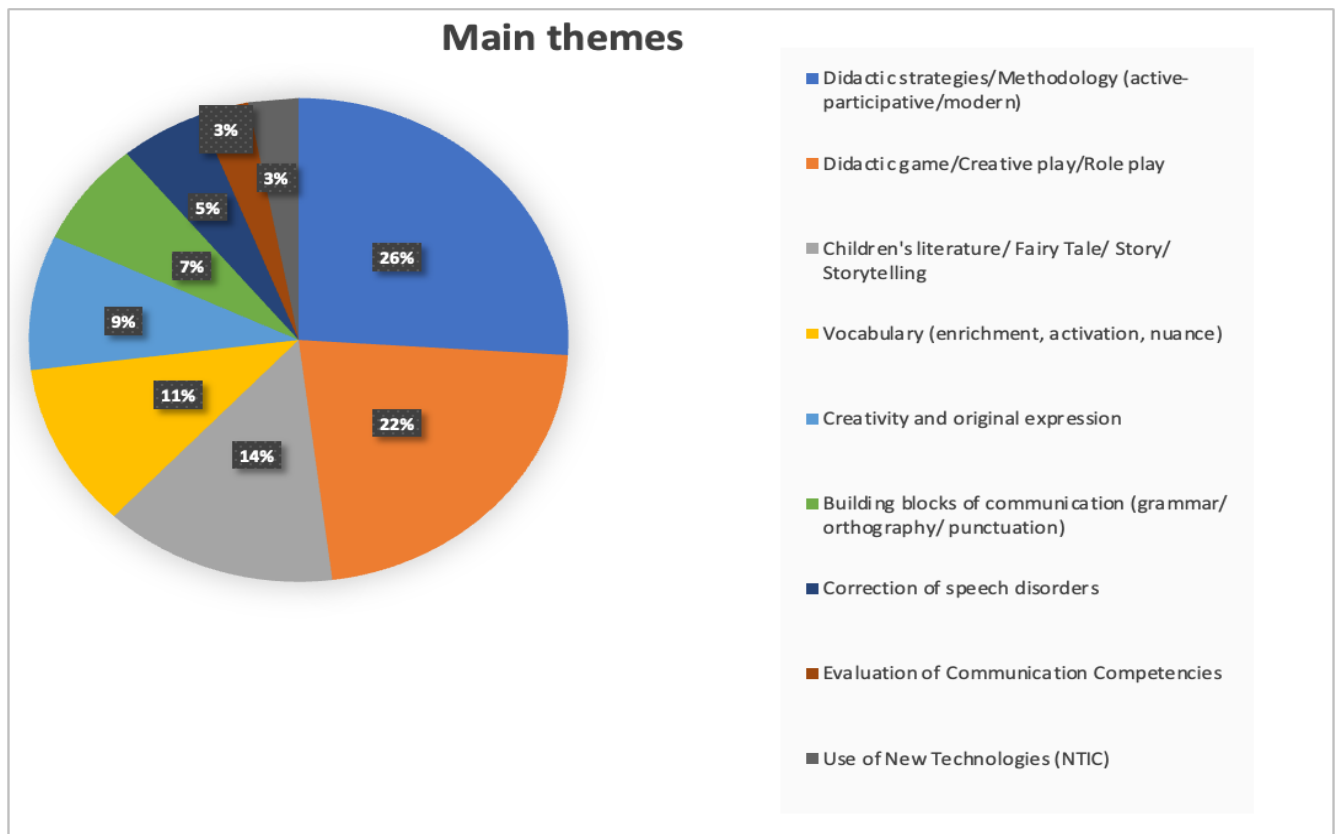
## Analysis of Collected Data

The sample was subjected to a rigorous analysis process following three main identified axes of analysis: level of education, specific content elements of the communication, language, and literature domain, and the didactic strategies involved.

Thus, regarding the level of education, the classification of titles confirmed a balanced distribution, but with a slight inclination towards the early stage. Furthermore, each title was associated with the dominant content category (vocabulary, grammar, literature, etc.). From an instrumental perspective, the main didactic strategy was identified, either in general form or particularized at the level of didactic methods, forms of realization (didactic game, interactive methods, storytelling).

The themes were grouped based on the main aspect addressed, highlighting the research priorities of the teachers:

No.	Main Themes	Frequency (number of papers)	Percentage
1.	Didactic strategies/ (active-participative/ modern) methodology	38	26%
2.	Didactic game/ creative play/ role play	33	22%
3.	Children's literature/ fairy tale/ story/ storytelling/ folklore literature	21	14%
4.	Vocabulary (enrichment, activation, nuance)	16	11%
5.	Creativity and original expression	14	9%
6.	Building blocks of communication (grammar/ orthography/ punctuation)	11	7%
7.	Correction of speech disorders	8	5%
8.	Evaluation of communication competencies	4	3%
9.	Use of New Technologies (NTIC)	4	3%



**Figure 1.** Main themes

Over 70% of the research focuses on teaching modalities and the didactic game. This confirms that teachers are primarily interested in the practical validation of methods that optimize their direct didactic intervention. Nevertheless, themes focused on content (vocabulary, fairy tale/story, storytelling, communication construction elements) also maintain a solid presence.

The research described in the teachers' papers concentrates on several major directions that contribute to the formation of a professional profile of teachers in terms of their majority concerns. Thus, it is found that the didactic game dominates the corpus, being the most researched theme by teachers, perceived as the most frequent method of stimulating language, both a formative and therapeutic tool (in correcting speech disorders and developing phonemic hearing in pre-schoolers and students). The fact that the didactic game is the most researched



didactic strategy on its own (22%) confirms its recognition as the didactic tool with the highest predictive value in language development at an early age.

Furthermore, children's literature – stories, fairy tales, poetic texts, narrative texts, folklore literature – is used as a resource for vocabulary, expressiveness, and moral education. Regarding didactic strategies, as well as instructional or evaluation methods used in the instructive-educational process, the emphasis is on the balance between traditional methods (storytelling, exercise, memorization) and modern methods (interactive, active-participative, digital technologies). The interest of the teaching staff is also manifested in the direction of integrated language education activities, in accordance with the variety of proposed didactic strategies.

Regarding the communication building blocks, vocabulary, in terms of enrichment and nuance, is considered the core of communication competencies, with many papers dedicated to it. However, a constant concern of the teaching staff is also for speech therapy, correcting pronunciation through adequate and effective didactic methods, and for the correctness of written and spoken language, part of the communication competencies assumed by the Curriculum.

Timidity, but visibly, a concern for technologies and non-formal methods in teaching Romanian language and communication emerges, with an emphasis on developing the learners' vocabulary. Based on the analysis of the 149 papers, we found that, regardless of the title's phrasing, they all address a complex theme, combining both the didactic/methodological aspect and the specific content of the Language and Communication field. These papers may opt for a more general phrasing, such as *approach*, *optimization*, or a specific one that names both the instrument (method) and the object (content) being studied:

- the didactic game with: language, vocabulary, oral expression, correction of pronunciation and speech disorders;
- the ensemble of didactic strategies with: oral and written communication, reading, elements of communication construction (vocabulary, orthography, and punctuation), correction of speech disorders;



- instructional methods with communication and language, children's literature (narrative text, poetic text, stories and storytelling), elements of communication construction (vocabulary, orthography, and punctuation);
- evaluation with communication or grammatical notions;
- creativity with different types of literary texts, such as poetry.

Thus, the authors of these papers demonstrate an advanced understanding of action research, establishing a causal or influential relationship between the methodological/didactic aspect and the content aspect. This indicates that a significant segment of teacher-researchers defines their research objectives with enough precision to test the impact of a specific strategy on a precise linguistic acquisition.

Regarding the research methods and instruments used in these papers, after a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the investigations conducted by teachers, considering the presence of at least two research methods in each paper, the following options were identified:

- Systematic observation (data recorded on observation sheets with different numbers of observational indicators, case by case) – 142 papers – 95%;
- Psycho-pedagogical experiment (with a single subject sample or with parallel samples, experimental and control) – 136 papers – 91%;
- Analysis of students' and pre-schoolers' activity products (worksheets, notebooks, compositions, drawings, journals, reading sheets, portfolios, etc.) – 112 papers – 75%;
- Questionnaire-based survey (questionnaires applied to different subject samples: teachers, parents, students) – 84 papers – 56%;
- Case study (monitoring the progress of a child or small group) – 48 papers – 32%.

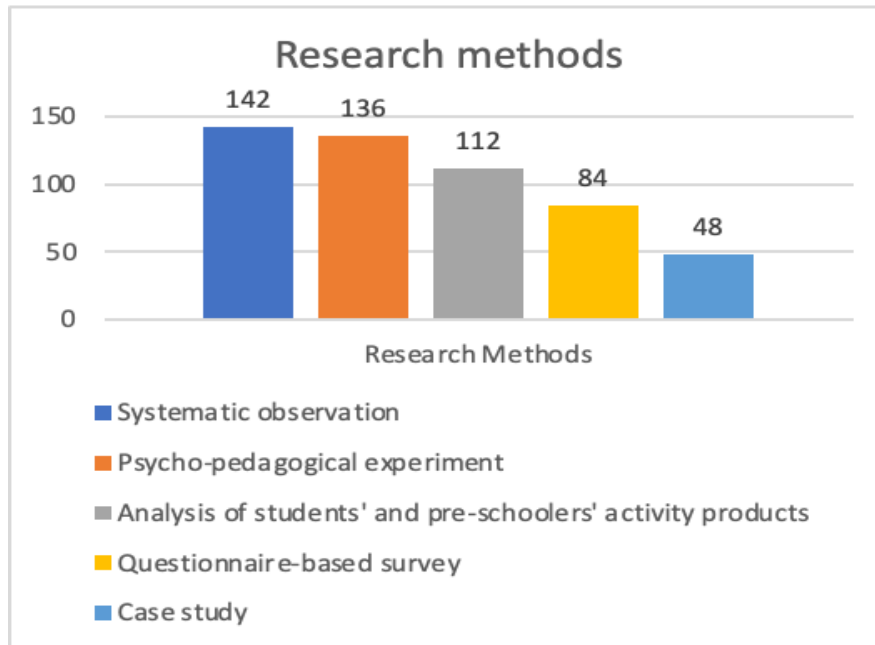


Figure 2. Research methods

## 4. Results and Discussions

The distribution of research methods confirms that the Teaching Degree I papers mostly fall within the paradigm of Action Research and applied research. The fact that each paper used at least two methods underscores the teachers' desire to ensure the validation of results through multiple sources, conferring an appreciable level of methodological rigor to their endeavors.

The dominance of methods oriented towards direct observation and intervention (observation, experiment) indicates a focus on the didactic process and the practical validation of innovative strategies. Systematic observation (95%), a fundamental data collection method, reflects the researcher-practitioner character of the authors. The use of observation sheets with specific indicators suggests an effort to transform an ordinary didactic activity (observation) into a standardized and rigorous research instrument. The psycho-pedagogical experiment (91%) is of paramount importance; its presence in most papers confirms that teachers are not just describing



a situation but are seeking to demonstrate the effectiveness of a specific didactic strategy (the independent variable) on the development of students' and pre-schoolers' communication (the dependent variable). The use of control samples (parallel samples) shows a correct understanding of the need to isolate the effect of the intervention.

Analysis of activity products (75%) is an indicator of the validity of the investigated didactic actions. Teachers use authentic instruments created by children – concrete results of the didactic process – to measure progress. This confirms an authentic evaluation and a measurement of competencies as a whole, not just knowledge.

The questionnaire-based survey (56%) shows a concern of teachers for the contextual perspective. Applying questionnaires to various samples (teachers, parents) allows, on one hand, the identification of colleagues' perceptions on different options and solutions in approaching components of oral or written communication in class, and, on the other hand, the understanding of the role of the family environment in communication.

The Case study, a method of in-depth analysis, although less frequent, is used in papers targeting themes such as the correction of speech disorders or communication difficulties of pre-schoolers and students. The case study allows for a longitudinal analysis of a subject, providing qualitative details that cannot be captured by quantitative methods, such as the experiment.

From the examination of research methods, the observation emerges that the research of primary and pre-school teachers in the field of language and communication is characterized by precision because it focuses on several main directions. First, from an interventional perspective, the dominance of the experiment (91%) demonstrates that the central objective of the teachers is to test and prove the efficiency of the proposed didactic strategies (didactic game, active-participative methods, storytelling, etc.). Second, the use of systematic observation and the analysis of activity products (over 75%) confirms that progress is systematically monitored by teachers and is based on concrete and authentic results of students' activity. Third, the inclusion of the questionnaire-based survey in research (56%) shows an awareness that educational results depend not only on the direct intervention of the experimental factor but also



on other factors, such as environmental factors (parents, colleagues), subjectivity, and the teachers' own vision.

The content analysis of the papers making up the research sample revealed that the concerns of pre-school teachers (76 papers) are directed towards the acquisition of basic oral language and the correctness of expression, as follows:

- developing vocabulary represents the most researched content element. The titles emphasize enrichment, activation, and nuance, reflecting the importance of the pre-school stage for lexical expansion.
- storytelling and the fairy tale are researched to validate the formative, educational, and therapeutic valences of the narrative (example, from story to storytelling). Content is viewed not only as a source of language but also as a tool for socio-emotional development and imagination stimulation.
- regarding speech correction, the papers focus on detection, prevention, and early intervention in speech disorders and the development of phonemic hearing. This activity is specific to the preschool age and highlights the teacher's role as an observer and an early interventionist.

The concerns of primary education teachers (73 papers) focus on the formalization of language and written communication competencies. Thus, the research targets the following aspects:

- Creativity, in primary grades, is most often an outcome pursued through the involvement of different strategies for stimulating oral and written expression during Romanian language and literature classes. This content is valued as a way to personalize learning and teaching.
- Communication construction elements (grammar, orthography, and punctuation) are not investigated in research focusing on what is taught (the content is given) but on how to teach efficiently (the methodology), to ensure understanding and the formation of lasting skills, whether it is about the noun and verb or orthography rules.



- The formation of writing or reading competencies is monitored in investigations that describe ways for a natural transition from oral language to functional literacy as a key content element.

To leverage the data collected from the examination of the research described in the Teaching Degree I papers of primary and pre-school teachers, the following actions are recommended:

- Creating a national bank of good practices based on the synthesis of the conclusions of the Teaching Degree I papers, by domain and education level. This would reduce research redundancy and facilitate access to field-validated solutions.
- Guiding teaching staff towards conducting quantitative analyses on larger samples, relevant to school practice, as many studies are based on small samples.
- Expanding research in the area of new technologies, both at the level of teaching and evaluation, with the creation, testing, and validation of efficient tools that ease the teacher's work and produce learning.

Encouraging teaching staff to explore how communication competencies (functional reading, creative writing) manifest and can be developed in the space of other curricular areas (for example, in Mathematics and Environmental Exploration), to ensure a holistic development of literacy within an interdisciplinary framework.

Therefore, the examined papers demonstrated the solidity of action research in early and primary education but also highlighted the necessity to expand the area of investigation towards adaptation to current technological challenges and the exploration of interdisciplinarity as a valuable resource for oral and written communication.

## 5. Conclusions

The present study demonstrates that the research interest of primary and pre-school teachers is characterized by a strong practical and interventional orientation, with a major concentration on the tools that maximize student or pre-schooler engagement: the didactic game and interactive methods. The formation of communication competencies in children in pre-school and primary education represents the basis of the educational process, being the foundation for all other



learning domains (Suebsing, Udomsan, & Bunphok, 2023). The research conducted by teaching staff in their teaching degree I papers demonstrates a heightened interest in the linguistic, socio-emotional, and digital dimensions of communication. However, there is a need for more rigorous research and expansion towards new themes.

The Grade I certification papers completed by primary and preschool teachers show a clear preoccupation with communication in its multiple dimensions: from language development in preschool, to didactic communication in school, to the relationship with parents, and increasingly, to digital communication. Practical interventions and active methods predominate; however, there is a need for studies with more robust methodologies and new topics related to linguistic diversity, emerging technologies, and longitudinal research. The thematic proposals in this study can guide teachers who wish to write a Grade I paper with theoretical and practical impact.

## References

- Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective Teacher Professional Development*. Learning Policy Institute.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Florin, A. & Véronique, G.D. (2003). *Apprentissage de la communication en milieu scolaire*. In Kail, M & Fayol, M. (coord.) *Les sciences cognitives et l'école*, Presses Universitaires de France. pp. 259-303.
- Hammond, O. (2005). *Measuring The Effectiveness of Professional Development in Early Literacy: Lessons Learned*. In Research brief. Pacific resources for education and learning. pp.1-6.
- Kalinina, G., Enova, I.V. & Tolkova, N.M. (2021). *Development of communicative skills of preschool children in cognitive activity*. In SHS Web of Conferences 113, 00046.



- Laurent, A. (2018). *Communication orale et écrite au préscolaire : quelles activités éducatives sont bénéfiques pour encourager es interactions sociales et favoriser le langage des enfants?*. Université de Sherbrooke.
- Lenoir, Y. (2000). *La recherche dans le champ des didactiques: quelques remarques sur les types de recherches, leur pertinence et leurs limites pour la formation à l'enseignement*. In Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Bildungswissenschaften, 22(1). pp. 177-222.
- M.E.(2024). *Profilul și standardele profesionale ale cadrului didactic din învățământul preuniversitar, pe etape de carieră și pe niveluri de învățământ*, Ministerul Educației, România.
- Mercer, N., & Littleton, K. (2007). *Dialogue and the Development of Children's Thinking: A Sociocultural Approach*. Routledge.
- Miller, P. (2011). *Theories of Developmental Psychology* (5th ed.). Worth Publishers.
- Suebsing, S., Udomsan, N., & Bunphok, S. (2023). Competency Development of Early Childhood Teacher in the 21st Century. In *International Education Studies*, 16(5). pp. 73-82.
- Torkos, H., & Pasinszky Bernadett, M. (2021). Communication Competences Development in Preschool Through Language Education Activities. In *Journal of Pedagogical Education*, 1(2).