

Faculty of Education

Thesis to obtain the licentiate degree in English Teaching

**The effectiveness of applying loose parts as a tool in speaking skills
in early childhood education with kids from four to five years old in an
International School located in Belén, Heredia during the
first quarter of 2026.**

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San José, Costa Rica

2026

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SWORN DECLARATION

DECLARACIÓN JURADA

Yo Maria Pamela Campos Mata, mayor de edad, portador de la cédula de identidad número 305020159 egresado de la carrera de Educación Preescolar Bilingue de la Universidad Hispanoamericana, hago constar por medio de éste acto y debidamente apercibido y entendido de las penas y consecuencias con las que se castiga en el Código Penal el delito de perjurio, ante quienes se constituyen en el Tribunal Examinador de mi trabajo de tesis para optar por el título de Licenciatura en Preescolar Bilingue, juro solemnemente que mi trabajo de investigación titulado: The effectiveness of applying Loose Parts as a tool in speaking skills in early childhood education with kids from four to five years old in an International School located in Belen, Heredia during the first quarter of 2026.

, es una obra original que ha respetado todo lo preceptuado por las Leyes Penales, así como la Ley de Derecho de Autor y Derecho Conexos número 6683 del 14 de octubre de 1982 y sus reformas, publicada en la Gaceta número 226 del 25 de noviembre de 1982; incluyendo el numeral 70 de dicha ley que advierte; artículo 70. Es permitido citar a un autor, transcribiendo los pasajes pertinentes siempre que éstos no sean tantos y seguidos, que puedan considerarse como una producción simulada y sustancial, que redunde en perjuicio del autor de la obra original. Asimismo, quedo advertido que la Universidad se reserva el derecho de protocolizar este documento ante Notario Público.

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San José, 6 de mayo del 2026

Mag. Diego Torres Moreno
Carrera Enseñanza del Inglés
Universidad Hispanoamericana

Estimado señor:

La estudiante María Pamela Campos Mata, cédula de identidad número 3-0502-0159, me ha presentado, para efectos de revisión y aprobación, el trabajo de investigación denominado ***The effectiveness of applying loose parts as a tool in speaking skills in early childhood education with kids from four to five years old in an International School located in Belén, Heredia during the first quarter of 2026***, el cual ha elaborado para optar por el grado académico de licenciatura en Preescolar Bilingüe.

En mi calidad de tutor, he verificado que se han hecho las correcciones indicadas durante el proceso de tutoría y he evaluado los aspectos relativos a la elaboración del problema, objetivos, justificación; antecedentes, marco teórico, marco metodológico, tabulación, análisis de datos; conclusiones y recomendaciones.

De los resultados obtenidos por el postulante, se obtiene la siguiente calificación:

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 AVALOS
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LETTER FROM THE READER

CARTA DE LECTOR

San José, 27 de junio, 2026

Universidad Hispanoamericana

Carrera: Licenciatura en Educación Preescolar Bilingüe.

Estimados señores:

La estudiante María Pamela Campos Mata, cédula de identidad 305020159 me ha presentado para efectos de revisión y aprobación, el trabajo de investigación denominado "**The effectiveness of applying loose parts as a tool in speaking skills in early childhood education with kids from four to five years old in an International School located in Belén, Heredia during the first quarter of 2026.**", el cual se ha elaborado para obtener su grado de Licenciatura en Educación Preescolar Bilingüe. He revisado y he hecho las observaciones relativas al contenido analizado, particularmente lo relativo a la coherencia entre el marco teórico y análisis de datos, la consistencia de los datos recopilados y la coherencia entre éstos y las conclusiones; asimismo, la aplicabilidad y originalidad de las recomendaciones, en términos de aporte de la investigación. He verificado que se han hecho las modificaciones correspondientes a las observaciones indicadas.

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San José, jueves, 23 de julio de 2026.

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Maria Pamela Campos Mata
305020159

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my thesis advisor, Karla Avalos Charpentier, for her invaluable guidance, patience and expertise throughout this process. Her support and encouragement have been fundamental in the completion of this work.

My sincere thanks also go to the American International School of Costa Rica, whose academic environment and resources made this research possible.

I am especially grateful to the parents who trusted and supported me by allowing their children to participate in the activities. Their confidence gave me the opportunity to carry out this project, and their children's enthusiasm and curiosity inspired me every day to give my best.

Finally, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my family and loved ones, whose constant encouragement and understanding provided the strength I need to complete this journey.

DEDICATORY

To my beloved parents, whose unconditional love and constant support have been the foundation of my journey. Your encouragement has given me strength, and your example has guided me every step of the way.

To my dear sister, who has accompanied me with patience and care since childhood, always offering her help and wisdom.

To my Tita, who instilled in me the conviction that the most important thing in life is to study and whose words continue to inspire my dedication to learning.

To my future husband, with whom I dream of building a life filled with love, growth and shared purpose. This work is also for you, as a step toward the better future we will create together.

And above all, to God, for granting me the opportunity, perseverance and blessings that have made this achievement possible.

With deep gratitude and love, I dedicate this work to you.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH STATEMENT

Naturally, children are creative, curious and playful. These characteristics are foundational to how young learners engage with the world around them. Playtime for children is very important, and it is not only recreational, but also a vital pedagogical tool that supports emotional, social, cognitive and linguistic development. Through play, children express themselves, solve problems and build relationships. As Whitebread et al. (2017) emphasize, play fosters self-regulation, symbolic thinking, and language acquisition, making it essential to high quality early experiences.

In their daily lives, children are often surrounded by a variety of objects, some are structured, others random and simple. These materials, known as loose parts, include items such as bottle caps, sticks, fabric scraps, and other repurposed materials that can be manipulated, combined and transformed. When integrated into play settings and paired with social interaction, loose parts become powerful tools of learning. Children use them to create, imagine and communicate engaging in open-ended play that promotes autonomy and innovation. As Carazo (2022) notes, the synergy between loose parts and social engagement fosters environments where children generate innovative ideas, explore freely and construct knowledge through hands-on experiences. This type of play also supports the development of critical 21st century skills such as communication, collaboration and problem solving (Beaudin, 2023)

In bilingual early childhood contexts, the development of speaking skills such as vocabulary use, comprehension, and fluency is shaped by both linguistic exposure and cognitive processes. Verbal fluency, for instance, involves more than word knowledge, it

engages executive functions like working memory, self-monitoring and strategic search (Hurks, 2012). Studies show that bilingual children often perform differently on semantic and phonemic fluency tasks, with semantic fluency more closely tied to vocabulary depth and phonemic fluency linked to executive functioning (Bialystok 2009; Friesen et al., 2015.)

Loose parts may offer a unique pathway to support both types of fluency. Its open-ended nature encourages children to retrieve and organize flexible, imaginative ways. As children manipulate materials and engage in collaborative dialogue, they practice clustering words, switching between categories, and refining their expressive abilities skills that are central to verbal fluency and language acquisition in bilingual learners. Moreover, the playful and low-pressure context of loose parts may reduce anxiety around language production, allowing children to take risks and experiment with new vocabulary and sentence structures.

Given the growing emphasis on bilingual education and the need for innovative strategies to support oral language development, this study seeks to explore the effectiveness of loose parts as a tool for enhancing speaking skills in bilingual preschoolers. Specifically, it will examine how this methodology influences vocabulary use, fluency and comprehension in children aged four to five years at an International School of Costa Rica during the third quarter of 2025.

There are several research investigations that highlight the utilization of loose parts in Early Childhood Education to enhance different developmental skills. These investigations support the idea that loose parts contribute positively to children's cognitive development. For instance, Houser et.al. (2016) conducted a thesis titled "*Let*

children play: Scoping review on the implementation and use of Loose Parts for promoting physical activity participation” emphasizing that loose parts invite children to engage in play, develop physical activity and interact with their environment. This integration encourages children to lead and create during play.

Another relevant study “*The arts, Loose Parts and Conversation*”. Explores how loose parts serve as tools for children to manipulate, create and design in multiple ways. Through these interactions, children engage in meaningful conversations that emerge unexpectedly and contribute to significant learning experiences.

Trevor Mackenzie’s inquiry – based learning framework offers a developmentally appropriate foundation for fostering curiosity and agency in early childhood education. In *Inquiry Mindset: Elementary Edition*, co- authored with Rebecca Bathurst- Hunt, MacKenzie outlines strategies such as provocations, progressive questioning, and gradual release of responsibility to empower young learners in constructing knowledge through exploration (MacKenzie and Bathurst- Hunt, 2019). Although the Loose Parts methodology is not explicitly addressed, its principles of open – ended play, creativity, and self-directed learning are inherently supported by MacKenzie’s approach. Provocations and question routines, central to both inquiry-based learning and the Loose Parts environment, encourage children to both engage deeply with materials, express ideas, and develop language skills through hands-on experiences. The pedagogical alignment reinforces the value of integrating Loose Parts into inquiry-driven classrooms, particularly in bilingual preschool settings where language development is a key objective.

1.1.2 Justification

Historically, the traditional education system has viewed play as a secondary activity, often limited to recess or free time. However, 21st century pedagogical approaches increasingly recognize play as a central tool for learning within the classroom.

When children engage in play, they develop essential cognitive and socio-emotional skills such as imagination, problem solving, initiative, teamwork, collaboration, and decision- making (Carazo,2022). Play also fosters executive functions including planning, organization, flexible thinking, and self-regulation skills that are foundational for lifelong learning and academic success (Beaudin, 2021; Whitebread et.al, 2012). Moreover, socio emotional development is enhanced through play-based learning, as children practice self-management, responsible decision-making and relationship building in authentic, meaningful contexts.

Within this evolving educational landscape, the Loose Parts methodology emerges as a transformative approach. Originally conceptualized by Simon Nicholson (1971), Loose Parts involves offering children open-ended materials such as buttons, sticks, fabric and recycled items that they can manipulate, combine and redesign. These materials invite creativity, experimentation and self-directed inquiry, allowing children to construct knowledge through hands- on exploration (Gull et al., 2019; Houser et. al 2016) Loose Parts are not just toys; they are cognitive tools that support diverse learning styles and developmental needs. They promote autonomy, agency and hoy in learning, making them particularly effective in early childhood settings.

In bilingual preschool education, Loose Parts play holds additional value. Learning English as a second language can present challenges in speaking, including limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, and articulation difficulties. Integrating Loose Parts into a language- rich environment provides children with opportunities to express themselves through play, storytelling, and collaborative dialogue. These experiences support oral language development, especially when paired with intentional teacher planning (Lo Bianco, Nicolas and Hannan, 2019; MacKenzie and Bathurst- Hunt, 2019). Inquiry- based learning frameworks, such as the proposed by MacKenzie, align well with Loose Parts pedagogy by emphasizing student curiosity, co- construction of knowledge, and meaningful provocations that spark conversation and reflection.

Therefore, researching and understanding these benefits of Loose Parts methodology is essential in shifting from traditional to modern educational practices. When thoughtfully implemented, Loose Parts can enhance speaking skills, foster bilingual development and create inclusive engaging learning environments where children thrive cognitively, socially, and linguistically.

1.1.3 Problematization

In today's increasing digital society, children are immersed in fast paced interactive environments that shape their expectations for stimulation and engagement. As a result, traditional classroom methods often rely on passive instruction, struggling to maintain attention and motivation, especially among young learners. This challenge is evident in Costa Rica classrooms, where despite national efforts to modernize early childhood education, many preschool settings still rely on rigid, teacher-centered approaches that limit creativity and language development (MIDEPLAN, 2023).

The 2023 *Informe Estado de la Educación* highlights persistent gaps in Costa Rica's preschool system, including limited pedagogical innovation, uneven teacher training, and insufficient integration of play-based methodologies. It emphasizes that while curricular reforms have promoted more active learning, implementation remains inconsistent across regions and institutions. The report also notes that bilingual education, particularly in early childhood, is still underdeveloped, with pilot programs showing promise but lacking widespread adoption and sustained support (Programa Estado Nacion, 2023)

In bilingual preschool settings, Loose Parts play holds value. Children learning English as a second language often face challenges in expressive communication, vocabulary acquisition and confidence. Research from the United States and Latin America highlights that intentional language instruction paired with interactive play environments can significantly improve oral language outcomes for dual language learners (Wasik and Hindman, 2004; Mendez et al., 2022). Loose Parts creates opportunities for storytelling, dialogue and collaborative problem-solving. Key practices that support bilingual proficiency and socio-emotional growth.

Therefore, investigating the implementation of Loose Parts methodology in bilingual preschool classrooms in Costa Rica is a timely and necessary step toward transforming traditional education into a more inclusive, engaging and developmentally appropriate model. It aligns with global trends in early childhood pedagogy and responds to the specific linguistic and cognitive needs of Costa Rica learners.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

How does the application of loose parts methodology influence vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension in the speaking skills of four- and five-year-old children in early childhood education?

1.2.1 Hypothesis

Children exposed to Lose Parts activities will demonstrate observable improvements in vocabulary use, verbal fluency and comprehension during structured and unstructured interactions in the third quarter of 2025.

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

- a. To determine the effectiveness of applying Loose Parts as a pedagogical tool in speaking skills in early childhood education with kids from four to five years old in an International School located in Belén Heredia during the first quarter of 2026.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- To identify the baseline levels of oral language skills (vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension) in 4- to 5-year-old children before implementing loose parts play activities during the first quarter of 2026.

- To implement a series of developmentally appropriate activities using loose parts in promoting verbal expression and oral communication in playful and structured settings for preschool children at the American International School of Costa Rica.
- To analyze changes in children's speaking skills focusing on vocabulary use, fluency, and comprehension after the loose parts intervention by comparing initial and final performance using observation rubrics and anecdotal records during the first quarter of 2026.

1.4 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

1.4.1 Scope

This study will be conducted in a bilingual international school located in Cariari, San Antonio de Belén, Heredia, Costa Rica. It focuses on a group of approximately eight children between the ages of four and five years old, during the third academic quarter of 2025. This age range is developmentally appropriate for observing expressive language growth, as children at this stage can engage in complete conversations and demonstrate emerging fluency in a second language.

The research will be implemented over the course of one trimester (three months) during which Loose Parts methodology will be integrated into daily classroom activities. The study will specifically examine how the use of enhanced Loose Parts such as natural materials, recycled objects and gamified provocations can support the

development of speaking skills in English, focusing on vocabulary acquisition, oral comprehension and fluency.

The scope of the study is defined by the following parameters: A bilingual international preschool in Cariari, San Antonio de Belén, Heredia, Costa Rica. Eight preschool children aged from four to five years old. One academic trimester, three months, during the third quarter of 2025. The study focuses on speaking skills in English, specifically vocabulary use, comprehension and fluency, developed through Loose Parts play. The study is grounded in inquiry-based learning principles. It explores how children learn through interaction with their environment, using Loose Parts as a medium for language rich exploration. The study does not evaluate written language, other play-based methodologies or children outside the specified range.

This delimitation ensures that the research remains focused and aligned with its central objective: to determine the effectiveness of Loose Parts methodology in enhancing speaking skills in bilingual preschool education.

1.4.2 Limitations

Although this study seeks to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of Loose Parts as a pedagogical tool for enhancing speaking skills in early childhood education, certain limitations must be acknowledged.

First, the research is context- specific, as it was conducted in a single International School in Belen, Heredia, with children aged four to five years old. This setting may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts, age

groups, or cultural environments. Second, the sample size is relatively small, which restricts the scope of statistical representativeness and emphasizes the qualitative nature of the analysis.

Another limitation relates to the reliance on observation of rubrics and anecdotal records as primary instruments. While these tools provide rich qualitative data, they are subject to researcher interpretation and may introduce bias despite efforts to ensure reliability and validity. Additionally, the intervention period was limited to one academic quarter, which constrains the ability to assess long-term impacts of Loose Parts activities on oral language development.

External factors also influenced the study and were not fully controlled. For instance, at the beginning of 2026 the class size increased, which affected the dynamics of group activities and individual participation. Additionally, nearly half of the students came from schools where English was not emphasized as strongly, which created disparities in prior exposure to the language.

Moreover, the diverse needs of each child such as students with learning difficulties introduce further variability in how children engaged with the Loose Parts activities and developed oral communication skills. These contextual elements may have shaped the outcomes and should be considered when interpreting the results.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 BACKGROUND OF THE INSTITUTION

The American International School of Costa Rica (AIS) was founded in 1970 as a private, non-profit association dedicated to serving both local and international families. From its beginnings, the school has emphasized bilingual and multicultural education, positioning itself as a leader in Costa Rica's international academic landscape (American International School of Costa Rica (AIS), 2026, para. 1).

AIS offers dual diplomas both Costa Rican and U.S and educates students from preschool through grade 12. Its community is composed of families from more than 20 nationalities, creating a learning environment where cultural diversity is not only taught but lived daily. This international character reflects Costa Rica's broader educational goals of preparing students for global citizenship (AIS, 2026, para.2; U.S. Department of State, 2025, para1)

The school's philosophy is rooted in student- centered learning with small class sizes that allow for individualized attention. AIS integrates technology, ecological awareness and ethical values into its curriculum ensuring that students develop holistically and are prepared for higher education and professional success (AIS, 2016, para 3)

In addition, AIS provides support for non- native English speakers and students with diverse learning needs, promotion and equity. This approach demonstrates the institution's commitment to meeting the intellectual, emotional and social needs of its students while fostering leadership and respect for cultural diversity. (AIS, 2026, para 4)

2.2 EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING FOUNDATIONS

2.2.1 How Preschool Children Learn

Preschool learning is a dynamic, multisensory process shaped by children's natural curiosity, emotional experiences and social interactions. At this stage, children construct knowledge through play, exploration and meaningful engagement with their environment. Their learning is deeply influenced by what they enjoy doing, the significant moments they experience, and the cognitive and sociocultural theories that explain how development unfolds. The section explores these dimensions to establish a foundation of understanding how bilingual preschool children acquire speaking skills.

2.2.2 Learning through play

Preschool children are naturally drawn to activities that engage their senses, spark curiosity, and allow for self-expression. Recent early childhood education research has emphasized the importance of play-based learning, open-ended exploration, and social interaction as central to how young children learn and develop language skills.

Children particularly enjoy:

- Open-ended play: Activities such as Loose Parts play, building and crafting allow children to manipulate materials freely, fostering creativity and spontaneous language use. These experiences support bilingual learners by encouraging them to describe, narrate and negotiate meaning in both languages (Portobello Institute, 2024)

- Social interaction: Group games, collaborative storytelling, and peer conversations are highly enjoyable and essential for developing speaking skills. In bilingual settings, children often switch between languages, practicing vocabulary and sentence structures in authentic contexts (Kidsville, 2024)
- Pretend play and role-play: Dressing up, acting out scenarios and using props stimulate imagination and narrative development. These activities help children experiment with language, express emotions, and build conversational skills (Freidman-Krauss and Weisenfeld, 2025)
- Music and movement: Singing, dancing and rhythmic games are joyful and support phonological awareness, memory and expressive language. These multisensory experiences are especially effective for bilingual learners, as they reinforce sounds and patterns across languages (Portobello, Institute, 2024)
- Exploration of nature and materials: Outdoor play and rich sensory environments such as sand, water and recycled materials, invite children to ask questions, describe textures and engage in inquiry-based dialogue. These moments naturally promote vocabulary expansion and language fluency (Freidman-Krauss and Weisenfeld, 2025)

2.2.3 Importance of the environment and interactions

In early childhood education, significant moments, those emotionally resonant, socially rich or cognitive challenging experiences, play a vital role in shaping how children learn and develop language. Research has emphasized the importance of emotionally meaningful interactions, culturally responsive teaching and child-led inquiry for deep learning and language development.

These moments often occur when:

Children feel emotionally safe and valued: Warm relationships with teachers and peers create a secure base for exploration. In bilingual settings, this emotional safety encourages children to take risks with language, try new words and express themselves without fear of correction (UNESCO, 2024).

Play leads to discovery: When children face something surprising, challenging or personally relevant such as solving a problem during Loose Parts play, they are more likely to engage deeply and use language to process their experience. (Evans and Mbullu, 2025)

Cultural and linguistic identity is affirmed: Activities that reflect children's home languages, traditions and stories foster pride and motivation. These moments validate bilingualism and encourage children to use both languages in meaning ways (UNESCO, 2024).

Adults guide learning at the right moment: Timely questions, prompts or expansions from educators during play or conversation help children stretch their thinking and language use. These interactions often become memorable learning moments (Evan and Mbullu, 2025)

Children make connections across contexts: When a child links something learned at home to an activity at school like recognizing a word in both languages or applying concepts they are experience a sense of mastery that reinforces language development (National Institute for Early Education Research 2024)

Educators can intentionally design environments and interactions that maximize these moments. In bilingual preschool classrooms, recognizing and nurturing significant

moments helps children build speaking skills through emotionally rich, socially grounded and cognitively stimulating experiences.

2.3 TEACHING ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Teaching English as a second language (ESL) in early childhood involves understanding how young children acquire language, how their brains respond to bilingual input and how educators can foster development through meaningful age-appropriate strategies. Recent research has emphasized the importance of emotionally engaging environments, neuroscience informed teaching and culturally responsive pedagogy in bilingual education.

2.3.1 Neurocognitive processes

Three influential scholars; Jim Cummins, Stephen Krashen and Patricia Khul have shaped contemporary understanding of second language acquisition in early childhood.

Jim Cummins introduced the distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). BICS refers to conversational fluency developed through social interaction, while CALP involves the language needed for academic success. In preschool, children begin developing BICS through play and peer engagement, which lays the foundation for future academic language (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2023)

2.3.2 Krashen Hypothesis

Stephen Krashen proposed five key hypotheses, including the Comprehensible Input Hypothesis and the Affective Filter Hypothesis. He emphasized that children acquire language best when exposed to understandable input low-stress, engaging environments. Preschool classrooms that incorporate songs, stories and play provide ideal conditions for ESL learning (Beelinguapp.2023)

Patricia Kuhl's neuroscience research highlights the brain's sensitivity to language during early childhood. Her studies show that infants and young children are "neural statisticians" detecting patterns in speech and forming language maps. This supports the idea that bilingual exposure during the critical period enhances phonetic perception and cognitive flexibility (Kuhl et.al., 2024)

Recent neuroscience and education research in Costa Rica and other countries reveal that bilingual learning activates multiple brain regions related to memory, attention and auditory processing. These findings underscore the importance of early, emotionally rich exposure to both languages.

Neural plasticity allows young children to form linguistic connections rapidly, especially when exposed to meaningful and emotionally positive interactions in both languages (Pena Garay, 2024)

2.3.3 Early bilingualism

Early bilingualism enhances executive functions such as cognitive flexibility and selective attention. These skills develop as children switch between languages and adapt their communication to different contexts (Boese et. al., 2023)

Multisensory learning through music, movement and hands on activities stimulates auditory and motor areas of the brain, reinforcing vocabulary and expressive language in ESL learners (UNESCO, 2024)

Educators who understand these neurological and theoretical foundations can design bilingual environments that support natural language acquisition. In Costa Rican preschool settings, integrating culturally relevant materials and play-based strategies aligns with both local curriculum and international best practices.

2.4 LOOSE PARTS METHODOLOGY

2.4.1 Origin and Theory of Loose Parts

The Loose Parts methodology is a pedagogical approach that emphasizes the use of open-ended materials to foster creativity, exploration and problem solving in early childhood education. Originally conceptualized by Simon Nicholson, the theory posits that the richness of an environment defined by the variety and accessibility of its materials directly influences children's creativity and inventiveness. Nicholson argued that "in any environment, the degree of inventiveness and creativity and the possibility of discovery are directly proportional to the number and kind of variables in it" (Nicholson, as cited in Cankaya Martin, and Haugen, 2023)

This idea was later embraced and expanded by Loris Malaguzzi, founder of the Reggio Emilia approach, who viewed children as capable, curious learners. In Reggio inspired classrooms, Loose Parts are integral to the "hundred languages of children" allowing them to express ideas through diverse materials (Scott Little, 2025)

2.4.2 Theoretical Foundations

The Loose Parts methodology is rooted in the work of two influential theorists: Simon Nicholson and Loris Malaguzzi. Their contributions provide the philosophical and pedagogical foundation for using open-ended materials to foster creativity, autonomy and cognitive development in early childhood education.

2.4.3 Simon Nicholson and the theory of Loose Parts

Simon Nicholson, a British architect and designer introduced the Theory of Loose Parts in the 1970s. He argued that creativity is not a fixed trait, but a dynamic process influenced by the environment. According to Nicholson

“In any environment, the degree of inventiveness and creativity, and the possibility of discovery, are directly proportional to the number and kind of variables in it” (Nicholson, as cited in Cankaya, Martin and Haugen, 2023).

This idea challenged traditional views of play and learning by emphasizing the importance of flexible, manipulable materials that children can use in countless ways. Nicholson's theory has gained renewed relevance in contemporary early childhood education, particularly in bilingual and multicultural contexts. In Costa Rica educators have adapted Loose Parts environments to reflect local culture and sustainability goals, using materials such as clay, driftwood and recycled packaging support creative exploration and environmental awareness (Scott Little, 2025)

2.4.4 Loris Malaguzzi and the Reggio Emilia approach

Loris Malaguzzi, the founder of the Reggio Emilia philosophy, expanded on Nicholson's ideas by emphasizing the role of the child as an active, competent learner. He believed that children possess a hundred languages, a metaphor for the diverse ways in which they express themselves, including through art, movement, construction and play. Loose Parts are central to this philosophy, serving as tools for exploration, communication and meaning making (Wunderled, 2025)

In Reggio Emilia inspired classrooms, materials are carefully selected to provoke curiosity and support inquiry. Children are encouraged to manipulate objects, test hypotheses and collaborate with peers, all with a prepared environment. This approach aligns with Costa Rica's national emphasis on inclusive, inquiry-based learning and supports bilingual development by integrating language use into creative play.

Malaguzzi's vision continues to influence early childhood education globally, including in Costa Rica, where educators are increasingly adopting Reggio principles to support holistic development. Loose Parts methodology, grounded in both Nicholson's environmental theory and Malaguzzi's child-centered pedagogy, offers a powerful framework for fostering creativity, autonomy and linguistic growth in children aged four to five.

2.4.5 Types of materials

The selection of Loose Parts is guided by principles of sustainability, accessibility and cultural relevance. In Costa Rica, early childhood settings, educators increasingly incorporate locally sourced and eco-friendly materials to align with national sustainability

goals and promote environmental awareness. For example, repurposed coffee bean sacks, driftwood and clay are used to connect children with their natural surroundings while supporting sensory exploration and fine motor development (Scott Little, 2025)

These materials are often organized in “provocation stations” or thematic corners, where children can engage in self-directed play. The flexibility of Loose Parts allows educators to adapt them to bilingual learning contexts, supporting both language acquisition and cognitive development through storytelling, role-play and collaborative construction.

2.4.6 Educator’s Role

While Loose Parts play is child- led, the educator’s role is essential in curating materials, designing provocations and supporting learning. In Costa Rican and international contexts, educators are increasingly trained to observe children’s play, document creative processes and extend learning through thoughtful questions and challenges (Scott Little, 2025) This reflective practice ensures that creativity is nurtured with a safe, inclusive and linguistically rich environment.

2.4.7 Cognitive and linguistic benefits

Loose Parts are materials that can be moved, combined, redesigned, taken apart and put back together in multiple ways. They are not prescriptive and do not have a single intended use, which makes them ideal for stimulating imaginative play and divergent thinking. These materials may include natural items such as stones, sticks, leaves. Recycled objects like bottle caps, cardboard tubes, CD’s. Their open- ended

nature encourages children to explore possibilities, solve problems and express themselves creatively without fear of failure or judgement (Gull, Levenson Goldstein and Rosengarten, 2022)

Loose Parts play has been linked to enhanced cognitive flexibility, spatial reasoning, and executive functioning. A recent systematic review found that indoor Loose Parts environments significantly support children's cognitive development by encouraging hypothesis testing, symbolic representation and narrative construction (Cankaya et al., 2023). In bilingual classrooms, these materials also serve as linguistic bridges, enabling children to experiment with vocabulary and syntax in both languages through play.

By fostering autonomy and imaginative exploration, Loose Parts methodology aligns with Costa Rica's emphasis on holistic, inclusive and inquiry-based early childhood education. It empowers children to become active participants in their learning journey cultivating not only creativity but also resilience, collaboration and critical thinking.

Creativity is the cornerstone of early childhood development, and the Loose Parts methodology offers a dynamic framework for cultivating it. By providing children with open-ended materials that invite exploration, transformation and self-expression. Educators create environments where creativity is not only encouraged but embedded in daily learning experiences.

In the context of preschool education, creativity involves the ability to generate original ideas, solve problems and express thoughts through various symbolic forms. It is closely linked to cognitive flexibility, emotional regulation and social collaboration. For bilingual learners aged four to five, creativity also supports language development by encouraging experimentation with vocabulary, storytelling and role-play in both languages (Gull, Levenson Goldstein and Rosengarten, 2022)

Loose Parts environments naturally foster these skills. Children are free to manipulate materials, invent scenarios and construct meaning without fear of error. This autonomy promotes intrinsic motivation and sense of agency key drivers of creative thinking.

Loose Parts play is inherently creative because it is child- directed and process-oriented. A single object can serve multiple functions depending on the child's imagination: a stick might become a wand, a bridge or a writing tool. This fluidity supports divergent thinking and encourages children to explore multiple solutions to a single challenge.

Recent research confirms that Loose Parts environments enhance creativity by promoting symbolic representation, hypothesis testing and narrative construction. Cankaya, Martin and Haugen (2023) found that children engaged in Loose Parts play demonstrated increased cognitive flexibility and creative problem solving. These findings align with Costa Rica's national emphasis on inquiry- based learning and holistic development in preschool education.

In bilingual classrooms, Loose Parts also serve as linguistic tools. Children often use materials to act out stories, label objects and negotiate roles activities that naturally integrate language learning with creative exploration. This dual engagement strengthens expressive and receptive language skills while reinforcing cultural identity and collaborative learning.

2.5 SPEAKING SKILLS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

2.5.1 Definition

Speaking skills are fundamental aspects of early childhood development, especially in bilingual educational settings. These skills encompass the ability to express thoughts, emotions and ideas through spoken language and are closely linked to cognitive, social and emotional growth. For children aged four to five, developing speaking skills involves acquiring vocabulary, understanding meaning and achieving fluency in one or more languages.

2.5.2 What are speaking skills?

Speaking skills refer to the capacity to produce and organize spoken language in a way that is coherent, contextually appropriate and socially meaningful. In early childhood, this includes the ability to name objects, describe actions, ask questions and engage in conversations. These skills are not only linguistic but also cognitive, as they require children to process information, retrieve words and construct sentences in real time (Sarmiento Campos et.al., 2022)

In bilingual contexts, speaking skills also involve navigating two linguistic systems, which can enhance metalinguistic awareness and cognitive flexibility when supported appropriately.

2.5.3 Oral Production competences.

- a) Vocabulary: is the foundation of speaking skills. It enables children to label objects, express emotions and describe experiences. Rich vocabulary exposure through songs, books and conversations enhances both expressive and receptive language.
- b) Comprehension: involves understanding spoken language, which is essential for meaningful interaction. It is supported by contextual cues, repetition and visual aids.
- c) Fluency: refers to the smooth, coherent production of speech. It develops through practice, feedback and opportunities to engage in extended dialogue.

In bilingual classrooms, these components are nurtured through play-based learning, thematic units and culturally relevant materials that reflect children's lived experiences.

2.5.4 Common difficulties in early communication

Children may face several challenges when developing speaking skills, especially in bilingual environments

- Limited vocabulary: Children may struggle to find the right words, especially when learning two languages simultaneously.
- Comprehension gaps: Difficulty understanding instructions or questions can limit participation.
- Fluency issues: Hesitations, repetitions or incomplete sentences may occur as children learn to organize their thoughts verbally.
- Pronunciation and articulation: Some children may have trouble producing certain sounds, which can affect clarity.
- Social anxiety or shyness: Emotional factors can impact a child's willingness to speak, especially in unfamiliar settings.

Educators in Costa Rica and globally address these challenges through intentional language modeling, visual supports and interactive activities that build confidence and competence.

2.5.5 Sociocultural Approach to Language (Vygotsky and Rogoff)

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and language in cognitive development. He proposed that children learn through guided participation with more knowledgeable others, such as teachers and peers. His concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) highlights how speaking skills develop when children are scaffolded to express themselves just beyond their current abilities (McLeod, 2025).

Barbara Rogoff expanded on Vygotsky's ideas by emphasizing guided participation and apprenticeship in thinking. She argued that children's learning is

embedded in cultural practices and social contexts and that speaking skills emerge through collaborative engagement and shared experiences (Rogoff, 2025). In Costa Rican preschool settings, these theories support inclusive, play- based strategies that promote oral language development through storytelling, role- play and peer interaction.

2.6 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOOSE PARTS AND SPEAKING SKILLS

2.6.1 Loose Parts as a foundation for language development

Loose Parts methodology is based on the idea that children learn best when they are free to explore open-ended materials such as stones, shells, cardboard and fabric. These materials invite creativity and problem-solving, but they also stimulate oral language. When children negotiate roles, describe their constructions, or narrate imaginative scenarios, they practice vocabulary, sentence structure and expressive fluency (Edutopia, 2025, para.5)

2.6.2 International Perspectives on Loose Parts and Speaking Skills

International studies confirm that Loose Parts environments foster oral communication. Cankaya, Martin and Haugen (2024, para.3) found that children engaged in Loose Parts play develop narratives and dialogues that strengthen linguistic

competence. Gull, Bogunovich, Levenson Goldstein and Rosengarten (2019, para.2) emphasize that outdoor Loose Parts classrooms provide authentic opportunities for children to verbalize ideas, collaborate and refine expressive language. Similarly, Haughey (2025, para 4) highlights that Loose Parts activities encourage storytelling and peer to peer dialogue which are essential for early literacy and speaking skills.

2.6.3 Costa Rican Context and Bilingual Education

In Costa Rica, the Ministry of Public Education (Ministerio de Educacion Publica (MEP), 2022, para 4) underscores play-based strategies as fundamental for preschool education, particularly in bilingual contexts. Loose Parts methodology aligns with these national guidelines by offering children authentic opportunities to practice oral communication in both Spanish and English. This dual- language practice is especially relevant in international schools, where children navigate multiple linguistic environments.

The *Guia Docente del Programa de Estudio Educación Preescolar* further highlights the importance of oral communication and interaction as central to preschool learning. It underscores that bilingual education should not only focus on vocabulary acquisition but also on meaningful exchanges that allow children to express ideas, emotions and cultural identity in both languages (MEP, 2016, p. 23).

Costa Rica's broader educational policy, *Educación para una Nueva Ciudadanía* frames bilingualism as a tool for preparing children to participate in a globalized world while maintaining national identity. This policy stresses citizenship, inclusivity and

sustainability, position bilingual preschool education as a foundation for intercultural competence (MEP, 2018, p.12)

Loose Parts methodology aligns seamlessly with these national priorities. By offering open-ended materials, children are encouraged to experiment, narrate and negotiate meaning in both Spanish and English. This approach emphasizes creativity, autonomy and active participation in early childhood education. In international schools, where linguistic diversity is more pronounced, Loose Parts activities provide authentic opportunities for children to bridge languages naturally, reinforcing both communicative competence and socio- emotional growth.

2.6.4 Inclusion and Confidence Building

Costa Rican educators have observed that Loose Parts activities promote inclusion by allowing children with varying language abilities to participate through gestures, sounds and emerging words. Over time, these interactions build confidence and support the gradual development of speaking skills (MEP, 2022, para.6) This inclusive aspect is crucial in bilingual classrooms, where children may be at different stages of language acquisition.

2.6.5 Social- Emotional and Communicative Competencies

Finally, the relationship between Loose Parts and speaking skills extends beyond vocabulary growth. It nurtures social-emotional competencies such as listening, turn-taking and empathy. By engaging in collaborative play, children learn to articulate their

thoughts clearly, respond to peers and co-construct meaning. These skills are foundational not only for academic success but also for effective communication in multicultural societies (Cankaya et al., 2024, para.5, Gull et. al., 2019, para. 3).

Recent studies emphasize that Loose Parts Play fosters executive function, creativity and agency which are directly tied to children's ability to regulate emotions and engage in cooperative dialogue. Beloglovsky (2021) notes that when children manipulate open-ended materials, they practice negotiation, problem-solving and perspective talking skills that strengthen both socio-emotional learning and oral communication. Similarly, open-ended play environments encourage children to listen actively, respect diverse viewpoints and build resilience, all of which are essential for bilingual learners navigating multiple cultural and linguistic contexts (ChildCareEd, 2023, para. 4)

Moreover, Loose Parts activities provide authentic opportunities for children to practice empathy and collaboration. When children co-create structures or narratives using versatile materials, they must coordinate roles, share ideas and adapt to others' contributions. This dynamic interaction enhances their communicative competence by requiring them to express needs, clarify misunderstanding and celebrate collective achievements (Lovely Commotion Preschool Resources, 2022, para. 6).

In bilingual preschool settings, these competencies are particularly valuable. Children not only expand their vocabulary but also develop the confidence to use language as a tool for social connection and emotional expression. Thus, Loose Parts

methodology supports holistic development, preparing children to thrive academically and socially in diverse, multicultural environments.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 TYPE OF RESEARCH

3.1.1 Applied Research

It is crucial to describe the characteristics of every research problem in order to clarify the scope and relevance of the study. The purpose of this research is applied, since it seeks to implement a pedagogical strategy *Loose Parts methodology* to strengthen children's oral communication skills in bilingual preschool contexts. Unlike purely theoretical studies, applied research aims to generate practical solutions that can be transferred directly to educational practice (Hernandez- Sampieri et al., 2014, p. 5).

In this case, the study intends to provide teachers with innovative strategies that address specific weaknesses in children's speaking abilities, such as limited vocabulary use, difficulties in turn-taking or lack of confidence in oral expression. By applying Loose Parts methodology, the research not only explores its effectiveness but also generates recommendations that can be adapted to diverse bilingual preschool environments. The applied nature of this study ensures that its findings will contribute to both academic knowledge and classroom practice, offering concrete tools for educators to foster children's communicative and socio-emotional development.

3.1.2 Temporal Dimension

The temporal dimension of this research is transversal, as the data collection and analysis are conducted within a specific and limited period of time. Transversal studies focus on observing and analyzing phenomena at a single point in time, rather than following participants across extended periods (Hernandez- Sampieri et al., 2014, p. 151).

In this case, the investigation will be applied during a defined timeframe in which children's oral communication skills are assessed through the implementation of Loose Parts methodology. The transversal design allows the researcher to capture the immediate impact of strategy on children's speaking abilities, social interaction and communicative competencies. Although the study does not extend longitudinally, it provides a detailed snapshot of children's behavior and results, offering valuable insights into the effectiveness of Loose Parts in Bilingual preschool contexts.

This temporal dimension is appropriate because it aligns with the practical nature of applied research, enabling the generation of recommendations and strategies that can be implemented promptly in educational settings. By focusing on a specific period, the study ensures that the findings are both manageable and relevant to the current needs of bilingual preschool education in Costa Rica.

3.2 FRAMEWORK

3.2.1 Micro

The framework of this research is micro, as it is delimited to a specific group within a single educational institution. Micro-level studies focus on analyzing phenomena in a reduced and precise context, allowing the researcher to observe details with greater depth and accuracy (Hernandez- Sampieri et al.,2014, p. 152).

In this case, the investigation will be applied to one preschool grade within an international school in Costa Rica. This delimitation ensures that the study remains manageable while still providing meaningful insights into the effectiveness of the Loose

Parts methodology for enhancing oral communication skills in bilingual preschoolers. By concentrating on a specific classroom, the research can generate detailed observations about children's interactions, speaking abilities and socio-emotional competencies, which may later serve as a foundation for broader applications in similar educational contexts.

The micro framework is appropriate because it aligns with the applied nature of the study, ensuring that the findings are directly relevant to the immediate educational environment. At the same time, the results can inform future research at meso or macro levels, contributing to the development of strategies that support bilingual preschool education more broadly.

3.3 Nature

The nature of this investigation is a mixed- method, as it combines qualitative and quantitative techniques to obtain a comprehensive understanding of children's communicative and socio-emotional development through the implementation of Loose Parts methodology. A mixed-method design allows the researcher to explore phenomena in depth while also incorporating measurable indicators that strengthen the validity of findings (Hernandez- Sampieri et al., 2014, p. 364).

On the qualitative side, the study emphasizes the richness of context, meanings and interactions. Information will be gathered through classroom observations, anecdotal records and children's communicative behaviors during play- based activities. This approach makes it possible to analyze how children express themselves, negotiate meaning and develop oral communication skills in bilingual contexts. It also captures

socio-emotional competencies such as empathy, turn- talking and active listening which are essential for language learning.

On the quantitative side, structured rubrics and coding instruments will be applied to measure specific indicators of vocabulary use, fluency and comprehension. This numerical data will complement the qualitative insights, enabling the researcher to identify patterns. Compare baseline and post- intervention results and evaluate the effectiveness of Loose Parts methodology with greater precision.

By integrating both perspectives, the mixed- method approach ensures that findings are deeply contextualized while also supported by measurable children's experiences and the impact of Loose Parts methodology on their speaking skills, offering insights that can inform practical strategies for bilingual preschool education in Costa Rica.

3.3.1 Character of the research

The character of this research is descriptive, as it focuses on portraying and detailing the phenomenon under study with precision and clarity. Rather than centering on interpretation or explanation, descriptive research seeks to capture the observable features, circumstances and dynamics that define the situation being investigated. Its purpose is to provide a comprehensive account of what occurs, highlighting patterns, behavior and conditions without necessarily delving into casual analysis (Hernandez-Sampieri et al., 2014, p.33).

In this case, the study describes how the Loose Parts methodology is applied in bilingual preschool classrooms and how it relates to the development of oral communication skills in young children. The descriptive character is reflected in the

careful observation and recording of children's actions, verbal expressions and interactions during play-based activities. It emphasizes documenting the frequency, variety and context of communicative behaviors as well as the classroom practices and bilingual dynamics that accompany them.

This approach is appropriate because it allows this research to generate a clear and structured picture of the phenomenon, offering educators a reliable account of how children engage in oral communication when exposed to Loose Parts methodology. By presenting detailed descriptions of behaviors and classroom conditions, the study provides a foundation upon which future analytical or interpretative investigations can build, while also offering practical insights for bilingual preschool education in Costa Rica.

3.4 SUBJECT AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Population from the investigation

3.4.1. Firsthand sources in the research

Table 1

Author/ Organization	Country	University/ Organization	Year	Contribution
Nicholson, S.	United Kingdom	University of Newcastle upon Tyne	1971	Originator of the Loose Parts Theory foundational for the

				framework
Beloglovsky, M.	United States	Sacramento State University / Playful Transformation	2021	Expanded Loose Parts into socio- emotional learning, emphasizing play as a tool for holistic development.
Maxwell, L., Evans, G., & Parnell, R.	United States	University of Georgia (Maxwell)/ Cornell University (Evans) / University of Sheffield (Parnell)	2021	Studied Loose Parts and language development in preschoolers, directly linking play to oral communication growth.
Garcia, O., & Wei, L.	United States	City University of New York (CUNY) (Garcia)/ University College London (UCL) (Wei)	2021	Key voices in bilingual education and translanguaging, crucial for scaffolding oral language in bilingual preschool contexts.

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3.4.2 Secondhand sources

Table 2

Author/ Organization	Country	University/ Organization	Year	Contribution
Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J.D.	United States	University of Michigan (J. Creswell)/ University of Nebraska- Lincoln (J.D. Creswell)	2021	Key reference for research design (qualitative and quantitative, mixed methods) supporting your methodology framework.
Etikan, I., & Bala, K.	Nigeria	Near East University	2017	Important for sampling methods, justifying the universe/ sample selection in the thesis.
Hernández- Sampieri, R.,	Mexico	Universidad de Celaya	2014	Classic text on research

Fernández-Collado, C., & Baptista- Lucio, P.		(Hernández-Sampieri)/ Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (UNAM)		methodology, widely used in Latin America, grounding your design choices.
Ministerio de Educación Publica (MEP)	Costa Rica	Government of Costa Rica - Ministry of Public Education	2014-2022	Provides official preschool curriculum and pedagogical guidelines, ensuring your intervention aligns with national standards.
Gardner, H.	United States	Harvard University	1983	Introduced Multiple Intelligences Theory, relevant for justifying diverse oral language activities.
Piaget, J.	Switzerland	University of Geneva	1952	Classic developmental

				theory on origins of intelligence, supporting play-based learning foundations.
Vygotsky, L.S.	Russia	Institute of Psychology/ Moscow	1978	Sociocultural theory and scaffolding, crucial for explaining interaction and turn-taking in oral language.
UNESCO	International	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	2024	Global report on early childhood education, situating the thesis within international policy frameworks.

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3.3 SAMPLE SELECTION

3.3.1 The population

The population of this research consists of all Pre-K students enrolled at an international school in Belen, Heredia. This group represents the broader universe of learners who could potentially benefit from the implementation of Loose Parts methodology in oral language development.

3.5 SAMPLE SELECTION

The sample is the specific group of students selected from the population to participate in the study. For this research, the sample will be the Pre-K class (children aged four to five years old). The decision to work with this group was based on the willingness and support of the school administration and parents who expressed interest in evaluating whether the Loose Parts methodology could enhance children's speaking skills. This purposeful selection ensures that the study is feasible and contextually relevant.

3.5.1 Non- Probabilistic

The sampling technique employed in this study is non-probabilistic, specifically purposive sampling. This approach was chosen because the researcher intentionally excluded the majority of the population to focus on a specific group of students. The selection was guided by practical considerations (school and parent disposition) and the alignment of the group's developmental stage with the study's objectives.

Non-probabilistic sampling is common in qualitative educational research, as it allows for in depth exploration of phenomenon within a defined context (Etikan and Bala, 2027; Creswell and Creswell, 2021)

3.6 TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS TO COLLECT DATA

The techniques and instruments to collect data for the conclusions of the investigation are based on systematic classroom observations. These observations allow the researcher to document children's oral production competences during both pre- activities and intervention activities.

3.6.1 Pre-Activities and Post- Activities

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the Loose Parts intervention, the study will incorporate a sequence of three pre- activities and three post- activities. The pre- activities are designed to establish a baseline of the children's oral communication skills, focusing on vocabulary, fluency, coherence and comprehension prior to the implementation of the intervention. The post- activities, conducted after the intervention, will serve to identify changes and improvements in these same dimensions, allowing for a comparative analysis of progress.

Both the pre- activities and post- activities will be systematically documented and analyzed using anecdotal records and structured observation rubrics. Anecdotal records will capture qualitative details such as specific words used, moments of hesitation and peer interactions, while the rubrics will provide a quantitative framework to assess performance across the targeted oral production competences. This dual approach

ensures a comprehensive evaluation of the children's communicative development, highlighting measurable outcomes and contextualized behaviors.

3.6.2 Anecdotal Records

Following the definition by Cohen & Manion (1994), anecdotal records are brief, objective descriptions of significant behaviors or events observed in natural contexts. In this study, anecdotal records are used to capture spontaneous vocabulary use, fluency markers (pauses, connectors, sentence length), comprehension (following instructions, retelling, elaborating) and interaction, turn-taking during each activity.

To provide qualitative evidence of children's oral language behaviors in authentic play situations. Anecdotal records (annex 1) will be completed for each child during three pre-activities and three intervention activities. Each activity will be observed once per child resulting in six anecdotal records per student.

3.6.3 Observation Rubric

Observation rubrics, as described by Brookhart (2013) are structured instruments that define performance criteria across levels of proficiency. In this study, the rubric focuses on Oral Production Competences with four dimensions: vocabulary used in oral production, fluency in spoken communication, coherence in spoken communication, and comprehension in spoken questions, instructions and peer contributions. Each dimension is assessed across four levels: Level 1- Emerging, Level 2 - Developing, Level 3 - Proficient, and Level 4 - Advanced. The purpose of the observation rubric (annex 2) is to provide systematic, comparable data on children's oral language growth

across activities. The rubric will be applied during each of the three pre-activities and three intervention activities, allowing for baseline and post- intervention comparisons. Each child will be rated once per activity, resulting in six rubric entries per participant.

3.7 OPERATIONALIZATION OF VARIABLES

The next table is used to explain the procedures of the research that will connect with the general objective and specific objectives to demonstrate the variables of the study.

General Objective: To determine the effectiveness of applying Loose Parts as a pedagogical tool in speaking skills in early childhood education with kids from four to five years old in an International School located in Belén Heredia during the first quarter of 2026.

Table 3

Specific Objectives	Variable	Conceptual Definition	Instrumental Definition	Observational Definition
To identify the baseline levels of oral language skills (vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension) in 4- to 5-year-	Baseline Oral Language Skills with the Pre-Activities	Oral Language skills refer to a student's ability to understand and produce spoken language, including	Application of initial observation rubric and anecdotal records to assess student's	The researcher observes and records how students use words, express ideas, respond to questions and maintain

old children before implementing loose parts play activities during the first quarter of 2026.		vocabulary use, fluency, coherence and comprehension .	speaking skills before the intervention.	verbal interactions during regular classroom activities.
To implement a series of developmentally appropriate activities using loose parts in promoting verbal expression and oral communication in playful and structured settings for preschool children at the	Loose Parts Intervention Activities	Loose Parts are open-ended materials that students can manipulate, combine, redesign and transform to support creativity, communication and problem solving.	Implementation of three structured Loose Parts activities designed to stimulate vocabulary, fluency, coherence and comprehension through guided and free- play scenarios.	The researcher facilitates and documents student's participation, verbal interactions, turn-taking, and expressive language during each Loose Parts activity.

American International School of Costa Rica.				
To analyze changes in children's speaking skills focusing on vocabulary use , fluency, and comprehension after the loose parts intervention by comparing initial and final performance using observation rubrics and anecdotal records during	Changes in Speaking Skills	Speaking skills refer to the student's ability to verbally express ideas with clarity, appropriate vocabulary, fluency and understanding of messages.	Comparison of pre and post intervention scores using the same observation rubric and anecdotal records to measure progress.	The researcher evaluates improvements in vocabulary richness, sentence structure , fluency, coherence and comprehension by analyzing differences between initial and final observations.

the first quarter of 2026.				
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3.8 ACTIVITIES

3.8.1 Pre- Intervention Activities

The objective with the pre-intervention activities is to identify the baseline levels of oral language skills (vocabulary, fluency, coherence and comprehension) in 4- to 5-year-old children before implementing loose parts play activities during the first quarter of 2026.

Table 4

Activity 1: Show and Tell about Community Helpers		
Objective	Materials	Procedure

Assess the student ability to use age-appropriate vocabulary and fluency when describing familiar roles.	Pictures, puppets, or props related to community helpers (doctor, firefighter, teacher, etc.).	- Each student selects a picture/prop of a community helper. The child presents it to peers, naming the helper and describing what they do. - The teacher prompts with guiding questions (<i>“What tools does a firefighter use?”</i>).
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Table 5

Activity 2: Picture Story Retelling		
Objective	Materials	Procedure
Evaluate comprehension and fluency through narrative retelling.	A short picture sequence or wordless storybook (3–4 images).	The teacher shows the sequence of pictures. The student describes what is

		happening in each picture. • Encourage retelling the story in order, using connectors (<i>“and then...”</i>).
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Table 6

Activity 3: Listening and Following Instructions Game		
Objective	Materials	Procedure
Assess comprehension and vocabulary through listening and responding.	Classroom objects (blocks, crayons, chairs, books).	• The teacher gives simple instructions (<i>“Put the book on the chair”</i>). Increase complexity (<i>“Take the crayon, draw a circle, and put it back”</i>). • After completing, ask children to explain

		what they did.
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3.8.2 Intervention Activities

The objective is to implement a series of developmentally appropriate activities using loose parts in promoting verbal expression and oral communication in playful and structured settings for preschool children at the American International School of Costa Rica. In order to analyze changes in children's speaking skills focusing on vocabulary use, fluency, and comprehension after the loose parts intervention by comparing initial and final performance using observation rubrics and anecdotal records during the first quarter of 2026.

Table 7

Activity 1: Loose Parts Character Builder		
Objective	Materials	Procedure

Promote vocabulary expansion and fluency by encouraging the student to design and describe characters using Loose Parts.	Loose Parts (buttons, shells, sticks, fabric, lids, stones).	➤ The student selects Loose Parts to create a character (e.g., a person, animal, or imaginary figure). Each child gives their character a name and describes its features. ➤ The student shares their character's role or story with peers, expanding on each other's ideas. ➤ Teacher scaffolds with prompts (<i>"What does your character like to do?" "Can you tell us more about its job?"</i>).
Observation Focus: 1. Vocabulary used in oral production: Naming objects and using descriptive words. 2. Fluency in spoken communication : Constructing sentences, using connectors, maintaining flow. 3. Coherence in spoken communication: Organizing ideas logically, maintaining topic relevance, and linking descriptions into a clear narrative about the character. 4. Comprehension in spoken questions, instructions and peer contributions: Explaining and elaborating on the character's role or actions.		

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Table 8

Activity 2: Loose Parts Picnic Play		
Objective	Materials	Procedure
Encourage turn-taking and oral communication through pretend play in a familiar, simple context.	Loose Parts that can represent food and picnic items (fabric scraps as plates/blankets, bottle caps as cookies, sticks as utensils, beads as fruit).	• The student set up a “picnic” area using Loose Parts. Roles are assigned naturally (someone brings food, someone serves, someone eats). • The students engage in simple role-play conversations: <i>“I have an apple,” “Would you like some juice?”</i> • The teacher models polite exchanges and connectors (<i>“I would like...” “Because I’m thirsty...”</i>).

Observation Focus: • Vocabulary used in oral production: Naming food items and objects. • Fluency in spoken communication : Using short sentences, practicing polite exchanges. • Coherence in spoken communication: Maintaining topic relevance during role-play, linking exchanges logically and sustaining conversational flow without abrupt shifts • Comprehension in spoken questions, instructions and peer contributions: Responding appropriately to peer/teacher questions and offers.		

Selfmade

Table 9

Activity 3: Loose Parts Home Builders		
Objective	Materials	Procedure
Strengthen comprehension and vocabulary by collaboratively building a familiar structure (a house or shelter) and describing its parts.	Loose Parts	- The students work in small groups to build a “home” using Loose Parts (walls with blocks, roof with fabric, stones as decoration). As they build, the teacher prompts them to name and describe each part (<i>“This is the roof,” “We made a door with sticks”</i>). - After finishing, each group explains their home to peers, adding details (<i>“Our house has two windows because...”</i>). - Teacher scaffolds with guiding questions (<i>“Who lives in your house?” “What do you need inside?”</i>).

Observation Focus:

- **Vocabulary used in oral production:** Naming parts of the house and objects used.
- **Fluency in spoken communication ::** Using short sentences and connectors (and, because, then).
- **Coherence in spoken communication:** Organizing ideas in sequence, maintaining topic relevance and linking descriptions into a unified explanation of the home.
- **Comprehension in spoken questions, instructions and peer contributions:**
Explaining the process, responding to questions, retelling what they built.

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CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected throughout the implementation of the Loose Parts intervention. The purpose of this section is to examine the extent to which the proposed activities influenced the development of oral communication skills, specifically vocabulary, fluency, coherence, and comprehension in preschool children aged four to five years.

The analysis is organized around the comparison between three pre-activities and three post-activities, allowing for clear identification of progress and challenges observed during the intervention. Data were systematically gathered through two complementary instruments; observations, rubric, and anecdotal records. The rubric, structured across four dimensions (vocabulary, fluency, coherence and comprehension) provides a quantitative framework to assess performance levels, while the anecdotal records capture qualitative details such as specific words used, moments of hesitation and peer interaction.

By integrating these tools, the chapter seeks to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the children's communicative development. The findings are not only presented descriptively but also connected to the theoretical framework and research objectives, highlighting how Loose Parts activities contributed to scaffolding oral language in bilingual preschool settings. This dual approach ensures that the results are both academically rigorous and pedagogically meaningful, offering insights into the effectiveness of the intervention and its implications for early childhood education.

4.2 OBSERVATION RUBRIC

The observation rubric was developed to evaluate children's oral language development during Loose Parts play, both at baseline (pre-intervention) and after the intervention (post-intervention). It focuses on four critical dimensions of speaking skills: Vocabulary, Fluency, Coherence and Comprehension, which are central to early childhood communication.

Each dimension is described through four progressive levels: Level 1: Emerging, Level 2: Developing, Level 3: Proficient, and Level 4: Advanced.

These levels capture the progression of language growth, ranging from initial attempts at verbalization to advanced, contextually appropriate oral communication. By applying this rubric, the researcher can systematically document changes in children's speaking skills, identify developmental patterns, and compare progress across the intervention period.

This structured approach ensures that observations are consistent, reliable, and aligned with the study's objectives, while also providing qualitative insights into how Loose Parts supports language development in bilingual preschool contexts.

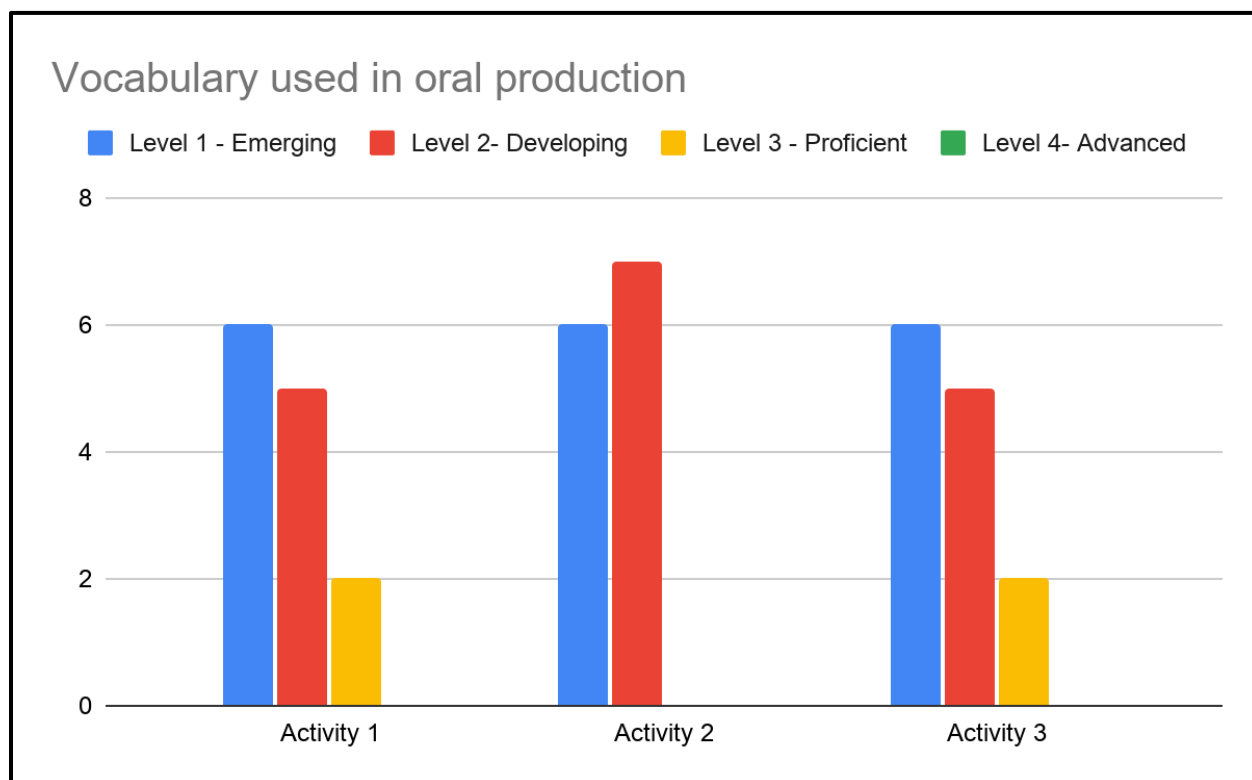
4.2.1 Pre- Activities data analysis

The pre-activity was implemented to establish a baseline of children's oral communication skills prior to the Loose Parts intervention. These activities provided opportunities for spontaneous verbal interaction, allowing the researcher to observe

how children expressed ideas, connected phrases and responded to peers in a natural play context.

Graphic 1

Vocabulary used in oral production



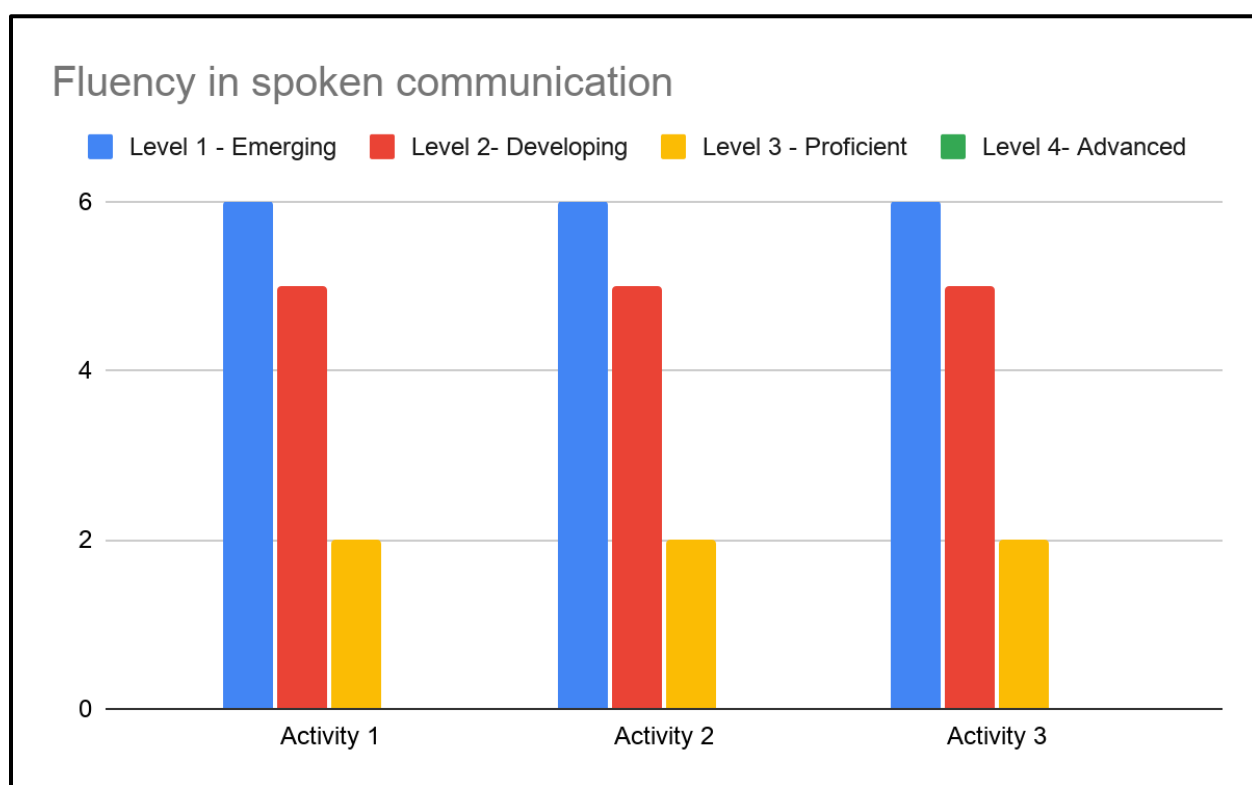
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Across the three pre- activities, the majority of children consistently remained at the Emerging and Developing levels of vocabulary use. In activity 1, most children could name objects and employ some descriptive words, though their vocabulary was basic and limited, with only two reaching the Proficient level. Activity 2 showed slightly stronger participation at the Developing level, yet no children advanced to Proficient or Advanced, indicating that role-play fostered engagement but did not

expand vocabulary beyond simple, repetitive phrases. Activity 3 mirrored Activity 1, with students naming house parts and objects but offering minimal elaboration. Overall, Emerging and Developing levels dominated, while Proficient vocabulary was rare and Advanced vocabulary absent. This pattern highlights that although children engaged actively and attempted naming, their oral production lacked variety, elaboration and spontaneous word use.

Graphic 2

Fluency in spoken communication



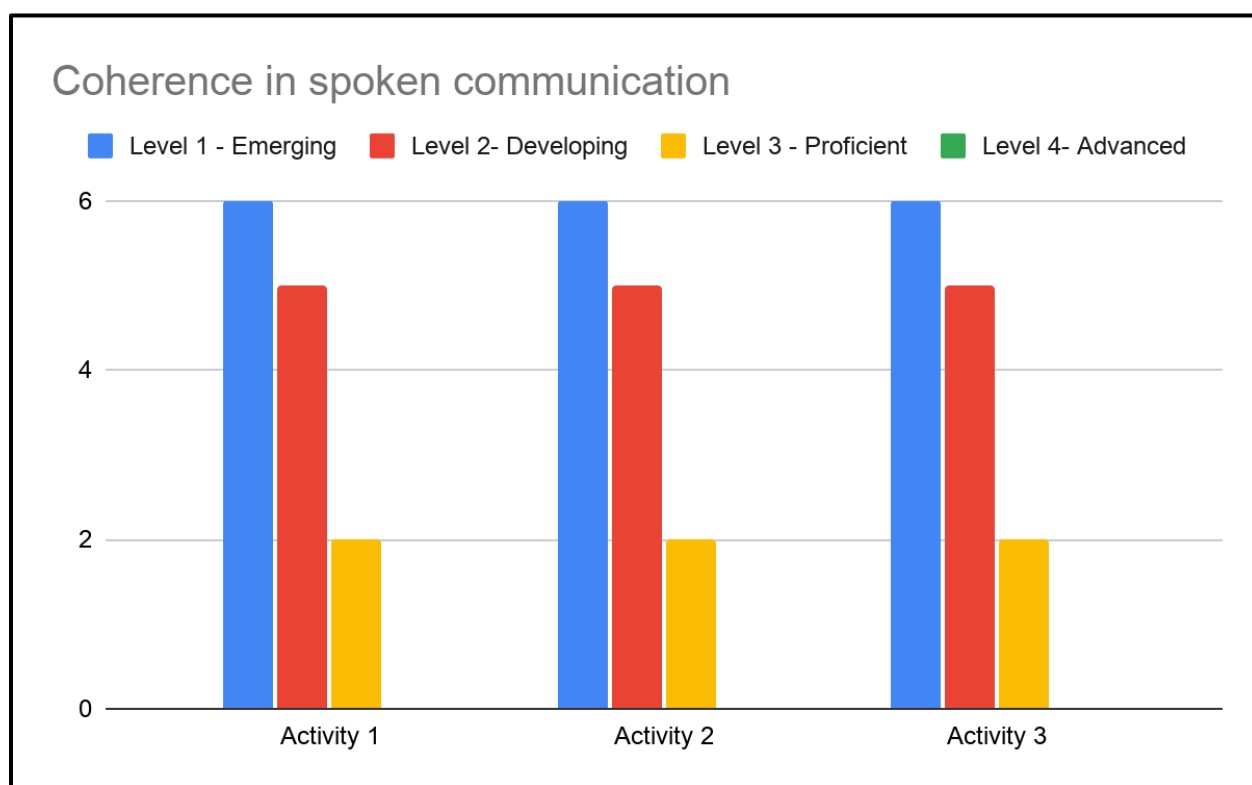
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The results across the three pre- activities reveal a consistent pattern: most children remain at the Emerging and Developing levels, with only a small number

reaching Proficient and none achieving Advanced fluency. This indicates that students' oral communication was characterized by short, fragmented sentences, frequent pauses, and limited use of connectors. Even when engaged in role-play or collaborative building tasks, their speech tended to rely on memorized or formulaic structures rather than spontaneous, connected language. The uniformity across activities suggests that context alone did not significantly influence fluency; children's baseline oral production skills were still in early stages of development.

Graphic 3

Coherence in spoken communication

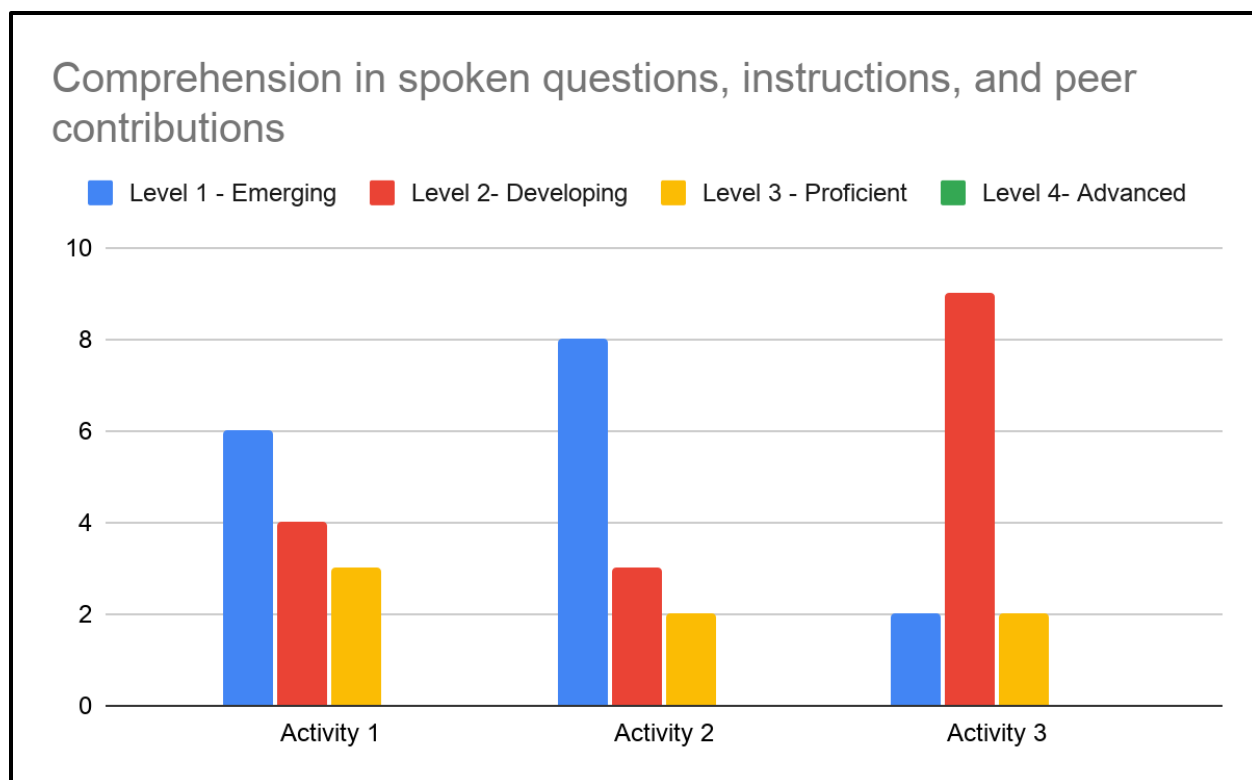


Selfmade

The chart shows a consistent distribution across the three pre-activities: most children are at the Emerging and Developing levels, with only a small number reaching Proficient and none achieving Advanced coherence. This indicates that children's oral communication often lacked logical sequencing and cohesion. Their utterances were fragmented, with ideas presented in isolation rather than connected into a clear narrative. Even when prompted to describe or retell, children tended to stay at a basic level of organization, producing short, related ideas without fully linking them. The small group at the Proficient level demonstrates some ability to maintain coherence in short exchanges, but overall, children struggled to sustain connected discourse across activities.

Graphic 4

Comprehension in spoken questions, instructions and peer contributions



Selfmade

The chart reveals varied comprehension patterns across the three pre-activities. In Activity 1, most children were at the Emerging level, with fewer at Developing and some reaching Proficient. This suggests that while many could follow basic instructions, only a smaller group demonstrated understanding through retelling or elaboration. In activity 2, comprehension was even more limited: the majority were Emerging with only few at Developing and Proficient. Here, children often relied on repetition or observation rather than confidently responding to questions or observation rather than confidently responding to questions or offers. In contrast, Activity 3 showed stronger results: most children reached the Developing level, with smaller groups of Emerging and Proficient. This indicates that collaborative building tasks provide clearer opportunities for children to explain processes and respond meaningfully to peers. Across all activities, Advanced

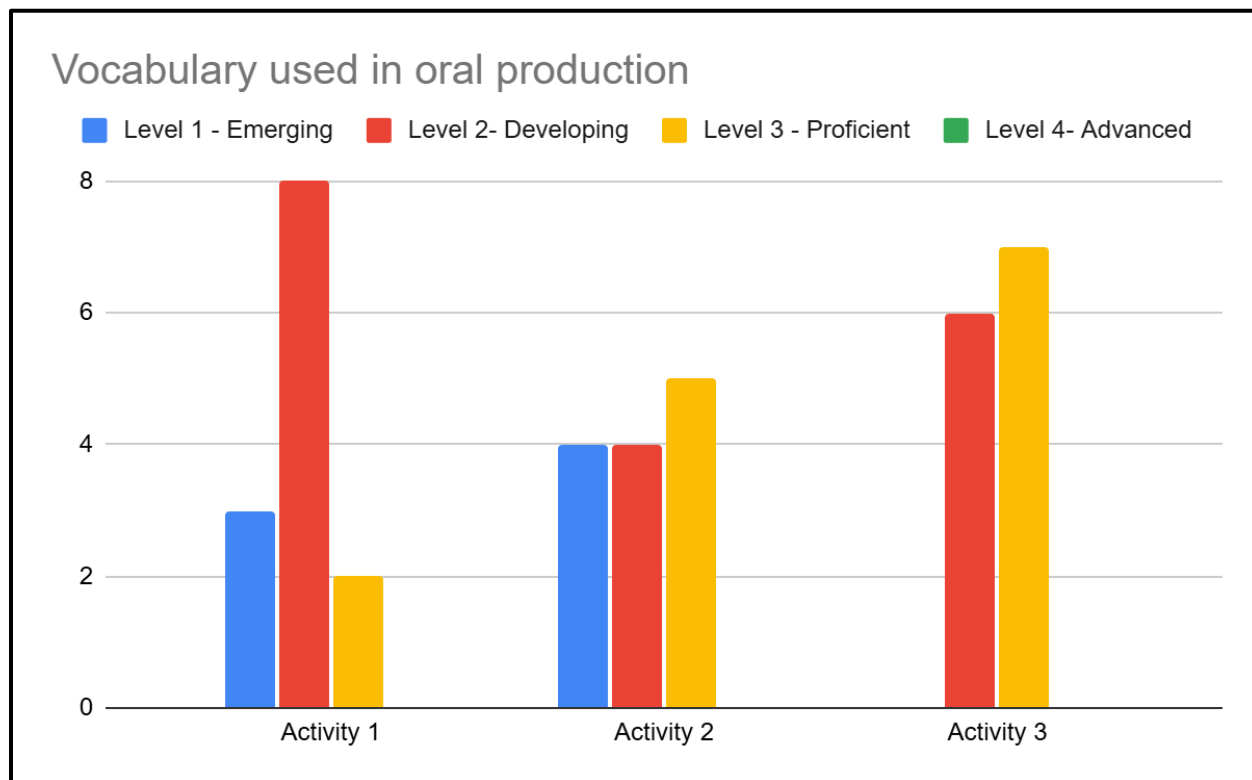
comprehension was absent, highlighting the early stage of children's ability to integrate instructions, peer contributions and elaboration into their oral communication.

4.2.2 Intervention Activities

The intervention activities represent the central phase of the study, as they were designed to stimulate oral communication through the pedagogical use of Loose Parts. A total of three activities were implemented, each focusing on the four dimensions of oral language development: vocabulary, fluency, coherence and comprehension. The analysis presented in this section is based exclusively on the observation rubric which provided a structured framework to evaluate children's performance across these dimensions. By applying the rubric consistently, the researcher was able to identify developmental patterns, track progress and compare outcomes between the pre-intervention and post-intervention stages. This systematic approach ensures that the findings are reliable, coherent and aligned with the study's objectives, offering clear evidence of how Loose Parts activities contributed to the enhancement of oral communication skills in bilingual preschool contexts.

Graphic 5

Vocabulary in oral production

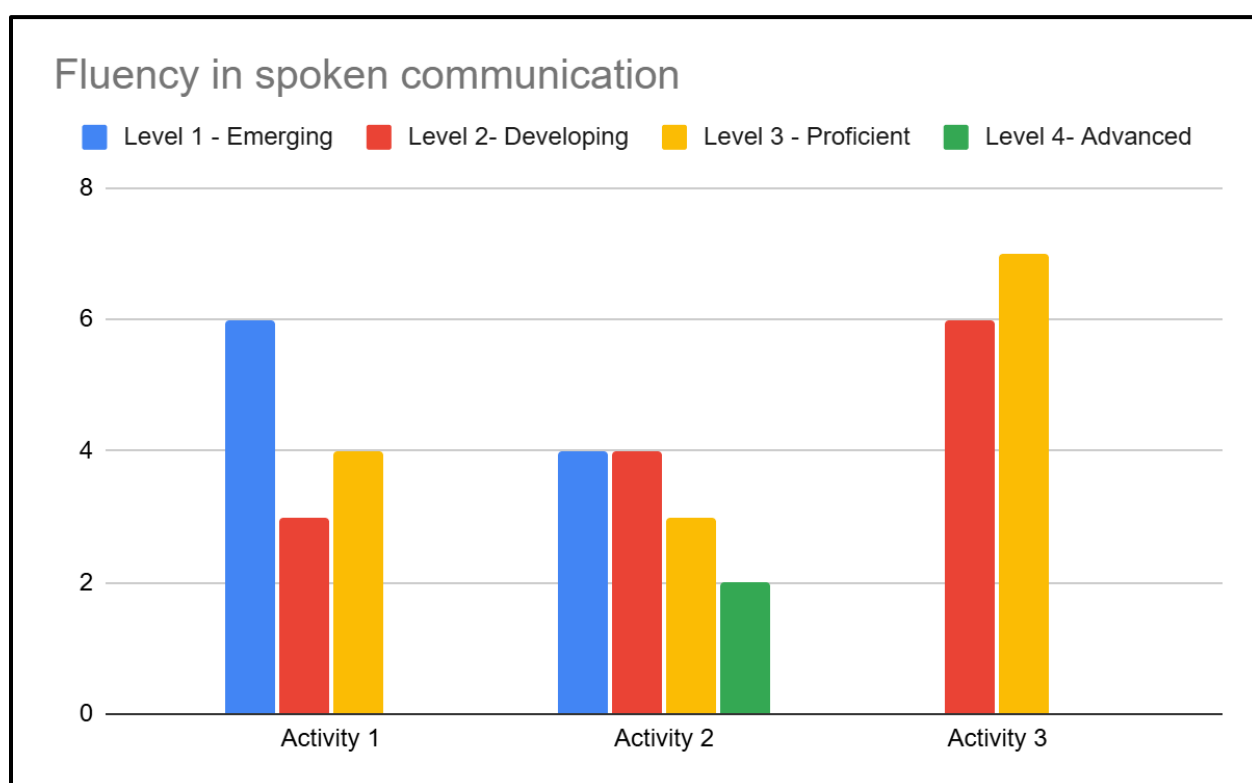
*Selfmade*

The intervention activities reveal a marked improvement in children's vocabulary use compared to the pre-activity baseline. In Activity 1 (Character Builder), most children reached the Developing level, with a smaller group at Emerging and two at Proficient, showing progress in naming and describing features of their creations. In Activity 2 (Picnic Play), vocabulary use diversified further: Proficient was the highest level, while Emerging and Developing balanced at 4 each, indicating that role-play contexts encouraged richer exchanges beyond simple naming. In Activity 3 (Home Builders), the strongest gains were evident, with Proficient vocabulary dominating and

developing close behind, as children named and described house parts with greater elaboration. Across all three activities, Advanced vocabulary remained absent, but the steady rise in Proficient use demonstrates that structured Loose Parts play stimulated more varied and functional word use.

Graphic 6

Fluency in spoken communication



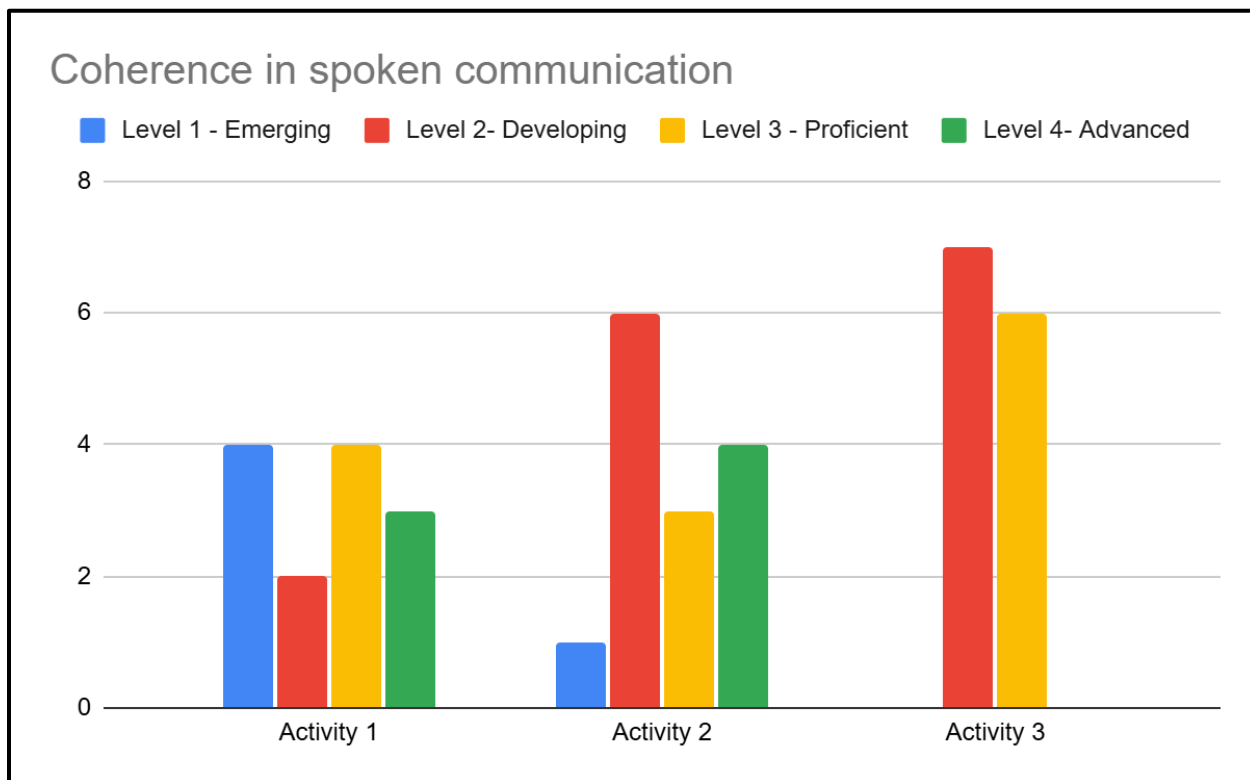
Selfmade

The intervention activities show a progressive improvement in children's speaking fluency. In Activity 1 (Character Builder), most children remained at the Emerging level, though several reached Developing and Proficient, indicating that while pauses and fragmented sentences persisted, some children began to construct more

connected speech. In Activity 2 (Picnic Play), fluency was more evenly distributed: Emerging and Developing both at 4, Proficient at 3, and a small group reaching Advanced. This suggests that role-play contexts encouraged polite exchanges and the use of connectors, allowing a few children to sustain more natural conversational flow. The strongest gains appeared in Activity 3 (Home Builders), where Developing and Proficient dominated, showing that collaborative building tasks prompted children to produce longer sentences, use connectors more consistently, and maintain speech flow with fewer interruptions. Overall, the chart reflects a clear upward trajectory from fragmented speech toward more fluent and connected oral production.

Graphic 7

Coherence in spoken communication



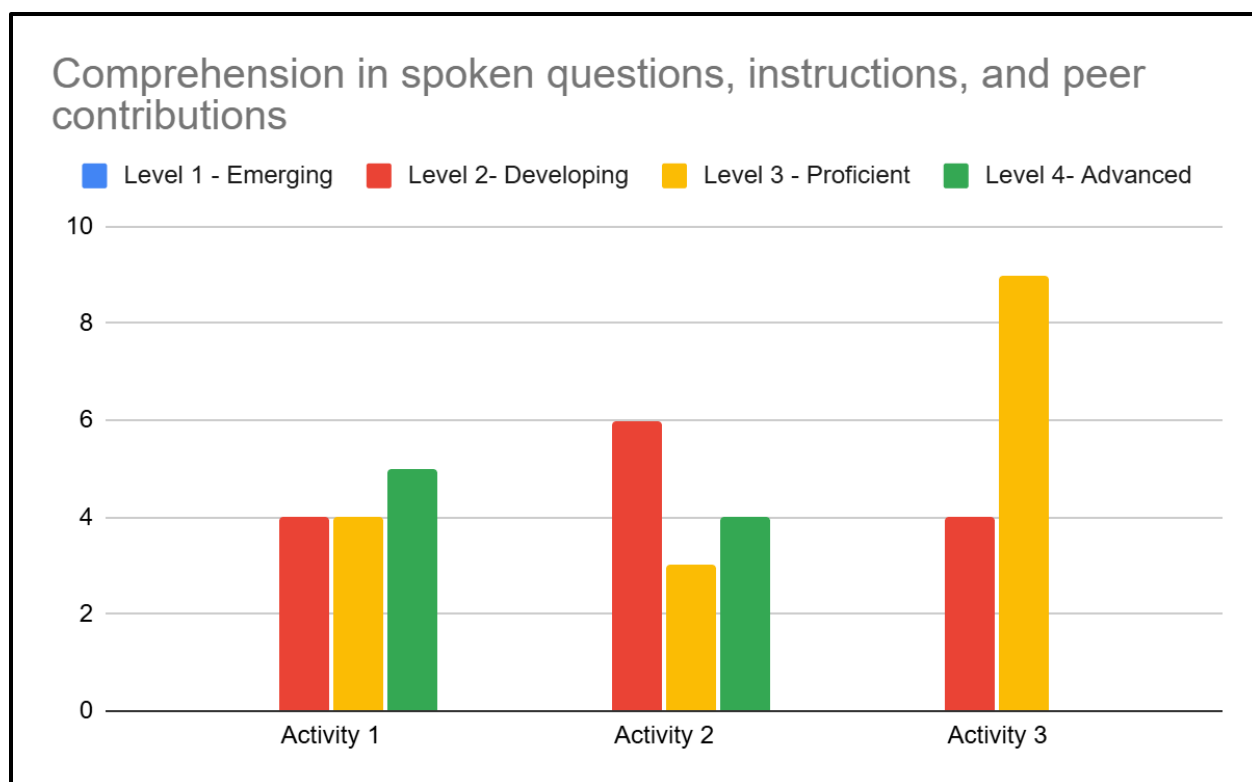
Selfmade

The intervention activities demonstrate notable progress in children's ability to sustain coherence in spoken communication. In Activity 1 (Character Builder), performance was distributed across levels: Emerging, Developing, Proficient and a small group reaching Advanced. This indicates that while some children still produced fragmented ideas, others began to organize their descriptions into connected narratives, with a few showing advanced ability to expand logically. In Activity 2 (Picnic Play), coherence improved further, with most children at Developing, alongside Proficient and Advanced. This reflects how role-play contexts encouraged children to maintain topic

relevance and link exchanges more smoothly. The strongest gains appeared in Activity 3 (Home Builders), where Developing and Proficient dominated, showing that collaborative building tasks fostered sequential organization and unified explanations. Overall, the chart illustrates a clear shift from fragmented contributions toward structured, connected discourse.

Graphic 8

Comprehension in spoken questions, instructions and peer contributions



Selfmade

The intervention activities reveal significant gains in children's comprehension skills. In Activity 1 (Character Builder), comprehension was distributed across Developing, Proficient, and a notable group at Advanced, showing that many children

could not only follow instructions but also elaborate on their character's role with depth. In Activity 2 (Picnic Play), most children reached the Developing level, with smaller groups at Proficient and Advanced. This indicates that role-play contexts supported appropriate responses to peer and teacher questions, though elaboration was less consistent than in Activity 1. The strongest results appeared in Activity 3 (Home Builders), where Proficient comprehension dominated alongside Developing. Here, children demonstrated the ability to explain processes, respond to questions, and retell collaboratively built outcomes with clarity. Overall, the chart shows a clear progression from basic understanding toward more advanced comprehension, particularly in collaborative and descriptive tasks.

4.3 ANECDOTAL RECORD

Application: Observer will document qualitative evidence during each activity to complement rubric scores. Records will capture authentic language use, contextual behaviors and peer/teacher interaction.

Pre- Activities

Table 10

Anecdotal Record		
1. What vocabulary did the child use spontaneously		
Observation	Day	Comments
Observation1. Activity 1.	Day 1	Children used new vocabulary such as community helpers and tools Some students memorized what they had to say rather than producing language spontaneously. Despite these challenges most students named the helper correctly and attempted to describe their roles, demonstrating emerging vocabulary.
Observation 2 Activity 2	Day 2	Students mainly produced simple sentences with basic vocabulary directly related to the pictures. Students struggle with the correct order of a sentence. Students struggled to express themselves in English and frequently switched to Spanish when they did not know how to say something.

Observation 3 Activity 3	Day 3	Children used basic vocabulary related to classroom objects and actions (e.g : book, char, crayon, circle) Spontaneous vocabulary was limited, many repeated the teacher's words rather than generating new terms. Several children confirmed instructions by repeating them in Spanish to the teacher, showing understanding but limited confidence in English.
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Selfmade

Based on the observations regarding what vocabulary the child use spontaneously, the data reveals consistent patterns of limited but emerging lexical use across the three- activities. Overall, the three observations demonstrate that children possess foundational lexical knowledge but struggle to produce vocabulary spontaneously in English. Their reliance on memorization, teacher prompts and Spanish translation indicates that while receptive understanding is present, productive skills remain at the Emerging to Developing levels. This underscores the need for structured intervention activities with Loose Parts to foster authentic, self-initiated vocabulary use in bilingual preschool contexts.

Table 11

2. Did the child attempt new or descriptive words?		
Observation	Day	Comments

Observation1. Activity 1	Day 1	Attempts at descriptive language were limited; children often repeated rehearsed phrases instead of expanding with new words. For some students, expression ideas in English was challenging which reduced their ability to attempt descriptive vocabulary
Observation 2 Activity 2	Day 2	Students mostly relied on basic vocabulary and produced simple sentences to describe the pictures. Attempts at new or descriptive words were limited, many students preferred to repeat memorized phrases rather than expand their descriptions. Most of the students struggled to find the right words in English and frequently switched to Spanish.
Observation 3 Activity 3	Day 3	Attempts at new or descriptive words were minimal, most students relied on the exact words from the teacher's instructions. Some tried to add simple descriptors but elaboration was not visible. A few students observed classmates before responding which reduced opportunities for spontaneous lexical expansion.

Selfmade

Based on the observations regarding whether the child attempted new or descriptive words, the data reveals that children's efforts to expand beyond basic vocabulary were minimal, with frequent reliance on memorized phrases and teacher prompts. Across the three observations, children demonstrated restricted use of descriptive vocabulary, with most responses anchored in memorization or teacher modeling. Code-switching to Spanish and reliance on peer cues further limited authentic attempts at new words. These findings place the majority of students at the

Emerging level of the rubric for vocabulary, underscoring the need for targeted intervention activities that encourage risk-taking, elaboration and spontaneous lexical expansion in English.

Table 12

3. How fluent was the child's speech (pauses, connectors, sentence length)?		
Observation	Day	Comments
Observation1. Activity 1	Day 1	Several children produced short sentences, often limited to one or two ideas, with noticeable pauses. The use of connectors (e.g., and, because) was minimal; most speech consisted of simple, separate statements. Some students relied on memorized phrases which reduced natural fluency and limited sentence length. Most of the children hesitated when trying to express ideas in English, leading to fragmented speech or incomplete sentences.
Observation 2 Activity 2	Day 2	Most students produced short, simple sentences limited to one idea per picture. Speech was frequently fragmented with pauses especially when students struggled to recall vocabulary in English. The use of connectors such as “and, then or because” was minimal, only few students attempted to link ideas together
Observation 3 Activity 3	Day 3	Sentence length was limited to one or two ideas (e.g: “I put the book”) Use of connectors (and then,after) was rare.

		Switching to Spanish occurred when children were unsure how to continue in English, interrupting fluency.
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Selfmade

Based on the observations regarding how fluent the child's speech was, the data highlights recurring challenges in maintaining flow, using connectors and extending sentence length. Across all three activities, children's oral production remained fragmented, with frequent pauses and limited attempts at linking ideas. Overall, the three observations reveal that children's fluency was characterized by short, fragmented sentences, minimal use of connectors and frequent pauses. Reliance on memorization and code-switching into Spanish further constrained their ability to sustain connected speech. These findings place most children within the Emerging to Developing levels of the rubric, underscoring the need for intervention strategies that model connectors, encourage extended responses and provide scaffolding to support more fluent, coherent oral communication in English.

Table 13

4. How did the child demonstrate comprehension (following instructions, retelling, elaborating)?		
Observation	Day	Comments
Observation1. Activity 1	Day 1	Most children were able to follow the teacher's instructions, selecting the community helper and responding to guiding questions. Several students provided short answers, showing basic understanding of the helper's role. Several students attempted to retell simple ideas. Elaboration was limited. For most of the students expressing understanding in English was difficult, leading to minimal or incomplete explanations
Observation 2 Activity 2	Day 2	Most students understood what they had to do and followed the teacher's instructions by describing the pictures in sequence. For many students creating imaginary ideas, elaborating beyond the basic description was challenging especially when trying to express ideas in English
Observation 3 Activity 3	Day 3	Most children understood what they had to do and successfully followed the teacher's instructions. Several confirmed their understanding by repeating the instruction in Spanish to the teacher before acting. When asked to retell, children could describe the basic action but found it difficult to elaborate or create a fuller explanation.

		Some students relied on observing classmates to ensure they were completing the task correctly.
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Selfmade

Based on the observations regarding how the child demonstrated comprehension, the data shows that most children were able to follow instructions and display basic understanding, but elaboration and retelling remained limited, particularly when expressing ideas in English. Through the three observations, children consistently demonstrated basic comprehension through following instructions and simple retelling, but elaboration and creative explanation were limited. Reliance on Spanish and peer observation further constrained independent expression in English. These findings place most students within the Developing level of the rubric for comprehension, underscoring the importance of intervention activities that scaffold elaboration, encourage imaginative retelling, and support bilingual transitions toward more complete explanations.

Intervention activities

Table 14

Analytical Notes (post- observations)		
Vocabulary Growth		
Observation	Date	Comments
Observation 1 Activity 1	Day 4	Students named Loose Parts objects (e.g., button, stick, stone) and used them to describe features of their characters Some expanded vocabulary by adding descriptors (big eyes, long hair) while others relied on basic naming Some of the students combine English and Spanish but always using English to say the name of materials
Observation 2 Activity 2	Day 5	Children confidently named food items and picnic objects using short phrases like “ I have an apple” or “Here is some juice”. Several began to include polite forms and connectors modeled by the teacher (“ I would like ____ because I’m thirsty”) showing early expansion of vocabulary. Repetition of familiar words was still common, but children showed willingness to try new phrases in context. Role- play encouraged participation; children seemed motivated to speak and exchanged words naturally.

		Vocabulary use remained functional but there was clear evidence of growth compared to baseline observations.
Observation 3 Activity 3	Day 6	Children named house parts confidently (This is the roof” , “We made a door with sticks”) Several expanded descriptions with short explanations (“Our house has two windows because we wanted more light”) Vocabulary use showed more variety than in previous activities moving beyond single words into functional phrases. Collaboration encouraged children to add details, prompting richer exchanges when explaining their group’s home. While repetition of familiar terms was still present, children demonstrated greater willingness to elaborate and connect ideas.

Selfmade

Based on the observations regarding vocabulary growth during the intervention activities, the data demonstrates clear progress in children’s ability to name objects, expand descriptions and attempt functional phrases in English. Compared to the pre-activities done by the students, children showed greater independence, confidence and willingness to elaborate. Across the three intervention activities, children’s vocabulary use evolved from basic naming toward functional, descriptive and contextually appropriate phrases. Loose Parts provided meaningful opportunities for lexical expansion, encouraging children to experiment with descriptors, polite forms and connectors. Although repetition and occasional reliance on Spanish remained, the overall trajectory reflects growth from Emerging/ Developing toward Proficient levels in the rubric, with increased confidence and independence in English vocabulary.

Table 15

Analytical Notes (post- observations)		
Fluency Development		
Observation	Date	Comments
Observation 1 Activity 1	Day 4	Many children spoke in short sentences, often pausing between ideas. A few began to use connectors (“<i>and</i>”, “<i>because</i>”) when describing their characters, which helped sustain flow. Speech was still hesitant for most, but some showed early attempts at longer, connected contributions.
Observation 2 Activity 2	Day 5	Role-play encouraged smoother exchanges; children practiced polite phrases like “<i>Would you like some juice?</i>”. Several maintained conversational flow with fewer pauses, linking ideas more naturally. A small group reached higher fluency, producing short dialogues with connectors, though others remained at basic sentence use.
Observation 3 Activity 3	Day 6	Children collaborated to describe their houses, producing longer sentences and explanations. Connectors (“<i>and</i>”, “<i>then</i>”, “<i>because</i>”) were used more consistently, helping sustain speech flow. Pauses were less frequent, and group presentations showed stronger fluency compared to earlier activities.

Selfmade

Based on the observations regarding fluency development during the intervention activities, the data reveals gradual improvement in children's ability to sustain speech, reduce pauses and incorporate connectors. Compared to the pre-activities developed, children demonstrated clearer progression toward more connected and confident oral communication. Across the three intervention activities, children's fluency developed from hesitant, short sentences into more connected exchanges supported by role-play and collaboration. The increased use of connectors and reduction of pauses reflect movement from Emerging/Developing toward Proficient level in the rubric. While fluency was not yet consistent among all students, the intervention activities provided meaningful opportunities for sustained speech and more conversational flow.

Table 16

Analytical Notes (post- observations)		
Comprehension Changes		
Observation	Date	Comments
Observation 1 Activity 1	Day 4	Children followed instructions to create and describe their characters with ease. Several elaborated on roles or stories, showing deeper understanding of prompts.

		A small group responded to peer questions with expanded details, moving beyond simple answers.
Observation 2 Activity 2	Day 5	Most children responded appropriately to peer offers and teacher questions (<i>"Yes, I want juice"</i>). Comprehension was evident in polite exchanges, though elaboration was less frequent. A few children reached higher levels, explaining reasons for their choices (<i>"Because I'm hungry"</i>).
Observation 3 Activity 3	Day 6	Children demonstrated strong comprehension by explaining the building process step by step. Group presentations showed clear responses to peer questions, with detailed retelling of what was built. Comprehension was most robust here, as children connected instructions, peer contributions, and their own explanations into unified accounts

Selfmade

Based on the observations regarding how the child demonstrated comprehension during the intervention activities, the data reveals steady improvement in following instructions, retelling and elaborating. Compared to pre-activities, children showed greater confidence, deeper understanding and more willingness to expand responses. Across the three intervention activities, children's comprehension progressed from basic following of instructions and short retelling toward expanded explanations and collaborative elaboration. The integration of peer interaction and contextual prompts fostered deeper understanding, moving many children from Developing toward

Proficient levels in the rubric. The intervention activities thus provided meaningful opportunities for children to demonstrate comprehension not only through accurate responses but also through elaboration, reasoning and connected explanations.

Table 17

Analytical Notes (post- observations)		
Overall Progress		
Observation	Date	Comments
Observation 1 Activity 1	Day 4	Children began moving beyond simple naming, adding descriptive words to their characters. Fluency was still hesitant, but some used connectors (<i>“and”</i>, <i>“because”</i>) to link ideas. Coherence varied: a few organized their character stories logically, while others stayed fragmented. ➤ Comprehension showed promise, with several elaborating on their character’s role when prompted. ➤ Comprehension showed promise, with several elaborating on their character’s role when prompted

Observation 2 Activity 2	Day 5	Vocabulary expanded through naming food items and practicing polite exchanges. Fluency improved as children sustained short dialogues with fewer pauses. Coherence strengthened, with role-play helping children maintain topic relevance and conversational flow. Comprehension was evident in appropriate responses to peer offers and teacher questions, though elaboration was less consistent.
Observation 3 Activity 3	Day 6	Vocabulary growth was strongest here, with children naming house parts and adding short explanations. Fluency advanced as group presentations featured longer sentences and consistent use of connectors. Coherence was clearly demonstrated: children organized ideas sequentially and linked them into unified explanations. Comprehension reached its highest point, with children retelling processes, responding to questions, and explaining their collaborative work in detail.

Selfmade

Based on the observations regarding overall progress during the intervention activities, the data demonstrates a clear trajectory of growth across all four dimensions of oral communication: vocabulary, fluency, coherence and comprehension. Each activity contributed incrementally to children's ability to produce more confident, connected and elaborate speech. Through the three intervention activities, children demonstrated progressive improvement in oral communication skills. Vocabulary use

evolved from basic naming to functional and descriptive phases; fluency advanced through longer sentences and connectors; coherence strengthened as ideas were organized into logical sequences; and comprehension reached higher levels of elaboration and collaborative explanation. These findings indicate that the Loose Parts intervention effectively supported children's movement from Emerging/ Developing toward Proficient levels, in the rubric, providing structures yet playful context that fostered authentic growth in bilingual oral communication.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

This study determined the effectiveness of Loose Parts as a pedagogical tool to enhance speaking skills in early childhood education with children aged four to five years old at the American International School of Costa Rica. The findings respond directly to the general objective, demonstrating measurable progress in oral language development across vocabulary, fluency, coherence and comprehension.

In relation to the first specific objective; identifying baseline levels of oral language skills, the pre-activities revealed restricted vocabulary, fragmented speech, limited coherence and uneven comprehension. These results confirmed the need for structured scaffolding and provided the rationale for implementing Loose Parts activities as means to stimulate richer language use and more sustained oral communication.

The second specific objective; implementing developmentally appropriate Loose Parts activities, was achieved through three carefully designed interventions that offered authentic opportunities for naming, describing, role-playing and collaborative building. These contexts fostered expressive vocabulary, smoother exchanges, more organized discourse and deeper comprehension, validating the pedagogical relevance of open-ended materials in preschool instruction.

The third specific objective; analyzing changes in speaking skills, was fulfilled by documenting clear improvement across all dimensions. Children advanced from reliance on basic words and short statements toward more descriptive language,

sustained speech, coherent narratives and elaborate explanations. Although not all reached Advanced levels, the overall upward trend demonstrates that Loose Parts function as an effective methodology for promoting oral communication in bilingual preschoolers.

In conclusion, the evidence gathered confirms that Loose Parts activities provide meaningful contexts for interaction, problem-solving and narrative construction, thereby supporting the development of more complex and spontaneous language use. The results validate the integration of Loose Parts into early childhood education and highlight the importance of intentional scaffolding to maximize children's communicative potential.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) Given that children initially demonstrated limited vocabulary and relied on familiar, functional words, it is recommended that teachers incorporate structured scaffolding strategies during Loose Parts activities. This may include modeling descriptive language, introducing new lexical items in context, and prompting children to explain, compare, and categorize materials. These practices can support children in moving from basic vocabulary use toward more expressive and varied language.
- b) The intervention showed that children's fluency improved when they engaged in sustained, meaningful interactions. Therefore, Loose Parts activities should be integrated consistently into the weekly curriculum to provide repeated

opportunities for children to extend utterances, use connectors, and participate in longer conversational exchanges. Teachers should encourage turn-taking, role-play, and collaborative problem solving to further support the development of fluent, connected speech.

- c) It is recommended that teachers design Loose Parts activities that require children to sequence actions, explain processes, and negotiate ideas with peers. Guiding questions such as “What happened first?” or “Why did you choose that piece?” can help children organize their thoughts and produce more coherent discourse.
- d) Teachers should therefore incorporate multi-step Loose Parts activities that prompt children to follow instructions, retell events, and elaborate on peers’ contributions. Encouraging children to justify decisions or describe their creations can further deepen comprehension and support higher-order thinking.
- e) The use of both rubrics and anecdotal records proved effective in capturing the nuances of children’s oral language development. It is recommended that teachers continue using these tools to monitor progress over time, identify individual needs, and adjust instructional strategies accordingly. Regular documentation also supports reflective teaching and strengthens the alignment between classroom practice and learning objectives.
- f) To ensure the sustained and effective implementation of Loose Parts, early childhood educators should receive ongoing training on how to design, facilitate, and assess play-based learning experiences. Professional development should

include strategies for scaffolding oral language, managing open-ended materials, and integrating Loose Parts into curricular goals.

- g) Since children's oral communication improved when they felt engaged and supported, it is recommended that teachers create a classroom environment that values dialogue, exploration, and collaborative learning. This includes offering accessible Loose Parts materials, establishing routines that promote conversation, and encouraging children to share ideas freely.
- h) Families can play an important role in reinforcing oral language development. Schools may consider providing simple guidelines or workshops for parents on how to use everyday materials at home to encourage storytelling, description, and imaginative play. This home-school connection can strengthen children's language growth and support continuity in learning.

CHAPTER VI

PROPOSAL

Loose Parts, Strong Voices

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter proposes a practical intervention to address the challenges identified in the research regarding the development of speaking skills in early childhood education. The suggested action is a professional development workshop for preschool teachers, designed to translate the findings of the study into classroom practice.

The proposed workshop, Loose Parts, Strong Voices, seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice by equipping educators with concrete strategies to foster oral communication in bilingual preschool classrooms. Its relevance lies in ensuring that the improvements observed during the research particularly in vocabulary, fluency, coherence and comprehension can be sustained and replicated through intentional teacher training. By providing hands-on activities, observation rubrics and collaborative planning opportunities, the workshop empowers teachers to apply Loose Parts pedagogy consistently, thereby strengthening children's speaking skills and promoting meaningful language development across diverse learning contexts.

6.2 WORKSHOP PROPOSAL

- a. **Name:** Loose Parts, Strong Voices
- b. **Objective:** To train preschool teachers in the effective use of Loose Parts activities as a pedagogical strategy to foster vocabulary, fluency, coherence and comprehension in bilingual preschool classrooms.
- c. **Target Audience:** Preschool teachers at the American International School of Costa Rica in Belen, Heredia.

d. **Duration:** 2 hours

e. **Content Outline:**

1.Introduction and Theoretical Foundation (20 minutes)

- Overview of Loose Parts theory.
- Connection to oral language development.

2. Presentation of Research Findings (20 minutes)

- Summary of the study's results.
- Key improvements and challenges observed.

3.Practical Demonstration (40 minutes)

- Hands-On activities using Loose Parts.
- Guided practice with observation rubrics.

4.Collaborative Planning (30 minutes)

- Small groups design their own Loose Parts activity.
- Sharing ideas with peers.

5.Reflection and Evaluation (10 minutes)

- Discussion on monitoring progress in children's speaking skills.
- Teacher feedback next steps

f. Materials Required:

- **Loose Parts sets:** buttons, shells, sticks, fabrics, lids, stones and other open-ended items.
- **Observation rubrics:** Printed copies for teachers to use during practice.
- **Handouts:** summary of theoretical foundations, research findings and activity guidelines.
- **Stationery:** markers, paper, sticky notes for collaborative planning.
- **Presentation equipment:** project screen, laptop.

6.3 EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Through participation in Loose Parts, Strong Voices, teachers will gain confidence in applying Loose Parts Activities, improved consistency in supporting oral communication across classrooms and strengthened collaboration among staff to address language development challenges.

The proposal seeks to bridge the gap between research and practice by equipping teachers with tools to enhance children's speaking skills. By sharing the findings through a structured two-hour workshop, the school community can collectively work toward improving bilingual oral communication in early childhood education. The workshop ensures that the research outcomes are not only documented but actively transformed into sustainable classroom practices.

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Annexes

Annex 1

Observation Rubric

Application: The Observation Rubric will be applied during baseline (pre-intervention) and final (post- intervention) observations. Each child will be scored across four oral production competences: Vocabulary, fluency, coherence and comprehension.

Oral Production competences	Level 1 - Emerging	Level 2- Developing	Level 3 - Proficient	Level 4- Advanced
Vocabulary used in oral production	Relies on gestures or single words; limited lexical repertoire; frequent repetition	Produces familiar words; begins naming objects; vocabulary range is restricted	Uses age-appropriate vocabulary with descriptive terms; demonstrates lexical expansion	Employs varied, precise, and contextually appropriate vocabulary; integrates new words spontaneously
Fluency in spoken communication	Speech is fragmented; frequent pauses; utterances limited to one–	Produces short sentences with occasional hesitation; limited use of	Speaks in complete sentences; maintains conversational	Demonstrates fluent, connected speech; employs complex

	two words	connectors	flow with minor pauses; uses basic connectors	sentences and varied connectors naturally
Coherence in spoken communication	Utterances lack logical sequence; ideas are disconnected	Produces short, related ideas; limited organization of speech	Expresses ideas with basic logical order; maintains coherence in short exchanges	Organizes speech clearly; demonstrates cohesion across extended discourse
Comprehension in spoken questions, instructions, and peer contributions	Struggles to follow instructions; responses are minimal or inaccurate	Follows simple instructions; provides short, contextually relevant answers	Understands and responds appropriately; retells simple ideas or events	Demonstrates deep comprehension; explains, retells, and elaborates on ideas with clarity and detail

Annex 2

Anecdotal Record

Application: Observer will document qualitative evidence during each activity to complement rubric scores. Records will capture authentic language use, contextual behaviors and peer/teacher interaction.

Student's Name: _____ Date: _____ Activity: _____ Observer: _____	
Observation Focus: • Vocabulary Use • Fluency • Coherence • Comprehension	
Anecdotal Record	
1. What vocabulary did the child use spontaneously?	
2. Did the child attempt new or descriptive words?	

3. How fluent was the child's speech (pauses, connectors, sentence length)?	
4. How did the child demonstrate comprehension (following instructions, retelling, elaborating)?	
Analytical Notes (post- observations)	
Vocabulary Growth	
Fluency Development	
Comprehension Changes	
Overall Progress	

Annex 3

AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

THE PLACE WHERE HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION MEETS MULTICULTURAL SOFT SKILLS,
TO DEVELOP TOMORROW'S CHANGE MAKERS



May 4, 2026

To Whom It May Concern

I, Mrs. Rocío González, in my capacity as Preschool and Elementary Principal at the American International School of Costa Rica, hereby authorize Ms. María Pamela Campos Mata, a student pursuing her bachelor's degree (Licenciatura) in Education, to carry out her thesis project within our institution.

The thesis is entitled:

"The Effectiveness of Applying Loose Parts as a Tool to Enhance Speaking Skills in Early Childhood Education among Children Aged Four to Five in an International School Located in Belén, Heredia, during the First Quarter of 2026."

We confirm that Ms. Campos Mata has our full support in implementing the planned activities, provided that all institutional guidelines are respected, and the well-being of the children is ensured at all times.

Sincerely,

Signature: Rocío González Z.

Mrs. Rocío González

Preschool and Elementary Principal



Annex 4**American International School of Costa Rica**

Heredia, Belén

April 30th, 2026

Dear Parents,

I hope this message finds you well. I am currently completing my Bachelor's Degree (Licenciatura) in Education and working on my university thesis entitled:

"The effectiveness of applying Loose Parts as a tool in speaking skills in early childhood education with kids from four to five years old in an International School located in Belén, Heredia during the first quarter of 2026."

With the support of the school, I would like to implement a series of playful and educational activities with the children, aimed at strengthening their vocabulary, fluency, coherence and comprehension in oral communication.

Please note the following important points:

- No photographs or videos of the children will be taken.
- Children's names will not appear in the thesis or in any academic documentation.
- The information collected will be strictly academic, based only on classroom observations.
- All data will be handled with confidentiality and respect.

I kindly request your authorization and support so that your child may participate in these activities, which are designed to enrich their learning experience in a natural and enjoyable way.

Thank you very much for your trust and collaboration.

Sincerely,

Signature:  _____

Maria Pamela Campos Mata

Bachelor's Degree (Licenciatura) Student in Education

Parent Authorization Signature

Please sign below to authorize your child's participation:

Parent/Guardian Name: Yuliana Piedrahita A.

Signature: _____ 

American International School of Costa Rica

Heredia, Belén

April 30th, 2026

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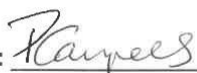
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Thank you very much for your trust and collaboration.

Sincerely,

Signature: 

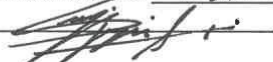
Maria Pamela Campos Mata

Bachelor's Degree (Licenciatura) Student in Education

Parent Authorization Signature

Please sign below to authorize your child's participation: CAMILA ROJAS VARGAS

Parent/Guardian Name: SERGIO ROJAS ARRIETA

Signature: 

American International School of Costa Rica
Heredia, Belén

April 30th, 2026

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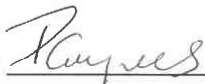
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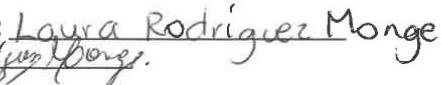
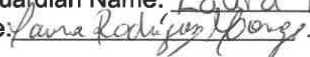
Sincerely,

Signature: 

Maria Pamela Campos Mata
Bachelor's Degree (Licenciatura) Student in Education

Parent Authorization Signature

Please sign below to authorize your child's participation: 

Parent/Guardian Name: 
Signature: 

American International School of Costa Rica
Heredia, Belén

April 30th, 2026

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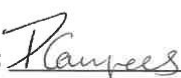
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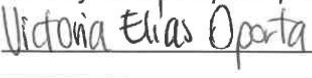
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Signature:  _____

Maria Pamela Campos Mata
Bachelor's Degree (Licenciatura) Student in Education

Parent Authorization Signature

Please sign below to authorize your child's participation:

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Signature:  _____

American International School of Costa Rica
Heredia, Belén

April 30th, 2026

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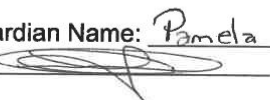
Sincerely,

Signature:  _____

Maria Pamela Campos Mata
Bachelor's Degree (Licenciatura) Student in Education

Parent Authorization Signature

Please sign below to authorize your child's participation:

Parent/Guardian Name: Pamela Conejo
Signature:  _____

American International School of Costa Rica
Heredia, Belén

April 30th, 2026

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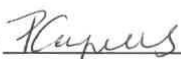
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Sincerely,

Signature: 

Maria Pamela Campos Mata
Bachelor's Degree (Licenciatura) Student in Education

Parent Authorization Signature

Please sign below to authorize your child's participation:

Parent/Guardian Name: Verónica Monge
Signature: 

American International School of Costa Rica
Heredia, Belén

April 30th, 2026

Dear Parents,

I hope this message finds you well. I am currently completing my Bachelor's Degree (Licenciatura) in Education and working on my university thesis entitled:

"The effectiveness of applying Loose Parts as a tool in speaking skills in early childhood education with kids from four to five years old in an International School located in Belén, Heredia during the first quarter of 2026."

With the support of the school, I would like to implement a series of playful and educational activities with the children, aimed at strengthening their vocabulary, fluency, coherence and comprehension in oral communication.

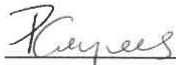
Please note the following important points:

- No photographs or videos of the children will be taken.
- Children's names will not appear in the thesis or in any academic documentation.
- The information collected will be strictly academic, based only on classroom observations.
- All data will be handled with confidentiality and respect.

I kindly request your authorization and support so that your child may participate in these activities, which are designed to enrich their learning experience in a natural and enjoyable way.

Thank you very much for your trust and collaboration.

Sincerely,

Signature:  _____

Maria Pamela Campos Mata
Bachelor's Degree (Licenciatura) Student in Education

Parent Authorization Signature

Please sign below to authorize your child's participation:

Parent/Guardian Name: Andrea Garza Ugaldé
Signature:  _____

American International School of Costa Rica
Heredia, Belén

April 30th, 2026

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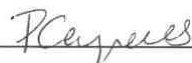
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Maria Pamela Campos Mata
Bachelor's Degree (Licenciatura) Student in Education

Parent Authorization Signature

Please sign below to authorize your child's participation:

Parent/Guardian Name: América Chaves S.
Signature: 

American International School of Costa Rica
Heredia, Belén

April 30th, 2026

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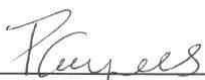
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Bachelor's Degree (Licenciatura) Student in Education

Parent Authorization Signature

Please sign below to authorize your child's participation:

Parent/Guardian Name: Fabiola Solana
Signature:  _____

American International School of Costa Rica
Heredia, Belén

April 30th, 2026

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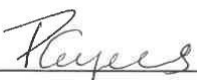
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Parent Authorization Signature

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Parent/Guardian Name: 

Signature: 

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Heredia, Belén

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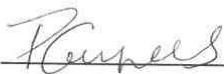
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Parent Authorization Signature

Please sign below to authorize your child's participation:

Parent/Guardian Name: Genesis Moreira
Signature: Genesis

American International School of Costa Rica

Heredia, Belén

April 30th, 2026

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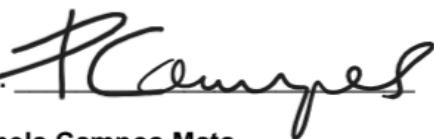
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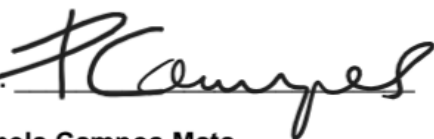
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