

Influence of a puppetry program on oral expression among three-year-old children

Influencia de un programa de títeres en la expresión oral de niños de tres años

Jashina Junneth Cachicatari Zegarra

jashina.cachicatari@une.edu.pe

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7622-8760>

Universidad Nacional de Educación Enrique Guzmán y Valle. Lima, Peru

Alicia Leidy Ccanto Alarcon

alicia.ccanto@une.edu.pe

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5225-4753>

Universidad Nacional de Educación Enrique Guzmán y Valle. Lima, Peru

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Abstract

Oral expression is fundamental in early childhood education. Therefore, this study aimed to analyze the influence of a puppetry program on the development of oral expression in three-year-old children at the "Carrusel de Niños" early childhood education institution in Peru. The study employed a quantitative, preexperimental design with a sample of 18 children, using an observation checklist. The results showed significant improvements in the clarity dimension, where the Excellent level increased from 23% to 33%; in fluency, from 17% to 33%; and in coherence, from 17% to 28%. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test confirmed statistically significant differences between the pretest and posttest for all participants. It is concluded that the puppetry program positively influenced children's oral expression development.

Keywords:

Oral communication; Language development; Early childhood education; Oral expression; Puppetry.

Resumen

El desarrollo de la expresión oral es fundamental en la educación inicial. Debido a esto, el objetivo de la investigación fue analizar la influencia de un programa de títeres en el desarrollo de la expresión oral de los niños de tres años de la institución educativa de nivel inicial "Carrusel de Niños" en Perú. El estudio fue de tipo cuantitativo, preexperimental, con una muestra de 18 niños, donde se utilizó una ficha de observación. Los resultados evidenciaron mejoras significativas en la dimensión claridad, pues el nivel Excelente aumentó de 23 % a 33 %; en fluidez, de 17 % a 33 %; y en coherencia, de 17 % a 28 %. La prueba de Wilcoxon confirmó diferencias estadísticas significativas entre el pretest y el posttest en todos los participantes. Se concluye que el programa de títeres influyó de manera positiva en el desarrollo de la expresión oral de los infantes.

Palabras clave:

Comunicación oral; Desarrollo del lenguaje; Educación infantil; Expresión oral; Títeres.

INTRODUCTION

The acquisition and development of oral language constitute fundamental processes in human formation during early childhood, a stage in which the foundations for effective communication and social interaction are established (Meza et al., 2024). From an early age, children require appropriate stimuli that foster the expression of ideas, emotions, and needs through the progressive use of increasingly complex linguistic structures. In this context, oral expression becomes a competency that goes beyond the communicative sphere and is linked to cognitive, emotional, and social development. Gálvez et al. (2023) pointed out that the development of oral language in children is born from stimulation through linguistic skills that enable correct verbal communication and oral expression, fostering an environment of trust and emotional stability.

Correspondingly, various educational contexts face limitations in oral expression development during preschool years, a situation that compromises the acquisition of communicative competencies. Saltos and Mendoza (2022) addressed a problem originating in early childhood: limitations in oral expression, as many children lack sufficient vocabulary to improve their speech with appropriate words. Their findings confirmed that children do not adequately express themselves orally because parents do not reinforce classroom topics at home, and teaching strategies that promote oral expression are not being applied in class.

Given this situation, the search for innovative teaching strategies has become a priority for early childhood educators, who recognize the importance of transcending traditional approaches centered exclusively on teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic. Galdón and Melguizo (2021) indicated that society associates the concept of school with a traditional function; however, it is essential to foster imagination, logical and rational thinking, and the creation of coherent representations from preschool age. For Chugchilan et al. (2024), oral expression is the ability to convey ideas, feelings, emotions, needs, and thoughts through verbal and nonverbal language, thereby facilitating communication.

Within the broad repertoire of pedagogical resources, puppets are a highly valuable didactic tool for developing oral language in early education.

Chimbo and Esteves (2023) identified their contribution as a didactic strategy and concluded that puppetry is a resource that facilitates the spontaneous development of orality in terms of speech, enunciation, and voice projection, thus enabling better sociability among school-age children. Araujo et al. (2025) determined that puppets foster the understanding of family values; in their study, 80% of the children recognized the value of respect, and 75% identified empathy. Inga et al. (2024) also advocated their use through dramatization workshops, observing a significant influence on emotional intelligence development, with 90.9% of children achieving a high level.

Likewise, various studies have documented the positive impact of puppets on other dimensions of child development, reaffirming their relevance as a pedagogical strategy in early childhood education. Aveiga et al. (2025) found that puppets transform educational spaces into symbolic play environments, helping stimulate oral expression, enrich language, and improve speech. Posligua et al. (2023) indicated that puppets stimulate children's creativity and imagination. Mendoza and Navarrete (2023) stated that they help create meaningful experiences for children. Karaolis (2023) discovered that this didactic resource invites children to converse, promoting expression and creativity. Råde (2021) noted that puppets have the potential to combine academic and playful intentions.

Despite documented progress, the “Carrusel de Niños” early childhood institution in Peru has identified a problem with the limited development of oral expression among three-year-old children. This situation emerges in a context where traditional pedagogical strategies have not sufficiently stimulated their linguistic abilities. Possible causes include limited implementation of innovative didactic resources and a lack of playful spaces that promote spontaneous oral expression. Ideally, children would achieve adequate levels of oral expression. To address this issue, the present research proposes implementing a puppetry program as an innovative didactic strategy. In this context, the research question arises: How does a puppetry program influence the development of oral expression in these children?

A study of this nature contributes to early

childhood education by providing evidence of puppets' effectiveness as a pedagogical resource for developing communicative competencies. This type of research is important because it identifies innovative teaching strategies that address the specific needs of Peruvian educational contexts and can be replicated in similar institutions. Additionally, it provides valuable information for teachers who require practical, accessible tools to stimulate oral language in early childhood. Based on this, the objective of the study was to analyze the influence of a puppetry program on the oral expression development of three-year-old children at the "Carrusel de Niños" early childhood institution in Peru.

METHODOLOGY

The research adopted a quantitative approach that objectively measured the impact of a puppetry program on oral expression development in three-year-old children. The study is applied in nature, as it sought to solve a specific educational problem through implementing a didactic strategy. The design is pre-experimental with a single group and pretest–posttest measurements, enabling the identification of changes in the study variables without including a control group. This methodological choice was appropriate to assess the effectiveness of the puppetry program in a real classroom context with a specific population.

The study was conducted at the "Carrusel de Niños" Early Childhood Education Institution during 2021. The population consisted of three-year-old children enrolled in the institution. An intentional sampling method was used to select 18 children who met the criteria for participation. This sample selection was based on participant accessibility and the feasibility of program implementation, ensuring adequate conditions for applying the pedagogical proposal and collecting reliable information.

Data collection was conducted through direct observation, enabling the recording of verbal behaviors in natural classroom interactions. An observation checklist was used to assess oral expression in terms of clarity, fluency, and coherence. These dimensions were evaluated through indicators corresponding to performance levels: Good (41–60%), Very Good (61–80%), and Excellent (81–100%). This structure facilitated

progressive assessment of linguistic development, allowing identification of participants' performance at the pretest and posttest stages. The checklist was applied by the teaching team in coordination with the principal researcher during planned sessions, ensuring appropriate observation conditions.

Ethical principles were fundamental in the study. Confidentiality and identity protection were guaranteed. Parents or legal guardians signed informed consent forms, ensuring voluntary participation. Child protection principles were respected; all activities were age-appropriate and promoted participant wellbeing.

For statistical analysis, descriptive and inferential techniques were applied. Frequencies and percentages were used to describe performance levels. Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests indicated non-normal data distribution, necessitating nonparametric procedures. Thus, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to compare pretest and posttest scores, enabling the identification of significant differences. SPSS version 28 facilitated data organization and processing.

RESULTS

Below are the results obtained from the implementation of the puppet program in the development of oral expression among three-year-old children at the educational institution Carrusel de Niños. For this purpose, the data were organized into tables showing the participants' progress in the dimensions of clarity, fluency, and coherence, as well as verification of the statistical assumptions of normality and comparison of scores using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. The findings are presented progressively to describe the changes observed in each dimension, identify the distribution of performance levels, and establish the appropriateness of the statistical procedures employed to assess the impact of the program.

When examining children's oral expression performance before and after the puppet program intervention in the clarity dimension, the results shown in Table 1 provide evidence of improvement. In the pretest, most children were classified at the Very Good level, representing 44% of the total, followed by Good at 33% and Excellent at 23%. This initial distribution indicated a predominance of intermediate performance levels, reflecting that the

children possessed certain oral expression skills, albeit with limitations. In the posttest, a significant change in performance was observed: the Good level decreased to 11%, while Very Good increased to 56% and Excellent to 33%. This shift toward higher categories indicates progress in oral expression clarity, with a reduction in lower performance levels and a strengthening of higher ones.

These results, which reflect an increase in the Very Good and Excellent levels in the posttest, indicate that the pedagogical strategy favored the acquisition of greater precision in language use, as well as improved structuring of ideas during

communication. The decrease in performance at the Good level confirms that the program contributed to overcoming initial difficulties and consolidating advances in discourse clarity. These findings support the relevance of incorporating playful and artistic resources in early education, as they enhance motivation, active participation, and children's confidence in expressing themselves. Moreover, the evidence obtained provides empirical support for recommending the continuation and expansion of this type of intervention in similar educational contexts, with the aim of strengthening fundamental communicative competencies in early childhood.

Table 1. Pretest and Posttest Results in the Clarity Dimension

Performance Level (41–100%)	Pretest		Posttest	
	f	%	f	%
Good (41– 60 %)	6	33	2	11
Very Good (61– 80 %)	8	44	10	56
Excellent (81– 100 %)	4	23	6	33

In the fluency dimension, the pretest results, as shown in Table 2, indicate that the largest proportion of children was classified at the Very Good level (44%), followed by Good (39%) and Excellent (17%). This initial distribution reflected that most participants achieved an intermediate level of performance, while a considerable group still presented limitations in the continuity and naturalness of their oral expression. After the implementation of the puppet program, the posttest results showed a favorable change in performance levels. The percentage of children at the Good level decreased to 17%, while the Very Good level increased to 50% and the Excellent level to 33%. This shift toward higher categories indicates progress in oral expression fluency, with a reduction in lower performance levels and a strengthening of higher ones.

These findings are significant for assessing the impact of the puppet program on the development of oral fluency in three-year-old children. The posttest increase in the Very Good and Excellent levels indicates that the pedagogical strategy enhanced children's ability to express themselves with greater continuity, rhythm, and confidence during their interventions. The decrease in

performance at the Good level confirms that the program enabled the overcoming of initial difficulties and the consolidation of advances in spontaneity and naturalness of discourse.

Table 2. Pretest and Posttest Results in the Fluency Dimension

Performance Level	Pretest		Posttest	
	f	%	f	%
Good (41–60 %)	7	39	3	17
Very Good (61–80 %)	8	44	9	50
Excellent (81–100 %)	3	17	6	33

In the coherence dimension, as shown in Table 3, the pretest results indicated that half of the children were classified at the Good level (50%), 33% at the Very Good level, and 17% at the Excellent level. These results indicate that most participants showed limited performance in the organization and articulation of their ideas, evidencing the need to strengthen their ability to structure clear and logical messages. After the implementation of the puppet program, the posttest results reflected a favorable change in performance levels. The percentage of children at the Good level decreased to 22%, while the Very Good level increased to 50% and the Excellent level to 28%. This shift toward higher categories indicates progress in the coherence of oral expression, with a reduction in lower performance levels and a strengthening of higher ones.

These findings highlight the impact of the puppet program on the development of discursive coherence in three-year-old children. The increase in the Very Good and Excellent levels indicates that the pedagogical strategy enhanced children's ability to organize their ideas in a more structured manner and to establish logical relationships between the parts of their discourse. The decrease in performance at the Good level confirms that the program enabled the overcoming of initial difficulties and the consolidation of advances in the construction of comprehensible and well-organized messages. These results support the relevance of incorporating this resource into early education, as it enhances motivation, creativity, and children's confidence in expressing themselves.

Table 3. Pretest and Posttest Results in the Coherence Dimension

Performance Level	Pretest		Posttest	
	f	%	f	%
Good (41–60 %)	9	50	4	22
Very Good (61–80 %)	6	33	9	50
Excellent (81–100 %)	3	17	5	28

In addition to the above, normality tests were applied to the pretest and posttest scores, as shown in Table 4. Significance values lower than 0.05 were obtained for both the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk statistics. In the case of the pretest, the values obtained were 0.003 and 0.001, respectively, while in the posttest values of 0.002 and 0.001 were recorded. These results indicate that the data distribution at both measurement points did not follow a normal pattern, thereby establishing the need to employ nonparametric statistical procedures for the comparative analysis of scores.

Consequently, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was applied to evaluate the significance of changes between the pretest and posttest across the three dimensions of oral expression.

Table 4. Normality Tests for Pretest and Posttest

Group	Kolmogorov- Smirnov (Sig.)	Shapiro-Wilk (Sig.)	n	Interpretación
Pretest	0,003	0,001	18	Non- normal
Posttest	0,002	0,001	18	Non- normal

When the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was applied to the oral expression variable, as presented in Table 5, all 18 participants were classified in the negative ranks category, with a mean rank of 9.50 and a sum of ranks of 171.00. No cases were recorded in the positive ranks category, nor were there any ties, indicating that all children achieved higher scores in the posttest compared to the pretest. This uniform distribution of results indicates a consistent change across the sample, as no

participant maintained the same level of performance or showed any decline. The absence of values in the positive ranks category confirms that all children improved their oral expression following the implementation of the puppet program, reflecting a favorable and homogeneous effect of the intervention. These findings support the conclusion that the pedagogical strategy generated a positive impact on all participants without exception.

Table 5. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test for Oral Expression

Comparison	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank
Category (+)	0	0,00	0,00
Category (-)	18	9,50	171,00
Ties	0	—	—
Total	18	—	—

In line with the results obtained, a sustained improvement is evident across the three dimensions of oral expression, with increases in the Very Good and Excellent levels and a reduction in lower performance levels. Thus, it is demonstrated that the pedagogical strategy based on puppets strengthened clarity, fluency, and coherence in children's communication, supporting the incorporation of this resource in early childhood education as an effective means of enhancing essential communicative competencies in early childhood. This was supported by the Wilcoxon test, which showed consistent improvements across all participants, reflecting a uniform effect of the program.

DISCUSSION

In the clarity dimension, the results showed significant increases in the Very Good level (from 44% to 56%) and the Excellent level (from 23% to 33%) after implementing the puppet program for three-year-old children in early childhood education in Peru. This finding confirms that the pedagogical strategy enhanced precision in language use and the

structuring of ideas, which is fundamental at the preschool stage. A similar conclusion was reported by Pila and Grados (2025) in Ecuador, who demonstrated that puppets strengthen macro linguistic skills in middle basic education students, with an 83.33% improvement in orality and writing. Although the contexts differ in age and educational level, both studies agree that puppets constitute an effective didactic resource for stimulating communicative clarity from early childhood through later stages of schooling.

Complementarily, progress was also observed in fluency among Peruvian children after the intervention, with advancement in the Very Good level from 44% to 50% and in the Excellent level from 17% to 33%. These findings are related to those reported by Moreira et al. (2025) in Ecuador, who identified that puppets enhanced participation, vocabulary, and confidence in the oral expression of children aged 24 to 36 months. In both contexts, puppets serve as mediators that foster confidence and spontaneity in communication, particularly at

early ages when shyness or expressive difficulties often limit linguistic development. This convergence reaffirms that puppets not only fulfill a playful function but also act as pedagogical tools that generate a positive impact on fluency and on children's ability to express themselves more naturally.

Regarding coherence, the study results showed a notable improvement in the organization and articulation of ideas, with an increase in the Very Good level (from 33% to 50%) and the Excellent level (from 17% to 28%). This progress indicates that children were able to structure clearer, more logical messages after the intervention. A similar conclusion was reached by Carranza et al. (2024) in Ecuador, who found that puppets improve oral expression among second-grade basic education students by fostering cognitive processes that support discourse organization. The relationship between both studies confirms that puppets stimulate orality and strengthen discursive coherence, which is important for the development of solid communicative competencies at different educational levels.

Furthermore, the sustained progress across the three dimensions of oral expression among Peruvian children is linked to what was described by Matamoros et al. (2023) in Ecuador, where it was identified that more than 70% of students achieved adequate development of oral expression, although influenced by the family environment. In this sense, the Peruvian results confirm that schools, through playful strategies such as puppets, can compensate for external limitations and generate significant advances in communicative competence. The comparison between both contexts highlights the importance of pedagogical intervention in early childhood, as it enables overcoming external factors that may restrict language development and ensures more equitable progress among students.

On the other hand, the uniform improvement observed among all Peruvian participants, evidenced by the Wilcoxon test showing that all 18 children achieved higher posttest scores compared to the pretest, with a mean rank of 9.50 and a sum of ranks of 171.00, is related to the findings reported by Mamani (2023) in Bolivia, who documented notable progress in the development of oral language in Aymara among children aged 5 to 6

through the use of puppets. Although the contexts differ in language and culture, both studies demonstrate that puppets constitute a versatile pedagogical resource adaptable to different realities and capable of promoting similar advances in orality. The convergence of results reinforces the validity of puppets as an intercultural strategy applicable in diverse scenarios to strengthen language and communication in childhood.

Likewise, the positive perception of the results in Peru is supported by the work of Luen et al. (2023) in Malaysia, where preschool teachers valued puppets as effective tools for promoting linguistic skills. This correspondence between practical evidence in Peru and teachers' perceptions in Malaysia reinforces the international validity of puppets as a pedagogical resource, regardless of cultural context or educational system. Moreover, it indicates that puppets have a universal character as a didactic strategy capable of generating benefits in children's oral expression across different countries and educational levels.

With respect to the dimension of comprehension and expression, the Peruvian results are aligned with the findings of Chango et al. (2023), who implemented puppet workshops with children aged four to five and demonstrated that these resources foster oral expression through stories, rhymes, and songs. Both studies agree that puppets strengthen orality, stimulate creativity, and foster interaction, thereby expanding learning opportunities in early childhood. The comparison between both contexts confirms that puppets constitute a strategy that enhances expression and language comprehension, favoring more comprehensive communicative development.

Similarly, the Peruvian evidence is connected with the findings of Moreira and Lescay (2022) in Ecuador, who highlighted that puppets generate motivating learning environments that promote interaction and participation among children. In both cases, puppets are consolidated as a resource that, in addition to improving oral expression, also contributes to the construction of a positive educational climate in which children feel secure to express themselves and share ideas. This convergence reinforces the importance of puppets as a pedagogical resource that combines linguistic development with the socioemotional dimension,

which is particularly significant in early childhood education.

In addition, the Peruvian results showing a positive and uniform impact on oral expression are related to what was reported by Yanac et al. (2021), who evidenced that puppets enhance motivation and attention in students, thereby strengthening communicative competencies. This is also consistent with Luen (2021), who demonstrated that puppet-based activities in early childhood foster creativity, social interaction, and holistic development. Likewise, it aligns with González (2022), who emphasized that puppet theater contributes to the development of communicative competence and educational quality. Taken together, these contributions confirm that puppets constitute an effective pedagogical strategy adaptable to different educational levels, supporting the results obtained in the Peruvian early childhood education context and reinforcing the relevance of their implementation in broader educational policies.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study found that the puppet program exerted a positive and significant influence on the development of oral expression among three-year-old children at the early childhood educational institution Carrusel de Niños in Peru. The results of the pretest-posttest comparison evidenced significant progress in clarity, fluency, and coherence. In the clarity dimension, the Very Good and Excellent levels increased from 44% to 56% and from 23% to 33%, respectively. In the fluency dimension, the Very Good level increased from 44% to 50%, while the Excellent level rose from 17% to 33%. With regard to coherence, the Very Good level increased from 33% to 50%, and the Excellent level rose from 17% to 28%.

In addition, the application of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test confirmed that all 18 participants achieved higher scores on the post-intervention measurement, with no cases of regression or stagnation, thereby validating the program's impact's consistency. These findings indicate that the incorporation of playful and artistic resources, such as puppets, enhances children's motivation, active participation, and confidence in oral expression. The interactive and creative nature of this strategy facilitates meaningful learning and

promotes comprehensive development of communicative skills at an early age. Likewise, the results provide evidence of the feasibility of implementing pedagogical intervention programs in real educational contexts, using accessible resources adapted to the characteristics of the child population.

It is recommended that this type of intervention be continued and expanded in other early childhood educational institutions, with the aim of consolidating fundamental communicative competencies in early childhood. It is also necessary to design teacher training programs focused on didactic strategies that use puppets and other artistic resources to strengthen pedagogical practices oriented toward the development of oral language. The inclusion of control groups in future research would strengthen the internal validity of the findings and establish more robust causal relationships between the pedagogical strategy and the results.

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