



Uso de estrategias creativas “Títeres digitales” para promover la expresión oral de los estudiantes

Using creative strategies “digital puppets” to promote students’ speaking skills

Mgt. Marbella Cumandá Escalante Gamazo¹; Mgt. Mishel Estefanía Galora Toapanta²

¹ ma.escalante@uta.edu.ec - <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3179-8102> Universidad Técnica de Ambato - UTA

² mgalora3429@uta.edu.ec - <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-3351-5385> Universidad Técnica de Ambato - UTA

Abstract

Speech is the most complex skill to develop when learning the English language. As such, it is essential to use authentic resources to facilitate their development. For this reason, the objective of this research work was to determine the influence of puppets on the ability to speak in eighth-grade students of the Antonio Carrillo Moscoso Educational Unit of Pillaro Canton. The research used a mixed cross-sectional approach. In addition, it required a quasi-experimental design with a control group and an experimental group. Additionally, a total of 36 students participated in the study, 18 girls and 18 boys aged 12 to 13 from classrooms A and B. Likewise, the information was collected through the application of a pre and post test. The same one that was taken from the speech section of the KET A2 validated by Cambridge. In the same way, different treatments were applied using strategies such as: plays, oral presentation activities and cooperative exercises to verify the hypothesis. Finally, the Wilcoxon statistical test was used to analyze the data and found that Z has a significance of -3.757b (bilateral) and the signed range was 0.000. The significance was less than 0.05, so the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. In conclusion, the puppets helped the students improve their oral expression because the experimental group showed an increase of 2.8 points in the posttest, while the control group only gained 0.3 thousandths. Students also improved four aspects of language such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and interactive communication.

Palabras claves: *Authenticity, oral productive capacity, puppets, oral skills, didactic resources.*

Resumen

El habla es la habilidad más compleja de desarrollar al momento de aprender el idioma inglés, en tal virtud, es fundamental utilizar recursos auténticos para facilitar su desarrollo. Por tal motivo, el objetivo del presente trabajo de investigación fue determinar la influencia de los títeres en la habilidad del habla en los estudiantes de octavo año de la Unidad Educativa Antonio Carrillo Moscoso, del Cantón Píllaro. La investigación utilizó un enfoque mixto de corte transversal. Además, requirió un diseño cuasi-experimental con un grupo de control y otro experimental. Adicionalmente, un total de 36 estudiantes participaron en el estudio, 18 niñas y 18 niños de 12 a 13 años de las aulas A y B. Asimismo, la información se recolectó mediante la aplicación de un pre y post test. El mismo que fue tomado de la sección de habla del KET A2 validado por Cambridge. Igualmente, se aplicaron diferentes tratamientos utilizando estrategias como: obras de teatro, actividades de presentación oral y ejercicios cooperativos para verificar la hipótesis. Finalmente, se utilizó la prueba estadística de Wilcoxon para analizar los datos, y se encontró que Z tiene una significación de -3,757b (bilateral) y el rango con signo fue de 0,000. La significación era inferior a 0,05, por lo que se rechazó la hipótesis nula y se aceptó la hipótesis alternativa. En conclusión, los títeres ayudaron a los estudiantes a mejorar su expresión oral porque el grupo experimental mostró un aumento de 2,8 puntos en la prueba posterior, mientras que el grupo de control sólo ganó 0,3 milésimas. Los estudiantes también mejoraron cuatro aspectos del lenguaje como la gramática, el vocabulario, la pronunciación y la comunicación interactiva.

Keywords: *Autenticidad, capacidad productiva oral, marionetas, destreza oral, recursos didácticos*

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of second language acquisition is the development of communicative competences. The majority of learners know the importance of oral proficiency, however most of them hesitate to participate in speaking activities. According to Khalil et al., (2019), some students master English language skills such as writing, reading and listening, but fail to develop speaking skill. As an effect, many English foreign language learners describe it as complex, difficult, challenging, and stressful to acquire. However, Condo (2021) pointed out that the use of didactic resources especially puppets, are suitable options to help students successfully develop the oral competence.

Speaking is one of the most challenging skills to develop any language. According to Llerena (2021), speaking is described as the ability to deliver information verbally so that it can be understood by the listener. In fact, Guato (2021) points out that oral expression skill is defined as an interactive process involving the production, reception and processing of information. Moreover, successful oral communication depends on the interaction of additional language skills including listening, writing, and reading. Therefore, many EFL participants believe speaking skill is the hardest to achieve.

From this, Rao (2019) categorized speech problems into two types: linguistic and affective. In the linguistic aspect there are different issues such as misuse of grammar, unfamiliarity with vocabulary, improper pronunciation, and poor fluency or accuracy that affect oral communication. In the second place is the affective problem that involves the following characteristics:

1. Lack of motivation is a very common factor in low oral proficiency. For this reason, the teacher has to help the learner to find reasons to learn the English language. These motivations can focus on two components: the reason why a learner intends to acquire the English language and their attitudes towards EFL. In other words, if learners have work or social motives, they appreciate the value of language because it is indispensable to their daily lives. Similarly, if learners have a positive attitude towards English culture, tradition and customs, they feel a strong desire to communicate and to learn about it. Thus, social or personal motivation and a positive attitude towards learning English increase the desire to develop oral proficiency.

2. Anxiety and lack of self-confidence create barriers to speaking for two reasons. First, anxiety makes the learner feel fear and stress about expressing opinions or ideas in English. For this reason, students tend to avoid activities that involve oral production and reduce their participation in the classroom (Hussain, 2018). Secondly, the low level of self-esteem generates insecurity. Therefore, students believe that if they make a mistake their peers will make fun of them. And as a result, they choose not to speak up as they feel intimidated.

Krashen (1982) cites in his affective filter hypothesis that teachers can help learners eliminate anxiety and build self-confidence through three aspects. 1) By facilitating suitable language for EFL learners to exchange their ideas in social settings. 2) Creating opportunities for the student to practice the EFL. Finally, by producing an engaging and dynamic classroom atmosphere. In this regard, Kröger and Nupponen (2019) argued that puppets are an efficient teaching aid for EFL speaking skills development as learners with low-anxiety and self-confidence are better equipped to develop input.

Taking into account the information presented above, the main purpose of the research is to determine the influence of Puppets on the speaking skill in eighth-grade students. For this objective, it was applied 5 interventions using puppet-based strategies such as theater plays, oral presentation activities and cooperative exercises. In fact, the treatments were developed within the methodology of presentation, practice and production during 45 minutes.

There are several definitions of puppets which assist in understanding their advantages in the society. First, they are lifeless objects that come to life with the assistance of a puppeteer. Second, puppets are distinguished by visual impressions, because they can transmit feelings by the movement of their body or head (Kröger and Nupponen, 2019). Third, Prabhakaran and Yamat (2017) founded that the main goal of puppets is to provide a humorous and enjoyable environment. Therefore, puppets are used in various areas like teaching, entertainment, publicity, and business.

In the educational context, puppets are useful teaching resources that enhance the entire pedagogical process. Besides, this tool has turned out to be highly effective in the EFL because it favors all learning styles (visual, auditory and kinesthetic). Thus, puppets greatly contribute to the growth of oral expression skill, as they let learners speak their ideas without fear. Moreover, puppets are an easy and inexpensive medium to obtain as they can be composed by recyclable material such as cardboard, papers, and socks.

Puppets are divided in different types such as; finger puppets, reed puppets, rod puppets, foam puppets, shadow puppets, figure puppets and hand puppets. However, Fauza et al., (2018) argued that the most appropriate for the EFL are hand puppets and paper puppets because both are very safe and do not involve danger. They are distinguished by a specific characteristic. For example, paper puppets contain cartoons supported on a kind of stick. This style of puppet is considered the least dangerous, as it is made of inoffensive materials (Ramadhania and Kristiantari, 2021). On the other hand, hand puppets are operated by the puppeteer who has to put his hand inside and move it with his fingers. This type of puppets helps to develop creativity and imagination.

Furthermore, Kröger and Nupponen (2019) stated that puppets have particular features in the English teaching-learning process for example:

1. It is important that students have a good understanding of the instructions for a task or activity involving puppets. The purpose is that the experience with the use of this medium positively affects learning development and does not confuse students.

2. Puppets are used for a variety of topics. For example, personal information, adjectives, vocabulary of jobs or occupations, leisure, family and vacations. Additionally, this didactic material can be developed in groups or individually. Through these activities, students can acquire different sub-skills of oral expression, such as pronunciation, fluency and intonation.

3. Puppets assist in the learning development process of students with special needs. Specifically, they foster self-esteem, stimulate emotional release and give a visual substitute for verbal disabilities and a textual substitute for visual disabilities. In addition, a puppet is used in different language therapies.

4. Puppets use the presentation, practice and production (PPP) method. First, the professor presents a topic related to daily or weekly planning. Then, he or she practices with the students the correct use of grammatical structures or pronunciation to ensure students have a good understanding of the topic. Finally, learners practice what they have learned through oral activities.

Through previous research carried out on the influence of puppets as a didactic resource in the teaching and learning of the English language, it is possible to analyze different benefits that positively affect the development of English speech.

1. Generating communication is one of the advantages that puppets provide in the educational environment. In fact this information is corroborated by several authors. For instance, Vygotsky (1962) mentioned that language is acquired through social interaction. With this in mind, puppets help the interaction between teacher-student and student-student. In this way communication in the classroom arises naturally. For this reason, Ardhian et al. (2021) found that puppets are effective in including shy students in oral communication.

2. Promoting a positive atmosphere in the classroom is one of the main advantages of puppets as they stimulate the interest of students and motivate their participation in class. Indeed, they contribute to making lessons authentic and entertaining to increase the attention of learners. Syafi et al., (2021) pointed out that puppets help to control student discipline at primary levels by positioning the didactic resource in a visible place. In addition, a puppet is an effective way to engage shy students who are afraid of making mistakes because for them the puppet makes the mistake instead of the student.

3. Enhancing creativity: according to Yolanda and Sofian (2018), puppets are a medium that encourages the creativity of students through the scripts they must create to perform a presentation. Moreover, this medium allows the development of creativity and cognitive skills, thanks

to the imagination of scenarios and characters to perform a play.

4. Changes attitudes: through puppetry, language is introduced in a playful, authentic and amusing way. These elements cause pupils to shift their views on the language. Many educators report that puppets are attractive pedagogical tools that hold the attention of the learner (Mujahidah et al., 2021). As a result, students become happy and enthusiastic in learning English.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present research was conducted using a quantitative approach since this one allowed to analyze the numerical data from the pre and post-test. According to Miller (2020), quantitative findings are more accurate and detailed because they are verified with statistical analysis calculations. Consequently, the Wilcoxon statistical test was primarily employed to contrast the numerical findings of the case study.

In addition, the paper employed bibliographic method as the researchers focused on the use of selected documents and discussed by logical techniques to assemble relevant data on the influence of puppets on the speaking skill. In fact, bibliographic research contributed the work to compare facts and to support the variables with validated and undated information (Allen, 2018).

Moreover, a quasi-experimental design was applied to examine how puppets can impact on the development of speaking skills. Therefore, the sample was split into two groups the control and experimental one but treatments were only applied to the experimental group. The treatments used various puppet-based strategies such as theater plays, oral presentation activities and cooperative exercises. Those were conducted during 5 lessons to check the impact on speaking skills, while the control group followed the usual classroom methodology.

POPULATION OR SAMPLE

The research took place at Unidad Educativa Antonio Carrillo, which is located in a rural area of Pillaro canton of Tungurahua Province. The research was applied to students of 12 to 13 years old, 18 females and 20 males from classrooms A and B. After that, the researchers divided the participants in two groups; the control group and the experimental group.

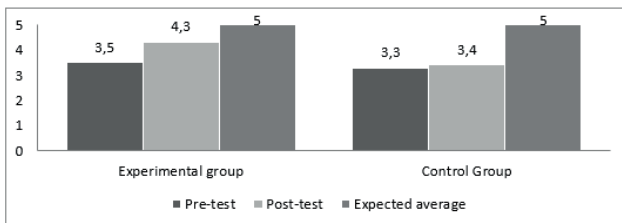
After applying the pre-test, it was concluded that the English level of the students was elementary. According to Zach (2020), a pretest and posttest are devices used in quasi-experimental investigation to match groups of subjects and to compare the degree of change that results from the treatments. To assess the oral competence level of a group of trainees, it is relevant to select a standardized test that

covers items related to the students' curriculum (Prabhakaran and Yamat, 2017). Therefore, the data gathering technique for this study involved the Cambridge "KET" test. The pretest comprised two parts; the first involved questions and short responses concerning personal information. This section tested the students' capacity to speak about their daily life, interests and hobbies. In the second part, different cards were set up to elicit non-personal questions and answers. With this information in mind, the test was separated into two stages: pretest and posttest. The pretest was implemented to assess the learners' English levels and the post-test aided the research in determining the efficiency of the puppets on the learners' oral proficiency.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

To start with, their speaking skill was evaluated with a standardized Cambridge rubric that contains 3 items such as grammar and vocabulary, pronunciation and interactive communication. The overall score is out of 15, with 5 as the expected score in each item. Below, Tables 4 and 5 show the pretest and post-test ratings of the control and experimental groups, involving 36 participants.

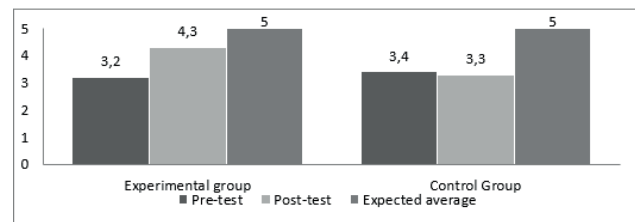
Figure 1
Pretest and post-test grammar and vocabulary control and experimental group



Note. Grammar and vocabulary section addressed to students from eighth- grade. Source: Pretest and posttest

The figure reports the pretest and post-test overall grade on the grammar and vocabulary segment, with a score value of 5 points. It is important to mention that the experimental group got a score of 3.5 on the pre-test while the control group obtained a 3.4. It indicates that both groups had similar knowledge in this area as the difference was minimal. Similarly, the experimental group has a total of 4.3 in the post-test while the control group has 3.4. Thus, the experimental group gained better scores on the post-test than the control group with a range of 0.9. In brief, the experimental group achieved better outcomes after the interventions in which vocabulary and grammar were introduced and practiced in an engaging and genuine way through the use of puppets.

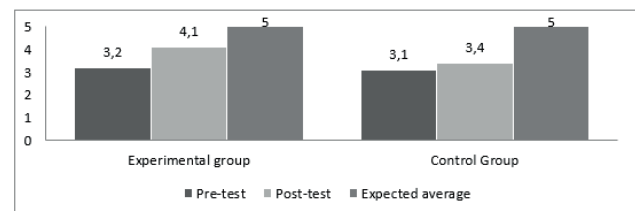
Figure 2
Pretest and post-test pronunciation control and experimental group



Note. Pronunciation section addressed to students from eighth-grade. Source: Pretest and post-test

Figure 2 illustrates the pretest and posttest total points in the pronunciation category, which had a score of 5 points. To initiate, the experimental group scored 3.2 on the pretest while the control group scored 3.4. Thus, both groups had similar competence in this area as the difference was minimal. Similarly, the experimental group has a total of 4.3 in the post-test while the control group has 3.3. So, the experimental group scored better on the post-test than the control group with a range of 1 point. In summary, the experimental group scored better after the interventions in which the students had multiple chances to recognize and practice the pronunciation of various words by group and individual oral activities employing the puppets.

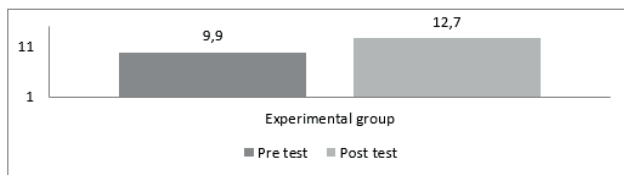
Figure 3
Pretest and posttest Interactive communication control and experimental group



Note. Interactive communication section addressed to students from eighth- grade. Source: Pretest and post-test

Figure 3 indicates the pre-test and post-test total score in the interactive communication section, with a value of 5 points. The experimental group scored 3.2 on the pretest while the control group scored 3.1. Both groups had the same level of knowledge in this alternative. Similarly, the experimental group has a total of 4.1 on the post-test while the control group has 3.4. As an effect, the experimental group got better scores in the post-test than the control group with a range of 0.7. In summary, the experimental group obtained better results thanks to the oral presentations with the use of puppets since each student had to share ideas and opinions to develop the theatrical play. In this way, they participated actively in all the activities.

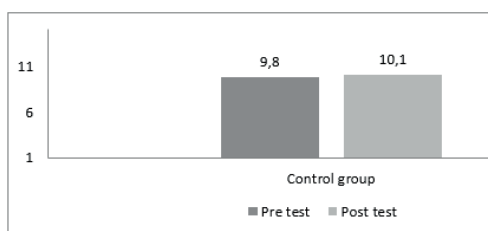
Figure 4
Pretest and Post-test Experimental group



Note. Pre-test and post-test overall results addressed to the experimental group. Source: Pretest and post-test

The figure establishes the overall results of the pretest and posttest applied to the experimental group of eighth graders. First, the final pretest score was 9.9 points. Whereas, the post-test score obtained through the interventions was 12.7 points. Therefore, the results were very good according to the Cambridge rubric. In conclusion, the post-test results were better with 2, 8 points. In other words, the oral skills were positively affected with the help of hand puppets. It was possible because the language was delivered in an interesting and entertaining way.

Figure 5
Pre-test and Post-test Experimental group



Note. Pre-test and post-test overall results addressed to the control group. Source: Pretest and post-test

The figure provides the overall results of the pre-test and post-test applied to the control group. First, the final pre-test score was 9.8 points. On the other hand, the post-test score was 10, 1 point; this means that the results were good. They continued with the traditional methodology and didactic resources. Consequently, they improved only 0.3 thousandths. In conclusion, the students in the control group had the same errors in both tests. Their teaching was based on common activities and they did not improve their scores in the post-test.

Statistical analysis
Test of Normality

Table 1
Test of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
PRE-TEST	,228	36	,000	,937	36	,040
POST-TEST	,225	36	,000	,939	36	,046

Note. Results from pre and post-test

The table presents the scores of the normality test using the SPSS statistical application. The sample was less than 50 because of this the research applied the Shapiro-Wilk data. The results obtained show that the p-value of the pre-test was 0.040 and that of the post-test was 0.046. In other words, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative is accepted because both values are less than 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis of the research project involved a non-parametric statistical test.

Statistical specifications

Table 2
Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Pre_test - Post_test	Negative Ranks	0 ^a	0,00	0,00
	Positive Ranks	18 ^b	13,50	271,00
	Ties	0 ^c		
	Total	18		

Note. Pre and post-test ranks

The table shows the results of the Wilcoxon test used for the purpose of contrasting the mean range between the post-test and the pretest. From this monkey, it was analyzed if there are differences between the ranks. According to the results there are 0 negative and 13.50 positive rankings. In addition, the sum of the ranks is different between both means because the pre-test has 0, 00 ranks while the post-test has 271, 00 ranks. In summary, the participants obtained better results after the interventions applying puppets within the lesson plans.

Table 3
Wilcoxon test statistics

Test statistics^a

	Pre-test	Post test
Z		-3,757 ^b
Asymp.Sig.(2-tailed)		,000

Note. Pre and post-test significance

In Table 3 Z has a significance of -3.757b (bilateral) and the range with sign (sig) is 0.000. The sig value is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. In conclusion, puppetry influences the speaking skills of eighth grade students.

DISCUSSION

The present research was based on analyzing the influence of puppets on the speaking skills. Therefore, the main findings from the research developed at the Unidad Educativa Antonio Carrillo, are presented.

Rao (2019) found that the main cause of low level of speaking skill in EFL learners is the anxiety created by public speaking. This statement was verified in the results obtained from the pre-test where students got low marks because they were embarrassed and afraid to answer the test. Fortunately, Krashen (1982) mentions that by providing students with pleasant environments to practice and produce the language they can improve their performance. To contribute to this information Prabhakaran and Yamat (2017) mention that puppets are effective media in oral skills as it creates a pleasant environment to express ideas without fear. In fact, the present research reaffirms this statement as through Wilcoxon's statistical test it was found that puppets positively influenced the development of eighth grade students' speech ability. To contribute to this information Prabhakaran and Yamat (2017) mentioned that puppets are effective media in speaking skills as it creates a pleasant environment to express ideas without fear. The present research reaffirms this statement as the Wilcoxon statistical test table 2 shows that puppets positively influenced the development of speech ability of the experimental group.

Furthermore, Yolanda and Sofian (2018) state that the use of puppets in the educational context enhances creativity and imagination as students create characters or dialogues to present a puppet play. Therefore, learners can put into practice different grammatical topics and vocabulary learned Figure 1. In this way, participants expand their vocabulary and accomplish their speaking goals.

In addition, figure 4 shows students in the control group did not improve their grades because they continued with the traditional methodology. However, the experimental group increased their scores because they experienced pressure-free learning. As Maharani (2016) mentioned the use of puppets increases students' confidence. In fact, this was proven as some shy students actively participated in the learning process.

Finally, the interaction was an important factor for students to improve their level of English. Besides, Vygotsky (1962) mentioned that an effective way of acquiring language is through social interaction. Figure 3 supports this theory as students were part of group activities to develop presentations and practice the language. Student-student interaction improved greatly.

CONCLUSIONS

The application of puppets as a didactic resource had positive effects on the interaction of all class members. As a result, teacher-student and student-student communication increased considerably. After the treatments, shy students

began to use the language without fear of expressing their thoughts. This was possible mainly because learners performed different plays in front of the class and developed a high level of self-confidence.

Furthermore, the learners in the experimental group were able to express ideas and thoughts using the English language, due to they feel pleasant in the class' environment. It made them feel comfortable to participate and they were not intimidated during oral activities. The use of puppets increased and motivated their confidence to learn and practice EFL.

The PPP methodology used in the interventions was very appropriate since the students in the experimental group improved with 2.8 points on the post-test while the control group only gained 0.3 thousandths. The method applied was based on presenting the topic of grammar and vocabulary to the students. Then, the participants practiced the learned topic and pronunciation with the help of the teacher. At the end, they created scripts to present the play using puppets in front of the class.

Puppets are a mean that encourages oral interaction. When students perform the plays, they think it is the puppet speaking. Therefore, they are not afraid to make mistakes during communicative activities. In this way it was possible to create an environment free of stress or nervousness.

By using puppet-based strategies, students had many opportunities to learn the language. During the interventions they practiced different vocabulary topics while writing the scripts. In addition, participants improve their pronunciation and fluency by performing the plays in front of their peers.

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