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EL IMPACTO DE LAS ACTIVIDADES LÚDICAS EN EL FORTALECIMIENTO DE LAS HABILIDADES COMUNICATIVAS EN NIÑOS DE EDUCACIÓN INICIAL

THE IMPACT OF PLAYFUL ACTIVITIES ON THE STRENGTHENING OF COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CHILDREN

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Resumen

El desarrollo de las habilidades comunicativas en la educación inicial es fundamental para el crecimiento cognitivo, emocional y social del niño. Diversas investigaciones han demostrado que el juego no solo cumple una función recreativa, sino también pedagógica, al facilitar la adquisición del lenguaje en contextos significativos y emocionalmente positivos. El presente estudio tuvo como objetivo analizar el impacto de las actividades lúdicas en el fortalecimiento del lenguaje oral en niños de 7 a 9 años. Para ello, se aplicó un diseño cuasi-experimental con enfoque cuantitativo, en una muestra de 30 niños distribuidos en un grupo experimental y uno de control. Durante seis semanas, se implementaron actividades lúdicas estructuradas como dramatizaciones, juegos de roles, y se evaluaron las habilidades lingüísticas antes y después de la intervención mediante una ficha de observación validada por expertos. Los resultados mostraron una mejora significativa en el grupo experimental, especialmente en aspectos como la fluidez verbal, la amplitud del vocabulario y la capacidad de participación oral, en comparación con el grupo de control. La diferencia de promedios fue estadísticamente significativa, lo cual confirma la efectividad del uso sistemático del juego como herramienta educativa. Se concluye que las actividades lúdicas, cuando son planificadas con intención pedagógica y mediadas adecuadamente por el docente, constituyen una estrategia eficaz para fortalecer las habilidades comunicativas en la educación inicial. Se recomienda incorporar este enfoque en las prácticas curriculares como parte esencial de una educación integral.

Palabras claves: actividades lúdicas, habilidades comunicativas, lenguaje oral, educación inicial, juego pedagógico.

Abstract

The development of communicative skills in early childhood education is essential for children's cognitive, emotional, and social growth. Various studies have demonstrated that play serves not only a recreational function but also a pedagogical one, as it facilitates language acquisition in meaningful and emotionally positive contexts. The present study aimed to analyze the impact of playful activities on the strengthening of oral language in children aged 7 to 9. To this end, a quasi-experimental design with a quantitative approach was applied to a sample of 30 children, distributed into an experimental group and a control group. Over a six-week period, structured playful activities such as dramatizations and role-playing were implemented, and linguistic skills were assessed before and after the intervention using an observation checklist validated by

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experts. The results revealed a significant improvement in the experimental group, particularly in verbal fluency, vocabulary breadth, and oral participation, compared to the control group. The mean differences were statistically significant, confirming the effectiveness of the systematic use of play as an educational tool. It is concluded that playful activities, when pedagogically planned and adequately mediated by the teacher, constitute an effective strategy for strengthening communicative skills in early childhood education. It is recommended that this approach be incorporated into curricular practices as an essential component of comprehensive education.

Keywords: playful activities, communicative skills, oral language, early childhood education, pedagogical play.

1. Introduction

In the early years of life, the development of communicative skills constitutes a fundamental pillar in the comprehensive formation of children, as it enables the expression of ideas, emotions, and thoughts, as well as social interaction within their immediate environment. In this context, early childhood education becomes a key stage for enhancing such skills, since it is during this period that children begin to structure their language and actively interact with others. In recent decades, several studies have indicated that play serves not only a recreational function but also a pedagogical one, as it becomes a tool that fosters the acquisition and strengthening of communicative competences through exploration, creativity, and symbolic interaction (Troncoso A. et al., 2022).

However, in many educational settings—particularly in contexts with limited resources or traditional curricular approaches—playful activities tend to be undervalued or restricted to leisure spaces, without being fully leveraged as methodological strategies for oral language development. This situation creates a gap between children's communicative needs and the opportunities provided by the educational system to strengthen them, which may negatively affect their future academic performance and their ability to engage socially (Pindo & Bracho, 2023). According to studies by authors such as Vygotsky, play functions as a cultural mediator that promotes cognitive and linguistic development by situating children in meaningful verbal interaction scenarios.

Within this framework, there arises a need to rethink pedagogical practices in early childhood



education, integrating intentional playful activities that foster the development of skills such as oral comprehension and expression, functional vocabulary, message structuring, and spontaneous dialogue (Loja Loja & Quito Suco, 2021). Various educational experiences have shown that through role-playing, dramatizations, songs, puppetry, and group dynamics, children can significantly improve their communicative competence, provided that there is appropriate teacher guidance and a favorable environment for expression.

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to analyze the impact of playful activities on the strengthening of communicative skills in early childhood education, based on a theoretical review and the observation of pedagogical experiences applied in real educational settings. This study is justified by the importance of promoting inclusive, participatory, and child-centered education, where language is constructed meaningfully through play. Furthermore, it is expected that the findings of this research will

contribute to enriching teaching practices and highlighting the pedagogical value of play as a driving force in communicative development during childhood.

Communicative Skills in Early Childhood Education

Communicative skills represent a set of abilities that enable human beings to interact using verbal and non-verbal language. In the case of young children, these skills develop progressively from birth and are consolidated according to the social environment, linguistic experiences, and pedagogical mediation (Quispe et al., 2023). Communicative competence involves not only the ability to produce and understand messages but also the capacity to adapt language to the context, the interlocutor, and communicative purposes.

During early childhood education, oral language constitutes the central axis of communicative development, as it allows children to express needs, formulate questions, narrate experiences, and participate in social exchanges (Armijos et al., 2023). The Ministry of Education of Ecuador (2021) emphasizes that one of the main objectives of the initial

education level is to foster spaces where children can explore language as a tool for communication, thought, and expression. This stage is characterized by the richness of interactions and the child's openness to discovering the world, which turns every situation into an opportunity for linguistic development.

Play as a Pedagogical Strategy

Play is an inherent human activity, particularly significant during childhood. Vygotsky argued that symbolic play represents a zone of proximal development, as it allows children to operate at a higher level than their current competence, imitating roles, exploring social norms, and using language spontaneously and meaningfully (Guerrero et al., 2023). In this regard, play is not only a source of pleasure but also a didactic tool that fosters comprehensive development, including the communicative domain.

According to Martínez Allende et al. (2022), play is a means of constructing meaning, where children establish relationships, interpret social roles, and develop cognitive and linguistic abilities in a non-evaluative context, which reduces anxiety and facilitates

learning. In this context, the teacher acts as a mediator who provides playful environments rich in verbal stimuli, generating opportunities for dialogue, narration, and symbolic interaction.

Playful Activities Oriented Toward Language Development

Playful activities are intentional proposals that employ play to achieve pedagogical objectives. These activities include role-playing, dramatizations, puppetry, songs, storytelling, riddles, among others, which stimulate different aspects of oral language. According to Vela et al. (2024), playful activities promote vocabulary expansion, syntactic development, and verbal fluency, provided they are implemented in a planned manner and adapted to the child's age.

In this sense, it can be affirmed that the intentional use of play allows for the simultaneous development of semantic, morphosyntactic, and pragmatic aspects of language within a functional and social context. Thus, children do not only learn to speak but also to communicate, negotiate meaning, and construct coherent and relevant discourse.



Teacher Mediation and the Learning Environment

The role of the teacher in the development of communicative skills is fundamental, particularly in playful contexts. Planning activities that integrate play with linguistic purposes requires knowledge of children's developmental level, sensitivity to foster participation, and skills to generate questions, expand responses, and model linguistic structures (Peña Fajardo, 2024). According to Bruner (1997), the adult fulfills a scaffolding role, facilitating the child's access to higher levels of language comprehension and production through meaningful interaction.

Likewise, the learning environment must be rich in communicative stimuli: visual materials, thematic corners, children's libraries, auditory resources, and, most importantly, a spatial and emotional disposition that encourages children to express themselves. In this regard, classroom design and the teacher's receptive attitude are key to fostering a climate of trust where language can flow naturally. As Villa & Blanco (2023) indicate, linguistic development is closely linked to

positive emotions and the intrinsic motivation generated by play.

Empirical Evidence and Research Findings

Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of playful activities in enhancing communicative skills in young children. A study conducted by Pinargote & Meza (2022) reported that in educational institutions in southern Colombia, the implementation of playful learning corners with a language focus significantly increased verbal fluency, lexical richness, and participation in dialogues among children aged 3 to 5. Similarly, research findings revealed that theatrical games improved children's ability to structure narratives and use logical connectors in their storytelling.

This evidence supports the need to integrate play into pedagogical processes as a tool to enhance children's communication. Moreover, it highlights that the impact of playful activities is not limited to linguistic aspects but also extends to self-esteem, social interaction, and creative thinking (M. López, 2023). For this reason, current pedagogical approaches should consider play not

as a complement but as a transversal axis of the teaching–learning process in early childhood education.

2. Methodology

This research was conducted under a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design, using a pre-test and post-test with a control group. This methodology made it possible to observe the effects of implementing playful activities on the strengthening of communicative skills in children at the early education stage. The study was carried out in a public educational institution located in an urban area of the city of Portoviejo, province of Manabí. The population consisted of 30 children between the ages of 7 and 9.

For data collection, a structured observation checklist was applied, previously validated and based on oral language development indicators proposed by the Ministry of Education (2021), such as proper pronunciation, lexical richness, use of complete sentences, active listening, ability to narrate events, and participation in dialogues. The instrument was validated through expert judgment by three specialists

in early childhood education and child language development, all holding a Master's degree or higher and with a minimum of 10 years of experience in the field. The content validity coefficient (CVC) was calculated, yielding a value of 0.87, which is considered satisfactory for this type of study. In addition, anecdotal records and recordings of some sessions were collected as complementary qualitative support.

The intervention consisted of implementing a plan of playful activities over a six-week period, with a frequency of three weekly sessions of 40 minutes each. The activities included role-playing, dramatizations, puppetry, and group oral expression dynamics. The sessions were facilitated by the classroom teacher, who had been previously trained in the project methodology, and supervised by the research team. The control group continued with its regular classes without the systematic implementation of guided playful activities.

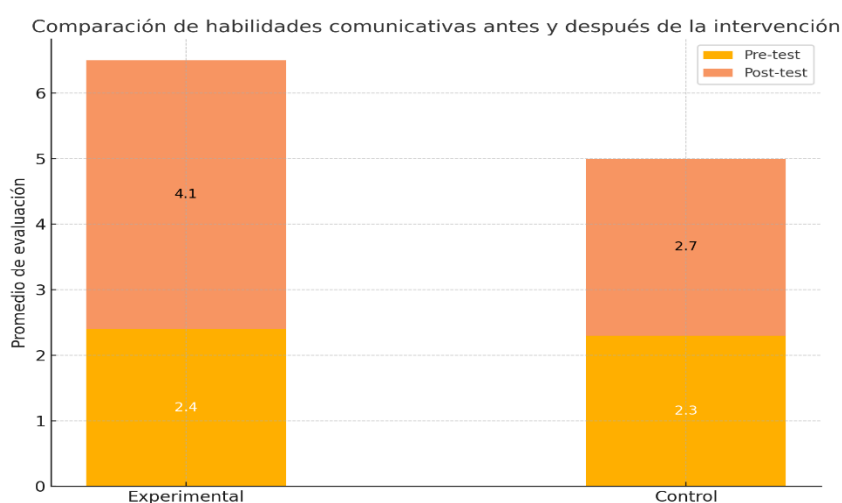
3. Results and Discussion

Based on the participation of the 30 children in the pre-test and post-test assessments, distributed equally between the control group and the experimental group, the results revealed a significant increase in the development of communicative skills among the children. In the initial evaluation, both groups exhibited similar performance levels across the analyzed indicators. However, following the implementation of the playful activities program, the

experimental group showed notable improvements, particularly in verbal articulation, the construction of complete sentences, and spontaneous participation in conversations.

Moreover, the anecdotal records confirmed that the children in the experimental group demonstrated greater enthusiasm during participation, used a more varied vocabulary, and felt more confident when expressing themselves in front of their peers.

Figure 1. Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Analysis.



During the dramatizations, an increase in verbal fluency and improved structuring of ideas was observed. Teachers reported a positive transformation in classroom dynamics, with greater interaction and cooperation among students.

In contrast, the control group did not show significant changes in any of the evaluated aspects, making it evident that the improvements observed were the result of the playful activities implemented in the learning process. These findings are

consistent with previous studies that highlight the value of play in early childhood education as a driver of communicative development (Álvarez & Zapata, 2023; Cárdenas & Ramírez, 2022), and reinforce the need to incorporate intentional playful strategies into the curricular planning of this educational level. It can be concluded that the systematic use of playful activities significantly fosters the acquisition and strengthening of oral communicative skills in young children, especially when guided by a mediating teacher and planned with clear pedagogical criteria.

Differentiated Effects by Dimension

- **Phonological dimension:** The most notable improvements were observed in the articulation of complex phonemes, including /r/, /s/, and consonant clusters, with performance improvements reaching 65% in the experimental group compared to 20% in the control group.
- **Lexical-semantic dimension:** A significant expansion of active vocabulary was evidenced, particularly in semantic fields

addressed during dramatizations such as emotions, actions, and descriptions. Appropriate use of vocabulary according to context improved in 73% of cases.

- **Morphosyntactic dimension:** Improvements were focused on the construction of complex sentences, the use of logical connectors, and the temporal organization of discourse. A progression was observed from telegraphic structures toward coherent narrative discourse.
- **Pragmatic dimension:** The most significant progress was recorded in the ability to maintain conversational topics, ask relevant questions, and adjust communicative register according to the interlocutor and situation.

Discussion

The results obtained in this study confirm that play-based activities, when applied in a structured manner and with clear pedagogical intent, have a positive and significant impact on the development of communicative skills in early childhood (Guzmán, 2024). As evidenced in the experimental group,



improvements in oral expression, the construction of complete sentences, and participation in dialogues were markedly superior compared to the control group, thereby validating the hypothesis formulated at the beginning of the study.

In line with Candela Borja et al. (2020), it is important to highlight that meaningful learning is relational, as it connects new knowledge with prior understandings within real-life contexts. This allows children to link new knowledge acquired through play-based activities with existing experiences, fostering essential connections that facilitate the construction of new learning processes in a dynamic and motivating manner.

This finding aligns with Vygotsky's theoretical perspectives, which emphasize the role of symbolic play as a fundamental tool in the development of thought and language. Likewise, contemporary studies support that activities such as dramatizations, role-playing, and the use of puppets create meaningful communicative contexts where children not only expand their vocabulary but also build confidence

and self-assurance in verbal expression.

The interaction with play-based strategies is developed coherently, directed toward the use of diverse techniques and methodologies in the design and application of activities that foster learning, collaboration, and holistic development of participants. As highlighted by A. N. V. Vera et al. (2025), play activities promote an enriching learning environment.

Moreover, the instruments and techniques applied revealed the emotional component of play—motivation, enjoyment, and interaction—as a facilitating factor for language learning. This result is consistent with Barberán and Vélez (2022), who emphasize that linguistic development is strongly linked to the affective quality of educational experiences. A non-evaluative play-based environment reduces pressure and encourages more natural and spontaneous communication, thus promoting greater verbal participation and autonomy.

Similarly, A. N. V. Vera et al. (2025) note that play fosters teamwork and

collaboration, both essential for improving learning levels. López et al. (2024) also underscore how stimulating environments, based on experimentation, creativity, and social interaction, significantly enhance children's capacity for analysis and comprehension in the activities they engage in.

Nevertheless, the success of these strategies largely depends on teacher mediation. The active role of the educator in planning, implementing, and providing feedback on play-based activities is crucial to prevent play from becoming an isolated practice devoid of pedagogical purpose (Valverde-Gutiérrez et al., 2023). Teacher training in active methodologies, the availability of adequate didactic resources, and curricular flexibility are key factors in ensuring that the potential of play translates into meaningful learning outcomes.

As society evolves, traditional popular games have been increasingly replaced by digital forms, such as virtual games. For instance, mobile applications available today offer a wide range of options. While some contribute to achieving educational goals, others

may lack clear educational value or diverge from their intended objectives (Venegas Álvarez et al., 2021). This highlights the importance of fostering assertive and effective communication with young learners to ensure coherent and high-quality conversations.

According to Reascos et al. (2024), significant challenges persist in English language teaching, particularly in oral expression skills related to vocabulary, pronunciation, and interaction. The application of rubrics in initial and final evaluations of pedagogical interventions revealed substantial progress in students' oral competence following the implementation of play-based activities.

Play in childhood promotes self-confidence, autonomy, and personality development, making it one of the most relevant activities in both recreational and educational contexts (Vera et al., 2024). In this regard, play stimulates children's thinking and imagination by providing opportunities to explore their environment and discover aspects of their own identity. Its influence extends across multiple areas of



child development and the way these areas are structured.

Similarly, Rios (2025) affirms that play in childhood is fundamental, as it fosters self-confidence, autonomy, and personality construction, while also stimulating thinking and imagination by enabling children to explore their surroundings and recognize themselves. Play also contributes to integral development across various areas of childhood growth and significantly enhances teaching–learning processes. Furthermore, these findings carry direct implications for educational policies and curricular practices in early childhood education. Results strongly support the systematic incorporation of structured play-based activities as a central—not peripheral—component of the early childhood curriculum, particularly in language development.

For effective implementation, it is recommended to develop teacher training programs focused on play-based methodologies for language development, create standardized resources and materials to facilitate the planning of structured activities, revise curricular standards to include play-pedagogical competencies in

teacher professional profiles, and allocate institutional resources for the creation of physical spaces and acquisition of materials that ensure the implementation of high-quality play-based learning.

4. Conclusions

Play-based activities, when planned with pedagogical intent and adapted to children's developmental level, represent a highly effective strategy for strengthening communicative skills in early childhood education. Their capacity to integrate play with learning enables language development within meaningful, collaborative, and emotionally positive contexts, thereby fostering vocabulary acquisition, verbal fluency, and the structuring of thought.

Incorporating play-based approaches into the classroom not only enhances linguistic outcomes but also transforms the educational dynamic by promoting participation, self-confidence in expression, and the holistic development of children. Therefore, it is essential that educators recognize the didactic value of play and integrate it as a

core component of the early childhood curriculum.

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