Reflection Article

Reflections of an educational program aimed at promoting the development of verbal expression through the proper use of screens in children

Reflexiones sobre un programa con fin educativo para el fomento del desarrollo de la expresión verbal mediante el uso adecuado de las pantallas en niños

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Correspondencia:
angie.caselles@correo.tdea.edu.co

Angie Mariana Caselles Sánchez
Estudiante de la Licenciatura en Educación Infantil.
Institución Universitaria Tecnológico de Antioquia.
CAT Los Patios, Colombia
angie.caselles@correo.tdea.edu.co
https://orcid.org/0009-0002-2140-2095

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Abstract

This reflective article addresses the impact of a pedagogical strategy aimed at fostering verbal expression through the appropriate use of screens in children. This reflection arises from the increasing incorporation of digital devices in early childhood and the need to promote balanced usage practices that do not replace experiences of interaction, play, and direct communication. Based on the analyzed references, it is recognized that early and prolonged screen exposure can be related to difficulties in various language skills, especially when it limits opportunities for verbal interaction. However, it is also evident that quality educational content, accompanied by adult guidance and used intentionally, can become a resource for promoting language development and expanding communicative opportunities. In this sense, it is proposed that the pedagogical use of screens should include defined time limits, appropriate content selection, and subsequent activities that promote conversation, narration, description, and the expression of ideas. Therefore, the proposed pedagogical strategy seeks to position the screen as a complementary resource within active educational experiences, where human interaction, play, and verbal expression maintain a central role in children's holistic development.

Keywords: Child language; Articulation (speech); Sentence structure; Verbal communication; Oral language (Source: DECS)

Resumen

El presente artículo de reflexión aborda la incidencia de una estrategia pedagógica orientada al fomento de la expresión verbal mediante el uso adecuado de las pantallas en niños. La reflexión surge ante la creciente incorporación de dispositivos digitales en la primera infancia y la necesidad de promover prácticas de uso equilibradas que no sustituyan las experiencias de interacción, juego y comunicación directa. A partir de los referentes analizados, se reconoce que la exposición temprana y prolongada a las pantallas puede relacionarse con dificultades en diferentes habilidades lingüísticas, especialmente cuando limita las oportunidades de interacción verbal. Sin embargo, también se evidencia que los contenidos educativos de calidad, acompañados por la mediación de adultos y utilizados de manera intencionada, pueden constituirse en recursos para favorecer el lenguaje y ampliar las oportunidades comunicativas. En este sentido, se plantea que el aprovechamiento pedagógico de las pantallas debe incluir tiempos delimitados, selección pertinente de contenidos y actividades posteriores que promuevan la conversación, la narración, la descripción y la expresión de ideas. Por tanto, la estrategia pedagógica propuesta busca posicionar la pantalla como un recurso complementario dentro de experiencias educativas activas, donde la interacción humana, el juego y la expresión verbal mantengan un papel central en el desarrollo integral de los niños.

Palabras clave: Lenguaje infantil; Articulación (habla); Estructura de frases; Comunicación verbal; Lenguaje oral (Fuente: DECS)

1. Introduction

The first years of life are a fundamental stage for children's overall development, as they establish the foundations for learning and growth. Due to the current technological revolution, it has become common to see family members sitting in front of televisions or other electronic devices in search of entertainment, information, or communication.

According to García and Dias de Carvalho (2022), the early years of human life continue to be a critical phase in brain development because both internal and external experiences leave a profound impact on children. However, the premature use of media often has adverse effects, as it can replace important skills that were traditionally acquired through interpersonal communication and physical interaction. Based on this perspective, the problem lies not only in technology itself but also in the habits associated with its use and the opportunities it provides. The basic human need for conversation and social interaction is increasingly being replaced by digital engagement.

As previously mentioned, the early and inappropriate use of media and technology can negatively affect development, particularly in relation to language acquisition, social relationships, and interactive group behavior. Nevertheless, the issue is primarily connected to the misuse or excessive use of these

technological resources. As Salinas (2026) points out, current technological advances shape the world as we know it today, and access to digital devices and applications influences children's communication patterns, attitudes, and behaviors.

More specifically, the most appropriate age to introduce technological devices appears to be around three years old. At this stage, children's mother tongue and verbal expression should be strengthened through continuous listening, active participation, and meaningful communication with others. An important strategy for addressing this challenge could be implemented in the classroom through the design of innovative educational activities based on play. In this way, computers, tablets, and other screens can become supportive learning tools rather than the primary focus of children's attention.

The main objective of this article is to investigate the effectiveness of such a methodology among students who experience difficulties with verbal expression and communication skills.

Si necesitas una **reflexión crítica académica en inglés** (con análisis, opinión fundamentada y conclusión), también puedo convertir este texto en un formato más crítico y adecuado para una tarea universitaria.

2. Method

Evidence demonstrating the correlation between television viewing time and language development is fundamental to addressing language-related issues in my pedagogical practice. Massaroni et al. (2023), for example, argue that excessive screen time and early exposure to screens reduce progress in language development and communication skills in general.

Specifically, the authors state that excessive screen time may decrease opportunities for social interactions, which are essential for language development (Massaroni et al., 2023, p. 81). Indeed, when a young child uses a digital device, the provider of the content often assumes a controlling role, limiting the child's opportunity to engage in dialogue and to develop advanced verbal behaviors spontaneously. Therefore, the pedagogical approach I would adopt to enhance language development would focus on using screens as a support for communication rather than as a substitute for it.

Karani et al. (2022) similarly found that screen time and early exposure to digital devices had adverse effects on language development; however, they emphasized the moderating role played by video design, content themes, and the type of interaction involved. The authors concluded that, in some cases, the negative factor affecting language development is not the device itself but rather the nature of its use and content. This means that an appropriate assessment of the impact on language development must consider all the conditions surrounding screen use. As a result, there is always an opportunity to encourage a child to engage in discussions, make predictions, and name or describe what appears on the screen.

Bal et al. (2024) agree that certain guidelines help minimize the harm caused by screen exposure to executive functioning and language development while emphasizing that screen use should be accompanied by play. On the other hand, excessive screen use can be detrimental to language development

because it limits children's opportunities to play and participate in other meaningful activities. In other words, the authors emphasize that advanced communication behaviors emerge when children have multiple opportunities to socialize with peers and adults using their full range of verbal skills. Consequently, a practical application of this recommendation would be to use screens for approximately fifteen minutes before an activity in which children are required to actively use language.

Jovanovska et al. (2025) suggest that parents should remember that mothers who deliberately limited screen time and engaged in frequent conversations with their children could expect greater development of speech, vocabulary, and syntax (p. 96).

In this regard, the central idea emerging from the previous discussion is that meaningful conversation and adult support are essential conditions for maximizing language development. Furthermore, as several studies cited above demonstrate, linguistic interaction following screen viewing can help expand vocabulary and improve grammatical structures. At the same time, both parents and peers should understand that using a digital device together provides many opportunities to increase active vocabulary and strengthen grammatical skills. In practice, after a child watches some content, simply discussing it, asking specific questions, or encouraging the child to express feelings and opinions about the topic can be highly beneficial.

However, the relationship between screens and language development does not depend solely on how much a child speaks. According to Oshchepkova et al. (2025), for example, the association is primarily observed when children use screens almost every day during the workweek, and it mainly affects narrative competence, with limited evidence of relationships to broader linguistic knowledge. In fact, a quantitative study revealed that the duration of screen use predicted variables such as narrative macrostructure and rhetorical ability but showed only a weak relationship with expressive language or active vocabulary size. These findings indicate that screen-based interventions may have additional benefits when the goal is to improve students' narrative abilities, such as encouraging them to tell stories or describe specific events in order to practice syntax.

Alroi et al. (2022), in turn, document a negative relationship between multimedia exposure and expressive vocabulary while considering factors such as screen time, background television exposure, and age of first exposure. This research suggests that educators and parents should look beyond how much time children spend in front of screens and instead consider what they watch, where they watch it, and when they watch it. If screens become a central part of a child's daily life, opportunities for genuine social interaction, conversation, and communication development may be reduced.

As a result, it may be beneficial to implement strategies that foster such interactions, such as organizing mandatory meetings with young children and encouraging parental participation within educational institutions.

Patel et al. (2025), on the other hand, suggest that although excessive and/or inappropriate screen use interferes with language acquisition, high-quality educational videos can have a positive effect on language development and

vocabulary growth. This finding makes it clear that, rather than using digital devices as a form of passive linguistic entertainment, educators should dedicate time to exposing children to different types of educational videos and then engaging them in discussion about the content. Such a strategy aligns well with pedagogical practices in which digital devices serve as sources of stimulating visual material that children subsequently describe, analyze, or use as inspiration for further activities. In this way, a gradual transition can be achieved from passive screen viewing to creating opportunities for children to use the full range of their linguistic competencies, including conversation, description, and repetition.

Consequently, it becomes evident that educators must carefully consider how to balance screen use within their pedagogical practice. The concern is that excessive screen time may interfere with a child's typical linguistic and cognitive development. In particular, Hutton et al. (2020) found that, compared with the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the amount of time preschool children spent using screens was associated with lower microstructural integrity in several white matter tracts involved in language and early literacy development. Similarly, Pecukonis et al. (2025) reported finding "differences in hemispheric lateralization for different reading genres and types of screen use" among young school-aged children (p. 112).

Furthermore, Choi et al. (2025) indicate that brain volumes at the age of two predict screen time at the age of three, regardless of gender and after adjusting for less favorable language outcomes. These findings, together with several of those discussed previously, encourage me to continue exploring ways to achieve a healthy balance between screen use and language development within my educational practice.

The following information is summarized and presented in Figure 1:

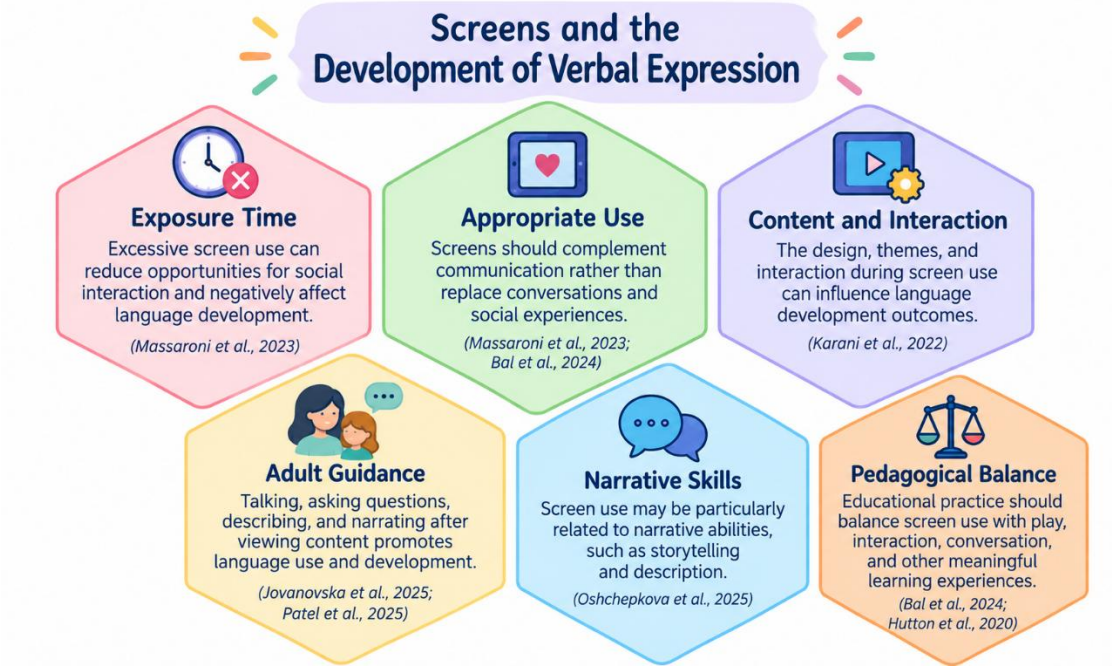

Figure 1. Impact of an Educational Program Designed to Foster Verbal Expression Development Through the Appropriate Use of Screens in Children (Source: Authors' Own Work).

3. Conclusions and Practical Application

This reflection has helped me understand that the use of screens during early childhood requires a specific approach that goes beyond simply limiting screen time. The language skills of a three-year-old child are still developing and require continuous interaction with adults who are willing to tell stories, discuss different topics, and engage in meaningful play.

Therefore, the most effective way to use screens from this perspective is to encourage children to express their thoughts after viewing content and motivate them to describe, discuss, reenact, and relate what they have seen to their own experiences and interactions with other children. This approach does not exclude children from essential communication opportunities or deprive them of enriching social interactions. Instead, it allows them to participate in a broader educational experience in which knowledge is acquired from two complementary sources: digital media and human interaction with family members, teachers, and peers.

Consequently, implementing an educational strategy for the appropriate use of technology helps ensure that children receive adequate stimulation and access to meaningful learning experiences. It also creates conditions in which technology becomes a support for communication rather than a barrier to it. Addressing this issue requires a brief but effective combination of activities in which children interact with screens in a purposeful way. These experiences should also provide opportunities for children to share their opinions, participate in discussions, describe what they have observed, and, most importantly, use their emerging technological skills while communicating and collaborating with their peers.

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Author Declaration on the Use of LLMs

This article was not written using texts generated by a Large Language Model (LLM), such as ChatGPT or others.

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