Technology and language development in Preschool II: A case study at the “Las Américas” C.E.I. (2024-2025)

Tecnología y desarrollo del lenguaje en Inicial II: Estudio de caso en el C.E.I. “Las Américas” (2024-2025)

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Abstract

This article presents the results of a study on the integration of technological tools in language teaching in early childhood education. The objective was to analyze the impact of interactive applications such as Canva, Genially, YouTube, and Wordwall on the development of oral comprehension and expression in children at the “Las Américas” Early Childhood Education Center, located in the city of Arenillas, El Oro Province, Ecuador. A qualitative methodology with an interpretative paradigm was employed. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with teachers and structured observation forms for students. The results showed observable advances in the learning process, aspects that were reflected in the pedagogical practices and in the responses of the participants during data collection. As a conclusion, it was identified that the intentional use of technological resources in the classroom favored the active participation of children and supported the progressive development of their language expression and comprehension skills, in the specific context of the “Las Américas” Early Education Center.

Keywords: educational technology, children’s language, comprehension, oral expression, early childhood education.

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Resumen

El artículo presenta los resultados de una investigación sobre la integración de herramientas tecnológicas en la enseñanza del lenguaje en niños de educación inicial. El objetivo fue analizar el impacto del uso de aplicaciones interactivas como Canva, Genially, Youtube y Word Wall en el desarrollo de la comprensión y expresión oral en niños del Centro de Educación Inicial "Las Américas", ubicado en la ciudad de Arenillas, provincia de El Oro, Ecuador. Se empleó una metodología cualitativa con paradigma interpretativo; se aplicaron entrevistas semiestructuradas a docentes y fichas de observación a los estudiantes. Los resultados evidenciaron avances observables en el proceso de aprendizaje, aspectos que se reflejaron en las practicas pedagógicas y en las respuestas de los participantes durante la recolección de datos. Como conclusión, se identificó que el uso intencionado de recursos tecnológicos en el aula favoreció la participación activa de los niños y apoyó el desarrollo progresivo de sus habilidades de expresión y comprensión del lenguaje, en el contexto específico del Centro de Educación Inicial "Las Américas".

Palabras clave: tecnología educativa, lenguaje infantil, comprensión, expresión oral, educación inicial.

Introducción

The integration of technology into education has profoundly transformed teaching and learning dynamics, even at the earliest stages of schooling. In early childhood education, digital tools can offer new opportunities to foster children's holistic development, provided they are applied with a clear pedagogical purpose and in consideration of the unique characteristics of childhood. From this perspective, the present study analyzes how technology can influence children's linguistic skills in real classroom contexts, specifically in early childhood education settings.

Early childhood education forms the foundation upon which subsequent learning will develop during children's educational stages (Tuárez Párraga & Tarazona Meza, 2022). Furthermore, it involves continuous support for the growth of children aged three to five years, encompassing all fundamental areas of their development, such as cognitive, emotional, motor, and social development. It also promotes the strengthening of their identity, autonomy, and sense of belonging to their community and culture. It fosters respect for their rights, the appreciation of linguistic and cultural diversity, and acknowledges each child's individual learning pace, as well as the development of their abilities, capacities, and skills.

In recent years, early childhood education has undergone profound changes as a result of the rapid advancement of digitalization in society, a transformation largely accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This situation necessitated the adoption of new teaching methods, bringing with it both challenges and opportunities, particularly in preschool education (Mera Romero et al., 2025).

From this perspective, information and communication technologies (ICTs) constitute an effective means to enhance teaching by offering interactive resources that enrich learning. However, the unsupervised use of technological devices for recreational purposes can negatively interfere with children's educational development.

Given this panorama, the incorporation of technology in early childhood education should be viewed as a complementary support to other pedagogical activities, prioritizing essential experiences for this stage of childhood (Nenger León et al., 2024). Currently, one of the main challenges in early childhood education is to integrate digital tools into language instruction, with the aim of strengthening both language comprehension and expression in children.

In this regard, the use of interactive applications has become an effective alternative for creating more engaging and impactful learning experiences. In light of this reality, it becomes fundamental to provide educators with innovative resources that allow them to integrate technology into their methodologies, thereby fostering a more dynamic, participatory, and enriching educational environment.

Nevertheless, the effective integration of ICTs in early childhood education faces various barriers. One of the most significant is the lack of teacher training in the pedagogical use of technology (Aquino, 2022). Added to this is resistance to change from some educators, who still show a preference for traditional methods (Córica, 2020). At C.E.I. "Las Américas," there has also been an evident insufficiency of technological resources aligned with learning objectives. Moreover, problems such as deficient connectivity also limit equitable access to these tools.

At the "Las Américas" Early Childhood Education Center, located in the city of Arenillas, El Oro province, the use of interactive technologies has been implemented as part of a strategy aimed at stimulating language comprehension and expression in children of Sublevel Initial II, corresponding to the 4 to 5-year-old age group. However, there remains a lack of clear information on the effectiveness of these digital tools in early childhood education, as recent studies warn of the need to evaluate their real pedagogical impact (Sánchez-Torres & López-Ramírez, 2023).

This situation has generated concern within the educational community, which seeks to confirm whether technological integration is truly contributing to the linguistic development of infants. Consequently, students might be experiencing limited linguistic development, and teachers, frustration from not obtaining the expected results. Therefore, it becomes necessary to analyze how technology is being used in the language teaching process, in order to identify its true impact on the development of language expression and comprehension, and to guide pedagogical decision-making in this specific educational context.

Based on the foregoing, the present study aims to analyze the impact of technology on the development of language comprehension and expression in children of Sublevel Initial II at the "Las Américas" Early Childhood Education Center, Arenillas canton, during the 2024-2025 period.

Language Comprehension and Expression

From an educational perspective, language is a uniquely human ability that equips children with tools to facilitate task resolution, overcome impulsive actions, plan problem-solving, and regulate their own behavior (Pinargote & Meza, 2022).

During childhood, language becomes an essential tool that facilitates school learning, proving key to achieving meaningful learning and consolidating future knowledge (Romero & Ortega Sánchez, 2021).

Language comprehension is fundamental for interpreting and making sense of various aspects of daily life. Therefore, it fulfills essential functions such as structuring, communicating, and organizing human experiences. Each use of language carries a specific intention always oriented toward a defined purpose. In the context of child development, this is reflected in how children employ language to express needs, desires, emotions, or to interact with others in concrete situations within the educational environment (Gutiérrez-Vidrio, 2023).

Furthermore, language is expressed through the body via voice, posture, gestures, and other bodily resources (Desueza Delgado, 2020). This is parti-

cularly relevant in the early stage of child development, as these forms of non-verbal communication complement and reinforce oral expression when language proficiency is still developing. It is also determined by multiple demographics, familial, and social factors. Among these, the child's individual characteristics, age, and educational level, parental involvement, the structure and dynamics of the family unit, and the degree of engagement in community activities are prominent (Segura Cardona et al., 2013).

Frequent Barriers to Children's Linguistic Expression

Expression and communication are essential for human beings to establish social bonds, develop emotions, and comprehend the world. However, during the early stages of development, some children may experience difficulties with oral language use, ranging from temporary delays inherent to the maturation process to manifestations that might require personalized attention (Larroca Saavedra, 2023). These barriers affect their development in key contexts such as family, school, and society in general.

In particular, difficulties related to the meaning of language are observed, demonstrating when children struggle to clearly comprehend what they hear or express. This can lead to complications when organizing and structuring units of meaning. In many cases, these limitations often become evident through a reduced vocabulary and a superficial understanding of the sense of the words used.

It is crucial to remember that each child progresses at their own pace in acquiring and developing linguistic skills (Méndez & Vargas, 2022). Nevertheless, it is important for teachers to be attentive to potential signs of persistent difficulty in verbal communication, in order to develop timely pedagogical strategies or, when appropriate, refer children to specialized educational institutions that support their holistic development.

Speech disorders are evidenced through symptoms such as the substitution, omission, distortion, or addition of phonemes. Children exhibiting these difficulties often experience significant delays in language development, as well as problems interacting and communicating with their peers. This situation negatively impacts the acquisition and refinement of the motor patterns essential for correctly articulating sounds and achieving proper pronunciation (Guevara et al., 2020).

Educational technology

Educational technology has become a key element in current pedagogical practices, as education increasingly relies on the use of technological devices to achieve its formative goals and facilitate the teaching-learning process (Rey Sánchez & Vergara Calderón, 2025). This discipline not only involves the use of digital resources on virtual platforms but also their integration for specific didactic purposes (Calánchez & Chávez, 2022). In the case of early childhood education, its application becomes relevant when oriented toward strengthening communication skills, as it allows for the creation of environments that stimulate verbal expression, message comprehension, and vocabulary development in meaningful situations for the child.

Given the increased use of ICTs in education, institutions have begun to implement significant efforts to manage the necessary changes that will enable them to respond to students' new technological demands. This adaptation seeks to address current needs and also foster a shift in thinking, promoting more innovative and creative thought processes. As Guzmán et al. (2022) indicate, it is essential to modernize learning environments through the use of technology. In this context, teachers must also recognize the importance of acquiring a solid command of digital tools to effectively integrate them into their pedagogical practices and strengthen the teaching-learning process.

In contrast, the full incorporation of ICTs in Ecuadorian preschool education is still in the process of consolidation. To advance this objective, it is essential for all educational institutions to have

access to the internet and adequate technological resources (Guzmán et al., 2022).

It's worth adding that educational technologies represent a key tool for strengthening student learning. Their implementation within the school environment must be carefully planned and guided by teachers. This is aimed at achieving the pedagogical objectives established for each activity (Gutiérrez, González, & Martínez, 2023).

ICTs and Language Development

The evolution of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in education has been significant since their initial implementations, leading to a progressive transformation in pedagogical strategies and the ways students interact with knowledge. In early childhood education, these tools have been integrated to foster environments that stimulate language development through visual, auditory, and manipulative experiences adapted to children's cognitive characteristics (Mantilla Rivera et al., 2024).

Their incorporation has been carried out strategically and adapted to the educational context. This promotes more interactive and personalized learning, which has also increased student motivation and academic performance. The effectiveness of these tools, however, largely depends on the quality and depth with which they are integrated into the school curriculum.

From this perspective, Sotomayor León et al. (2024) highlight that ICTs provide innovative resources that enrich traditional educational interventions by offering additional means that favor language stimulation in children with linguistic expression difficulties.

In the words of Bonilla, Troya, and Peñafiel (2020), technology significantly influences language development in four and five-year-old children, solidifying its role as a useful resource within the educational process. It not only promotes the use of innovative pedagogical materials but also strengthens child autonomy, facilitates language comprehension, and responds to the demands of contemporary society. Nevertheless, it's important to consider that these benefits depend on factors such as teacher training, the quality of the resources used, and the suitability of activities to the students' developmental level. Without these elements, the positive impact of ICTs can be limited or even reversed.

Materials and Methods

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach (Condori Quispe, 2024) with an interpretative paradigm (Correia Lima, 2019). The study aimed to understand how the use of technological tools influences language development in children aged 4-5 years (Sublevel Initial II). This methodological choice allowed for addressing the phenomenon from the perspective of the involved actors, capturing their experiences, meanings, and lived realities within the educational context.

The study type was descriptive, as it sought to characterize a phenomenon within its usual educational context without intervening in or altering the natural classroom dynamics (González-Cordero & Jarrín-Navas, 2021).

The study was carried out at the "Las Américas" Early Childhood Education Center in Ecuador during the 2024-2025 academic year. Located in an urban setting, the educational institution possesses basic technological infrastructure, which allowed for observing the real-world use of digital resources in the classroom. Furthermore, the educational community is characterized by a diverse population with varying socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, where families show increasing interest in their children's education. Pedagogically, the initial level promotes inclusive strategies and an approach focused on the child's holistic development. These contextual conditions are relevant for understanding how technology is integrated into the language teaching and learning process for children.

The population comprised 100 children and 4 teachers from the Initial II level. From this population, a

sample of 25 students aged between 4 and 5 years was selected using purposive sampling, taking into account their attendance, active class participation, and frequent exposure to technological tools. Additionally, the 4 teachers from the sublevel were considered key informants for obtaining qualitative information, owing to their classroom experience, knowledge of the group, and role in implementing technological strategies.

Tabla 1.
Criterios de selección de informantes clave para la recolección de datos

Informante	Criterio de selección	Cantidad
Docentes	Docentes que impartan en el subnivel Inicial II grupo etario de 4-5 años	4
Estudiantes Subnivel Inicial II	Estudiantes del Subnivel II grupo de 4-5 años	25

Two primary techniques were employed for data collection: semi-structured interviews (Escobar, Escobar, & Henao, 2024) and non-participatory observation (Reina Carchi, 2022). The former was applied to the teachers to explore their perceptions, experiences, and strategies when using technological tools during their classes. Four interviews were conducted, one per teacher, each lasting approximately 30 minutes. Additionally, observation was carried out within the classroom without direct interaction with the children, totaling eight 40-minute sessions distributed over four weeks. During these observations, skills related to language comprehension and expression, and interaction with digital resources, were recorded.

The evaluation instruments used were an interview guide (Granados Muñoz, 2020) and an observation sheet. Both were subjected to a validation process by two expert judges in early childhood education, selected for their master's degree in education or related fields and at least three years of experience in early childhood or preparatory level teaching. These specialists evaluated the clarity, coherence, relevance, and pertinence of each tool, providing observations that optimized their suitability for gathering information on the impact of technological resources on the language development of children in Initial II.

The interviews were conducted in person at the educational center and had an average duration of 30 minutes per teacher. These allowed for inquiry into pedagogical practices, the level of technology integration, and the perceived challenges in applying digital resources to foster early language expression and comprehension.

As for the observations, these were carried out during regular class sessions over several weeks. Behaviors, interactions, students' linguistic responses, and how teachers implemented technologies were recorded.

Data analysis was performed through thematic coding (Manzano Chura, 2023) and content analysis (Veitía, de Armas, & Simón, 2020). Coding was done manually, identifying units of meaning within the transcriptions and organizing them into emerging categories related to technology use and its influence on communication skills, thus allowing for the establishment of significant patterns and relationships between qualitative categories. Table 2 presents the assigned codes, which include the abbreviation I.C.D.#.I.A, corresponding to "key informants teacher # from Inicial de las Américas."

Tabla 2.
Codificación de docentes

Docente Investigado	Código
Docente 1	I.C.D.1.I.A
Docente 2	I.C.D.2.I.A
Docente 3	I.C.D.3.I.A
Docente 4	I.C.D.4.I.A

For students, the code I.C.E.#.I.A (key informants student # from Inicial de las Américas) was used, ranging from 1 to 25, to maintain confidentiality

and streamline the organization of information gathered during observations.

Information triangulation was also applied as a strategy to ensure the study's internal validity (Marín & Sarmiento, 2024). This technique allowed for cross-referencing data obtained from interviews with observation results, thereby strengthening the reliability of the conclusions.

The applied methodology offered a deep and contextualized insight into teachers' experiences and children's reactions to the use of technological tools. This helped identify both the benefits and challenges of incorporating these resources into language development in early childhood education.

Study Findings

Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with early childhood education teachers and observation sheets applied to 25 students. The educators reported frequent use of devices such as tablets, interactive whiteboards, and laptops to enhance language comprehension and expression in children. Similarly, applications like Canva, Genially, and YouTube Kids were regularly utilized.

Regarding digital competencies, the key informants reported an intermediate level of proficiency with technological tools. For instance, I.C.D.1.I.A indicated feeling comfortable using Canva and Genially but still required continuous training. Likewise, I.C.D.3.I.A stated familiarity with basic applications but expressed interest in improving their digital skills.

Observations of students in Sublevel Initial II revealed that the majority actively participated in activities involving digital devices. This participation was evident through behaviors such as sustained attention, interaction with technological resources, and willingness to respond to instructions. Generally, the children successfully identified the main idea of the presented content, demonstrating effective comprehension. Furthermore, the notable use of gestures, facial expressions, and body movement as supportive non-verbal communication resources was observed.

The results identified challenges such as unstable connectivity, limited device availability, and the need for more teacher training. I.C.D.2.I.A mentioned pre-downloading resources to avoid connection issues, while I.C.D.4.I.A acknowledged self-teaching to integrate new tools into their pedagogical practice. Overall, there was a positive perception regarding the impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) on the development of language comprehension and expression, highlighting improvements in verbal fluency, increased vocabulary, and greater social interaction among children.

Discussion

The findings of this research indicate that using technological tools in early childhood education, specifically in Sublevel Initial II, can support the development of language comprehension and expression when employed with pedagogical intent. Observations confirmed that children showed a greater willingness to participate in communicative activities when using digital resources. This aligns with Montijano Serrano (2013), who argues that ICTs promote communicative interaction and stimulate cognitive and linguistic development. However, in this particular case, such interaction was more pronounced in activities accompanied by teacher mediation, underscoring the educator's role as a facilitator.

Among the tools used, Canva, Genially, and YouTube proved effective in making classes more dynamic and encouraging more active language use. Students not only expanded their vocabulary but also increased their oral participation and the use of non-verbal cues such as gestures, gazes, and facial expressions to reinforce their messages. While Guzmán et al. (2022) emphasize that properly implemented technologies foster active and motivating learning, the data from this study show that their effectiveness depends on how they are contextualized based on the group's lin-

guistic abilities and the teacher's strategies, rather than on the technological resource itself.

Nevertheless, limitations associated with technological infrastructure were also identified, conditioning the impact of ICTs. Intermittent connectivity, a scarcity of devices, and a lack of maintenance limited opportunities for technological interaction in some sessions, consistent with what Jordán, Terán, and Soxo (2022) noted. However, in this case, the problem not only affected access but also forced teachers to modify their strategies or revert to traditional resources, revealing a tension between digital planning and classroom reality.

Despite teachers' willingness to integrate technologies, the need for continuous training was evident. This reaffirms Sánchez Vera (2023) concerning the importance of professional development for appropriate pedagogical use. Here, the willingness to change was clear but was limited by a lack of institutional support and continuous updating.

Qualitative analysis revealed that children responded better to digital stimuli when they were integrated into playful and structured didactic sequences. This aligns with Desueza (2020), who argues that early stimulation through digital media can strengthen expressive channels. However, the study suggests that this strengthening only occurs when technology mediates communicative engagement, not when it's used as a mere distraction.

Ultimately, the results underscore the need for a planned didactic approach to technology use. Aquino (2022) warns that it is not technology itself that transforms learning, but its intentional use from a clear pedagogical perspective. In this study, this was evident in the qualitative difference between structured sessions with defined linguistic objectives and those where resources were used solely for entertainment.

In this sense, this research not only confirms existing literature but also provides contextualized evidence from a specific educational experience. Technology can become an ally in early childhood language development, provided critical aspects like teacher training, the suitability of the technological environment, and the inclusion of active methodologies are addressed. These conditions must be considered when planning strategies to strengthen linguistic competencies from an early age.

Conclusions

The findings of this qualitative research demonstrate that the planned use of digital tools such as Canva, Genially, YouTube, and Word Wall significantly contributes to strengthening oral comprehension in children at Sublevel Initial II. When integrated through playful strategies, these technological resources allowed students to improve their oral comprehension, expand their vocabulary, and express themselves with greater confidence. This process was evident in children's active participation, the use of more structured phrases, and more fluid communication, both verbal and gestural.

Specifically, it was observed that visual and auditory stimuli promote the interpretation of simple messages and the comprehension of stories, while interactive activities foster a more motivating and participatory environment. Furthermore, pedagogical mediation was a key factor: the results show that technology is effective when guided by teachers who intentionally design learning experiences tailored to the group's characteristics.

However, the study also identified significant limitations: unstable connectivity, unequal access to digital devices, and a lack of teacher training in the didactic use of ICTs were obstacles that affected the full implementation of planned strategies. These conditions underscore the need to strengthen technological infrastructure and ongoing training processes in early childhood education contexts.

Therefore, it is recommended that future interventions consider not only the incorporation of technological resources but also contextualized

didactic planning to ensure their pedagogical relevance. This study, focused on an urban institution with specific conditions, paves the way for subsequent research exploring the impact of ICTs in rural or intercultural contexts, as well as in broader levels of basic education.

Author contributions

Patricia Yessenia Rios Romero: Conceptualization, data collection, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, supervision, validation, writing original draft and final review.

Gladys Gardenia Gonzalez Pereira: Formal analysis, research, methodology, writing of the original draft and final review.

Karina del Rocio Cajamarca Jaramillo: Methodology, data curation, formal analysis, research, validation, final review.

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