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Utilization of puppetry as a means of enhancing communication through oral language and attention to task.

Ida Marlene Cary Adams

UTILIZATION OF PUPPETRY AS A MEANS OF ENHANCING COMMUNICATION THROUGH ORAL LANGUAGE AND ATTENTION TO TASK

A THESIS

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Ida Marlene Cary Adams

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789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

THESIS ACCEPTANCE

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Committee

Name	Department
Katherine Koster	Educational Administration
Sandra K. Squires	Counseling & Special Education

Chairman

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Date

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M.A.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

In order for children to effectively participate in learning, their attention must be acquired and maintained. Teachers need to evaluate as many alternative educational means as possible to accomplish this result. The knowledge and encouragement of communication are also of paramount importance in the classroom. Puppets can be viewed as one audio-visual method for effectively progressing toward these goals. It has been suggested that puppets are capable of commanding attention and promoting communication through, not only their versatility, but also their ability to cross age and racial barriers. Thus, puppetry has been viewed as a communicative tool throughout history.

We can only speculate about the exact origin of puppets. Their longevity is evidenced through historic examples of puppets found on Pharaohs' tombs in ancient Egypt to the present day popularity of cartoon figures, such as an advertising finger puppet walking through the Yellow Pages of the telephone directory. The first part of the word puppet is taken from the Latin word pupa which means girl, doll, or small creature. The ending et is a diminutive which would make this a small creature (Parker, 1981).

Historically, puppets have served two basic purposes. First, they have been traditionally seen as an art form. In some areas, there is evidence that the use of puppets preceded human actors in the dramatic arts (Currell, 1980). Historians note that during the Roman period in

the great theater of Dionipia, a showman named Potheinom performed with marionettes in the 5th century B. C. (Latshaw, 1978). Although the American Indians made use of puppets and masks in religious rituals, puppetry in North America actually grew from European traditions of entertainment (Latshaw, 1978) which included puppets in some of Shakespeare's plays. One of the first documented use of puppeteers in North America was when a magician-puppeteer accompanied Hernando Cortez on his exploration for gold in the Honduras in 1524 (Baird, 1965; Parker, 1981).

Various individual puppets have become famous in the realm of theater and entertainment. Punch first performed in England in 1662 (Latshaw, 1978). French children were entertained by the Guignol. In Russia, a famous puppet was named Petruskha. Two other well known Russian puppets were Hanswurst and Kasperi (Woltmann, 1976). The use of puppets in children's theaters is relatively recent, dating from the 18th and 19th centuries (Roysdon, 1982). Originally, puppetry remained a secretive art, which was handed down from one generation to the next. This changed when Tony Sarg published the first 'how to make puppets' book which opened the way for puppets to be utilized by varying people for purposes other than entertainment. He subsequently founded a school in 1924 (Batchelder & Comer 1956). Sue Hastings, his first student, founded one of the first touring companies in the U.S. Although the principal attitude in America was that puppets were only for kids, Sue's marionette's performed in four Broadway musicals and toured English music halls (Baird, 1965). In 1934, Fiorello La Guardia, Mayor of New York, supported a marionette company as one of his work projects in order to

combat unemployment and frustration during the depression years.

Radio produced some puppet/creator superstar teams, such as, Edgar Bergen sparing with Charlie McCarthy, Paul Winchell and Jerry Mahoney, and Shari Lewis with Lamb Chop. Kukla, Fran and Ollie, which were built on the foundation of Punch, entertained millions of people and performed on TV for more than a decade (Baird, 1965). An early massive puppet production was Bill Baird's presentation of Peter and the Wolf. Many famous people were involved, such as Yul Brynner as director, and Art Carney as the only "live" actor during this performance. There were so many characters that it was impossible to remember all of the lines. In light of this, a "scriptanola," or a pair of rolling scripts just below camera level, was conceived. This type of machine has since become standard equipment in television studios (Baird, 1965). More recently, Jim Henson has become famous as a puppet creator/puppeteer. He has invented unique Muppet creatures, such as Kermit the Frog, Miss Piggy, Cookie Monster, Bert, and Ernie from Sesame Street and Gobo, Wembley, and the Dozers from Fraggle Rock on Cable TV's Home Box Office station.

The second major use of puppets has been as a means of transmitting information. Mohammedans, Buddhists, Greeks, Romans, witch doctors in Africa, and early Christian leaders used various forms of puppets to convey sacred teachings (Sylwester, 1983). In Indonesia, puppets continue to be used as interpreters of morals and customs (Roysdon, 1982).

Industry began using puppets for advertising and developing public relations in a major way at the Chicago Century of Progress Fair in 1933. At this fair, Tony Sarg's show was seen by more than three million people.

The following year, Bill Baird presented continuous shows for twelve hours a day. Eighty-eight shows were produced for Chrysler at the second New York World's Fair (Baird, 1965; Latshaw, 1978; Richter, 1970).

Puppets have also been used effectively as tools for swaying public opinion through political comment or political and social satire. In 1936, President Franklin Roosevelt conceived a plan to organize fifty puppet companies, headed by master puppeteer Remo Bufano, to explain democracy and the philosophy behind his "New Deal". It is recognized, however, that politics interfered with its actual completion (Baird, 1965). A more recent example was Peter Schumann's Bread and Puppet Theater. This was a street theater which used grotesque "super puppets" and masks to protest the war in Vietnam (Latshaw, 1978).

Until recently, the scope of puppets remained that of a craft or enrichment activity in the educational realm. Puppets were initially used educationally in historical plays in American schools in the twenties (Roysdon, 1982). During the 1970's, puppetry became immensely more popular through television exposure. Because educators are constantly striving to increase communication efforts and encourage and sustain student's attention to instructional tasks, the application of puppetry to educational programming took on renewed emphasis for both normal and special groups. At the present time, the effectiveness of puppets is being explored daily in varied classroom work, libraries and special education resource rooms. They are being used as demonstrative instructional tools diagnostically and therapeutically in dealing with psychological problems and educational therapy. They are used as an aid in developing language and communication skills for students who

are visually impaired, hearing impaired, those with learning problems, as well as the general student population. And as generally acknowledged, they are used in dramatizations in the classroom as well as in the theater. In light of the number of students that are mainstreamed, a puppet's versatility in use, size, and type provides the potential for them to become invaluable for the teacher (Reich, 1968; Roysdon, 1982).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The use of puppets is common in educational settings. Educational journals feature techniques for the use of puppetry to enhance oral language expression. There has been little actual experimental research, however, devoted to the use of puppets in eliciting language or keeping a child on task.

The purpose of this study is to assess the use of hand puppets in encouraging the facilitation of oral language usage and its ability to elicit active student attentiveness and participation. It is further intended to study the difference between adult manipulated hand puppets and student manipulated hand puppets on the preschool level.

HYPOTHESIS

1. The use of puppets will enhance mean length utterance (MLU) of preschool students and will be statistically significant at the .01 level of confidence.

2. The use of puppets will enhance the semantic intent of preschool students and will be statistically significant at the .01 level of confidence.

3. The use of puppets will enhance the pragmatic intent of attending to task for preschool students and will be statistically significant

at the .01 level of confidence.

DEFINITION OF IMPORTANT TERMS

Bodi-puppet. Bodi-puppet is a puppet made like a paperdoll without hands or feet which is large enough to cover the entire front of the individual. The puppet's wrists and ankles are anchored to those of the individual. The puppet's hands, therefore, are those of the puppeteer in order to speak through sign language or freely pantomime the message.

Communication. Communication is the social function of language which transmits information. It is a verbal or nonverbal method of sharing thoughts, feelings, and ideas. The process of communication involves a sender, receiver, and a medium of transmission (Rodrigues, 1981).

Language. Language, as used in this study, is defined as a vocal code of humans which makes meaningful communication possible (Bloom & Lehey, 1978).

Mean Length Utterance. Mean Length Utterance (MLU) is obtained by counting the total number of morphemes for each utterance in order to provide a measure of syntactic complexity (Miller, 1981).

Morphemes. A morpheme is the smallest portion of a word that conveys a meaning.

Puppet. A puppet is a non-person which is a simplification of whatever it represents. It is completely helpless and needs to be given actions through human manipulation (Burn, 1977; Parker, 1981).

Puppetry. Puppetry is an active two-way communication medium which forms a bridge between reality and fantasy. It involves a puppeteer who is the sender and a receiver represented by the audience.

Attention to Task is defined as the period of time in which a student

is viewed as actively engaged in attending to an academically relevant task as evidenced by responses to questions.

DEFINITION OF SEMANTIC INTENTS *

Action. This category contains utterances which depict action or movement but which doesn't denote a change of location.

Attribution. Utterances in this category are adjectival descriptions which distinguish the object or person from others, e.g., blue book.

Causality. The utterances in this category are those that have a cause and effect relationship: generally containing the words because, so, or cause.

Coordinate. Utterances in this category are those that generally are joined with and but remain independent of each other, e.g., black and blue.

Epistemic. Utterances in this category denote definite certainty or uncertainty, e.g., I don't know.

Possession. This category denotes the state of having or feeling ownership. This is frequently preceded by my, e.g., my flower.

Quantity. This category includes utterances denoting a number, plurals, or adjectives such as some or many.

Time. This category includes utterances which denote time in some manner such as references to past, present, or future. The morphemes -ing, -ed, and verbs in the past tense are included.

*Author's interpretation of these intents are drawn from university linguistics class discussions and Bloom and Lehey (1978).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Throughout the ages children and adults have gained entertainment, therapeutic, and educational value from puppets. There is presently a thrust toward justification of puppet utilization as an educational tool emphasizing the concepts, skills, and methods thought to enhance language development, teacher/learner interaction, and participation in selected skill areas. The review of literature was conducted to address the following issues:

1. What is the role of puppetry in education?
2. How does puppetry relate to oral language and communication?
3. What is the research regarding puppets in student attention and involvement?

PUPPETRY AND EDUCATION

Classroom Involvement

Puppets are often used effectively in education. While there is much anecdotal information existing to support this claim, little empirical data exists in the field. Currell (1980) stressed that puppetry in education suffered because of an over emphasis on craft aspects and from its vagueness of purpose. He stated that the purpose of puppetry is a means for providing children with supplementary opportunities that will expose them to a wide range of concepts, knowledge, skills and situations which would stimulate this further knowledge and reinforce their previous learning.

Educational benefits derived from puppets are greatly increased when

the puppets are produced by the students (Currell, 1980; Jenkins, 1980; Roysdon, 1982; Weiger, 1974). Briggs and Wagner (1979) found that children identify more readily with puppets which they have constructed themselves, therefore, the total value of the puppet is not realized if it is not made by the pupil.

Puppetry performs an important function in the classroom because these activities bring children of varied interests, abilities, and talents together in ways attainable through few other school related activities. The varied elements of a puppet performance, puppet construction, manipulation, scenery, and lighting guarantee that there is something for everybody to do, no matter where their talents, interests, and abilities lie. Group experiences develop social responsibility. While language enhancement or some area of curriculum may be the initial reason for the puppet presentation, group cooperation is cited most often as a benefit (D'Alonzo, 1974; Renfro, 1979; Roysdon, 1982; Weiger, 1974).

In Montgomery's (1979) study, sixty-seven third grade students were randomly assigned to a control and experimental group in order to determine the degree of effect puppetry and ventriloquism have on the instruction of an economic unit. It was concluded that third graders within the limits of this study did not exhibit greater gains through the use of puppets and ventriloquism than the control group that was taught comparable material using stories, explanation, and discussion.

A study done at Portland State University (Vogelsang, Saubidet & Sullivan, 1979) was based on the supposition that although most adults, think of puppets purely as a toy or entertainment, puppets used as

a teaching and communication medium were found to be highly effective. In this study, eight trained interviewers with a Pierson Inter-rater Reliability of .694 discussed a live puppet presentation with 59 students. Children in grades two through five were involved with a balance across age and gender. Approximately 15% represented ethnic minorities. In regard to the perception of discrimination, no significant difference was found in this study among children of different ages, gender, grade levels, or cultural backgrounds. The authors concluded "puppets are a powerful didactic communication/educational medium" (p. 5).

Puppetry is currently being used more extensively in school and public libraries. Puppets are used for "teaching skills, enhancing story hours, giving book talks, and communicating with children in a multitude of ways" (Champlin, 1979, p. 4). In light of this increasing emphasis in puppetry, Parker (1981) studied the relationships between the perceptions of public administrators about puppets and the degree to which they were actively used. The study found that even though librarians are generally familiar with the wide variety of uses, they tend to limit their use to traditional forms which are most associated with children. She also found that the more frequency of use, the greater their belief in the influence of puppets. The results appeared to support the belief that puppets are primarily for use with pre-primary and primary age children. This is further evidenced by the extreme lack of research with junior high and older students (Parker, 1981; Renfro, 1979).

Educators who are cognizant of the value of puppetry with older children and adults have found that puppetry can provide a universal

and open-ended medium for all ages. Biderman (1979) specified that puppetry programs for older students need to emphasize the roles of adolescents in a rapidly changing world. The materials must encourage these students to feel free to accept the puppets as an extension of their individual feelings and reactions. Following these guidelines, puppetry gives adolescents freedom to explore and be creative.

Relationship to Play

Puppetry frequently is not given serious consideration by educators and others based on the assumption that it is a form of play. Quisenberry (1975) concluded that play, however, is highly beneficial to education and development. Play provides children with an environment in which they feel safe to experiment with social rules. In play, consequences are minimized and children explore ways in which people interact. Play is theoretically and practically identified as one of the mediators through which children learn about and perceive the world in which they live. Thus, play can make a significant curricular contribution to childhood (Quisenberry, 1975).

Silvern, Williamson, and Waters (1983) conducted a study with 102 kindergarten children to determine if familiarity with play conditions would enhance student comprehension. The results strongly support that enrichment activities, such as role playing, puppets, and other forms of symbolic play will, over time, increase language comprehension.

Pellegrini (1980) examined the relationships between play and variables such as gender and socioeconomic status. He found that play was a significant predictor of success in developing prereading, language, and writing skills with dramatic play showing the greatest impact on

achievement.

Puppets have the ability to "fascinate and involve children in a way that few other art forms can" (Jenkins, 1980, p. 11). They encourage imagination and creativity since children are free to create the plot, lines, character, and even the puppets themselves in order to dramatize whatever is needed. The mind can bridge the gap between reality and fantasy through the use of the imagination that brings the puppet to life (Parker, 1981).

Individuals who are hesitant to participate in acting out life situations may volunteer to take part in puppet plays since a puppet serves as a means of distracting attention from themselves to the puppet. Thus pressures are reduced which they might feel when performing in other ways (Briggs & Wagner, 1979).

The relationships of language use, context, and the nature of play episodes were investigated by Martlew, Connolly, and McCleod (1978). These findings support the belief that role playing is important in the development of a child's communicative skills. Quisenberry (1975) asserted that children need opportunities to express experiences and creative ideas through play. Puppets can be used effectively to stimulate socio-dramatic play. Using puppets in this manner, teachers and parents can positively influence children's intellectual, creative, and social development. Puppetry is one of the most effective tools for creative play because using puppets allows a child to internalize the ideas of adult behavior which had previously not been understood.

Yawkey and Hrncir (1983) studied the relationships among imaginative play, communication play, and the development of oral language in young

children. They found that imaginative play expedites the development of communication abilities in preschoolers. They specified that the communication between caregivers and children plays an important role in their use of imaginative play. They also stress that imaginative play is an effective means for stretching cognitive capacities and fostering verbal skills.

Special Needs Students

An individual may develop feelings of complete power or mastery over a puppet. The puppet then becomes almost human as a tool for self-expression (Making and Using, 1978). In using the puppet, a youngster can express inner conflicts, problems, desires, and fantasies without having to immediately take direct responsibility for them and without being physically exposed. Puppets may also provide a "socially acceptable means for releasing pent-up frustrations and anxieties" (Renfro, 1979, p. 136). Educators can use puppets to draw out an individual's innermost thoughts, in a non-threatening manner (Latshaw, 1978; Myers, 1979; Reinert, 1980; Woltmann, 1976).

Ambron (1981) emphasized that social stress is a primary source of anxiety in preschool children. Shyness and withdrawal are generally the children's response to a threatening situation. Since puppets can combine learning and entertainment, they can be used to produce laughter. Laughter serves to relieve stress and acts as a safety valve during the stressful preschool years (Ambron, 1981).

The character which the puppet represents can encourage shy children to feel a measure of safety. In addition, a very shy child could be given a puppet with a very large mouth, such as a monster or crocodile, to allow

the child experience using a big voice. On the other hand, a very loud child could utilize a quiet type puppet, such as a butterfly, to gain understanding of subdued communication (Koenig & Peyton, 1977, Woltmann, 1976).

The American Guidance Service, Incorporated has developed a program using puppets to assist children in understanding their social and emotional behavior leading to positive self-images. In their program titled Developing Understanding of Self and Others (1982) puppets were used in leading discussions, facilitating dramatic play, conducting listening activities, and role playing. In a study (Gumaer, 1984) of 72 second and third graders, the DUSO program had a significant impact on the measurement of self-concept in five of seven subtests indicated in the study.

An intensive program for emotionally disturbed preadolescents was developed in Buffalo, New York with social workers and a professional puppeteer. They used fairy-tale characters to depict emotional experiences in order to help their population deal with feelings and emotions in real life situations. They found that the structured experiences with puppets were helpful in developing a sense of responsibility for these student's actions. Parents, school administrators, caseworkers, and students rated these behavior changes from moderate to extremely successful (Vidler, 1972).

Mainstreaming

Hamrin (1981) found that insight into people's anxieties, as well as imparting factual information regarding handicapping conditions, can best be presented through appropriate literature, puppets, and dramatic

play in order to facilitate mainstreaming for special needs children and their regular education peers. Other research supported using puppets with special needs children. Martin, Kubl, and Haroldson (1972) conducted a study using a talking puppet with two stuttering children for twenty minutes a week. These children had received no previous therapy. Their major purpose was to assess the value of using a puppet, in order to elicit spontaneous speech. Observers recorded the rate of disfluency of the youngsters as they conversed with the puppet. These rates were compared with disfluency when they talked with adults. The findings reflected sudden and dramatic reductions in the children's disfluencies when a puppet was used. Stuttering behavior was reduced and maintained in both children for one year.

The "Kids on the Block," a puppet program created in 1978 by Barbara Aiello, addressed mainstreaming issues (Hechinger, 1978). The program is currently implemented by over 500 groups in forty-six states and nine countries. The puppets present information regarding handicapping conditions which include cerebral palsy, mental retardation, blindness, spina bifida, deafness, learning disabilities, and physically handicapped. This puppet program presents disabilities in a manner that communicates the human elements of people who happen to have handicapping conditions with an emphasis on changing attitudes. The focus is on reactions and interactions between puppets characterized as non-disabled and disabled individuals which have as their goal alleviating hostilities, anxieties, and reducing alienation toward other people who are different (Caputo, 1983).

A preliminary study was conducted through Meyer Children's

Rehabilitation Center in order to survey student attitudes following the presentation of the puppet program "Kids on the Block" (Brockman & Esterling, 1985). Pre-test, immediate post tests, and three week delayed post tests were administered to 695 students in six different elementary schools, grades four through six. These presentations resulted in mild improvements in children's attitudes regarding handicap conditions even though these changes were fairly transitory.

Puppets have also been used with children who have limited motor control or amputated limbs. For example, puppets have been adapted to be worn on their wrists or feet, and puppet stages have been clamped onto lap boards and wheelchairs (Caputo, 1983). Stick puppets have also been placed on hats of quadriplegic children enabling them to maneuver and voice puppets simultaneously (Making and Using, 1978).

Puppet plays have been effectively presented by visually handicapped and hearing impaired children (Reich, 1968). These plays have emphasized spontaneous dialogue. Shows for hearing impaired youngsters concentrate on clarity of ideas, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Findings showed clear improvements in oral language in children with auditory difficulties. Since conventional talking puppets may not be suitable for children with hearing impairments, the bodi-puppet has been used effectively. According to Renfro, "The key to working with unconventional children is to use unconventional puppets" (1979, p. 133).

Puppet Usage in Other Languages and Cultures

In 1973, puppets were initiated in Alaska as a major part of the school curriculum utilizing "Benjamin Beaver's Box," an oral language development program. Native Alaskan children participating in this program were

learning to speak, read, and write English as a second language. Puppets were selected to encourage psychologically reluctant native Alaskan children to speak in the presence of adults at school. The philosophical beliefs underlying these experiences were "one's own language is important and has a place in the school environment" and "in all aspects of language learning there must be something to talk about and someone to talk to" (Rubin, 1973, p. 620).

Peyton and Koenig (1976) also tested the effectiveness of puppets with Spanish-speaking children in Willimantic, Connecticut. As an outcome of their findings, they added a supplement to the Language Arts Bilingual-Bicultural Curriculum Guides which recommended using puppets that represent the Puerto Rican culture. Koenig and Peyton (1977) also contended that puppets who exhibit proper language usage motivate bilingual students to work on scholastic activities in a productive manner.

Researchers have found puppets valuable in the educational programs of other countries such as Samoa, Fiji, and Tonga. Since the population of these countries has limited access to printed media, television, and radio, educators sought means to stimulate language which did not represent foreign cultural identification, was inexpensive, and provided interest through use of the native languages. Puppets were assumed to contain all of these qualifications. It was also acknowledged that puppets would hold the attention of both children and adults in a more effective manner than direct presentation of factual material. Oak's (1977) results showed that using puppetry as a folk medium facilitated interpersonal communication of these peoples. The puppeteers were able

to weave real personalities around themes that had direct bearing on the everyday lives. The Mexican government recognized Robert Lago for his efforts in establishing puppet companies and instructing hundreds of teachers in puppet techniques. Puppets were used to improve literacy and public health and to spread civic historical information (Baird 1965). In India, half of the 600,000 villages have roving theater groups, puppeteers, oral historians, and minstrels who convey ideas to vast numbers of village people in a simple and inexpensive manner. Also in India, Shankar Singh used puppets on broadcasts by local media to change the rural people's thinking regarding equality for women, the evils of untouchability, the need of minimum wages for agricultural laborers, national integration, and the ills of moneylending (Roy, 1983). India's Literacy House trained puppeteers to help educate village people in how to make choices affecting their everyday lives. Presentations include themes on small pox inoculations versus the witch doctor, family planning, and child marriages.

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

Puppetry Involvement

Use of puppets in the classroom are based on the assumption that they promote interaction and active participation (Burn, 1977). Roysdon (1982) found that puppetry is currently being successfully used to promote learning "a wide range of communication and language skills" (p. 10). Because of this, American Guidance Service, Inc. (Peabody Language Development Kits, 1981) incorporated puppets in their language program.

Puppet activities and performances can produce natural outlets by providing varied subjects and motivation for communication. When a

puppet is the focus of attention, rather than the person holding the puppet, feelings and ideas are more freely expressed by the sender and the audience feels more freedom to respond (Burn, 1977). Since puppet manipulators are not normally visible to audiences, puppet story-acting seems to be an ideal strategy for initiating oral communication. This medium may assist students in overcoming a fear of speaking in front of their peers, it can also foster the development of expressive language patterns as the feelings of the puppets are revealed through students' voices (Briggs & Wagner, 1979). Furthermore, puppetry appears effective in language development because visual and auditory channels are utilized simultaneously (Proschan, 1980).

Storytelling and Picture Books

Dunstall (1974) conducted a study in which first grade children in a control group were told stories using picture books and records. Children in an experimental group were told the same stories using puppets and records. To assess the children's immediate knowledge and retention of details, a listening comprehension test and a visual imagery test were administered immediately following the presentations and again one month later. In the four categories tested, listening comprehension, visual imagery, motivation, and retention, the puppetry group scored significantly higher ($p<.001$) than the control group. Dunstall also found that the puppetry presentations were more effective than picture books regardless of age or socioeconomic groups.

Martin investigated whether 154 preschool, Kindergarten, and first grade students increased their knowledge of selected nutritional concepts after viewing a puppet story as opposed to viewing the same material

presented through dramatic storytelling. The single variable was the method of storytelling (Martin, 1979). Student's nutritional knowledge was significantly greater among the experimental group.

The ability to communicate with others through language has been basic to early childhood educational programs. The preschool and elementary school years are seen as highly critical in the acquisition of language and communication skills. Increased fluency and frequent communication through verbal social play is emphasized at every opportunity (Bellon, 1981; Carrow-Woolfolk & Lynch, 1982; Johnson, Campbell, & Miller, 1982). Educators responsible for selecting curriculum recognize that storytelling and picture book programs make significant contributions to language development (Bellon, 1981). In these activities, children become involved in the act of communication through the interchange of questions and the clarification of ideas. In addition to vocabulary and linguistic richness, stories and drama can provide opportunities for action and sensory experiences as children replay events from various plots (Bellon, 1981). The enhancement of language competencies in the classroom has traditionally been addressed through using picture books and storytelling experiences.

Chomsky's (1972) research gave additional support to the relationships between books and language development. She studied thirty-six children between ages six and ten to determine their linguistic competence with respect to complex aspects of English syntax. She found that the number of opportunities the children had to listen to books read aloud correlated positively with their linguistic advancement. Their exposure to more complex language, which was available to them through listening

to stories, resulted in increased knowledge of language.

Fasick (1973) compared the language of children's books with the content found on children's television programs in order to determine which was a better facilitator of language development. She found that books offered a far wider range of syntactical patterns and included sentences that were more complex than those used on television. Another strength of the use of books was the opportunity to repeat parts of stories which is only possible in two-way communication. Repeating the stories resulted in social interaction between readers and listeners. Two way communication encouraged acknowledgment and reinforcement of what children say, provided effective models, and facilitated the use of complex sentences. These three strategies were documented as the most beneficial approaches in facilitating language development (Fasick, 1973; Johnson et al., 1982).

Normal Language Studies

Early linguistic literature was dominated with information regarding measures that document types and frequencies of various topographics involving syntax, semantics, and phonological influences. This approach provided needed scientific analysis but it did not address the dynamic process of communication. This information was less sensitive to the interactional aspects of communication. The concept that language always occurs in context and that contexts are not the same are the major premises that have been highlighted during the 1970's and 1980's (Gallagher & Prutting, 1983).

Although language specialists do not define language using the same specifics, most agree on the general characteristics of language.

Johnson et al. (1982) found there is general agreement in language development as a gradual sequential process both in terms of receptive and expressive language. Carrow-Woolfolk and Lynch (1982) noted that language represents a social contract whereby the members of society agree on the meanings of words and they emphasize that knowledge is acquired through interaction within the social world. This social knowledge is crucial to the normal development of language and is an integral part of the foundation for language development. The major function which language serves, both in society and for the individual, is the social function of communication (Carrow-Woolfolk and Lynch, 1982).

Brown (1973) conducted a longitudinal study which followed three preschool children's primary development of English language. The mean length utterance (MLU) served as an index of grammatical development since "almost every new kind of knowledge increases length" (Brown, 1973, p. 53). The researchers subsequently created a general index of grammatical development comprised of five major stages. In order to equate one child's data with another's, Brown formulated nine rules to determine MLU as a basis for standardizing linguistic studies. Utilizing Brown's linguistic rules, Miller (1981) studied the linguistic relationship in 123 children. Analysis of the results revealed a strong correlation between age and MLU ($r=.88$). Further findings indicated that age and MLU change in a parallel continuum. Since age was found to be predictable with calculated MLU and vice versa, Miller modified Brown's stages and established age ranges which correlated with mean length utterance.

Semantic analysis is useful in studying the diversity and complexity of children's language, even though it may be difficult to separate

semantics from cognition and the grammatical and pragmatic structures with which it interacts (Miller, 1981). Bloom (1970) conducted a longitudinal study with three English speaking children in which she reported MLU and semantic analysis. Her findings suggested that when a child is able to use two or three words in appropriate order and make correct discriminating responses, this can be preceived as evidence of semantic intent and not just maintenance of individual word meaning. She emphasized, however, that semantic interpretation of a child's utterance is considered intuition and therefore the intent can not be positively identified by anyone else.

ATTENTION TO TASK

Puppets in research are primarily used as vehicles for maintenance of attention. Koenig and Peyton (1977) found that puppet's animation was a contributing factor in their ability to act as an "attention-getter" by making lessons appear to "come alive." Parker (1981) found that through animation of puppets, adults will also exhibit attention responses where instructions had previously been ignored. Clark and Anderson (1979) used puppets in role-playing in order to study spontaneous corrections which children make to their own utterances. They found that by four years of age, children use the entire range of directive statements found in adult speech and systematically modify these directives in varying social contexts.

Karweit (1983) stated that when the teacher is aware of the importance of attention, instructional adjustments in pacing or method of instruction can be made. Ambron (1981) also emphasized that in order for children to give sustained attention, the criteria of rapid change, novelty, and

familiar objects produce the most effective results. Puppets generate interest which encourages students to participate in a given activity (Koenig & Peyton, 1977; Roysdon, 1982). Attention normally varies during instructional sessions due to methods used, classroom environment, and student variables. Inattention is one indication for the instructor that an alternation of pace, topic or method of instruction is needed.

SUMMARY

The major implications to be drawn from the review of related research is that although puppets have become a viable phenomenon, the vast majority of puppetry is perceived as purely an entertainment medium. Even though puppet utilization and its value as an educational tool have been recognized, the potential is rarely approached. Part of this assertion is the historical interpretation of puppetry as a form of play. Even if this were accurate, play has been shown to be valuable in children's lives. The application of puppetry has been perceived as advantageous in the area of language and communication development. Additionally, puppetry was shown to be significant in providing student involvement through attention to task. "Today the puppet is reaching more people and serving more needs than ever before in its history--and it survives because it serves" (Latshaw, 1978, p. 24.). Thus, puppetry can fill a critical position for normal and special needs students in the attempt to educate the whole child. "Puppetry's unique blend of theater, literature, and the visual arts allows a particularly effective integration of art and the curriculum" (Roysdon, 1982, p. 7).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Prior to testing the author conducted a pilot study with two preschool children in conjunction with a university linguistic class in order to become familiar with mechanical equipment, questions, and coding techniques. A home crafted puppet, Fisher Price Castle, questions, and tape recorder were used for both the pilot study and the data base study. Various puppets were used for the children's manipulation. An easy to manipulate puppet with a large mouth was felt to be needed in order to have an effective puppet for the study. The university instructor and author recognized the results warranted an additional study to demonstrate increases in oral language and attention to task. This study was used to measure enhanced semantic intent and increases in the pragmatic intent of attention to task using of puppets.

Setting and Subjects

This study was conducted in a licensed preschool in a suburb of a metropolitan area. Thirty students were randomly selected from 106 students to serve as subjects for this study. Two subjects were subsequently eliminated because of special problems. One child was eliminated because of severe learning disabilities and one was eliminated because of a bilingual language background. This resulted in total of 28 subjects representing six different preschool classes. The subjects were between 4 and 5 1/2 years old and attended the preschool in either a morning or an afternoon session two days a week.

Materials

A Fisher-Price Castle and four plastic wooden people-like figures were used as the focal point for the six questions. A Dakin hand puppet was utilized by subjects. The puppet was a green crocodile with a big mouth. A homecrafted hand puppet was utilized by the interviewer. It resembled a white worm. Details included a large green mouth, moveable eyes, red hat, and wooden button nose. All interviews were tape-recorded.

Procedure

The author visited all of the classrooms the week previous to the study, spending 5 to 10 minutes in each room. Introduction was made in each room by the preschool director. The author was thereafter referred to as "our friend" or by her given name in the same manner as the regular preschool teachers. This was an attempt to encourage a feeling of familiarity and rapport with staff and children. The director went to each room the first two days of the study, to insure a feeling of security, as the students were asked to go with the interviewer. All testing was done in a room adjacent to their classroom which was familiar to the subjects. The subjects were interviewed as parental permission was received, therefore, groups were interspersed throughout the study. The interviews were conducted during the middle of the preschool sessions, only during times that the subjects were not actively involved in a more interesting activity as indicated by their teachers.

The subjects were randomly divided into three groups. The nine subjects in group I were interviewed with no puppet involved. The nine subjects in group II manipulated the hand puppet in response to questions.

The ten subjects in group III were interviewed by means of interviewer manipulating the hand puppet.

The subjects were allowed to familiarize themselves with the castle for 2 or 3 minutes by finding the toy people which had been hidden within the castle before the interview. The interview was conducted individually. All subjects were asked the same questions regarding familiar situations. The six questions asked in this study were:

1. How is this castle different from your home?
2. What do you think a birthday party would be like in this castle?
3. What do you think the kid's mommy would do that lives here?
4. When my kid's Dad comes home in the evening, he's tired from his job. What do you think the Dad would do who lives here?
5. What's going to happen when the kids come home from school if the drawbridge is up?
6. For the child who lives here, what might be the favorite way to play in the castle?

The interviews were transcribed and coded for mean length utterances (Brown, 1973) and semantic content (Bloom and Lehey, 1978). The pragmatic function of attention to task was also coded.

MLU was counted such that a subject received a numeric score for each morpheme used in an utterance. If the subject used a word repeatedly, e.g., boat, boat, boat goes, the stuttered word was counted only once. The introductory a before an answer was not counted. Also not counted were placeholds, e.g., hmmmmmm. All of the MLU tallies for Questions #1 were recorded by the author and checked with a language professor at the University of Nebraska at Omaha with 100% agreement.

Eight semantic intents (Bloom & Lehey, 1978) were coded in the study. Those utilized were: action, attribution, causality, coordination, epistemic, possession, quantity, and time. In order to calculate reliability, Question #1 was chosen for interjudge reliability because it had the greatest number of responses. It was coded independently by this investigator and a faculty member at UNO who taught classes in normal and disordered language. After conferring, 100% agreement was reached. The question with the next greatest response was independently coded and 80.82% agreement was reached. The remaining four questions were coded to coincide with the classifications of the first two questions.

The pragmatic function of response indicating communicative attention to the questions was coded for subjects at one time. In order to calculate reliability, these responses were coded independently then checked for agreement with a UNO professor in learning disabilities with 100% agreement. Language responses which were neither on nor off task such as: I don't know, or an animal sound instead of language, as a response when a subject had the puppet, were deemed uncodable and not counted. Primary analysis was completed without the knowledge of which group each subject participated in.

Assumptions and Delimitations

Three assumptions were made when the aforementioned procedures where implemented. The first assumption made was that the subjects were familiar and unafraid of puppets. The second assumption was that the subjects were not unduly anxious about conversing with an unfamiliar interviewer or a tape recorder. The third assumption was that the parents had not previously set up an anxious situation concerning the answers given in

the interview. This study was delimited to students who were deemed as having normal learning and language abilities as assessed by their classroom teachers and preschool director. It was further delimited to students who did not have a bilingual background.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to test the following hypotheses:

1. The use of puppets will enhance mean length utterance of preschool students and will be statistically significant at the .01 level of confidence.

2. The use of puppets will enhance the semantic intents used by preschool students and will be statistically significant at the .01 level of confidence.

3. The use of puppets will enhance the pragmatic function of attention to task for preschool students and will be statistically significant at the .01 level of confidence.

Statistical Analysis

An analysis of variance was utilized to analyze the effect of puppets on children's language when children manipulated the puppet in response to questions, when the interviewer held the puppet to ask the same questions, and when no puppet was involved. In addition, mean scores for the groups were compared when a significant F ratio was found.

The results for MLU were found to be not significant (F=.7315, df=2/25, p>.01) as shown in Table I. The semantic intents of action (F=.324, df=2/25, p>.01), attribution (F-1.38339, df=2/25, p>.01), causality (F=1.0698, df=2/25, p>.01), coordination (F=1.13, df=2/25, p>.01), epistemic (F=2.75, df=2/25, p>.01), possession (F=3.1088, df=2/25, p>.01), quantity (F=.55836, df=2/25, p>.01), and time (F=.67139, df=2/25, p>.01) were found to be not significant as found on Tables II through

IX. The puppets increased the children's ability to stay on task ($F=7.55$, $df=2/25$, $p<.01$). Tukey's highly significant difference post hoc comparison of means was used to determine which of the differences between group means were significant and which were not (Kirk, 1968). Results are reported in Table XI. The means in Table XI indicate that the mean for the group with child held puppets differed from the control group I, the group mean with teacher held puppet differed from the control group I, but the group mean with the child held puppet and teacher held puppet group mean did not differ.

Overall, puppets were not found to significantly increase the MLU or enhance semantic intent. However, puppets were found to significantly increase attention to task. Both of the groups in which the student utilized the puppet and the group in which the interviewer utilized the puppet produced greater attention to task than the group in which no puppet was involved.

TABLE I

Results of Analysis of Variance for Mean Length Utterance

Sources of Variation	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F
Between Groups	2	6273.36	3136.68	.7315
Within Groups	25	107189.75	4287.59	

TABLE II

Analysis of Variance
Semantic Intent of Action

Sources of Variation	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F
Between Groups	2	.50	.25	.324
Within Groups	25	19.255	.7702	
Total	27	19.755		

TABLE III

Analysis of Variance
Semantic Intent of Attribution

Sources of Variation	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F
Between Groups	2	.3546	.1773	1.38339
Within Groups	25	3.205	.1282	
Total	27	3.5596		

TABLE IV

Analysis of Variance
Semantic Intent of Causality

Sources of Variation	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F
Between Groups	2	.108	.054	1.0698
Within Groups	25	1.255	.05052	
Total	27	1.363		

TABLE V

Analysis of Variance
Semantic Intent of Coordination

Sources of Variation	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F
Between Groups	2	1.116	.558	1.13
Within Groups	25	12.33	.4932	
Total	27	13.446		

TABLE VI

Analysis of Variance
Semantic Intent of Epistemic

Sources of Variation	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F
Between Groups	2	.298	.149	2.75
Within Groups	25	1.363	.05452	
Total	27	1.661		

TABLE VII

Analysis of Variance
Semantic Intent of Possession

Sources of Variation	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F
Between Groups	2	.6854	.3427	3.1088
Within Groups	25	2.758	.11032	
Total	27	3.4434		

TABLE VIII

Analysis of Variance
Semantic Intent of Quantity

Sources of Variation	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F
Between Groups	2	.584	.292	.55836
Within Groups	25	13.824	.55296	
Total	27	14.408		

TABLE IX

Analysis of Variance
Semantic Intent of Time

Sources of Variation	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F
Between Groups	2	.662	.331	.67139
Within Groups	25	12.325	.493	
Total	27	12.987		

TABLE X

Analysis of Variance
Pragmatic Intent of Attention to Task

Sources of Variation	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F
Between Groups	2	.4882	.2441	7.55**
Within Groups	25	.8075	.0323	
Total	27	1.2957		

**p<.01

TABLE XI

Post Hoc Comparison
Between Group Means

	II	III	I
	Child puppet	Teacher puppet	No puppet
Means	.969	.919	.661
II - .969		.050	.308*
III - .919			.258*
I - .661			

*p<.05

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Summary

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the degree to which puppetry was effective in increasing oral communication and determining attention to task as reflected in the spontaneous responses of preschool students and to contribute to the body of knowledge concerned with utilizing puppetry as a motivational and communication tool for preschoolers. This study was designed to compare responses to specific open ended questions and to discern if differences would occur with children responding to a teacher held puppet, child held puppet, or verbal interaction without the use of a puppet. The research hypothesis of the study was that preschool children who were involved in an interview while holding a puppet or the teacher holding a puppet would produce more MLU, semantically enhanced oral language, and attention to task than children who were asked the same questions by the teacher in a traditional manner without puppet involvement. No statistically significant differences were found between the teacher held puppet, pupil held puppet, and interview with no puppet involved for MLU or semantically enhanced oral language. However, attention to task was significantly enhanced for children holding the puppet and responding to teacher held puppet when compared to the no puppet experimental condition.

Conclusions

In terms of the design of the study and the limitations of the study,

the following conclusions appear warranted:

1. Preschoolers interviewed with teacher held puppets or responding through puppets themselves did not exhibit significantly different oral language than when no puppets were utilized.

2. Preschoolers interviewed with puppets and teachers speaking through puppets were significantly more likely to attend to task than when puppets were not utilized during similar language activities.

Discussion

Although the pilot study and literature strongly suggested otherwise, this study did not show that the use of puppets made a significant difference in the amount or type of oral language. This may have partially resulted from the children's previous experience as viewers of television and dramatizations rather than active participants. This was observed as producing feelings of uncertainty in the manipulation of the puppet or conversing with the puppet during the short time that the students participated. Therefore, the novelty of actually interacting with puppets may have produced uncertain and inhibiting reactions. Previous exposure in working with the puppets might have produced different results in amount of language produced.

Another reason for the discrepancy between expectations and results may have been due to the emphasis of the study. Since the more global approach of attention to task produced significance, the portion of the study which dealt with fine differences in semantic intent in language may have been too narrow in scope. The study was further limited by the small number of participants involved in each group.

The practical implications of this study revolve around the indication

of increased student attention to task. Since attention is a precursor for learning to take place, it is imperative that teachers use methods which have been found to facilitate attention. The use of puppetry is seen as particularly advantageous during the critical time that new information is being presented in the classroom. In order for teachers to advantageously use the tool of puppetry as an addition to their repertoire of methods, they must first be exposed to its advantages, applications, and utilization. Currently, this is accomplished primarily through in-service demonstrations, specialized workshops, and publications. There are only a limited number of institutions of higher learning which offer courses or degrees in puppetry. In order to use the potential of puppets, this knowledge needs to be expanded and accelerated.

Implications for Further Study

1. Future studies might take into consideration that although there is a great deal of information written about the value of puppetry, a comparatively minor volume of empirical research has been reported. This is particularly true of longitudinal studies and those which involve junior/senior high students, adults, and senior citizens.

2. Some children are found to have attention deficits and are highly distractable. According to this study, puppets encouraged more attention to task behaviors, thus additional research could be conducted to ascertain the effects of puppets in holding and maintaining attention deficit disordered children.

3. The questions of whether or not a background in puppetry is necessary for the teacher and/or student to encourage oral language could be studied. A number of teachers could be provided with formalized experiences in

working with puppets. These teachers would then feel confident in their ability to use puppetry in their classroom. Their students would be personally familiar with manipulating puppets and less likely to feel inhibited with the interaction of puppets as a two-way means of communication. These classes could then be studied in conjunction with students who have only had limited exposure to puppets.

4. Some of the literature indicated that the true value of a puppet is not realized unless it is produced by the child, thereby encouraging an empathy with their creation. Conversely, there is an enormous variety of commercially produced, quality puppets which are available for immediate use. A fourth consideration for future studies, therefore, might involve the discussion between the impact of teacher constructed or purchased puppets versus child constructed puppets.

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APPENDIX

University of Nebraska at Omaha

College of Education
Department of Counseling (402) 554-2727
and Special Education (402) 554-2201
Omaha, Nebraska 68182

Dear Parent,

We believe the following study will contribute to our understanding of how puppets may encourage the important skills of vocal language communication. As instructors, we are constantly striving to find the most productive and enjoyable means of helping our students grow. We feel this study will produce knowledge toward encouraging innovative teaching techniques.

Kaye Hale

Kaye Hale
Maplewood Preschool Director

John W. Hill, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Counseling and Special Education
Director, Learning Disabilities

INFORMED CONSENT

Your child is invited to participate in a study in the use of puppets. This study is being conducted for my master's thesis. It will center around how puppets can play an important part in encouraging children's communication through spoken language. Your child's name was randomly selected.

Each participant will be interviewed either with or without the use of a puppet. The following are examples of what might be asked in the interview: Why do you think this is a good place to live? Tell me about what you might do on a snowy day. The interview will be taped recorded.

This should be an enjoyable experience in vocal communication for your child and a learning experience for the teachers. Since puppets have become such a frequent part of our lives, I feel that there are no risks to your child in this study.

All interviews will remain strickly confidential. Your child's name will not be entered as a participant in any reports of this research.

Participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to have your child participate will not prejudice your future relations with Maplewood Preschool or the University of Nebraska. You are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue your child's participation at any time.

- -

Please RETURN THIS SLIP as I need your reply to continue the study.

I DO NOT wish to have my child participate. _____

I DO wish to have my child participate. _____

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT, HAVING READ THE ABOVE INFORMATION, YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PERMIT _____ TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY. YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM TO KEEP.

_____ _____

Signature Date

_____ _____

Relationship to Subject Signature of Investigator

If you decide to allow your child to participate and would like a summary of the results, please indicate by filling in your address. It will probably take at least two months before these results are available.

_____ _____

Name Address

2819 Benson Gardens Blvd.
Omaha, Nebraska 68134
August 20, 1984

Dear Parent,

This letter is a preliminary summary of the results of the study which I conducted at Maplewood Preschool between March 1 to May 1. You indicated an interest in the results on the parent consent form.

Twenty-eight students participated. They were randomly divided into three groups. All students were encouraged to play with a toy Fisher-Price Castle and four of its people for a few minutes before I asked them any questions. The questions centered around the castle. The students in one group were asked the same questions by means of a hand-puppet which I used. The remaining group manipulated the hand-puppet while answering the questions. Three types of responses were tabulated for the three groups. First, I counted the number of words which were used in response to the questions. Second, I counted the type of words in their responses, eg. action words, possessive words, and last I counted the number of on-task and off-task responses while using no puppet, my holding the puppet, or the children holding the puppet.

After compiling the results and conferring with my advisers at UNO, we found that the students were encouraged to use a few more words in their answers when the puppet was utilized but these findings were not significantly different. The type of words uttered by the children in the different groups were not found to be significantly different. It was found in this study, however, that when the puppet was utilized, the students were more likely to attend and respond to the questions. This finding was statistically significant. Out of 130 responses to the questions in the group without the puppet, 86 or 66% were related to the question. Out of 115 responses in the group with the students manipulating the puppet, 111 or 96% related to the question. From the 149 responses in the group in which I used the puppet, 137 or 91% were related to the question. I hope these findings will encourage teachers to utilize puppets, when appropriate, as a means of increasing the likelihood that their students will respond with greater attention to the concept being presented.

Thank you for your cooperation and for contributing to my graduate experience at UNO. My thesis is scheduled to be completed this winter. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me (393-8290) or my thesis committee chairman, Dr. John Hill (554-2201).

Sincerely,

Marlene Adams

Marlene Adams