



Enhancing Inner Speech through Puppet Dialogue: Embodied Approaches to Second-Language Learning

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Abstract

This study explores how puppet-based self-dialogue can enhance inner speech in second-language learning. Inner speech—the silent dialogue individuals engage in with themselves—plays a critical role in cognition, emotion regulation, and identity formation. However, it remains largely untapped in traditional language pedagogy. Through a qualitative case study conducted in a university-level German conversation course, this study investigates how students use puppetry to externalize and transform their internal dialogues into expressive, reflective speech. Drawing on theoretical frameworks, including embodied cognition, metacognition, experiential learning, and narrative self-enactment, the analysis focuses on two contrasting student projects. One student progressed from emotionally detached language to personal and expressive articulation through creative puppet embodiment. In contrast, another student began with rich metaphorical reflection but regressed to an objective, depersonalized narration in the final video. These divergent outcomes highlight both the potential and challenges of employing puppetry as a pedagogical tool. Findings suggest that puppet dialogue facilitates emotional safety, promotes introspection, and supports developing a narrative voice when appropriately scaffolded. This approach builds linguistic competence and encourages learners to engage with language as a medium for personal meaning making. This study argues for reimagining language education as an emotionally resonant, embodied, and creative practice.

Keywords: Embodied Cognition, Experiential Learning, Metacognition, Narrative Self-Enactment, Puppetry in Language Learning

1. Introduction

Inner speech—engaging in silent, self-directed dialogue—plays a crucial role in cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, and language development. This internal conversation is often overlooked in language-learning contexts; however, it provides an essential foundation for articulating thoughts, processing emotions, and developing narrative coherence. While inner speech is a personal and largely invisible phenomenon, pedagogical strategies that externalize it can deepen learners' metacognitive engagement and enhance their communication abilities.

This study explores how puppet dialogue facilitates developing inner speech, particularly in university-level education. Drawing on Vygotsky's (1986) sociocultural theory, which conceptualizes inner speech as the internalization of social interaction, this study positions puppet dialogue as a transitional practice that enables learners to reflect, revoice, and reframe their thinking through embodied performance. Reflection, identity construction, and emotional awareness are crucial learning components in higher education, especially in teacher education. This paper examines how puppet dialogue supports the emergence of these elements by offering a psychologically safe and linguistically flexible space for expressing complex or vulnerable aspects of inner life. This study extends previous research through detailed qualitative analysis by proposing puppet dialogue as a generative pedagogical practice in higher education and exploring its broader implications for reflective learning, critical pedagogy, and professional identity development.

The research questions are:

- What challenges do learners face when articulating their inner speech?
- How does puppet-based self-dialogue influence the transformation of inner speech into overt speech?

This study contributes to growing interest in integrating embodied, narrative, and reflective practices into language pedagogy. The following sections review the relevant theoretical frameworks, describe the research methodology, analyse student projects, and discuss the pedagogical implications of engaging with inner speech through creative and performative approaches.

2. Literature Review

The study of inner speech has evolved significantly, shifting from a peripheral psychological concept to a central focus in cognitive science, narrative theory, and language education. Inner speech is increasingly recognized as a silent linguistic phenomenon and key mediator of cognitions, thoughts, and actions (Fernyhough & Borghi, 2023). This section synthesizes the theoretical perspectives relevant to pedagogical use of inner speech, focusing on embodied cognition, metacognition, narrative self-understanding, and the potential of puppetry as a learning tool.

2.1 Inner Speech as a Cognitive Tool

Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky originally theorized inner speech as a developmental transformation of social speech through which children internalize external dialogues and gradually use language for self-regulation and problem-solving (Vygotsky, 1986). Subsequent researchers have expanded on this perspective. Fernyhough and Borghi (2023) propose that inner speech is not merely a byproduct of cognition but a central component of language processing, imagination, and self-reflection. They emphasize the dialogic nature of inner

speech, which resembles the internal conversation that often mirrors social interactions. Chella and Pipitone (2020) introduced inner speech as a cognitive architecture for complex thought, suggesting its potential role in artificial intelligence. Rovetta (2024) further distinguishes between inner speech used for narrative self-understanding—constructing a sense of who we are—and narrative self-enactment—the performance of that identity through storytelling.

2.2 Embodied Cognition and Language Learning

Embodied cognition is grounded in bodily experiences and sensorimotor interactions with the world (Fincher-Kiefer, 2019). From this perspective, language learning is not confined to abstract mental operations but also involves gestures, physical expression, and engagement with the environment. Caracciolo and Kukkonen (2021) argue that narrative comprehension is shaped by embodied processes. This suggests that storytelling practices, particularly those involving physical objects such as puppets, can deepen learners' understanding and retention. Embodied cognition has inspired methods that incorporate movement, role-play, and creative performance into language education. Using puppets aligns well with this approach, as it involves manipulating external objects to represent internal states, thereby linking thought with action and voice with gestures.

2.3 Metacognition and Self-Reflection

Metacognition refers to the awareness and regulation of one's thinking processes. In second-language acquisition, metacognitive strategies help learners monitor their understanding, adjust their approaches, and reflect on their emotional and cognitive experiences. When students are invited to examine what they say, as well as how and why they say it, they become active learning participants. Puppet dialogue tasks require this type of reflection, as learners must make intentional decisions about which aspects of their inner speech to express, how to embody different voices, and how to structure narratives that feel authentic. This process leads to a deeper engagement with language as both a communicative tool and medium for personal expression.

2.4 Puppetry as a Pedagogical Medium

Using puppets in education, especially in early childhood, is a long-standing tradition. However, their applications in higher education and language learning are still emerging. Puppetry allows learners to project different personas, explore emotional complexity, and experiment with narrative structures in low-stakes environments. As external tools, puppets serve as mediate artifacts that help students visualize and vocalize their inner states. In this study, puppets function more than playful props; they become extensions of the self, offering a creative way to rehearse, reflect on, and revise their inner dialogues. The performative aspect of puppetry also introduces a sense of safe distance, enabling learners to explore vulnerability and express emotions with less self-consciousness.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative, case-based approach to investigate how puppet dialogue facilitates externalizing inner speech and enhances emotional expression in second-language learning. The research was conducted during a university-level German conversation course at Showa University of Music. The course integrated a creative video project where students used puppets to dramatize their inner dialogue. This design allowed for close observation of how language learners engage in self-reflection, narrative construction, and emotional articulation through embodied performance.

3.1 Research Context and Participants

Participants were undergraduate students in German classes at level A.1.1 as a second language. The course focused on developing oral communication skills through dialogue, role-play, and multimedia storytelling. During the 2024 Winter semester, students were assigned a project titled “Dialogue with the Self” and asked to create a short video dramatizing an internal conversation using puppets or similar objects. This project was designed not as a performance aimed at linguistic accuracy but as a process-oriented exploration of thoughts, feelings, and expressions. Students were encouraged to draw on personal experiences, emotional memories, or inner conflicts and represent these through scripted puppet interactions.

3.2 Data Collection

The primary study data comprised:

- Initial written scripts and planning memos submitted by students prior to video production
- Final puppet-based videos created by students
- Reflective commentaries from students (where available)
- Observational notes recorded by the instructor/researcher.

Two student projects were selected for in-depth analysis based on their contrasting approaches: one moving from objectivity toward emotional expression and the other moving in the opposite direction. These cases provide insight into how learners interpret and engage in inner speech and its outward articulation.

3.3 Analytical Framework

The analysis combined four theoretical lenses—embodied cognition, experiential learning, metacognition, and narrative self-enactment—to interpret how students externalized and transformed inner speech. Data from student scripts, final videos, and reflective commentaries were transcribed and subjected to qualitative thematic analysis.

First, all video data were reviewed and transcribed to capture verbal and visual elements, including puppet gestures, vocal variations, and narrative tone. Second, deductive coding was applied using the four theoretical categories as initial codes (e.g., metacognitive elements were coded where students evaluated their thinking or made intentional decisions about language use.) Narrative self-enactment was coded where students projected aspects of identity or used storytelling techniques. Emergent themes were then refined iteratively to ensure consistency across both case studies.

This multi-layered analysis allowed for a nuanced understanding of how puppet dialogue externalized inner speech and supported emotional expression and reflective thinking.

Four interconnected theoretical lenses guided the analysis:

1. **Embodied Cognition:** how learners physically externalize internal states through puppet manipulation.
2. **Experiential Learning:** creating a video as a site of active, reflective knowledge construction.

3. **Metacognition:** how learners reflect on and regulate their thought processes during the project
4. **Narrative Self-Enactment:** how students construct and perform versions of the self through dialogue.

These lenses allowed the researcher to move beyond purely linguistic analysis and focus on the cognitive, emotional, and narrative dynamics within the students' projects.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

The students provided informed consent allowing their work to be included in the study, which was approved by the university's ethics review board. Videos were anonymized and student reflections were included only when explicitly permitted. This project was supported by a JSPS KAKENHI grant (Grant Number JP 24K22744) and adhered to ethical guidelines for qualitative research in educational settings.

4. Case Studies

This section presents two student case studies that explore the relationship between puppet dialogues and the development of inner speech. These projects illustrate distinct trajectories, one showing a shift from objectivity to emotional engagement and the other moving in the opposite direction. Each case reveals how learners interpreted the “dialogue with the self” task and reveals their metacognitive and emotional engagement.

4.1 Case Study 1 Analysis: From Objectivity to Emotional Expression

4.1.1 Initial Script

Student 1 initially submitted a script describing their childhood piano practice routine. The narrative was observational and impersonal, focusing on factual descriptions of learning methods. There was minimal insight into the students' internal experiences or emotional states, only brief mentions at the end of sentences, such as noting that learning piano was fun. The tone resembled a report rather than a self-reflective narrative.

Figure 1: Preparation of story



Figure 2: Prepared Origami puppets



4.1.2 Final Video

In the final project, the student transformed the narrative by introducing handmade origami puppets. She placed a cut-out image of her childhood face onto a piano key and created an origami bear puppet to symbolize her finger voices. The bear engages in an internal dialogue using finger movements and varied vocal tones. The student wore different animal characters on each finger: the thumb was a pink rabbit numbered 1; the index finger was a green cat numbered 2; the middle finger was a yellow tiger numbered 3; the ring finger was a brown dog numbered 4; and the pinky was a blue penguin numbered 5. Using these finger puppets, the student dramatized their inner dialogue during piano practice, staging a conversation between herself and her fingers. Through this approach, the student externalised their internal monologue, creating a back-and-forth between a “self” and a “critical inner voice”:

Puppet finger bear: “Which is Do?”

Student voice: “Rabbit!”

Puppet finger bear: “Right! And then which is So?”

Student voice: “Penguin!”

This performance marked a significant shift from an objective description to an emotionally rich interaction between the self and her fingers, a highly personalized expression of inner speech. Embodying inner speech through puppet performance appeared to facilitate metacognitive awareness, which was not evident in the initial scripts. The puppet became a stand-in for the students’ internal voices, both critical and supportive, allowing them to explore their thought patterns and emotions more explicitly.

Figure 3: Origami bear representing the voice of fingers on the final video



Figure 4: The student learning piano as a childhood and representative finger animals with a number on it



4.1.3 Final Video Analysis

The transformation seen in the final project was substantial. The student externalized her internal cognitive and emotional processes through the creative embodiment of puppets: origami fingers labelled with distinct animal identities and personalities. By acting out a dialogue between herself and the puppet fingers, the student simulated a metacognitive environment in which internal thoughts were verbalized and examined. The puppet bear's role in asking questions and the fingers' responses mimicked the Socratic method of self-enquiry, which has been linked to developing advanced forms of inner speech.

The embodied representation served several functions:

- **Facilitation of Emotional Expression:** By attributing roles to different fingers and using varied vocal tones, the student introduced playfulness and emotional engagement into what had previously been a sterile narrative.
- **Metacognitive Engagement:** Self-questioning and self-correcting behaviours demonstrated are hallmarks of internal dialogue and reflective thinking.
- **Personalization and Agency:** The shift from reporting experiences to embodying and engaging with them marked a movement from passive observation to active internal negotiations.

This case highlights how puppetry can scaffold the transition from external speech to internalized, emotionally charged inner speech.

4.2 Case Study 2 Analysis: From Emotional Storytelling to Objectivity

4.2.1 Initial Script

In contrast, Student 2 began with a more emotional and dramatic concept: an imaginary train journey symbolizing different experiences through various cities in Germany. Along the way, the puppet(s) encounter(s) a thunder storm and experience(s) emotions such as anxiety and happiness.

Figure 4: Making of puppets

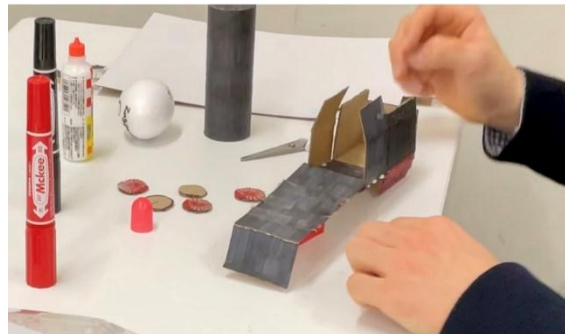
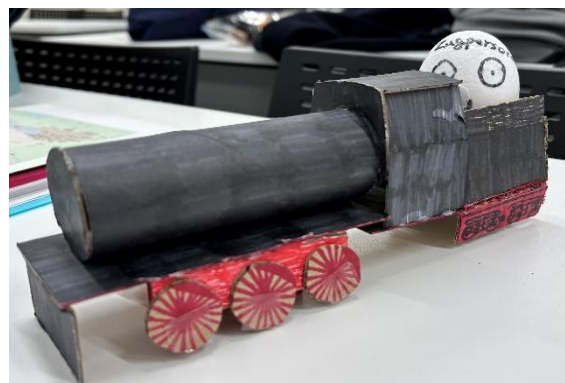


Figure 5: Completed train

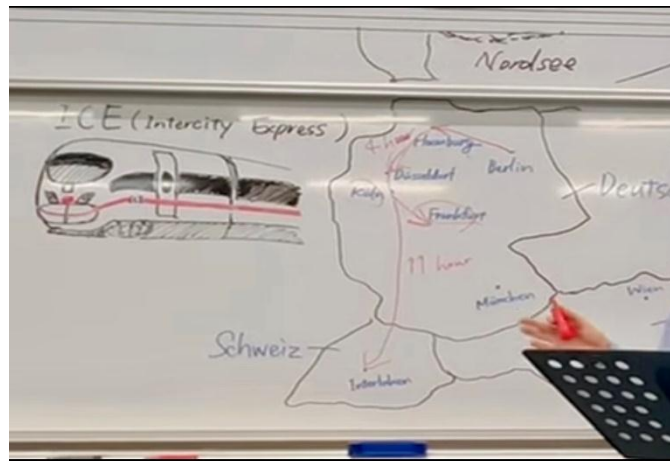


4.2.2 Final Video

Despite this evocative beginning, the final product took both a literal and objective turn. The student used a whiteboard to draw and explain a non-fictional train route through several cities in Germany to Interlaken in Switzerland while holding the puppet train in his left hand. The focus shifted from a personal narrative to a descriptive geography of the train journey—e.g., train type, station names, travel times, and brief historical backgrounds—without referencing the emotional metaphors from the initial script:

“Hamburg is a city in northern Germany and the birthplace of Johannes Brahms. The Elbe River flows into the North Sea, and the city has a long history as a port town. There are many beautiful churches in the centre of the city. In Hamburg, there is an EC train for Düsseldorf. This express train takes 11 hours to travel from Hamburg to Interlaken.” (Cited from the video work.)

Figure 6: final scene of the video work



4.2.3 Final Video Analysis

While the video was linguistically accurate and well-organized, it lacked the emotional nuance and introspective voice found in the original script. The narrative became depersonalized, resembling a textbook exercise rather than a personal exploration of inner speech.

What was lost in the transition:

- **Emotional Authenticity:** The final script eliminated metaphors and emotional resonance, replacing them with objective, emotionally neutral content.
- **Inner Dialogue:** The final version shows little evidence of an internal voice or reflective dialogue. Rather than interrogating their thoughts or reflecting on experiences, the student presented factual information.
- **Metaphorical Thinking:** The rich symbolism that could have served as a tool for emotional or psychological insight was replaced by literal descriptions.

This regression suggests that the final presentation structure, possibly constrained by format, audience expectations, or performance anxiety, led the student to prioritize linguistic accuracy and clarity over personal voice.

4.3 Comparative Analysis of the Two Case Studies

Together, these two case studies offer a compelling illustration of how puppet dialogue can serve as both a liberating and constraining force in developing inner speech, depending on how it is interpreted and implemented by learners.

Table 1:

Dimension	Student 1	Student 2
Initial Mode	Objective and emotionally distant	Symbolic and emotionally rich
Final Mode	Emotionally expressive and personalized	Objective and depersonalized
Puppetry Function	Facilitates metacognitive and emotional engagement	Used to illustrate factual content, not inner voice
Inner Speech Development	Advanced through embodiment and dialogue	Regressed to external factual narration
Narrative Voice	Became reflective and introspective	Became explanatory and detached

4.3.1 Interpretation

Student 1 exemplified a *constructive trajectory* in which puppetry served as a catalyst for emotional expression, self-dialogue, and metacognitive insight. They embraced the performative nature of puppetry as a means of accessing internal voices that might otherwise have remained unspoken.

Student 2 presented a *dissociative trajectory* in which the original emotional intent was abandoned in favour of linguistic and factual correctness. Despite starting with a rich inner imagery, the final product reflects a retreat from self-expression.

4.3.2 Pedagogical Implications

These contrasting cases suggest that both the instructional framing of the puppet task and students' individual perceptions of it are critical. Puppetry can support developing inner speech, but only if learners feel they have permission to explore subjective, emotional, and imaginative dimensions. Emotional safety, scaffolding for metaphorical thinking, and explicit encouragement to prioritize personal voice over factual correctness may be necessary to prevent regression, as observed in the case of Student 2.

5. Analysis

Case studies show how learners interact with their inner speech and the factors that support or hinder their transformation into expressive, overt language. This section analyses the two projects through four theoretical lenses: **embodied cognition**, **experiential learning**, **metacognition**, and **narrative self-enactment**. Together, these frameworks help explain why puppet dialogue is effective for some learners but less effective for others.

5.1 Embodied Cognition: Thinking Through the Body

Embodied cognition posits that cognitive processes are deeply rooted in the body's interactions with the world. In Student 1's project, the origami bear served as a physical anchor for inner speech. The puppet's gestures, facial expressions, and vocal variations allowed abstract thoughts and emotions to be given forms and substances. This process externalized internal conflict and helped to clarify it (e.g., the puppet's accusatory tone made the student's inner

criticism recognizable and distinct from the voice of encouragement). Thus, physically manipulating the puppet functioned as a rehearsal for self-compassion and problem-solving. By contrast, Student 2's whiteboard-based video lacked similar embodiment. He reverted to an abstract, decontextualized form of speech without a tangible object to inhabit the emotion or voice. This suggests that embodiment is not merely decorative but serves as a scaffold for both cognitive and emotional access.

5.2 Experiential Learning: Learning by Doing

The puppet video assignment involved experiential learning, in which students constructed meanings through active, hands-on engagement. The open-ended, creative format of the task allowed learners to experiment with form, tone, and character, transforming internal reflection into outward performance. This experiential process was not focused on language drills or memorization but on *using* language in meaningful, affective, and personal ways. For Student 1, the process of making, scripting, and performing puppet dialogues became an opportunity to reframe her emotional relationship with learning. Thus, the student deepened her engagement with German as a foreign language and a medium for self-expression. Student 2, however, may have lacked the experiential tools or confidence to translate his narrative into a performative form. His shift toward objectivity reflects how learners sometimes disengage from risk taking when emotional expressions are too vulnerable.

5.3 Metacognition: Becoming Aware of Thought Processes

Puppet dialogs encourage learners to examine their thoughts and emotional responses. Student 1 shifted from a detached script to a vivid inner dialogue, suggesting heightened metacognitive awareness. They became more attuned to how frustration and self-doubt shaped their learning behaviour and how encouragement could shift their mindset. This form of reflection goes beyond simple narration, and it involves *monitoring*, *evaluating*, and *adjusting* one's internal processes. By contrast, Student 2's project reflected lower metacognitive engagement. Although the initial script hinted at rich internal reflection, this was not sustained in the final product. Their metacognitive potential remains latent rather than fully developed without integrating embodied or narrative tools.

5.4 Narrative Self-Enactment: Performing the Self

According to Rovetta (2024), inner speech plays a dual role in both constructing and performing identities. When students engage in dialogue with themselves, especially in a performative, embodied format, they do not simply describe themselves; they become the selves they narrate. Student 1's bear puppet functioned as a proxy for internal voices during the conflict, allowing them to enact a dynamic and evolving identity. By contrast, Student 2's absence of characters or emotional expression in the final video suggests a retreat from narrative self-enactment, resulting in a static and depersonalized performance. This comparison illustrates that *speaking as oneself* (even through a puppet) can be transformative but only when learners feel safe and supported. When framed as a tool for self-exploration rather than evaluation, puppet dialogue can be a powerful means of fostering narrative fluency and emotional resilience in language learning.

6. Discussion

The analysis of puppet-based self-dialogue in language learning offers valuable insight into how adult learners, particularly university students, access, externalize, and transform their inner speech. More than a playful task, puppet dialogue served as a structured, emotionally safe practice that enabled participants to voice unspoken aspects of thought, identity, and reflection. This section connects these findings to broader educational frameworks, including sociocultural theory, reflective practice, and constructivist pedagogy, and considers their implications for language education and learner development.

6.1 Bridging the Gap Between Thought and Expression

For many second-language learners in university settings, there is a persistent disconnect between their internal reflections and their ability to articulate those thoughts in the target language. Puppet dialogue addresses this challenge by offering a semiotic “third space” through which learners can explore and rehearse language in a psychologically less threatening way. Echoing Vygotsky’s (1986) concept of internalization, the puppet acts as a mediating tool through which learners begin to convert social speech into inner speech—and vice versa. Through the symbolic and playful use of puppets, learners gain a voice not only in linguistic terms but also in terms of agency and self-expression. This process supports a shift from viewing the second language as an external structure to inhabiting it as a personal and expressive medium for meaning-making.

6.2 Emotional Safety and Performative Distance

The performative nature of puppet dialogue creates a crucial emotional buffer. Students, especially in high-stakes or self-conscious learning environments, may hesitate to directly articulate vulnerability, doubt, or internal conflict. The puppet offers a way to “speak through” these experiences while maintaining an affective distance, facilitating a kind of reflection-in-action (Schön, 1987). This emotional scaffolding was especially visible in learners who used the puppet to express confusion, discomfort, or conflicting motivations. However, not all students accessed this potential equally. As Case Study 2 illustrates, performance anxiety and uncertainty about symbolic expression can limit engagement, emphasizing the importance of clear scaffolding and a supportive learning climate where students feel safe to experiment and reflect without fear of judgment.

6.3 Rethinking the Role of Creative Pedagogy

While traditional language instruction often emphasizes accuracy and fluency, puppet dialogue prioritizes dialogic and narrative complexity. Learners can explore linguistic expression not merely as correct usage but as a form of storytelling and identity formation. This approach aligns with constructivist views of learning as a process of co-constructing meaning (Bruner, 1996), and highlights the role of embodied, aesthetic practices in adult education. Moreover, puppet dialogue accommodates a diversity of learner styles, emotional readiness, and cultural backgrounds. Rather than aiming for standardized outputs, it encourages differentiated participation and fosters deeper engagement. Consequently, creative pedagogy is not simply a supplement to language learning but a central method for cultivating metacognitive awareness and linguistic ownership.

6.4 The Need for Educator Support

The divergent responses observed in this study underscore the crucial role of educators in framing and facilitating reflective, creative tasks. Puppet dialogue must be introduced not as a performance to be judged, but as a space for exploratory inner speech. Educators can support learners by modelling the practice, sharing examples of reflective puppet exchanges, and explicitly framing the exercise as an invitation to self-expression. Attention must be given to cultural and individual differences in how vulnerability and metaphor are perceived. University students may vary widely in their familiarity with symbolic discourse. Creating optional pathways, encouraging experimentation, and validating a range of expressive styles are essential for inclusive pedagogy.

6.5 Implications for Future Research

The study findings invite further inquiry into the role of inner speech in adult language learning. Future research might explore the relationship between reflective self-dialogue and speaking fluency over time, or investigate how different forms of mediated self-expression (e.g., puppetry, avatar-based platforms, or narrative journaling) influence learner confidence, anxiety, and identity formation. Longitudinal studies could examine how puppet dialogue contributes to internalizing second-language thinking, while cross-cultural research could investigate variations in symbolic engagement. Additionally, integrating digital puppetry into online or blended learning environments may expand access to this low-stakes, expressive modality—an especially timely consideration in post-pandemic education.

6.6 Implications for Educational Practice

The study implications extend to university-level education and professional training programs where reflection, identity formation, and self-regulation are essential learning outcomes. Puppet dialogue can be applied in various pedagogical contexts:

1. Reflective Practice in Teacher Education and Social Professions

In programs preparing students for interpersonal, emotionally demanding roles (e.g., teaching, counselling, social work), puppets offer a unique medium for rehearsing difficult conversations, unpacking internalized norms, and experimenting with alternative discourses. Students can embody conflicting voices (e.g., a struggling student and a critical inner teacher), making tacit tensions visible and discussable.

2. Supporting Professional Identity Development

Puppet dialogue helps students explore their emerging professional selves by allowing them to voice values, uncertainties, or contradictions in an embodied narrative form. This can be especially helpful in culturally diverse cohorts, where students may feel tension between personal and professional expectations.

3. Fostering Dialogic Thinking in Seminar and Workshop Formats

In discussion-based university classes, puppets can act as “third voices,” disrupting habitual discourse patterns and encouraging divergent thinking (e.g., instructors might ask students to respond to a prompt not as themselves but through a puppet’s voice, prompting critical distance and creativity).

4. Emotionally Safe Expression and Self-Regulation

Adult learners often suppress emotional expression due to academic or professional expectations. Puppets create a context in which confusion, frustration, or excitement can be externalized and reflected upon. This supports emotional intelligence and resilience, which are important qualities in complex professional environments.

5. Innovative Assessment of Reflective Capacity

Puppet dialogue can be used as an alternative or supplement to written reflection tasks (e.g., students might record a short puppet exchange representing an inner conflict or learning moment). This allows educators to assess their capacity for perspective-taking, self-awareness, and meaning-making in a multimodal format.

By integrating puppet dialogue into university pedagogy, educators can promote a richer, more embodied form of reflection that acknowledges the social, emotional, and narrative dimensions of learning. Puppet dialogue reveals aspects of students' inner speech and helps them shape it, encouraging more intentional, flexible, and dialogic ways of thinking.

7. Conclusion

This study examined how puppet-based “dialogue with the self” can transform second-language learning, particularly at university level. Through qualitative analysis of puppet-mediated inner speech, learners navigated the complex terrain between internal cognition and external articulation, drawing upon narrative, embodiment, and symbolic expression to bridge this divide. These findings underscore the pedagogical significance of inner speech as a linguistic phenomenon and as a psychological and reflective process central to language acquisition.

First, this study affirms that inner speech is a rich but often inaccessible resource for language learners. Students' difficulty in externalizing their thoughts in a second language reflects not a lack of insight, but the emotional and cognitive demands of doing so authentically. Puppet dialogue offered a scaffolded, symbolic space where learners could experiment with language while engaging emotionally and intellectually with their evolving identities.

Second, puppetry functioned as both a symbolic mediator and an emotional buffer. It enabled learners to explore vulnerability, internal conflict, and narrative positioning without fear of direct exposure. This performative distance proved crucial for promoting reflection and expression in ways that conventional classroom practices often overlook.

Third, the educator's role was pivotal. Facilitating meaningful inner speech requires intentional design, emotional scaffolding, and creating a psychologically safe learning environment. Educators must model expressive practices, respect cultural variation in self-disclosure, and encourage experimentation, especially in adult and university settings where learners may have complex relationships with risk and identity.

Finally, this study contributes to broader educational discourse by reframing language learning as a deeply personal and developmental process. Moving beyond narrow emphases on fluency and correctness, this study proposes a vision of language education that includes narrative formation, emotional engagement, and embodied self-reflection. Inner speech, when accessed through creative and supported means, leads to linguistic competence and greater self-understanding.

In summary, puppet-based inner dialogue reveals that second-language learning is not merely acquiring words and grammar but a dialogic encounter with the self. By engaging with this process creatively and reflectively, learners discover new ways of speaking, thinking, and being. Such practices invite educators to reimagine the language classroom as a space where identity, emotion, and expression are central to learning.

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