

How do Team Games Tournaments as an Alternative in Assessment promote Second Grader's  
Language Achievement in an EFL Class?

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**Abstract**

This action research was aimed to explore the effectiveness of a cooperative learning strategy, Teams-Games-Tournaments (TGT), when applied as an alternative in assessment to promote the English language achievement of second graders at Francisco Miranda Institution. Data were collected through a teacher's journal, games outcomes, a focus group, and a questionnaire to the cooperating teacher. The data analysis revealed that TGT can be successfully implemented as an alternative in assessment that positively affects learning outcomes and promotes students' cooperative work, attention, and participation. However, there are factors that must be considered for this strategy to be effective such as the language assessment process and some practicality issues.

*Key words:* Teams-Games-Tournaments, alternative in assessment, language achievement.

**Degree Requirement**

This action research project is submitted as a requirement of the Bachelor of Education in Teaching Foreign Languages (English-French) at the Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, in Medellín, Colombia.

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**Preface**

This research was born from my interest in the use of games in the classroom, not only as a teaching strategy but also as an assessment tool. Teaching should not be limited to just giving information but it should generate interaction between the students and the teacher, and it should have a sense of enjoyment, too. It is my expectation that teachers start to consider games not as an imposition from the institutions but more as a dynamic tool that transforms the classroom and that gives the opportunity to assess students without stress or pressure. I really hope to keep on this path of discovering the uses that games can have on the classroom and inspire others to try and see how fun it can be.

### **Description of the Context**

Francisco Miranda Institute is a school that is located near the Botanical Garden in a medium stratum neighborhood in Medellín. The grade in which the process of observing and teaching was carried out was a second grade in the primary school building called Julio Arboleda. The classroom is wide but due to the system of chair-table that is used the space seems to be smaller than it really is. There is a whole wall full of windows which allows the entrance of light and air. Additionally, the institution counts with a library room with a TV and a system room with computers.

This institution presents itself as an inclusive environment in which all the children can develop themselves with good morals and respect for themselves and for the others. Their vision is intended to prepare students to be an active part of the city and the progress of the society, and their philosophy promotes an inclusive environment regardless the differences in religion, politics, and social levels. Their syllabus does not state a particular methodology or approach to learning; it rather presents a number of approaches and methodologies for teaching that includes communicative approach and task based teaching.

The elementary school teachers are divided by classrooms so one teacher is in charge of that particular class the whole year and teaches all the subjects. After talking with the teachers and the institution's coordinator, both agree that there is not enough training for teaching English and it is mainly caused by little knowledge of the language itself.

Regarding the students, they are children from seven to eight years old who enjoy getting new knowledge and love participating. Through my observations and interactions with the children I noticed that their motivation to learn English comes from a personal interest more than

a strong external motivation. This motivation has been enhanced with the introduction of cooperative and competitive activities in which they get a reward.

### **Statement of the Problem**

I strongly believe that in any educational institution, the preparation and training of the teachers is a vital part of a successful learning experience for the students. Regardless what the goals of an institution are, without well-prepared teachers the learning process might not be as fruitful as expected. Throughout my observations, I noticed that one of the problems that the institution faces is that elementary school teachers are not professionals in language teaching, thus the language assessment processes can also be affected.

The testing processes that I had the opportunity to observe presented situations that were of great concern to me. The teacher wrote all the questions of the test on the board and the children had to write everything down before starting to answer. It seems that the children had problems understanding the questions and what was being asked to do. Moreover, there were some students that still did not know how to write or they wrote very slowly. As a result, students wrote down incorrect or incomplete information and this may have resulted in wrong answers and finally, a low grade.

This situation strengthened my belief in assessment practices that take into consideration the age of the students and their abilities, so they can promote their language achievement. It is important to remember that this is a second-grade classroom in which the students are children who think, act, and understand the world in ways that we do not. Additionally, they are just learning the most basic abilities that are required for an academic environment like writing and



problem-solving. This is why I consider that the assessment practices have been conducted in a traditional and thus unsuitable way.

In short, I consider that if the students have to write down the content of the test from the board, mistakes can appear. Additionally, children might not always understand what they must do in the test. Therefore, I narrowed down what I considered are the principal issues present in the assessment of these children and I related these issues with the principles of language assessment defined by Brown (2004). I mainly focused on *reliability* and *practicality*, more specifically *test reliability*: how the structure and other components of the assessment moment affect the outcomes, and *practicality*: how the time and ways of administration affect the results.

In summary, the problem that I consider is the most important to solve is the way the children are assessed, so I came up with the following research question: How do Teams Games Tournaments as an alternative in assessment promote second graders' language achievement in an EFL class? I intend to bring a new tool to this classroom, to convey a feeling of success to the children, and to make the assessment process easier and more fruitful for the teacher.

### **Theoretical Background**

As many authors have done research in the topics I developed, it is indispensable to refer to them so the reader understands the theories and concepts that guided this action research. In the following lines I intend to present the three main concepts underlying this study: Teams-Games-Tournaments (TGT), Alternatives in Assessment, and Language Achievement.

#### **Teams Games Tournaments**

Games have been a very interesting topic to analyze as they bring many benefits to the classroom and to the students. In 1969, Johnston and Calhoun (as cited in Kumar and Lightner,

2007) elaborated on the positive effects that games as an “Active Learning Strategy” bring to the classroom in comparison with a more traditional procedure:

The learner passively sitting in a lecture, with no stake or interest in the information, does not reach the level of stimulation required to promote effort. Moving around a room, participating in a contest, or simply talking to other students can raise the level of activity to a point where a student is more alert and attentive to the activities of the class. (p. 53)

Moreover, games allow students to apply their knowledge, to receive feedback from their fellow partners, and to receive positive reinforcement for working with others (Kumar & Lightner, 2007, p.54). Thus, the use of games for teaching is not a new topic.

Going further, games have been considered a strategy for learning. In 1975, David DeVries and Keith Edwards at the Johns Hopkins University (as cited in van Wyk, 2011) created what is called “Team-Games-Tournaments”. This is a cooperative learning strategy in which students participate in tournaments by teams to gain points; students can compete with each other, help the members of their team, and learn together without stress and with a cooperative motivation. In addition, Van Wyk (2011) also refers to other studies in which the positive effects of cooperative learning on students’ learning were evident.

For example, the study of Humphrey, Johnson, and Johnson (1982) proved that more information was learned and retained with the use of cooperative strategies when compared to competitive or individualistic strategies among ninth graders of a physical science class. Similarly, Allen and Van Sickle (1984) conducted a study on low achieving students in which their scores improved significantly after the use of cooperative learning strategies in comparison to the control group that only used traditional techniques (p. 184).

However, this strategy has been limited only to the process of teaching and learning. From my perspective, this method has the suitable characteristics to be used as an alternative in assessment practice that involves students, promotes cooperative work, and allows children to express their knowledge in a “nonintrusive” way. This last characteristic was stated by Huerta-Macías (as cited in Brown and Hudson, 1998) as a quality of alternative assessments as it is part of the daily classroom dynamics present in the curriculum (p. 654). I believe that by avoiding the assumption of assessment as a quiet and still moment, the strategies involving actions that are natural and already present in children’s lives, like games, could be easily implemented. That is why these everyday activities and the innate interests of the children give us the possibility to apply assessment with less stress, less anxiety, and more motivation.

### **Alternatives in Assessment**

As mentioned before, TGT has been considered a strategy for teaching and learning but I believe it can be used as an alternative in assessment strategy. In relation to this concept, there are two different approaches; one is *alternative assessment* and the other is *alternatives in assessment*. Thus, before defining alternatives in assessment, which is the concept I used for this action research, it is necessary to clarify that, as Brown and Hudson (1998) stated, these procedures are not new or different as the word “alternative” may suggest, but rather a new development of previous ones applied in the field of assessment. Therefore, it is better to use the term *alternatives in assessment* (p. 657).

Still, it is necessary to define what these alternatives in assessment are. Brown and Hudson (1998) in “The Alternatives in Language Assessment” created a list of characteristics in which they combined the features that authors like Huerta-Macias (1995) and Aschbacher (1991)

have given to this concept. The final list is a complete definition of alternatives in assessment as an approach that offers constant feedback for the students to be actively involved with a focus on the process as well as the product. In addition, it should use real and meaningful information and must be a non-intrusive process where the students have knowledge of the criteria that is going to be applied to them (pp. 653-655). Some examples of alternatives in assessment are portfolios, checklists, journals, logs, teacher's observations, self-assessment, and peer assessment. For explaining these various methods, Brown and Hudson (1998) categorized the different assessment types into three: selected response, constructed response, and personal response.

The first offers limited possibilities for response and the students do not create an answer or produce language, so they are mostly for language comprehension. They are easily scored but the answers could be guessed by the students. Examples of this first type are true-false, matching, and multiple-choice answers. The second, "constructed response", demands a product or some kind of creation from the student, so they are ideal to assess students' productive skills. This reduces the risk of students guessing the answer but leaves space to bias or subjectivity from the teacher. The most common ones are fill-in, short-answer, and performance assessments. Finally, "personal response" is similar to "constructed response" as it demands a product from the student but in a more individual way. It gives students the chance to communicate freely but it has some disadvantages as they are difficult to create and administer. Some personal-response assessments are conferences, portfolios, and self- and peer assessments (pp. 656 - 667).

For this research proposal, I consider the most adequate category for TGT as an alternative is "Constructed-Response Assessments", defined by Brown and Hudson (1998). This type of assessment "require[s] students to produce language by writing, speaking, or doing something else" (p.660). As mentioned above, "performance assessment" is one of the

procedures that is part of this category, and is the one that will be mostly applied in my action research. It presents characteristics such as authenticity of the language tasks, opportunity to estimate “true language abilities” as well as estimate students’ future language achievement. These characteristics allow the results to be more valid for the research and useful for the students (p. 662).

### **Language Achievement**

To define language achievement, it is necessary to clarify that achievement and proficiency have been considered two different concepts. Nation and Macalister (2010) in *Language Curriculum Design* state that achievement is related to a specific topic while proficiency takes language as a whole. They refer to the differences between these concepts from an assessment perspective in which “achievement assessment” is based on the topics covered in class, the students know what topics are going to be assessed, and have clear criteria to verify that learners have “achieved enough” (p. 115). This is a relevant concept as in my action plan I assessed per units, students knew what was assessed, and the assessment products were graded by assigning to each component an equal amount of the final grade. In contrast, proficiency as defined by those authors is based on a general perception of the language that covers “a large range of items and skills” (p. 116).

With that said, the theory also proposes that participation can be used as a tool to show evidence of language achievement, Kumar and Lightner (2007) state that “Participation in an activity requires the use of content by the learner; thus ensuring students are working with the ideas that are being taught, and applying them.” (p. 53). In addition, Cruickshank and Telfer (2001) (as cited in Kumar and Lightner, 2007) assert that games enhance “transfer” as they

demand participation and active involvement with the material (p. 55). Thus, in an English class, a high level of participation demands a high use of the language itself so this can be related to some level of language acquisition.

In relation to achievement and TGT there are some authors who have done research on those two concepts. Van Wyk (2011) in his paper *The effects of Teams-Games-Tournaments on Achievement, Retention, and Attitudes of Economics Education Students* presents a study in which he intended to determine the effects of TGT as a cooperative learning technique on three areas: achievement, retention of information, and attitudes. The results of the study showed a significant improvement on the “achievement test” of the TGT group in comparison with the control group, which only had a traditional lecture learning method. This “achievement test” had a hundred multiple-choice items and “student achievement scores was measured by the number of correct responses...” (p. 189).

Veloo and Charhany (2013) also conducted a study in which the effects of the use of TGT on attitudes and achievement towards a field of mathematics were examined. The study was conducted in Indonesia and 64 secondary students participated with 32 on the TGT group and 32 on the control group. The results showed a significant increase on the scores of mathematics probability achievement test conducted on the TGT group in relation to the control group that had a traditional “chalk and talk” method. This study is particularly useful to my research as they made the comparison between TGT and traditional “chalk and talk”, which is similar to the strategy that I want to implement but using TGT as an assessment method as well as a teaching method.

In conclusion, TGT has proved to influence and promote achievement in various fields like mathematics and economics. However, I have not found research that focus on EFL

achievement in relation to TGT. For this reason, I consider relevant to explore the effects of TGT in language achievement as it is an open and wide concept that can be applied to any subject.

### **Research Question**

How do Team Games Tournaments as an alternative in assessment promote second grader's language achievement in an EFL class?

### **General objective**

To promote second graders' language achievement in an EFL class through TGT as an alternative in assessment.

### **Specific objectives**

To enhance cooperative work among second graders in an EFL class.

To analyze students' language achievement during the implementation of the TGT.

### **Action Plan**

After all this process, my main interest is to apply a type of assessment that allows students to express their knowledge in more dynamic and creative ways without the limitations of their age. That is why I want to apply a cooperative learning strategy as an alternative in assessment. For that purpose, I plan to apply a Teams-Games-Tournaments (TGT) strategy for assessing the students as well as a focus group with five students that will be audio recorded, a questionnaire to the cooperating teacher (CT) at the institution, and personal reflections in the way of a teacher journal. The application of this plan is meant to be from the first month until the last one.

For the alternative assessment practice, the products of the students will be collected as evidence after each of the two TGT assessment days that will be applied in the classroom. These products will be graded and then analyzed to perceive how the TGT strategy truly promoted English language achievement on the students. Then, a set of questions will be made to five of the students to discover their personal opinions in relation to the TGT strategy that was applied to them. An interview with the CT will also be carried out to notice how the TGT strategy has changed the classroom dynamics and achievement of academic goals.

Finally, a rigorous analysis and comparison of the information will be carried out to present the outcomes of the Action Research and a possible answer to the main research question at the end of the semester.

Procedure	DATE																
	Base Line Data							Action Data					Data Analysis				
	Feb 2nd week	Feb 3rd week	Feb 4th week	March 1st week	March 2nd week	March 3rd week	March 4th week	April 1st week	April 2nd week	April 3rd week	April 4th week	May 1st week	May 2nd week	May 3rd week	May 4th week	Jun 1st week	Jun 2nd week
Socialization of the research proposal																	
Asking for informed consent																	
Class observation and reflections																	
Design of game 1																	
Implementation of game 1																	
Design of game 2																	
Implementation of game 2																	
Design of game 3																	
Implementation of game 3																	
Focus group																	
Interview to the teacher																	
Analysis of the Data																	
Project Writing																	
Presentation																	

### Development of Actions

This research has followed a previous set of actions aimed to guarantee its success. These actions had small modifications with the purpose of overcoming unexpected situations; however, these modifications have been minimal and the research development was not affected. The plan was arranged in terms of nineteen weeks with the 14th of February being the starting point.



The first action of this research was the socialization to the students, the parents, and the CT of the institution. This was complemented with the handing out and subsequent recollection of the signed consent form to guarantee the transparency of this action research. This also allowed the use of the data collected from the children as it was signed by their parents. All of the above was carried out between the first and the second week of the action research.

Afterwards, the teaching and assessing of the course was completely in charge of the researcher until the 6th of June, the last day of classes before vacation time and the fifteenth week of the research. During these weeks the researcher arranged the topics in three main units that needed to be covered by the institution. This was planned on the first week with the help of the CT and the topics presented in the English syllabus of Julio Arboleda Institution. Data were collected all along this teaching process in a teacher's journal that was later analyzed to give an answer to the research question.

Other data as photographs of students' products after the TGT application were also collected at the end of each unit; on the fifth, tenth and fifteenth week with a total of three TGT assessment activities. However, after the first application of the TGT assessment strategy, necessary changes were made. Thus, due to the unsuccessful application of the first TGT assessment -and taking into account the limited amount of time for the research- the TGT assessments were performed and the data were collected after covering two or three topics of each unit, with a total of four TGT assessment activities with data collected from the second and the third TGT assessment applications. Each application was composed by two games which were identified as Game A and Game B.

The TGT assessment activities were created thinking on what the students could do and keeping in mind the characteristics of the Alternatives in Assessment proposed by Brown and

Hudson (1998) such as authenticity and non-intrusiveness. The games did not demand any writing from the students but they did demand a high level of attention and listening comprehension. Their language achievement was measured in terms of oral comprehension of the instructions and stories that were used during the games and measured their success on correctly relating and placing the pictures of each activity according to what they heard.

In addition, a focus group with five open questions was conducted on the tenth week to five students. These questions focused on the personal perceptions of the students towards the TGT application and their personal feelings on language achievement. This datum was audio recorded and only the students who signed the consent form participated. Afterwards, a four-open question interview to the CT was conducted on the twelfth week in order to know the personal perceptions that the CT had towards the application of this strategy in the English class and the students' performance.

The information was constantly analyzed and reflected on to make changes and to improve the research process. Data started to be properly coded and analyzed from the seventh week of the research after the first application of the TGT as an assessment strategy. The final paper of this action research was constructed all along the research process with its conclusions and final insights being written from the thirteenth to the sixteenth week of this research.

### **Findings and Interpretation**

Throughout this research, data were collected from different sources, coded, and then carefully analyzed. According to Saldaña (2009) a code is a word or phrase that expresses the spirit of a piece of data (p. 3) and that does not simply reduce datum but condenses it (p. 4). Thus, following this author's idea of codes, we started to assign codes to the journal entries, the CT's

answers to the questionnaire, and the answers of the students in the focus group. We focused on finding patterns that showed the effects that the TGT application had on the classroom dynamics and on the assessment moments. For this purpose, we looked at the list of characteristics that the author gives to patterns noticing that the one that suited the best our research purpose is the characteristic of “correspondence” as it represents situations that occur in relation to other events (p. 6).

After finding those patterns and assigning codes to represent the data that we considered were relevant, we coded again. Saldaña (2009) states that coding is a “cyclical act”, and the first “cycle” of coding is not necessarily the one that best expresses the data (p. 8). Thus, we read the data and the codes again and shared these codes with our college partners which helped to improve them. Finally, we started to create categories or “umbrellas” to cluster these codes in a more general concept. Saldaña (2009) states that “coding is thus a method that enables you to organize and group similarly coded data into categories or “families” because they share some characteristics” (p. 8). This common sharing is the one that finally gives life to the following interpretations and findings.

### **Advantages of Teams-Games-Tournaments as an Alternative in Assessment**

After the process of coding the data, it was interesting to notice how the TGT application affected other areas of the classroom dynamic even though this action research was mainly focused on language achievement. Significant benefits were evidenced on the students’ attentiveness, students’ participation, discipline regulation, and cooperative work which we will discuss below.

There was a significant positive response from the students in terms of attention motivated by the competitive component of the TGT strategy. We can see evidence of this improvement of attention in journal#3 “The TGT component of competition was present in the game [...]. This enhanced the students’ attentiveness as they needed to be ready to speak on their turn...” as well as in journal #9 “The competition was a good motivator for them as they needed to pay attention to other teams”. This corroborates what Johnston and Calhoun (1969) already affirmed about how the interaction with others through games can raise the alertness and attentiveness of the students (p. 53).

In addition, the competitive factor also affected the level of participation as we can see in journal #7 “A star was given to the row that pronounced the animal correctly. Again, the students loved to scream and gain stars so the participation was excellent.” Further confirmation of this high participation level can be taken from the words of the cooperating teacher as she expresses that “[The researcher’s] methodology succeeded on awakening the children’s interest for the foreign language because there was always an active participation in the games and a dynamic assessment.” (Cooperating Teacher Questionnaire).

Discipline management was also affected by the TGT strategy but not because of its competitive component but more because of the rewards that the students gained during the competences. These rewards were stars drawn on the board under the team number and they were erased if one or many members of a team did not pay attention or if their behavior affected the progress of the activity, this motivated them to regulate the members of their team. This situation was evidenced in the journal #5 “Asking them to listen is a thousand times easier if I just make the warning of removing a star from them because they are the ones who regulate the members of

their team.” and journal #11 “I reminded them that they would lose a star as a team if they didn’t behave and pay attention, and that calmed them down.”

Finally, we can assure that the component of cooperative learning was present during the TGT applications and among the students’ personal perceptions. As I expressed in journal #3 cooperative work enhanced students’ confidence to answer, and in journal #9 the students discussed and arrived into an agreement in order to choose the correct answer. Even more important, from the students’ perception the TGT strategy helped them to make friends and to reinforce their knowledge of the topics (Focus group). This represents a success to the action research as two of the vital components of TGT defined by DeVries and Edwards (1975) were the cooperation between the members of the team and the freedom to learn together.

### **Promotion of Language Achievement**

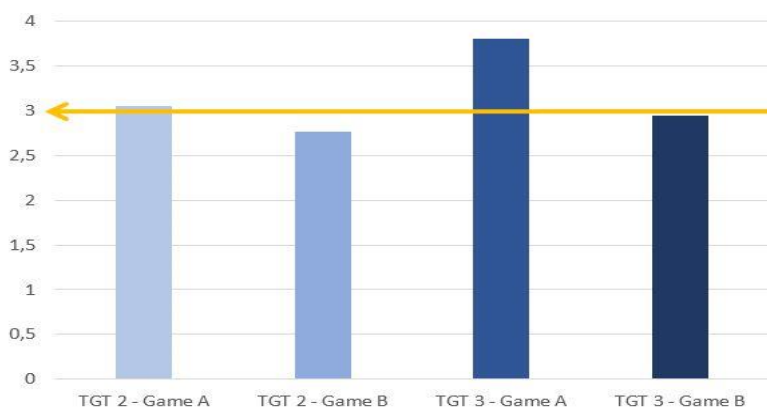
This particular finding was the one in which our research focused on from the beginning. However, the quantitative results compared with the qualitative observations differ significantly. For going deeper in this respect, it is necessary to discuss the components of language production and language comprehension that were evidenced during the action research.

First, the implementation of games during the classes and assessment moments gave us the chance to observe language production from the students as every game implemented aimed to have the students use the language from single words to simple sentences. In journal #7 we can notice how the students processed the input that was given and answered using the language: “It is important to highlight that almost all the students knew and pronounced the animals with just a few mistakes but in general they knew and connected the animal in English to the sound.” Therefore, and as stated before, active participation from the students can be used as prove of

language achievement as the students need to understand the content to be able to use it (Kumar & Lightner, 2007). In addition, there was a case in which the students went beyond the expected answer and added some extra information by themselves, as we can see on the journal #1 where the students added “teacher” to the greeting.

Second, during the TGT application in assessment moments, we noticed that language comprehension was easily established through the final products collected at the end of each game. These products demanded an attentive comprehension of the information provided as the answers were given within a real context –a cat’s story- in order to bring authenticity to the activity. An example of this can be read on the journal #12 where I noticed how the students listened carefully before trying to find the correct character that needed to be placed on the paper. This authenticity concern comes from the characteristics of the *performance assessment* mentioned before and defined by Brown and Hudson (1998); characteristic that needed to be present for the TGT to become an *alternative in assessment*.

Hence, in the qualitative observations I could perceive some progress of students’ language achievement. However, in terms of grades, the performance of the students was not significantly high (see graph 1) and only on Game A of the second TGT application I noticed a high average on the students’ grades.



Graph 1, students’ average on the TGT assessment

These results come from a failure on one of the steps proposed by Shohamy and Inbar (2006) for the process of language assessment: the design of the assessment tool. In this case, the items that were graded on each game were too few for having a better evidence of the students' performance as one mistake represented a high amount of the final grade. In relation to this, these authors state that "There is disagreement and great variability among educators and researchers as to what actually constitutes language knowledge as well as to the suitable procedures for assessing this knowledge." (p. 3). Thus, this lack of a proper design for the game is not considered a failure but rather an interesting finding that can guide future researches in this respect.

### **Factors that hamper the TGT application as an Alternative in Assessment**

Finally, even though there is evidence that the TGT strategy can be applied as an alternative in assessment, it is necessary to highlight three factors observed during the applications that affected its development. These factors are related to the time and materials required to create the games, the number of students, and the students' unwillingness to work in teams.

First, the preparation of the games was a component that required great planning and preparation as they were handmade. It could have been easier to present the games on a digital platform but it proved to be difficult to get a laptop –even when asking for one before class– without compromising the class time. We can see this on the journal #9 "The CT asked the laptop from another teacher but she never brought it as she was using it in her classroom. [...] after waiting for another laptop the class started 20 minutes later." Thus, it was better to avoid the need

of a laptop. With that said, preparing and creating the games is a process that requires time and that can considerably decrease the practicality of the strategy.

Second, we consider that fewer students contribute to the normal development of the TGT application. On the first TGT assessment only 24 of 32 students were present and the teams were formed by three or four students. This helped to have a better management of each team as registered on the journal #8 "...it helped a lot with the progress of the activities and reduced the risk of leaving a student out of the activity." This affirmation is supported by the journal of the second TGT assessment day where all the 32 students were present and the progress of the activities was compromised:

Each team had a set of shapes [...] that they needed to stick on the "robot head" but they just started to pick out shapes at random without paying attention to the instructions. I tried to give the instructions again but they were talking on their teams and didn't listen. (Journal #11)

Finally, there were moments in which the students didn't want to work on teams. In the first TGT assessment day the students arranged the teams by themselves while on the second I was the one to arrange the teams. In both cases, some students were reluctant to work on teams and kept insisting on work alone (journal #8 and journal #11). In the end, we could get into an agreement and they participated on the activities with a team. For this TGT strategy it was a challenging situation as the team work is crucial. However, we need to highlight that the cooperative work observed was significantly higher than the unwillingness to work in teams, and that this situation was only present on three of the 32 students.



### Conclusion

As a conclusion of this research we can assure that the cooperative learning strategy known as Teams-Games-Tournaments can and should be implemented not only as a teaching strategy but also as an alternative in assessment. It presented positive results and influenced areas of the classroom dynamics that positively affected the students' disposition and involvement.

The evidence proved that the competitive component enhanced students' attention and participation. The students loved to compete by teams and obtain more points than the other teams so there was an active involvement of the students during the activities. In addition, these rewards also helped to promote in-team regulation, and contributed to the discipline and development of the games. Even more important, it was a strategy that enhanced the natural qualities that the children have and that focused their energy into a competition that made them use the language. Something to highlight is that one of the objectives was achieved. We could notice how the students helped each other and worked together to reach a common answer. Thus, the TGT strategy successfully enhanced the cooperative work among the students.

In addition, we stated at the beginning of this research that the children of this age and in this context did not have a level of writing production and comprehension sufficient enough to assess them through written tests. Thus, this strategy not only was appropriate for their age but allowed us to have a clearer perception of their language achievement as the games were composed mainly by oral production and comprehension. The TGT allowed the students to use the language in ways that a written test cannot. However, an improvement on the games design is necessary for the grades to reveal the real language achievement of the students.

Nevertheless, any strategy that tries to get out of the conventional/traditional procedures can encounter some obstacles and situations that hinder its application as we experienced in this

research. Well-prepared games are a great source of students' true knowledge but they demand a high commitment to create them and apply them. Even more important, they demand perseverance to keep improving after a failure. These factors surely hamper the TGT application, and in terms of language assessment principles: its high reliability is directly opposed to its practicality.

In addition, there will be moments in which external factors that are impossible to predict will influence so much the development that -no matter how much you prepare for it- changes will need to be implemented on the go. We experienced that when the children did not want to participate, or when the instructions for the game were simply ignored by them. In conclusion, it is a great strategy but with its benefits it also carries some difficulties that cannot be ignored. Future researches can expand on how this strategy can be implemented on groups with large amount of students and how the creation of games can become more practical.

### **Reflections**

After concluding this research, I feel that I have grown as a person and as a teacher. At the beginning I did not want to work with children as I thought they were impossible to control, but then I understood that it was not about control but more about caring for them. Thanks to this experience I got to understand that children have so much to offer, so much energy, but it is excluded by a system in which discipline means silence and learning means memorizing. If we as teachers take the time to pay attention to their actions, their reasoning and their way of seeing the world, we would understand them better and as a consequence, we will be the teachers that they need us to be.

Sometimes, it was hard to manage them and I even thought that they hated me, but the truth is that they have needs that they are constantly trying to fulfill. They need to move, to talk, to ask, to discover. When I took into consideration those needs in my teaching practice I got to gain their interest and that is something that made me really happy. I feel that I was giving them a space where they were considered as kids and in which they could be themselves. I strongly believe that games are the answer to make the classroom *their* classroom.

However, something that saddens me is the reality of our country. There are so many students grouped together in a single classroom and the elementary teachers are so overwhelmed and tired that the initiative to introduce a new strategy to the classroom is seen as something impossible, difficult, and unworthy. I really appreciate when an institution allows practicum students to be there as they represent a change on the routines and hopefully, an influence that contributes to a change on the elementary teachers' way of thinking.

In general, it was a challenging experience, but also a rewarding experience. I hope that I could have introduced the possibility of implementing games on the classroom as a viable strategy and that my cooperating teacher has learned as much as I did after this process which we shared together.

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## Appendix A

### CONSENTIMIENTO DE PARTICIPACIÓN EN LA INVESTIGACIÓN: TORNEOS DE JUEGOS POR EQUIPOS COMO ALTERNATIVA EN EVALUACIÓN

La Universidad de Antioquia promueve la investigación en espacios reales en busca del desarrollo personal y profesional de sus estudiantes. Por esta razón, yo, Andrea Serna Heilbron, he participado en las clases de inglés de la institución Educativa Francisco Miranda con observaciones e intervenciones bajo la supervisión del docente a cargo. Como continuación de este proceso y durante dos periodos escolares, realizaré una investigación en el grado 2do del cual es parte el menor de edad a su cargo.

Su hijo está invitado a hacer parte de esta investigación-acción que busca ofrecer una estrategia de evaluación en la cual los estudiantes demuestren un nivel de conocimiento del inglés que vaya más allá del papel y lápiz.

Si usted acepta que su hijo haga parte de esta investigación se recolectaran evidencias del proceso y resultados de la investigación. Estas evidencias pueden ser fotos de las evaluaciones realizadas, fotos de los estudiantes durante los juegos realizados y grabaciones en audio de entrevistas a los estudiantes. La privacidad del estudiante no se verá comprometida ya que su nombre no aparecerá relacionado a los resultados y evidencias recolectadas.

Esta investigación espera traer una serie de beneficios a los estudiantes y la institución tales como la implementación de estrategias alternativas para mejorar el aprendizaje y evaluación de los logros alcanzados por los estudiantes así como la posibilidad de educar mejores seres sociales al integrar los beneficios que el aprendizaje cooperativo puede traer a sus vidas.

No habrá ningún efecto negativo por la participación en esta investigación acción. No se les asignará trabajo extra fuera de lo que se hace en el aula de clase, el docente a cargo del grupo estará siempre presente y la integridad física del menor no se verá comprometida a causa de los juegos que se realicen. Recuerde, el propósito es realizar un aporte positivo a la institución y a la sociedad.

La participación es completamente voluntaria y su negativa no tendrá ningún efecto perjudicial para usted o el menor a su cargo. Sin embargo, es importante aclarar que el menor no queda exento de las clases y actividades que se realizaran, las cuales deberá atender normalmente.

Ante cualquier duda, favor comunicarse con:

Luz Helena, profesora a cargo del grupo

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Firma del acudiente

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Firma del estudiante

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Fecha

Appendix B

Sample of the TGT tool used in the games and a students' product.

