



Gamification as a Strategy to Strengthen English Oral Abilities in Primary School Students

Action Research

Angie Lorena Corredor Montoya

Angel Santiago Morant Ramírez

Submitted as a Requirement for the Bachelor of Education in Teaching Foreign Languages

Research Project and Practicum Advisor

Elizabeth Rodríguez Montoya, M.A. in TESOL

Universidad de Antioquia

School of Languages

Foreign Language Teaching Program

Medellín

2026

Cita	(Corredor Montoya & Morant Ramírez, 2026)
Referencia	Corredor Montoya, A. L., & Morant Ramírez, A. S. (2026). <i>Gamification as a strategy to strengthen English oral abilities in primary school students</i> [Trabajo de Grado]. Universidad de Antioquia, Medellín.
Estilo APA 7 (2020)	



Biblioteca John Herbert Adams – Escuela de Idiomas

Repositorio Institucional: <http://bibliotecadigital.udea.edu.co>

Universidad de Antioquia – www.udea.edu.co

El contenido de esta obra corresponde al derecho de expresión de los autores y no compromete el pensamiento institucional de la Universidad de Antioquia ni desata su responsabilidad frente a terceros. Los autores asumen la responsabilidad por los derechos de autor y conexos.

Dedication

To our families.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Institución Educativa Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Ayala (JEGA) for making this research possible. We especially thank Ms. Ana Yadira, coordinator of the institution, and teachers Claudia Valencia and Victoria Restrepo for their collaboration and support throughout the research process.

We are also grateful to the participating students, whose involvement made this study possible. Finally, we thank our families, friends, professors, and advisor for their encouragement and guidance during the completion of this project.

Table of Contents

Abstract	6
Resumen	7
Introduction	8
Description of the Context.....	9
Statement of the Problem	10
Research Question	11
Objectives	11
General Objective	11
Specific Objectives	11
Theoretical Framework.....	12
Pedagogical Strategies	12
Gamification.....	13
Oral Abilities in English Language Learning	15
Action Plan	17
Development of Actions	18
Data Analysis.....	19
Findings and Interpretation	20
Students' Initial and Final English Oral Abilities.....	21
Gamified Activities as Opportunities for Oral Interaction.....	23
Pedagogical Conditions Mediating Oral Language Use.....	25

CTs' and Students' Perceptions of Oral Development	28
Conclusions	30
Recommendations	31
References	32
Appendix A.....	36
Appendix B.....	37
Appendix C.....	38

Abstract

This action research project analyzed the effects of a gamified pedagogical strategy on the development of English oral abilities among 3rd and 4th-grade students at Institución Educativa Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Ayala, in Bello, Antioquia. The study emerged from classroom observations that showed limited opportunities for students' oral interaction, as lessons were mainly focused on grammar, vocabulary, and written activities. The intervention was developed in two cycles and included an initial oral test, five gamified sessions in each cycle, and a final oral test. Data were collected through oral tests, researchers' journals, observation guides, self-assessment formats, and questionnaires answered by the cooperating teachers. The analysis followed a hybrid inductive-deductive thematic approach. Findings showed improvement in students' basic oral performance (within their A1 level), especially when answering simple questions, recalling familiar vocabulary, and participating in short, guided exchanges. Gamified activities promoted oral participation and peer interaction.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language, gamification, oral abilities, pedagogical strategies, primary education

Resumen

Este proyecto de investigación-acción analizó los efectos de una estrategia pedagógica gamificada en el desarrollo de las habilidades orales en inglés de estudiantes de tercero y cuarto grado de la Institución Educativa Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Ayala, en Bello, Antioquia. El estudio surgió a partir de observaciones de clase que evidenciaron oportunidades limitadas para la interacción oral de los estudiantes, ya que las clases se centraban principalmente en gramática, vocabulario y actividades escritas. La intervención se desarrolló en dos ciclos e incluyó una prueba oral inicial, cinco sesiones gamificadas en cada ciclo y una prueba oral final. La información fue recolectada mediante pruebas orales, diarios de los investigadores, guías de observación, formatos de autoevaluación y cuestionarios respondidos por las docentes cooperadoras. El análisis siguió un enfoque temático híbrido, inductivo y deductivo. Los hallazgos mostraron mejoras en el desempeño oral básico de los estudiantes, dentro de su nivel A1, especialmente al responder preguntas simples, recordar vocabulario familiar y participar en intercambios cortos y guiados. Las actividades gamificadas promovieron la participación oral y la interacción entre pares.

Palabras clave: educación primaria, estrategias pedagógicas, gamificación, habilidades orales, inglés como lengua extranjera

Introduction

The development of oral abilities in English is essential in primary education, since students begin to build confidence, recognize basic vocabulary, and participate in simple communicative exchanges. However, in many Colombian public schools, English classes prioritize grammar, vocabulary, and written exercises, while oral interaction remains limited.

This project was developed at I.E. Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Ayala, a public school in Bello, Antioquia, with 3rd and 4th-grade students. Initial observations showed that students had few opportunities to practice English orally, as speaking moments were mainly limited to repetition or short controlled answers. As a result, many students struggled to answer simple questions, use familiar vocabulary, and participate confidently in basic exchanges.

In response, this study explored a gamified pedagogical strategy to support students' English oral abilities. Gamification was understood as the intentional use of game elements, such as points, challenges, badges, teamwork, and rewards, within pedagogically designed activities that created structured opportunities to speak and interact. The study followed an action research approach developed in two cycles, including a gamified pre-test, five gamified sessions, and a post-test. Data were collected through oral tests, researchers' journals, observation guides, student self-assessment formats, and questionnaires answered by the cooperating teachers.

This document presents the context, problem, research question, objectives, theoretical framework, action plan, data analysis, findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Description of the Context

This project was conducted at Institución Educativa Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Ayala (I.E JEGA), a public co-educational school in Bello, Antioquia, Colombia, serving approximately 2,400 students from kindergarten to 11th grade. According to its Institutional Educational Project (I.E JEGA, 2019), the school promotes spiritual values, respect for diversity, human dignity, and environmental awareness.

The study involved 3rd- and 4th-grade groups of approximately 40 students each, aged eight to eleven, mostly from socioeconomic strata 1 and 2. English instruction is limited to two hours per week in primary school. During observations in 2025-1, more than 70% of students demonstrated limited vocabulary knowledge and difficulty participating orally, despite the Ministry of National Education's (MEN, by its Spanish acronym) expectation of reaching an A1 level by the end of 5th grade (MEN, 2006).

As in many Colombian public schools, primary teachers at JEGA often teach English outside their area of specialization. To address this, the school implemented La Comunidad de Inglés, a program led by student-teachers from Universidad de Antioquia that supported teachers' English instruction. Our CTs showed willingness to learn and collaborate; however, the community did not last long, and we evidenced that our CTs' English lessons relied mainly on printed modules and grammar-based worksheets, limiting oral interaction.

During the intervention, we adopted a co-teaching approach (Cook & Friend, 1995), alternating among one teach, one observe; one teach, one assist; and team teaching. This model supported students while exposing CTs to communicative practices. These conditions describe the instructional context in which the study was implemented and help situate the limited opportunities students had to practice English orally.

Statement of the Problem

During our first semester of the teaching practicum at the school, 2025-1, we identified a consistent issue in English classes of grades 3 and 4: students had limited opportunities to develop their oral abilities. Lessons focused mainly on writing and grammar, while oral activities were infrequent and often limited to repetition or memorized songs. As a result, students rarely used English for real communication, showed weak oral performance, and lacked confidence when asked to speak.

This problem was also identified through informal conversations with the two CTs during our co-teaching sessions. They expressed that, although they recognized the importance of developing oral abilities, their English lessons often prioritized written and grammar-based activities due to curriculum pressure and their lack of specialized training in language teaching (Angie's journal, April 25, 2025). These perceptions coincided with our classroom observations and reinforced the need for strategies that promote more active oral participation.

The review of instructional materials also supported this finding. Teachers mainly used a printed module composed of worksheets, from which students usually completed one or two per lesson. Although these materials provided structured practice, their focus was predominantly grammatical rather than communicative. Consequently, opportunities for spontaneous oral interaction were minimal, and speaking activities were usually limited to short, controlled responses.

This situation is especially concerning because, according to the MEN (2006), students in Colombia are expected to progressively reach specific English proficiency levels by each grade, with the goal of achieving B1 by the end of 11th grade. However, observations at Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Ayala School suggest a gap between this objective and students' current communicative competence. Since early language learning is critical for building confidence, motivation, and communicative competence, limited oral interaction may affect students' speaking development and future academic and professional

opportunities. As Cameron (2001) points out, early foreign language learning lays the foundation for learners' confidence and willingness to communicate, which later supports the development of solid communicative competence.

Research Question

How does the implementation of a gamified pedagogical strategy affect the development of English oral abilities among 3rd and 4th-grade students at I.E. JEGA?

Objectives

General Objective

To analyze the effects of implementing a gamified pedagogical strategy on the development of English oral abilities in 3rd and 4th-grade students.

Specific Objectives

1. To diagnose the initial and final level of English oral abilities of the participating primary school students through gamified oral tests and structured observations.
2. To systematically monitor students' interactions, participation patterns, and oral language use during gamified activities, using multiple data sources to capture both individual and group dynamics.
3. To compare the results of students' oral abilities in English before and after the intervention, based on diagnostic/final tests and evidence collected during the gamification process.
4. To explore the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the development of English oral abilities throughout the implementation of the gamified strategy, through reflective questionnaires.

Theoretical Framework

This section focuses on three key concepts: pedagogical strategies, gamification, and oral abilities in English language learning. These ideas helped us establish a connection between playful strategies and students' oral performance in English to explore their implementation in this context.

Pedagogical Strategies

Pedagogical strategies are essential components in the teaching and learning process, as they provide structured and purposeful guidance for educators to promote meaningful student engagement. This view aligns with Richards and Rodgers (2014) argument that pedagogical strategies form the core of language teaching because they establish the principles and procedures that help teachers facilitate meaningful learner engagement and support successful language development. From this perspective, pedagogical strategies go beyond simple instructional techniques, since they involve organized principles, classroom procedures, and teaching decisions that guide how learning is planned and implemented.

Teachers select and implement these strategies based on their students' needs, the context of the learning environment, and the educational goals they aim to achieve. Richards (2013) stated that effective instructional planning requires organizing classroom activities in a logical sequence that addresses learners' difficulties while supporting ongoing language development and academic performance. Thus, a well-constructed pedagogical strategy involves a logical and coherent organization of activities, making it possible not only to respond to learning difficulties but also to sustain and improve overall academic performance.

As Romero (2012) emphasized, pedagogical strategies can be classified into the following categories: cognitive, metacognitive, ludic (play-based), technological, and socio-affective. Cognitive strategies focus on helping students process, organize, and internalize information; metacognitive strategies guide learners in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their own learning; ludic strategies

incorporate games and playful activities to increase motivation and participation; technological strategies use digital tools and multimedia resources to enhance instruction; and socio-affective strategies promote collaboration, emotional support, and positive interpersonal relationships in the classroom. This classification allows educators to adopt a diversified and flexible approach that enables teachers to act intentionally and creatively, adapting their practice to the evolving demands of the educational process.

Considering that, in this context, students have limited exposure to English, and their classes typically focus on grammar, vocabulary, written exercises, and worksheet-based activities, the strategy designed for this study was based on the students' observed needs and aligned with the topics to be covered during the academic year. Although teachers occasionally incorporate more dynamic resources, such as songs and interactive slides, these practices are not part of a sustained teaching approach. In this context, designing a pedagogical strategy could provide a clear structure for planning and monitoring the intervention, while introducing playful challenges with gamification elements based on mechanics that are familiar to students from their technological and gaming environments.

Gamification

In recent years, the need to foster more engaging and effective learning environments has led educators and researchers to explore alternative pedagogical strategies that go beyond traditional teaching methods. One such strategy is gamification, which has gained increasing attention in the field of education due to its potential to enhance student motivation, sustain attention, and promote active participation in learning activities (Dicheva et al., 2015). In a systematic mapping study on gamification in education, Dicheva et al. (2015) found that most reviewed studies reported promising results related to students' motivation and engagement, although they also emphasized the need for more empirical research in specific educational contexts.

According to Burke (2014), gamification involves the use of game mechanics and experience design to engage and motivate people to achieve their goals, a concept that emphasizes the deliberate and strategic application of specific game elements within non-game contexts, such as the classroom. In this study, gamification is understood as a pedagogical strategy because it organizes playful elements with an instructional purpose, rather than using games as isolated classroom activities. Cameron (2001) affirmed that play and playful interaction are not peripheral activities but central mechanisms through which young learners naturally absorb and experiment with a new language. Gamification, therefore, constitutes a structured pedagogical approach that, by systematizing playful elements, seeks to transform learning dynamics into a meaningful and motivating experience.

Several empirical studies have examined the relationship between gamification and the development of oral abilities in EFL contexts. Simbaña et al. (2023) conducted a quasi-experimental study in a private school in El Quinche, Ecuador, with 50 eighth-grade students between 13 and 14 years old. They found that gamification significantly supported students' oral communication skills, particularly in grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. Similarly, Cardona Arias (2022) explored the impact of gamification on the speaking interactions of 19 ninth-grade students in a public secondary school in Caldas, Colombia. His action research study showed that gamification contributed to students' lexical development, fluency, oral participation, and engagement, although he found that pronunciation did not improve considerably. These studies suggest that gamified strategies can create favorable conditions for oral participation and basic speaking development, while also showing that their effects may vary across specific components of oral performance.

Based on these theoretical and empirical contributions, it is clear that gamification in the classroom involves integrating carefully selected components such as points, badges, challenges, levels, leaderboards, and team-based competitions to encourage positive behaviors, maintain learners' interest,

and create a more dynamic environment. As Kapp (2012) explained, these elements structure learning experiences by providing clear goals, immediate feedback, and motivational incentives that help guide students' behavior throughout the activity, allowing points to reward oral attempts, badges to acknowledge milestones, challenges to promote meaningful use of English, levels to signal progress, leaderboards to make advancement visible, and team-based competitions to strengthen collaboration and oral interaction. By incorporating these elements, educators can foster motivation, increase participation, and promote sustained learning, aligning the learning process with students' intrinsic and extrinsic incentives (Barata et al., 2013). In this study, gamification elements such as points, badges, and challenge-based progression are intended to increase JEGA learners' motivation, foster active engagement, and most importantly support the development of their oral abilities throughout the research process.

Oral Abilities in English Language Learning

Oral abilities encompass the set of skills that enable learners to convey and interpret meaning effectively through spoken interaction. This process depends on the coordinated use of vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, fluency, and listening comprehension. As Brown (2004) explained, these components must work together in real time to support successful spoken communication and enable learners to participate in communicative tasks such as discussions or question-and-answer exchanges. Fulcher (2003) stated that oral ability integrates multiple dimensions of control of the sound system, accurate and cohesive use of grammar and vocabulary, fluency, strategic competence, discourse organization, and pragmatic awareness, highlighting its multifaceted nature. In the foreign language learning field, oral abilities also involve using language appropriately and purposefully in real communicative situations, integrating linguistic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic components (MEN, 2006).

This understanding of oral abilities aligns with the communicative approach to teach foreign languages described by Gordillo (2011), who argues that instruction should move beyond grammatical correctness toward fostering intentional interaction and meaningful use of English, particularly in primary education. From this perspective, oral abilities develop when students are given opportunities to speak, negotiate meaning, and apply the language in authentic or semi-authentic situations. Additionally, research shows that learners with more accurate and fluent oral production tend to demonstrate stronger language processing abilities, increased confidence, and more active participation during the early stages of language learning (Goh & Burns, 2012), reinforcing the relevance of strengthening these abilities from the beginning of their English learning process.

The importance of developing oral abilities early on is also reflected in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which indicates that A1 learners should be able to produce simple phrases, use basic vocabulary, and maintain short communicative exchanges using elementary structures (Council of Europe, 2001). However, in many primary-level EFL classrooms, these abilities do not fully emerge when instruction is limited to worksheet-based tasks that restrict meaningful oral practice with isolated pronunciation, as observed in JEGA school. In this regard, methodologies such as gamification may provide a more supportive environment for oral development, as the integration of game mechanics can sustain learners' motivation and participation during communicative activities (Burke, 2014).

In sum, we considered that the JEGA institution provided the appropriate setting to implement a gamified strategy, since the traditional strategies observed did not seem to effectively engage students. This motivated us to explore whether a playful and participatory methodology like gamification could produce results similar to those reported by Simbaña et al. (2023). In their study, the use of gamification in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom led to a remarkable improvement in students' oral

communication skills, especially in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. They also found that gamification increased student participation and engagement, as learners were more motivated and enjoyed the learning process. Teachers, in turn, found the use of games meaningful and enjoyable. These outcomes strengthened our interest in applying gamification as a tool to enhance oral production and create a more engaging and motivational learning environment for primary school students.

Action Plan

This project adopts an action research approach, a cyclical and reflective process through which teachers intervene in classrooms to improve a pedagogical situation while examining its effects. According to Burns (2010), action research links action, observation, reflection, and improvement. Thus, the intervention seeks to generate situated knowledge to improve English oral instruction at I.E. JEGA. The pedagogical strategy will be designed and implemented by the researchers in collaboration with the CTs.

The study investigates the effects of a gamified pedagogical strategy on English oral development in 3rd- and 4th-grade students through two action research cycles of diagnosis, implementation, observation, and reflection (see Table 1). Data will be collected using gamified oral tests, self-assessment and CT questionnaires, researchers' journals, structured observation guides, and audio recordings of pre- and post-tests. The study seeks to strengthen students' oral abilities while refining the pedagogical strategy according to classroom realities.

Table 1*Research Cycles Plan – Implementation Structure and Data Collection Instruments*

Phases	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Pre – test	Gamified pre – test (baseline measurement of oral abilities)	No pre-test; informed by Cycle 1 reflection.
Gamified Intervention Sessions	2 sessions	3 sessions
Data Collection	Researchers’ journals, audio, recordings, observation.	Researchers’ journals, audio, recordings, observation.
End of cycle instruments	Student self-assessment questionnaire	Final post-test, second student self-assessment questionnaire, CT questionnaires.

Development of Actions

The implementation followed the plan outlined previously, the school curriculum, and the study objectives. After consulting the two CTs and obtaining approval for the topics, the intervention was carried out in two cycles of seven sessions each: a pre-test, five intervention sessions using a gamified strategy, and a post-test. While the overall design remained unchanged, minor adjustments were made to address classroom dynamics and students’ needs.

The pre-test assessed students’ initial oral performance, particularly vocabulary and pronunciation. During its implementation, it became evident that some students needed additional scaffolding to speak confidently, leading to the incorporation of guided practice before oral production tasks.

The gamified strategy, La Tiendita, rewarded students with fake money and badges that recognized skills demonstrated during each lesson. The intervention included activities such as Storytelling, Guess Who with family trees, a Who Wants to Be a Millionaire-style contest, BuzzFight, Bingo,

and the final La Tiendita activity. Materials, including albums, bingo cards, brochures, digital slides, fake money, and badges, supported comprehension, participation, and engagement. Although the sessions generally followed the original plan, some activities were shortened or continued in subsequent lessons due to time constraints while maintaining engagement and study objectives.

Data were collected throughout both implementation cycles. Pre- and post-tests (Appendix A) provided evidence of students' oral development. Student self-assessment questionnaires (Appendix B) gathered information about perceived progress, while CT questionnaires (Appendix C) offered professional perspectives on the intervention's impact. Researcher journals, structured observation guides, and audio recordings were also used to document students' progress.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this action research study followed a qualitative approach using a hybrid inductive-deductive thematic analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) to understand how the gamified pedagogical intervention influenced students' oral abilities. This approach allowed us to examine the data through categories related to the research objectives and theoretical framework, while also identifying meaningful patterns that emerged from the different sources.

As explained by Creswell (2009), qualitative analysis involves organizing and interpreting data to make sense of participants' experiences. In this study, the process began by organizing the collected information, including students' and CTs' questionnaire responses, reflective journal entries, CT observation records, audio transcriptions, and pre- and post-test results. We conducted transcriptions of students' oral participation and the oral response provided by one CT, and analyzed all the material in relation to students' oral production, classroom interaction, and participation during the gamified activities.

During the coding stage, data segments were initially classified according to several descriptive categories connected to the study's focus. As the analysis progressed, recurring patterns and relationships across data sources were identified and compared. Following the recursive process of thematic analysis, conceptually related categories were reviewed and consolidated in order to reduce redundancy and strengthen analytical coherence. This process resulted in four final categories: Students' Initial and Final English Oral Abilities, Gamified Activities as Opportunities for Oral Interaction, Pedagogical Conditions Mediating Oral Language Use, and CTs' and Students' Perceptions of Oral Development. Together, these categories captured the most relevant patterns related to students' oral production, classroom interaction, participation, and perceptions of the gamified intervention. The analysis followed a cyclical process of organizing, reducing, and interpreting the data, as suggested by Miles et al. (2014), through multiple reviews that helped refine both predefined and emerging categories.

A constant comparison across instruments guided the analysis process. We contrasted data from journals, questionnaires, observation records, and pre- and post-tests to identify patterns, differences, and connections across sources. To strengthen the validity of the findings, we applied triangulation by cross-checking evidence from multiple instruments, including journal observations, CT input, and pre- and post-test results (Meijer et al., 2002). This process allowed us to interpret how gamified tasks supported students' oral participation and interaction while keeping the analysis closely connected to the classroom context.

Findings and Interpretation

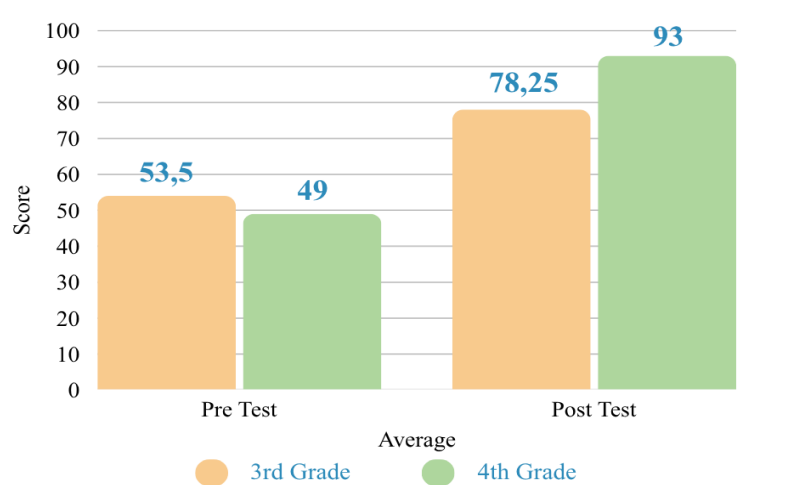
This section presents the main findings of the study, organized around themes derived from the categories developed during the data analysis.

Students' Initial and Final English Oral Abilities

The analysis of the pre-test confirmed that students' initial English oral abilities were limited, as observed during 2025-1. Most students relied on isolated words or very short responses, showed difficulty constructing simple phrases, and demonstrated hesitation, long pauses, avoidance of participation, limited vocabulary recall, minimal control of basic structures, and low confidence when speaking. This interpretation aligns with Brown's (2004) and Fulcher's (2003) understanding of oral ability as a multidimensional competence that involves coordinating vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and meaning in spoken communication. As shown in Figure 1, students' pre-test performance was relatively low, with average scores of 53.5 in third grade and 49 in fourth grade out of 100.

Figure 1

Pre and Post Test Comparison



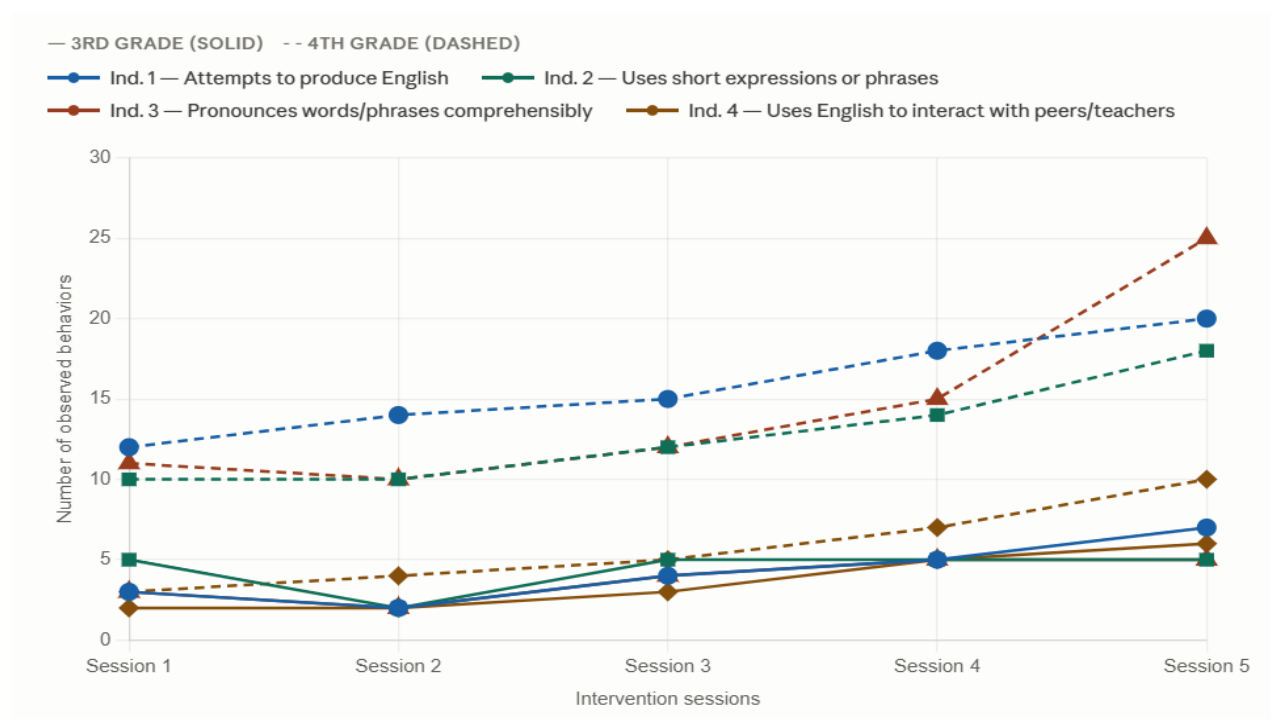
In contrast, the post-test results showed noticeable improvement, with average scores increasing to 78.25 and 93, respectively. In addition, 95 out of 120 station-question entries received a positive score (79.2%), and 78 entries (65%) obtained scores of 6 or higher, suggesting successful basic oral production in most evaluated responses. These results are relevant because, according to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), early A1 learners are expected to begin using simple phrases, familiar vocabulary, and brief

communicative exchanges. From this perspective, the post-test suggests progress toward more functional forms of basic oral production.

This improvement was also supported by the observation records completed by the CTs throughout the intervention. As shown in Figure 2, oral behaviors increased across the five sessions in both groups, including attempts to produce English, use of short phrases, and comprehensible pronunciation. For example, in fourth grade, the number of students who attempted to produce English increased from 12 in the first session to 20 in the fifth session. In third grade, those attempts also increased from 3 in the first session to 7 in the fifth session. These progressive changes suggest that students in both grades used English more frequently and confidently during classroom activities.

Figure 2

Observed Oral English Behaviors by Indicator and Grade Across Five Intervention Sessions



However, this development remained mostly within basic sentence structures and predictable responses. Students' language use was aligned with an initial A1 stage, where learners are expected to

use familiar vocabulary, simple phrases, and brief communicative exchanges rather than extended or complex oral production (Brown, 2004; Council of Europe, 2001). Therefore, the results show relevant progress within students' proficiency level, as they began to use English more actively while still depending on basic vocabulary and simple structures to communicate.

Gamified Activities as Opportunities for Oral Interaction

The analysis of classroom interactions revealed that gamified activities fostered greater oral participation and peer interaction throughout the intervention. As evidenced by the classroom observation records presented in Figure 2, students increasingly used English during classroom exchanges, particularly during collaborative and competitive tasks. For example, the indicator related to using English to interact with peers or teachers increased from 2 to 6 observed behaviors in third grade and from 3 to 10 in fourth grade across the five intervention sessions. These progressive changes suggest that students became more willing to use English during classroom activities and gradually participated more actively in oral exchanges.

This tendency was also observed by one of the CTs, who reported that “además, algunos estudiantes comenzaron a interactuar entre ellos utilizando frases y palabras cortas en inglés” [“some students began interacting with one another using short phrases and words in English”] (CT questionnaire, March 24th, 2026). Similarly, the teacher explained that game-based activities encouraged interaction because students needed to communicate in order to follow the rules and complete the tasks, which favored the spontaneous use of English. These observations suggest that oral participation emerged not only from teacher prompts but also from the interactional demands created by the activities themselves.

Across the intervention, students participated in several speaking-oriented activities, including Bingo, Guess Who, BuzzFight, Storytelling, and the Who Wants to Be a Millionaire-style contest. Although each activity had different objectives and dynamics, all of them required students to use English to earn

points, complete challenges, advance in the game, or contribute to their teams. As a result, speaking became a meaningful part of participation rather than an isolated classroom exercise. Students increasingly used familiar vocabulary and previously practiced expressions while interacting with classmates and teachers, particularly during activities that incorporated competition, collaboration, and immediate rewards.

Evidence from classroom journals supports this interpretation. Observations from the BuzzFight and Bingo sessions showed that learners were eager to participate and motivated by the possibility of earning points (Angel's journal, October 24th, 2025). Likewise, both CTs reported observing an exchange of words in English during activities such as Bingo and matching games. Although these exchanges were generally brief and based on familiar language, they provided meaningful opportunities for students to use English in communicative situations.

This represented a notable change compared to students' initial behavior. Evidence from the pre-test indicated that many learners avoided answering oral questions, remained silent, or produced isolated vocabulary items that did not meaningfully respond to the prompt. During the intervention, students increasingly participated in guided exchanges related to personal preferences, family members, and school contexts. Classroom observations also showed that learners responded more frequently when oral production was supported through direct questions and familiar interaction patterns. As noted in one journal entry, "students were more willing to speak when they were asked questions" (Angie's journal, September 26th, 2025).

Participation patterns also evolved throughout the intervention. One cooperating teacher explained that "al inicio fue algo difícil, pero ellos fueron adaptándose" ["it was a bit difficult at first, but they gradually adapted"] (CT questionnaire, March 24th, 2026). She further noted that "incluso aquellos que normalmente eran tímidos fueron cambiando. Muchos estudiantes intentaron pronunciar nuevas

palabras y repetir expresiones sin temor a equivocarse” [“even those who were usually shy began to change. Many students tried to pronounce new words and repeat phrases without fear of making mistakes”]. These observations suggest that the gamified environment encouraged participation and contributed to students’ confidence when using English orally.

Overall, the findings indicate that gamified activities created structured opportunities for oral interaction by connecting English use with meaningful classroom purposes. Rather than speaking only because they were instructed to do so, students used English as part of completing challenges, interacting with peers, earning rewards, and participating in team-based tasks. This finding is consistent with Simbaña et al. (2023), who reported that gamified EFL activities increased students’ participation and oral engagement, and with Gordillo’s (2011) view that oral development is strengthened through purposeful communicative exchanges rather than exclusively through form-focused practice.

Pedagogical Conditions Mediating Oral Language Use

An important finding of this study was that students’ oral participation was influenced not only by the presence of gamified activities but also by the pedagogical conditions embedded within those activities. The data suggest that oral language use became more accessible when tasks included repetition, modeling, familiar vocabulary, visual support, clear rules, and structured opportunities for interaction. Therefore, the effectiveness of gamification appeared to depend on how activities were organized and supported rather than on game elements alone.

Classroom observations revealed that students participated more actively when activities followed predictable patterns and required short, guided responses. As recorded in Angel’s journal, “students spoke more when the activities were clear and repetitive” (Angel’s journal, October 17th, 2025). Similarly, during the Storytelling activities, students were more willing to participate when questions had been repeated and when they could reuse phrases previously produced by their classmates. These

findings suggest that repetition and peer modeling functioned as scaffolding mechanisms that facilitated oral participation despite students' limited English proficiency. This interpretation aligns with Goh and Burns' (2012) view that oral development benefits from structured support, guided practice, and interactional opportunities.

The structure of the activities also contributed to students' oral production. Tasks such as Bingo and Guess Who required learners to use repeated sentence patterns, familiar vocabulary, and guided question-answer sequences. For example, during Bingo students repeatedly produced the structure "This is a..." followed by the name of an object, while Guess Who encouraged the use of questions such as "Who is this?" to identify family members. These activities reduced cognitive demands and created predictable interaction patterns that supported language production. In this sense, gamification functioned as a form of scaffolding that made oral participation more accessible for beginning learners.

The CT' perceptions reinforced this interpretation. One CT reported that students produced brief responses, vocabulary repetition, exchange of ideas, and the use of expressions learned in class during the intervention (CT questionnaire, March 24th, 2026). The same teacher also observed exchanges such as "What is this?" and "It is a pencil" while students identified school supplies during classroom activities. These observations suggest that students benefited from tasks that provided clear linguistic models and limited response options.

However, the same conditions that facilitated participation also revealed important limitations. Several classroom observations documented students' reliance on Spanish when they lacked the vocabulary necessary to express ideas in English. During the Storytelling class, students frequently used Spanish and sometimes responded only with isolated words rather than complete utterances. Likewise, in the Guess Who activity, some groups showed lower participation levels and focused more on

manipulating the materials than on using English. These findings indicate that students still depended heavily on teacher support, familiar vocabulary, and guided language to sustain oral communication.

These mediating conditions help explain why students' oral production remained largely basic and guided throughout the intervention. Although learners became more willing to participate and demonstrated greater use of English, their oral production continued to rely on familiar vocabulary, modeled expressions, and repeated interaction patterns. Consequently, progress was primarily reflected in vocabulary recall, pronunciation attempts, short responses, and willingness to speak rather than in the production of extended or independent oral discourse. This finding connects with Simbaña et al. (2023) and Cardona Arias (2022) as they suggested that gamification can support oral participation, vocabulary use, fluency, and engagement, while its effects may vary across specific components of oral performance. This outcome is also consistent with expectations for learners at an initial A1 level, where communication is generally based on familiar vocabulary, simple phrases, and brief exchanges rather than complex oral production (Council of Europe, 2001).

Overall, the findings indicate that gamification functioned as an effective pedagogical mediator when accompanied by appropriate scaffolding and structured support. Clear instructions, repetition, teacher modeling, visual aids, and familiar language created conditions that facilitated oral participation. At the same time, students' dependence on guided language and occasional reliance on Spanish suggest that oral development remained within the boundaries of basic communicative use. Therefore, the effectiveness of the intervention depended not only on game mechanics but also on the pedagogical conditions that supported learners' oral engagement and language production.

CTs' and Students' Perceptions of Oral Development

The analysis of students' self-assessments revealed positive but not uniform perceptions of their speaking performance during the intervention. Table 2 presents the comparison between the first and second self-assessments in both grades:

Table 2

Students' Self-Assessment Responses per Question and Session for 3rd and 4th Grade

Questions	A		B		C		D	
	SA1	SA2	SA1	SA2	SA1	SA2	SA1	SA2
3RD GRADE (n=7)								
Q1	5	6	2	1	0	0	0	0
Q2	6	6	1	1	0	0	0	0
Q3	7	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
Q4	6	2	1	4	0	1	0	0
Q5	6	6	1	1	0	0	0	0
Q6	6	6	1	1	0	0	0	0
4TH GRADE (n=21)								
Q1	11	13	7	7	3	1	0	0
Q2	10	8	11	11	0	2	0	0
Q3	10	15	9	4	0	1	2	1
Q4	14	15	7	5	0	0	0	1
Q5	19	12	1	6	1	2	0	1
Q6	16	12	4	5	0	3	1	1

Note. Q1-Q6 correspond to the questionnaire items presented in Appendix B. SA1 and SA2 refer to Self-Assessment 1 and Self-Assessment 2, respectively. Response categories were coded as A = Yes, B = More or Less, C = No, and D = I Don't Know.

As shown in Table 2, *n* refers to the number of self-assessment formats available for analysis: 7 responses from 3rd grade and 21 from 4th grade. In Q3, which asked whether students could answer a simple question in English during the games, 7 out of 7 students in 3rd grade (100%) and 15 out of 21 students in 4th grade (71.4%) selected the most favorable option. Positive responses also appeared in

items related to saying more words in English and producing short phrases, especially in 4th grade, where 13 students (61.9%) selected the most favorable option in Q1 and 15 students (71.4%) did so in Q4. These results suggest that students perceived progress mainly in basic oral participation, vocabulary use, and short oral responses.

However, the results were not uniform across all items. Q4 in 3rd grade showed a decline in the most favorable response, while Q5 and Q6 in 4th grade also decreased. Since Q5 focused on pronunciation and Q6 on using English more frequently in class, these results should not be interpreted as evidence of general improvement in all oral abilities. Rather, they show a mixed pattern: students seemed to perceive progress in specific aspects, such as answering simple questions and producing short phrases, but not necessarily in pronunciation or in using English more frequently during class. Therefore, the self-assessment data suggest partial progress in basic oral participation, while also showing that some aspects of oral development remained limited.

The CTs' perceptions were consistent with this interpretation. From their perspective, students showed greater willingness to use English, increased participation in oral tasks, and more dynamic classroom interactions over time. One CT observed that “muchos estudiantes intentaron pronunciar nuevas palabras y repetir expresiones sin temor a equivocarse” [“Many students tried to pronounce new words and repeat phrases without fear of making mistakes”] (CT questionnaire, March 24th, 2026). This suggests that the gamified activities created a supportive environment in which learners felt more confident using English despite making mistakes. This perception may be connected to the gamified structure of the intervention, since Kapp (2012) explains that elements such as challenges, rewards, and visible progression can help sustain learners' involvement and guide their participation toward specific learning goals.

When these perceptions are contrasted with students' performance data (see Figure 2), the perceived improvement appears closely related to increased participation, confidence, and more frequent use of basic English during classroom activities. Therefore, both students and teachers associated oral development with greater engagement, willingness to speak, vocabulary, basic structure recall, and short oral responses. This pattern is consistent with Dicheva et al. (2015), who found that gamified educational experiences are frequently associated with engagement and active participation.

Conclusions

The gamified pedagogical strategy positively influenced students' basic oral development by promoting participation, vocabulary recall, pronunciation attempts, short responses, and greater confidence in speaking. Activities such as Bingo, Guess Who, BuzzFight, and a Who Wants to Be a Millionaire-style contest created meaningful opportunities for oral interaction, making speaking an integral part of classroom challenges and dynamics.

Students' oral development remained largely basic and guided. Their performance depended on familiar vocabulary, modeled structures, teacher support, and repeated practice, reflecting progress consistent with their initial A1 level rather than independent or extended oral production.

We can conclude that gamification alone does not guarantee oral development. Its effectiveness depended on clear instructions, visual support, repetition, teacher scaffolding, peer interaction, and achievable linguistic goals. Challenges such as reliance on Spanish, unequal participation, and dependence on guided language highlighted the continued need for pedagogical support.

Overall, the intervention increased students' willingness to participate, expanded opportunities for oral interaction, and supported the use of basic English in classroom activities. Its main contribution was the creation of a more engaging and structured environment in which students could use English more actively and confidently.

The study was limited by the short duration of the intervention, the large number of students per group, and the availability of some data sources, including self-assessments. Additionally, the findings are specific to 3rd- and 4th-grade students at I.E. Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Ayala and are not intended to be generalized. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the role of gamified pedagogical strategies in supporting basic oral participation in primary EFL classrooms.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, English teachers in similar contexts are encouraged to use gamified activities as part of a structured pedagogical strategy, not as isolated games. These activities should include clear linguistic goals, simple instructions, familiar vocabulary, visual support, and repeated opportunities to speak, so students understand both the game and the language they need to use.

Teachers should also provide modeling and scaffolding before and during the activities, especially because A1 students still depend on guided language. Sentence frames, pronunciation models, vocabulary practice, and clear examples can reduce confusion and make oral participation more accessible.

Finally, gamified activities should promote balanced participation through roles, smaller groups, turns, and teacher monitoring. Future implementations could include longer interventions and more frequent oral practice to better examine the effects of gamification on fluency, pronunciation, accuracy, and more independent oral production.

References

- Barata, G., Gama, S., Jorge, J., & Gonçalves, D. (2013, September). Engaging engineering students with gamification. In *2013 5th International Conference on Games and Virtual Worlds for Serious Applications (VS-GAMES)* (pp. 1-8). IEEE.
- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309050128_Engaging_Engineering_Students_with_Gamification
- Brown, D. (2004). *Language assessment*. Pearson Education.
- <https://evelintampubolon.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/h- douglas brown - language assessment.pdf>
- Burke, B. (2014). *Gamify: How gamification motivates people to do extraordinary things*. Gartner.
- <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315230344>
- Burns, A. (2010). *Doing action research in English language teaching*. Routledge.
- <https://www.routledge.com/Doing-Action-Research-in-English-Language-Teaching-A-Guide-for-Practitioners/Burns/p/book/9780415991452>
- Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching languages to young learners*. Cambridge University Press.
- <https://assets.cambridge.org/052177/3253/sample/0521773253WS.pdf>
- Cardona Arias, J. E. (2022). *Gamification: Its impact on 9th graders' speaking interactions* [Master's thesis, Universidad de Caldas]. Repositorio Universidad de Caldas.
- <https://repositorio.ucaldas.edu.co/server/api/core/bitstreams/6eed7f9-e83c-445b-90ab-591905a25875/content>

- Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European Framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cook, L., & Friend, M. (1995). Co-teaching: Guidelines for creating effective practices. *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 28(3), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.17161/foec.v28i3.6852>
- Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design*. Sage. https://www.ucg.ac.me/skladiste/blog_609332/objava_105202/fajlovi/Creswell.pdf
- Dicheva, D., Dichev, C., Agre, G., & Angelova, G. (2015). Gamification in education: A systematic mapping study. *Educational Technology & Society*, 18(3), 75-88. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/270273830_Gamification_in_Education_A_Systematic_Mapping_Study
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 80-92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500107>
- Fulcher, G. (2003). *Testing second language speaking*. Taylor & Francis. https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9781317873686_A23914093/preview-9781317873686_A23914093.pdf
- Goh, C., & Burns, A. (2012). *Teaching speaking: A holistic approach*. Cambridge University Press. https://assets.cambridge.org/97811070/11236/frontmatter/9781107011236_frontmatter.pdf
- Gordillo, L. (2011). Desarrollo de la comunicación oral en la clase de inglés. *Innovación y Experiencias Educativas*, 38, 1-9. https://archivos.csif.es/archivos/andalucia/ensenanza/revistas/csicsif/revista/pdf/Numero_38/LOURDES MARIA GORDILLO SANTOFIMIA_02.pdf

Institución Educativa Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Ayala. (2019). *Proyecto educativo institucional*. Documento institucional no publicado.

Kapp, K. (2012). *The gamification of learning and instruction: Game-based methods and strategies for training and education*. Pfeiffer.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/273947281_The_gamification_of_learning_and_instruction_Game-based_methods_and_strategies_for_training_and_education_San_Francisco_CA_Pfeiffer

Meijer, P., Verloop, N., & Beijaard, D. (2002). Multi-Method triangulation in a qualitative study on teachers' practical knowledge: An attempt to increase internal validity. *Springer Nature Link*, 36, 145-167. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1014984232147>

MEN. (2006). *Guía N°22, estándares básicos de competencias en lenguas extranjeras: Inglés*. Revolución Educativa Colombia Aprende. https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1780/articles-115174_archivo_pdf.pdf

Miles, M., Huberman, M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. Sage. <https://www.metodos.work/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Qualitative-Data-Analysis.pdf>

Richards, J. (2013). Curriculum approaches in language teaching: Forward, central, and backward design. *RELC Journal*, 44(1), 5-33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688212473293>

Richards, J., & Rodgers, T. (2014). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009024532>

Romero, P. D. (2012). Estrategias pedagógicas en el ámbito educativo. *Itinerarios Educativo*, 25(58), 199-225. <http://biblioteca.usbbog.edu.co:8080/Biblioteca/BDigital/64579.pdf>

Simbaña, E., Sarabia, D., García, F., & Pico, J. (2023). Gamification for improving oral communication skills in English as a foreign language learners. *CIENCIAMATRIA*, 9(2), 359-379.
<https://doi.org/10.35381/cm.v9i2.1176>

Appendix A

Pre and Post Test Questions

Station 1 (Preferences):

- What is your favorite food?
- What is your favorite color?
- What sport do you like to play?
- What is your favorite day of the week?
- What is your favorite activity to do on weekends?

Station 2 (My Family):

- What are your family members?
 - What is your pet's name?
 - What's your mother's name?
- What's your grandfather's name?
 - What's your father's name?

Station 3 (My School):

- What's the name of your school?
- Who is your English teacher?
- How many notebooks do you have?
 - Name four school materials.
- Name three friends from your school.

Appendix B

Questionnaire: Self-assessment 1 and 2

Cuestionario sobre hablar en inglés

Nombre: _____ Grado: _____

Instrucciones: Lee cada pregunta y marca tu respuesta teniendo en cuenta los tres últimos juegos (quien quiere ser millonario, bingo, adivina quién, adivinanzas) de las semanas anteriores.

1. Con los juegos en clase de inglés, ¿dices más palabras en inglés que antes?

- Sí
- Más o menos
- No
- No sé

2. Con los juegos en clase de inglés, ¿entiendes mejor lo que dicen tus compañeros o el profesor en inglés?

- Sí
- Más o menos
- No
- No sé

3. Con los juegos en clase de inglés, ¿puedes responder en inglés cuando te hacen una pregunta sencilla?

- Sí
- Más o menos
- No
- No sé

4. Con los juegos en clase de inglés, ¿dices frases cortas en inglés?

- Sí
- Más o menos
- No
- No sé

5. Con los juegos en clase de inglés, ¿pronuncias mejor las palabras en inglés?

- Sí
- Más o menos
- No
- No sé

6. Con los juegos en clase de inglés, ¿usas inglés más veces en clase que antes?

- Sí
- Más o menos
- No
- No sé

Appendix C

Semi-structured interview with CTs

Semi-structured interview CTs

1. ¿Considera que la estrategia utilizada durante las clases influyó en el desarrollo de las habilidades orales en inglés de los estudiantes?
2. ¿Ha notado algún cambio en la forma en que los estudiantes se comunican oralmente en inglés después del proceso? Si es así, ¿qué tipo de cambios ha observado? (de esta dependen 1-2)
3. ¿Cómo describiría las habilidades orales (por ejemplo, pronunciación, vocabulario, escucha) en inglés de sus estudiantes después de la estrategia ludificada? (recordatorio que es ludificación, clases, actividades)
4. ¿Ha notado algún cambio en la manera en que los estudiantes construyen frases cortas, o expresan ideas cortas en inglés?
5. ¿En qué momentos o tipos de actividades ludificadas observó un mayor uso del inglés oral por parte de los estudiantes?
6. ¿Qué formas de comunicación oral observó entre los estudiantes en inglés durante las actividades ludificadas? (por ejemplo, intercambio de ideas, respuestas breves, repeticiones, intentos espontáneos de hablar, uso de expresiones aprendidas, etc.). ¿Puedes darnos algún ejemplo?
7. ¿Qué formas de comunicación oral observó estudiante-profesor en inglés durante las actividades ludificadas? (por ejemplo, intercambio de ideas, respuestas breves, intentos espontáneos de hablar, comprensión de lo que se hablaba en inglés) ¿Puedes darnos algún ejemplo?
8. ¿Cree que alguna de las actividades ludificadas fue más efectiva que las otras para promover el uso del inglés oral? ¿Cuál?
9. Pensando en las actividades ludificadas durante las clases, ¿qué aspectos del uso del inglés cree que se trabajaron con mayor frecuencia o profundidad?
10. ¿Hubo algo que le sorprendiera o le llamara la atención sobre la manera en que los estudiantes se expresaron oralmente durante o después de las actividades ludificadas?
11. ¿Qué aspectos de la estrategia aplicada le parecen más útiles o efectivos para fortalecer la comunicación oral en inglés?
12. ¿Qué elementos de la estrategia cree que podrían mejorarse o ajustarse para seguir promoviendo las habilidades orales de los estudiantes?
13. ¿Utilizarías esta estrategia en futuras clases de inglés? ¿Si – no? ¿Por qué?