

Enhancing functional oral interaction through game-based oral activities in English as a Foreign Language learners in elementary education

Mejoramiento de la interacción oral funcional mediante actividades orales basadas en juegos en aprendices de inglés como lengua extranjera en educación primaria

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Abstract

In recent years, foreign languages have faced several challenges. Teachers must constantly prepare themselves to respond to students' needs, maintain students' motivation, and implement innovative pedagogical strategies. One of the main challenges in this field is the use of effective strategies that positively influence the learning process. Therefore, this study aims to explore how game-based oral activities promote functional oral interaction among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in elementary education at Unidad Educativa Salinas. To achieve this, a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design was adopted, and data were collected through direct classroom observations using a structured observation rubric administered before and after the intervention. The participants were twenty-six fourth-grade students. During the first phase, an initial diagnostic observation was conducted for two weeks, in which students participated in activities focused on functional oral interaction. Subsequently, the intervention consisted of implementing game-based oral activities over a 1-month period. Finally, a second observation was conducted for one week to analyze the changes after the implementation of the strategy. This study contributed to the understanding of the impact of game-based strategies on the development of functional oral interaction among EFL learners.

Keywords: Language Instruction; Motivation; Teaching Materials; Educational Games.

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Resumen

En los últimos años, la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras ha enfrentado diversos desafíos. Los docentes deben prepararse constantemente para responder a las necesidades de los estudiantes, mantener su motivación e implementar estrategias pedagógicas innovadoras. Uno de los principales retos en este campo es el uso de estrategias efectivas que influyan positivamente en el proceso de aprendizaje. Por lo tanto, este estudio tiene como objetivo explorar cómo las actividades orales basadas en juegos promueven la interacción oral funcional entre estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en educación primaria en la Unidad Educativa Salinas. Para lograr este propósito, el estudio utilizó un enfoque cuantitativo con un diseño pre-experimental, y los datos se recolectaron mediante observaciones directas en el aula utilizando una rúbrica estructurada de observación aplicada antes y después de la intervención. Los participantes fueron veintiséis estudiantes de cuarto grado. Durante la primera fase, se llevó a cabo una observación diagnóstica inicial durante dos semanas, en la cual los estudiantes participaron en actividades enfocadas en la interacción oral funcional. Posteriormente, la intervención consistió en la implementación de actividades orales basadas en juegos durante un período de un mes. Finalmente, se realizó una segunda observación durante una semana para analizar los cambios después de la implementación de la estrategia. Este estudio contribuyó a la comprensión del impacto de las estrategias basadas en juegos en el desarrollo de la interacción oral funcional en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera. Palabras clave: Enseñanza de Idiomas; Motivación; Material Didáctico; Juego Educativo.

Introduction

The development of functional oral interaction is a major challenge in EFL classrooms. Communication skills are fundamental for language acquisition. Humanez and Arias (2009) state that oral interaction is one of the most important skills for learning a foreign language. However, it is also one of the hardest skills to develop because it is rarely practiced in classrooms today. Many teachers focus mainly on verbal interaction and often overlook non-verbal communication. According to Consolo (2006), oral interaction develops through dialogue and collaboration. With the rise of global communication, learning English has become a significant challenge for students. Many learners are hesitant to participate and interact in class. Therefore, teachers should use effective strategies to motivate students and improve their linguistic skills (Faustino, 2022).

This study is situated in the Ecuadorian educational context, specifically in a public school in Salinas. It focuses on fourth-grade students who are at an A1 level of English according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2020). In this context, the teaching of oral interaction presents certain limitations, particularly related to students' involvement and motivation. For this reason, the study explores the use of game-based activities, such as role-plays, communicative games, and board games, as strategies to promote functional speaking skills in the English classroom. According to Wright et al. (2006), language games can create meaningful opportunities for learners to practice communication in more engaging and interactive ways.

In the educational context, Faustino (2022), states that several factors, such as low involvement, lack of confidence, and limited opportunities for speaking practice in the classroom, affect

the development of oral skills in EFL learners. These difficulties negatively influence students' ability to express themselves effectively in English and reduce their engagement during classroom activities. Therefore, teachers need to implement innovative strategies that encourage learners to interact and actively engage in the learning process. Similarly, Toxirovich (2026), emphasizes that effective oral practice is essential for human communication and everyday interactions. However, traditional teaching methods often limit students' speaking performance because motivation is not always a central focus in the classroom. In addition, Obando et al. (2023), explain that students with low motivation, anxiety, introversion, and inhibition often experience these issues when the affective filter is at a higher level, creating a mental block that prevents information from being used efficiently.

Richards (2006), as a seminal author in the field of English language teaching, highlights the importance of functional oral interaction in English language learning, while more recent studies, such as Obando et al. (2023), emphasize the use of game-based strategies to promote students' participation and motivation in the classroom. Although previous studies have explored game-based learning and oral interaction separately, there is limited research focusing specifically on how game-based activities influence functional oral interaction among beginner EFL learners in the Ecuadorian public school context. Therefore, it is necessary to examine this relationship in more detail to better understand its impact on students' oral communication development.

For this reason, the purpose of this study is to examine the impact of game-based activities on functional oral interaction among EFL learners through a quantitative approach. Specifically, the study aims to describe how EFL learners participated in functional oral interaction activities in the English classroom and to identify how game-based oral activities supported functional oral interaction among EFL learners.

In line with these aims, the study is guided by two research questions: How do EFL learners participate in functional oral interaction activities in the English classroom? And how do game-based oral activities support functional oral interaction in EFL learners? Accordingly, the objectives of this study are to describe learners' participation in functional oral interaction activities and to identify the role of game-based activities in supporting functional oral interaction among EFL learners.

Literature Review and Theoretical Foundations

This study is based on Vygotsky's (1978), sociocultural theory, a foundational theory in educational psychology, which states that cognitive development occurs in two ways: first, in the social aspect through interaction with other people, and second, in the individual aspect in order to internalize it later, which becomes part of individual thinking. That is to say, the collaboration process facilitates the collaborative construction of knowledge. In addition, a concept within this

theory is the Zone of Proximal Development, which indicates the distance between what a student can do independently and what he can do with the teacher's support or a classmate.

Therefore, Vygotsky (1978), states that students develop their knowledge and abilities through social interaction and collaborative learning, because his theory states that knowledge is first constructed at the social level. For this reason, it is important that learning occurs with the help of others who are more capable, such as teachers, and that students are exposed to activities where they interact in real situations.

From this perspective, based on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and Long's (1996), Interaction Hypothesis, functional oral interaction refers to learners' ability to use the target language meaningfully through communicative participation, social interaction, and the exchange of ideas in classroom situations. In this way, language functions as a mediational tool that supports oral interaction and communication in the classroom. Toxirovich (2026), mentions that functional oral interaction begins in the classroom, where the students use the target language through different activities, communicative exchange through role-play, and speaking games that allow the students to understand that language is a tool for interacting.

Likewise, Long (1996), a key theoretical framework in second language acquisition, explains that, through the Interaction Hypothesis, the best way to learn a language is to develop thought interaction with others. Long also mentions that learners improve their linguistic abilities when they participate in communicative situations where they ask questions, clarify information, and negotiate meaning during communication.

In addition, in the English teaching context, the strategies based on games can be used as a mediating tool that promotes interaction, participation, and communication. The application of the game-based strategy involves the use of real games, role play, and collaborative tasks, where these activities create dynamic environments which influences participation and interaction of EFL learners. This strategy promotes interaction and social participation in the English classroom, reduces anxiety, and allows the student to use the target language in a significant way (Obando et al., 2023).

Furthermore, Prensky (2001), a foundational reference in game-based learning theory, mentions that game-based learning, through playful activities, promotes active participation, motivation, and meaningful experiences. This perspective aligns with Obando et al. (2023), as both studies suggest that game-based activities do more than simply increase participation, where both create conditions for more authentic communicative engagement. Within these environments, students tend to interact more spontaneously, which gradually strengthens their confidence and willingness to communicate with peers. At the same time, the practicality of these strategies is noteworthy: because they rely on flexible and readily available classroom resources, they can be adapted across diverse educational contexts without requiring extensive institutional support.

From this perspective, Harmer (2007), emphasizes that communicative activities do not merely provide opportunities to practice language, but create conditions in which oral interaction can emerge more organically within the classroom. Tasks such as role plays, simulations, guessing games, and collaborative activities place learners in situations that resemble real communicative exchanges, encouraging them to negotiate meaning rather than reproduce isolated forms. This shift toward more dynamic and situated use of language supports the development of fluency while also fostering more natural interaction among peers.

In this sense, the connection with game-based learning becomes evident: both approaches prioritize meaningful communication and active participation, not as secondary outcomes but as central components of the learning process. Moreover, their emphasis on interaction inherently contributes to more engaging classroom environments, where students are invited to take a more active role in constructing language through use rather than through passive reception.

Oral Interaction and Game-Based Learning in EF

Functional oral interaction is essential in language learning, as it enables students to practice communication in different contexts and develop their speaking skills. Rather than being limited to grammatical knowledge, oral interaction involves meaningful use of the language in social and communicative situations. Faustino (2022), emphasizes that oral interaction activities create opportunities for learners to use the target language while increasing their confidence, particularly when they are actively engaged in the learning process. In addition, complementing this view, Van Batenburg et al. (2019), argue that oral interaction involves not only knowing English grammar rules, but also participating, collaborating, and responding in communicative situations with classmates. Together, these perspectives suggest that functional oral interaction requires learners to actively use the target language in a meaningful and collaborative classroom context.

In this sense, oral interaction also involves important skills such as listening, turn-taking, asking questions, and maintaining conversations. Therefore, in an EFL classroom, promoting functional oral interaction requires creating meaningful opportunities where students actively use the language rather than focusing only on form-based practice.

The purpose of the game-based strategy is that the students use the target language in an interactive way. For this reason, several studies have been implemented in the EFL in order to improve functional oral interaction skills. These investigations have reported positive results in the use of game-based strategy as an effective strategy to improve oral interaction. Joma et al. (2016), game-based strategy promotes the participation of the students, whether in real-life situations such as interpersonal communication. For the students, it is more effective to use role-plays, because it allows the students to enjoy the opportunity to act and take on other roles, more than the

idea of interpreting the original ideas. Moreover, the use of communication games in the English classroom as a foreign language provides several benefits, such as the development of phonological awareness, auditory perception, and especially memory for retaining sequences of words.

In a complementary perspective, Hernández et al. (2021), state that game-based activities can increase students' motivation and confidence to participate in oral tasks. Together, these studies indicate that games contribute not only to oral practice but also to active participation and communicative engagement in the EFL classroom. Additionally, Gaşior (2019), explains that games allow the students to be the central element in the English class, while the teacher gradually assumes the role of facilitator and observer. This perspective aligns with the previous studies, reinforcing the idea that game-based learning promotes a more student-centered and interactive classroom environment. Overall, these studies indicate that game-based learning fosters a more interactive, student-centered environment that enhances both motivation and oral communicative practice in EFL classrooms.

Affective factors in Oral interaction

Learning EFL presents a challenge in the educational context, especially in developing oral interaction skills. Several studies have indicated that EFL students often struggle to interact actively due to limited exposure to the language and a lack of confidence. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), students experiencing anxiety are unable to interact effectively, unlike those in a relaxed state who can convey their message well. In like manner, MacIntyre et al. (1998), emphasize that implementing pedagogical strategies that foster a participatory environment prevents affective factors from directly influencing communication and hindering oral interaction. Both perspectives suggest that emotional factors directly influence students' willingness to communicate and their opportunities to practice speaking in the classroom.

In relation to this, Mohamed et al. (2025), state that the use of games as a strategy is a promising tool in EFL classes to improve communicative skills. In this way, students have access to more visual learning and structured environments that guide interactive participation, and these games also support motivation and continuous engagement. Moreover, Khasawneh & Ahmad (2024), highlighted the benefits of game-based learning in improving language learning and reducing affective barriers. Although these studies emphasize the positive effects of game-based learning, most research tends to focus on general language outcomes rather than specifically analyzing oral interaction development.

For this reason, it is necessary to place greater emphasis on research focusing on how game-based learning can help EFL learners face these challenges. Therefore, further research is needed

to determine how game-based strategies can specifically enhance oral interaction in EFL classrooms.

Methodology

Study Design

This study seeks to examine the impact of the use of the strategy based on games in the functional oral interaction in EFL learners in the “Unidad Educativa Salinas”. To this end, a pre-experimental quantitative design was used. According to Creswell (2014), the investigator studied only one experimental group and applied the intervention without using a control group. The collected data were used to examine the impact of the game-based strategy to improve the functional oral interaction in EFL learners at “Unidad Educativa Salinas”. The functional oral interaction was observed before, during, and after the game-based activities as part of the experimental process.

Population and Sample

The participants in this study were EFL students from the public institution “Unidad Educativa Salinas” in elementary education, located in Salinas, Bolívar Province. The sample consisted of six EFL learners aged between 8 and 9 years old. The group included both male and female students enrolled in the same classroom, corresponding to the same grade level in primary education. The participants were selected because they represent a suitable group for analyzing the development of functional oral interaction in early stages of EFL learning, since students are beginning to develop communicative skills in the target language. In addition, participation in the study was voluntary and authorized by the school authorities and parents.

Instruments

This research project applied a functional oral interaction observation sheet before and after the intervention to analyze possible changes in the functional oral interaction. The observation instrument was designed based on communicative interaction and EFL classroom participation criteria within game-based oral activities.

Based on this criteria, four main areas of evaluation were established: initiation of oral communication in English, observing whether the student initiates communicative exchanges during the game; turn-taking and responses to peers, to evaluate the active participation and the communicative reciprocity; functional use of English vocabulary, analyzing whether the language used

demonstrates communicative intention rather than mechanic repetition; and communicative intention and maintenance the interaction, considering the continuity of the oral exchange during playful activity. Each indicator was evaluated using a four-level Likert scale (never, rarely, sometimes, always), which allowed for structured measurement aligned with the objectives of the study.

Procedure

This research was carried out in three phases. In phase 1, an initial observation was conducted with the whole group using a functional oral interaction observation sheet focused on communicative interaction in the EFL classroom. This first phase helped to identify the functional oral interaction level of the students before the intervention. Subsequently, in phase 2, a series of game-based oral activities was implemented in the English as a foreign language (EFL) class with all students. The strategy was applied three times a week for one month, according to the class schedule, to promote students' functional oral interaction.

The activities included role-plays, communicative games, board games, songs, puppets, and vocabulary interaction tasks. In addition, small rewards were used to encourage students' participation and motivation during the activities. For instance, during the role-play task, students were placed in everyday communicative situations, such as greeting a classmate or ordering food in a restaurant, where they had to both initiate and respond appropriately in the interaction. In addition, learners answered personal information questions, such as name, age, and daily routines, which encouraged spontaneous speaking and the use of basic vocabulary. Similarly, in communicative games like information-gap activities, students worked in pairs. These activities were designed to promote oral interaction and communicative participation in the EFL classroom.

For instance, in role-play activities, students were assigned simple everyday situations such as introducing themselves, asking for information, or ordering food. These tasks required students to initiate conversation, respond to their peers, and maintain short exchanges in English. In communicative games, such as information-gap activities, students worked in pairs and were given different pieces of information that they needed to share to complete a task. This required them to ask and answer questions, take turns, and actively participate in the interaction. These activities were designed to promote meaningful communication and to encourage students to use English in a functional and interactive way rather than focusing only on isolated vocabulary or grammatical structures.

Finally, in phase 3, after the game-based strategy was implemented for one and a half months, the same observation sheet for all students was used to analyze changes in functional oral interaction. The data obtained through the observation sheet were analyzed through descriptive analysis. Each indicator was evaluated using a four-level Likert scale (never, rarely, sometimes, always). The

scores were interpreted according to the established levels: low interaction, medium interaction, and high interaction.

Results

This section presents the results obtained after the data collection process was completed. The results were obtained through the functional oral interaction observation sheet administered before and after the implementation of the game-based oral activities with approximately twenty-six EFL students. The data addressed students' participation in oral interaction tasks, changes in communicative performance, and the contribution of game-based activities to functional oral interaction in the English classroom. This observation sheet was structured as a rubric based on a four-point Likert scale (never, rarely, sometimes, always) to evaluate students' performance.

This section was divided into three subsections: Pre-Intervention Results, which described students' initial performance; Post-Intervention Results, which presented students' performance after the intervention; and Comparative Results, in which both stages were analyzed through tables and descriptive quantitative analysis in order to identify changes in functional oral interaction. Although improvements were observed across all dimensions, the degree of progress varied slightly, suggesting that some aspects of oral interaction may require more sustained practice over time.

Pre-intervention Results

Prior to implementing the game-based oral activities, a functional oral interaction observation sheet was administered to twenty-six EFL students during classroom oral tasks over a period of two weeks in order to collect baseline data. The instrument was structured using a four-level Likert scale (never, rarely, sometimes, always) to evaluate students' performance in different dimensions of functional oral interaction. The data obtained from the instrument provided evidence of students' oral interaction performance before the intervention. The results were organized and quantified using mean scores for analysis.

Regarding the dimension of **initiation of communication**, the findings revealed that most students demonstrated low performance levels, with a score of 5 being the most frequent. Specifically, 57.7% of students were classified at the low level, while 23.1% achieved a medium level with a score of 6, and 19.2% reached a high level with a score of 7. These findings showed that students initially presented low levels of initiating communication during classroom oral activities. These results were organized and analyzed using descriptive quantitative analysis.

Table 1. Pre-Intervention Results -Initiation of Communication (n = 26).

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low (5)	15	57.7%
Medium (6)	6	23.1%
High (7)	5	19.2%

Source: Author's own elaboration

Prior to the implementation of the game-based oral activities, the functional oral interaction observation sheet was applied to twenty-six EFL students over a period of two weeks in order to collect baseline data on **turn-taking** during oral interaction. The findings indicate that most students demonstrated medium performance levels. Specifically, 65.4% of students were classified at the medium level with scores of 5 and 6, while 15.4% achieved a low level with scores of 3 and 4, and 19.2% reached a high level with scores of 7 in this dimension.

Table 2. Pre-Intervention Results-Turn-taking (n=26).

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low (3-4)	4	15.4%
Medium (5-6)	17	65.4%
High (7)	5	19.2%

Source: Author's own elaboration

Prior to the implementation of the game-based oral activities, the functional oral interaction observation sheet was applied to twenty-six EFL students over a period of two weeks in order to collect baseline data on **responses to peers** during oral interaction. The data suggest that that most students demonstrated low performance levels. Specifically, 61.7% of students were classified at the low level with scores of 3 and 4, while 30.8% achieved a medium level with scores of 5 and 6, and 7.7% reached a high level with a score of 7.

Table 3. Pre-Intervention Results- Responses to peers (n=26).

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low (3-4)	16	61.5%
Medium (5-6)	8	30.8%
High (7)	2	7.7%

Source: Author's own elaboration

Prior to the implementation of the game-based oral activities, the functional oral interaction observation sheet was applied to twenty-six EFL students over a period of two weeks in order to collect baseline data on the **functional use of English vocabulary** during oral interaction. The results obtained from the instrument showed that the majority of students demonstrated low levels in this dimension. Specifically, 84.6% of students were classified at the low level with scores of 3

and 4, while 15.4% achieved a medium level with scores of 5 and 6, and 0% reached a high level in the functional use of English vocabulary.

Table 4. Pre-Intervention Results- Functional Use of English Vocabulary (n=26).

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low (3-4)	22	84.6%
Medium (5-6)	4	15.4%
High (7)	0	0%

Source: Author's own elaboration

Post-Intervention Results

The following subsection presents the results obtained after implementation of the game-based strategy. The data allowed identifying the students' development in the four dimensions of the functional oral interaction.

After the implementation of the oral activities based on games, the same observation worksheet of the functional oral interaction was applied to the 27 students during two weeks, for the purpose of collecting post-intervention data. The results obtained show a change in the distribution of the students in these dimensions. In particular, 57.7% of the students attained a score of 9, 23.1% obtained 10 points, and 19.2% achieved 11 points in the dimension of initiation of communication during the activities.

Table 5. Post-Intervention Results-Initiation of Communication (n=26).

Score	Frequency	Percentage
9	15	57.7%
10	6	23.1%
11	5	19.1%
Total	26	100%

Source: Author's own elaboration

After the implementation of the oral activities based on games, the same observation worksheet of the functional oral interaction was applied to the 27 students during two weeks, for the purpose of collecting post-intervention data. The results obtained show a change in the distribution of the students in the turn-taking dimension. Which shows the following results: 7.7% the students obtained a score of 9, 30.8% attained 10 points, 57.7% achieved 11 points, and 3.8% achieved 12 points in this dimension.

Table 6. Post-Intervention Results-Turn-Taking (n=26).

Score	Frequency	Percentage
9	2	7.7%
10	8	30.8%
11	15	57.7%
12	1	3.8%
Total	26	100

Source: Author's own elaboration

Regarding the third dimension, the results obtained indicate that 11.5% of the students obtained a score of 9; on the other hand, 38.5% obtained 10 points. Furthermore, 38.5% achieved a score of 11, and the 11.5% achieved 12 points in the responses to the peers' dimension.

Table 7. Post-Intervention Results-Responses to peers (n=26).

Score	Frequency	Percentage
9	3	11.5%
10	10	38.5%
11	10	38.5%
12	3	11.5%
Total	26	100%

Source: Author's own elaboration

In relation to the four dimensions, the 65.4% obtained a score of 10 points. Moreover, 19.2% achieved a score of 9, while 15.4% obtained 11 points in the **Functional use of the English vocabulary** dimension. Overall, the results show that on the grading scale, students tend to score higher.

Table 8. Post-Intervention Results-Functional use of the English vocabulary.

Score	Frequency	Percentage
9	5	19.2%
10	17	65.4%
11	4	15.4%
Total	26	100%

Source: Author's own elaboration

Discussion

The results obtained in the present study show that the oral activities based on games help to develop the functional oral interaction of the EFL students. The comparison between the pre-intervention and the post-intervention showed increases in the dimensions. Furthermore, an in-

crease was observed at the level of participation and oral interaction of the students during the activities. This improvement may be explained by the interactive nature of the activities, which required students to engage in real-time communication. These tasks encouraged learners to take turns, initiate conversations, and respond actively, which are key components of functional oral interaction.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings can be interpreted through Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, as the social interaction generated by the activities supported language learning through collaboration. Similarly, Long's Interaction Hypothesis suggests that meaningful interaction facilitates language development, which aligns with the increase in students' participation observed in this study.

Regarding the first dimension, the results show improvement at the initial stage of communication in EFL students after the application of oral activities based on games. Before the intervention, the majority of the students had a low performance, showing difficulties in initiating oral English communication.

After the intervention, a positive change was evidenced, with a decrease in the low level and an increase in the medium and high levels. Regarding the results, the students showed the capacity to initiate oral communication during the activities in class. This finding can be explained with the Sociocultural theory of Vygotsky, which states that language and communication are learned through social interaction, which allows individuals to construct meaning through participation (Lantolf & Thorne, 2026). The learning based on games, therefore, presents an opportunity to create a much more stimulating class, which leads students to feel more confident to start speaking. Similarly, Swain (2005), in the Output Hypothesis, suggests that language production must be effectively organized and processed by students, as it requires students to use the language with a purpose during the class.

To the second dimension, it is evidenced that the students have improved in turn-taking during the English oral interaction. In the pre-intervention phase, it was observed that students had difficulties in respecting and maintaining turn-taking, which affected classroom communication. However, after the implementation of game-based activities, it was observed that students managed turn-taking more effectively during participation, since responding and constructing from others' ideas occurred in a more productive way. This finding can be explained based on the analysis of conversation proposed by Sacks et al. (1974), who argue that this process is organized through a turn-taking system that coordinates the change of speakers, allowing communication in a continuous and holistic way. Similarly, Thornbury & Slade (2006), highlight speaking fluency through playful activities that stimulate real-life communicative situations and promote the spontaneous use of language, allowing students to participate in meaningful and continuous interactions.

In relation to the third dimension, the results show an improvement in the capacity to interact and respond to their classmates during oral activities. Nonetheless, in the pre-intervention phase, it was perceived that the students presented limited or infrequent responses, which had an impact on oral interaction. As a result of the implementation of game-based activities, an improvement in the number of responses was observed. In addition, an active participation in responding to classmates' attempts in the communicative exchange was demonstrated. This finding can be explained by Swain's (2005), Output Hypothesis, which states that oral production is essential for developing communicative competence, as it motivates students to express their ideas in the target language. At the same time, Long (1996), highlights that language learning improves through the negotiation of meaning, conversations, and interactions. Through these playful activities, students have the opportunity to interact in a meaningful way.

Regarding the fourth dimension, the results evidenced that students had difficulties in the functional use of English vocabulary during oral activities. During the pre-intervention phase, a limited use of vocabulary was perceived; likewise, word repetition was observed, which made effective communication difficult. Nevertheless, after the implementation of game-based activities, a progressive improvement in the use of functional vocabulary was evident, since the students began to use greater lexical variety to express their ideas, although with some limitations in language accuracy and fluency.

The findings can be explained by Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985), which states that vocabulary acquisition occurs when students interact in a meaningful context. From this perspective, playful activities facilitate the exposure and use of vocabulary in real communicative situations, allowing students to develop their functional lexical competence. Nonetheless, these findings should be interpreted with caution, as the study did not include a control group, which limits the ability to attribute the observed improvements exclusively to the intervention.

Limitations

This study presents several limitations. First, the research was conducted with a single group of twenty-six students in one educational institution, which limits generalizability. Second, the pre-experimental design did not include a control group. Additionally, the short duration of the intervention may have limited the depth of observable changes in students' interaction performance, and as the data were collected through observation, there is a possibility of observer bias despite the use of a structured rubric. Additionally, although a structured rubric was used, the evaluation process may involve a degree of subjectivity, which should be considered when interpreting the results.

Conclusion

Firstly, the findings of this study indicate that the implementation of game-based oral activities was associated with meaningful improvements in students' functional oral interaction. Learners demonstrated greater ability to initiate communication, respond to peers, and engage more actively in classroom exchanges after the intervention. Rather than simply increasing participation, these activities appeared to create conditions in which students could use the language more spontaneously, contributing to a noticeable development in both engagement and communicative performance. The classroom environment also became more dynamic and supportive, allowing learners to interact in ways that felt more natural and less constrained by fear of making mistakes.

Secondly, and from a pedagogical perspective, these findings reinforce the value of integrating game-based approaches into English language teaching, particularly in elementary settings where motivation plays a crucial role. What stands out is not only their effectiveness, but also their practicality: these strategies can be implemented with relatively simple and adaptable resources, making them accessible across a range of classroom contexts. In this way, they offer teachers a flexible means of promoting interaction while maintaining a learner-centered focus.

Lastly, this study contributes to a growing body of research that highlights the role of interactive and game-based approaches in fostering functional oral skills in EFL contexts. At the same time, the results should be interpreted with caution. The limited sample size and the absence of a control group restrict the extent to which the observed changes can be attributed solely to the intervention. Future research could build on these findings by examining similar strategies in larger samples and through more controlled designs, in order to deepen understanding of how game-based activities influence oral interaction over time.

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