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**Universidad de Concepción**  
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**Inglés.**

## **The contribution of board games to early year students' oral production when participating in the English class.**

Leslie A. Werlinger Bravo

Profesora Guía: Dra. María-Jesús Inostroza Araos  
Facultad de Educación  
Universidad de Concepción.

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## Abstract

During the last decades, global interest for learning English as a foreign language (EFL) has increased, encouraging countries to include it as part of the school education. This trend was followed by the Chilean Ministry of Education, which suggests teaching English based on a communicative approach starting in early childhood education. To foster students' learning, it is imperative to acknowledge that very young learners learn differently than older ones, and that EFL teachers should be able to identify their characteristics and interests and implement age-appropriate strategies. This dissertation reports the findings of an action research which explores the contribution of board games, memory and bingo on pre-kindergarten students' oral expression when participating in the English lesson. A group of 19 children aged 4, from a private school in Concepción, Chile, took part in this study by playing online and concrete material, bingo, and memory games. Data were gathered by qualitative methods, such as an observation checklist, a semi structured interview applied to the co-teacher, and group interviews carried out with students at the end of intervention. Thematic data analysis technique was implemented to analyze data gathered from the group and semi structured interview, along with frequency data analysis implemented to analyze data gathered from the checklists. The results provide evidence of students increasing their English oral production when games were implemented in their EFL lesson.

Keywords: oral production, early childhood education, games, board games, EFL.



## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1. Background information.

During last year, parental interest for their children learning English at early stages has increased worldwide (Oliver & Azkarai, 2017). This is based on the perception that English is considered as an international tool of communication (Tabalí, 2019). In Chile, this interest has been acknowledged by the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) affecting the educational policy. For example, in 2020 MINEDUC published a suggested curriculum to be implemented in early childhood education based on the Communicative Approach. This has brought new challenges for early years' teachers, who face demands related to children's characteristics, motivation, and strategies to develop English language learning.

Children have good instinct for interpreting the sense or meaning of a situation and have a great capacity to enjoy themselves, being absorbed by the activity (Mega, 2012). Similarly, children need hands-on activities to engage in their own learning, thus, teachers must provide tasks that respond to their interest (Degimenci and Yavuz, 2015). In this concern, games emerge as an appropriate strategy to teach English to very young learners.

Games promote exploration and the development of meaningful learning which are the foundation of Early Childhood Education. In fact, they are considered one of the most important tools for children to learn (MINEDUC, 2018), as they encourage students to adopt an active role and develop feelings of self-confidence and motivation. Furthermore, playing is a social activity that promotes children to communicate their ideas and comprehension by social interactions (UNICEF, 2018). Similarly, in instructional contexts, games create opportunities to acquire knowledge by playful interactions with objects and others, that lay foundations to understand abstracts concepts in the future (UNICEF, 2018).

For the current action research study, language practice games were implemented to foster students' oral production in English when participating in their EFL lesson. The selected games implemented on the intervention were: Bingo and Memory game in two different formats, students played in an online and board format.

### 1.2. Problem identification

Considering parental interest to learn English since early stages, the suggestions done by MINEDUC in 2020 of teaching English based on the Communicative Approach from pre-primary levels, and the observation done to early language learners in a non-bilingual private school in Concepción, it have be observed that these group of children show great motivation levels of participation in the English lesson. Moreover, after the first months of instruction, children are able to identify and orally use the target vocabulary, as well as comprehend commands and questions in English. However, when they are asked to orally participate during the lesson, students tend to speak in their first language, Spanish. In order to foster



students' oral participation using English during the lesson, games emerge as a useful tool as they not only bring fun to their classes, but they could also affect children's vocabulary learning and memorization (Aslanabady and Rasouli's, 2013). In the same line, Putcha & Ellis (2017) state that by playing children practice some important behaviors (respect to turns, listen to others, etc.), develop social skills and learn that cooperation is more important than winning. Additionally, Aslanabadi et al (2013) notice that games can make students learn language unconsciously because games are highly motivating and entertaining, when playing children can focus on learning because they do not feel forced to learn.

### **1.3. Aims**

Based on previous information this action research study aims at to exploring the contribution of board games (Memory and Bingo) to support prekindergarten students' oral use of English in the EFL lesson. Thus, three specific objectives have been defined:

- 1) To describe the frequency of children's English use when playing board games (Memory and Bingo) in the EFL lesson.
- 2) To identify co-teacher' perception of the use of games to support he oral use of English.
- 3) To identify students' perception on the use of games in the English lesson.



## Chapter 2. Theoretical framework

The literature review examines relevant aspects related to the learning process of English as a foreign language (EFL) for early foreign language learners, including their characteristics, vocabulary development in early year students, task-based language teaching for early language learners, Task-based repetition and games in early language learning.

### 2.1. Early foreign language learning

Children and adults differed in strategies used to complete tasks; therefore, the selected strategies should consider students' characteristics, interests, and motivation to learn a new language (Oliver & Azkarai, 2017).

According to Pinter (2011) the number of second and foreign language programs (particularly English language programs) for children has been increasing globally. In the same line, Barahona (2016) notices that English is regarded as a tool that facilitate the access to economic development, leading governments all over the world to implement English language programs as part of their educational systems since early stages. Similarly, many parents have developed the assumption that learning English would be important for their siblings in the future (Tabalí, 2019). This interest has emerged because of the English language becoming an international tool of communication fueled by the relentless forces of globalization (Barahona, 2016).

In Chile, the learning of English has been regarded as a key element to help the development of the country and to promote the globalization process (Tabalí, 2019). In this regard, English has become the compulsory foreign-language subject since 1990's. Nevertheless, the Chilean curriculum have changed substantially during the last 20 years (Barahona, 2016), changes have been attempted to gradually introduce English at earlier stages in primary school (Inostroza, 2018; Tabalí, 2019). Until 2009 programmes and plans for teaching English focused on reading and writing skills. In 2009, the implemented modifications incorporate listening and speaking skills, based on the Comprehensible Input Hypothesis. In 2012, the MINEDUC proposed the Communicative Language Approach as a key element of the curriculum as it involves students in an active role and increment their exposure to English (Tabalí, 2019). Moreover, MINEDUC in 2020, published a document called Curriculum Proposal for Teaching English as Foreign Language for- Kindergarten (*Propuesta curricular: Idioma Extranjero Ingles - Kinder*), based on a Communicative Approach. Setting up as a main objective allowing students to communicate in English in a meaningful and contextualized way, by integrating the four language skills: listening, speaking reading, and writing (MINEDUC, 2020).

As a consequence of this emerging interest on teaching English during early education years, a new demand for qualified English teachers has emerged. Young



language learners require teachers who have a deeper understanding of the principles of pedagogy and child development, as well as being confident to speak fluently and spontaneously to children in L2 using suitable language for this age group (Mourao, 2015). Indeed, Hanusova and Najvar (2017) advise that, “the younger the child starting to learn an L2, the higher the importance of teacher qualifications” (as cited in Mourao, 2015, p. 54). In this regard it is imperative that teachers have a deeper knowledge of their students and find new strategies to foster their learnings.

### **2.1.1. Very young learners’ characteristics**

Humans start learning from the moment they are born. Children are naturally interested in activities which help them to make sense of the world and their place in it (Puchta & Elliott, 2017). According to Puchta and Elliott (2017) and the European Union Members (as cited in Mihaljević, 2012) the term *very young language learner* is used when referred to children between three to seven years. However, children’s age is not an indicator of how mature they are, their culture, sex, environment (city or rural), and parents are factors that influence children’s maturation (Ameer, 2016; Princess-Melita et al, 2020). It is also important to take into consideration that not all children develop at the same time, some children develop very fast, and others might need more time. Early language teachers must be aware of all their differences because understanding them can help teachers to select the correct activities or task to develop in a better way their teaching processes. The knowledge of children’s attitudes, interests, and circumstances must influence on their teacher’s decisions (Ameer, 2016). The present research study focuses on children aged 4, who start their school life.

Particularly in Chile, children often start attending school at preschool levels between the ages of four through six. At this age, they are naturally curious and enthusiastic, and have intrinsic motivation to explore the world around them. Early language learners are still in the process of learning their mother tongue (Pinter, 2017). Mihaljević (2012) presents the popular belief that “all children are highly motivated to learn FLs, have very positive attitudes and no inhibitions, and are successful by default” (p.57). However, Mourao and Ellis (2020) suggest that this does not guarantee future success and continued confidence. To keep their motivation and interest, children need to continue feeling good about learning a foreign language. Moreover, the most significant difference between very young and older learners, remains on that they are developing cognitively, physically, emotionally, socially, as well as linguistically at an enormous rate. Learning at this age includes “developing fine and gross motor skills, as well as, understanding the natural and social world” (Puchta & Elliott, 2017, p.2). Moreover, Piaget (1982) remarks on the idea that, children are active learners, and construct their knowledge by making sense of the environment (as cited in Pinter, 2017). Same scholar informs that preschoolers are in the preoperational stage of intelligence, experiencing with concrete materials, such as pictures, objects, and others, which will foster their



learning (as cited in Degirmency. & Yavuz, 2015). On the other hand, Vygotsky (1962) refers that children construct their knowledge through social interactions with peers and adults (as cited in Degirmency & Yavuz, 2015). Furthermore, it is through the interaction with adults or older siblings that the child learns the language (as cited in Puchta & Elliott, 2017).

Puchta & Elliott (2017), notice that “very young children form their ideas through talking” therefore, there is an “intimate relationship between thinking and talking ...” (p.3). In this regard, it is vital to provide students with lots of opportunities to practice the new language in order to make them feel familiar with the concepts and use it spontaneously (Puchta & Elliott, 2017). In addition, as young learners are at an early stage of literacy development reading and writing are not in the center of their learning process. Similarly, very young learners have a lot of energy, but struggle to keep concentrated; therefore, Degirmency and Yavuz (2015) suggest implementing concrete material, physical and fine motor activities combined with language contribute to learning. In this line, Degirmency and Yavuz (2015), Pokrivčáková (2020), and Emery and Al-Marzouki (2020), along with others, remarks that teachers should provide a variety of activities without getting the children bored. In this regard, it is suggested to make them use their imagination, creativity and energy in games that involve activities such as, songs, drawing, pictures, or puzzle-like, among others.

In relationship to the benefits of teaching foreign language at early ages, many popular beliefs have emerged, such as ‘the youngest the better’ (Degirmency & Yavuz, 2015, p. 20), and “children’s brains are more elastic and open, since they appear to be able to pick up languages from birth onwards” (Puchta & Elliott, 2017, p. 4). Recent studies (e.g. Hu et al, 2016; Pokrivčáková, 2020) have challenged the idea that very young learners have a cognitive advantage to learn another language. Nevertheless, if language learning is integrated in the curriculum and carried out as naturally as possible, it can have positive effects to learn English in the future. For example, increased their logical thinking, verbal communication, and a positive attitude to other languages.

Mourao and Ellis (2020) suggest that there are many factors that contribute to successful learning, such as respect of the way children learn, involve close collaboration with parents, and plan transition carefully. By considering those factors, “it is more likely that the child will become successful language learner and confident user of English” (p.8).

Furthermore, there are some researchers that suggest language learning skills are connected to students age and developmental stages. Puchta and Elliott (2017) mention the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) which suggested the best period for learning a foreign language is between the ages of 2 and 12, due to the neurological changes, humans are unable to learn a foreign language to native-speaker standard after puberty. Intensive research has been carried out since CPH was proposed, although there is no agreement on whether CPH exist, or how age influences language learning. This hypothesis explains why adults are likely to be



able to learn complex vocabulary, while other areas such as grammar and phonology may cause problems to them. Some scholars indicate that “a number of empirical studies confirm what teachers of young learners have frequently observed: children are usually more successful in learning pronunciation of a new language than adults” (Puchta & Elliott, 2017, p.6). Similarly, Mourao and Ellis (2020) notice “if children are provided with opportunities to hear good models of English through natural speech, songs and rhymes, they will over time, pick up a clear pronunciation and gain in fluency” (p.8).

Existing research recognizes the critical role played by teaching English language during childhood. As Pinter (2011) declares early learners of English could become superior pupils than who started later, but only if the teaching was appropriate, teachers were qualified, and there was continuity between primary and secondary. It also helps children to learn about other cultures and develops a positive attitude and motivation to the new language as well as promotes language awareness.

### **2.1.2. Early language learners speaking skills**

Language is the most complex tool for human communication, enables people to interact with others, express their opinions, beliefs and attitudes, and more. However, it is not something we are born with it, language acquisition depends on external factors, the language students are exposed to (Pokrivčáková, 2020).

As Pinter (2017) suggests language development starts before children are able to say a word, in the beginning babies exercise their receptive skills, it takes some years to be able to start producing language. Words are often used before children understand it. The development of oral production is connected to understanding development and it is gradual. During early years, children enjoy playing with words and experimenting with language even when they rely on limited resources. Likewise, Ameer (2016) advise that children start using their language skills before they are aware of them, and highlighted that they are holistic learners, by using body movement, mimics, and gestures and respond to the meaning that underlie the language used without worrying about individual words or sentences.

Ur (2012) notice that the most important criterion to select which vocabulary items should be taught must be related to the usefulness that represents to the student's needs. The same scholar notices that implicit learning present better results for children; imitating, memorizing, repeating and productive tasks represent enjoyable and interesting activities. Similarly, Washington-Nortey et al. (2020) in a systematic review on language development of early language learners, acknowledge that the influence of familiar and school factors has been associated with the development of early literacy and language skills in children. Some scholars notice that studies shown that the linguistic environment within the home can influence language development, in this regards parent–child interaction quality had a significantly greater predictive effect on emergent literacy skills, children who



engaged in more elaborate reciprocal conversations with their parents exhibited greater brain activity in their brain area responsible for speech production. On the other hand, the school represents another important context where children spend significant amounts of time, studies recognize the influence of school-related factors on language development. According to Washington-Nortey (2020), the most important factors relay on the impact of students-teachers' interactions, where teachers act as facilitators on children's vocabulary development process, along with peer expressive language exposure. Related to this kind of influence, some studies (e.g., Aikens et al., 2010; Justice et al., 2011) have found that greater improvements in receptive and language competences have been addressed by children that present higher language skills than their peers with lower language skills (as cited in Washington-Nortey et al., 2020). Moreover, it is important to take into consideration that teachers must be aware of the age-appropriate strategies to support the development of young language speaking skills. Furthermore, in order to develop effective teaching, teachers must be proactive and improve their abilities to organize the English lesson effectively in order to give possibilities for all students to succeed (Ur, 2012).

Syafryadin (2020) argues that learning is effective when it is sequenced from receptive to productive skills, from impersonal to personal, from concrete to abstract, from fully controlled to less controlled, and to informal to formal theme activity. Likewise, Pokrivčáková (2020) informs that children follow a sequence of stages when learning language, but they develop their skills at different times. Similarly, Pinter (2017) suggests that when learners begin to speak, they start using single words, nouns and adjectives, and short formulaic expressions, teachers must encourage children to experiment with language. There are some lexical items in English that have no parallel in students' mother tongue, and must be explained with the item that represent it (Ur, 2012). In the same line, Puchta and Elliott (2017) suggest that by imitating what children hear and see, they learn to speak. Moreover, these authors remark that teachers expect children start speaking as soon as possible, first imitating what they heard and then learning to say things by themselves. Furthermore, same researchers (e.g. Puchta and Elliott, 2017) accentuate that:

- ✓ Children love imitating and activities that engage them emotionally.
- ✓ Involving kids in small conversation will help to develop their speaking skills.
- ✓ Children love to be engaged in small talk, in this kind of conversations speakers often use formulaic or prefabricated language rather than creating their own utterances. If teachers regularly engage their pupils in these activities they will learn to pick up important chunks of language, and gradually learn it chatty in a natural and useful way.
- ✓ Kids will transfer this valuable skill to their own language, helping them to become more sociable and balanced individuals.
- ✓ Teachers must take their pupils seriously and should be able to react to what they say, or what the teacher assumes they want to say, often through one-word sentence or the use of body language. It is important to remember that



children need to construct their knowledge by interacting with others, peers or adults.

Pinter (2011) noticed, in pre-primary schools, foreign language learning is considered as preparation for a further level of studies; therefore, there is less emphasis on linguistic and proficiency outcomes. It typically aims to: Develop basic communication abilities, foster motivation by making initial language learning experiences fun, encourage early familiarization with a new culture, and develop cognitive, metacognitive and metalinguistic skills through and initial contact with a foreign language. In addition, the scholar remarks that by integrating language and context it will get better results (Pinter, 2011).

## **2.2. Vocabulary development in early year students**

The process of acquisition of a foreign language is a long-lasting process (Pokrivčáková, 2020). In this regard, vocabulary development is a key element when learning a language (Dapo, 2014). Likewise, Aslanabady and Rasouli (2013) highlighted that “Vocabulary plays an important role in understanding any concept in the process of learning a foreign language, it is considered as one important element that link the four language skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing” (p.188). Vocabulary learning requires learners to have a solid mnemonic ability and a high level of metacognitive abilities in order to encode the information in different ways (Tonhyani & Khaneghir, 2017). Pokrivčáková (2020) suggested that newly vocabulary introduced must be presented in a meaningful context, because when words are linked to visual manifestations (pictures, photographs, drawings, flashcards or real objects) create opportunities for children to develop learnings in a more multi-sensory experience. Moreover, in a study about the way language teachers can support children’s independent use of English in an ELA, Mourao’s (2018) worked with a group of 16 five and six years old students from a preprimary school in Portugal, her findings shown that students develop their English at different times, and this affect their linguistic repertory, children switch languages between L1 and L2 easily, but make an effort to use English, even there is evidence that some children help and correct each other in English.

Nation (1990) classified vocabulary in two large groups; a) Receptive vocabulary; involves knowing a word and being able to recognize it when heard or seen. B) Productive vocabulary, involves knowing a word and being able to pronounce and use it in a suitable situation. On the other hand, Aeborsold and Field (1977) classified vocabulary into two groups: active vocabulary, referring to items can use appropriately considering pronunciation, grammar and meaning; and passive vocabulary, referring to language items that student can recognize and understood in the context of reading and listening (as cited in Aslanabady and Rasouli, 2013).

Mourao (2018) notices that “peer interaction and talk contribute to language development” (p.72). This scholar also suggested that peer interactions can also be



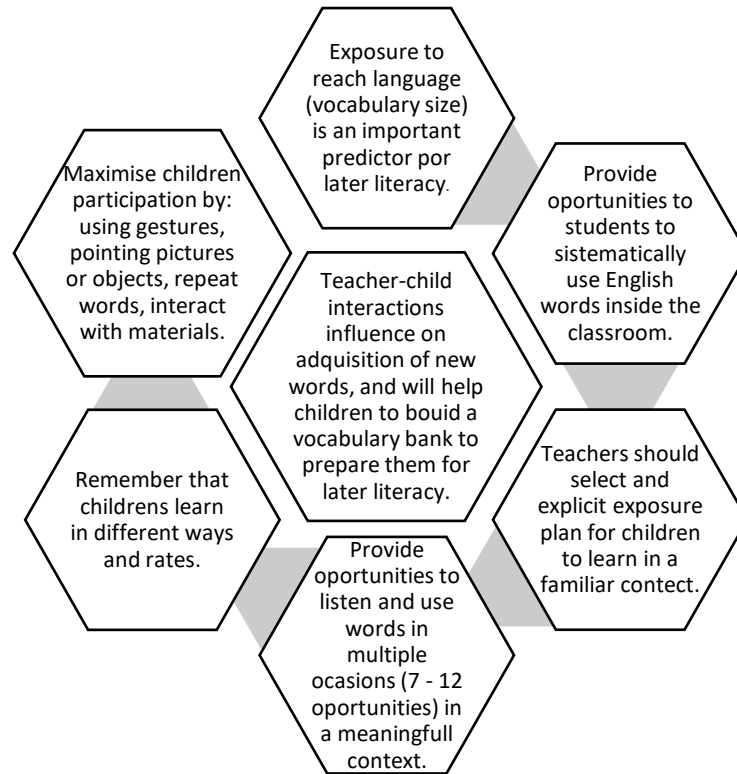
influenced by other types of interactions inside of the classroom, such as familiarity experiences with tasks, as well as activities prompt children interactions using a second language while playing with others. Similarly, Washington-Nortey et al (2020) notice that all children benefited from their peer's expressive language skills, it also suggested that the nature of this interactions in the classroom can create a context that either facilitates or inhibits the development of important language skills.

Likewise, Pinter (2011) highlights that learning new vocabulary is a critical process where children hear a relevant word in a relevant context, but to acquire new vocabulary they need to encounter the word many times before beginning to use it. Consequently, identifying children's cognitive foundations (memory and recall ability), neurological maturation, communication with adults, and individual and cultural differences are important factors to consider. Moreover, when teaching a foreign language, it is also relevant to consider aspects related to L1 acquisition. In this manner, Pinter (2017) footnote that respecting students' mother tongue and consider its use to support their second language is essential. Additionally, this scholar acknowledges that learners should have opportunities to reproduce patterns and vocabulary in a controlled way before expressing their own meanings more freely. Furthermore, the same researcher highlighted that it is important to remain fun, and do not experience simple repetition activities, suggesting games "offers great opportunities for hearing the same language again and again and for learning" (p.38).

Mourao and Ellis (2020) provide a set of recommendations related to vocabulary acquisition for early ages (Figure 1 below). For example, they emphasize the relevance of teachers preparation. In addition, the scholars suggest that students' exposure to the new language is a predictor for later literacy. Another point that the authors address is that tasks and activities implemented play an important role in language learning considering motivation and engagement of the students.



**Figure 1: Mourao and Ellis (2020) vocabulary development recommendations**

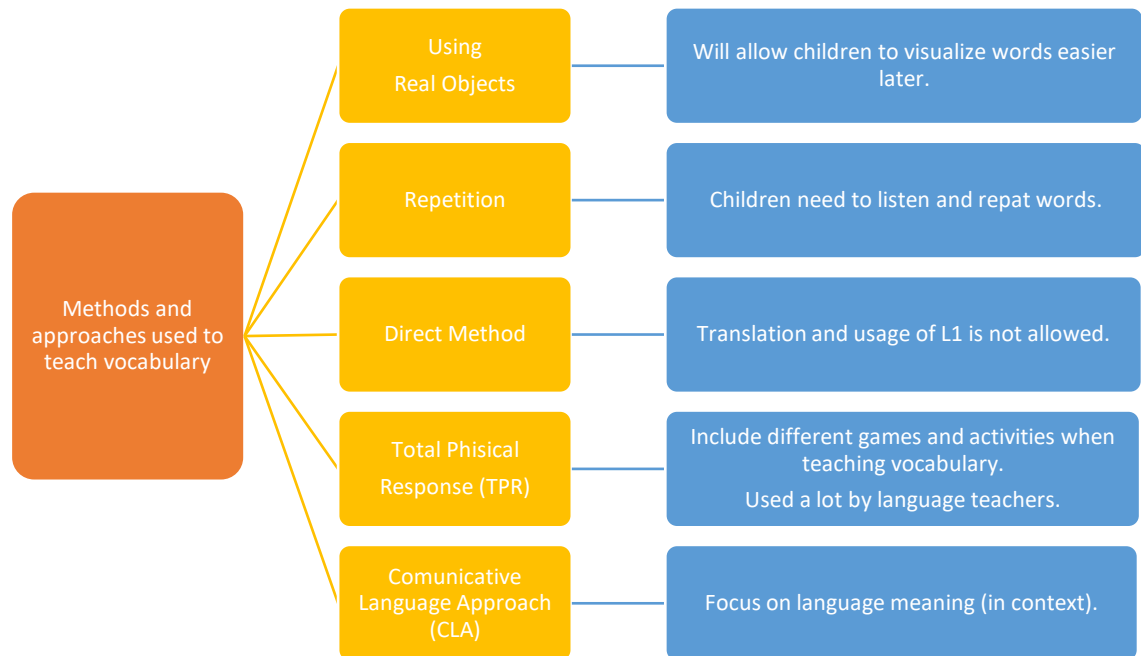


According to Puchta and Elliott (2017) the more children hear and grow familiar with a form of input, the more they would want to imitate the language and more easily they will remember. Then, they will gradually notice the features of the material, imitate them, and try to use them independently. Moreover, in a study about using language learning tasks in the young learner classroom with 6 graders from two Omani state schools, Emery and Al-Marzouki (2018) inform that teachers commented that tasks involved the learners in challenging themselves, promoted teamwork, required students to use the language in real life situations and gave opportunities practice their speaking fluency.

Mourao (2018) suggests that by integrating English into the children's lives at school collaborating with the class educator and setting a plan for English to accompany what the children are learning in their L1, will allowed children's to make connections between their experiences in the two languages.

Different theories related to early language vocabulary development exist in the literature. In this regard, Ameer (2016) informs that there are several approaches and methods that could be used to teach English vocabulary presented below (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Methods and approaches to teach vocabulary**



### 2.3. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) for teaching early language learners.

Over the years a variety of strategies, approaches and language programs have been developed in order to foster English foreign language learning.

Emery and Al-Marzouki (2018) highlighted that TBLT tend to be used in adult teaching, but- this method has been increasing their popularity with young learners as it encourages learners to engage with the task emotionally and cognitive. This approach gives learners opportunities to use the target language in real task (Emery & Al-Marzouki, 2018). In the same line, Ellis (2009) remarks some key elements, for example, TBLT offers the opportunity for ‘natural’ learning inside the classroom; it emphasizes meaning over form; it affords learners a rich input of target language; It is intrinsically motivating; it considers the learner as a central element, and it can be used alongside a more traditional approach. Conversely, Ellis (2020) informs that a common critique of TBLT is that it is not suitable for beginner-level learners. However, according to Ellis (2020), this critique derives from a misconception about TBLT involving the use of speaking tasks where grammar has a relevant significance.

Particularly regarding early language learning, Pinter (2020) suggests that TBLT is possible to implement with beginners, but only if it is acknowledged that it does not always have to involve learner production, and/or, can involve minimal



speaking. Furthermore, Pinter (2015) explains that in “task-based lessons learners are likely to engage with the learning materials more enthusiastically and thus develop their language skills more efficiently” (p.113). Moreover, Pinter (2017) highlighted that acquisition of L2 should take place naturally, with the help of focus-on-form. When learners are engaged in the effort to communicate, TBLT aims to facilitate this process creating contexts where learners’ attention is drawn to linguistic form while they are focused on meaning. In the case of young learners, TBLT aims to tap into this natural capacity for implicit learning. In addition, same scholar suggests that teachers can delay the implementation of TBLT until the learners have started to try to speak. One effective strategy to implement TBLT with children is to ask students to first complete an input-based task and then try a related output-based tasks, the input-based task becomes a preparation for the output-based task (Pinter, 2017).

### **2.3.1. Task-Based repetition (TR)**

Along with TBLT, there are other approaches used to teach English to young learners, one of them is Task-Based repetition (TR). There are different views of the pedagogical benefits of task repetition; nevertheless, Askarai and García (2016) and Ur (2012) notice that TR has shown to be beneficial for children. Repeating a task allows learners to focus their attention on meaning at the first time the task is performed, and to focus on form when it is repeated (Azkarai & García, 2016; García, 2018). Similarly, Oliver and Azkarat (2017) argue that repeating a task benefits language learners because they have more time for formulating the language needs and expressing their ideas. Research has shown that, when learners are familiar with a task, their opportunities to focus on the form of the message increase (Askarai & García, 2016)

In a study about investigated task-repetition with young Japanese children, Sintani (2012) findings suggested that upon repetition students increase their comprehension and task competition easier. In the same line, the scholar remarks that task repetition benefit learners’ fluency and complexity. In addition, Pinter (2007) suggests that TR is an effective methodology with young learners and low proficiency levels (as cited in García, 2018). Moreover, according to Oliver & Agutzane (2017) children cooperation, motivation, confidence, and negotiation increased over time. In the same line Azkarai and García (2016) notice that when content and task were unfamiliar learners require more clarification, when content and procedure were familiar the opportunities to use feedback were more frequent.

Some concerns related to TR mainly refer that when repeating activities students will not develop extrinsic motivation and do not perceive long-term goals, repetition is not authentic, and related to students losing their interest to the task. As



Pinter (2017) suggests an obvious concern of repeating tasks is that learners will lose interest in them. However, while tasks initially tend to be very challenging, they became more manageable with each repetition and learners' comprehension improved over time so they could see that they were learning, which help students to maintain their motivation. The same author sets up as a general principle that once the task becomes too easy, the activity as well as the task will become unproductive and boring (Pinter, 2017).

Sintani's (2012) findings suggest that repeating a task may be beneficial in different ways: a) the same input-based task produces changes in the input provided by the teacher; b) it helps to provide context to the learner; c) as students may feel familiar with the tasks and procedures in social speech (over time) the use of L2 increases while the use of L1 decrease; d) as imitation plays an important role in the children's learning of the target words, attention to linguistic form is necessary for learning; e) exposure to the same input help students to segment the teacher's utterances; f) students perform tasks easier when their comprehension improves; and, g) repeating a task is an excellent way of building children's disposition to communicate in the L2.

Thus, Task repetition can be considered a powerful option for teaching languages to young learners.

#### **2.4. Games in early language learning**

Games are understood as "purposeful and familiar activities for children, governed by rules and which provide a meaningful and comfortable environment for target language use" (Inostroza, 2018. p.85). In this regards, Inostroza (2018) suggest that games are the most frequent and recommended activities for teaching language to early language learners around the world. In addition, Mourao (2018) denotes that play is the child's work, noticing that "play is difficult to define: It is spontaneous; it is an active process in which thinking, feeling, and doing flourish; and it involves pretense and imagination" (p.68). In Chile play is one of the pillars of nursery school education, where children learn by doing. Thus this learning experiences need to be considered when teachers prepare their lessons and materials important role. Derakhshan & Davoodi (2015) and Aslanabadi and Rasouli (2013) suggest that using vocabulary games make the learning process more valuable, enjoyable, relaxing and helps students to retain target words faster, allowing them to use the language more communicatively. Similarly, Putcha and Ellis (2017) notice that play is a central activity for very young learners learning processes, as when children play, they are emotionally engaged and multiple sensory channels are activated in their brains; games involve looking, listening and moving all at the same time; thus, making language learning more memorable. In



the same line, by playing children practice some important behaviors (such as, waiting for turns, listening to others, etc.), develop social skills and learn that cooperation is more important than winning. Similarly, Pokrivčáková (2020) notices that when playing, children “are not consciously trying to learn new words or phrases – for them this is incidental” (p.31).

MINEDUC (2020) also considers games as a central element for learning acquisition for very young students. In the same line, Pinter (2017) suggests that games offer great opportunities for learning to take part in simple conversations as well as for hearing the same language repetitively. For example, Aslanabady and Rasouli’s (2013) carried out a study about the effect of games on the improvement of vocabulary knowledge in two kindergartens in Iran. Their work showed that games not only bring fun for learners, but also teaching English with games affected children’s vocabulary learning and memorization. In another study carried out in Iran, Derakhshan and Davoodi (2015) found that when using vocabulary games, the learning process became more valuable, as they make vocabulary learning more enjoyable, helping students to retain target words more quickly. Their findings also suggest that educational games seem to be appropriate for very young children as they are encouraged to be physically and mentally active, represent students-central activities, focus children’s attention, they are fun and promote socialization. In the same line, Martin (2017) acknowledges that games help learners to experience the language.

However, not all games are appropriate for all students, games are more useful if they consolidate the use of language items (Martin, 2017). Bakhsh (2016) present some challenges related to the implementations of games for teaching young learners, like the noise, lack of organization in the classroom, diversity of games to engage students’ attention and students use of their mother tongue (as cited in Martin, 2017). Mourao (2015) informs that children differ in their favourite English games and activities. In her investigation with pre-primary children, the scholar found that these include dialogues with a puppet, a wide variety of games (many involving flashcards), looking at books, songs, rhymes, telling stories, and inventing games, highlighting that children show “enormous amount of motivation to play in English” (Mourao, 2015, p. 64).

In this manner, Pinter (2017) suggests that different activities should be implemented with beginners such as yes/no activities, memory games based on pictures, listening comprehension, building block tasks. Input-based tasks have always had a place in TBLT.

Aslanabady and Rasouli (2013) argue that “vocabulary learning games have many advantages for language teachers and learners at the same time” (p.187). Particularly, language games help learners to learn the language when engaged, making children learn without noticing because they enjoy while playing, allowing teachers to present the language in a playful atmosphere which make their job interesting. These authors, summarize some characteristics of language games:



1. They engage all students in the learning process, while students play in pairs or groups they have the opportunity to recognize and appreciate the contribution of others
2. They provide opportunities of cooperation and collaboration, while playing students are not able to realize that they are learning, but they are working together in order to reach a common goal
3. They provide an enjoyable learning experience, generate motivation among students.

Aslanabadi and Rasouli (2013) provide a set of recommendations related to the advantages of the implementation of games into the learning of a foreign language (Figure 3). For example, they emphasize the benefits related to motivation, enjoyment, and peer interactions. Another point that the authors addressed is that games develop language skills without noticing.

**Figure 3. Advantages of games**



Games are a powerful strategy to teach foreign languages. Khan (1991) classifies learning language games in two groups: language practice games and communicative language teaching games. Language practice games refer to games



that involves repeated use of particular language items, where language form is given and accuracy reproduction is required in order to succeed; on the other hand, communicative language teaching games refers to games where the need to communicate is powerful, but accuracy is not in the focus (as cited in Inostroza, 2018).

Inostroza's (2018) findings from Chilean primary classrooms inform that the implementation of games during the English lesson presents benefits such as, children's' motivation and the lessons feel shorter. However, the findings also reported disadvantages, related to the time available for teachers to prepare materials and to prepare themselves to carry out these activities.



## Chapter 3. Methods

### 3.1. Type of research

The present investigation is an action research, which aims at analyzing prekindergarten students' use of English in a classroom context, and which involves action and reflection from the teacher about her practices. According to Burns (2005), "action research is seen as a mean towards creating meaning and understanding in a problematic social situation and improving the quality of human interaction and practices within those situations" (p.57). Edwards & Burns (2016) highlighted that this methodology requires that teachers take an active role by planning, acting, observing, and reflecting in order to collect evidence to support understanding of improvements.

Action research (hereafter AR) allowed the teacher-researcher to reflect on their professional practices, concentrate on what is happening inside of the classroom and focus on student potential, interest, motivation and abilities, in order to improve their own practices and give support to analyze new ways to facilitate their students' learning process. In the same lane, Burns (2010) agrees on that "AR involves taking a self-reflective, a critical and systematic approach to exploring your own teaching context" (p.2).

The following study is an exploratory research, as there is limited research related to very young learners. In the same way, most of the studies reviewed emphasizes the importance of further investigations on young learners' foreign language acquisition in general.

### 3.2. Research problem

In 2020, the MINEDUC suggested a curriculum to teaching English in early childhood education based on a Communicative Approach. The proposed curriculum suggests that games should be considered as a central element of learning for very young students. In this regards, early language learners are expected to orally communicate in English using the target vocabulary when participating in class, interact, and express themselves in the foreign language with peers and adults.

In the current AR study teaching context, after the first months of instruction, early-years students are able to identify and use the target vocabulary, as well as comprehend commands and questions in English. Furthermore, children display a great motivation for participating in the English lesson; however, every time that they are asked to orally participate during the lesson, students tend to speak in their first language, Spanish.

Literature suggested that the lack of English oral production can be influenced by different factors, such as, students' anxiety, lack of motivation, "limited attention span or little confidence when completing tasks" (Sketchley, 2014, p. 8), and/or fear



of mistakes; thus, students could tend to use their first language. Similarly, Willis (1996), highlighted that “beginners may feel more vulnerable and shy when attempting a new language” (p. 118). In addition, Bandura noticed that children with poor self-efficacy (the child's belief in their abilities) may want to avoid tasks and convince themselves they are not good at language learning (as cited in Pinter, 2017).

According to Putcha & Ellis (2017) by playing children practice some important behaviors (respect to turns, listen to others, etc.), develop social skills and learn that cooperation is more important than winning. Additionally, Pinter (2017) suggests that children are active learners. Thus, in the current AR so as to foster students' oral participation using English, board games (Memory and Bingo game) were implemented during the English lessons. In that way, the implementation of games during lessons seems to be appropriate to promote self-confidence and oral production among pre-kindergarten students.

### **3.3. Research question and objectives**

#### **3.3.1. Research question**

In the light of the presented problem the following question emerges:

How can the use of games support prekindergarten students' oral use of English in the EFL lesson?

#### **3.3.2. General objective**

To explore the contribution of board games (Memory and Bingo) to support prekindergarten students' oral use of English in the EFL lesson.

#### **3.3.3. Specific objectives**

Three specific objectives were selected in order to guide the following intervention:

1. To describe the frequency of children's English use when playing board games (Memory and Bingo) in the EFL lesson.
2. To identify co-teacher' perception of the use of games to support he oral use of English.
3. To identify students' perception on the use of games in the English lesson.



### 3.4. Description of participants

#### 3.4.1. Sample

For the presented action research, a convenience sample was chosen regarding some criteria related with the action research objectives, student’s characteristics and some ethical issues. According to Etikan et al (2015) a convenience sample technique is a type of sampling technique, where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria to participate are included for the purpose of the study.

In this action research, a convenience volunteer sample was selected according to the following criteria:

- **Age of students:** Prekindergarten students. Children between 4 to 5 years old. This intervention will be carried out in a private school in Concepción that follows its own Curriculum. With a convenience sample of 19 students divided into 12 boys and 7 girls from the same pre-kindergarten class.
- **Written consent:** All participants had written consent from their parents or legal tutor in order to participate in the study (volunteer sample).
- **Years of EFL instruction:** This is the first year at school for all students, and for most of them, this is also their first year learning a foreign language.
- **Hours of EFL a week:** Children have one hour of EFL classes a day, 5 times a week at the beginning of their school day. EFL is taught every day from Monday to Friday, one class daily of 40 minutes, a total of 3 hours 50 minutes per week (chronological time).

The project used a convenience sample of 19 prekindergarten students, 12 boys and 7 girls. Due to some health issues such as COVID and other winter viruses, students showed inconsistent attendance. Only 3 students participate during the 6 sessions, 5 students participate during 5 sessions, 4 students participate during 4 sessions, 4 students participate during 3 sessions and 3 students participate during 2 sessions (in summary all participants attend more than one session). However, all students’ responses were considered when data was analyzed. Table 1 presents a summary of the students’ attendance at the implemented sessions.

**Table 1: Summary of students’ attendance to the sessions**

6 sessions	5 sessions	4 sessions	3 sessions	2 sessions	1 session
3 students	5 students	4 students	4 students	3 students	-



All participants are L1 Spanish speakers and most of them have no previous experience in formal teaching and neither have previously been instructed in the English language; however, they display a positive attitude towards the English lesson and present high levels of motivation to games and activities where they play an active role. However, they tend to lose motivation and concentration with activities that invite them to perform a passive role.

In addition, most of the students' parents do not have knowledge regarding English language; however, they consider it as an important subject for their children. At the school where this AR took place, English is taught as a foreign language and the goal for the target group is to have a first approach to the new language. The EFL program is guided by the school's own curriculum and the coursebook "Happy Charms 2" (Fash & Grijalva, 2018).

### 3.5. Stages of the action research

This study took place in a private school in Concepción, lasting 6 sessions, between two to three times a week, in June 2022. Each session lasted 30 minutes. Students worked in the classroom organized in different ways, in large and small groups. Activities were planned from guided activities to more independent activities.

This pedagogical intervention consisted in implementing two games (Memory and Bingo) to foster students' use of oral English during lessons. Figure 4 below present the intervention summary.

#### Figure 4: Action Plan summary

**S1: 08/06/2022** 15 students.

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- Online Memory Game (Wordwall platform).
- Students were organized as a whole class.

**S2: 13/06/2022** 14 students.

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- Bingo Game.
- Students were organized in small groups (3 - 4 children). Shared a large-format Bingo card.

**S3: 16/06/2022** 13 students.

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- Memory board game.
- Students were organized in small groups (3 - 4 children).



**S4: 22/06/2022** 13 students.

---

- Board Bingo Game.
- Students play individually.

**S5: 23/06/2022** 11 students.

---

- Memory Board Game.
- Students were organized in small groups (3 - 4 children).

**S6: 24/06/2022** 11 students.

---

- Board Bingo Game.
- Students were organized in small groups (3 - 4 children).

**Data collection 28/06/2022** 7 students.

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- Students group interview.
- Students were interviewed in two groups (1st group of 3 students, and 2nd group of 4 students).

**Data collection 01/07/2022**

Co-teacher.

---

- Co-teacher semi-structure interview.

First session took place on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 15 students attended the lesson on that day. Students play an online memory game displayed on the whiteboard, students by turn selected 2 cards and were asked to name the vocabulary, the aim of the session was to describe the frequency of children's L2 use at the beginning of the intervention. Students' participation was registered in an observational checklist.

The second session took place on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 14 students attended lesson that day. Students were organized in 5 groups and shared a large format Bingo card, a digital roulette was display on the whiteboard and by turns, students participated and were asked to name the vocabulary presented using English. Students' participation was registered in an observational checklist.

The third session took place on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 13 students attended the lesson on that day. Students were organized in 2 groups of 4 children and 1 group of 5 students. Students were encouraged to play a Memory game. Each group was monitored by a teacher and students were asked to name the vocabulary presented in English. Students' responses were registered in an observational checklist.

The fourth session took place on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 13 students were attending class on that day. Students were invited to play Bingo using their own bingo card, the teacher walked around the classroom asking students by turns to take a card from the magic



bag and present it to the class. Students' participation and responses were registered in an observational checklist.

The fifth session took place on June 23<sup>th</sup>, 11 students attended the lesson on that day. Students were organized in 2 groups of 4 students each one and 1 group of three students. They were invited to play a Board Memory game. Students' participation and responses were registered in an observational checklist.

The last session (6th session) took place on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 11 students attended lesson on that day. Students were organized in 2 groups of 4 children and 1 group of three students. They were invited to play a Board Bingo game. Students' participation and responses were registered in an observational checklist which aim was to identify changes in their use of English through the implementation of games.

Finally, after the intervention sessions, two group interviews were applied to students in order to identify students' perceptions towards the implementation of games in the English class. Then a semi-structured interview was applied to the co-teacher, aiming at identify changes in students' use of the foreign language during the implementation of games from their perspective and observation done through the sessions.

### **3.6. Data collection techniques**

Qualitative methods were selected to identify and analyze data related to the objectives and characteristics of current AR. Three qualitative data collection techniques were used 1) observational checklist, 2) group interview and 3) semi-structured interview. The interviews were applied in Spanish, interviewees' first language, to avoid issues of communication and to make them feel more comfortable during the data collection process.

#### **3.6.1. Observation along with observational checklist**

Mason (2002) argues that observation usually "refer to methods of generating data which entail the researcher immersing herself or himself in a research 'setting' so that they can experience and observe at first hand a range of dimensions in and of that setting" (p. 84). The aim of this instrument was to collect information regarding the frequency of children's English use when playing board games (Memory and Bingo). Observational sheets in the form of a check list were used to register the students' oral performance in every lesson. The items addressed the times children named the lexical item in English or Spanish, or do not name the lexical item. These were completed by the teacher-researcher and the co-teacher.

In order to register observational data, the teacher-researcher ticked off the items presented in the checklist. It also included a field to register how many times the item was observed during tasks. The items were three: a) name the lexical item in English; b) name the lexical item in Spanish, c) or do not name the lexical item (see Appendix 1).



Observational Checklists were used to register the information on each session, a total of 12 observational checklists were registered. During sessions 1, 2 and 4 the teacher-researcher filed out the checklists (a total of three), in sessions 3, 5 and 6 the teacher-researcher, co-teacher and helper fulfilled the checklists (a total of nine).

Piloting session was implemented one week before starting the intervention with students from the other pre-kindergarten group of the school.

For the last two sessions (where games were developed more autonomously) students were divided into three groups and a teacher was in charge of registering students' responses on an observational checklist for each group.

### **3.6.2. Semi-structured interview (See appendix 2)**

In order to achieve validity to the presented action research a semi-structured interview was applied to the co-teacher. According to Kallio et al. (2016) semi structured interview tend to be perceived as an easy data collection instrument because of their versatile and flexibility. One of their main advantages is that it promotes reciprocity between the interviewer and participant, and allowed the interviewer to improvise questions based on participant's responses, and to give the interviewee's space for individual verbal expressions. Questions are determined and formulated before the interview and covers the main topics of the study. This interview offers a focused structure but should not be followed strictly. The purpose was to gather information about her perception on students' use of English during the implementation of games through the sessions. Five questions were formulated based on Use of English theme and considering suggestions from the specialists, teachers, and colleagues.

Piloting session was implemented one week before starting the intervention with the class teacher from same group than other instruments were piloted.

The interview was applied in Spanish, interviewee's first language in order to have a better understanding and to make her feel more confident and comfortable during the data collection process.

### **3.6.3. Group Interview**

-Group interviews were applied to seven students. This method has been suggested to better respond to children's characteristics and age, and promote their participation (Lewis, 2012).

Kuchah & Pinter (2012) mentions there is a growing interest in exploring children's perspectives about different aspects of their life. All aspects of children's development are influenced by the child social world (Lewis, 1992). Similarly, Vygotsky (1978) remarks, children construct their knowledge through social interactions with peers and adults (as cited in Degirmency & Yavuz, 2015).

In this regard, Kuchah & Pinter (2012) suggest that "group interviews with children can provide a space where mutual understandings can be negotiated, and



as a consequence, the children's views can emerge" (p.284). Furthermore, Lewis (2012) mentions that "Children may be less intimidated by talking in a group than when talking individually to an adult, particularly if the interviewer is not well known to the children" (p.416).

As Kuchah & Pinter (2012) notice interviewing adults is not easy, but interviewing children is more challenging because of the issues surrounding and the effect of the generational power gap. However, in groups children can feel more confident and relaxed with adults than during individual interviews, plus, participating in group talk children have opportunities to explore their own and others' ideas, and to clarify, defend, re-count and paraphrase their half-formed utterances.

Group interviews may be more productive than individual interviews because when one child is speaking, other children have thinking time, thus also encouraging greater reflectivity in responses (Lewis, 1992). In the same line, Hill et al (1996) comment that children are more likely to give their opinions in group interview when they hear others, and their memory can be supported by peers (as cited in Kucha & Pinter, 2012). Additionally, it gives children opportunities to explore their own and others' ideas, and to clarify, defend, re-count and paraphrase their half-formed utterances (Kuchah & Pinter, 2012). Group context also "make it easier for children to question the interviewer, seek clarification, or to express uncertainty" (Lewis, 1992, p.417).

Moreover, Lewis (1992) suggests that smaller groups will promote the participation of children. This scholar points out that the interviewer and the interviewee might sit facing or alongside, and eye contact may be crucial especially with children. Kuchah and Pinter (2012) remark that if taking seriously children's interview can offer unique insights and can change adult perceptions in powerful ways.

This data collection technique was chosen to prevent embarrassment interfering with the responses, and in order to make interviewee's feel more confident. Interviews were applied to students in two small groups, one group of three children, and another group of four children. Interviewees were selected regarding their attendance; therefore, they were applied to students attended to most of the sessions. The interview design aimed at identifying students' perceptions of the use of games in the English lesson to support their oral use of English, three questions were selected according to each the dimensions: perception of the English class, perception of games and use of English.

Both interviews were applied in Spanish, interviewee's first language in order to have a better understanding and to make them feel more confident and comfortable during the data collection process. A piloting session was implemented to with three students from the other pre-kindergarten of the school one week before starting the intervention.



### **3.7. Data analysis**

In relationship to the research objectives and qualitative data collection techniques implemented, content data analysis was used to analyze the collected data. As Burns (2010) mentions, “Analyzing AR data is a continuing process of reducing information to find explanations and patterns” (p. 104).

Drisko & Maschi (2016) suggest “based on the interpretation of texts, focused by the researcher’s chosen questions, qualitative content analysis seeks to develop carefully specified categories that are refined in an interactive feedback-loop process to ensure credibility and usefulness” (p.6). Some authors recommend that researchers may transcribe into written texts or transcripts. However, transcripts should capture the core overt content of the message. In such cases, researchers must make choices about the importance on how the content was structured and delivered instead of emphasizing only in the core content of the message (Drisko & Maschi, 2016).

In order to analyze the obtained data, Creswell (2009) suggests following a series of steps starting by reading all the data to obtain a general sense of the information, code it (into categories or themes) and finally analyze findings, this type of analysis it is called thematic analysis.

Thus, the obtained data was transcribed to then analyze and code it into emergent categories related to motivation and the use of English of the students during English class.



## Chapter 4. Findings

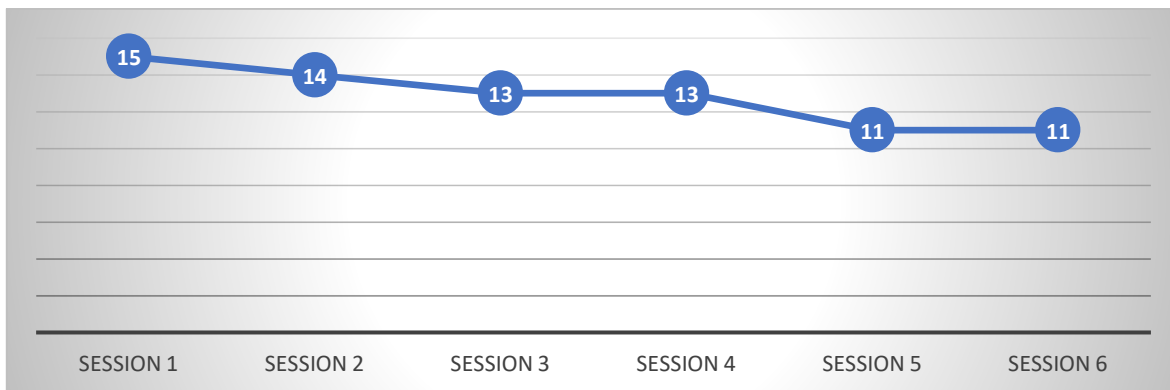
In the following study, findings have been organized by the three specific research objectives. In addition, in order to protect children's identity, pseudonyms have been used to identify the participants.

### 4.1. Specific Objective 1: To describe the frequency of children's English use when playing board games (Memory and Bingo) in the EFL lesson

In order to address Specific objective 1, data was gathered using observational checklists applied during each of the sessions by the teacher-researcher and the co-teacher. The findings are presented below according to each of the moments of the lesson (pre-task, while-task and post-task).

Figure 2 below shows the attendance of students during the intervention sessions. Due to school internal activities in session 3, circle time was not reviewed. Therefore, there is no information related to that specific field in the following figures (Figure 5 and 6).

**Figure 5: Number of students attending the sessions**



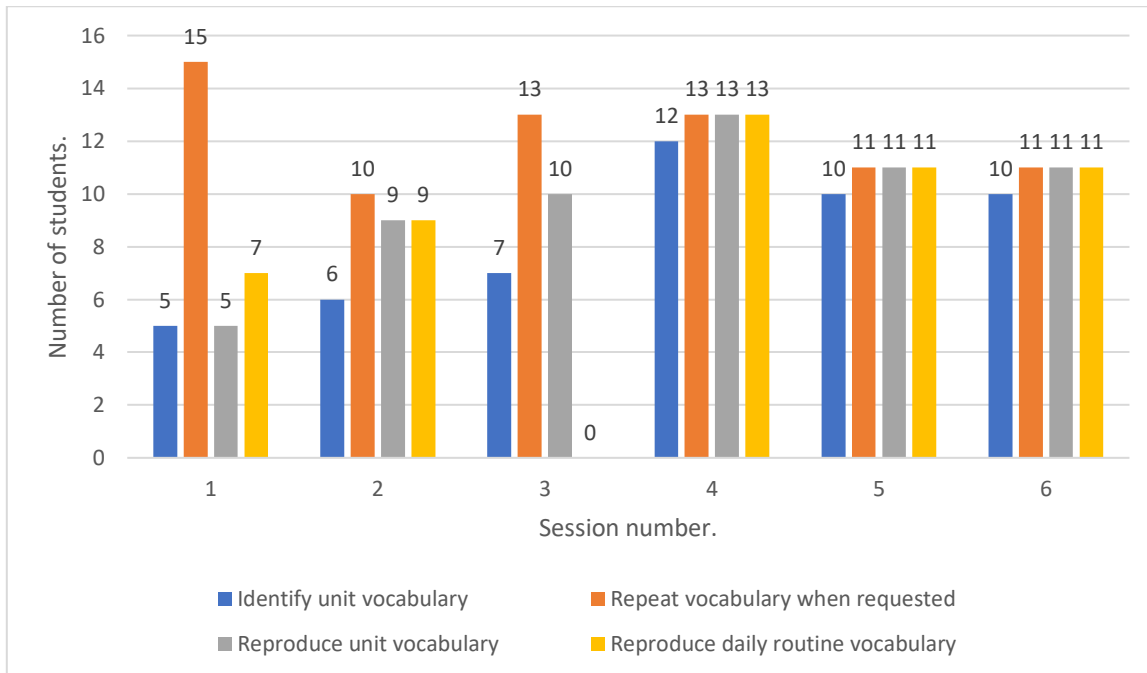
#### 4.1.1 Pre-task

During the pre-task, activities were carried out as a whole class and data were registered regarding the number of students attending and considering their participation in the lesson.

At the end of the intervention, all of students were able to identify the unit vocabulary, repeat it when requested, reproduce it spontaneously and to reproduce spontaneously vocabulary related to daily routine, as it can be seen in Figure 5 below.



**Figure 6: Pre-task activity, students' participation**



Results evidence that regarding students' vocabulary repetition there is not a big difference from first to the last session while implementing the games. However, all other aspects observed increased while the students were exposed to the implemented games, such as students' identification (S1 33%, S2 42.8%, S3 53.8%, S4 93.3%, S5 and S6 100%), spontaneous reproduction of the unit vocabulary (session 1 33.3%, session 2 64.2%, session 3 76.9%, session 4, 5 and 6 100%) and students' spontaneous reproduction of vocabulary related to daily routine (session 1 46.6%, session 2 64.2%, session 3 no data, session 4, 5 and 6 100%).

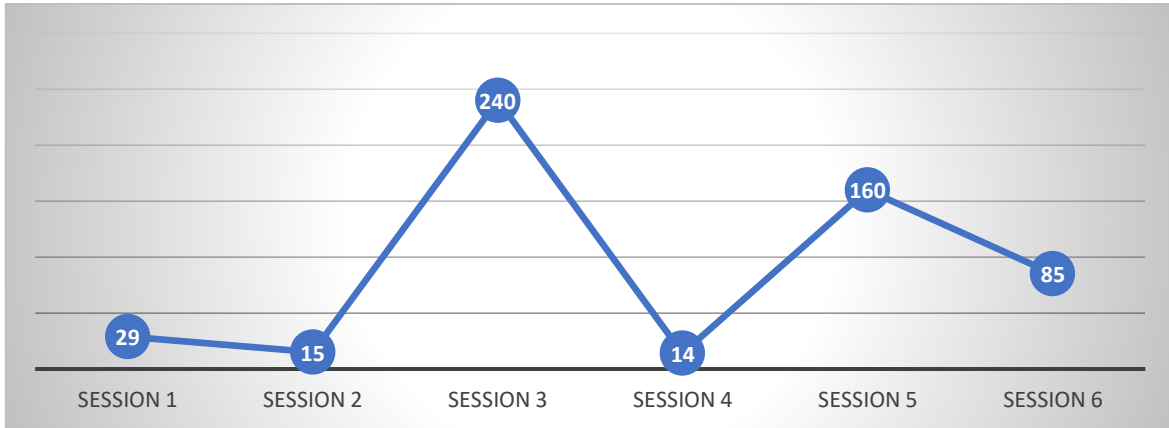
Findings showed that students' use of English increased, the progression can be observed in Figure 5 were at the last session of the intervention all students were able to identify and reproduce target vocabulary in a spontaneous way.

#### 4.1.2. While task

While-task results focused on the number of opportunities given to students to orally use English during their participation on the games. Thus, Figure 6 shows the number of opportunities given to students to speak while they were playing the games.

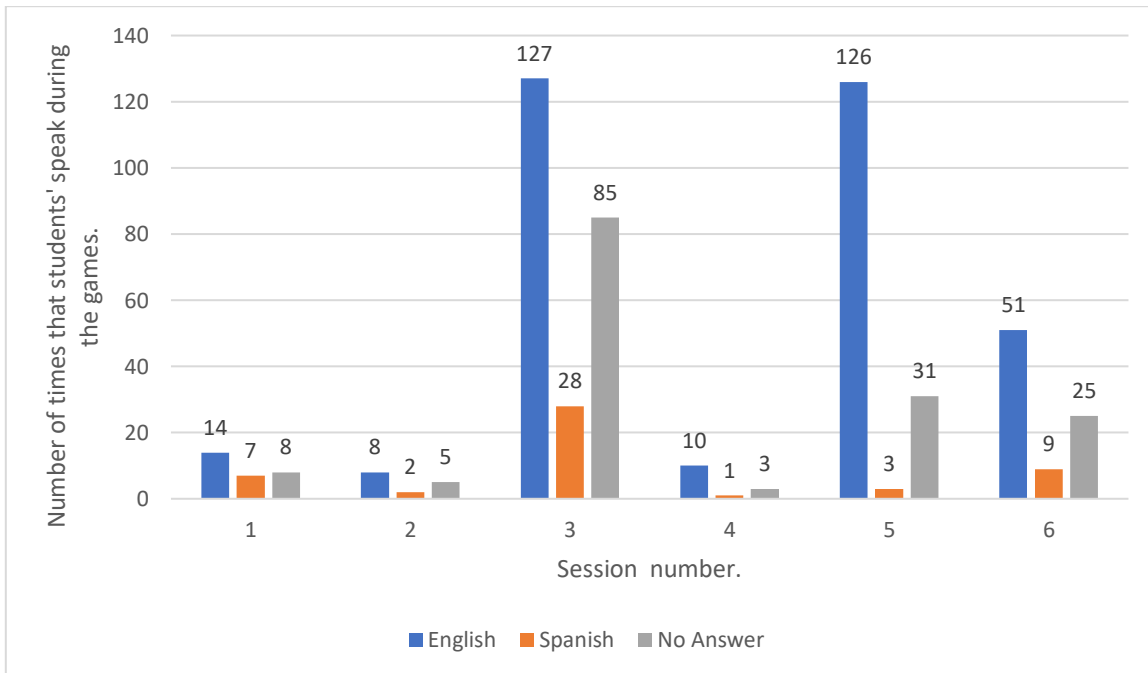


**Figure 7: While task activity, number of opportunities given for students to speak during the games**



It is important to consider that students struggled with two concepts: *wrench* and *tire*; therefore, none of them obtain 100% related to use of English. When students faced those words some of them tended to name them in Spanish or did not answer.

**Figure 8: While-task, number of times students' use English, Spanish or did not answer while playing the games**





The analyzed data present some consistency from session 1 to session 5. In session 6 inconsistency is observed, this could be as a result of external and internal factors.

When analyzing the number of opportunities given to students to participate during games, results evidence that regarding oral use of English during task, there is an increase in the number of times children used English from session 1 through session 5. In session 1, 48.2% of the times students named concepts these were in English, this increased by sessions; therefore, by session 5, 78.8% of the times students name concepts these were in English. In session 6, recoil is found, with only 60% of the times students name concepts were in English.

Regarding the use of Spanish during students' oral participation while playing games, results showed that it decreased from session 1 through session 5. While in session 1, 24.1% of the times when students name concepts while playing games were using Spanish, by session 5 this decreased to 1.8%. During session 6 recoil is found, 10.5% of times students name concepts when playing games were using Spanish.

Results present inconsistency when referring to students who did not answer orally or using body language when it was their time to participate in games. Regarding this aspect, it can be suggested that it could not be benefited by the implementation of games during the English lesson, furthermore it can be suggested that other factors could affect it such as poor self-efficacy, motivation, students' silent period, among others this is in line with Clarke's (2009) findings that suggest then children face a new language can feel confused and/or frustrated and may lose confidence. Considering the number of times that students did not answer when it was their turn to participate on games on session 1, 27% of the times, on session 2, 33% of the times, on session 3, 35% of the times, on session, 21.4% of the times, on session 5, 19.3% of the times and on session 6, 29.4% of the times.

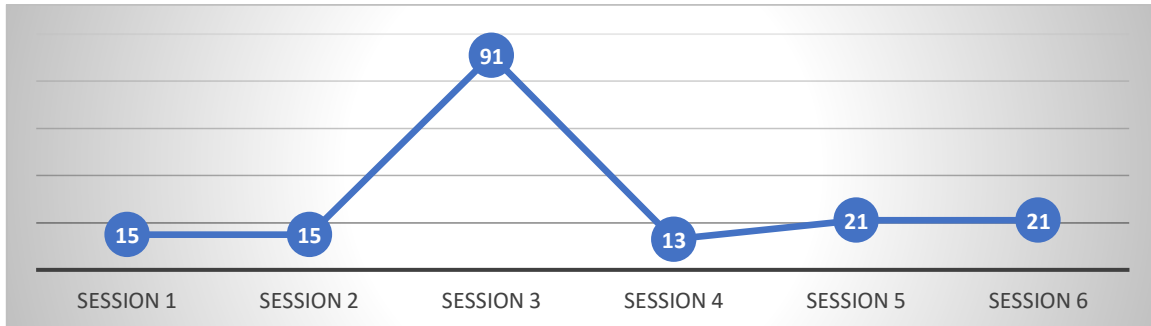
The results showed that during session 4 and session 5, students use of English was more frequent than during session 1, 2 and 3 (as it can be seen in Figure 8). On the other hand, when refers to the use of Spanish during the English lesson, the first two sessions present the higher number of times.



### 4.1.3. Post-task activities

Post-task activities results were analyzed considering the number of opportunities given to students to orally use English during closing activities.

**Figure 9: Number of opportunities for students to speak during closing activities**

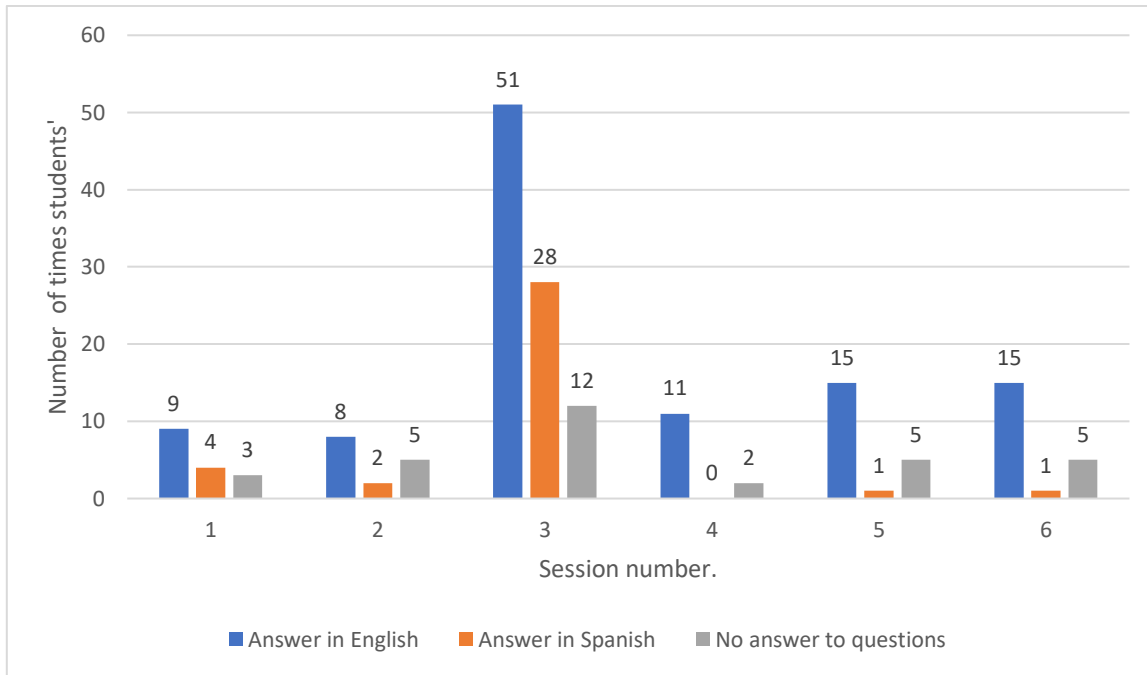


Analyzed data present inconsistency when refers to the use of English and Spanish during closing activities. Firstly, when analyzing the number of opportunities given to students to use English during closing activities, Figure 9 shows that there is an increase in the opportunities of students to speak during closing activities on session 3, but this increase is not consistent along all sessions.

Regarding oral use of English when participating (Figure 10 below), there is an increase in the number of times they do it using English, but this raise is not consistent along the sessions. In session 1, students answered using English 60% of times during closing activities, at session 2, 53.3% of the times, at session 3, 50% of the times, at session 4, 84.6% of the times, at session 5, 71.4% of the times, and finally at session 6, 71.4% of the times.



**Figure 10: Post-task activity, students' use of English and Spanish at closing activities**



Regarding the use of Spanish during closing activities, it can be observed that the use of this language tends to decrease from session 3 to session 6. In session 1, 26.6% of times students answers during closing activities were in Spanish, in session 2, 13.3% of, in session 3, 30.7% of times, in session 4 students did not use Spanish for answering, while in session 5 and 6, 4.7% of the times students' answers were in Spanish.

When refers to results related to students that no answer (orally or physically) when participating in closing activities. In session 1, 20% of the times students did not answer when requested while closing activities, in session 2, 33.3% of times, at session 3, 13.1% of times, at session 4, 15.3% of times. Finally, at session 5 and 6, 23.8% of the times students do not answer when requested.



## 4.2. Specific Objective 2: To identify co-teacher’ perception of the use of games to support the oral use of English

Data to address specific objective 2 was gathered in a semi-structured interview applied to the co-teacher at the end of the intervention. Four sub-themes emerged from the data analysis process, namely, confidence, repetition, students’ participation, and contextualized use of English.

**Table 2: Summary of themes and sub-themes emerged regarding co-teacher’ perception on the use of games to support the oral use of English**

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Sub-themes</i>
<i>Use of English.</i>	Confidence Repetition Students’ participation Contextualized use

The semi-structured interview was transcribed, read and analyzed through thematic analysis. Obtained data was categorized and reported through themes and sub-themes selected, the most representative quotes are presented on the chapter in order to support the presented analysis.

### 4.2.1. Confidence

Regarding the first sub-theme emerged, *confidence*, this is understood as the participants’ feelings of being certain about their own abilities and knowledge related to the oral use of English. Findings show that the co-teacher perceived that when students feel self-confident, they tended to use English during the lesson. Table 3 shows the frequency that this sub-theme was identified.

**Table 3: First sub-theme, confidence**

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency	Extracts
Use of English	Confidence	3	T: más confianza para expresarlos verbalmente.

These findings suggest that when students were on last stages of the intervention, they present a better comprehension of English and their self-efficacy



grew, as a consequence they felt more confidence to speak using the new language. The following quotes show this point:

*T: al final se logra recibir esto de manera innata, o sea ya lo interiorizaron aún más.*

*T: También en la confianza de los niños ya que al contextualizarlos a través de los juegos dio más seguridad.*

#### 4.2.2. Repetition

Regarding the second sub-theme analyzed, *repetition*, understood as the act of orally saying the same target words in similar or different context (related to tasks and activities during the English Lesson). Findings show that the co-teacher perceives that repetition helped students to foster their participation using English when playing the games. Moreover, the co-teacher suggests that games that require repetition help students to express themselves in the foreign language. Table 4 shows the frequency that this sub-theme was identified.

**Table 4: Second sub-theme, repetition**

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency	Extract
Use of English	Repetition	5	T: el de la memoria en mi caso sentí más logros de esta expresión, ya que se repetía más.

Furthermore, the co-teacher considered that Memory game promoted repetition, as a result of the mechanic of the game itself, where students name the concept each time that turn over a card. On the other hand, according to the co-teacher Bingo did not promote repetition. The following quotes show this point:

*T: Claro, tenían más turnos. Lo otro es que al dar vuelta las flashcards tenían que decirlo 2 veces.*

*T: en el Bingo quizás se distraían un poco más, ya que donde era más material, tenían que poner las fichas. Entonces ahí como que no había tanta repetición.*

*T: al principio yo solo notaba solo una repetición de vocabulario y esto dio chance a que yo pudiera observar que claro a través de estas estrategias ellos pudieron ir interiorizando más, comprendiendo más.*



### 4.2.3. Students' participation

In relation to the third sub-theme analyzed, *students' participation*, understood as the children taking part in the activities and/or tasks carried out during the English lesson; findings show that the co-teacher perceives that in general students were motivated to participate during the English lesson when games were implemented. Even when, students are not able to identify the language (English or Spanish) used while playing, it is clear that they are able to recognize words in English and mention it. However, the co-teacher acknowledged that students' participation using English during the lesson was more frequent when students were closer to the last sessions of the intervention. Table 5 shows the number of times this sub-theme was identified.

**Table 5: Third sub-theme, students' participation**

Theme.	Sub-theme	Frequency	Extract
Use of English	Student's participation	5	T: así que ahí ya se obtenía mayor porcentaje de expresión en inglés. T: dentro de las últimas 2 secciones fue donde hubo más logro de este idioma.

Additionally, the co-teacher suggested that the memory game promoted students' oral participation, as well as more use of English from students when participating on the games. The following quotes show this point:

*T: si se evidenció el uso del inglés y se registraba más que nada en la participación individual de cada uno cuando preguntaba directamente ellos tendían obviamente a usar el inglés.*

*T: puedo identificar mayormente el memory game, donde había más expresión verbal.*

### 4.2.4. Contextualized use of English

Regarding the fourth sub-theme emerged, *contextualized use of English*, understood as the use of English in a real and/or simulated context; findings show that the co-teacher argued that when students had a better comprehension of the unit vocabulary, they would be able to use it more often. Table 6 shows how frequent was this sub-theme identified.



**Table 6: Fourth sub-theme, contextualized use of English**

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub-theme</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Extract</i>
Use of English	Contextualized use of English	3	T: También en la confianza de los niños ya que al contextualizarlos a través de los juegos dio más seguridad.

In the same line, the co-teacher acknowledged that when they comprehended the target vocabulary and had opportunities to use it in a contextualized manner, students felt more confident using it. Furthermore, the co-teacher suggested that Bingo promoted students' comprehension of the new language. The following quotes show this point:

*T: El bingo propiciaba más la comprensión.*

*T: que no solamente es recordar, sino que también van comprendiendo el vocabulario y todo lo relacionado a esto.*

#### **4.3. Specific Objective 3: To identify students' perception of the use of games in the English lesson.**

Data to address specific objective 3 was gathered in in two group interviews applied to seven students at the end of the intervention. One theme, Enjoyment and three sub-themes emerged from the analysis, namely, games, memory, and bingo

**Table 7: Themes and sub-themes emerge in group interview**

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Sub-themes</i>
<i>Enjoyment.</i>	Games Memory Bingo

The group interviews applied to seven students in two groups were transcribed, read and analyzed through thematic analysis; then, the obtained data was categorized and reported through themes and sub-themes, the most representative quotes are presented on the chapter in order to support the presented analysis.



#### 4.3.1. Theme 4: Enjoyment

Regarding theme emerged, *enjoyment*, defined as the feeling of happiness or pleasure while working in the English lesson; findings show that students in general enjoy the English lessons, especially when games are implemented. Table 8 shows the frequency that this theme was identified.

**Table 8: Theme, enjoyment**

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Extracts</i>
<i>Enjoyment</i>	11	Group 1 I: ¿A ustedes les gustan las clases de inglés? Vane, Daniel, David (all at once): Sí  Group 2 Andrea: Me gusta todo.

Students' answers indicate that both groups agree on that in general like English lessons. Furthermore, two children say that the English lesson is fun. However, they struggled to identify specific aspects of the lesson that they enjoy.

Moreover, some students from group 1, identify games as their favorite aspect of the English lesson. Meanwhile, on group 2 students were not able refer to their favorite aspects of the English lesson. Considering answers from both groups, it can be seen that students cannot identify specific aspects that they enjoy of the English lesson. However, most students agree that they like everything in the lesson.

In the light of the observations done during the intervention and students answers to interviews, it can be concluded that in general children show a positive attitude toward de English lesson and they also enjoy activities related to this specific subject. Additionally, when refers to possible future implementation of games during the English lesson, students from group 1 nod affirmatively.

Regarding previous information, it can be concluded that introducing games into the English lesson can foster students learning process and generate intrinsic motivation in children to learn a foreign language. The following quotes show this point:

*I: ¿Las clases de inglés son divertidas o aburridas?*  
*David: Divertidas.*



*I: ¿Y a tí Vane que es lo que más te no te gusta de la clase de inglés o te gusta todo?*

*Vane: Todo (referring that she likes everything of the ESL lesson)*

*I: Las clases de inglés son ¿divertidas o aburridas?*

*Daniela: Divertidas.*

*I: ¿Hay algo que no les guste o todo les gusta? (referring to the English lesson)*

*Daniela: Todo (refers that she likes everything of the ESL lesson)*

*I: ¿A ustedes les gustan las clases de inglés?*

*Andrea, Leo, Daniela, Loreto (all at once): Sí*

### 4.3.2. Games

Regarding first sub-theme emerged, *games*, understood as organized activities and/or tasks that children do during the English lesson where students must follow instructions and steps in order to be able to participate; findings show that students enjoy games into the English lesson. Table 9 shows the frequency that this theme was identified.

**Table 9: First sub-theme, games**

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub-theme</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Extracts</i>
Enjoyment	Games	10	Group 1 <i>I: ¿Les gustaron los juegos?</i> <i>Vane, Daniel, David (all at once): sí.</i> <i>I: ¿Qué es lo favorito el libro o los juegos?</i> <i>David: Cuando trabajo en los juegos.</i> <i>Daniel: en los juegos.</i> <i>Vane: Los juegos</i>

Obtained data from both groups acknowledged that all students like playing games when working in the English lesson. Furthermore, most students were able to identify their favorite game. However, it was hard for them to explain the reason behind this, with two students answering recursively “porque sí” (just because), and because it is fun. Another student refers that he enjoys the mechanic of the game itself. Moreover, they suggest that in the future they would like to play games in the English lesson. Group 1 nod affirmatively when researcher suggest implementing games to future English lessons. The following quotes show this point:

*I: ¿O te gustaron los 2?*



*Vane: nod affirmative with her head, referring that she likes both games memory and Bingo.*

*I: ¿Les gustaría que después con unas nuevas palabras jugáramos más juegos parecidos?*

*David, Daniel, Vane (at the same time): asienten con la cabeza.*

Both groups agreed that, in general, children enjoy games when working into the English lesson. Notwithstanding one participant informed that she liked working on textbooks, later, also mentioned she that liked games too, specifically the Memory game.

Regarding gathered data it can be conclude that children in general enjoy playing games, when they participate in the English lesson.

#### 4.3.3. Memory

Regarding the second sub-theme emerged, *memory*, understood as a kind of board game where students must find two cards with same object, while they are playing, they are encouraged to mention the words presented on the lifted cards.

Findings show that the co-teacher perceive that students identify memory as their favorite game. Table 10 shows the frequency that this theme was identified.

**Table 10: Secund sub-theme, Memory**

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub-theme</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Extract</i>
Enjoyment	<i>Memory</i>	14	Group 1 I: ¿qué es lo que más te gusta de la clase de inglés? David: Memoria.  Group 2 I: ¿Por qué te gustó más la memoria? Daniela: porque es divertido.

Four out of seven students identify the “Memory game” as their favorite game. However, when they were asked to identify the reasons that make that game their favorite, they struggled. Only three students were able to answer., two participants referred to intrinsic motivation, such as, “*porque sí*” (just because), and “*porque es divertido*” (because it’s fun). Another student referred to the mechanic of the game itself, “*porque hay que encontrar lo mismo*” (because you should find the same). The following quotes show this point:



*I: ¿Cuál fue el favorito tuyo?*

*David: la memoria.*

*I: ¿Por qué te gusto la memoria?*

*Vane: Por que sí.*

*I: ¿por qué te gusto más?*

*David: porque... porque hay que encontrar lo mismo.*

#### 4.3.4. Bingo

Regarding the third sub-theme emerged, *Bingo*, understood as a kind of board game where students must find the target words on their individual Bingo mat, the first child that finds all words presented on their mat will win the game. Findings show that students present a positive attitude to Bingo game, even when most of students do not identify it as their favorite game. Table 11 shows the frequency this theme was identified.

**Table 11: Third sub-theme, Bingo**

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency	Extract
Enjoyment	<i>Bingo</i>	3	<p>Group 1            I: ¿Qué es lo que más te gusta de la clase de inglés Vane?            Vane: Bingo.</p> <p>Group 2            I: ¿Cuál fue el que más te gustó?            Andrea: eh, el bingo.</p>

Students like playing during lessons, and they were able to identify their favorite game. Three out of seven students select Bingo as their favorite game. However, they are not able to identify the reason behind their choice.



## Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter will present the discussion of findings of the current action research study. The results presented in Chapter 4 showed that including games in the English lesson can foster children's use of English and promote student's participation and motivation. Thus, discussion has been organized by the three specific research objectives.

### **5.1. Specific Objective 1: To describe the frequency of children's English use when playing board games (Memory and Bingo) in the EFL lesson**

This specific objective was addressed by the observation checklist done by the teacher-researcher and the co-teacher. Data was categorized by the moments of the lesson (pre-task, while-task and post-task).

The different moments of the lesson were analyzed, considering the first moment, pre-task, it can be seen that all students scored 100% at the end of intervention. During the second moment, while task, it can be seen that the usage of English while playing increased during the sessions; on the other hand, the use of Spanish decreased when students got closer to the end of the intervention. Nonetheless, when referring to the number of students that did not answer, there was a slight change on the findings related to this topic and their number remains similar from first to sixth session. Regarding post-task and while-task data, there is a tendency on students to increase their use of English while they got close to the end of intervention. These results are consistent with those obtained in Shintani's (2016) study where students gradually reduce the use of L1 and increased more complex L2 input, with learners' motivation stayed high throughout the cycles of repetition. Shintani's findings suggest that over time the learners were able to perform the task more easily, their comprehension improved, and they were able to shape the task as active participants. Also, as they repeated the task, some children started to switch from being listeners to becoming producers of English.

In addition, the current action-research findings clearly suggest that implementing games in the English lesson could foster students' oral use of English when participating in the English lesson. This would support the idea that games are a natural activity for children, which promote motivation, reduce anxiety levels, and promote enjoyment in very young learners (UNICEF, 2018). In addition, Pinter (2019) proposes that game playing can have a positive effect on language learning processes such as vocabulary and grammar learning. Furthermore, these results are in line with Inostroza (2018) who notice that games are meaningful activities that give children opportunities to use language purposefully in a comfortable environment, similarly Derakhshan and Davoodi (2015) suggest that using



vocabulary games students can use language communicatively, creating different contexts where students can use the language to communicate, exchange information and express their own opinions.

Clarke (2009) informs that adult-directed games also provides opportunities for children to learn and practice English. In Clarke's (2009) research and current study, the way that games are organized, and the support provided assists the learners to take part using the comprehension and level of English they know at that time. In the early years, children's play is best when guided by adults but not dominated by them. Skilled early childhood professionals can support children's conversations and scaffold their oral language when engaging them in conversation and find a balance between talking and listening to the children (Clarke, 2009).

Another interesting finding from the current AR was that during all the sessions students showed interest in participating in the games; nevertheless, they struggled waiting for turns, tending to complain about it. When analyzing students' use of English, referring to students that did not answer, findings show a rather stable number of events of this kind during all sessions. This could suggest that student's motivation uphold during the six sessions. In accordance with the present results, Clarke (2009) has demonstrated that very young language learners vary tremendously in their willingness to begin using English; while some children are risk takers and naturally outgoing, others will be more reticent in starting to speak English, observing others quietly and joining in with non-verbal responses or single words such as 'yes' or 'no', or will retreat into silence, this is called "*The silent period*". During this period, they may sit and observe others, or join in an activity without speaking. According to Clarke (2009), children may feel insecure in the new unfamiliar environment, therefore they may need to build a sense of trust, and/or sometimes they have high expectations of themselves and do not want to make mistakes in the new language. Other children may be timid and find trying new things difficult. The silent period is recognized as an important stage for some children learning English as a second language.

## **5.2. Specific Objective 2: To identify co-teacher' perception of the use of games to support he oral use of English**

This specific objective was attained by the co-teacher semi-structured interview carried out at the end of the intervention. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis categorized into one theme "Use of English" and four sub-themes, confidence, repetition, students' participation, and contextualized use of English.



Obtained data from the co-teacher suggested that students tend to use English while playing when they feel confident. These results reflect those of Azkarai and García (2016) who suggested that when learners become familiar with the task their need to fall back on their L1 decreases. Similarly, Pinter's (2006) demonstrated that repetition makes children become more confident, fluent, and accurate across three repetitions of the same type of tasks. Additionally, the scholar argued that children became better at handling the cognitive difficulties hidden in the specific tasks, as well as managed to consider each other's needs as listeners. In the same line, in the current AR the co-teacher suggested that games that require repetition helped students to express themselves in the foreign language. This point is also consistent with Rokita's study (2007) who inform that children learn English quickly, but also forget it fast when frequent repetition and high-intensity exposure is not provided. Moreover, Ellis (2005) argues that when students repeat a task, the first performance is considered as a preparation for further performances, in this regard repeating a task had a positive impact. In addition, repetition can be perceived by the children as a source of motivation and confidence. As Oliver and Azkara (2017) argue repetition would benefit learners because it gives students more time for formulating the language needed to express their ideas, providing children opportunities to interact with materials and activities that require them to use vocabulary and recycle it. Together with promote teacher-child interactions that could influence their acquisitions of new words. Furthermore, Pinter (2019) footnote that

*“Repetition is a valuable pedagogic tool for young learners’, over three repetitions the children were able to focus on both meaning and form simultaneously, and they felt more motivated and confident as speakers. Repetition led to better cooperation between pairs ... in fact ‘rather their enjoyment grew over the repetitions” (p.148).*

When refers to the games implemented, the co-teacher argues that students' oral participation using English was more frequent during the last sessions, and she identified the memory game was the game that promoted better students' oral participation, as in this game students had more opportunities to interact with peers and to speak. A possible explanation for this might be that, as Washington-Nortey et al (2020) study showed, all children benefited from their peers' expressive language skills. Moreover, these scholars denote that children are more likely to interact with peers than adults (teachers) in the classroom.

Finally, the co-teacher advises that, when students comprehend and have opportunities to use the target vocabulary in a contextualized manner feel more confident to use English. This is consistent with Mourao and Ellis (2020) recommendations related to vocabulary acquisition at early years, where they suggest teachers to select a plan to developed explicit exposure to help students to



learn in a familiar content and to focus, providing opportunities for the children to listen and use words in a variety of contexts and on multiple occasions. In this manner, games shown as an efficient strategy to foster English language learners.

Another key element is to maximize children's participation during the lesson, in this regards repetition emerges as a relevant aspect to take into consideration. Additionally, Pinter (2019) notes that "children spontaneously engage in repetition when they play... In fact, wanting to repeat a game or an activity is the sure sign that the first time it was fun" (p.153).

### **5.3. Specific Objective 3: To identify students' perception of the use of games in the English class.**

This specific objective was addressed by two group interviews done at the end of the intervention. Data was categorized into one theme "Enjoyment" and three sub-themes: Games, Memory game and Bingo Game. Thus, learners expressed that they loved playing games during the English lesson, and that they would like to play games in future lessons. Particularly, students preferred the memory game, some of them referring to the mechanic of the game itself, while others just refer to intrinsic motivation. These findings are clearly aligned with the literature. For instance, Inostroza's findings (2018) inform that games helped to engage children with the topic. Pinter (2019) suggested that tasks for young learners need to be playful, allow active participation, creativity, imagination and fun that feed intrinsic motivation as well. Moreover, the young learners' language classrooms must provide enjoyable, meaningful language learning experiences where learners are motivated to participate, practice and progress with their learning. In this regard, Domnus (2010) informs that "the value of educational games has been increasing in language education" (p.1497). Furthermore, this scholar advises that the use of games produces positive attitudes, captures their attention, and motivates children while learning.

Furthermore, the nature of the game fits the nature of the children. According to Derakashan & Davoodi (2015) games are fun for children as they are a student-centered activity, include interaction, physical and cognitive activity, socialization, competition and cooperation. The same researchers suggested that using games, teachers can generate different contexts in which students can have opportunities to use the target language to communicate, exchange information and express their own opinions (Derakashan & Davoodi, 2015).

Students' positive perceptions about implementing games into the English lesson could be fostered by the game characteristics. At early stages, games constitute the most important way that students obtained knowledge and core competencies. The most representative game characteristics are that it is useful,



fun, it invites to an active participation, it is dynamic, and game is socially interactive (UNICEF, 2018).

#### **5.4. Implications**

Teaching English to very young language learners is not an easy task, the following research reminded me that as a teacher it is mandatory to be aware of students individual and group motivation, developmental stages, and interests. In order to help my students to develop this kind of knowledge, it is important to remind that we as teachers are in charge of creating the lessons plans and selecting activities that involve the students on their learning process taking an active role. In this regard games emerge as an effective strategy to implement.

The research obtained results give evidence that implementing games on the English language lesson is a valuable tool, because games are a natural activity for children and motivate them, which allows students to repeat an activity without losing their interest. As teachers, we should know how to select and organize the games, in order to create conditions for children to listen and talk, along with finding new ways to encourage students to use English actively. This intervention highlighted the key role played by the English teacher when planning strategies, who should consider young learners' characteristics and interest, in order to benefit their vocabulary acquisition. Teachers should always have a positive attitude, create a joyful and comfortable atmosphere for children, along with paying attention to shy children. Similarly, it is the teachers' duty to generate the best conditions for the students to participate boldly and confidently in group activities in order to develop their language knowledge and skills.

Another important aspect future teaching practices that emerges from the current AR is the importance of searching new strategies that motivate students into the adventure of learning a new language. In this case board games were selected, but it is important students' needs are addressed in an innovative way that fosters their learning processes.

As a coordinator of the early child education department, the current study findings give me the opportunity to inspire other teachers to implement different strategies to teach English, such as games in this case, instead of following the traditional teaching strategies. Moreover, it allowed me to demonstrate the relevance of searching for new teaching strategies that are based on students' needs and characteristics so as to motivate children and make them learn while enjoying their tasks.



## 5.5 Limitations

The current study presents interesting insights towards the contribution of games for the use of the target language in the EFL lesson, some limitations related to the study's design and the data collection instruments used have been identified.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to collect specific data related to each student's use of English during the intervention and while playing the games to identify students' individual improvements in the use of English. In addition, video recordings were not allowed by the school authorities; this data collection technique would have helped to clarify data obtained from each student's usage of language in the lesson.

Another point was the school academic year planning, as some changes were made on the school winter's break which affected the number of students involved in the group interviews. It would have been interesting to have access to the perceptions of all children included in the observation sample.



## Chapter 6: Conclusions

### 6.1 Summary of main findings

The aim of the present research was to explore the contribution of board games (Memory and Bingo) on pre-kindergarten students' oral use of English during their participation in the EFL Lesson. Findings show that-, in general, the use of L1 decrease, while the use of English increase when implementing games into the English lesson. This can be related to some intrinsic and extrinsic factors, such as the characteristics of the game itself, motivation, enjoyment, children characteristics, and students' self-confidence.

In regard to the first specific objective, data was categorized among the three moments of the lesson (pre-task, while task and post task). Considering the pre-task stage, by the end of the intervention, almost all students were able to identify unit vocabulary, repeat it when requested, reproduce it spontaneously and to reproduce vocabulary spontaneously related to daily routine. Results illustrate that students' use of English increased, with all students being able to identify and reproduce target vocabulary in a spontaneous way by the last intervention session. For the while task stage, there was a clear increase in the number of times children use English in the lesson. In the same line, Post task stage findings shown an increase in the number of times students orally use English.

At the light of these results, it can be concluded that students in general increase their oral use of English when games were implemented on the English lesson.

For the specific objective two, according to co-teachers' perceptions implementing games in the English lesson could foster students oral use of English when children participate in the EFL. These results are in line with Pinter's (2019) and Clarke's (2009) who notice that games have a positive effect on the language learning process. Furthermore, the co-teacher argued that it provides the learners' opportunities to practice and learn English.

When referring to teacher's perception of the use of games to support the oral use of English among children's, she argued that when children' develop feelings of confidence they tend to speak using English during the lesson. These results are in line with Pinter's (2019) who suggested that repetition make children become more confident, fluent and accurate.

When referring to sub-theme repetition, findings show that co-teacher perceive that repetition help students to foster their oral use of English when games were implemented during the lesson. These results are in line with Ellis (2005) and Pinter (2019) who suggested that repetition is a valuable tool for teaching language to young learners, moreover, it promotes motivation and confidence among children.

Regarding sub-theme students' participation using English, results evidence that students were motivated to participate when games were implemented, as well as, they identify that games that present more opportunities for students to participate, such as memory game, as they are the ones that generate more interest by students to orally participate using English. These results are in line with





are a natural activity for children, and with Pinter's (2019) findings who suggested that playful and fun tasks develop intrinsic motivation among students. Moreover, students in general present a positive perception about games implemented into the English lesson, this situation could be foster by the game's characteristics, as UNICEF (2018) acknowledge, games are fun, invites to active participation, it is dynamic and is socially interactive.

When analyzing data related to the games implemented, Memory and Bingo games, it can be seen that the Memory game was chosen as their favorite game by a larger number of students, a small number of students indicate the Bingo game as their favorite game, but they present a positive attitude to play both games.

**Figure 12. Most frequent concepts given on the group interviews**



Figure 12 represent the most frequent concepts given by the students during group interviews after the intervention.

From the word cloud, it is evident that the students have a positive perception about games. In general, children considered that English classes are fun. In addition, they notice that enjoy games when are implemented during the lesson, and most of them identify Memory games as their favorite game.

In summary, these results shown that games could be a valuable tool to teach English to early language learners. Games catch students' attention and motivated them to interact with peers and adults, increasing their oral use of English when are implemented in the English lesson. Games promote language learnings without feeling the pressure of traditional teaching experience. This could be based on the students' characteristics and the features of the game itself. While playing students do not notice that they are learning.



## 6.2. Personal reflection

As a personal reflection, it was hard to carry out the planned activities and tasks involved in the implementation of the action plan because the teacher-researcher had to deal with different situation due to daily unexpected situations, school requirements, among others. In that regard, flexibility emerges as a key aspect to considered when an intervention has to take place.

Considering challenges emerged during the action research, it was challenging to find enough time to prepare materials needed to carry out the action research in general. In addition, there is limited research related to very young learners, as in many countries the learning of a foreign language starts in primary education. Therefore, most of the studies relay to students of that age or older.

Finally, getting parents or tutor consent was also challenging. In general, parents feel motivated to participate on this study; however, because of the winter, bad weather and children's health issues, students' attendance during the sessions was inconsistent.

In the same line, flexibility was also implemented during the design process where research aims were re-oriented to the implementation of games to support children's' oral production using English during their participation in the English class. This decision was based on students' characteristics, natural interest to play games, and considering the benefits of introducing of games into the English lesson.

The following research remind me that it is imperative to find new ways of teaching English that motivate students and make them learn in a relaxed atmosphere, especially considering students' mental health after the pandemic. Games motivate children to speak in a foreign language because they encourage and stimulate the use of language and decrease anxiety levels.

As the teacher-researcher the following study allowed me to remember the importance of reflecting on my own teaching practices regularly. This reflection allowed to identify some problematic conditions and look for possible solutions on strategies that create or modify tasks that support the students' learning process, besides than just to focus on issues that are out of the teachers control. In the same line, as a professional I realized the importance of collaborative work and that different points of views can enhance teaching processes, related to lesson planning, problems and possible solutions identifications.



### 6.3. Recommendations

Further studies need to be carried out regarding the limited number of studies related to young language learners, especially when referring to children under 6 years old. Moreover, a large number of studies reviewed emphasize the importance of further investigations on young language learners' foreign language learning in general.

Teachers should consider these research findings about implementing language practice games as a useful strategy to be incorporated into the EFL lesson to foster the students' language learnings

On the other hand, early language teacher-researchers should take advantage of this research, focusing on children's characteristics and interests searching to find new strategies to foster students language learning process by incorporating activities and tasks that differ from traditional English instruction.



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## Appendix 1: Instruments

### 1. Observational Checklist

Session:		Date:		
Teacher:				
T.	Item	Yes	No	Frequency.
Use of English.	Pre-task			
	Students identify vocabulary from the unit.			
	Students repeat vocabulary when requested (the number of times this occurs is recorded).			
	Students spontaneously reproduce vocabulary related to the unit (the number of times this occurs is recorded).			
	Students spontaneously reproduce vocabulary related to daily routines (the number of times this occurs is recorded).			
	When asked a question, students respond to it in English (the number of times this occurs is recorded).			
	While-task			
	When participating in the games, students verbalize the concept presented in English (the number of times this occurs is recorded).			
	When participating in the games, students verbalize the concept presented in Spanish (the number of times this occurs is recorded).			
	When participating in the games, the student does not respond verbally or physically in relation to the concept presented (the number of times this occurs is recorded).			
	Post-task			
	When asked a question, students respond to it in English (the number of times this occurs is recorded).			
	When asked a question, students respond to it in Spanish (the number of times this occurs is recorded).			
	When asked a question he/she does not answer (the number of times this occurs is recorded).			



## Appendix 2: Instruments

### 2. Entrevista semi-estructurada co-docente

Theme: Use of English.

1. ¿Cree que hubo cambios con la implementación de los juegos? En caso de que su respuesta sea positiva, ¿Qué cambios observó por parte de los estudiantes?
2. Entre los juegos implementados ¿En cuál de ellos observó un mayor uso del inglés por parte de los estudiantes?
3. ¿En qué sesión de la intervención se vió un mayor uso de inglés por parte de los estudiantes?
4. ¿En qué sesión de la intervención se vió un mayor uso del español por parte de los estudiantes?
5. Se observó uso espontáneo de inglés por parte de los alumnos? ¿En caso de ser positiva su respuesta, en qué ocasiones se evidenció esta situación?

#### Co-teacher semi structure interview

Theme: Use of English.

1. Do you think there were changes with the implementation of the games? If yes, what changes did you observe on the part of the students?
2. Among the games implemented, in which of them did you observe a greater use of English by the students?
3. In which session of the intervention did you observe a greater use of English by the students?
4. In which session of the intervention did you observe a greater use of Spanish by the students?
5. Was spontaneous use of English by the students observed, and if so, on what occasions was this situation evidenced?



### Appendix 3: Instruments

#### 3. Entrevista grupal estudiantes

Sub-themes	Questions:
Perception of the English class	1. ¿Te gustan las clases de inglés? ¿Por qué? 2. ¿Qué es lo que más te gusta de las clases de inglés? 3. ¿Qué es lo que menos te gusta de las clases de inglés?
Perception of games	4. ¿Te gusta que hagamos juegos en la clase de inglés? ¿Por qué? 5. ¿Qué juego fue el que más te gusto? (se presentan imágenes de los juegos realizados para recordar "Memory game" y Bingo) ¿Por qué? 6. ¿Qué fue lo que más te gusto cuando estabas jugando ese juego? (se presentan imágenes de los alumnos jugando el juego que mencionaron en la pregunta anterior) ¿Por qué?
Use of English	7. ¿Hablaste en inglés cuando jugabas? 8. ¿Hablaste en español cuando jugabas? 9. ¿Hablaste en inglés y español cuando jugabas?

#### Students group interview

Sub-themes	Questions:
Perception of the English class	10. Do you like English lessons? why? 11. What do you like most about the English classes? 12. What do you like least about English classes?
Perception of games	13. Do you like it when we play games in English class? why? 14. Which game was the one you liked the most? (images of the games played are shown to remember "Memory game" and Bingo are presented) Why? 15. What did you like the most when you were playing that game (images are presented of the students playing the game they mentioned in the previous question) Why?
Use of English	16. Did you speak English when you played? 17. Did you speak in Spanish when you played? 18. Did you speak in both English and Spanish when you played?



## APPENDIX 4

Board Games:





Online games:

