

Effectiveness of using ludic activities to enhance students' speaking skills

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to find out the effectiveness of using ludic activities to develop English-speaking skills. Speaking is vital for interaction and for communicating messages. Based on some researchers' experience, speaking is the most challenging skill to develop in the English language teaching-learning process. For that reason, this research was conducted to solve the problem in students' speaking skills thus they can better communicate their thoughts or ideas. Moreover, the research participants were seventeen students from the second year. This study used an action research method by collecting quantitative data that was analyzed to provide a background on the topic under study. The findings reveal that there was a significant improvement in the student's scores since students gather 4.56 points on the pretest and 8.12 points on the posttest, this demonstrates the effectiveness of using ludic activities to improve students' speaking skills. To sum up, ludic activities enhance students speaking skills in an efficient way. Because of this, students practice the speaking components which help them to speak clearly. This study provides more information for future research about the incorporation of ludic activities to improve students' speaking skills.

Keywords: *effectiveness; ludic activities; speaking skills.*

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Efectividad del uso de actividades lúdicas para mejorar las habilidades de habla de los estudiantes

RESUMEN

Este estudio pretende averiguar la eficacia del uso de actividades lúdicas para desarrollar la capacidad de hablar inglés. Hablar es vital para la interacción y para comunicar mensajes. Según la experiencia de algunos investigadores, la expresión oral es la destreza más difícil de desarrollar en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa. Por ello, esta investigación se llevó a cabo con el fin de resolver el problema de la expresión oral de los alumnos para que puedan comunicar mejor sus pensamientos o ideas. Además, los participantes en la investigación fueron diecisiete estudiantes de segundo año. Este estudio utilizó un método de investigación-acción mediante la recopilación de datos cuantitativos que se analizaron para proporcionar antecedentes sobre el tema objeto de estudio. Los resultados revelan que se produjo una mejora significativa en las puntuaciones de los estudiantes, ya que éstos obtuvieron 4,56 puntos en el pretest y 8,12 puntos en el posttest, lo que demuestra la eficacia del uso de actividades lúdicas para mejorar la expresión oral de los estudiantes. En resumen, las actividades lúdicas mejoran la expresión oral de los alumnos de forma eficaz. De este modo, los alumnos practican los componentes orales que les ayudan a hablar con claridad. Este estudio provee más información para para futuras investigaciones acerca de la incorporación de las actividades lúdicas para mejorar la habilidad del habla de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: actividades lúdicas; efectividad; habilidad del habla

1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is regarded as being the most crucial of the four essential language abilities for learning a foreign language. The Ministry of Education aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) established that students in Bachillerato General Unificado must attain a B1 level at the end of the second year. In light of this, students at this level are able to “use the English language for communicating in everyday situations, solving problems, and communicating basic necessities in travel, school, and work” (Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 198).

Bearing this in mind, speaking is notoriously difficult to master since it involves some components which are vital to have good communication abilities. However, two major issues exist when students try to speak in English: fluency and psychological factors (Putri, et al., 2016). First, students do not speak fluently since they lack vocabulary. According to Liu and Jackson (2008), the main barrier to communication that EFL learners encounter is a lack of vocabulary. Second, students stand with some psychological factors. The main factor is the fear to make mistakes because of this, students do not participate and interact in EFL classes spontaneously.

There are many methods and techniques to improve speaking skills, in this case, ludic activities were taken as an effective strategy for the development of this skill. Some authors sustain that ludic activities are a great tool to perfect this skill (Fiallos, 2019) exclusively. In accordance with Vanegas (2020), “ludic activities allow the construction of new knowledge in a natural and spontaneous way”. Through ludic activities, students are able to demonstrate improvement in all aspects of speaking skills, such as fluency, vocabulary, accuracy, pronunciation, and coherence. With this in mind, the importance of changing traditional teaching to games or activities that encourage students to be part of learning can be corroborated.

Although there is evidence that speaking is one of the most challenging skills to develop, it is important to mention that many researchers have conducted studies using several teaching strategies (Dewi, et al., 2017; Jiménez, 2022; Putri, et al., 2016; Sánchez, 2020; Yagual & Figueroa, 2017). However, these researchers mentioned that ludic activities should be incorporated to improve students' language skills. Despite this, there are still gaps in speaking skills, therefore, this research was focused on how to effectively enhance English speaking skills using ludic activities as an innovative strategy.

Considering the above information, this study seeks to demonstrate the effectiveness of using ludic activities to enhance students' speaking skills. Additionally, according to the results obtained, it was possible to establish how effective or not was to implement this strategy to increase this skill. For this reason, these activities were carried out in each class thus students could practice each component of speech and find an improvement that would support the feasibility of using these ludic activities in future classes. Overall, it was noticeable from the results obtained that students had a significant improvement in each component evaluated, consequently, an improvement in their speech was seen. This article contains an abstract that briefly summarizes the whole research. An introduction includes an overview, previous research, the importance of the study, and the thesis statement and it provides the background information necessary to understand the reason to conduct this research. A methodology describes in detail how the study was conducted and it includes the procedure, participants, and materials used to carry out the study. The results summarize the major findings; moreover, this section analyzes and interprets the data gathered through the instruments. The discussion section evaluates and interprets the implications of the results and it is based on the specific research question. The conclusions state the most outstanding outcomes of the study. Finally, the references contain the cited work of the article.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking skills

For decades, speaking skills have played an essential role in language acquisition since it is how messages or ideas are transmitted. As reported by Fata, et al., (2016) speaking is the process of creating and exchanging meaning through verbal and non-verbal symbols. Moreover, Nunan (2004) claims that speaking involves producing, receiving, and processing information as part of an interactive process. Speaking is an essential component of teaching and learning a foreign language.

Moreover, it is crucial to stress that speaking is regarded as an active or productive skill which indicates that students are fully engaged in the learning process. In this regard, students are required to produce sentences on their own and they must practice a great deal as well as learn a variety of concepts related to grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, and use (Srinivas Rao, 2019).

Components of speaking skills

Speaking is the most crucial skill as is the ability to carry on a conversation. Additionally, speaking effectively and efficiently requires mastering a variety of language skills, including accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency and coherence, which work together to maintain a dialogue (Leong and Masoumeh, 2017; Sari, 2022). These essential components are described below:

Accuracy. It refers to the way that words are put together to form appropriate sentences. Sentence structure is governed by a system of rules called grammar. It is clearly crucial in speaking for conveying messages coherently. According to Fiallos (2019), using proper grammar enables the transmission of a message appropriately structured and appropriate for oral communication.

Vocabulary. It is a list of words with their meanings. "Words can be expressed without using grammar, but ideas cannot be conveyed without words" (Siri, 2020). It is one of the most important components of speech as it allows speakers to convey their message more effectively by using a variety of words. On the other hand, a student's inability to speak, understand and learn the English language is hampered by a lack of vocabulary.

Pronunciation. It is the process by which a speaker creates various sounds of words when speaking. The fundamental elements of spoken language are vowels, consonants, stress, and intonation. The part of grammar known as phonology controls how sounds and patterns are created and how they are repeated in a language (Siri, 2020).

Fluency. This component is challenging to master. Nevertheless, it could be stated that it is the major goal when learning a language. The number of syllables, as well as the length of the run, are crucial components of fluency.

Coherence. It refers to how coherent, logical, and meaningful the speech is. According to Cercado (2019), coherence is the capacity to speak indefinitely, to put ideas into practice logically, and to use signposting to indicate the direction of speech.

Ludic activities

Ludic activities center on social interaction through enjoyable games and activities. It encourages the growth of interpersonal relationships, skills, and a sense of humor in people and primes the student's mind for learning motivation. Based on Vanegas's (2020) study "ludic incorporate joy, amusement, and enthusiasm, making the contexts easier to comprehend and understand". This author stated that ludic activities enhance learning

because these activities give students a chance to do so in a friendly setting. It is vital that teachers who opt for this option must apply these activities correctly, which means activities that require students to use and produce the language. In this way, these activities can serve not only to improve speaking skills but also any of the four language skills (i.e. writing, listening, reading) (Chila & Macías, 2017). In this way, "ludic activities are a great technique teacher can develop in any of the four skills of the language" (Chila & Macias, 2017).

Since ludic activities foster psychosocial development, language learning, personality development, and knowledge growth, these activities are crucial to learning. In addition to being a simple diversion, the game helps students develop their action, decision-making, interpretation, and socialization skills. When used properly, it also functions as an effective educational strategy.

Students are inspired by ludic activities to learn English in a playful way. Muñoz-Restrepo et al., (2020) claimed that "motivation is one of the most crucial factors that affect learning any subject, especially a foreign language, both successfully and with enjoyment". Students learn more when they are motivated, so implementing it in an English classroom is advantageous because they pick up the language easily and simultaneously develop linguistic skills.

Advantages of ludic activities

Concerning the advantages of implementing ludic activities Da Silveira (2017) stated the following:

- Students actively participate.
- Increase students' interest and interaction.
- They are engaging in cooperative work.
- Motor and sensor abilities are developed through ludic activities.
- Students naturally acquire the language.
- Students feel motivated and entertained developing these ludic activities.

Ludic activities to improve speaking skills

Chenche and Ochoa (2017) and Yagual and Figueroa (2017) asserted that implementing specific ludic activities are helpful to engage students in learning. Bearing this in mind, these authors established the following ludic activities to improve students' speaking skills: guessing games, board games, spelling games, pair/group work, card games,

individual games, storytelling, song, role-plays, simulations, tongue-twisters, and realia. All these activities are considered ludic as they require interaction, participation, motivation, and cooperation by students. All these aspects are key to developing speaking because without them students can get bored and not become part of the learning. Crucially, these ludic activities are closely related to promoting student interaction since through these activities they practice using the English language. For that practice is significantly important in learning a language as it allows repetition which is also indispensable in learning.

However, to select these activities teachers should consider some factors such as purpose, group size, physical environment, and personalization of activities (Ortiz and Ortiz-Márquez, 2018). These factors are also necessary to support the acquisition of knowledge and students' learning as they work together.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study was based on action research, as Zuber-Skerritt (2021) stated it seeks to comprehend how to enhance practice and foster professional development by understanding one's students, resolving issues, or learning new skills. It includes four key phases: plan, act, observe, and reflect. The plan entails problem analysis and a strategic plan; action refers to putting the plan into action; observation includes evaluating the action using the proper methods and techniques; and reflection involves thinking back on the evaluation's findings as well as the entire action and research process.

Furthermore, the researcher employed data collection since it is the procedure of gathering and examining precise data from various sources to identify trends, probabilities, and solutions to research problems to assess potential outcomes (Marzuki & Kiliahana, 2021; Simplilearn, 2021). In light of this, the quantitative method was used which focuses on quantifying data collection and analysis (Bryman, 2012). The pretest and posttest were utilized by the researcher to gather this type of data; moreover, these instruments were developed through the testing technique. The data analysis was done by collecting, selecting, categorizing, comparing, synthesizing, and interpreting the data, which was represented in tables to provide a clear vision of the results.

This study was carried out over forty hours of intervention plan based on ludic activities. The population of this research was seventeen bachillerato students from a public high

school. The whole participants were between fifteen and sixteen years old and had several abilities, gender, and learning style.

The researcher did the following procedure to conduct this study. Firstly, the researcher identified the main problem regarding speaking skills. Furthermore, an intervention plan was structured, including ludic activities as an innovative strategy to enhance students' oral expression. Consequently, the plan was put into practice with different ludic activities encouraging students' learning. Then, with several speaking activities students practice their speech, and it was assessed to check their improvement in the speaking components (fluency, coherence, accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary). At the end of the intervention plan, the teacher could notice students' performance and which aspects of speech a positive change was most evident.

4. RESULTS

This section displays the results obtained from the pretest and posttest. Hence, it was demonstrated how effectively implementing ludic activities enhanced students' speaking skills. Since students had a significant improvement in each speaking component, this was advantageous for them to communicate properly.

Table 1

Pretest and Posttest results by indicators.

Component	Pretest	Posttest
Accuracy (2.5)	1.17	2.06
Vocabulary (2.5)	1.17	2.20
Pronunciation (2.5)	1.11	2.18
Fluency and Coherence (2.5)	1.11	1.68
Total means	4.56	8.12

The results from each speaking component of the pretest and posttest are shown in Table 1. Seventeen students were measured on four speaking components (accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency and coherence) each with a score of 2.50 points having an overall average of ten points. Additionally, the mean of each component can be seen, which aids in providing a clearer picture of the outcomes. Through the use of ludic activities, it is clear that students' speaking skills have significantly increased. However, it is notable that students did not notably improve in the fluency and coherence component given their inability to maintain a lengthy answer on their own.

The pretest was applied before the intervention process to check students' ability to speak in English. With this in mind, students demonstrated many issues in their speech since they were not able to answer most of the questions appropriately. Although they were familiar with some of the vocabulary terms evaluated, their pronunciation was not clear enough for their speech to be fully understood. In addition, many of the students correctly answered the questions but either lacked the proper grammatical structure or they did not catch what the teacher was asking. Some of the students' responses, however, were in need of coherence which would help with comprehension. They also frequently paused when speaking, which indicates that their fluency was lacking.

On the other side, the posttest was applied after the intervention plan based on ludic activities. In light of this, students showed a better ability to communicate verbally. This was apparent since the majority of students' responses were concise and understandable. Additionally, they greatly expanded their vocabulary and their pronunciation improved noticeably. Their responses also had proper grammar, making comprehending their ideas easier. Despite some pauses and errors, their coherence and fluency had slightly improved, and their message was still clear.

All things considered, table 1 demonstrates that "vocabulary" had the highest mean score (2.20/2.50), whereas "fluency and coherence" had the lowest mean score (1.68/2.50). Despite this, it was clear that students improved in their ability to communicate because their speech was comprehensible after receiving treatment based on ludic activities. Students improved their "accuracy," which went from 1.17/2.50 (46%) in the pretest to 2.06/2.50 (82%) in the posttest; their "vocabulary," went from 1.17/2.50 (46%) to 2.20/2.50 (88%); their "pronunciation," went from 1.11/2.50 (44%) to 2.18/2.50 (87%) and their fluency and coherence went from 1.11/2.50 (44%) to 1.68/2.50 (67%). Considering the difference in the total mean scores between the pretest and posttest, these essential instruments showed an outstanding improvement in students' speaking skills. Therefore, ludic activities are a great technique to enhance students' interaction, participation, and motivation which are essential ingredients for improving students speaking skills.

5. DISCUSSION

The question that guided this research was “how can students effectively improve English speaking skills by using ludic activities?” The difference between the pretest and posttest taken before and after the intervention plan demonstrates the effectiveness of using ludic activities for improving speaking skills. The total means scores of the speaking components from the posttest were higher than in the pretest having a difference of 3.56. Although students’ fluency and coherence did not show a notable improvement, students’ responses were comprehensible. This result is in agreement with Yagual and Figueroa (2017) who stated that ludic activities are a useful strategy to enhance students’ speaking skills. Additionally, through the use of ludic activities, is evident that students’ fluency, coherence, accuracy, vocabulary, and pronunciation significantly improved (Putri, et al., 2016). Hence, ludic activities greatly promote students’ interaction making them participate actively in speaking activities and be part of the learning.

Furthermore, some limitations appeared during the development of these activities, making it difficult to accomplish them. For instance, the time because not always is compatible to include new activities in the lesson planning. Because of this, the management of the time must be rigorous as the teacher should explain the rules of the activities which takes time. Additionally, students could get distracted and make noise during the activities. It is essential to further investigate ways that are useful and above all effective, for students to be able to communicate everyday situations in English. In addition, teachers should apply new strategies that help students to participate actively in class and interact with partners.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Ludic activities are a practical strategy to apply to enhance students’ performance. These activities help students to utilize the language which is advantageous for them to practice all speaking components. The incorporation of ludic activities aids to keep the classroom lively and raise students’ awareness of any subject matter covered in class. Additionally, the speaking activities created a dynamic environment that inspires learners to participate. Consequently, learners gradually enhance their ability to communicate in a foreign language.

Furthermore, the use of ludic activities demonstrated that students' perspectives on the English class and the language itself were altered by the enjoyment of the lesson and the

resulting esprit de corps among the participants. In this way, ludic activities were an important tactic for creating an environment where students would be interested in learning and where it would be connected to their context.

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