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NACIONAL
AUTÓNOMA DE
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Using games as a didactic strategy to develop speaking skills in
English as a foreign language

Trabajo de seminario de graduación para optar

al grado de

**Licenciado en la Carrera de ciencias de la educación con
mención en inglés**

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Estelí, 21 de febrero de 2020



I. Introduction

The present research focuses on games as a didactic strategy to enhance the speaking skills in young learners in Estelí municipality during the second semester of 2019. The purpose of this investigation is to analyze the effect of the use of the game as a didactic strategy to develop the oral skills of the English language.

During the learning process of a foreign language, students have to develop four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. This study focuses on speaking skills in the learning process. This skill for communication is very important and at the age of six and seven years old; students start the process of writing and reading in their first language; therefore, the English class develops in a communicative way.

This investigation was made at Emmanuel Mongalo Institute; an elementary public school located in Estelí in the neighborhood Oscar Games, in which English lessons have been received in first grade since 2018 and it continues the sequence in second grade with two hundred eighty-five students that are protagonists in the educational learning process.

English, as a subject was implemented recently, for students, is new knowledge and they have received it in a positive way; and the teacher applied a variety of activities during teaching with the purpose of creating interest in the class.

The technique applied in this research was the game. Games according to Oxford Dictionary; defines a game as a form of play or sport, especially a competitive one played according to rules and decided by skill, strength, or luck Oxford, (2019). Therefore, the educational game is a game designed to teach humans about a specific subject and to develop their skills and competencies Keesee, (2011) Games are attractive for kids because games are part of kids' daily lives. Kids bring it to the class becomes an interesting exercise where children constantly like to be involved.

There are different advantages during the application of games in the class. One is the Student's high participation and motivation. Students feel involved during the class and it facilitates the acquisition of the target language. Another advantage is that games Create self-confidence in the learners; so they do not feel afraid during the class and participate actively

and in a natural way. Games contribute to creating an atmosphere for comprehensible input and output and it gives to students an active role when they are playing.

One disadvantage is that the minority of students who do not pay attention to the games by their learning styles. Some students prefer to not to participate and stay in their seats. Another disadvantage could be noise during the class.

The main motivation to investigate this research is to know the importance of using the games as a strategy to develop oral skills in children and acquire new knowledge about how students learn a foreign language. This investigation will help us as future teachers to teach the language.

In Nicaragua, teaching English in primary public schools started in 2018, as a pilot project, and it was complex to know what it would be its effect on kids. Also, as a new project, teachers did not have enough experience in teaching English to young learners and there were not enough didactic materials to develop English class. Bounce Now Starter level is the book used by teachers published by MacMillan Publisher, provided by the Ministry of Education (MINED), and as a great investment; it is just used as a visual element and students cannot be scratched. Therefore, teachers have to find other kinds of strategies for the learning process. Developing speaking skills in a context where English is a foreign language can be difficult for the teacher; therefore, the educator can make use of games to facilitate the acquisition of new knowledge by the students. Games can work as an excellent tool when teachers want to introduce new content because kids easily acquire knowledge. By the facts before mentioned, a problem question is proposed:

What effect do games have in the development of the speaking skills of first-grade students at Emanuel Mongalo School in Estelí, during the second semester of 2019?

II. Literature review

Piaget, (1980) is based on the premise that there are stages in development and that each stage is qualitatively different, while others maintain that development is more continuous. Jean Piaget's theory states that learning evolves by stages from birth to adulthood. According to this theory, the children interact with the environment, and with information processing,

they create schemes that become complex. Therefore, children interpret new knowledge in terms of old schemes they already possess, and then the information will be modified to fit the new experience. Children between the ages of 2 to 7 enjoy and participate actively in repetitive games where the same scenario is acted out over and over again.

Creswell,(1938) is the proponent of learning by doing. He believed that each child was active, inquisitive and wanted to explore. He thought that effective education came primarily through social interactions schools and classrooms should be representative of real-life situations, allowing children to participate in learning activities interchangeably and flexibly in a variety of social settings.

According to Cameron, (2010), children learn differently from adults. Children are very active, enthusiastic and lively learners. They participate constantly in activities organized by the teacher.

The communicative approach according to Patel & Jain, (2008)is a learner-centered approach. This approach develops communicative competences. The role of the teacher is seen as a facilitator and he should provide all the resources necessary for communication to be effective in every context. Through the communicative approach, the atmosphere of the English language is created so that students could learn English directly and the teaching-learning materials are prepared according to child attitude and interest or individual difference so that children could learn the language easily and effectively.

III. Materials and methods

The population is thirty-eight students of the section "A" in the morning shift. The sample of the study consists of eight students at Emmanuel Mongalo School.

Data instruments used for this investigation are interviews, observation, and a focus group. The interview was applied to the teacher who works at the school selected. With the interview, the interviewee could explain their points of view on the subject and provide an overview of their own experiences.

Observation and focus groups were applied to students of Emmanuel Mongalo School with the purpose of observing the environment in which the participants evolve and acquire their knowledge.

IV. Analysis and discussion

This chapter presents results about the investigation and explains the instruments used during the inquiry. In addition, this chapter links data collection with the theory presented in chapter three.

During the class observation of the group “A” in the morning shift, that teacher applied three games to review the lesson of the weather. It was observed the participation and motivation of the students during the games, and as they participated during the class, they produce the vocabulary taught by the teacher. Using games for the learning process can open the opportunity to experiment a comprehensible input and output because according to Dewey’s theory since games bring a real situation to the classroom contributes to creating a good environment for knowledge acquisition.

Another instrument was applied and it was the focus group; that was implemented at School studied; with the participation of eight students and the moderator. During the application of the interview, ten questions were asked to the students. Before the questions, the moderator applied a game; which it was observed that during the activity; students were active and they felt confident. During this activity, it could be observed that children enjoyed the game, which is a stimulating activity that develops their language. Also when they participated in the game they produced the vocabulary taught in the previous lessons. Dewey, (2010) states that integrating activities that children have out of the classroom facilitates the learning process. Supporting this theory and with the game applied before the focus group it could seem that: there is a positive effect when a teacher brings the real-life situation to the class like games that belong to students’ lives. Students produce the vocabulary taught easily and use a variety of activities to teach English to create interest in children to acquire more knowledge. Therefore, it creates a good environment to produce the vocabulary and practice the foreign language during the class. Students said during the interview that they enjoy

participating in different games and that they like to receive English classes. For that reason, the English class is attractive for kids.

V. Final words

With this investigation, I acquired knowledge about how children learn another language; that they do it in dynamic and interactive activities like games, facilitating the acquisition of a foreign language. Developing speaking skills are essential in communication and it is one of the four skills that teachers have to work with; in a daily class in a country where English is not a second language and it is just used at the moment of the class. Thus, it is convenient that students interact with each other to practice the language, using a variety of activities that the teacher will facilitate during the class.

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