Mejora de la capacidad de expresión oral de L2 para jóvenes aprendices a través de juegos basados en contenido

Enhancing L2 Young Learners' Speaking Skill through Content-Based Games

Melhoria da habilidade de falar L2 para jovens alunos por meio de jogos baseados em conteúdo

Cristina Alexandra Juca Castro
Universidad de Cuenca
E-mail: cristhina.juca@ucacue.edu.ec

Susana Ximena Orellana Mora
Universidad de Cuenca
E-mail: ximena.orellanam@ucuenca.edu.ec

Resumen

El presente proyecto de investigación estuvo enfocado en responder las siguientes preguntas: (1) ¿En qué grado el uso de juegos basados en contenido dentro de la clase de inglés ayuda a los estudiantes de sexto grado de la Unidad Educativa Particular "Rosa de Jesús Cordero" (Catalinas) a mejorar su destreza de expresión oral de una segunda lengua? (2) ¿Qué subdestreza tendría el mayor impacto al desarrollar la destreza de expresión oral de un contenido de clase de una segunda lengua? Los participantes del estudio fueron sesenta y ocho estudiantes divididos en dos grupos de treinta y cuatro estudiantes cada uno al comienzo del año escolar. Los estudiantes de cada grupo no tenían un nivel de inglés homogéneo. Se aplicó la estrategia de aprendizaje de juegos basada en el contenido dentro del aula para motivar a los estudiantes a mejorar

su destreza de expresión oral en inglés. Se aplicaron instrumentos de prueba previa y posterior en el proyecto tanto al grupo de intervención como al grupo de control. Además, se planificaron y desarrollaron 10 juegos conectados con el contenido de planificación curricular durante la participación. El enfoque cuantitativo se desarrolló en esta investigación. Los resultados revelaron que la estrategia de aprendizaje de contenidos a través de juegos tuvo un impacto significativo en los estudiantes del grupo de tratamiento en la subdestreza mensaje.

Palabras clave: Enfoque cuantitativo, juegos basados en contenido, destreza de expresión oral, subdestreza.

Abstract

This research project was focused on answering the following questions: (1) To what degree does the use of content-based games inside the English class help sixth-grade students from Unidad Educativa Particular "Rosa de Jesús Cordero" (Catalinas) to enhance their L2 speaking skills? (2) Which subskill would have the greatest impact by developing oral communication in an L2 class content? There were sixty-eight students as participants, who were divided into two groups of thirty-four students each at the beginning of the school year. The students of each group did not have a homogenous English level. Content-based games learning strategy was applied inside the classroom to encourage the students to improve their L2 speaking skills. A pre test and post test were applied to the treatment and the control group to measure the participants' speaking skills before and after the intervention. Additionally, ten games were planned and applied based on the curriculum content. The quantitative approach was developed in this research. Findings revealed that the use of content-based games learning strategies had a significant impact on the students on the subskill message for the treatment group.

Keywords: Quantitative approach, Content-based games, speaking skill, subskill.

Resumo

Este projeto de pesquisa teve como objetivo responder às seguintes questões: (1) Em que medida o uso de jogos baseados em conteúdo na aula de Inglês auxilia alunos da sexta série da Unidade de Ensino Particular "Rosa de Jesús Cordero "(Catalinas) para melhorar suas habilidades de conversação em uma segunda língua? (2) Qual subcapacidade teria o maior impacto no desenvolvimento das habilidades de expressão oral de um conteúdo de aula de segundo idioma? Os participantes do estudo foram sessenta e oito alunos divididos em dois grupos de trinta e quatro alunos cada no início do ano letivo. Os alunos de cada grupo não possuíam um nível homogêneo de inglês. A estratégia de aprendizagem baseada em conteúdo foi aplicada em sala de aula para motivar os alunos a melhorar suas habilidades de fala em inglês. Os instrumentos pré e pósteste foram aplicados no projeto tanto para o grupo intervenção quanto para o grupo controle. Além disso, 10 jogos vinculados ao conteúdo do planejamento curricular foram planejados e desenvolvidos durante a participação. A abordagem quantitativa foi desenvolvida nesta pesquisa. Os resultados revelaram que a estratégia de aprendizagem do conteúdo por meio de jogos teve impacto significativo nos alunos do grupo de tratamento na subcapacidade de mensagem.

Palavras-chave: Abordagem quantitativa, Jogos baseados em conteúdo, habilidades de expressão oral, subcapacidade.

1. Introduction

 "Language learning is a hard work. Effort is required at every moment and must be maintained over a long period of time" (Moayad, 2011, p. 3). English is considered in Ecuador one of the subjects that has to be improved in the different Educational Institutions. In Ecuador, public institutions are economically managed by the government. On the other hand, private institutions have their own economic income. According to the Ministry of Education (2019), students from different grades must have a specific English level. The Ministry of Education's aim is to give the Educational Institutions guidelines which help authorities from the different establishments have a clear idea of the English objectives that need to be achieved in Ecuador. The English levels that are needed achieved are based on the Common European Framework (CEF) in which different levels are presented: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2. The Natural Approach is one of the branches that is taken into account in our context because the Ministry of Education wants the learners to know how to interact with others in our social context in a natural way (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2019). English as a second language is one of the most important subjects at Catalinas Elementary School which is a private institution. The school provides students the opportunity to advance their English skills by having ten class hours per week, in this way, teachers are required to use their time to help students improve their English level by planning activities according to their age and level. However, inside a class, there is a group of students that their English level is lower, and another group that has a good English level and they like to participate all the time.

This research aims to analyze the use of content-based games in the English class to improve the students' speaking skills since they need to be more motivated to produce the target language. Performing an L2 language could be difficult if the effort is not involved. Since that "…the person who has not good communication skills will suffer badly in this era of competition and comparison to the person who has good

communication skills…" (Khan & Ali, 2010, p.2). According to Rijal and Arifah (2017), the speaking ability is a part of the productive skills which is "…more complicated because the teacher must use the suitable strategy to make the class very effective" (p.1). Also, Urrutia and Vega (2010) state that students should be motivated to practice L2 oral communication inside classrooms to demonstrate their ability when they need to do it. Motivation is a significant aspect when a person learns a new language, so Dornyei (2001) argues that "…motivation is related to one of the most basic aspects of the human mind, and it has a very important role in determining success or failure in any learning situation" (p.11). Teachers are the key to the learning process because they are in charge of students who have the necessity of expressing their feelings or thoughts, but who do not have enough confidence (Kasker, 2009). One of the problems that students face in producing speaking skills is because "…they are worried about making mistakes, receiving criticism or losing face in front of the rest of the class" (Fitri & Gurning, 2013, p.2). In this way, teachers have to assume an important part in the teaching-learning process, since the students' motivation by learning a new language must be reflected in the effort that teachers apply to the process. The motivation that the students acquire would depend on the teachers' achievement by applying new strategies that help them learn and produce a new target language. For these reasons, the implementation of content-based games activities inside an EFL classroom helps students and teachers keep motivating in the teaching-learning process in which Moayad (2011) states that "…games motivate learners, promote communicative competence and generate fluency and may have a significant role in improving a second language acquisition" (p. 4).

2. Theoretical Framework

This study is built on the theory of Constructivism Approach, Active Learning Approach, The Natural Approach, and the Meaningful Learning Theory. They support the development of this study. Constructivism learning is taken into account as a primary theory. Bada (2015) states that

this is an approach to teaching and learning based on the foundation that cognition (learning) is the consequence of psychological construction. Two notions are focused on this approach. The first one explains how students learn new information by linking their existing knowledge, and another notion highlights how students build up their learning through their experiences. So, the use of content-based games in a classroom can help the students connect the new information to the previous learning, and in this way, this knowledge could be more significant because the students learn through their experiences, and they could become active learners. One of the benefits of constructivism is that kids get the learning faster and appreciate learning when they work dynamically. Additionally, Constructivism Approach pays attention to the students' experience, and how they are constructing their knowledge. For instance, if a person finds something new, he/she has to settle it with his/her earlier learning. It means that he/she could switch what he/she supposes because a person is an active designer of his/her learning. Besides, teachers have to make sure that students understand the previous information and can connect to the new one and build up new learning (Bada, 2015).

Roehl et al. (2013) manifest that teachers have the challenge to change the way how the students have to learn. It means that teachers are in charge of creating new strategies, and they do not have to focus on traditional teaching methods like memorizing new information. The idea is that learners have to be enrolled in the new learning through their experiences actively. The Active Learning method plays an important role in the teaching-learning process because students are the core of the classroom as active learners. Besides, Active Learning emphasis students' participation in which they are not only listeners, for this reason, it is proposed activities that help learners to have a dynamic role in education such as: "…(a) individual activities, (b) paired activities, (c) informal small groups, and (d) cooperative student projects…" (Roehl et al., 2013, p.45), and they could have the opportunity to interact with other students. Like this, students have the advantage to get knowledge by working in different manners. According to the social interaction that learners

need to have in the learning process, Smolucha (1989) in his research states that "…Vygotsky proposed a developmental theory of creativity in which creative imagination develops from children's play activities into a higher mental function that can be consciously regulated through inner speech" (p. 4). Also, Miller (2003) establishes that Vygotsky said that "…a child's development depends on the interaction between a child's maturation and a system of symbolic tools and activities that the child appropriates from his or her sociocultural environment" (p. 13). It means that the growth of human cognitive and higher mental meanings come from social relations and through the contribution of communal events derives cognitive and outgoing meanings.

Taking into consideration that students should be the center of a learning process instead of teachers, the Natural Approach (NA) is quite important in the way how this research project is developed. Ellidokuzoğlu (2014) states in his project that "…in NA the aim is to make students rediscover their innate capacity to acquire a language…" (p. 1). Second language acquisition is installed in social activities that arise as personal interaction with people, things, and events (Aimin, 2013). Students could achieve learning in different manners and situations. Krashen and Terrel (1995) established Five Hypotheses that are taken into consideration in the educational system; however, three of them are part of this research project. *Learning-Acquisition Hypothesis* is the first *one* in which *learning* is focused on the structure of a language and *acquisition* is related to the message (meaning) of the new language. Furthermore, the author claims that when a person interacts with a native speaker, he/she is worried about the message and the features of his/her language; for instance, movements and signs that define the feature of the meaning (Abukhattala, 2012). The use of content-based games is focused on the acquisition because the strategy pretends to help students improve their learning English-speaking skills by highlighting the message. *The Input Hypothesis* is the fourth *one* in Krashen's theory. This hypothesis is the most important because this hypothesis states that students get the new language by understanding the message little by little. Teachers

give the students a moment of silence that is called a *"silent period"* in which students could feel and understand that the new learning is giving results. Then, the next stage produced is *"speech emergence"*. Krashen and Terrel (1995) stated that the stage "*speech emergence*" is developed when learners acquire new information little by making mistakes at the beginning of the learning process. As an advantage of this stage, the students could continue producing the learning in a better way. So, the use of content-based games in the teaching-learning process lets learners produce the target language word by word and then building up short phrases according to students' age, level, and school content. *The Affective Filter Hypothesis* is the fifth hypothesis that Krashen proposed in the educational system. Du (2009) states that "Language learning is a process that involves objective and affective factors" (p.1). People who have a low affective filter will permit extra input into their language achievement. *Affective Filter* was incorporated by Krashen as one of his five input hypotheses. There are four affective factors: motivation, attitude, anxiety, and self-confidence that affect learners when they are acquiring new information. These factors are essential when teachers want students to produce a new learning because some students do not have good L2 development due to their lack of motivation to improve it.

Finally, this research project is focused on the way how the students learn something new by connecting their pre-existing knowledge as well. Meaningful Learning Theory highlights the importance of the students as the center of the teaching-learning process in which teachers must be acted as facilitators in the educational system. Ballester (2014) in his research project states that if students have developed appropriate learning before, they could continue learning without any difficulty. Ausubel is the precursor of the Meaningful Learning Theory in which he explained how to put the theory into practice to make the learning more significant. According to some studies, the use of content-based games as a teaching-learning strategy inside the classroom creates a dynamic environment where students could feel motivated by learning the target language and connect the new information. This research project was

focused on one of the principles of The Meaningful Learning Theory, "*Motivation*". "Motivation helps to improve classroom environment and makes learners interested in their tasks and creativity strengthens imagination and intelligence" (Ballester, 2014, p. 2).

3. Literature review

Based on the importance of implementing active and interactive oral activities as part of the English class, there have been some investigations about the improvements of the speaking skills. To understand the students' speaking learning process, Wang (2014) stated that speaking skills could be influenced by three factors "…cognitive, linguistic and affective factors" (p.1). He argued that the *Cognitive factor* has been developed in different ways in which people could produce a new language. Conceptualization has been applied when people tried to think about how to use the correct information to express their ideas. Formulation has been required when people wanted to express their ideas by using grammatical structures correctly, and articulation has been applied when people needed to produce the language by the use of their organs. *Linguistic factors* have been really important when people wanted to communicate by using pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary subskills. The ability to acquire speaking skills has depended on *Affective factors* in which anxiety and restriction have had a great impact on developing L2 speaking skills because people felt anxiety when they did not domain the target language and could not express their ideas, and also, they felt that it was better to keep silent instead of using the target language in a wrong way. Dewi et al. (2017) stated that the factors "…fear of making mistakes and fear of being laughed by their friends…" (p.4) could prevent L2 students to have real communication. These factors and the lack of vocabulary made L2 young learners not have enough confidence to develop the mentioned skill, so this uncomfortable feeling made that the classes turned into a boring environment without any interest. For that reason, Wang's (2014) research project paid attention to the speaking skills stages which were four: "Pre-speaking;

while-speaking; post-speaking; and extension practice" (p. 4-6). It was stated that each speaking stage has been followed by the learning factors which were mentioned before. In his research project, he identified that the speaking process helped students reduce their anxiety level and enhance their ability in speaking. It has been recommended to continue using the four speaking skills steps because they have been very useful when a person has acquired a new language.

It was important to take into consideration that the practicing of the four L2 skills have been quite significant when a person has had to gain the target language, however, the achievement of L2 listening and speaking skills has been very valuable because people have had to interact all the time in this era of communication. People who have not acquired good L2 speaking skills would suffer because they have lived in an age of competition. It has been recommended to foster grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation through the use of oral dynamic activities to keep the students motivated as well (Arias et al., 2015; Khan & Ali, 2010). Toro et al. (2018) manifested that in this new era, there have been some teachers that have worked on traditional methods such as "task-based activities" which have not been part of the students' age and points of view. For example, in Ecuador, there was a lack of useful strategies to enroll the students to develop speaking skills. Based on this problem, the Ministry of Education of Ecuador has designed a Curriculum where the Communicative Approach has been the core of the principles to acquire the target language, and also, it has been suggested the practicing of different activities, strategies, and material which would offer the learners more opportunities to apply the new communicative language. According to Khan and Ali (2010); Arias et al. (2015); Buitrago and Ayala (2008), there have been some educational methods that have been recommended to use in an L2 lesson class, so one of the methods that has been suggested to apply in classrooms was "Motivation". They manifested that "…students should be given motivation, encouragement, some psychological training, reassurance, and counseling to remove their shyness..." (Khan & Ali, 2010, p.4). Another method that has

been suggested to maintain the students motivated was to use the target language in the classroom all the time and the physical language communication, and like this, the students could understand better the target language, as they could show the results in their research project process. They have recommended using different instruments such as electronic dictionaries, projectors, online self-tests, etc. to encourage learners to improve different English skills. Another method to foster speaking skills has been based on applying oral educational events such as cultural activities that were related to the Spanish projects. Likewise, they have suggested incorporating activities that helped students work cooperatively by creating strategies according to the students' abilities in which the learners could not think or feel that the learning activities were a competition.

The implementation of educational games inside the classroom has been effective in the L2 learning process as an option to create an atmosphere to talk, and in this way, the students could use the target language in a freeway without thinking all the time about their mistakes. Buitrago and Ayala (2008) indicated that the use of games has been "the most accepted strategy by learners; they are always requesting to play" (p.5). The authors named two kinds of games: linguistic and communicative in which communicative games were considered more important by the named researchers, so they were used to exchange information. An example of communicative games was "…arranging games, guessing games, and matching games" (Wang et al., 2011, p.3). Buitrago and Ayala (2008); Wang et al. (2011); Yolageldili and Arikan (2011) stated that the use of active games inside the classroom had a crucial impact on L2 learners because these kinds of activities motivated the students to construct their learning without stressed or frustration. In the same way, they stated that games had a real and positive impact on second language acquisition, and they enabled L2 knowledge particularly for young learners. Besides, the authors argued that educational games needed a purpose, for this reason, teachers had to think about the kind of game they had to apply in the classroom and the correct time to introduce the game.

Continuing with the analysis of using games inside classrooms, Moayad (2011); Gozcu and Caganaga (2016); Dewi et al. (2017) agreed that the use of games produced many improvements in students' learning process. Applying communicative games inside an L2 classroom, the students could be very optimistic, and the class could be interesting. Gozcu and Caganaga (2016) maintained that students could feel free and motivated, and the most important reason was that L2 students could enhance their communicative learning through communicative games. Moayad (2011) suggested the use of games in primary levels to encourage the students to use the new language more effectively. Twister was one of the games that was proposed to use to help students improve their speaking skills and reduce students' anxiety and stress. It has been recommended that in future research, teachers could use games in the L2 teaching-learning process since the games have helped the students learn the target language in a good environment as long as the games had an educational aim.

In conclusion, the use of traditional methods and few oral dynamic activities which were only practiced to promote Grammar improvements inside an L2 class in some Public Institution in Cuenca-Ecuador (Calle et al., 2012) have led to carry out this research project that its aim was to help the students improve their speaking skills through content-based games inside a classroom. The content-based games benefited the learners to consolidate their learning. For this reason, the students of the sixth level from Catalinas learned English as a second language through some content-based games which were related to the English class content. The activities were developed at the beginning, middle, or the end of a class, without losing control of the main purpose of the lesson. According to the problem that was the lack of oral communication performance by using English as an L2, and the purpose which was focused on helping students enhance their speaking skills by the use of active and interactive activities such as content-based games, this quasi-experimental project required to answer the following questions: In what degree does the use of content-based games inside the English class help sixth-grade students from Unidad Educativa Particular "Rosa de Jesús Cordero" (Catalinas) to

enhance their L2 speaking skills? Which subskill would have the greatest impact by developing oral communication in an L2 class content?

4. Objectives

4.1. General objective.

To analyze the use of content-based games in the English class to improve the students' speaking skills.

4.2. Specific objectives

To identify the most useful subskill to develop the speaking skill.

To establish the importance of using content-based games when developing students' speaking skills.

To compare the students' oral production before and after the research project intervention.

5. Method and design

The quantitative approach – a cross-sectional study was developed in this research because the speaking skills-subskills level was measured before and after the intervention, and the project was carried out a semester, so the results were compared once when the project had concluded. The Convenient sampling method was carried out to the selection of the students in each class before starting the school year. The design of the research was quasi-experimental since there were two groups, the treatment group, and the control group.

The L2 young learners' speaking skill was recorded before (pre test) and after (post test) the intervention to analyze it later. The pre test was part of the diagnostic test at the beginning of the academic year, and as the

Unit 3 evaluation at the end of the research project. Students had to talk about personal information, and they had to include events in the past. They did not have a limit of time to speak, so they could speak in a free way without paying attention to the time and mistakes. The research supervisor analyzed the information that was recorded, and the students' English-speaking level mean was compared at the beginning and at the end of the project. The research project intervention lasted three-unit classes (36 hours).

Ten content-based games were chosen to help students of the treatment group improve their communicative learning. Each game was planned as part of the class content, for this reason, each game was repeated according to the necessities of the content. At the beginning of the class, the students paid attention to the skill, objective, and instructions of the class, and the game was part of the lesson plan at the beginning or at the end of the class.

5.1. Games applied during the intervention

5.1.1. Taboo

According to Bowo (2014), *Taboo* enables significant teaching and learning and generates exciting and pleasurable activities. In the research project, this game was managed in the following way: The teacher divided the class into two big groups and projected the class a picture of the vocabulary word to each student who was part of each group made a description of the picture which represented a vocabulary word that was studied first. Each group had one minute to guess the vocabulary word. The group who had more guessing words won the competence. This game was carried out at the beginning of the class as a warm-up activity that helped students to be refreshed to continue the lesson, and at the end of the class as a consolidation step. This game required vocabulary pictures or slides of the known words.

5.1.2. Find your partner

Find your partner was used inside the class to practice the speaking skill and improve the students' understanding. The teacher prepared two sets of pieces of paper in which were written the vocabulary word. There were two pieces of paper with the same word. Each student received a piece of paper with a written vocabulary word. The purpose of this activity was that each student had to find her partner by saying the definition of the word or describing the word that she got. The student who would have found her partner first had to say stop. The teacher supervised the task by walking around the classroom to motivate each student to use the L2. This game required 34 pieces of paper with different vocabulary words, and 34 pictures of the different vocabulary words.

5.1.3. Passing the ball

Passing the ball was developed in class to help students understand new grammar content. The teacher divided the class into two teams. After this, the teacher showed the students two small balls of a different color (yellow-red). She explained to the students that the yellow ball was for positive sentences and the red ball was for negative sentences. The students sat down on the floor of the classroom and listened to music when the music stopped, the students who had the ball of different colors had to say the sentence according to the instruction. After this, each group had to decide if the sentence was correct or incorrect. At the end, the group who had more correct sentences had a prize. This game required two balls of a different color, a computer, and music.

5.1.4. Airline help desk-miming

Airline help desk – miming was used in class to help students think about solutions. This game emphasizes the use of the modal "should-shouldn´t". The teacher divided the class into five groups in which each group had to select one student. This student needed to get a piece of

paper in which was drawn a problem and she had to mime it. Her group guessed the problem and gave solutions to it. The group that said more solutions to the problem won. This game required different pieces of paper.

5.1.5. Tic Tac Toe

Honarmand et al. (2015) say that "… tic-tac-toe is a classic and simple game that can make learning English fun. Make a board that contains nine squares" (p. 32). In this game, the teacher divided the class into two teams. Each team selected a person who had to finish a sentence following the teacher´s instruction. If the sentence was correct, she had to mark with an X-0 a square in which there were numbers from 1 to 9. The group that made a vertical, horizontal, or diagonal line first won the game. This game required a board and any color board marker and the halves of some sentences.

5.1.6. Bang Bang

In this game, the teacher divided the class into two teams. Each team had to choose a student who came in front of the class and thought of a simple past verb. The student of another team had to say a positive or negative simple past sentence by using the given verb. If the sentence was incorrect, the student who said the verb had to say the phrase "Bang bang" to the student who said the sentence. Each group needed to take turns. The group that has more correct sentences wins the game. This game required a list of regular and irregular verbs which had to be practiced before the game.

5.1.7. Excuses Excuses Board

In this board game, the students practiced the simple past tense by using regular and irregular verbs. The teacher divided the class into seven small groups. Each student in the group had a piece that represented her.

Each participant threw the dice and had to move her piece according to the number in the dice. Some squares had the phrase "Sorry, I´m late", when a student arrived at this square had to say her justification by using simple past tense positive or negative sentences. The group decided if the sentence was correct or incorrect. The first student who finished the game of each group won a prize. This game required 7 dices, 7 game worksheets, and 7 different small pieces.

5.1.8. Restart

In this game, the teacher divided the class into 7 small groups. The students had to use the past simple affirmative sentences and picture cards to talk about what they did yesterday. Each group had a set of picture cards, and they had to shuffle and distribute the cards equally. Each student had to take one card and say what she did yesterday. The game finished when one student laid down all her cards. If one student had the restart card, she needed to change her action in the picture card and say an affirmative sentence again. This game helped to practice simple past tense. This game required a set of 20 picture cards.

5.1.9. Oh, Really?

In this game, the students practiced simple past tense by using time expressions and information questions. The teacher divided the class into 7 small groups. She gave them a set of picture cards. They had to shuffle the cards and placed them down in a heap on the table. One student went first by picking up the top picture card from the heap, and she asked the student on the right an information question. The student looked at the time expression and made a believable past simple sentence using a time expression. The group had to decide if she said the truth. The student who finished with all her time expressions won the game. This game required a set of 20 picture cards and a set of 10-time expressions.

5.1.10. In the past

In this game, the students practiced past simple tense affirmative and negative sentences. The teacher divided the class into 7 small groups. Each group received a set of time expressions cards and some verb cards. The time expressions were placed face down, and the verb cards were given to each student in the group the same number of cards. The students took turns to get one card from the pile and make a true past simple affirmative and negative sentence. She had to use one of the verbs on her cards and the time expression. She had to construct sentences, and the group decided if the sentence was grammatically correct or incorrect. The student who finished all her verb cards won the game. This game required a set of 10-time expressions. The purpose of applying these games was to reinforce the students' L2 learning. These content-based games were developed as a warm-up activity, practice activity, or consolidation activity.

A speaking rubric and an audio record were the instruments applied in the research intervention project. There were five subskills in the speaking rubric *"pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar and message".* Each subskill was graded over 2 points. There were four parameters to be evaluated in each subskill (Excellent 2/2, Good 1.5/2, Fair 1/2and Poor 0.5/2).

Differing from the students who belonged to the control group received different activities related to the same topics. Creswell (2014) says that there must be equality in both groups, treatment and control group. He suggests that the control group should have the same benefits as the treatment group. The control group activities were based on extra interactive worksheets, videos, songs, speaking activities from the book such as dialogues in pairs, group work to practice reading and writing, listening skills, and vocabulary games in groups. These activities helped the control group improve their different English skills.

5.2. Context and participants

The school that was part of this research project was "Rosa de Jesús Cordero-Catalinas". It is a big private institution where there are only girls who have a high economic status. The Institution is located in Ricaurte-Cuenca. The participants were two groups of thirty-four students in each group. They were girls who were between nine and ten years old from the sixth-grade of middle school who were not chosen randomly because the Administrative Department Staff was in charge of separating these two groups at the beginning of the year. These two groups were not homogeneous in English language proficiency. According to the CEFR and the International Baccalaureate program, the English level that these groups of students might achieve is an A2.1 as their exit profile. Most of the sixth graders' students have been studying in the institution since they were in kindergarten where they started receiving English classes. The English level that each student has to achieve is according to the CEFR guidelines. It is important to manifest that the students who are in kindergarten take English classes as an adaptation process to start elementary school. The students who start the second-grade have to achieve an A1 English level when they finish the fourth-grade, and the students who start the fifth-grade have to get an A2 English Level when they finish the seventh-grade as the exit profile.

According to the psychologists from the School Counseling of the institution, there were not students with a physical disability or a strong intellectual disability; however, there was the presence of a student who was diagnosed with special needs (lack of attention). For this student, the teaching-learning process guidance and evaluation were more personalized. The Exclusion Criteria that were taken into account to start the project were if the students did not have their parents' authorization to develop different projects inside the institution, and in the case, if the students were not enrolled in the school year since the beginning of the project. The Inclusion Criteria that were taken into consideration were if the students were between 9 and 10 years old if they were students of

the sixth-grade level of the Institution, and if their parents had signed the Consent Letter at the beginning of the school year.

6. Analysis of Data

The results are expressed by measures of central tendency and dispersion. The data normality test for samples of more than 30 Kolmogorov Smirnov data revealed that the behavior was not normal (p <0.05), so it was decided to apply nonparametric tests: the nonparametric comparison test of U-Mann Whitney groups and the test for related samples (before and after) of Wilcoxon. Besides, the correlation coefficient r of Pearson was used to establish a correspondence between qualification criteria. Data processing was carried out in the statistical program SPSS 25, and the edition of tables and graphs in Excel 2016. For a better understanding, it was used histogram, box and whisker diagrams, tables, and stacked column charts. The decisions were made with a significance of 5% (p <0.05).

6.1. Results

The total performance of the qualified oral expression in the pre test is 10 points which has oscillations between 1 and 7.5 with a mean of 5.0 (SD = 1.4); 47.1% (n = 32). It does not reach the required learning, 41.2% (n = 28) is closed to reaching and the remaining 11.8% (n = 8) reaches it.
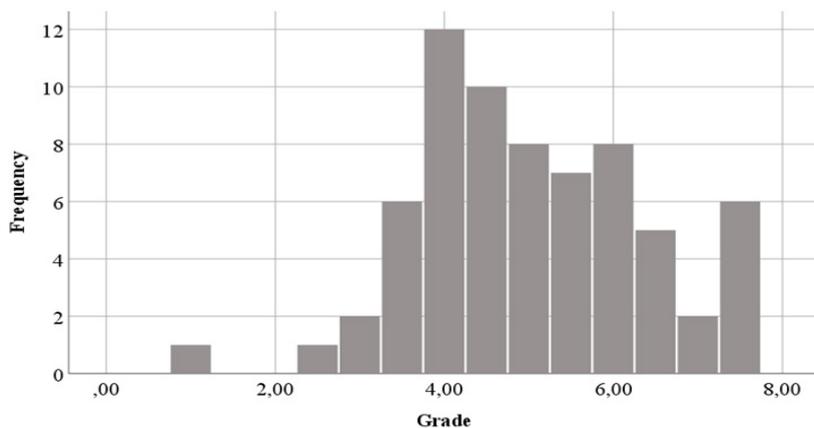
Figure 1. shows that the ratings are concentrated between 4 and 6 points which implies a mean performance of this skill.

The subskills scored over 2 points revealed oscillations between 0 and 2. Figure 2 shows that the best performance is grammar with a mean of 1.12 (SD = 0.37) which is followed by pronunciation with a mean of 1.07 (SD = 0.40). On the other hand, the lowest performance is vocabulary (= 0.85, SD = 0.37). The message subskill is constant in almost all participants with a score of 1.
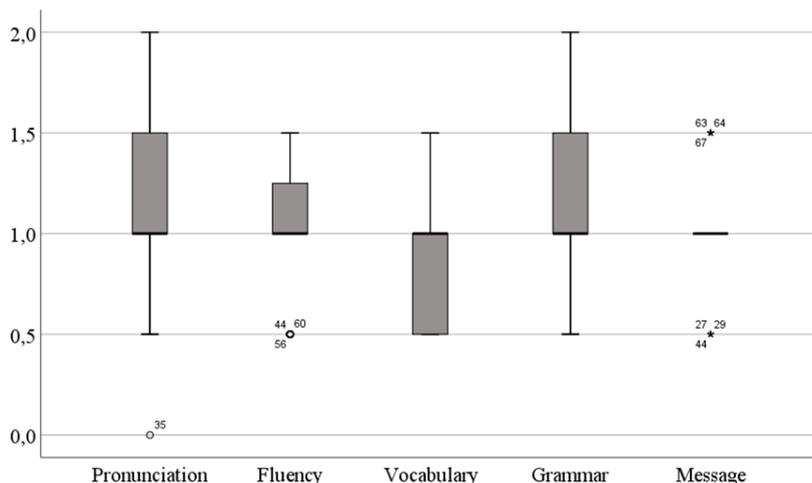
Figure 2. Speaking subskill. Box and mustache diagrams show the distribution of data; the horizontal lines reflect the values: minimum, maximum, and quartiles; external points reflect outliers.

Table 1 shows the results of the pre and post test of the two working groups. It can be seen that grammar is the best performance in the pre test and message in the post test. Significant changes are evidenced in both groups (p <0.05).

Table 1.
Efficacy of methodologies in control group (pre-post test)

| | Control group | | | | | Intervention group | | | | |
| | Pre test | | Post test | | | Pre test | | Post test | | |
Subskills	M	SD	M	SD	p	M	SD	M	SD	p
Pronunciation	0,985	0,379	1,353	0,262	0,000*	1,162	0,403	1,441	0,239	0,000*
Fluency	0,926	0,305	1,353	0,262	0,000*	1,103	0,365	1,662	0,363	0,000*
Vocabulary	0,735	0,331	1,338	0,319	0,000*	0,971	0,368	1,559	0,385	0,000*
Gramar	**1,015**	0,313	1,382	0,303	0,000*	**1,221**	0,393	1,662	0,267	0,000*
Message	0,985	0,23	**1,485**	0,337	0,000*	1,088	0,26	**1,971**	0,119	0,000*
Grade	4,500	1,108	6,882	1,052	0,000*	5,544	1,411	8,279	1,095	0,000*

*Note: *Significative difference (p<0.05)*

In this current research project, the treatment group has a good performance in the subskill *grammar* in the pre test and a better performance in the subskill m*essage* in the post test.

6.2. The efficiency of the Methodology

The control group presents the main improvements in *vocabulary* while the treatment group in *message*. The differences between before and after the intervention are not significantly different between the two working groups because they were students of the same level, and the strategies that were applied with them were the same. The only difference was that for the treatment group the oral activities were presented based on oral games activities meanwhile the control group work on oral traditional activities. In the subskill *message,* there is a greater change in the treatment group (p <0.05). In the control group, a 0.5 point is registered while in the treatment group a 0.9 as is in detail in table 2.

Table 2.
Difference between pre and post test

	Control Group		Treatment Group		p
	Media	DE	Media	DE	
Pronunciation	0,368	0,376	0,279	0,330	0,323
Fluency	0,426	0,329	0,559	0,404	0,133
Vocabulary	0,603	0,404	0,588	0,417	0,879
Gramar	0,368	0,449	0,441	0,364	0,543
Message	0,500	0,389	0,882	0,248	0,000*
Grade	2,382	1,219	2,735	1,061	0,301

*Note: *Significative difference (p<0.05)*

6.2.1. Control Group

In each subscale, there were at least 21 students with positive changes in the control group. *Grammar* and *pronunciation* are the subskills with the most draws and negative changes. In figure 3 the details can be observed.
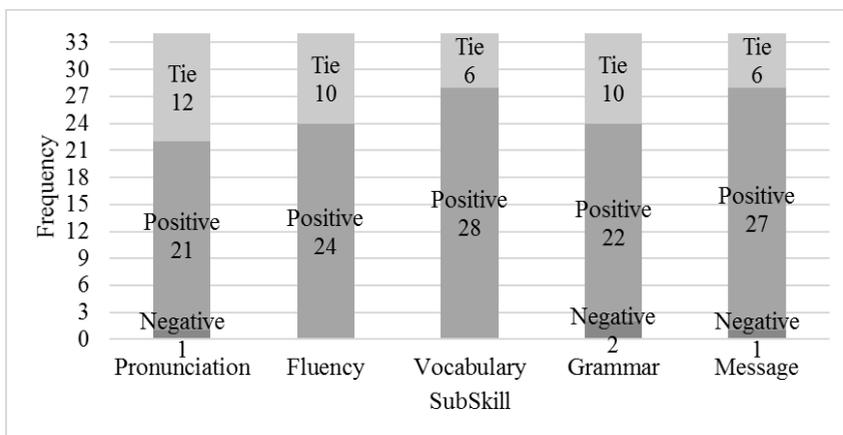
Figure 3. Changes in subskills. Stacked columns show the number of cases with positive, negative changes and tie in their qualifications.

6.2.2. Treatment Group

Figure 4 shows that in the treatment group, all the students present improvements in the subskill *message* after the application of content-based games within class planning.
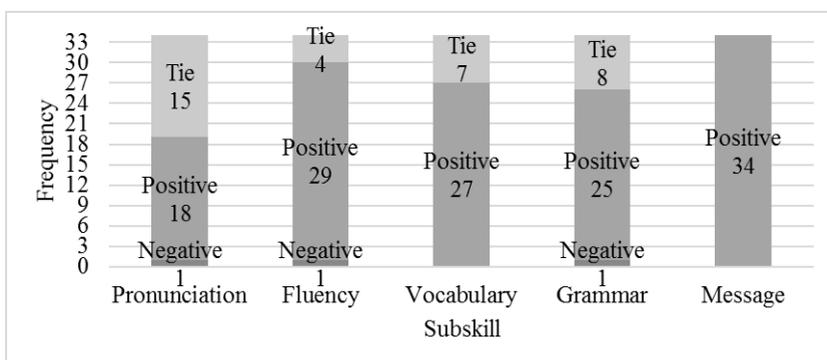

Figure 4. Changes in subskills. Stacked columns show the number of cases with positive, negative changes and tie in their qualifications.

Finally, after the intervention, 15 students of the treatment group dominate the required learning -7/10 compared to 2 of the control group. Likewise, 12 cases in the control group are closed to achieve the learning concerning 1 of the treatment group as it is shown in figure 5.
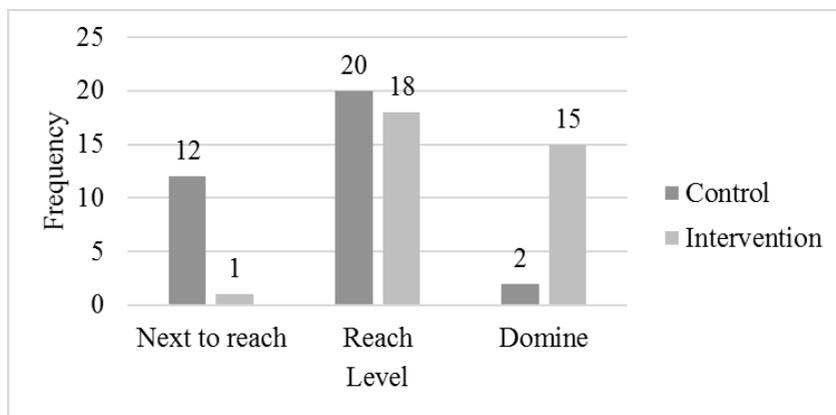

Figure 5. Reach level. The columns show the frequency of students at each level in each group.

6.3. Relationship between teachers' criteria

Tables 3 and 4 show important correlations between the researcher´s criterion and supervisor which implies concurrence of qualification criteria and guarantees impartiality and objectivity in the use of the rubric.

Table 3.
Relationship between teachers' criteria (Pre Test)

		Researcher					
		Pronunciation	Fluency	Vocabulary	Gramar	Message	Grad
Supervisor	Pronunciation	.535**					
	Fluency		.717**				
	Vocabulary			.665**			
	Gramar				.421**		
	Message					.347**	
	Grade						.771*

*Note: * significant relationship*

Table 4.
Relationship between teachers' criteria (Post Test)

		Researcher					
		Pronunciation	Fluency	Vocabulary	Gramar	Message	Gr
Supervisor	Pronunciation	.500**					
	Fluency		.747**				
	Vocabulary			.657**			
	Gramar				.577**		
	Message					.621**	
	Grade						.87

*Note: * significant relationship*

In general, more students dominated the required scopes which were part of the sixth level exit profile. It is important to remember that the control group had a better level of English at the beginning of the intervention according to the pre test results.

7. Discussion

This research investigated the importance of using content-based games in an L2 classroom. It focused on motivation and on the improvement

of the speaking skills. Taking into account that each different subskill had different results according to the initial and final test in both groups, the difference between the treatment group and the control group was analyzed.

First of all, the initial performance of the treatment group was low. The subskills with the best performance were only *grammar* and *pronunciation*. At the beginning, it could be identified that the students did not reach the required learning -7/10. The subcategories with the worst performance were: *vocabulary* and *message.* On the other hand, the control group presented major improvements in *vocabulary* at the beginning of the project. Comparing with the study that was developed in Ecuador in the Amazon Region, 53,19% of students manifested that *pronunciation* was the most difficult subskill to produce. Showing that the *grammar* subskill was practiced more than the other subskills such as vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, and message (Arias et al., 2015). Wang (2104) established that students did not domain the subskill *vocabulary* and *message* because they did not live in a context where they could practice all the time the target language. So, students preferred keeping silent practicing another subskill than making mistakes in oral production where 46% of students made grammar mistakes, so it affected the students' speaking accuracy; 44% of students often made some hesitation and 45% usually forgot the vocabulary to be used when they spoke. He stated that the students felt motivated in the learning process because the teachers applied new and dynamic activities that helped them in the teaching-learning. In the same way, Wang et al. (2011) stated that the results that he presented were significant in the subskill *"vocabulary"*.

Furthermore, in this project after the treatment, there were not significant differences in the improvements (Overall 2 points in total). The treatment group had only higher progress in the subskill *message*. On the other hand, in each subscale, at least 21 students with positive changes were registered (Control group). According to Dewi et al. (2016); Buitrago

and Ayala (2008); Khan and Ali (2010), it was quite important that the students felt in a comfortable environment at the moment of practicing real communication. Dewi et al. (2016) action research method worked because, at the end, 30 students reached the minimum score that was 75. It represented 83.33%. The context could help the students feel motivated and improve their learning process. So, in the research project, the students worked in pairs and groups and they did not have any punishment for making mistakes, and all the oral activities were based on dynamic group-pair games. It meant that everything depended on the way on how the teacher-researcher managing the class. In the current research project, the quantitative method was applied in which most of the students of the treatment group had positive changes in the subskill *"message"* and in the control group 21 students had some positive changes in the subskill "*grammar-pronunciation*". The strategy that was applied for the control group was "task-based activities". Toro et al. (2018) explained that they had good results on their research project by using "task-based activities" because the students also feel motivated and argued that from 30% to 50% of teachers used this strategy. These activities helped students interact with the teachers or their classmates when they had to ask for support during the completion activity. For this reason, the use of this kind of activity could work well as long as the instructions have been given correctly. At the beginning of the treatment, both groups had different percentages in the different subskills; taken into account that one of the problems that the students had to face was the fear of speaking.

Finally, the application of content-based games inside an L2 classroom had positive results because the students worked more dynamically (Yolageldili & Arikan, 2011; Gozcu and Gaganaga, 2016; Moayad, 2011). The improvements of the different subskills were not the highest; however, it was identified that the students had an enhancement in general. In the pre test, the students of the treatment group had a relevant result in the subskill *"grammar"* and the subskill *"message"* was better in the post test. This is quite different because according to Calle et al. (2012), most Ecuadorian English teachers did not promote the use of

oral activities as a strategy to improve the speaking skills, and they only concentrated their teaching-learning process on developing grammar skills, so at the end of the research project the learners felt more motivated and they could use the target language better; as a result of it, the subskill "*message*" had a great impact.

8. Conclusions

The study showed that the use of content-based games had a great effect since this kind of activity motivated the students due to the new way of learning acquired during the classes as is manifested in the Active Learning Approach. It is important to highlight that this strategy was also very useful because the students showed excessive interest in learning a second language because of the interaction they were involved in by the Natural Approach which was showed when students were exposed to the language.

After comparing the results, it was found that both groups improved significantly, especially the treatment group. The subskill "*Message*" was predominant in the treatment group with an improvement of 0,88 points, representing 81%.

In general, the students of the treatment group improved by 2.74 points compared to the beginning of the school year, representing an improvement of 49.3% (0.2 in *Fluency*, 0.5 in *Grammar,* and 0.8 in *Message*). The control group had a slight improvement in the subskills Pronunciation and Vocabulary in contrast to the treatment group because this group practiced different activities that allowed them to enrich these subskills. Another point of view is that both groups shared the same previous knowledge and constructed their new knowledge based on what they already knew.

One of the limitations could be the lack of habits of learning through games. Another limitation is that games are not part of the lesson plans

because teachers do not connect games with content. Additionally, it is advisable to focus on only one subskill to gain more specific results. Finally, it is recommended that the study ought to be preserved and continued to enhance not only speaking but also, reading, listening, and writing L2 skills-subskills through content-based games at different school levels.

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