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The impact of guided vocabulary practice through board games to enhance A1 sixth graders' oral production in English

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Abstract

The objective of this action research was to check the effectiveness of guided vocabulary practice through board games as a strategy to improve students' level of oral production in English. This study was conducted with two groups of 12 students each, from two different public schools located in the south of Bogotá, Colombia. 11 boys and 13 girls, ranging in age from 10 to 13, whose English level was A1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference (2001), made up the group of 24 participants. The two groups evidenced common behaviours of apathy and poor participation in activities that involved oral communication in English. The initial analysis revealed the lack of vocabulary as the main reason students felt restrained and insecure when they were required to participate in oral activities. The instruments used to collect the information before, during, and after the pedagogical intervention were vocabulary tests, oral production tests, questionnaires, checklists and teachers' journals. The data analysis revealed positive results regarding the implementation of teaching and learning vocabulary guided through games. There was evidence that students increased their vocabulary in English as they improved their attitude towards oral activities in the target language. The results of this study provided a pedagogical alternative for the development of oral production skills in second language learners. First, this pedagogical intervention emphasized the need to teach vocabulary in context and provide students with the tools for them to become able to participate actively in oral activities. In this sense, the learning and practice of a high-frequency words list through board games presented positive results. Second, promoting collaborative work and practice of the target language, through board games, raised learners' self-confidence and security.

Keywords: vocabulary development, educational games, teacher directed practice, speaking skills.

Resumen

El objetivo de la presente investigación fue examinar la efectividad de la práctica guiada de vocabulario a través de juegos de mesa como estrategia para mejorar el nivel de producción oral en inglés. Este estudio se realizó con dos grupos de 12 alumnos, cada uno pertenecientes a dos colegios localizados en el sur de Bogotá, Colombia. El grupo de 24 participantes estaba conformado por 11 niños y 13 niñas con un rango de edades entre 10 y 13 años con un nivel de inglés A1 según el Marco Común Europeo (2001). Los dos grupos evidenciaban comportamientos comunes de apatía y poca participación en actividades que implicaban comunicación oral en inglés. El análisis inicial reveló que la falta de vocabulario era la principal causa para que los estudiantes se sintieran cohibidos e inseguros cuando debían interactuar en actividades orales. Los instrumentos utilizados para la recolección de información antes, durante y después de la intervención pedagógica fueron exámenes de vocabulario, exámenes producción oral, cuestionarios, listas de verificación y diario de campo para los profesores investigadores. El análisis de los datos reveló resultados positivos en cuanto a la implementación de la práctica guiada de vocabulario a través de juegos de mesa. Hubo evidencia de que los estudiantes aumentaron su vocabulario en inglés, así como una disminución en actitudes de apatía y timidez en situaciones en las que debían interactuar en idioma extranjero. Con base en los resultados de este estudio, podemos considerar que esta estrategia ofrece una alternativa pedagógica para el desarrollo de habilidades comunicativas orales en los estudiantes de una segunda lengua. En primer lugar, en este estudio se hizo énfasis en la necesidad de enseñar vocabulario en contexto y brindar a los estudiantes las herramientas para que puedan participar activamente en las actividades orales. En este sentido, el aprendizaje y práctica de una lista de palabras de uso frecuente por medio de los juegos de mesa produjeron resultados positivos. Segundo, la

promoción del aprendizaje colaborativo y la práctica del idioma inglés a través de los juegos incrementaron la autoconfianza y seguridad de los estudiantes.

Palabras claves: desarrollo de vocabulario, juegos educativos, práctica dirigida por el maestro, habilidades de habla.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Study

Language is one of the primary media to overcome the geographical barriers in the current globalization process (Block & Cameron, 2002). In the last decades, according to Crystal (2003) English has become the dominant language in fields as geopolitics, science, commerce, communications, technology, and politics, among others. In other words, English has become the bridge, which allows communication between people from around the world. To make it possible for Colombian students to participate in that worldwide interaction, the Ministerio de Educación Nacional (MEN) through its National Bilingual Program set the Basic Standards of Competences in Foreign Languages (MEN, 2006) in an effort to promote the development of students' oral communicative skills. One of the purposes of this program is to guarantee that all students have a B1 level (CEFR) when they exit their secondary studies; however, a study conducted by Sánchez (2012) revealed that Colombian students' level of English when they graduate from school was lower than the one expected. The author found that, in 2011, 90 % of eleventh graders had an A1 exit level as per the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and only 2% of them reached an intermediate B1 level. The present research project aims, therefore, to contribute to the achievement of the objective proposed by the National Bilingual Program.

Studies such as the one conducted by Prieto (2007) revealed that one of the difficulties Colombian English learners face, in different school contexts, is the development of oral productive skills. In the two schools involved in this study, there are strong indications that two of the main problems students' problems regarding oral communication were lack of sufficient vocabulary and difficulty to remember and use new words in context. Considering the relevance of teaching vocabulary (Nation, 2001), and learners' development of oral communicative skills

(O'Malley & Pierce, 1996), we expected that tackling these two problems would have a positive impact on students' English learning process. Other authors such as Littlewood (1981) and Skehan (1996) have also underlined foreign language learners' need to develop oral communication skills. Littlewood (1981) affirms that the most efficient communicator is often the person who is able to communicate effectively in conversations even when they do not use accurate language structures. On the other hand, authors such as Lewis (1993), Nation (2001), Wilkins (1972), and Willis (1990) have emphasized the necessity of vocabulary learning in order to develop communicative skills. Nation (2001) suggests that, taking into account that even native speakers do not know all of the language; learners should learn a small group of high frequency words that will allow them to communicate.

The research team set the objective of enhancing oral production in 24 sixth graders from two public institutions located in the south of Bogotá, Colombia. To facilitate the students' learning and retention of high frequency words in their long-term memory, it was necessary to implement a strategy to help them overcome the described problem. Therefore, this study proposed a combination of guided vocabulary practice and board games as a strategy to help students succeed in dealing with their oral communication issues. For the selection and implementation of guided vocabulary practice through board games as a strategy, we considered benefits such as the creation of classroom environments, which allowed us to guide the learning of specific vocabulary, and at the same time, gave the students the freedom to construct knowledge and develop sub-skills such as autonomy and self-regulation. After this strategy selection to promote students' vocabulary learning and oral production, we chose the target vocabulary. We considered a high frequency word list, designed by Cambridge ESOL (Bailey, 2005), to be an appropriate model to follow. However, because of the needs of our specific

context and the objectives of our study, we needed to replace some words. For instance, in the list designed by Cambridge, we found the expression *train station*, so we replaced it with *bus station*, which is the most common public transportation in the students' context. As a result, we had a new list with some variations from the original one. When the list of target words was completed, we began to design the board games, which would allow us to promote guided practice. This helped us to introduce the vocabulary to the students in meaningful context as Littlewood (1981) proposed. In addition to the vocabulary list, the criteria taken into account to design the games were as follows: opportunities for oral interaction, frequency of repetition of target words or expressions, free participation, and promotion of authentic information exchange providing contextual clues.

By attending to globalization demands, such as communicative, social, and technological skills (Block & Cameron, 2002); through the improvement of oral communicative abilities (including the ability to express ideas coherently in English by using accurate vocabulary and expressions in specific contexts), this study determined the possible effect of teaching guided vocabulary through board games. This is a way to enrich the English classroom and to determine to what extent the use of guided vocabulary practice as the strategy given in contexts through board games facilitates the development of oral production.

The implementation of this strategy aims to tackle immediate oral interaction problems not only with specific sampling of this study, but also with students of different proficiency levels. In addition, through the implementation of this strategy, the research team expects to help learners prepare for future working and studying opportunities.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

According to Wilkins (1972) one of the reasons why teaching vocabulary is a key issue in language teaching research is that English learners with poor vocabulary tend to feel awkward and insecure when producing the language orally. “Without grammar, very little can be conveyed but without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed” (Wilkins, 1972, p. 111). Taking into account the importance of vocabulary knowledge to develop communicative skills such as oral production, during our needs analysis we established our sampling levels of vocabulary knowledge and oral communicative skills.

During the observation of our sampling, we noticed that the students easily forgot the vocabulary studied in previous lessons. They apparently had more success in written tasks than in oral activities. Based on the gathered information, we presumed that a possible cause for these problems could be that the demands of oral activities are such that students must respond immediately. In contrast, the demands of written activities are such that students have more time to look for some help or support. We have observed that when students are working on written activities they search for unknown words in the dictionary or ask a partner or teacher about the things they do not understand. In oral activities, they do not have time for that. Another possible reason for these problems was that learners do not have the opportunity to practice English in other contexts outside the classroom. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) explain that second language skills can only be mastered after a long period of practice. In this case, it is important that the learning environments encourage students to practice oral communication.

In this regard, we decided to promote students’ learning of vocabulary in meaningful contexts through board games, being aware that acquisition of a foreign language and the development of effective oral communication go beyond memorizing words. It is necessary to

know how to use them in context (Nation, 2001). To include all the mentioned components of our study, we implemented guided vocabulary practice and board games as a combined strategy to help students learn vocabulary in context.

1.2.1 Needs analysis and problem statement.

The participants selected in this study were 11 boys and 13 girls from two separate groups in two public schools located in the south of Bogotá: San Carlos IED and Colegio Cundinamarca IED. These two schools were selected to participate in the study because the two researchers work for them. This facilitated access to students and information. Besides, this made it possible to implement the pedagogical proposal according to the plan. They were A1 level according to the pre-implementation diagnostic test, which was designed based on the Common European Framework of Reference. During the oral production pre-implementation test both groups of students showed poor participation in oral activities and, when they were asked to interact in English, they reacted with apathy and shyness.

According to the standards set by the National Ministry of Education (MEN for its initials in Spanish), students are expected to have a B1 level (CEFR) when they finish high school. Correspondingly, they should be able to participate in conversations, express their own opinion, and talk about general topics with coherence and clear pronunciation. However, the "Programa Nacional de Inglés: Colombia Very Well 2015 – 2025" proposed by MEN (2014), showed that 59% of public school students had a level equivalent to those who have never had contact with English. In this study, only 6% of the students reached B1 level according to the standards of CEFR. Based on the information gathered throughout the stages of the study, it is possible to say that the problem evidenced in this study is also a reality in the two schools were the study was carried out.

In order to establish our students' level before any intervention, we implemented vocabulary tests (Syndicate UCLES & Oxford University Press, 2001) during the initial stage. The results demonstrated that our students were below the standards of the CEFR, which was A2 level, by a wide margin. Most of them reached A1 level with difficulty being these results similar to the ones found in the study conducted by Sánchez (2012).

As the aim of this study is to contribute to the improvement of the language level in our schools, the research team delimited the components and objectives of the research. Expecting that the study can continue during the upcoming years, we chose sixth graders. It follows that the earlier the intervention starts, the bigger the impact will be. Besides, taking the participants of the study as starting point will give us more time to improve our teaching processes in our schools.

The information for the needs analysis was gathered through different instruments. First, we implemented a questionnaire designed to confirm our previous assumptions about the students' lack of contact with English, and to discover the students' favoured ways of learning (Appendix B.1). The results of the questionnaires provided relevant information related to the schools' contexts and the differences between them. The first finding was that, at San Carlos IED, most students were never exposed to an English learning program in primary school and were taught English by teachers or specialists from other academic disciplines; whereas the students from Colegio Cundinamarca had received English instruction for three years by language teachers. Regarding the students' preferences, most of them answered that the language skill they more wanted to develop was speaking. However, they affirmed that they had little participation in oral activities. They also expressed that the most common cause of their low participation was that they did not know how to express their ideas or did not feel confident about their language skills.

Taking into account that students mentioned the lack of vocabulary as an obstacle for their participation in oral communicative situations, we applied a diagnostic vocabulary test to find out about the amount of vocabulary they actually knew. In such test, we assessed students' degrees of knowledge of a high frequency word list, taken from list from YLE Flyers (Bailey, 2005) which could help learners to develop communicative competences. This instrument was useful for gathering data about the number of words students knew in relation to the number of words they needed to know to be able to communicate orally. Students from San Carlos IED identified a small amount of isolated words related to colours, professions, and general topics, but they did not understand their function when they found the words in a sentence or context. Students from Colegio Cundinamarca IED, on the other hand, recognized a larger amount of isolated words and demonstrated a better level of understanding when the vocabulary was in context. Despite the differences in vocabulary knowledge, we found that in the oral production test the students from both groups had low levels of performance. Some of them tried to produce complete sentences to answer the questions given in the test but they were unable to connect words. Some others used the code switching to express their ideas.

Another finding was related to the students' preferences about activities for learning. According to the questionnaire results at the two schools, most students preferred learning by doing appealing activities that allowed them to interact with peers, thus many of them selected games as one of their favourite activities to do in the English classes (Appendix N).

Finally, from the data collected through this test, we concluded that the lack of vocabulary was the main factor that limited students' oral production.

1.2.2 Justification of problem's significance.

As mentioned in the needs analysis, an important factor hindering students' participation in oral communicative situations was the lack of vocabulary. For that reason and having in mind that Nation and Newton (2008), and Ellis (1994), among others, underlined the importance of meaningful vocabulary learning when acquiring a foreign language, we considered that tackling the problem of students' lack of vocabulary would be an important step in the improvement of the oral production in these two institutions. Nation and Newton (2008) stated that "deliberate vocabulary learning can make a very useful contribution to a learner's language proficiency" (p. 6). The strategy proposed was a combination of guided vocabulary practice and board games, where games provided authentic communicative situations for the students to put into practice the vocabulary target list (Bygate, 2006). Through the implementation of the set of board games, we attempted to find out the impact that vocabulary learning could have on the students' performance in oral activities.

The foundations of our intervention approach were two theories related to the amount of basic words that a person needs to communicate in a language and the number of times a word needs to be repeated to be learned. According to Nation and Newton (2008), when a language learner knows about two thousand words, he/she becomes a competent user of the language, that is to say, a learner with B1 level according to CEFR. This is supported by Nation and Newton (2008) and Richards and Rodgers (2014). They highlighted the need of learning basic vocabulary and agreed that a basic amount of 2000 words is required to become a competent user of the language.

The second theory refers to the need of repetition to learn a word. Brown (1995) explained that, although repetition is important and needed to learn a word, it may vary

depending on factors such as morphology, contextual clues, and learners' interests. As a learner has more exposure to a word, he/she will have more opportunities to learn it. In other words, for learning vocabulary, it is not enough to repeat words but it is essential to introduce it to students in real and meaningful contexts. According to Nation and Newton (2008), the way the words are presented might also cause different degrees of impact and cause different levels of learning.

1.2.3 Strategy selected to address problem.

In order to tackle the problem of low oral production, we proposed a strategy that allowed us to address the students' lack of vocabulary and the lack of opportunities to use and practice the language, which were the apparent causes of the problem. The proposed strategy was to promote explicit vocabulary learning and guided practice of the target words and expressions through board games. The set of board games was the tool used to create a communicative environment and a context where students had the chance to interact and use the target vocabulary. Nation and Newton (2008) explained that a meaningful communicative environment might help students feel more familiar with the English language and more secure in future communicative situations.

The research team had high expectations in regards to the possible positive impact of this project. According to Nation (2013), real vocabulary learning comes through its use and practice in environments which facilitate the learners' internalization and use of words.

1.3 Research Question and Objective

After the initial observation of the population and the implementation of data collection instruments for the needs analysis, the problem of students' low level of oral production was delimited. We found that students did not have the necessary vocabulary to communicate in the foreign language, which, according to Nation and Newton (2008), is a minimum of about 2000

words. Students also did not have opportunities to practice the language in the classroom. Having those facts in mind, the research question that led this study was stated as follows: How does guided vocabulary practice through board games improve oral production in A1 (CEFR) sixth graders? Hence, the main objective of this research study was to enhance sixth grade beginners' oral production. The strategy chosen to achieve that objective was guided vocabulary learning and practice.

Students needed to learn a high frequency word list, which helped them to communicate orally. Taking into account that the implementation time was 24 hours, distributed in four weeks (three sessions of two hours per week) we decided to choose 250 words. This was developed in three stages: the first was the presentation stage, which consisted of introducing the high frequency words. It was done using flashcards, videos, and games (different from board games). During the second stage, which was guided practice, the board games were used with the objective of facilitating learning and interaction. In connection with this, Ackerman (2004) affirmed that playing is the human brain's favourite way of learning. Thus, we agree with Wood (2001) in the sense that learning games might help to create a more comfortable learning environment and benefit students' vocabulary learning. The third and last stage was the learning evaluation. This was done through information gap activities in which students needed to use the vocabulary studied in oral communicative situations.

The development of the three stages of the implementation allowed the researchers to have a complete overview of the correlation between the different components of the study and enabled us to answer the main question.

1.4 Conclusion

After considering the lack of vocabulary as one the reasons for the students' low development of oral production in the two schools taking part of this project, we set the objective of implementing the learning of guided vocabulary through board games as a strategy to increase oral production, to make learning a more meaningful experience and to reduce learners' anxiety, Deesri (2002).

The second chapter will explore in detail the constructs for this study and the results of other investigations, with the purpose of knowing more about the topic and examining how other researchers have tackled similar language problems and which benefits they have found from the implementation of similar strategies.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter analysed the reasons for the low level of students' oral production and proposed the strategy of board games in order to practice guided vocabulary learning as a way to help students to develop their oral production level.

This chapter presents the literature review for the constructs that support the significance and relevance of the present study. These constructs are oral production, vocabulary learning and teaching, guided practice, and board games. In addition, it will present previous research studies related to the constructs of this study to support its analysis.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Oral production.

Bygate (2006) defined oral production as the ability to adapt the abstract features of language, such as grammar structures, to a communicative situation where the user produces the language orally. O'Malley and Pierce (1996) concurred with Brown and Yule (1983), that oral production was related to negotiation of meaning according to the specific situation where the speakers use the language to interact. Wilkinson (1970, p.71) made special reference to "verbalization of experiences" and affirmed that oral communication does not only help the development of the oral communicative skill, but it also helps the construction of personality. Hymes (1972) defined oral skill as the capacity to communicate effectively within a particular speech community that wants to accomplish its purposes. To sum up, oral production is a communicative skill, which involves interaction, negotiation and construction of meaning, verbalization, and context.

Moreover, our experience as teachers has shown us that, for many language learners, speaking is the most challenging communicative skill, as it happens in real time and spontaneously. According to Burns and Joyce (1997) speaking is defined as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information. Luoma (2004) affirmed that speakers do not usually speak in sentences, as in written communication, but express idea units, which are about two seconds or seven words long. They may apparently break the formal rules of language and normally contain a reasonable number of slips and errors, such as mispronunciation and wrong word order, but still transmit a fully comprehensible and coherent message**.** Chastain (1998) defined speaking as "a productive skill and it involves many components. Speaking is more than making the right sounds, choosing the right words or getting the constructions grammatically correct." (As cited in Prieto, 2007).

For the purpose of the current study, speaking is defined as the learners' ability to express their thoughts, ideas and feelings using the oral language understandably. Considering the importance of the components of speaking (grammar, pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary and content) to assess and measure the oral production, this study takes into account the use of vocabulary and the students' ongoing process to produce an understandable message when they speak.

To improve the students' oral production, the researchers implemented the strategy of guided vocabulary practice by means of board games. These games created information gaps that provided meaningful contexts where the students could use the target high frequency words to exchange messages, play different roles, and produce language orally. In agreement with Cinamon and Elding (1998) who stated that "…talking requires someone to talk to and something to talk about" (p. 215), the research team considered relevant aspects such as group

work (someone to talk) and themes of interest for students (something to talk about) when designing the board games. Apart from the aspects directly related to language, it was also necessary to pay attention to other factors such as interaction arrangement, which could interfere with students' oral performance. As explained by Flottemesch (2000), the way interaction is planned and promoted by the teacher is one of the aspects related to the quality of the learning environment that influences the way a specific strategy affects students' learning and performance. In that sense, Wilkinson (1970) advises to plan activities for groups of two or three students so all of them will have opportunities to participate and feel more comfortable and confident. This advice became useful for this research because it was necessary to guarantee that all the students had the chance to interact orally during the games.

2.2.2 Vocabulary teaching and learning.

During the needs analysis, the research team found an apparent lack of vocabulary, which seemed to interfere with the development of oral production. Different authors such as Lewis (1993), Willis (1990), and Nation (2001) underlined the relevance of vocabulary learning and its positive impact on the development of communicative language skills. They agree that, when learning a foreign language, vocabulary learning is indispensable, since communication cannot be established and meaning cannot be conveyed without it. Nation, (2001) stated that words are much more than "isolated units of language" (p. 23). Accordingly, Richards & Rodgers (2014) concluded that words express complete ideas and complex thoughts.

We found that students' poor level of vocabulary and oral production were associated with time limitations to practice the language and lack of implementation of vocabulary learning strategies. Students from San Carlos had just started their process of English learning at school, while students from Colegio Cundinamarca had been taking English classes for at least three

years. Despite this difference in time of exposure, they did not demonstrate great differences in the levels of vocabulary knowledge and oral production. This led us, as teachers of these two schools, to retrospectively evaluate the processes of language teaching developed and methodologies implemented during the last year to understand the reasons for students' low vocabulary learning. We also implemented a written questionnaire where students reported the type of activities they most commonly did in the English classes. This reconfirmed that students from San Carlos IED had not had English lessons during their primary studies. They affirmed that their teachers taught some words about basic topics as school objects and colors, and asked them to repeat the pronunciation of that vocabulary. Students from Colegio Cundinamarca (this sampling was formed by students who were new at the school), which from the two schools is the one that devotes more time to English teaching, had been mostly exposed to the grammar translation methodologies in the schools they studied. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), in this method there is not emphasis on meaningful vocabulary learning but on understanding a written text, thus vocabulary is taught through bilingual word lists, dictionary study, and memorization.

Thus, the issues of how to teach vocabulary, how students could better increase their lexicon in the target language, and factors that enhance or avoid vocabulary learning became a relevant component of this study. According to Thornbury (2006), it is necessary to create a mental connection between the word's form and meaning when presenting the vocabulary to learners. Studies conducted with Catalan and French EFL learners revealed a direct connection among the vocabulary learnt to the students' frequency and usefulness of it in meaningful contexts (Celaya, 2001; Horst & Collins, 2006 in Jiménez, 2014). The students' repertoire of words in their mother tongue influences the vocabulary learning in a foreign language (Gu &

Johnson, 1996). This indicates that, as stated by Nation (2008), meaningful vocabulary learning may facilitate the memorization of words and their use in communicative situations.

2.2.3 Guided practice.

Aiming to facilitate students' learning of vocabulary, a strategy to create a comfortable environment and opportunities for learners' interaction with high frequency words in meaningful context was implemented. Although this strategy was initially based on the principles of controlled practice, it emphasized the concept of guidance rather than control. The research team did not intend to control students but to guide them through the stages of learning high frequency words and use them orally in a controlled learning environment. As stated by Richards (2005), controlled practice gives a negative connotation and an idea of how language practice is promoted and about the way the learners are treated. It is usually related to memorization of dialogues and drills mostly used for mechanization of grammatical structures.

The objective of the change from controlled to guided vocabulary practice was to create a controlled space where students were guided to practice a list of high frequency words that gave them the tools to communicate at a basic level in real life situations. According to Thornbury (2006), a positive way to learn vocabulary is by repeating words through a number of seven encounters with a word in meaningful contexts. The author also explained that repetition of words in several contexts helps to learn new material and promotes the process of organizing ideas. With guided practice, the teachers aimed to improve the learning environment and guide the learning process to facilitate learners' encounters with the target high frequency words.

Another difference between guided and controlled practice is related to teaching approaches and principles. Moving from teacher-centred to learner-centred education is one of the challenges of the 21st century (Brown, 2003). In the past, teachers were expected to be in

control of everything in the classroom, but, in recent decades, this expectation has changed. Weimar (2013) argued that teachers are not asked to control but to guide and facilitate the students' learning process. In student-centred classroom, students may find a teacher who supports them in learning according to their individual characteristics. McCombs and Whisler (1997) affirmed that these language-learning environments result in increased students' motivation and levels of achievement.

2.2.4 Games.

Although the effectiveness of games with learning purposes has been studied extensively, we could not find any study which investigated the effectiveness of board games in learning, thus, we based our research on the results of the implementation of other types with different learning or teaching objectives of games. The general perception of games is that they are activities to play and have fun but they also have characteristics that are useful for learning. For instance, Byrne and Haldfield agree that games have an element of fun, but that they also imply following specific rules and achieving a goal (as cited in Deesri, 2002). Dörnyei (2001) explains that one advantage of games is that, as students concentrate more on achieving a goal than in the language content, then they might increase their interest. In order to take advantage of games with teaching and learning purposes, teachers need to take into account important aspects such as the learners' English level, ages, learning styles, and contexts. If the games are not appropriate, they will not help students and teachers to achieve the learning objectives (Carrier & the Centre for British Teachers, 1985). Valipour and Assadi (2014) make direct reference to the use of games in teaching. They mention that games are usually understood as warm-up activities to create a comfortable environment for learning, but they affirm games are also useful for

language learning because they help to diminish anxiety and create opportunities for students to use the language and interact with peers.

For the design and implementation of games in this study, it was necessary to think of ways to include all the required elements to fit the students' specific needs found during the needs analysis and comply with the language teaching requirements of the two schools. Those elements were: purpose of the strategy, students' level of English, seating arrangement, high frequency vocabulary list, frequency of repetition needed, school curriculum, and time for the implementation.

2.3 State of the Art

2.3.1 Previous research on vocabulary teaching.

During recent decades, researchers have been interested in vocabulary teaching to enhance students' proficiency in English. In our search of experiences on L2 vocabulary teaching, we found different studies conducted in different contexts around the world. In a study conducted in the United States, Stahl and Fairbanks (1986) tried to determine the effect of vocabulary instruction on children's comprehension of texts and the most effective types of vocabulary instruction. The researchers concluded that vocabulary teaching is effective when it follows three main principles: providing learners with definitional and contextual information about words, encouraging learners to process information about a word at a deeper level, and providing learners with multiple exposures to a word. Although this study used vocabulary teaching to enhance learners' comprehension of texts, these principles of vocabulary teaching also fit the needs of our population and were included in the design of the board games to improve oral production in the context of our study.

August, Dressler, and Snow (2005) analysed the extent of vocabulary learning influence on English language learners' comprehension. The researchers confirmed that vocabulary learning is an influential factor in language learning and highlighted the need for permanent attention to learners' vocabulary development. They also explained that more research is necessary to determine if there is a set of words that needs to be taught, the relation of that list with the first-language backgrounds, and the order in which words should be taught. In this sense, our study may offer answers to those questions, as the strategy we implemented included the teaching of a specific list of high frequency words which was organized according to the frequency of usage in the target language, but at the same time we adapted the list to the learners' context.

In Colombia, Barón and Martínez (2013) developed a study that examined how the use of metacognitive strategies influenced vocabulary learning. They found that the use of metacognitive strategies had a positive impact on students' vocabulary learning and promoted autonomy. Taking into account that the board games implemented in this study allowed the use of metacognitive strategies, using them as the tool to promote vocabulary learning and practice may also help to promote autonomy.

Hennebry, Rodgers, Macaro and Murphy (2013) compared the effects of vocabulary instruction on recognition and recall through provision of either an L1 equivalent or an L2 definition. They found that although the use of L1 equivalent in some types of activities is helpful, the use of focus on meaning strategies for vocabulary instruction have benefits for L2 learners' identification and recall of word meanings. These findings reinforce the relevance of meaningful learning of high frequency words, which we attempted to promote through the

implementation of board games to help learners to be able to use such vocabulary in oral communication.

Little and Kobayashi (2014) investigated Japanese students' preferences of vocabulary learning strategies. The students were provided with three explicit cognitive strategies (vocalization, writing rehearsal, and word cards) and three vocabulary memorization strategies (imagery strategies, association, and mnemonics). The researchers found that the students liked both types of strategies but valued explicit vocabulary instruction.

Shaw (2016) researched on how daily exposure to vocabulary influences speaking and writing in first grade students. Two of the researcher's main findings were that daily exposure to vocabulary improved the students' speaking skill, and that when the students learned vocabulary, they were motivated to use it in the speaking activities. These findings are closely related to the objective of our study, which attempted to improve oral production through vocabulary teaching. They also confirm that the lack of vocabulary decreases students' motivation to try to produce the target language, as it was evidenced during the needs analysis of our study.

2.3.2 Previous research on oral production.

Prieto (2007) conducted a study with a group of eleventh graders in Bogotá, in which the researcher attempted to improve oral production through the implementation of cooperative learning strategies. There was evidence that group work helped the students to improve their oral production and interaction increasing confidence progressively with the support of peers. They recommended working with small groups, taking into consideration different levels of ability. In the implementation of our proposed strategy, we followed these recommendations, as it was essential that all the students had as many opportunities as possible to participate in the games and in an oral exchange of information.

Taguchi (2007) conducted another study that investigated the effects of task difficulty on L2 oral output. The population was a group of 59 Japanese university English learners' (29 students with high proficiency level and 30 with low level) and discovered that there were important differences in accuracy, but not in time of response. She also concluded that the power relations among the people involved in the conversation influenced the quality of the language produced. These findings warned our research team that factors such as power relationships and the level of difficulty of the tasks could influence the students' performance in oral activities positively or negatively.

Dolosic, Brantmeier, Strube and Hogrebe (2016) investigated the relationship between self-assessment and oral production in a French class. The findings indicated that self-assessment and the improvement of oral production were significantly correlated. The researcher explained that self-assessing may be considered as a metacognitive strategy for students to learn to self-diagnose strengths and weaknesses, and work on their individual language learning needs with the help of instructors. In addition, Amiryousefi (2016) explored how fluency awareness could increase speaking ability in college level English students. He found that the level of fluency progressed substantially over the course of a year. He explained there is no evidence that specific strategies promote the development of fluency, but the time for continuous practice and speech repetition led to the students' progress. These studies provide useful insights about the positive effect of cooperative learning, the relevance of self-awareness to students' progress, and the need for practice and repetition, which, in our study, were promoted through the implementation of the board games.

Ochoa, Cabrera, Quiñonez, Castillo, and González (2016) researched the effect of communicative activities on English learners' motivation. They realized that students gained

confidence when they helped each other in activities such as games, pair work, group work, role-playing, and oral presentations that allow and promote interaction. They also found that communicative activities such as games, pair work, small group work, and role-plays, which were used to promote oral production in our study, were the most motivating to students and teachers in the language learning classroom.

Moradan and Ahmadian (2016) investigated the role of interaction in the learner's oral proficiency. The results demonstrated that including interaction in the classroom improved learners' oral proficiency. Ullauri and Cain (2016) aimed to determine the impact of motivational strategies on learners' development of the speaking skill. One of their findings evidenced that the lack of varied methodology and techniques, including leisure activities and role-play, decreases learners' motivation and interest. According to this, the use of board games in the case of our study allows the variation of tasks, interaction patterns, and permanent dynamism to raise students' motivation to participate in oral activities, which was one of the main problems we attempted to solve.

2.3.3 Previous research on games with learning purposes.

Regarding the use of games as a strategy to promote language learning, we found studies that investigated the impact of different types of games in different learning contexts. (Wang, 2010) conducted a study to examine the use of communicative language games in teaching and learning English in Taiwanese primary schools. The results indicated that teachers generally recognized the advantages of communicative game activities in the teaching of the English language. The findings also suggested that it was necessary for teachers to take into account the students' different backgrounds, learning styles, needs, and expectations when selecting and implementing the communicative games. Yip and Kwan (2006) researched about online

vocabulary games as a tool for teaching and learning English vocabulary. This study aimed to find out if online games to teach specific technical vocabulary actually benefited engineering students' vocabulary learning. The results indicated that online games had a positive impact on students' vocabulary learning, but they required additional support from the teacher. It gave more validity to the use of games with learning purposes but at the same time highlighted the importance of teachers' support and the creation of a controlled learning environment for learners to be able to meet the learning objectives.

Another study conducted by Huyen and Nga (2003) aimed to find out if games help students learn vocabulary effectively, and, if so, how. The results suggested that learning games facilitates vocabulary learning. They have several benefits such as fun learning, practice and friendly competition, and the promotion of language review. Erni (2016) attempted to develop sixth graders' speaking skill through games. He concluded that games help learners to get used to the language and become more confident when speaking. This was one of the main reasons for selecting games as the tool to promote students' oral participation in this study.

Avinash (2016) investigated the impact of using puzzle-solving games to teach English. Although he limited the research exclusively to that specific type of game and emphasized on the teaching of grammar, he concluded that games provide a leisurely and friendly classroom environment, which facilitates students' learning of the language. Nurhasanah (2016) attempted to improve students' listening comprehension through cluster games. He stated that cluster games had a positive effect on students' listening comprehension.

Although, in all of the studies cited above, the researchers used different types of games to improve different language skills, none of them coincided with the objective and strategy of our study. However, all of them agreed that the use of learning games favours language learners

since they reduce learners' anxiety and facilitate interaction, creating a comfortable learning environment.

2.3.4 Justification of research question and objectives.

The objective of this study was to enhance sixth grade beginners' oral production through guided vocabulary learning and practice. The research team aimed to contribute with a solution to a problem that is common to the two participant schools and, according to Sánchez (2012), common to the Colombian language-teaching classroom even in the higher levels: low oral production. Finding a solution to this problem is relevant since the Colombian bilingualism program main objective is "having citizens able to communicate in English with internationally comparable standards, to insert the country into universal communication processes in the global economy and cultural openness" (Guerrero, 2008 p. 32). The low level of oral production demonstrated the need for an urgent intervention that the research team considered pertinent to start at an early stage of the process. As suggested by the results of the studies cited throughout this paper, one way to approach this problem is through the implementation of strategies that promote interaction and increase learners' motivation to use English to communicate orally.

Taking into account that the needs analysis evidenced the lack of vocabulary knowledge as the main factor hindering students' development of oral communicative competences and, therefore, the students evidenced low motivation to produce English orally, we considered that tackling the specific problem of the lack of vocabulary might be a starting point to increase students' motivation, self-confidence, and oral proficiency. The literature review pointed out the use of games and vocabulary teaching as the combined strategy addressed to diminish students' anxiety and promote their oral performance.

2.4 Conclusion

Throughout the literature review, we found that, although the cited studies were conducted in different countries of the world with heterogeneous populations with different needs and characteristics, they dealt with aspects common to all language learners. In reference to oral production, it was confirmed that interaction promotes the development of this ability. Factors which do not necessarily have to do with the language, like, for example, the effect that power relations have on speakers' production, become an important influence in the way students perform in oral communicative situations (Taguchi, 2007). In connection with vocabulary learning, all the studies agree that the use of vocabulary learning strategies and students' awareness improve communicative skills. The research team also found that, in different studies, games have been used with various learning purposes including vocabulary learning, and have obtained positive results in terms of memorization, use, understanding of the target vocabulary, and students' interest and motivation. The different authors concur that, in order to succeed, it is necessary to take into account specific elements like students' backgrounds, language level, ages, setting arrangement, and discipline management when selecting games with specific learning purposes.

The findings cited in the literature review helped the research team to have a better understanding of the main constructs of this study, and provided relevant information that prevented altered results; however, none of the studies coincided with the components and features of our study. In relation to oral production skills, the reviewed studies agree on the need of strategies and methodologies that promote interaction and some of them mention the relevance of vocabulary teaching in the development of this skill. In regards to vocabulary teaching, the researchers consulted specific aspects, such as the breadth and depth of vocabulary

that have to be taken into account when teaching vocabulary. August, Dressler, and Snow (2005) suggested other researchers to investigate if a specific set of words should be taught, which was one of the questions answered in this study. In reference to the use of games in language learning, we also found that all the studies agree on their benefits, but none of the studies referred to board games.

In the following chapter, we will explain the research design and methodology, data collection instruments, population and context, the researchers' role, ethical considerations, and the validation process.

Chapter 3: Research Design

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter showed theoretical constructs that support the importance of games and vocabulary practice to enhance oral production in learners of English as a foreign language. This section will refer to the type of study, context, methodology, researcher's role, setting, participants, instruments to collect data and ethical considerations used in order to shape the study.

3.2 Type of Study

This research project was conducted through the collaborative action research methodology. According to Reason and Bradbury (2001), collaborative action research allows us to reflect on our profession, combining theory and practice in order to change a problematic situation. It also contributes to the improvement to the participants learning process.

We aimed to determine the manner in which the promotion of vocabulary learning and practice through board games that could promote interaction and diminish students' level of anxiety, would help students improve their oral production skills.

Edwards and Willis (2014) explained that action research methodology requires the researcher to find a problem that is affecting a specific group and propose actions or tentative solutions to address such problem. Burns (2010), in reference to the figure of teacher-researcher, mentions that the use of action research methodology gives teachers the opportunity to take an active role in the different stages of the research project since they collect data, analyse and interpret the data, and propose strategies to solve the problem. Thus, as teachers-researchers, we identified the problem of poor oral production and students' lack of vocabulary as one of the possible factors that were causing the problem.

3.3 Context

This research was conducted at San Carlos IED and Colegio Cundinamarca IED, two public schools located in Bogotá. According to the socio-economic stratification system in Colombia, which classifies urban populations into different strata with similar economic characteristics on a scale from one to six, with one as the lowest income area and six as the highest (Gallego, Lopez & Sepulveda, 2014), both schools are located in strata two.

San Carlos IED offers educational services to about 2000 students from Kindergarten to Eleventh grade in the morning and afternoon shifts. The school has a team of about 60 graduated teachers mostly with master degree. Tenth and Eleventh grade programs have an emphasis on electronics and graphic design. One special feature of this institution is an inclusion program with deaf students with a specialized service of sign language classes in high school.

The school is divided into two premises: A and B, both of them located in San Carlos neighbourhood, in Tunjuelito district. This study was carried out with a sampling of hearing students from one of the headquarters (B). For this population, the school offers 3 hours of English instruction per week. For deaf students, that time is devoted to the learning of Spanish as a second language, considering that their first language is sign language.

The students do not follow any specific textbook or use sources for the English subject other than the teachers' activities. The school is going through a process of reconstructing the language-teaching curriculum, thus the results of this study might serve as a guide for the selection of the content, approach, and methodology, which fit the students' needs, and the language teaching goals of the schools.

Colegio Cundinamarca IED is a public institution located in Ciudad Bolivar district. The institution attends about 2200 students from Kindergarten to Eleventh grades in the morning and

afternoon shifts. The school has a team of about 82 graduated teachers mostly with master degree.

This institution is part of the National Program of Bilingualism, so the students take 5 hours of English instruction per week. However, progress in the bilingual project has not been as steady as expected, due to aspects such as intermittence of language teachers, new students and lack of motivation of the school community.

3.3.1 Participants.

The sample selected for this study was a group of 24 sixth graders from San Carlos IED and Colegio Cundinamarca (12 out of a class from about 36 students from each school) made up of girls and boys who were between eleven and thirteen years old. The 24 students' level of English corresponded to A1 according to the CEFR. Before this study, the 12 students from San Carlos IED had not started any process of English learning. This group of students showed difficulties to produce the language orally and low vocabulary knowledge, according to the results of the needs analysis. This is considered a result of their lack of contact with the target language.

Regarding the level of the students from Cundinamarca School IED, it is important to clarify that the students selected for this study were new at the school and had not the same process as the rest of the groups, showing poor results in the diagnostic vocabulary test.

In relation to the students' affective and cognitive needs, most of them dealt with difficult familiar situations that affect their motivation in their learning progress causing low self-esteem in the medium or long term, (Bandura, 1989). For this reason, they need to be continually motivated to learn and raise their self-confidence to develop different tasks. Regarding students 'cognitive needs, the needs analysis revealed that they tend to forget words, expressions and

grammar structures easily, thus they need to be exposed to meaningful activities to facilitate their long term memory.

For the needs analysis, the students were asked to answer a questionnaire (Appendix B.1) which revealed that one of the possible causes of the problem of low oral participation in the classes was that they did not have the necessary vocabulary to express basic ideas.

3.3.2 Researcher's role.

For this study, the teachers' role evolved to teacher-researchers, as we designed, adapted and implemented a set of games to improve the level of oral production of the selected sample.

As teacher-researchers, we facilitated the fluent and effective communication among learners and verified that the proposed activities were executed successfully to measure the evolution of the primary situation. As O'Brien (1998) argued, the main role is to nurture local leaders to the point where they can take responsibility for the process.

Our role as researchers was active since we were directly involved in the intervention and problem solving. We reflected, intervened, evaluated, reported and became active agents in the process of trying to find ways to increase the oral production and vocabulary of the students. We also proposed strategies to help students learn high frequency words and facilitate their oral use of the target language.

3.3.3 Ethical considerations.

Throughout the process of the data collection instruments, the research team followed the key principles of action research, suggested by Burns (2010), regarding responsibility, confidentiality and negotiation. In order to accomplish them, the researchers created two consent letter forms that were addressed to school principals, students and parents from the two public

institutions (Appendix A). These documents informed all the participants, in detail, about the study, purposes and procedure. The participants were asked to sign to acknowledge their approval and authorization for carrying out this study.

The researchers guaranteed to hold the confidentiality, privacy and integrity of all the participants in this study. The students were asked to write their initials in the instruments to collect data which were replaced by numbers during the systematization process. Students from San Carlos IED were identified with numbers from one to 12, and students form Colegio Cundinamarca IED with numbers from 13 to 24. Girls were additionally differentiated from boys by using colours: pink for girls and dark green for boys (Appendix E).

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

The data collection instruments for this study were selected because they provided different sources of data, facilitated the systematization of the data, and especially gave validity and reliability to the study. The instruments included questionnaires, tests (vocabulary test and oral production test), checklists, and teachers' journal. The questionnaires were applied in the initial stage to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. The vocabulary and oral production tests were applied before the implementation, in the middle, and at the end of the implementation. The checklist and teacher's journal were used during the implementation of all the board games. The questionnaires and tests were designed to collect qualitative and quantitative data; the checklist and teacher's journal provided qualitative data.

3.4.1 Descriptions and justifications

3.4.1.1 Questionnaire.

According to Burns (2010), questionnaires have the advantage of being easier to answer and less time consuming. For the purpose of this study, two different questionnaires were

implemented. The first was used during the needs analysis stage to determine students' language learning needs and plan the pedagogical intervention (Appendix B.1). The second questionnaire was designed to register students' opinions and perception of the strategy, and implemented methodology. (Appendix B.2).

3.4.1.2 Tests.

The tests were a tool used to verify comprehension from students, and to help researchers identify what students know or do not know about the studied topic. Sagor (2000) recommended the use of tests for data collection. In this study, they were used to collect quantitative data about the approximate number of high frequency words students knew before and after the intervention and qualitative data about the level of comprehension of target words when used in context. Then, during the development of the study, the students were asked to answer three vocabulary tests: pre-test, mid-term test, and post-test (Appendix C). These tests were designed based on the beginners' frequency vocabulary list for level A1 according to the CEFR, and model tests to assess the different skills from Cambridge University. The word list was adapted considering the students' needs, interests, and context.

3.4.1.3 Checklist.

According to Arhar, Holly, and Kasten (2001), checklists are a formal tool that allows researchers to record the samplings observed and the features of interest for the study. The use of checklists provided us with relevant information about the students' performance in oral activities and their progress in the vocabulary learning throughout the implementation of the proposed strategy in this study. We designed a list of criteria related to the frequency of oral participation, students' attitude and coherence, which allowed the researchers to have a complete picture of each individual process (Appendix D).

3.4.1.4 Journal.

Borg (2001) explains that the research journal is a reflective writing tool that, in language teaching studies specifically, helps teacher-researchers have a deeper understanding of all the sides of the research processes. However, Nunan and Bailey (2009) clarify that using journals as research instruments requires the researcher to be disciplined, to collect consistent data that leads then to reliable patterns in the information that can be analysed. This instrument was selected because not only did it allow the researchers to record qualitative data, but also to revisit the registered information as many times as needed. The journal and the checklist were implemented together to gather information related to the students' performance during the implementation of the board games.

3.4.2 Validation and piloting.

To give validity and reliability to this study, the research team chose instruments that allowed the collection of qualitative and quantitative information. The four data collection instruments were piloted before the implementation. First, the instruments were shared with colleagues and corrected according to their recommendations. Then, they were implemented in the two schools with groups of sixth graders with similar characteristics to the samplings in terms of age, level of English, grade, and learning needs, who were not participating in the study. According to the colleagues' comments and the results of the piloting with the students, the research team made changes related to the language to avoid confusion or bias in the instruments implemented with the students. Besides, some other changes were necessary in the checklists and teachers' journals to ensure the collection of relevant information, taking into account the time constrains for taking notes while attending to a whole class.

The triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data related to the samples' levels of vocabulary and oral production collected through different instruments during the three stages (pre, mid-term and post implementation of the board games for guided vocabulary practice) added to the validity. As stated by Bouchard (1976), "the convergence or agreement between two methods enhances our belief that the results are valid" (p. 268). Taking into account that the same instruments were used during the three stages, the data obtained allowed researchers to establish students' initial levels of vocabulary and oral production, analyse and compare information to answer the research question, follow the students' vocabulary learning progress, and see how it was reflected on their oral production performance during the process of this investigation. The questionnaire applied after the intervention, aimed to reveal the sampling perceptions of the implemented strategy and methodology and the results, increased the validity of the study. According to Burns (2010), a study gains validity and reliability when the participants in the study recognize and support its findings.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented a general overview of the action research methodology, the instruments to collect data, teachers' role and ethical considerations. This study followed a collaborative action research methodology in which two teacher-researchers implemented questionnaires, tests, checklists and journals to gather, register and triangulate the qualitative and quantitative data. In addition, in all stages of the study, the anonymity of the participants was guaranteed by replacing their initials with numbers in the systematization and analysis of the data. All the data collection instruments were piloted before the implementation for the researchers to be able to make the necessary corrections, which contributed with the gathering of

reliable information. The different stages addressed throughout the implementation of this study are described in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Pedagogical Intervention and Implementation

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed description of the pedagogical intervention, which was carried out in a period of 4 weeks, totalling 24 hours to determine how guided vocabulary practice through board games improved A1 level Sixth Graders' oral production. The timeline, a sample of the lesson plans (objectives, activities, resources) and data collection instruments are also presented. The researchers' visions of curriculum, language, learning, and classroom are exposed with the purpose of clarifying how English teaching and learning as a foreign language are understood.

4.2 Visions of Language, Learning, and Curriculum

4.2.1 Vision of language.

Firstly, the researchers recognize language as a vehicle of communication, personal growth, interaction, and access to information as well as a product of social construction, which reflects its speakers' culture and identity (Buttjes, 1990). Accordingly, when defining the vision of language, the research team examined two aspects of language learning: the learners' communicative needs and the learners' cultural context.

In connection with the learners' communicative needs, the researchers considered it important to promote meaningful language-learning through activities, which help learners develop their receptive and productive communicative skills (Ausubel, 1963). As language teachers and researchers, our goal was to guide learners through a process of learning the language and becoming competent users in authentic communicative situations (Richards and Schmidt, 2013).

Regarding the cultural component of language, the researchers recognize a direct correlation between culture and language where language competence affects cultural competence and vice versa (Buttjes, 1990). In the case of this study, we used a high frequency word list by Cambridge ESOL examinations (Bailey, 2005), which we adapted according to our sample's context and culture to make it meaningful for learners and to facilitate learning. We consider that this process of acculturation is also related to the so-called "World Englishes" which refers to the continuous transformation of the English language because of speakers' adaptation of the language to their own context and particular communicative needs (Bolton, 2004; Jenkins, 2006).

4.2.2 Vision of learning.

The researchers understand learning as a holistic process. First, knowledge is acquired throughout social construction opportunities (Vygotsky, 1978) and, second, students' learning is potentiated through collaboration with others (Brown & Ferrara, 1985). In summation, learning results from authentic interaction. This definition of learning may be also applied to language learning where interaction plays a relevant role in the promotion of authentic learning and in the development of communicative skills (Little, 1996).

Keeping in mind the interactive and social character which is common to language learning, the research team believes that second language learning follows the natural stages of human language development (Coady & Huckin,1997), since learners also need progressive interaction with the target language in order to develop communicative skills (Terrell, 1982). We consider that when promoting authentic and natural interaction, information gap activities, which were promoted during the implementation of this study, become an effective strategy because they generate conversational patterns of meaningful classroom learning (Doughty & Pica, 1986).

4.2.3 Vision of curriculum.

The research team members, in agreement with their respective institutions' identity and pedagogical approaches, understand the curriculum as a set of principles and procedures for the planning, implementation, evaluation and management of an educational program (Nunan, 1988). Both public institutions, Colegio San Carlos and Colegio Cundinamarca follow the Basic Standards of Competences in Foreign Languages (MEN, 2006), and the schools' policies or Institutional Educational Project (abbreviated as PEI). These standards, which encourage the promotion of communicative skills with academic and social purposes, attempt to satisfy the need to promote the bilingualism in English in Colombian schools, to facilitate learners' access to the global information community and marketplace competence.

According to this vision of curriculum and the specific objectives of the study, the implementation of the strategy proposed to improve learners' oral production skills followed the situational or oral approach. Richards (2014) explained that according to this approach, language teaching needs to start with spoken language before written language, the target language is the language used in the students' learning context, oral language practice is contextualized, and target vocabulary selection is essential. Celce-Murcia (2001) also stated that the situational approach prioritizes spoken language development and the progressive introduction of lexical and grammatical items from simple to complex in situational communicative situations. Accordingly, our proposal involves the planning and implementation of communicative activities, and the evaluation and management of their effectiveness in promoting communicative language learning.

4.3 Instructional design

4.3.1 Lesson planning.

The pedagogical intervention took place in a period of four academic weeks, with an intensity of six hours per week, totalling 24 hours in each school. The researchers designed and implemented one lesson plan each week. The lesson plans included three main components: presentation of target vocabulary, language practice through board games, and evaluation of learning through oral activities. According to the planning of the implementation, each student was required to participate in the three games, thus the process described in this lesson plan was repeated for each game.

Firstly, the target vocabulary was presented through simulation of real life communicative situations (Appendix Q). The researchers used visual, kinaesthetic, and auditory resources and materials, selected according to the students' ages, grade, and language level, which, according to Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer and Bjork (2009), allow teachers to attend to all the learners' different learning styles with the objective of satisfying individual learning needs.

Secondly, the language practice through board games aimed to facilitate the learning of high frequency words related to specific topics. Each game was divided into three stages that were designed according to the stages of language natural development (Nation, 2001).

According to Coady and Huckin (1997), those stages are the silent period and the production period. Namely, when language learners learn a word, they need some time to process the new knowledge acquired about the word, to finally become able to use it. The first stage in the lesson plan was the assimilation of game rules and objectives, and the familiarization with words and short basic expressions. The second stage was recognition and repetition of target words. In this stage, the games provided patterns of meaningful use of words and

expressions in daily life situations. These examples of how to use the vocabulary were presented through cards. Students needed to find the correct expressions to communicate with the other players according to the specific situation of the game they were facing, thus, they did not need to produce sentences by themselves. This exercise prepared students for the third stage of the games where they needed to produce the language orally. In this stage, the participants needed to face similar situations to the ones presented in the second stage but in this case, they were required to ask and give information to progress in the game without any type of aids or help to produce the language.

The topics, vocabulary, and grammar items for the implementation were selected according to the two schools' curricula, the population's learning needs detected during the needs analysis, and the objectives of the study. According to this, the topics chosen were places in a city, how to get to a place, and asking for help. Some of the visual and auditory materials for the introduction of the content and the games design were taken from the web; the researchers created others. All the videos used were taken from YouTube channels. The resources used for the implementation were a TV set, tape recorder, flashcards, board, and board games designed by the researchers according to the objectives of the study.

4.3.2 Implementation.

The implementation of the lesson plans started by sharing the objectives and relevant information with the groups of students from the two schools. The twelve sessions were developed in four weeks according to the planning in the students' regular schedules.

Table 1. Implementation timeline

STAGE	WEEK	DATA COLLECTION	TIME
Session 1: Introduction-Pre implementation vocabulary test (written and oral)	1 October 12th – 16th	Teacher's journal Vocabulary tests (written and oral)	100 minutes
Session 2: Topic 1- places in a city		Teacher's journal and checklist	100 minutes
Session 3: Board game- practice of vocabulary in context		Teacher's journal and checklist	100 minutes
Session 1: Introduction-presentation of vocabulary: prepositions of place	2 October 19th – 23rd	Teacher's journal	100 minutes
Session 2: Topic 2- How to get to a place		Teacher's journal and checklist	100 minutes
Session 3: Board game- practice of vocabulary in context		Teacher's journal and checklist	100 minutes
Session 1: Introduction-presentation of vocabulary: Members of the family and professions	3 October 26th – 30th	Teacher's journal Vocabulary tests (written and oral)	100 minutes
Session 2: While implementation tests (written and oral) Topic 4- Verbs		Teacher's journal and checklist	100 minutes
Session 3: Reflection and assessment		Teacher's journal and checklist	100 minutes
Session 1: Introduction-presentation of vocabulary: prepositions of place	4 November 2nd - 6th	Teacher's journal	100 minutes
Session 2: Topic 2- How to get to a place		Teacher's journal and checklist	100 minutes
Session 3: Post implementation of tests (written and oral) Board game- practice of vocabulary in context		Teacher's journal and checklist Vocabulary tests (written and oral)	100 minutes

First, students were asked to perform a written vocabulary test to determine their level of vocabulary knowledge before the implementation (Appendix C.1). Then, they had an oral production test to establish the initial level of proficiency in this skill (Appendix F).

After collecting the diagnostic data, the researchers proceeded to present the complete high frequency word list, so the learners could familiarize themselves with the vocabulary they were expected to know at the end of the implementation. Then, the researchers started the introduction of the first group of words according to the lesson plan. The vocabulary was presented through flashcards, videos, and PowerPoint presentations. After that, a board game was introduced according to the target vocabulary of each lesson.

At the beginning of the implementation, the introduction and contextualization of the content took more minutes than expected. As a result, the implementation of the first stage of the first board game had to be shorter than the second and third board games. However, as the content of the first game was the most basic and familiar for students, this fact did not have negative implications in the expected outcomes. For example, in the first two sessions (200 minutes), about 50 minutes were devoted to instructions and 150 minutes to the game. As the implementation advanced, instructional time decreased and interaction time through the board games increased. In the two final sessions, students had 180 minutes of games and 20 minutes of instructions and feedback.

Vocabulary written tests and oral production tests were applied in the seventh and twelfth sessions to establish the midterm and final level of vocabulary learning and oral production levels.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter expounded the visions of learning, language and curriculum which served as guidance to determine which was the most appropriate way to approach oral production according to the local, national, and global contextual needs. It also presented the study timeline and the explanation of the lesson planning process, which allowed the research team to verify the coherence among the problem, the strategy chosen to tackle the problem, the tools, and the distribution of time. The subsequent chapters will present a detailed analysis of the collected data and the impact of the implementation on the participants.

Chapter 5: Results and Data Analysis

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter elaborated on the researchers' visions of language learning, and curriculum, and illustrated the pedagogical intervention timeline and lesson planning process. This chapter explains the data management procedures, the reduction of data for validation and triangulation, the data analysis methodology and the categories resulting from the pedagogical intervention of this action research, which was conducted according to the principles of the Grounded Theory Approach described by Corbin & Strauss (2015). Those principles to implement grounded theory are developing critical analysis, recognizing the tendency to bias, thinking abstractedly, and being flexible and open to criticism. From the data analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, and the open, axial and selective coding procedures, some categories and subcategories emerged to obtain a better understanding of how data collection helped to answer the research question of this study.

5.2 Data Management Procedures

The data collected during the study included qualitative and quantitative data. All the information was collected through the implementation of questionnaires, a teacher's journal, a checklist, written vocabulary tests (pre, mid-term, and post implementation of the strategy), and oral production tests (pre, mid-term, and post implementation of the strategy). This information was systematized in a matrix with the help of MS Excel ™ tools.

All the instruments used provided qualitative data related to risk-taking, use of metacognitive skills, pronunciation and coherence, meaning comprehension, authenticity of information exchange, and individual progress during the pedagogical intervention. Additionally, written vocabulary tests and oral production tests applied pre, mid-term, and post implementation

of the strategy, allowed the collection of quantitative data related to the students' word repertoire, and frequency and quality of participation in oral activities. In the vocabulary test, we could count the amount of isolated words students identified, and the times they were able to identify words meaning in a sentence. At the end, we could compare the results of each student in the three tests. In relation with the oral production test, we designed a checklist, which helped us register the frequency of participation, the use of the target vocabulary, and the quality of each intervention in terms of comprehensibility.

In order to make the management of the information as easy as possible and maintain the participants' anonymity, students from San Carlos were enumerated from 1 to 12 and students from Colegio Cundinamarca from 13 to 24. Additionally, boys and girls were differentiated with colours.

5.2.1 Validation.

Validation allows researchers to determine the level of authenticity, reliability, and applicability of a study (Tracy, 2010). To validate results, it is important to combine and compare information obtained through different instruments (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Consequently, the instruments to collect the data, their design, and the planning of their implementation in this study, aimed to gather qualitative and quantitative information during different stages, in different ways. This allowed the researchers to have a wider overview of the problem and verify the accuracy of the set objectives. This also facilitated the classification of the information collected to draw a complete map of the data in order to discover patterns, determine the categories, and sub categories.

The research team also evaluated the study according to the eight criteria of quality in qualitative research proposed by Tracy (2010): worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence.

5.2.2 Data analysis methodology.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) explained that in qualitative research the collection and analysis of data should be simultaneous. Bogdan and Biklen (2007), suggested the following aspects that researchers should consider when carrying out a qualitative study make decisions concerning the type of study develop analytic questions, plan data collection sessions based on findings of previous observations, write many observers' comments about what they are learning, try out ideas and themes on participants, begin exploring the literature while they are on the field, play with metaphors, analogies and concepts, and use visual devices.

Conforming to the suggestions given by Merriam and Tisdell (2015) and Bogdan and Biklen (2007), and based on principles of Grounded theory as critical analysis, recognition of the tendency to bias, abstract thinking, and flexibility to criticism, the collection and analysis of data was systematic and permanent during the stages of this study. We followed this order: observation for needs analysis, designing instruments for data collection, piloting of instruments with colleagues and students, correcting instruments according to the weaknesses found during the piloting, implementation, coding the data collected, digitalization of the data, producing a graphic representation of the data, and drawing conclusions.

The process of classifying the data was done through open and axial coding which allowed us to organize the information and to find the categories and subcategories. The definition of the categories was done also according to the systematic process of data analysis

proposed by Tracy (2010): category construction, sorting categories and data, naming the categories, establish the number of categories, and finally constructing theoretical basics.

5.3 Categories

5.3.1 Overall category mapping.

The open coding procedure helped the researchers to identify the initial codes by analysing all the instruments. The initial codes were identified through the process of color-coding as it is showed in the table below.

Table 2. Initial codes

How does guided vocabulary practice through board games improve oral production in A1 Sixth Graders (CEFR)?
➢ Learning vocabulary
➢ Oral production
➢ Collaborative learning
➢ Interactive learning
➢ Anxiety reduction
➢ Willingness to participate
➢ Authentic information exchange
➢ Increased self-esteem
➢ Language awareness

The axial coding procedure led the researchers to identify the relation among the concepts found in the open coding. This helped to group the concepts making the categorization more concise. (Figure 1)

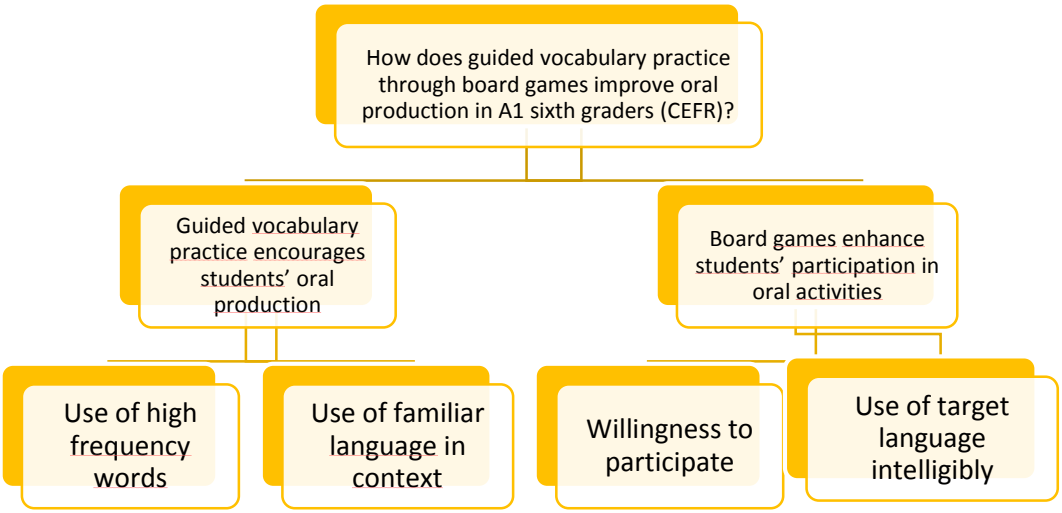

Figure 1. Preliminary categories and subcategories

The main categories that emerged after the analysis of open, axial and selective coding and the relationship among them are displayed in Figure 2.

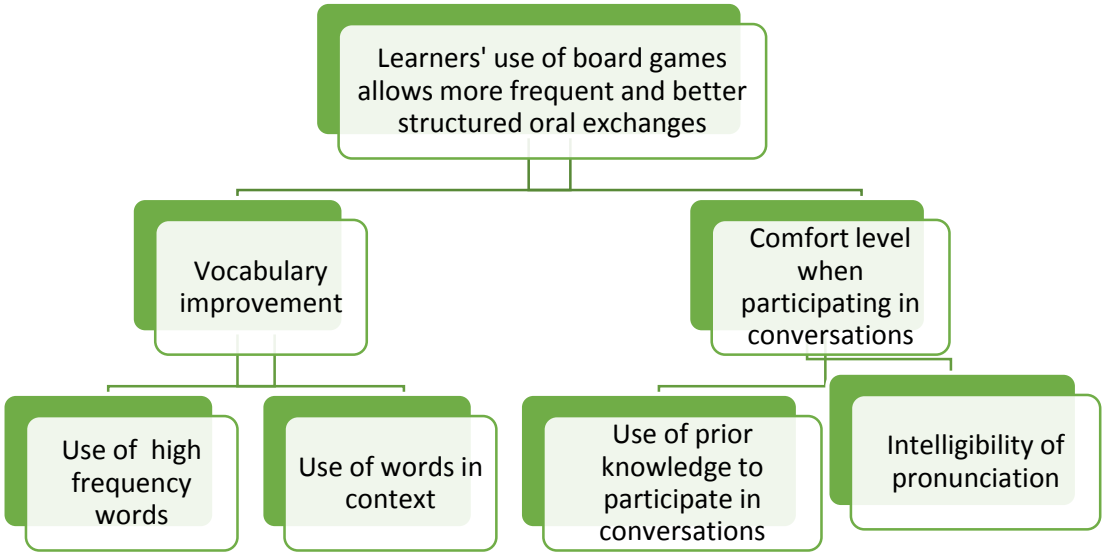

Figure 2. Final categories and subcategories

5.3.2 Discussion of categories.

5.3.2.1 Vocabulary improvement.

The strategy of guided vocabulary practice through board games increased significantly the number of words retained by the students. As the words were selected considering their use

in the students' context, it was easier to make connections between the students' first language and the target language, and this seems to have affected positively their oral production. In this way, learning words that are commonly used in the learners' context is a practical way to improve the development of oral production (Nation, 2001).

5.3.2.1.1 Use of frequency words.

According to the time of implementation, the target vocabulary was limited to 250 high frequency words that included mainly nouns, adjectives and adverbs, which were selected by following the sample list from YLE Flyers (Bailey, 2005) which served as guide. In reference to this, the comparison of vocabulary levels and the level of oral production in the three stages of the implementation evidenced that although lack of vocabulary was not the unique factor that was hindering oral production, this was affecting the way learners responded to oral activities.

Figure 3. Comparison of the vocabulary tests: identification of words

The first stage of the games was designed to develop the first stage of vocabulary learning (Schmitt, 2008): establishing an initial form–meaning link. This was done through pictures and cards, which were part of the games, and with the teacher's support to provide

pronunciation patterns. The effectiveness of this strategy was observable when comparing the results of the vocabulary tests implemented along the research, in which all students increased the number of words identified as presented in Figure 3.

5.3.2.1.2 Use of words in context.

Vocabulary learning implies more than just identifying the literal meaning of words. Prince (1996) explains that knowing the translation for a word does not guarantee that the learner will use it successfully in context. Accordingly, we promoted the learning and practice of words inside a meaningful context to help learners develop the gradual process of vocabulary learning which, according to Nagy, Herman and Anderson (1985), requires many exposures to the unfamiliar word in context to understand the meaning.

The findings of this study, in relation with this category were: first, the implementation of board games helped students understand the meaning of words. This was because words were presented in context and situations familiar to students. Then, when they did not remember the meaning of a word, the context gave them the clues to make connections that helped them infer and remember its meaning. This seems to confirm that the role of context in L2 vocabulary learning is transcendental (Nagy, 1995). Secondly, although repetition and learning by heart apparently have a negative connotation (Cook, 1994), repetition of words in a meaningful context is an efficient activity to facilitate memorization, comprehension and use of words according to specific contextual needs (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2000). In this study, recycling the same vocabulary in the different stages of the games evidenced a positive impact on learners' ability to use the vocabulary learned.

The third finding was the effectiveness of board games as a means to promote vocabulary learning and use inside specific contexts. The dynamics of the games does seem to have helped

learners go through the stages of vocabulary learning (Schmitt, 2008), and facilitate the students' learning and use of the target vocabulary. An additional advantage of the use of board games was that words, which were not part of the high frequency target list; were learned incidentally because of the students' need to express their own ideas about specific situations in the games. Those words included some verbs such as *find, help,* and *need,* some articles as *the* and *a/an,* and function words as prepositions of place and the modal verbs. In this regard, Hunt and Beglar (2002) explain that the variation of the type of activities favours vocabulary (intentional and incidental) learning. This may be observed when comparing the utterances produced by learners at different moments of the pedagogical intervention.

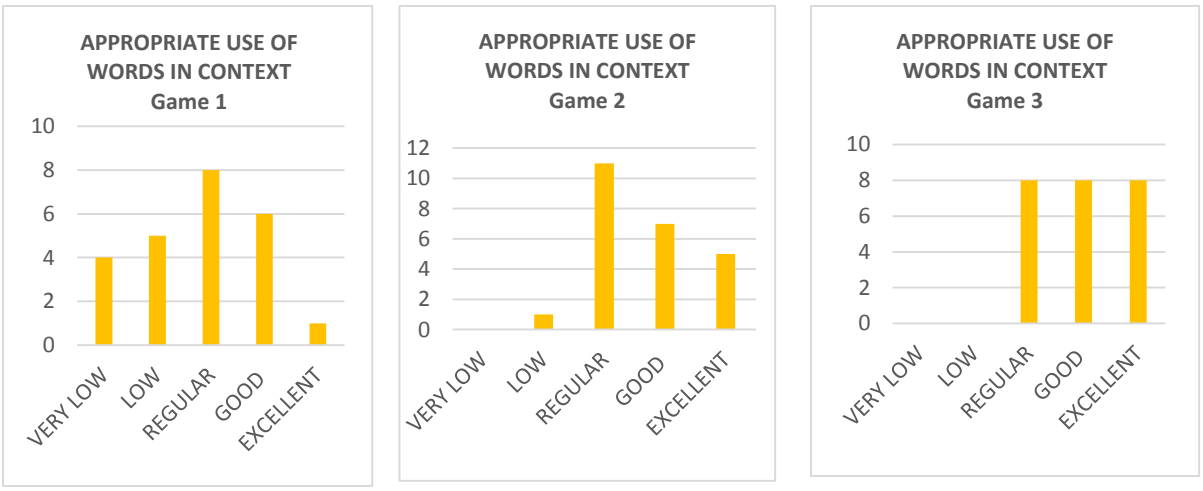

Figure 4. Use of words in context along the implementation

5.3.2.2 Ease of participation in conversations.

Schmitt (2008) stated that maximizing engagement is a key principle in vocabulary learning. In this case, engagement was increased through board games, which were developed in three stages: identification of vocabulary, providing language use patterns through game cards, and producing language orally. From these three stages, the first was receptive, the second was receptive-productive, and the third was productive. The results of this study demonstrated that

when the students learned new high-frequency words, they simultaneously increased their participation in oral production activities.

One feature of the board games was interaction. This was significant to the study because opportunities for interactive speaking practice are essential to develop oral communicative skills (Thornbury, 2006). Although students were not able to produce completely accurate sentences at the end of the implementation, all of them tried to communicate orally by using the learned vocabulary. Apparently, games helped leaners overcome their insecurity and move from low or no oral participation to active participation in the oral activities of the board games. According to Stern (1983), the affective component has the same influence as cognitive skills on language learning. In this case, the increased oral participation evidenced that games helped learners to overcome the affective factors related to insecurity detected during the needs analysis, which were having a negative impact on students' performance and learning.

5.3.2.2.1 Use of prior knowledge to participate in conversations.

Throughout the study, it was necessary to consider the students' prior knowledge, interests, and learning styles, for planning and implementing each one of the stages. Pierce and Adams (2005) refer to readiness as the students' background, the skills previously taught or prior knowledge. Regarding this, authenticity is an important key point to enhance the students' participation in oral activities. Language must be useful and practical in the learners' real life so they can raise awareness of its usefulness and meaningfulness (Thornbury, 2006). In this study, authenticity was promoted with information gaps created through the board games that simulated situations where, for instance, *a sick person needs help*. The participants needed to find a way to help the other players to advance. To do this the students needed to use their prior knowledge about how to deal with real life specific situations.

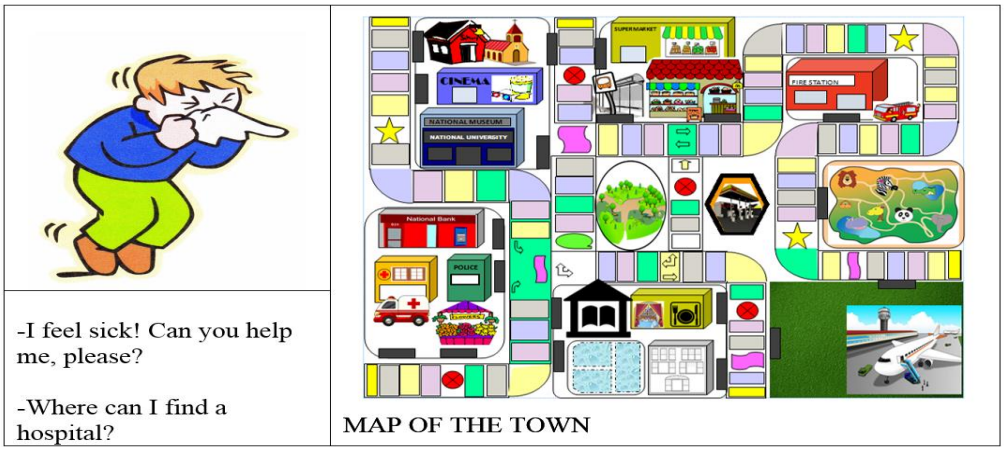

Figure 5. Excerpt from a game used to promote oral participation

In these situations, identification and memorization of single words was useful since students who were not able to structure a complete sentence used isolated words or inaccurate sentences to start producing meaningful language, which allowed them to communicate with the other player. To respond to communicative situations such as the one presented above, some students said: *You ok? Hospital next corner right,* or when they needed to ask for help they said: *Help! Please hospital!*

Table 3. Students' sample of oral production during the games

participant	Pre-implementation	Mid-term	Post-implementation
S4	Where can I find the hospital?	I feel sick. Where can I find the hospital?	I feel sick. Do you know where the hospital is?
S7	SR: no se decirlo en inglés	SR: hospital next church	SR: yes, the hospital… is… next to church.

5.3.2.2.2 Intelligibility of pronunciation.

The main objective of this study was to enhance the students' oral production and one of the main criteria to evaluate the achievement of this objective was intelligibility of pronunciation. In this regard, Morley (1991) affirms that intelligibility of pronunciation is crucial

for the effectiveness of oral communication processes. When evaluating learners' performance in the oral activities, the researchers did not take into account errors related to grammar, phonetics or fluency because, as explained by Luoma (2004), in unplanned spoken speech, slips and errors such as mispronunciation and wrong word order are common. The author explains that this happens to learners of a second language but also to native speakers. Thus, we considered that the best way to measure the students' oral performance was through the effectiveness of the information exchange. To this end, Spitzberg (1988) says that effectiveness is one of the criteria most commonly used to measure the quality of communication because it summarizes other aspects such as accuracy, clarity, comprehensibility, and coherence. In this study, the researchers measured effectiveness of oral communication according to the execution of actions in the games that demonstrated the success of the communicative exchange between players and the appropriateness of the language produced within the context of the interaction (Spitzberg, 1988). The evidenced that throughout the process of recycling vocabulary, intelligibility increase and the quality of information exchange improved.

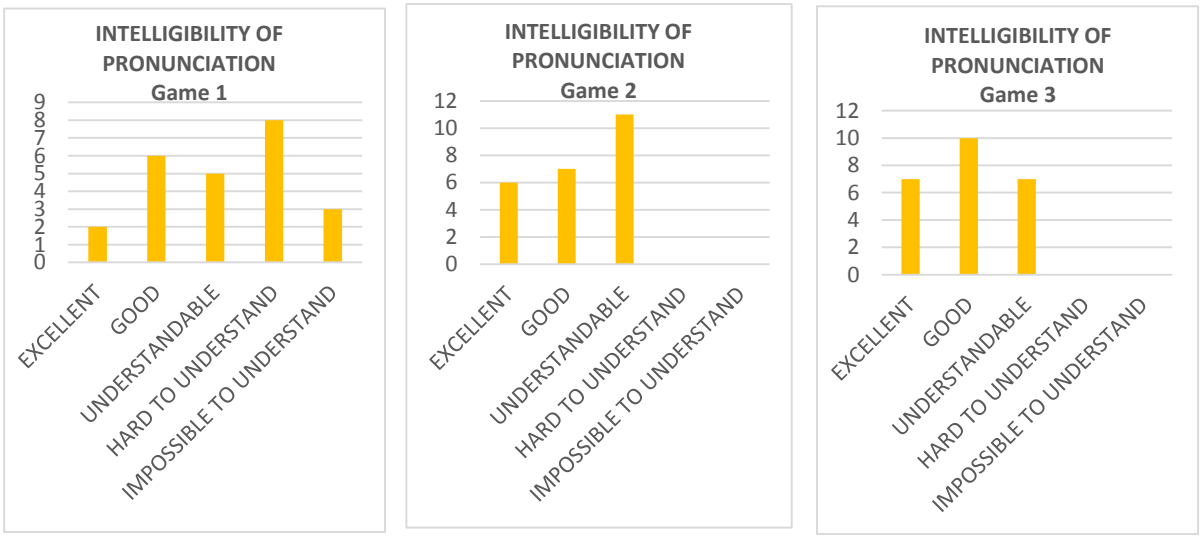

Figure 6. Comparison of the intelligible pronunciation in the three games.

In the figure, it is possible to observe that there was a considerable improvement of intelligibility in the second game compared to the first one. During the development of the games, we observed that although the vocabulary of the first game was more basic and familiar to students, they did not understand each other when they used those words orally. Nevertheless, in the second game students started to communicate more effectively. In the third game, intelligibility did not improve compared to the second game; however, the researchers surmised that the results of the third game were positive, considering that the level of difficulty of the games increased progressively. In the third game, students needed to produce complex sentences and give more complete information.

5.3.3 Core category.

After the classification, analysis and reduction of the data collected, the research team found that the central category, which led to the answer of the research question, was "learners' use of board games allows more frequent and better-structured oral exchanges". The results indicate that the implementation of board games facilitated the following: firstly, the learning of high frequency words, secondly, the use of target words in contextualized communicative situations, thirdly, the growth of students' interest and motivation to participate in the oral activities, and finally, intelligibility.

It was evidenced that adapting the vocabulary of the games to the students' real context made learning more meaningful. The presentation of words in context seemed to facilitate the recall and use of words (Appendix J). The replication of situations that students experience in their real lives made learning a more real experience where the language learned becomes useful and practical (Thornbury, 2006). Controlled practice through the board games was also beneficial since this guaranteed frequency of repetition and variation of situations where each

word could be used. This apparently improved students' attitudes towards oral production activities, since repetition and practice helped them gain confidence. Additionally, intelligibility (the main criterion to measure learners' oral performance) improved throughout the implementation of the games, possibly because of practice, repetition, meaningful interaction, and mechanization of expression.

5.4 Conclusion

The analysis of the results evidenced that learners' use of board games helped them produce more and better-structured language. The use of board games guaranteed contextualization, interaction, and frequency of repetition, which enhanced the learning of high frequency words, and practice. As a result, students increased their self-confidence and participation in oral activities. The measurement of the learners' oral performance under the criterion of effectiveness of information exchange demonstrated the improvement of intelligibility. The next chapter expounds the conclusions and pedagogical implications of the study.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions of this study, which aimed to enhance Sixth Graders' oral production by using guided practice of frequency words (Wood, 2001) in meaningful contexts through the implementation of board games. It also compares and contrasts the results of this study with the results of other studies that addressed similar interests. In addition, it presents the limitations and implications for future research.

Due to the globalization phenomena, improving oral production in English is relevant in the local, national, and international contexts. In agreement with Nunan (1998), the ability to speak in a foreign language is at the heart of what it means to be able to function in another language. Considering the low communicative competence that graduated students evidenced in different regions of Colombia (Sanchez, 2012), this study strove to contribute to the solution of this situation.

Researchers in Colombia (Prieto, 2007; Barón & Martinez, 2013; Peña & Onatra, 2009; Rhenals & Molina 2014), presented pedagogical proposals that sought to improve oral production. Other studies (Stahl and Fairbanks, 1986; Omar & Hamzah, 2014) reiterate the relevance of vocabulary instruction and the use of games in the progress of the students' oral performance. The results of this study supports other studies' findings and recommend strategies such as games and guided vocabulary practice to improve learners' oral communicative skills and to enhance their willingness to participate in oral activities demonstrating significant progress in their self-confidence and motivation.

These results suggest that meaningful learning environment and learner-centred classrooms facilitated the development of oral communicative skills. They also indicate that the

implemented strategy, besides promoting oral interaction, could be adapted to improve other communicative skills with different types of populations. For future studies, we recommend to explore the effectiveness of the use of high frequency words through board games in the development of communicative skills such as reading and listening.

This study had some limitations in the pedagogical implementation related to time constraints and working with a large group. The replication of this proposal might imply a challenge for teachers-researchers to find a better way to attend all the students while collecting data and to guarantee that they do not miss relevant information.

6.2 Comparison of Results with Previous Studies' Results

The results of our study confirm that guided vocabulary practice in meaningful learning environments help intentional learning and facilitate incidental learning of new words. Regardless of the context, age, or other particular characteristics of the population, vocabulary teaching contributes to the development of the language communicative skills, as evidence in the studies conducted by (Stahl & Fairbanks, (1986); Barón & Martínez, (2013); Hennebry, Rogers, Macaro & Murphy, (2013); Little & Kobayashi (2014)), which were done with heterogeneous Asian, North American, European, and South American populations. Although the conclusions of all the cited studies restate the necessity of vocabulary teaching, we have found contradictory perspectives about how to teach it. Biemiller (2001) states that teacher-centred classrooms might be more effective for vocabulary teaching since it is difficult for children to learn words incidentally, thus, vocabulary learning must be early, direct, and sequential. In this sense, although the research team considers that learner-centred classroom, which was implemented, has more benefits for students' learning than teacher-centred, these two perspectives about vocabulary teaching might be complementary. It is possible to introduce a stage before the

implementation of vocabulary practice board games where teachers directly introduce and explain the meaning of the target words. This matches the characteristics of a typical lesson according to the situational approach, which is structured in three-phase sequence known as the PPP cycle (presentation, practice, and production) (Richards, 2005).

Concerning the usefulness of games with language learning purposes, we found that board games helped students gain confidence and interest in interacting with peers by using the target language, besides, the structure of the three games, which guaranteed presentation, practice and production; promoted memorization and meaningful use of high frequency words. All the studies we found recognize the effectiveness of games in the development of different language skills; nevertheless, they warn about some risks when games are not used properly. Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby (2005) affirm that some advantages of games are as follows: firstly, they help teachers to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful, and secondly, that they involve the emotions, making the meaning of the language a more real experience, facilitating learning. The authors explained that when using games to develop oral communicative abilities, the greatest mistake is when the learner does not speak at all; hence, grammar or pronunciation mistakes are acceptable and can be considered as normal at the beginning of the process.

The results of our study also evidenced that collaborative board games simulating real life communicative situations were useful to promote social and citizenship skills. For instance, students were required to help people they met in the street. When they met a sick person, they should help him/her to find a hospital. The games implemented allowed us to develop these types of skills because they were designed following the principles of collaborative board games. Zagal, (2006) stated:

> Opportunities exist for players to be able to work together to achieve a win-win condition. A cooperative game does not always guarantee that cooperating players will benefit equally or even benefit at all. Cooperative games include enforceable rules for negotiating or bargaining that allow players to identify a desirable outcome for the parties involved. (p. 25).

6.3 Significance of the Results

Taking into account that this study dealt with language learning issues such as oral production, vocabulary learning, and use of games as a teaching strategy, we consider that its findings might be of interest to local, national, and international language teachers and researchers. Initially, the findings of this study are relevant to the two schools involved in the study because they allow teachers to replicate the positive results related to the usefulness of board games to promote the development of oral production skills, learning of high frequency words, and also social and citizenship skills, which were not considered in the objectives. Nationwide, the study is also useful and practical, since it was designed according to the National Standards for Language Learning and Teaching set by the MEN, and tackled a problem that, according to the studies conducted by Sánchez (2012), is common to the different contexts of the country.

Regarding the global context, this study can be relevant to teachers who are trying to find strategies to enhance oral production. The necessity of vocabulary learning to develop oral skills was restated, even if the development of oral production is not understood as a language-learning problem but as a natural stage of language learning. The analysis of the results evidences that, in the context of this study, games with language learning purposes were useful and effective because students interacted with friends in a comfortable environment where they were allowed

to be spontaneous, autonomous, and cooperative. All these findings are an invitation for teachers to use more learner-centred methodologies, which address the different types of student needs. The conclusions of this study also underline the relevance of procuring a meaningful learning environment where learners have the possibility to use the target language with authentic communicative purposes.

6.4 Pedagogical Challenges and Recommendations

Throughout the development of this study, the research team found two main pedagogical challenges. The first one was to guarantee that the games fulfilled their language learning objectives. Taking into account the playful nature of games, it was easy for the students to forget the objectives of playing and limit their oral production development objectives to just having fun with peers. As the games were played in groups, it was difficult for the researchers to monitor the student behaviour constantly. To overcome this difficulty, the teacher selected one student per group to play the role of monitor. This role was assigned to different students each time. The monitors were in charge of verifying that the players fulfilled the rules of the games, which were set to guarantee the use of target vocabulary and oral interaction in English. These monitors were recommended to use their mobile phones to record their partners' interventions. These recordings were not used as instruments for data collection but as a tool to promote students' engagement and self-monitoring.

The second challenge was designing games that were appealing for the students according to their ages and interests. Although researchers around the world have recognized the effectiveness of games with learning purposes, it was difficult to decide the best way to design the games, the level of difficulty in the content, colours and the appropriateness of the pictures. To guarantee that the board games were going to be appealing for the students, the researchers

involved the students in the planning of the games. They had the opportunity to help teachers to make decisions about the design of the games.

6.5 Research Limitations on the Present Study

Although this research study accomplished the goals proposed, there were two noticeable limitations along the implementation. These were related to the number of students per class and time constraints. First, the average of students per class in the two schools was 35, but, in order to collect and analyse the data with more detail, we selected at random only 12 students from each group to be part of the sample. However, as teachers we had to attend the students who were not participating in the study while implementing the instruments and collecting data. This situation hindered the researchers to be more concentrated on the effects that the strategy implementation had on the participants and delayed the collection of data or missed relevant information. For further studies, it would be advisable to ask for supporting teachers in order to facilitate researchers with the implementation and collection of data.

Second, there were time constraints during the intervention, since it was necessary to carry it out within six hours per week and the schools' schedules devoted only between three and five hours for the English class. In addition, other activities inside the institutions such as flag raisings, teachers' training day or students' report cards disrupted the normal course of the classes. To overcome this obstacle, it was necessary to ask for colleagues' support and negotiate their time with students in order to complete the number of hours required to develop the outline-planned activities for the implementation. Despite the difficulties mentioned, the implementation was done successfully.

6.6 Further Research

Data analysis and conclusions demonstrated that the pedagogical proposal implemented in this project was successful. However, those interested in further research might focus on three aspects that emerged while conducting this study. First, the connection between learners' personality factors and classroom environment to improve oral communicative skill. It would be interesting to do research to find out to what extent working on students' personality factors such as self-confidence helps to create a more comfortable classroom environment, affecting students' performance in communicative oral activities.

Second, the use of guided vocabulary practice through board games to enhance other communicative skills different to speaking. It was interesting to see the evolution in the students' oral performance in class due to their increased motivation when participating in meaningful context under the figure of board games environment. We think that this strategy may work with reading, writing or listening as successfully as it worked with speaking.

Finally, we found that the vocabulary games also promoted citizenship and social skills whose development gained more relevance in our schools because of the students' contexts and background. The two schools that participated in this study are located in neighbourhoods where children face problems such as violence and insecurity. The board games implemented simulated real life interaction with people on the streets and allowed students to make decisions on the way they related with others according to the situation, which promotes values as solidarity and teamwork. Doing research on this topic could give teacher tools to make the English class a scenario, which contributes not only to language learning but also to the transformation of society.

6.7 Conclusion

The globalization phenomena demand that people be ready to use English for interactive purposes in order to get more job and education opportunities. The present study aimed to propose a strategy to improve the level of oral production of A1 Sixth Graders from two public institutions contributing to the expectation that the National Ministry of Education has in connection to the globalization demands. Although the participants in this study claimed to know the importance of speaking English in today's society, questionnaires and tests revealed that oral communicative activities were the ones that had lower participation and performance. Factors such as lack of vocabulary and expressions inhibited students from participating in oral activities and decreased their self-esteem, confidence and motivation. Thus, this study examines the impact of guided vocabulary practice through board games to enhance oral production.

The result of the implementation of the mentioned strategy demonstrated that games helped students to feel more confident and secure when interacting with peers in the target language. These also eased the processes of identification, memorization, use and mechanization of word meaning and expressions. This strategy made students become more active in communicative oral activities. In a post implementation questionnaire where students were asked about their experience with the strategy implemented (Appendix N), they answered that they liked playing in the English class and that they found the content easy to practice and to participate in the games.

Ultimately, this research study laid-out the importance of combining board games and guided vocabulary practice within meaningful contexts to promote students' oral production. This research provided teachers with a combined strategy that helps learners to be competent users of the language, according to the current globalization demands. In addition, the results of

this study revealed positive effects on students' self- esteem and confidence, and their abilities to work cooperatively. Despite the challenges and limitations of the study, the findings were positive, since board games helped students learn high frequency words and meaningful practice helped improve the students' level of oral production.

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Appendix A: Consent Letters

A. 1 Consent letter for parents

UNIVERSIDAD DE LA SABANA

MAESTRÍA EN DIDÁCTICA DEL INGLÉS CON ÉNFASIS EN AMBIENTES DE APRENDIZAJE AUTÓNOMO

CARTA DE AUTORIZACIÓN DE LOS PADRES

Bogotá, Septiembre 23 de 2014

Señor padre de familia y/o acudiente

Es grato para mi comunicarles que en el marco del proyecto de investigación titulado "The impact of guided vocabulary practice through board games to enhance A1 sixth graders' oral production in English" (Impacto de la práctica del vocabulario guiado por medio de juegos de mesa para promover la producción oral en Inglés en estudiantes de grado sexto con nivel A1), con el cual pretendo aplicar al título de Maestría en Didáctica del Inglés con Énfasis en Ambientes de Aprendizaje Autónomo, para lo que cuento con la autorización de la señora rectora, Nelfa Rincón; realizaré algunas actividades con el fin de recolectar y analizar información directamente relacionada con el mejoramiento del proceso de aprendizaje del idioma Inglés que se realiza en el grado sexto en el cual se encuentra matriculado(a) su hijo(a).
Para el desarrollo exitoso de dichas actividades, las cuales consisten en responder cuestionarios y pruebas de vocabulario, es necesario contar con su consentimiento y aprobación para el uso, análisis y publicación de la información y resultados de dichos estudios, que por supuesto están diseñados **bajo estrictos parámetros que protejan la integridad, privacidad y anonimato de los participantes** en el proyecto mencionado.

Cualquier aclaración, consulta o revisión de la información, podrá ser realizada sin restricciones durante el desarrollo del proyecto y la información recolectada o sus resultados **no afectarán el sistema de evaluación de la clase**.

Agradezco mucho la atención y colaboración que puedan brindar, ya que el objetivo del proyecto es mejorar la enseñanza del inglés como segunda lengua en beneficio de sus hijos, y de nuestra institución.

Atentamente,
XXX
Docente de Inglés e investigadora del presente proyecto.
Candidata a Magister en Didáctica del Inglés de la Universidad de la Sabana.

_____
Favor devuelva esta carta debidamente firmada

_____
NOMBRE DEL PADRE DE FAMILIA Y/O ACUDIENTE

_____
FIRMA DEL ESTUDIANTE

A. 2 Consent letter for principals

UNIVERSIDAD DE LA SABANA
MASTER IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING
FORMATO DE AUTORIZACION

Respetado Rector XXX,

Es grato para mi comunicarle que con el fin de contribuir al mejoramiento de los procesos de aprendizaje del Inglés como lengua extranjera en los estudiantes de grado sexto de esta institución, pretendo desarrollar un proyecto de investigación titulado ***The impact of guided vocabulary practice through board games to enhance A1 sixth graders' oral production in English,*** con el cual aplicaré al título de Maestría en Didáctica del Inglés con Énfasis en Ambientes de Aprendizaje Autónomo.

Solicito su consentimiento para el desarrollo de las actividades, descritas en detalle a continuación:

- El proyecto de investigación se desarrollará dentro de la jornada laboral y en horario habitual de clase del grupo 605
- Se solicitará consentimiento de los estudiantes y padres de familia para llevar a cabo el proyecto.
- Los cuestionarios y actividades que se desarrollen no afectará negativamente las notas de los estudiantes.
- Los participantes en el proyecto no serán expuestos a ningún riesgo físico ni emocional
- La información y los datos recolectados durante este proceso serán de carácter público para quienes deseen tener acceso a ellos.
- No habrá ningún tipo de remuneración por la participación en el proyecto.
- Los estudiantes no serán llamados con nombres propios en los reportes de los resultados de este proyecto.

Yo, _____ rector del Colegio XXX, autorizo a la docente XXX y a los estudiantes del grado XXX a participar de este proyecto de investigación.

Firma:_____

Fecha:_____

Appendix B: Questionnaires

B. 1 Pre-implementation questionnaire

UNIVERSIDAD DE LA SABANA
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND CULTURES
MASTER IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

CUESTIONARIO

A continuación encontrará una serie de preguntas relacionadas con la experiencia que ha tenido aprendiendo Inglés en esta institución. Saber su opinión es muy importante, por favor responda con sinceridad. Sus respuestas en este cuestionario no afectaran sus calificaciones.

1. ¿Qué clase de actividades le gustaría realizar para aprender inglés en clase? a. Participar en Juegos b. Escuchar canciones c. Participar en dramatizaciones d. Desarrollar actividades escritas	2. ¿De las siguientes habilidades lingüísticas, cuál es la que más le gustaría fortalecer? a. Escucha b. Habla c. Escritura d. Lectura
3. ¿Puede mantener una conversación corta en inglés con su profesora o compañeros? a. SI b. NO *Si respondiste NO, contesta la pregunta 4	4. La razón por la que no puede mantener una conversación en inglés es porque: a. Le da pena b. Le da pereza c. No sabe o no recuerda las palabras que necesita para expresarse

De acuerdo con su experiencia de aprendizaje del idioma Inglés como lengua extranjera en esta institución, valore de 1 a 5 los siguientes items, siendo 1 muy bajo y 5 muy alto su acuerdo con cada uno de ellos.

1. Me gusta el idioma Inglés — 1 2 3 4 5
2. Considero que dominar el idioma Inglés es importante — 1 2 3 4 5
3. Dominar el inglés me permite tener más oportunidades de trabajo y estudio — 1 2 3 4 5
4. Me siento motivado a participar en la clase de ingles — 1 2 3 4 5

B. 2 Post-implementation questionnaire

CUESTIONARIO No.2

Apreciado estudiante,

A continuación encontrará una serie de preguntas relacionadas con su experiencia en el aprendizaje del inglés, una vez se implementó el proyecto de la enseñanza del vocabulario a través de juegos de mesa en esta institución. Saber su opinión es muy importante, por favor responda con sinceridad. Sus respuestas en este cuestionario no afectaran sus calificaciones.

1. ¿Considera que los juegos de mesa mejoraron el aprendizaje de vocabulario?

   SI ☐ NO ☐ ¿Por qué?

   _____

   _____

2. ¿Cree que el vocabulario usado en los juegos de mesa han contribuido al mejoramiento de su producción oral?

   SI ☐ NO ☐ ¿Por qué?

   _____

   _____

3. ¿Cree que el vocabulario usado en los juegos de mesa es práctico para comunicarse en la cotidianidad?

   SI ☐ NO ☐ ¿Por qué?

   _____

   _____

4. ¿Cree que la implementación de los juegos de mesa para la enseñanza del vocabulario lo motivo a expresarse más frecuentemente en inglés?

   SI ☐ NO ☐ ¿Por qué?

   _____

   _____

5. ¿Observó algún factor o factores en la implementación de juegos de mesa para el aprendizaje de vocabulario y el mejoramiento de la producción oral que le haya gustado?

   SI ☐ NO ☐ ¿Por qué?

   _____

   _____

Gracias por su participación!

Appendix C: Vocabulary Test

C. 1 Pre-implementation vocabulary test

SAN CARLOS SCHOOL IED

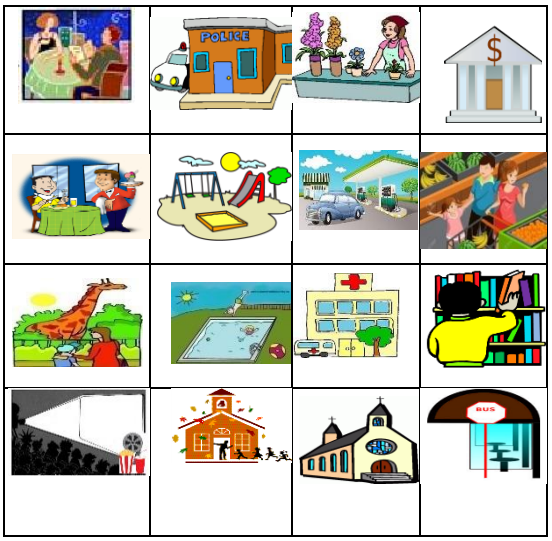
SIXTH GRADE - VOCABULARY TEST

NAME_____

GRADE_____**DATE**_____

I. Write the names of the places under the pictures.

	BAKERY	GAS STATION	POOL	
RESTAURANT	SCHOOL	SUPERMARKET	ZOO	
HOSPITAL	TRAIN STATION	FLOWER SHOP	LIBRARY	
CINEMA	PARK	BANK	POLICE STATION	CHURCH

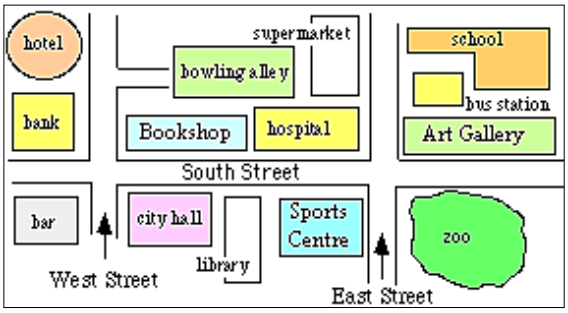


II. Find the pairs.

you can eat there _____	1. library
police officers work there_____	2. market
	3. cinema
doctors and nurses look after sick people there_____	4. hospital
	5. supermarket
people go to buy and sell things there_____	6. restaurant
	7. school
you go to borrow or read books there_____	8. post office
	9. church
children go to learn there_____	**10.** police station
you go to send letters and to buy stamps there_____	
you go to watch films there_____	
people go to pray there_____	
you can buy food and other things in that big shop_____	

III. Look at the map from exercise 4 and complete the sentences with the correct preposition.

1. The hospital is _____ the bookshop.
2. The school is _____ the bus station.
3. The bar is _____ the bank.
4. The bus station is _____ the school and the art gallery.
5. The city hall is _____ the library.



IV. Look at the map and answer the questions, using the preposition of place in brackets.

1.- Where is the library? (between)
It's _____

2.- Where is the bowling alley? (behind)
_____

3.- Where is the hotel? (next to)
_____

4.- Where is the zoo? (opposite)
_____

V. Professions

C. 2. Mid-term implementation vocabulary test

COLEGIO CUNDINAMARCA IED

SIXTH GRADE - VOCABULARY TEST

NAME_____
GRADE_____**DATE**_____

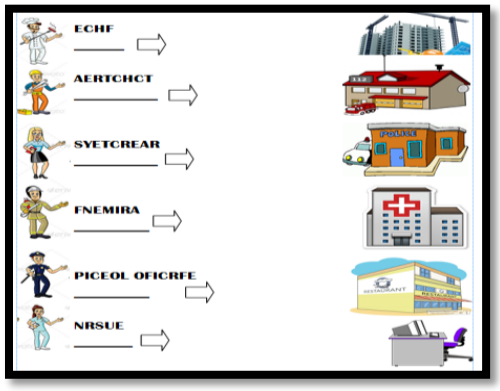
1. Unscramble the names of the places and write them on the corresponding location in the picture**. (0.5)**

BRIALRY	BARKEY	HOSCOL	PITHOSAL	GSA STTIAON
OOPL	PASURKERMET	RTNAI STITAON	WFLOER SPHO	NAECIM
RPAK	ESRANTRAUT BNKA	ICPOLE SITATNO	CCURHH	OZO

2. .**(1.0)** a**)** Find the names of the places of the city in the puzzle.

b) Unscramble the professions and match them to the corresponding places where people with those professions work

H	F	O	S	O	F	F	I	C	E	W	G	O	I	L
O	D	J	Y	I	I	O	B	U	I	L	D	I	N	G
S	E	D	K	O	R	G	E	H	U	T	L	O	R	J
P	O	L	I	C	E	A	T	A	T	I	O	N	W	M
I	S	A	U	F	I	J	U	J	O	A	B	G	F	S
T	S	T	N	A	R	U	A	T	S	E	R	U	V	E
A	N	L	E	A	B	I	K	A	V	Q	H	I	A	X
L	I	F	I	R	E	S	T	A	T	I	O	N	T	A



3. Write complete sentences using the preposition of place in brackets

Ex: secretary-office

The secretary work**s** in the office

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

4. Use of prepositions of place: Match the pictures to the corresponding sentence. **(0.5)**

The ball is under the table.

The ball is in the box.

The ball is on the table.

The ball is behind the box.

The ball is next to the table.

5. Look at the map and answer the questions, using the preposition of place in brackets.**(1.0)**

1.- Where is the library? (between)

It's _____

2.- Where is the bowling alley? (behind)

_____

3.- Where is the hotel? (next to)

_____

4.- Where is the zoo? (opposite)

_____

C. 3. Post-implementation vocabulary test

SAN CARLOS SCHOOL IED

SIXTH GRADE - VOCABULARY TEST

NAME_____

GRADE_____**DATE**_____

1. Match the definition with the occupation **(1.0)**

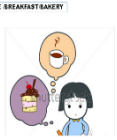
1- THIS PERSON HELPS THE DOCTORS AT THE HOSPITAL.	A-POSTMAN
2- THIS PERSON PUTS OUT THE FIRE.	B-WAITER
3- THIS PERSON SENDS LETTERS AND ANSWERS THE TELEPHONE.	C-DOCTOR
4- THIE PERSON KEEPS THE HOUSE CLEAN	D-DENTIST
5- THIS PERSON CATCHES THIEVES.	E-COOK
6- THIS PERSON HELPS PEOPLE GET WELL.	F-MECHANIC
7- THIS PERSON TEACHES YOU NEW THINGS.	G-FIRE FIGHTER
8- THIS PERSON DELIVERS LETTERS.	H-VET
9- THIS PERSON COOKS DELICIOUS MEALS.	I-MAID
10-THIS PERSON WORKS IN A RESTAURANT.	J-HAIRDRESSER
11-THIS PERSON INVESTIGATES	K-NURSE
12-THIS PERSON REPAIRS CARS.	L-DENTIST
13-THIS PERSON CUTS OUR HAIR.	M-TEACHER
14- THIS PERSON TAKES CARE OF OUR TEETH	N-SECRETARY
15-THIS PERSON TAKES CARE OF ANIMALS	O-SCIENTIST

2. Complete the sentences writing the places where each person works. Use the words in the box **(1.0)**

EXAMPLE: A baker works in a *bakery*

GARAGE HOSPITAL(2) SCHOOL SHOP RESTAURANT(2) OFFICE POLICE STATION POST OFFICE	
1- A TEACHER WORKS IN A.....	6-A POLICE OFFICER WORKS IN A.....
2. A MECHANIC WORKS IN A.....	7-A COOK WORKS IN A .....
3- A NURSE WORKS IN A.....	8-A POSTMAN WORKS IN A .....
4- A WAITER WORKS IN A.....	9-A SHOP ASSISTANT WORKS IN A .....
5- A SECRETARY WORKS IN AN.....	10-A DOCTOR WORKS IN A .....

3. Write sentences describing the situations presented and explaining the place the person needs to go. Follow the example. **(1.0**

EXAMPLE: *He needs money. He needs to go to a bank.*	_____	 _____
_____	_____	_____

4. Select the correct words to complete the dialogue. **(1.0)**

TOM: Hello!

ROBERT: _____… **(Hi / good night / bye bye)**

TOM: Are you _____**? (happy / ok / married)** Do you need any _____? **(friends / money/ help)**

ROBERT: Oh _____. Please help me. I feel bad. **(yes / No / obviously)**

TOM: You need to see a _____. **(hospital/ doctor/ architect)** What is your _____? **(name /profession/ office)**

ROBERT: My… name is… _____. **(teacher / Robert /sick)**

TOM: Ok Robert, We are going to the _____ now. **(hospital/ park/ library)** It is on the next block turning left. We need to go straight on and pass the traffic lights, and then we will find it on the right next to the national library.

ROBERT: Ohh thanks a lot. You are very_____ to help me. **(bad/ rich/ nice)**

5. Write a short dialogue between two people about the situation presented in the pictures. One person needs help and the other person offers help. **(1.0)**

A: _____

B: _____

A: _____

B:_____

A:_____

B:_____

OPTIONAL

_____

Appendix D: Teacher's Checklist

Student's name_____ Date: _____

Category	Without difficulty	With difficulty	Comments
Student uses appropriate vocabulary to express his/her ideas clearly on issues related to the context studied.			
Student uses an intelligible pronunciation for effective communication.			
Student uses strategies such as paraphrasing to compensate for difficulties in communication.			
Student uses his/her prior knowledge to engage in a conversation.			
Student is willing to speak. (Motivation)			

Appendix E: Participants' Identification System

San Carlos IED

PARTICIPANTS	CODE
R. B	S1
A. P	S2
H. L	S3
J. O	S4
K. Q	S5
M. H	S6
J. J	S7
D. P	S8
L. L	S9
L. C	S10
S. C	S11
R. H	S12

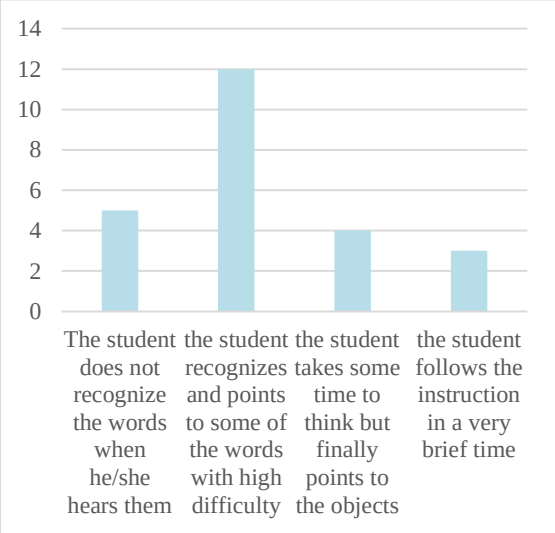
Cundinamarca IED

PARTICIPANTS	CODE
S. N. G	S13
J. P	S14
M. H. L	S15
E. D	S16
K. V	S17
Y. H	S18
A. O	S19
B. R	S20
B. R	S21
J. G	S22
J. T	S23
L. M	S24

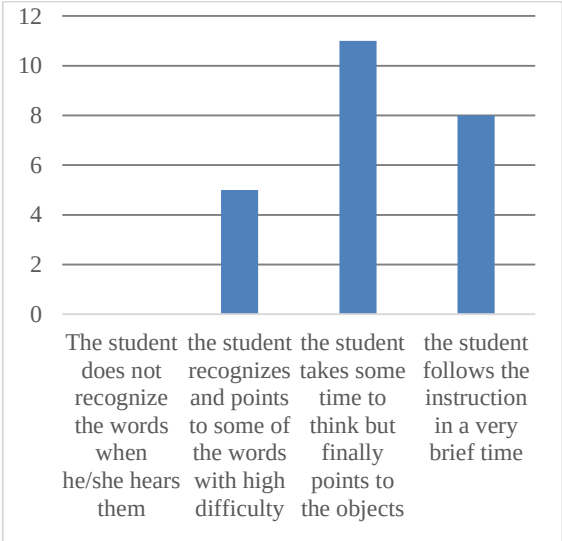
Appendix F: Results of the Oral Production Tests

PART 1: The examiner asks the student to **point** to 5 objects on the scene picture

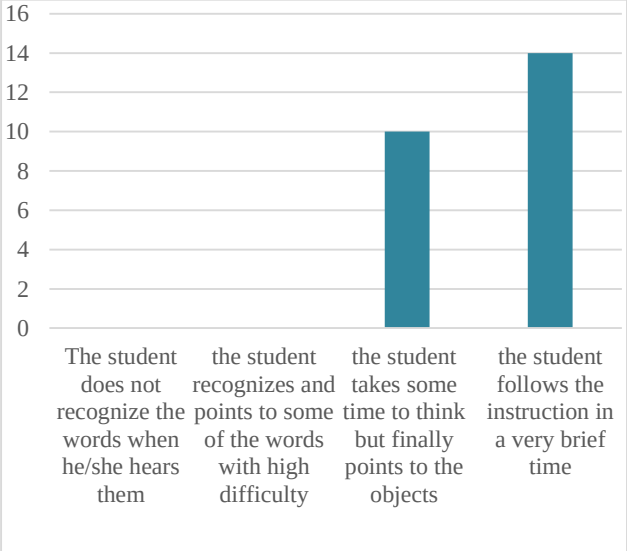
Pre-implementation



Mid-term

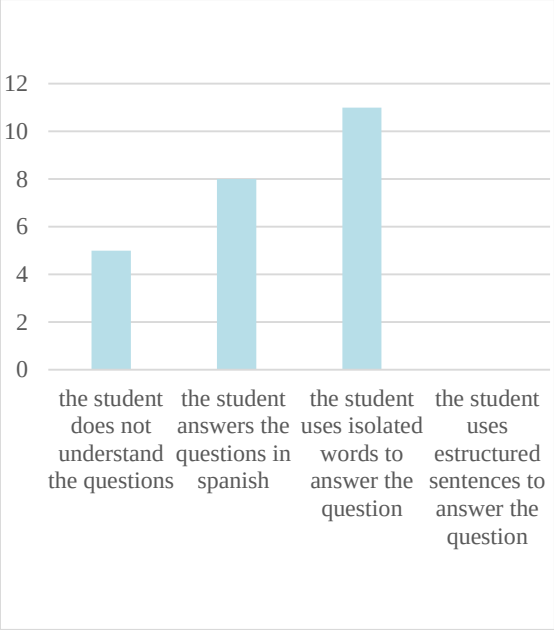


Post-implementation

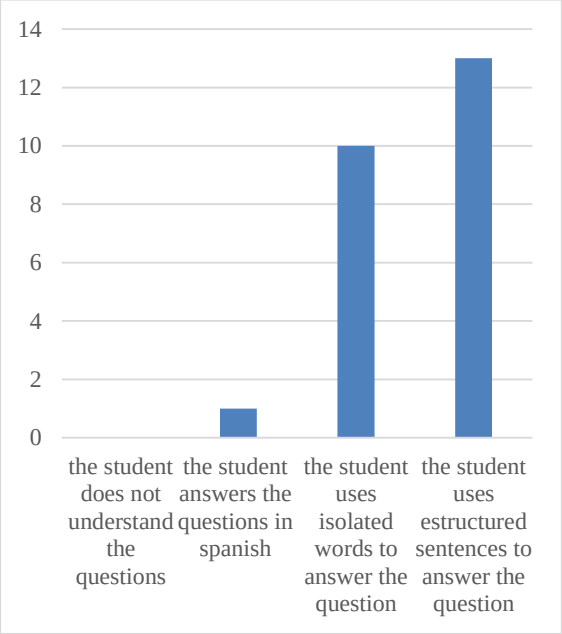


PART 5: The examiner asks the candidate some personal questions using the vocabulary that will be studied through the games

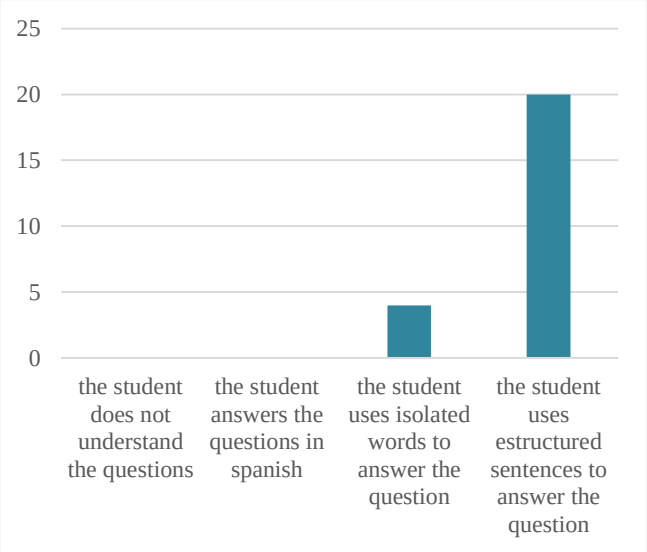
Pre-implementation



Mid-term



Post-implementation

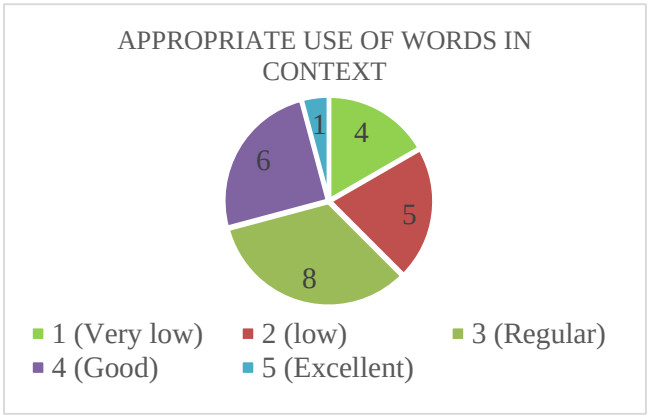


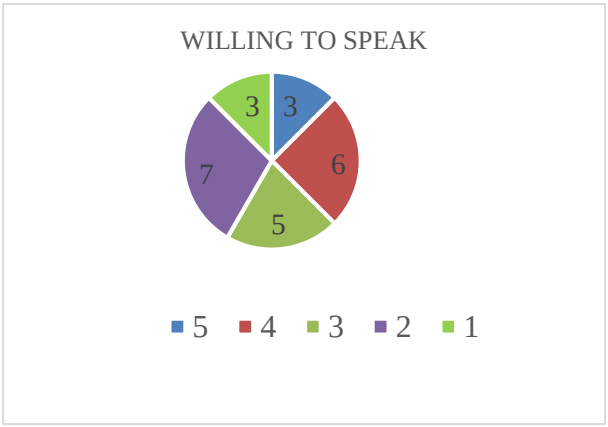
Appendix G: Comparative Figures of Individual Results in Vocabulary Tests

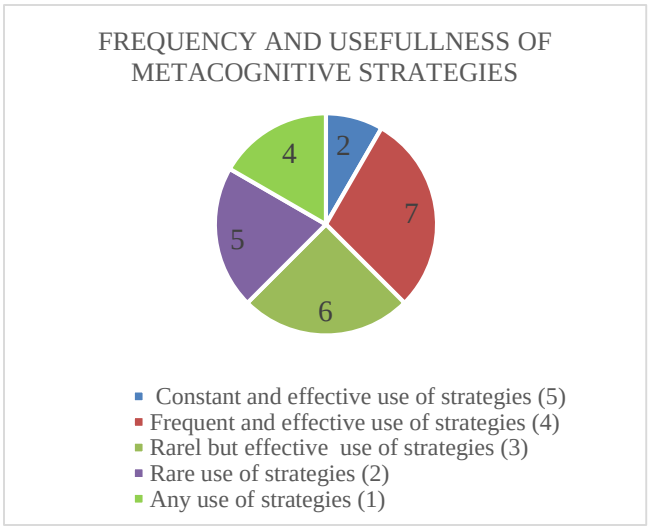
Students who had been enumerated with odd numbers were selected for this individual analysis.

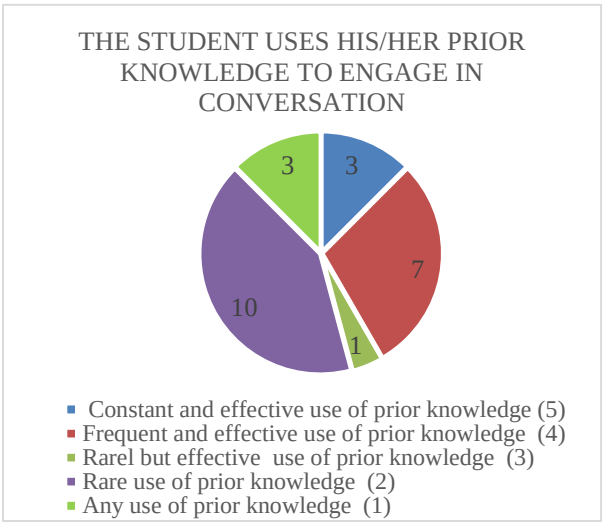
Appendix H: Following Up of Students' Oral Performance in Games

H. 1 Following up of students' oral performance in game 1

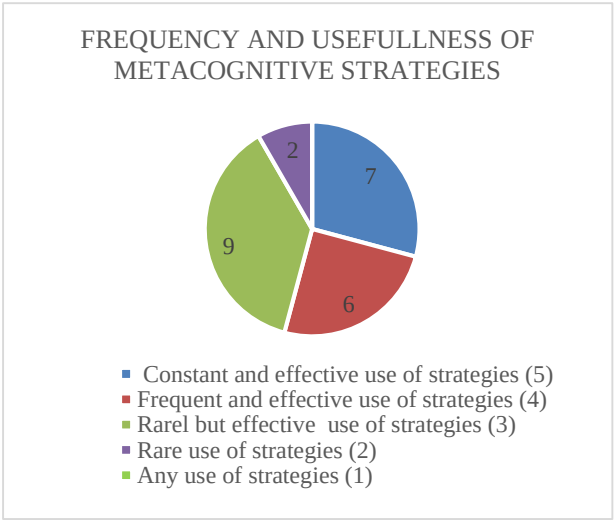


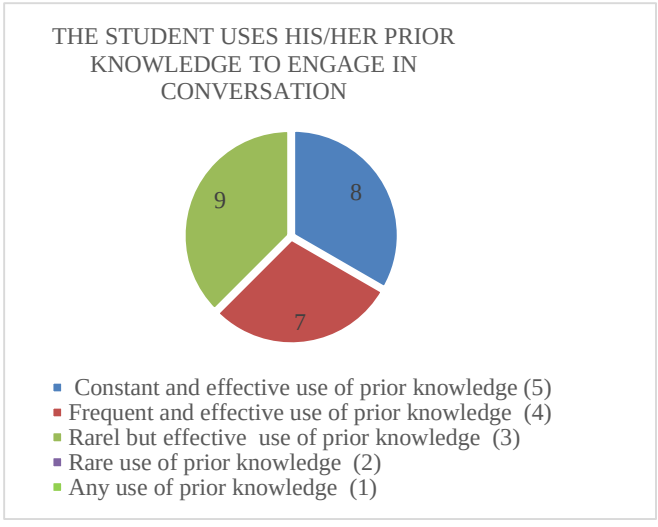




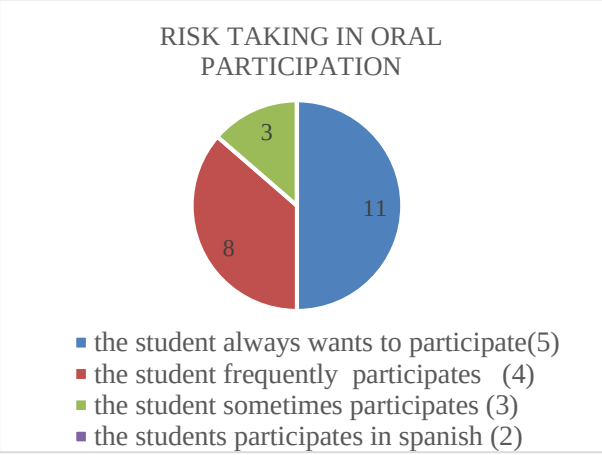


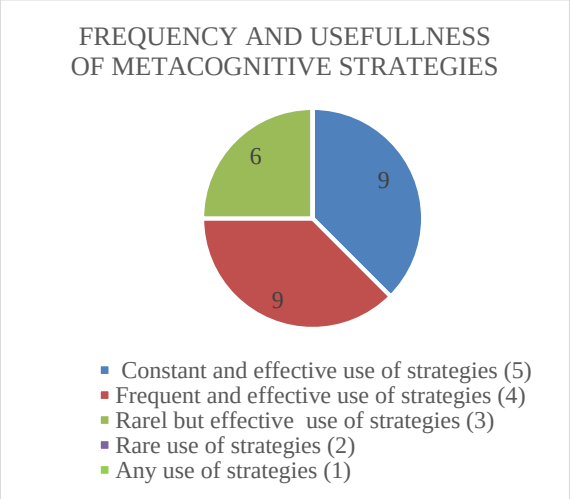
H. 2 Following up of students' oral performance in game 2

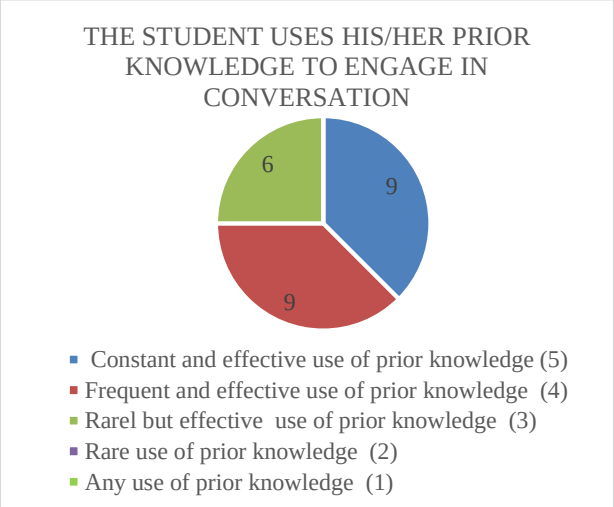




H. 3 Following up of students' oral performance in game 3

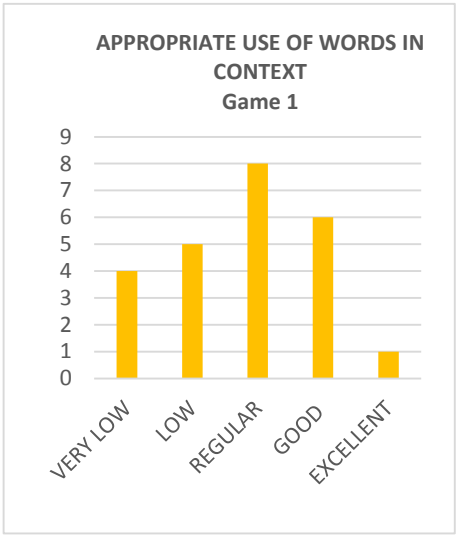


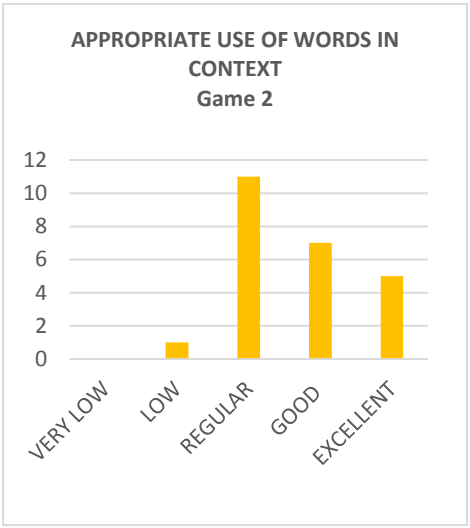


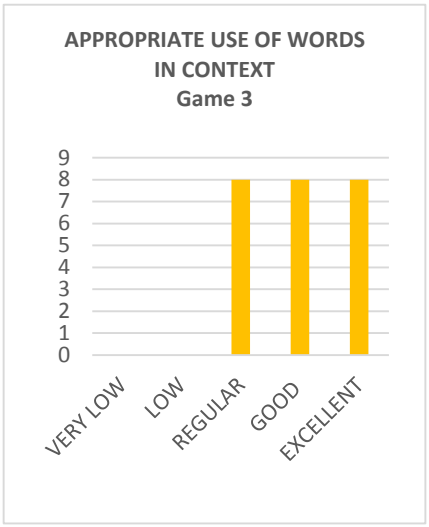


Appendix I: Appropriate Use of Words in Context

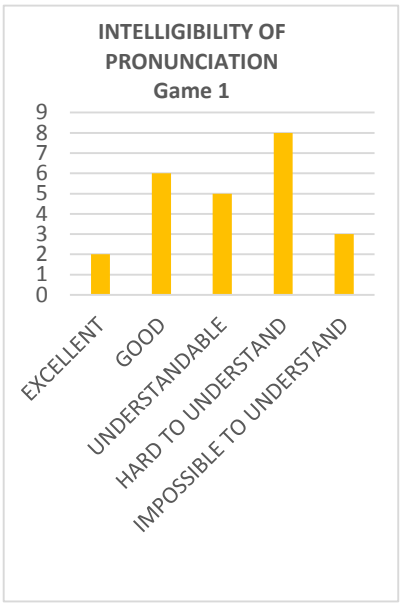
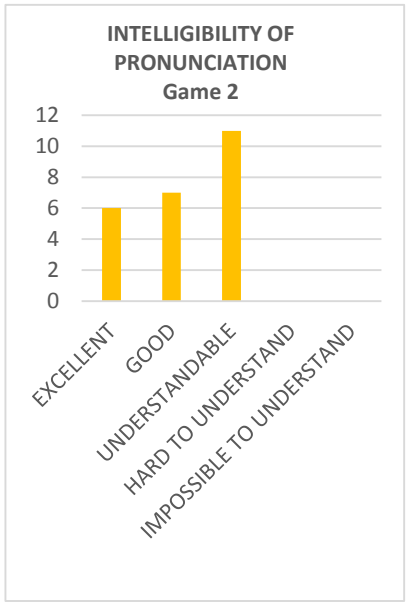
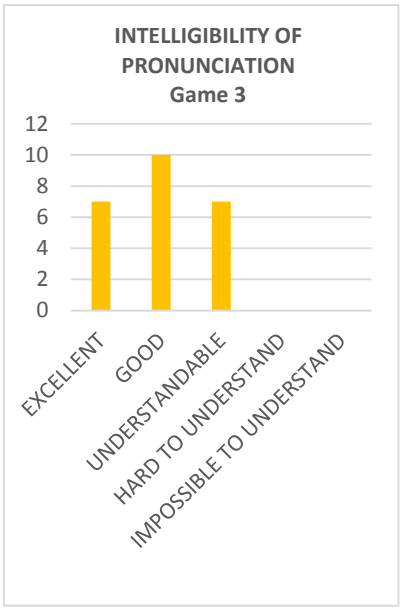
Checklist





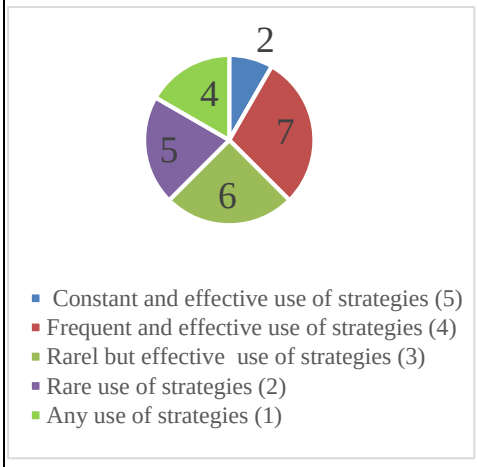
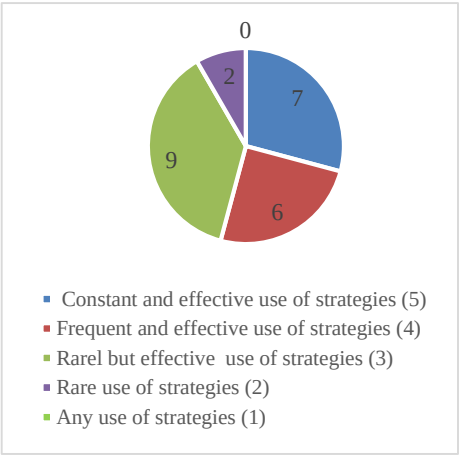
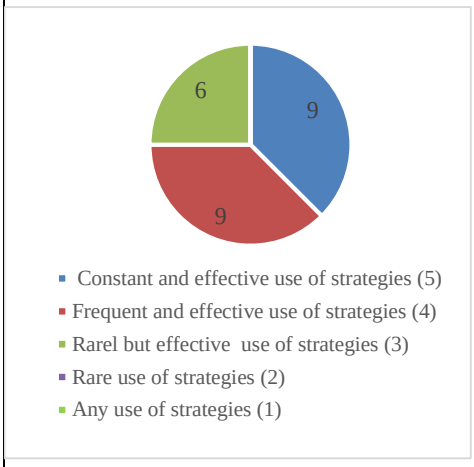


Appendix J: Intelligibility of Pronunciation

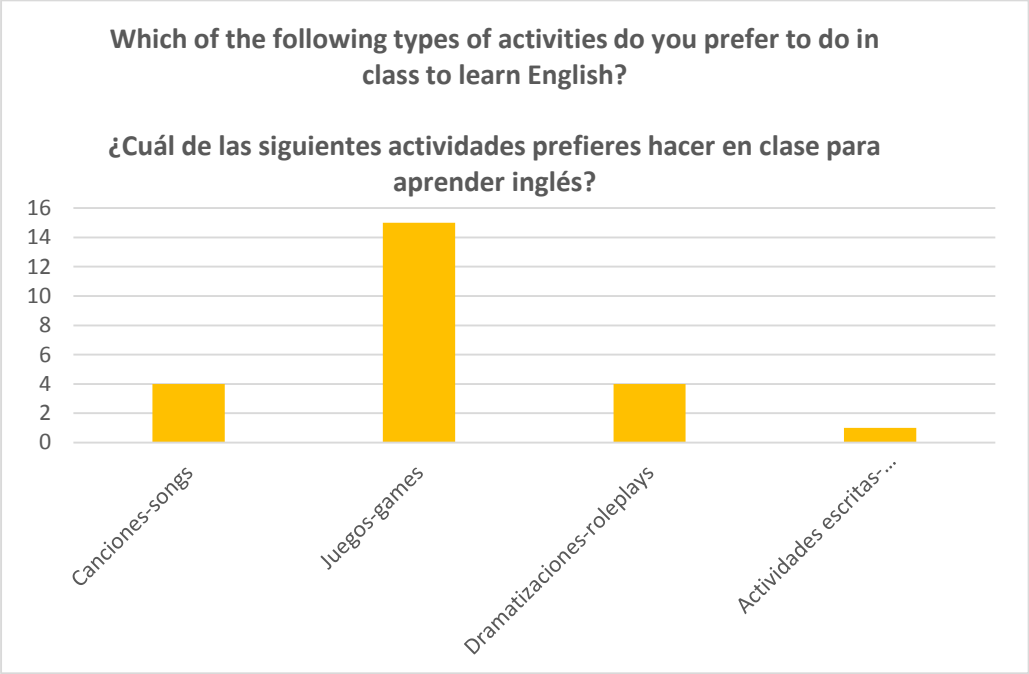
Checklist		
		

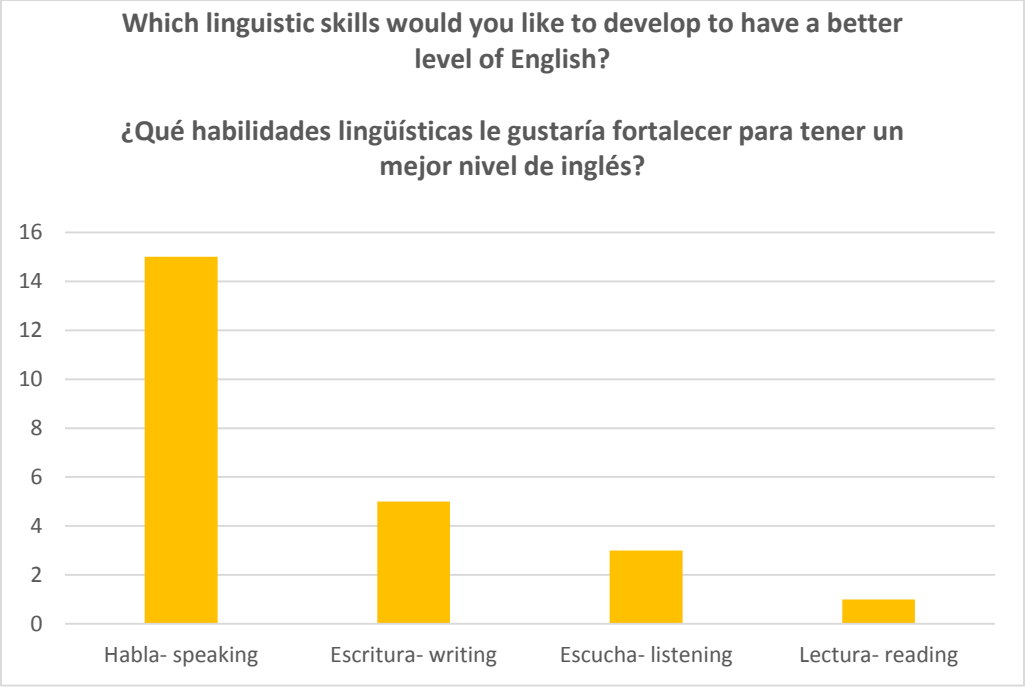
Appendix K: Frequency and Usefulness of Metacognitive Strategies

Checklist

GAME 1	GAME 2	GAME 3
		

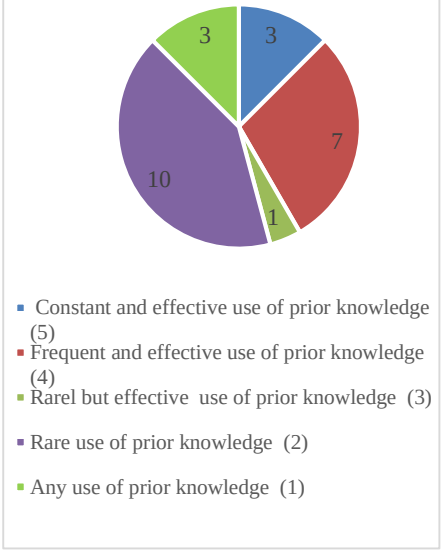
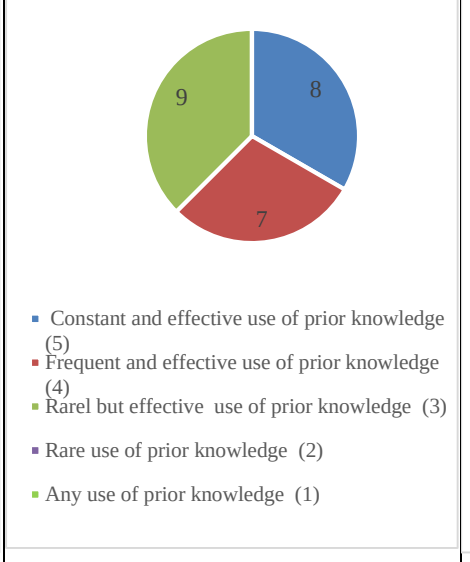
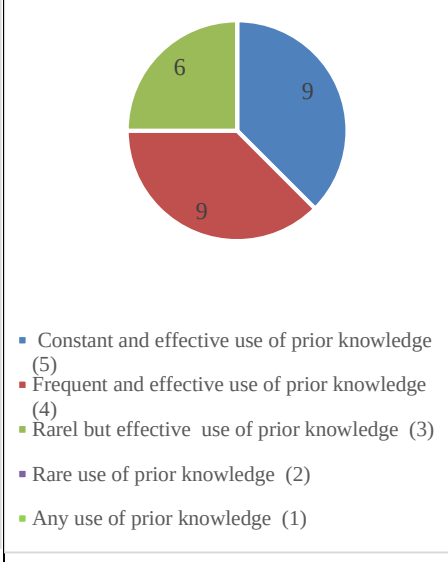
Appendix L: Pre-Implementation Questionnaire Results



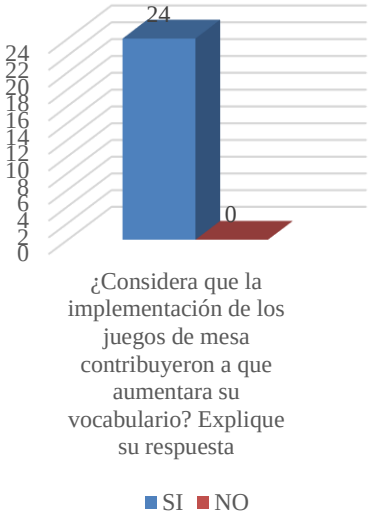


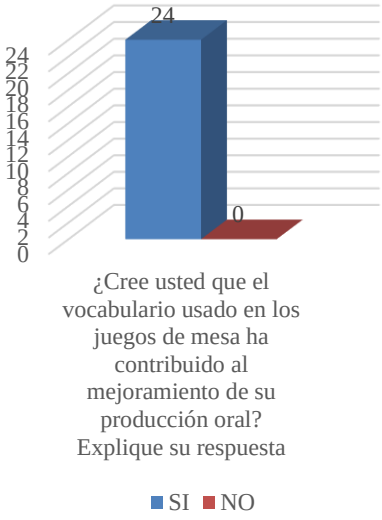
Appendix M: The Student Uses His/Her Prior Knowledge to Engage in Conversation

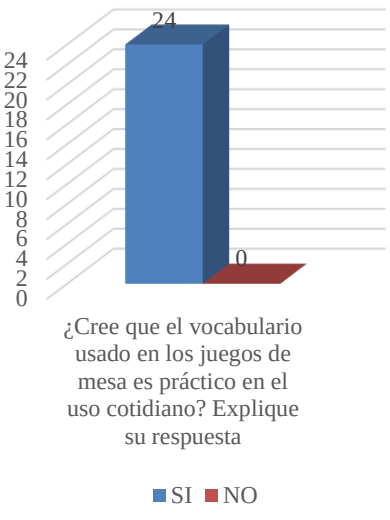
Checklist

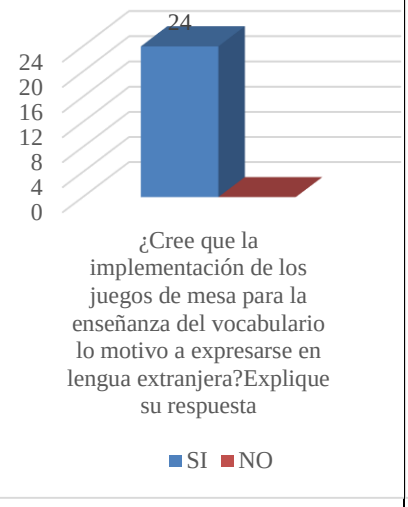
GAME 1	GAME 2	GAME 3
		

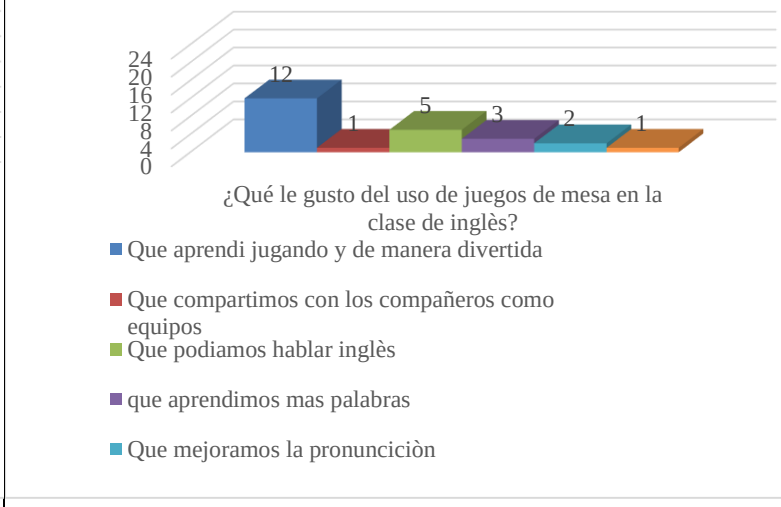
Appendix N: Post-Implementation Questionnaire











Appendix O: Board Game

Game 1

Game 2

BAKERY GAS STATION SWIMMING POOL	UNIVERSITY BANK CHURCH	CHURCH AIRPORT FIRE STATION
MUSEUM HOSPITAL BUS STOP	POLICE STATION AIRPORT	RESTAURANT HOTEL BEACH
FLOWER SHOP LIBRARY CINEMA	APARTMENT LIBRARY GAS STATION	HOTEL BANK BAKERY

Appendix P: Sample of Lesson Plan

Lesson plan 1

School: **Colegio Cundinamarca IED**					
Sixth grade Topic: **Places in a city**			**Main Goal:** To learn vocabulary of places and describe the activities that people do there. **Specific Goal:** Students will work collaboratively to complete the tasks		
WEEK	**STAGE**	**OBJECTIVE**	**ACTIVITIES**	**TIME**	
1	**Session one:** Introduction	To present the learning objectives To explain to the students the methodology that was going to be used	Explanation of the objectives and expected outcomes. Presentation of high frequency words list that students were expected to learn and use in context. Familiarization with the list of high frequency words.	100 min	Teacher's journal
	Session two: Introduction to **Topic 1:** Places of the city	To guide the learning of the first group of words (places of the city) To promote the familiarization of the vocabulary though the stage 1 of the first game.	Presentation of the target words of this session with the support of images and a video. Introduction to **Game 1: stage 1.** Explanation of the game rules. Playing the game Checking understanding and the learning, and feedback.	100 min	Teachers journal Checklist
	Session 3	To use the target words inside sentences to talk about daily life situations.	Presentation of daily life situations where people need to refer to the different places in a city	100 min	Teachers journal Checklist

			Implementation **of Game 1: stage 2** matching situations to the places in a city Checking understanding and learning, and giving feedback.		