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ESCUELA DE DERECHO, EDUCACIÓN Y SOCIEDAD

**CARRERA DE PEDAGOGIA DE LOS IDIOMAS  
NACIONALES Y EXTRANJEROS**

RESEARCH REPORT

**INTEGRATING GAMES AS A TEACHING STRATEGY TO IMPROVE  
STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

INFORME DE INVESTIGACIÓN:

**INTEGRANDO JUEGOS COMO ESTRATEGIA DE ENSEÑANZA PARA  
MEJORAR LAS HABILIDADES DEL HABLA DE LOS ESTUDIANTES EN EL  
IDIOMA INGLÉS**

PREVIO AL TÍTULO ACADÉMICO DE:

**LICENCIADO EN PEDAGOGÍA DEL IDIOMA  
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LÍNEA DE INVESTIGACIÓN:

**EDUCACIÓN, COMUNICACIÓN, CULTURA, SOCIEDAD Y VALORES**

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## COMITÉ EVALUADOR

COMO MIEMBROS DEL COMITÉ EVALUADOR DEL TRABAJO DE INTEGRACIÓN CURRICULAR DE LA PUCE ESMERALDAS, CERTIFICAMOS QUE HEMOS LEÍDO EL TRABAJO ELABORADO POR SCARLETH ANTONELLA CAÑIZARES SANTANA, TITULADO *INTEGRANDO JUEGOS COMO ESTRATEGIA DE ENSEÑANZA PARA MEJORAR LAS HABILIDADES DEL HABLA DE LOS ESTUDIANTES EN EL IDIOMA INGLÉS*, Y SUGERIMOS SU APROBACIÓN POR CUMPLIR CON LOS REQUISITOS ESTABLECIDOS PARA LA OBTENCIÓN DEL TÍTULO DE LICENCIADA EN PEDAGOGÍA DE LOS IDIOMAS.

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La aprobación y aceptación final de este trabajo están condicionadas a la entrega, por parte del/la estudiante, de las copias finales del mismo. Por medio de la presente, certifico que he leído este trabajo elaborado bajo mi dirección y recomiendo que sea aceptado por cumplir con los requisitos exigidos para la obtención del grado correspondiente.

## **CERTIFICADO DEL DIRECTOR**

Yo, Dr. Haydeé Ramírez Lozada, en calidad de directora de este trabajo, certifico haber revisado que el mismo cumple los requisitos de calidad, originalidad y presentación exigibles y que se han incorporado las sugerencias del tribunal al trabajo de grado.

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Dr. Haydeé Ramírez Lozada, PhD

## **DECLARACIÓN DEL AUTOR**

Yo, Scarleth Antonella Cañizares Santana, afirmo que la investigación contenida en el presente informe de investigación es única, auténtica y de carácter personal.

El contenido de este trabajo constituye una responsabilidad legal y académica legítima de la autora y de la PUCE Esmeraldas.

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Scarleth Antonella Cañizares Santana  
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Este trabajo está dedicado a mis familiares, por brindarme su amor y apoyo incondicional, por la ayuda en mi formación personal y profesional. A mis padres, quienes con sus palabras de motivación y aliento han logrado que no me dé por vencida. Gracias por creer en mí incluso en los momentos más difíciles.

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## **Abstract**

To assess the contribution of games as a teaching strategy to improve students' speaking skills in English, a quantitative action research approach was used. Also, it was followed an explanatory scope through a quasi-experimental design to observe changes in oral performance of ten A1-level students between 11 and 13 years old. These changes were observed before and after the gamified activities. To collect data, several instruments were applied, such as a pre-test and post-test, a speaking rubric, and an observation checklist. It allowed the assessment of fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and comprehension throughout this process. The results of this research showed improvements in all the speaking indicators assessed. Especially in fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Also, the gamified activities enhanced students' motivation, confidence, and participation. For this reason, games stand out as an effective strategy for improving speaking skills.

**Keywords:** *Games, Speaking Skills Improvement, English as a Foreign Language (EFL).*

## **Resumen**

Para evaluar la contribución de los juegos como estrategia de enseñanza para mejorar las habilidades de habla de los estudiantes en inglés, se utilizó un enfoque de investigación-acción cuantitativa. Además, se siguió un alcance explicativo a través de un diseño cuasiexperimental para observar los cambios en el rendimiento oral de diez estudiantes de nivel A1 entre 11 y 13 años. Estos cambios se observaron antes y después de las actividades gamificadas. Para recopilar datos, se aplicaron varios instrumentos, como un pre-test y un post-test, una rúbrica de habla y una lista de

verificación de observación. Esto permitió la evaluación de la fluidez, el vocabulario, la pronunciación, la gramática y la comprensión a lo largo de este proceso. Los resultados de esta investigación mostraron mejoras en todos los indicadores de habla evaluados. Especialmente en fluidez, vocabulario y comprensión. Además, las actividades gamificadas mejoraron la motivación, la confianza y la participación de los estudiantes. Por esta razón, los juegos se destacan como una estrategia efectiva para mejorar las habilidades de habla.

***Palabras clave:** Juegos, Mejora de las Habilidades Orales, Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (EFL).*

## Introduction

According to Farinango (2023), learning a foreign language is time consuming, it requires practice and motivation. Teaching methods need to be flexible so that students can effectively learn and acquire English. In this way, teachers are also key agents in the teaching process when it comes to providing a context for students to drive participation and advancement in their language abilities. In many classrooms, the lack of interactive methodologies, limited use of communicative activities, and opportunities for practice stop students from achieving their English language learning outcomes.

Among the four skills, speaking is one of the most fundamental since it serves communicative purposes and enables learners to express ideas. Thus, it establishes mutual understanding between the speaker and listeners (Alihusni et al., 2014). Many learners struggle with English proficiency and find it difficult to improve their speaking skills because many classes are teacher-centered. Students do not have enough chances to communicate with their peers. Therefore, learners' confidence and motivation are undermined and fluency and pronunciation are not improved. Alihusni et al. (2014) emphasize the importance of using effective strategies to help students overcome these challenges and improve their speaking skills.

Games for learning have become an effective strategy for creating environments where students can practice in a supportive and enjoyable way. Palacios (2023) says that gamification can be used in the classroom to motivate students and that game elements can support continuous learning. Also, Smiderle et al. (2020) argue that gamifying education can increase student engagement, allowing learners to develop skills and improve their learning experience. In this way, Palacios (2023) explains that

gamification is crucial for capturing students' attention and encouraging participation, while Farinango (2023) states that it can support learners to improve their skills.

Integrating games into English lessons could be a possible solution to these challenges. Games have the power to awaken students' curiosity and motivation, providing opportunities for them to actively use the language in real-life communication. Through meaningful and interactive activities, learners are encouraged to speak more confidently, which contributes to the overall development of their speaking proficiency. The present research seeks to answer the following question: What is the contribution of integrating games as a teaching strategy to improve students' speaking skills in the English language?

Based on this question, the general objective of the research was to assess the contribution of integrating games as a teaching strategy to improve students' speaking skills in the English language. To achieve this, three specific objectives were established: (1) to diagnose students' deficiencies in speaking; (2) to select gamified activities for classroom use; and (3) to describe students' improvement after implementing the selected activities. These objectives aim to describe how the application of gamified strategies can enhance motivation, participation, and the development of speaking skills among learners of English as a foreign language.

### **Gamification in education**

Gamification, as described by Adipat et al. (2021), is a teaching tool that uses interactive play and gaming activities to get the goal of balancing conceptual knowledge and skill acquisition. Therefore, a gamified learning environment can greatly enhance educational experience, promote curiosity while supporting learners' focus, attention

span, and engagement. This strategy is crucial for achieving learning objectives and enhancing students' understanding (Bhat et al., 2023).

On the other hand, games in education include using game mechanics and elements in the learning environment. It makes perfect sense to incorporate games elements into education, given many common features between games and learning. In games, a specific goal (winning) is aimed for by users despite obstacles. The same is in education, learners must fulfil a learning objective by completing specific activities or interacting with content (Kiryakova et al., 2013).

### **Importance of speaking skills**

Speaking according to Kaur and Aziz (2020) involves the oral expression of thoughts and perspectives, allowing individuals to articulate their viewpoints and share personal ideas through verbal communication. Thus, language functions as an essential tool for human interaction, since it enables people to convey their thinking and interpret the ideas of others (Kaur & Aziz, 2020). Communication is based on speech as the main channel through which meaning is exchanged between individuals. For this reason, building speaking skills becomes important for anyone learning a new language.

Language can be understood as dynamic and social activity that is part of a context in human interaction (Qureshi, 2020). The ability to express oneself and share opinions is a key aspect of human interaction, allowing people to connect, influence, and comprehend one another. On the other hand, Harris (1974, as cited in Kurniati & Novitri, 2021) explains that speaking consists of five principles components, such as: fluency, grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Comprehension is described as the learners' ability to respond to oral communication appropriately while vocabulary is defined as the correct use of words to express ideas. In the case of pronunciation, it is explained as the way speakers produce clear and understandable sounds. Meanwhile, fluency is described as the ability to speak smoothly, naturally, and accurately with fewer pauses. However, Heaton (1978, as cited in Kurniati & Novitri, 2021) who emphasizes that grammar means the capacity to arrange correct sentences in conversation. Comprehension is essential because it allows individuals to not only understand spoken language but also answer appropriately.

### **Social interaction and learning**

Learning, especially in childhood, is a socially mediated and emotionally influenced process. From a sociocultural perspective, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) explains how learning occurs through interaction and guidance (1978, as cited in Irshad et al., 2021). The ZPD represents the distance between what learners can do independently and what they can achieve with support of a more knowledgeable peer or teacher.

### **Emotional factors in language learning**

Emotional factors also play a crucial role, as explained by Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. Krashen (1982, as cited in Pizarro & Josephy, 2011) argues that learners' emotions such as: anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence can either facilitate or hinder language acquisition. When learners experience high levels of stress or fear of making mistakes, the affective filter rises, blocking input from being processed effectively.

## **Antecedents**

Researchers have contributed information about the use of gamification to improve the speaking skills of students in English as a foreign language. The studies of Andriani and Syarif (2019); Kaur and Aziz (2020); Simbaña et al. (2023) highlighted that games have been shown to have a significant positive impact on learners' speaking abilities. This is due to games improving grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and fluency, as well as motivation, engagement and confidence. In comparison to traditional strategies, games make speaking classes more dynamic and interactive.

Farinango (2023) and Palacios (2023) state that gamification represents an effective alternative to traditional teaching strategies, as it contributes to making the learning process more meaningful and engaging. According to their findings, the integration of gamified activities in classrooms enhance the development of fluency, encourages collaboration work, and raises students' self-confidence.

In addition, games reduce students' anxiety and fear of making mistakes, encourage peer interaction, and provide opportunities for communication, leading to improved speaking skills because it creates a more participatory classroom environment (Nuriyanti, 2025; Putri et al., 2017; Subkhi, 2020).

## **Methodological framework**

The research was carried out with a group of children attending English classes. The participants were chosen intentionally and consisted of 10 students, both male and female, ranging in age from 11 to 13 years old. All of them began with a very limited level of English. The research followed a quantitative approach combined with action research. This was because there was an intervention in the teaching process by using

games to improve speaking skills. Likewise, the research was quasi-experimental, as it involved a pre-test and post-test without a control group. This design allowed for a comparison of the students' performance before and after the intervention. Since the objective was to describe students' improvement, the research also had a descriptive scope.

To assess fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and comprehension a speaking rubric was applied. At the same time, an observation checklist was used during the gamified activities to check students' participation, motivation, and confidence. The data were analyzed from the tests and analyzed using arithmetic mean, which made it possible to compare and interpret the results, as well as observe students' progress in a clear manner.

## **Results**

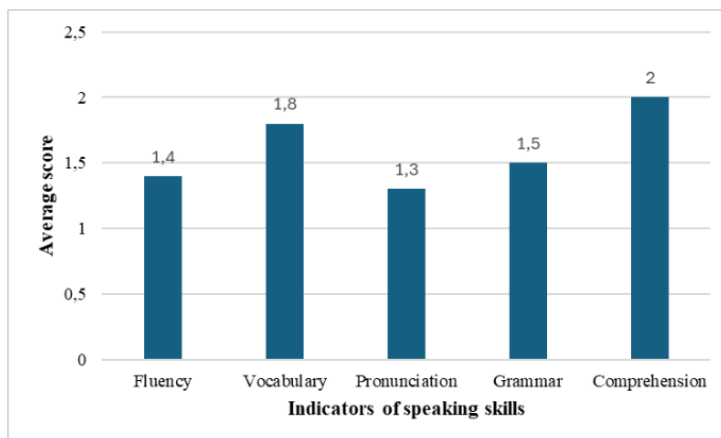
This section presents the results obtained from the pre-test and post-test applied to ten beginner-level students to assess the contribution of integrating games. The speaking skill was assessed through five indicators: fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and comprehension, using a five-point Likert scale.

Figure 1 presents the results of the pre-test, which was used to see the problems students had with their speaking skills. In general, the data show low scores in all areas. Fluency had an average of 1.4, which means that most students could not speak continuously and paused many times. Vocabulary also had a low score of 1.8, because students did not have enough words to express their ideas. Pronunciation had the lowest average with 1.3, showing that students had a lot of trouble being understood. Grammar was also low at 1.5, with many mistakes that made it hard to understand the message.

Finally, comprehension had an average of 2.0, meaning that students only understood very simple questions and needed the teacher to repeat things many times.

**Figure 1**

*Results of the pre-test.*



*Note.* Average scores of the five speaking indicators obtained during the initial diagnosis.

The gamified activities implemented during the four weeks intervention were designed to create a motivating learning environment that helped students to actively use English while participating in the games. That is why table 1 provides a brief description of the games that were used.

**Table 1**

*Description of gamified activities implemented during the intervention.*

<b>Week</b>	<b>Gamified activity</b>	<b>Gamified approach</b>	<b>Speaking focus (topics)</b>	<b>Brief description</b>
<b>Week 1</b>	La pañoleta	Gamification using traditional game	Introducing oneself	La pañoleta is a traditional game adapted through gamification elements such as competition, rules, turns, and challenges. Students were required to answer oral questions in

					English before completing the action.
<b>Week 2</b>	Jump Rope/ Hopscotch (rayula)	Gamification using traditional games	Expressing animals and colors/ Free time activities		Jump rope was gamified by incorporating oral challenges related to free-time activities while students jumped, encouraging basic oral production. In Hopscotch, prompts were integrated into each step, requiring students to respond orally based on the topic.
<b>Week 3</b>	Who touches it first/ Freeze tag	Gamified traditional and guessing activities	Family description/ Daily routines		Who touched it first involved competition and teamwork, where students touched images according to oral descriptions related to family members. But Freeze tag was adapted so that students who were caught had to describe their daily routine.
<b>Week 4</b>	Broken telephone/ Picture relay challenge	Gamified collaborative activities	Actions in progress/ Describing people's clothes		Broken telephones required students to collaboratively transmit messages describing actions shown in images, reinforcing listening and speaking accuracy. A relay-style activity incorporating teamwork, competition and visual support. Students worked in

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pairs to collect images of clothing and collaboratively describe what people were wearing.

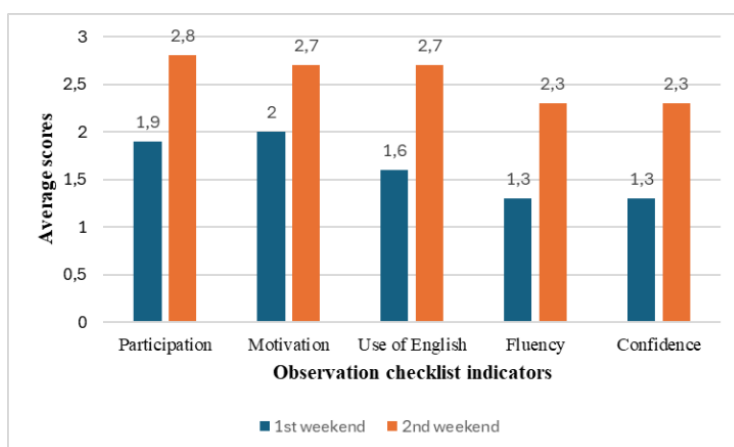
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On the other hand, figure 2 compares the average results from week 1 and week 2. The numbers demonstrate that there was an improvement in all areas during the second week. In the first week, students did not participate much and did not have much confidence. This happened because they were beginners and were afraid to speak in English. However, by the second week, participation went up because students felt more comfortable with games.

Motivation and the use of English also seemed good progress. This suggests that interactive games enhance speaking more in class. Even though the improvement in fluency and confidence was small, it shows that students started to speak with fewer pauses and felt safer when they were talking.

### Figure 2

*Comparison of the average results in weeks 1 and 2.*

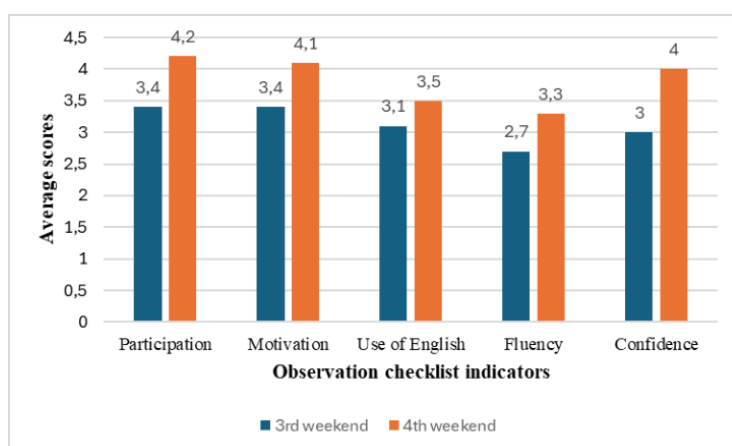


*Note.* Comparison of observation checklist indicators between the first and second week of the gamified intervention

In this way, the comparison between weeks 3 and 4 (figure 3) points to clear increases in all areas, which means the students continued to improve during the activities. Participation and motivation reached high levels because the students were very interested in the games. Confidence moved up from 3.0 to 4.0, showing that students felt safe speaking English in front of their classmates. Fluency and the use of English also go better, and students were finally able to express basic ideas out loud.

**Figure 3**

*Comparison of the average results in weeks 3 and 4.*



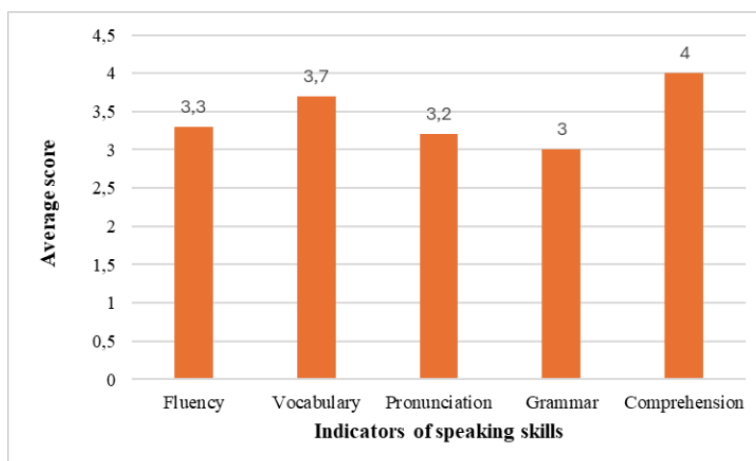
*Note.* Increasing students' performance and engagement during weeks 3 and 4 of the implementation.

In the case of figure 4 presents the results of the post-test, which was done after using traditional, guessing, and collaboration games. The final numbers point to a clear improvement in every indicator. Fluency increased to an average of 3.3, meaning that students spoke with fewer pauses and more confidence. Vocabulary also improved quite a bit, reaching 3.7, which indicates that students used basic words more correctly.

Pronunciation went up to 3.2, suggesting that most students were easier to understand even if they still made some small mistakes. Similarly, grammar reached an average of 3.0, reflecting better control of basic rules. The biggest change was observed in comprehension, which reached an average of 4.0. This result means that students could understand most questions easily and answer them correctly, demonstrating greater confidence and engagement, and proving they felt more comfortable and involved in class.

**Figure 4**

*Results of the post-test.*



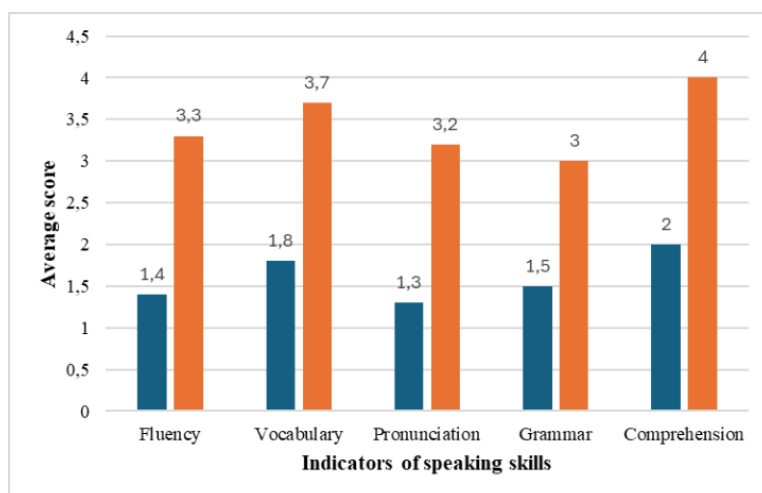
*Note.* Final average scores in speaking skills after integration of games.

As a result, figure 5 compares the average scores of the pre-test and post-test for each speaking category. The data confirms clear improvement in all the areas assessed. Fluency increased from 1.5 to 3.3, while vocabulary went from 1.8 to 3.7. Pronunciation also improved from 1.3 to 3.2, grammar moved from 1.5 to 3, and comprehension rose from 2.0 to 4.0. These results suggest that using games in class had a positive effect on the students' speaking skills. The most important changes were seen in vocabulary and

comprehension, which are very important parts of speaking for students at a beginner level.

**Figure 5**

*Comparison of pre-test and post-test.*



*Note.* Comparative analysis of pre-test and post-test results showing the overall improvement in all speaking categories.

## Discussion

The results of this research show a positive contribution on students' speaking skills. There was an improvement in fluency, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Also, motivation and confidence were felt by students when speaking practice was carried out through gamified activities. The results of this research are supported by Simbaña et al. (2023), showed that gamification can enhance oral communication by making grammar and vocabulary stronger.

The growth in vocabulary (from 1.8 to 3.7) and grammar (from 1.5 to 3.0) happens because games have rules and goals that drive them to complete the activity. In this way, students must use the English language through games. In addition, games

were based on teamwork and competition, which push students to speak English more often. These activities helped create a low-anxiety environment. As Palacios (2023) stated that gamification is important because it creates a safe space where students feel comfortable interacting with others.

Also, gamification improves how students interact in class (Basantes & Farinango, 2024). Authors like Andriani and Syarif (2019) say that games give everyone the same chance to participate and relieve them the fear of making mistakes. Likewise, the systematic review by Kaur and Aziz (2020) confirms that language games are a terrific tool for increasing speaking skills.

When there is a small-size class it is easier for teachers to handle their classes, so that, it is considered as advantage during this process. Providing immediate feedback to each student. The intervention only lasted four weeks, which meant there was a short time to cover all the topics effectively, so that, it was carefully planned each activity. Since most of the activities were based on traditional games, it was assumed that students would be familiar with them, whether from schools or their neighborhoods. But some students did not know about the rules or dynamics of some games.

It was observed that games, in addition to contributing to improvement in speaking. Also help create an environment where students can feel secure, with less anxiety and without stress. This is how, by applying gamified activities that promote collaboration and emotional safety, students feel comfortable participating freely and expressing themselves without fear.

### **Conclusions**

This research found that integrating games improved students' speaking skills. First, students' speaking deficiencies were identified, and it showed difficulties in

fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and confidence. Based on this diagnosis, appropriate gamified activities were selected and implemented. To promote and enhance active oral participation there were games that considered rules, teamwork, and competitive elements.

After the application of these activities, evident improvements were observed in students' speaking performance, mainly in fluency, interaction, and confidence. Overall, the post-test results confirmed significant improvement compared to the initial diagnosis.

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