

Artículo

The impact of gamified tasks on Chilean EFL students' speaking skills: An action research study

El impacto de las tareas gamificadas en la habilidad de expresión oral de estudiantes chilenos de inglés como lengua extranjera: un estudio de investigación-acción

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CITACIÓN

Cartes, Y., Tagle, T. & Etchegaray, P. (2025). The impact of gamified tasks on Chilean EFL students' speaking skills: An action research study. Revista de Inclusión Educativa y Diversidad (RIED), 3(2), 1-18

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.170 80771

INFORMACIÓN DEL AR-TÍCULO

Recibido: 24 de Febrero, 2025 Aceptado: 18 de Agosto, 2025 Publicado: 23 de Septiembre, 2025

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Abstract. This study examines the impact of gamified tasks on the English-speaking skills development of fifth graders from a primary school in southern Chile. The research employed both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, utilizing an action research design. In this context, a teacher-researcher designed and implemented a three-month pedagogical innovation focused on gamified English-speaking tasks, using resources such as Mentimeter, Kahoot, Wordwall, Flippity, and ClassDojo. 12 Chilean primary school students of English as a foreign language, who were in their fifth year of school, participated in the study. The data collection techniques and instruments included a reflection journal by the teacher-researcher on her pedagogical actions during the intervention cycle, a pre and posttest of English-speaking skills, and a semi-structured interview to gather students' perceptions. The results are based on the teacher's reflection on the design and implementation of English pre-, while, and post-speaking tasks, which aimed to enhance learners' L2 communicative performance by using gamified resources. Moreover, post-intervention quantitative results revealed significant improvements in participants' L2 oral production (p < 0.05), demonstrating an increase in vocabulary, pronunciation, and interaction. Qualitatively, learners manifested positive perceptions about the pedagogical innovation, reporting higher engagement in interviews. This study supports the use of gamification as a tool for EFL oral proficiency development, although the sample size limits its generalizability. Future research could explore long-term learning and intrinsic mo-

Keywords: gamification, task-based language teaching, oral proficiency, EFL, action research, primary education.

Resumen. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo examinar el impacto de las tareas gamificadas en la habilidad de expresión oral en inglés de estudiantes de quinto año de educación primaria en el sur de Chile. Se empleó la metodología cualitativa y cuantitativa, con un diseño de investigación-acción. En este contexto, una profesora-investigadora diseñó e implementó una innovación pedagógica de tres meses centrada en tareas gamificadas de expresión oral en inglés, utilizando recursos como Mentimeter, Kahoot, Wordwall, Flippity y ClassDojo. 12 estudiantes chilenos de inglés cursando su quinto año de educación primaria participaron en el estudio. Las técnicas de recolección de datos fueron un diario de reflexión de la profesora-investigadora sobre sus acciones pedagógicas durante el ciclo de intervención, una prueba previa y posterior de expresión oral en inglés y una entrevista semiestructurada sobre percepciones de los estudiantes. Los resultados se basan en la reflexión de la profesora sobre el diseño e implementación de tareas de expresión oral en inglés previas, durante y posteriores para mejorar el desempeño comunicativo en L2 de los estudiantes, usando recursos gamificados. Adicionalmente, los resultados cuantitativos posteriores a la intervención revelaron mejoras significativas en la producción oral en inglés de los participantes (p < 0.05), demostrando aumento en vocabulario, pronunciación e interacción. Desde la dimensión cualitativa, los estudiantes manifestaron percepciones positivas sobre la innovación pedagógica y declararon, en las entrevistas, mayor compromiso. Este estudio propone la gamificación como herramienta para el desarrollo de la expresión oral en inglés como lengua extranjera, aunque su generalización se ve limitada por el tamaño de la muestra. Futuras investigaciones podrían explorar aprendizajes a largo plazo y motivación intrínseca.

Palabras clave: Gamificación, enseñanza de lenguas basada en tareas, expresión oral en inglés, ILE, investigación-acción, educación primaria.

1. Introduction

English ranks as the third most spoken language by native speakers globally; however, it is the first with the highest number of non-native users (Ethnologue, 2025). In Chile, English is considered a foreign language and is not used as a regular means of communication (British Council, 2015). According to the English Proficiency Index (EPI), which draws on data from over 2.1 million individuals worldwide who have completed an English language test, Chile has consistently maintained a medium proficiency level since 2019 (Education First, 2025). This fact suggests that the typical individual can comprehend song lyrics, compose professional emails on everyday topics, and participate in meetings related to their area of expertise.

The Chilean educational curriculum integrates English as a Foreign Language (EFL) as a compulsory subject from the fifth year of primary education to the fourth year of secondary education, focusing its learning objectives on developing linguistic skills of comprehension and production, following a communicative logic of learning and teaching (Chilean Ministry of Education, 2023). Within this framework, according to the national curriculum, students are expected to reach the elementary or A1 level of proficiency in this language, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), by the end of the sixth year of primary education, being able to hold a simple conversation in English (Chilean Ministry of Education, 2019). Moreover, these national standards also specify that Chilean students should reach the CEFR A2 level by the end of primary education and the B1 level by the end of secondary education (Chilean Ministry of Education, 2016).

A study indicates that Chilean secondary education students show unsatisfactory results in listening and reading comprehension skills in English, failing to achieve the A2 level (Agencia de Calidad de la Educación, 2017). Consequently, if learners possess insufficient listening and reading competencies in a foreign language, they will struggle to develop speaking and writing skills (see, for example, Ellis, 2005). It has been reported that, at the national level, students lack opportunities to develop or practice English speaking skills (see, for example, Tagle et al., 2021). This limitation may be attributed to the restricted occasions for Chilean learners to use English outside of the educational context, where the language is not promoted as the exclusive medium of communication (British Council, 2015). To address EFL learning challenges in the national context, the Chilean Ministry of Education (2013, 2021) suggests implementing task-based instruction across the national curriculum. From this perspective, the task-based approach highlights meaningful tasks with specific learning objectives, aimed at enhancing both receptive and productive language skills in contexts focused on communication rather than merely studying language forms. These tasks offer students opportunities to utilize the English language to convey ideas and negotiate meaning (Long, 2015). Therefore, this teaching approach is suitable for helping EFL learners develop their English-speaking skills, in conjunction with the rest of their communicative abilities.

Despite task-based teaching having multiple benefits for EFL, empirical research on its implementation in Chilean classrooms is scarce. A study conducted by Abarzúa et al. (2020) found that in-service and pre-service English teachers, as well as learners, perceive task-based teaching as promoting a learning environment conducive to EFL. Another study by Aravena et al. (2018) found that task-based activities are suitable for students with low English language proficiency, as they can enhance their participation and engagement in lessons. Furthermore, Peralta (2023) theoretically discussed the connection between task-based teaching and formative assessment, which supports EFL students in achieving their learning objectives while providing them with feedback. This researcher acknowledged the necessity for additional studies on this topic.

Research about English classrooms in Chile emphasizes the importance of incorporating motivating pedagogical practices that enhance learner participation and, consequently, facilitate foreign language interaction (Bravo & Cisterna, 2020; Inostroza et al., 2024). In this context, gamification can support the communicative approach goals, which frame English teaching in the national context. Gamification is particularly suitable for foreign language

teaching, as it creates a playful context that encourages learners' oral interactions (Herrera, 2017; Villafuerte-Holguín, 2022). Moreover, it uses technological resources that are highly attractive to students and effective in developing language skills (Almusharraf et al., 2023; Rueckert et al., 2020).

Despite the above, few studies have investigated the effect of gamification on English language learning in the Chilean context. For example, quasi-experimental studies have demonstrated that pedagogical interventions using Kahoot help Chilean English learners develop their communicative skills and linguistic systems (Cancino & Viguera, 2024; Cardenas-Moncada et al., 2020). These research findings also indicate that a gamified teaching approach enhances student motivation and fosters favorable conditions for EFL. Another study described how Chilean learners and English teachers perceived card games as a form of gamified teaching material (Vega-Abarzúa et al., 2024). The participants claimed these resources promote student willingness to produce in the foreign language orally, adapting to any stage of an English lesson.

Based on the previous information provided, there is currently no research conducted in Chile that connects the linguistic potential of task-based instruction with gamification to enhance EFL learning. Consequently, the present study incorporated the implementation of a pedagogical proposal that complemented these two didactic approaches to develop the English-speaking skills of a group of Chilean students. The following general research question is posed: What is the impact of gamified tasks on the English-speaking skills development of fifth graders from a primary school in southern Chile?

This study also focuses on the following specific objectives:

- 1. To reflect on the impact of gamified tasks on the English-speaking skills development of fifth graders from a primary school in southern Chile.
- To evaluate the English-speaking skills development of the fifth graders from a primary school in southern Chile before and after a pedagogical intervention based on gamified tasks.
- 3. To describe the fifth graders' perceptions of using gamified tasks to develop speaking skills in English.

Theoretical framework

Speaking skills in English

Oral proficiency entails the ability to articulate ideas, negotiate meaning, and maintain interactional fluency, depending on individuals' communicative competence (Bygate, 2009; Hughes & Reed, 2017). Speaking skills integrate two fundamental linguistic dimensions: fluency and linguistic accuracy. The former relates to producing a clear message and logical ideas, while accuracy encompasses pronunciation, as well as the correct use of grammar and vocabulary (Bailey, 2020).

Speaking skills involve various cognitive processes, including preparation, formulation, and conceptual articulation (Levelt, as cited in Goh & Burns, 2012). In the preparation phase, language users select the topic they will discuss and organize their ideas, activating their prior knowledge both before and while speaking. Consequently, during formulation, speakers transform their planned ideas into a spoken text, deciding on the grammar and vocabulary items they will use. The third cognitive process is articulation, which involves expressing a message aloud. Goh and Burns (2012) argue that speakers can achieve this by activating and controlling specific muscles, such as those in their vocal tract, larynx, and lungs, which are part of their articulatory system. These authors also state that articulation is related to pronunciation and accent.

Communicative approach to language learning and teaching

The communicative approach, also known as communicative language teaching, involves instructional practices that perceive language as a system based on meaning to facilitate communication (Celce-Murcia, 2014). This vision arises in response to traditional approaches or methods that prioritize repetition and memorization. This approach establishes that individuals learn a language by using it in daily activities for different purposes (Bilsborough, 2020). As a result, communicative practices encourage learners to adjust their language use to fit the context and audience, becoming proficient in producing various types of texts and maintaining effective communication through diverse strategies.

Within the communicative approach, learners play a participatory and active role in developing communicative language skills and work collaboratively with their peers (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Likewise, teachers assume the role of language learning monitors and facilitators, so they must create opportunities for students to use the foreign language.

Task-based language teaching

Task-based language teaching (also known as the task-based approach, task-based learning, or task-based instruction) is framed within the communicative approach and emphasizes the task as the center of language teaching and learning (East, 2021; Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011; Long, 2015). This approach has three specific components: goals, procedures, and meaningful content-oriented activities, rather than focusing exclusively on linguistic structures.

In task-based language teaching, the task corresponds to a communicative activity through which individuals exchange meanings, complementing comprehension and production. Nunan (2015) defines communicative tasks as activities that can stand alone and require comprehending, producing, manipulating, or engaging in authentic interaction with language, with a focus on meaning rather than form.

Willis and Willis (2007) suggest three fundamental stages for task development:

Pre-task: The teacher demonstrates or models the expected task performance for students. Learners explore the topic of the task, as well as useful words and phrases.

Task cycle: Students perform tasks in pairs or groups under the supervision of the teacher. Additionally, while learners perform the task in front of the class, the teacher provides either oral or written feedback.

Language focus stage: After performing the task, learners and teacher(s) analyze the aspects of the language that facilitated or complicated the tasks they carried out.

In the context of developing oral production, the phases proposed by Willis and Willis (2007) align with pre-speaking, speaking, and post-speaking tasks or activities.

Teachers construct daily communicative scenarios using the task-based approach, where students engage in meaningful tasks that encourage speaking in a foreign language (Ellis et al., 2020). Moreover, this approach benefits speaking skill development by establishing natural language learning in the classroom, promoting interaction among students, and enhancing communicative fluency (Bailey, 2020).

Gamification

In education, gamification refers to the use of game designs and techniques in non-game contexts to develop skills (Burke, 2012; Muntané, 2017). Gamification enhances teaching and learning by providing experiences that diverge from traditional methods, as it fosters a learner-centered environment through the incorporation of multiple levels of game design (Figueroa, 2015; Franco, 2022). This practice generates positive changes in students' attitudes and increases their willingness to learn a language (Herrera, 2017).

Unlike game-based learning, gamification integrates game elements (such as scoring and leaderboards) into non-game contexts to enhance motivation (Deterding et al., 2011). Additionally, gamification begins with didactic content, evolving into an activity infused with game elements (Foncubierta & Rodríguez, 2014). Games have been proposed to reinforce formal aspects of language teaching, obviating communicative processes without achieving the expected natural interaction (Herrera, 2017). This problem is alleviated by gamification, as all the elements selected to gamify a task enable and motivate communication (Batlle & González, 2023; Shroff et al., 2020).

Werbach and Hunter (2012, 2015) categorize gamification elements into three types: dynamics, mechanics, and components. The referenced authors clarify that dynamics encompass the overall aspects of the gamified system that need to be considered and controlled, but are not directly displayed in the tasks. Emotions, relationships, constraints, narrative, and progress are all part of dynamics. Mechanics are the game processes that enable the execution of actions that generate participant engagement, including challenges, competition, cooperation, feedback, reward, and turns. Finally, the components correspond to the realization of the dynamics and mechanics, including the resources available and the tools used to design a gamified task. These are associated with achievements, avatars, levels, scoring, teams, and timelines.

2. Research methodology

On the one hand, this study employed a qualitative research methodology, which relies on textual data as empirical material, drawing on participants' subjective knowledge and perspectives. On the other hand, the study used quantitative research, whose data derive from measurements, represented by numbers, and analyzed with statistical methods.

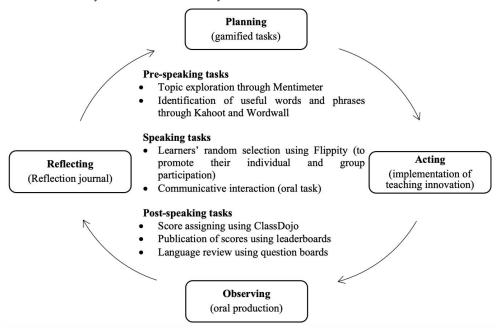
This study also used an action research design. In education, these studies pertain to reflective practice and involve entrusting teachers with the responsibility of being researchers. This function requires a systematic, critical, and self-reflective approach to examining teaching environments and addressing issues (Burns, 2010). In this study, the lead author assumed the role of teacher-researcher in her teaching context, designing and implementing an educational innovation intervention that complemented the task-based approach and gamification.

The innovation was considered to have a three-month implementation period, consisting of 12 one-hour classes. The organization of the gamified tasks was based on the stages of the task-based approach: pre-speaking tasks, speaking tasks (while-stage), and post-speaking tasks (Willis & Willis, 2007). The teacher-researcher selected the topics and contents in accordance with the national curriculum for the English subject in the fifth year of primary education (Chilean Ministry of Education, 2013).

To gamify the tasks, the lead researcher selected different educational platforms appropriate for language teaching and the development of speaking skills. Regarding the design of the gamified tasks, the teacher considered the students' age range, interests, and needs.

Figure 1 summarizes the action research cycle that guided the innovation design and implementation process based on a model proposed by Latorre (2005).

Figure 1
Action research cycle utilized in the study



Participants

A convenience sample of 12 fifth-grade EFL learners (seven girls and five boys, ages 10-11) from a public school in southern Chile participated. The lead researcher selected this type of sampling due to subject availability. As the participants were minors, this research only considered those who voluntarily agreed to participate and had obtained the consent of their legal guardians. Convenience sampling was appropriate for this action research design, as it aims at achieving contextual understanding rather than generalizing results (Efron & Ravid, 2019). Additionally, the lead researcher of this paper, who was the English teacher of the group mentioned above, also participated in this study.

Data collection techniques and instruments

Data was triangulated through three sources: (1) teacher journals, (2) pre-/post-speaking tests, and (3) semi-structured interviews.

First, the teacher-researcher used a reflection journal to record impressions about her practice and the students' oral interactions. This action enabled her to reflect and make informed decisions about the plan's implementation. Journals are pedagogical tools that encourage reflection, inquiry, and self-analysis among teachers to enhance their pedagogical practices (Farrell, 2015). The questions that guided the reflection journal were validated through expert judgment.

Secondly, a speaking test based on an international English evaluation, considering the Pre-A1 level, was administered before and after the pedagogical intervention. This task involved an oral interaction between the researcher and a student, who had to answer questions about personal information such as age, family, school, and friends. To assess the students' progress in speaking, the researcher used a rubric associated with the Pre-A1 level of the English language (Cambridge English, 2024). The instrument considered vocabulary, pronunciation, and interaction criteria and contemplated a band with six performance levels ranging from 0 to 5. Level 0 indicates an unsatisfactory performance or the absence of it, and five is the optimal level. This level corresponds to A1 on the CEFR, which is aligned with the Chilean primary school curriculum's end-of-sixth-grade benchmark (Chilean Ministry of Education, 2019). At this level, the individual demonstrates appropriate vocabulary, intelligible pronunciation, and the ability to engage in simple interactions.

Third, a semi-structured interview was conducted to describe the students' perceptions of gamified tasks for English-speaking development. This type of interview offers a high degree of flexibility, as it allows the researcher to tailor the questions to the interviewees (Efron & Ravid, 2019). As the interview script was created for this study, it underwent validation through expert judgment.

Procedure

Initially, the authors considered the ethical aspects of the research. Therefore, they requested formal authorization from the principal of the educational institution and the legal guardians of the students, as they were minors. The learners also signed a letter of assent to confirm their voluntary participation. The parties involved entered into a confidentiality agreement regarding the dissemination of findings.

Subsequently, the teacher-researcher applied an English-speaking pretest at the Pre-Al level. The evaluation of this task considered the rubric criteria associated with the test, which dealt with vocabulary, pronunciation, and interaction. Two English teachers evaluated the students' performance.

During the implementation of the pedagogical intervention, the teacher-researcher organized the gamified tasks according to the stages of the task-based approach. Additionally, she recorded and transcribed each student's oral interventions, then carefully observed them. Subsequently, she recorded her impressions in a journal of reflection. Furthermore, while implementing the pedagogical proposal, the teacher-researcher conducted a semi-structured interview with the students to gather their perceptions. She utilized this data collection technique in Spanish, the EFL learners' native language, to enable them to express their viewpoints more fluently and effectively. The teacher-researcher recorded the participants' responses for later transcription into written text. The researchers then translated this data into English for publication purposes.

At the end of the implementation, the teacher applied a posttest to evaluate the influence of the gamified tasks on the participants' English-speaking performance. The teacher-researcher used a format equivalent to that of the pretest. Two English teachers again evaluated the students' performance, considering the criteria of the Pre-A1 level rubric.

The pre and posttest data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. This practice enabled the description and analysis of a data group without making inferences using numerical techniques. Initially, a descriptive statistical analysis of frequency and percentage distributions examined participants' performance in vocabulary, pronunciation, and interaction during pretest and posttest stages. These results offered a categorical overview of learner progress according to the six performance levels defined by the Pre-A1 rubric.

The descriptive statistical analysis also calculated the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation for each criterion at pretest and posttest stages. Moreover, to compare participants' pretest and posttest scores for the speaking skill criteria and to assess statistical significance, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used. This non-parametric test was selected due to the small sample size (n = 12) and ordinal-level data. All quantitative analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS to ensure an accurate computation of numerical results.

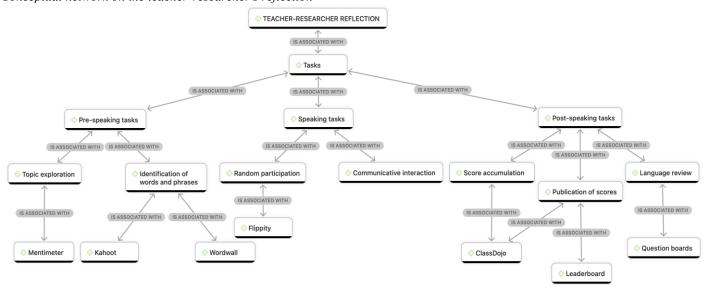
In contrast, utilizing ATLAS.ti, the qualitative content analysis was used to process the reflection journal entries and the semi-structured interview transcripts. This technique systematically studies text or transcripts to interpret discourse through pre-analysis and analysis (coding, categorizing, and inferring) regarding meaning relationships.

To ensure confidentiality, the researchers used pseudonyms to anonymize the participants' identities in all transcriptions and data records. Only the research team had access to this information. Furthermore, no identifiable data was shared with the school or guardians, and all reports utilized aggregated or coded information.

3. Research findings

Reflection on the impact of gamified tasks on the English-speaking skills development of fifth graders from a primary school in southern Chile.

Figure 2
Conceptual network on the teacher-researcher's reflection



As illustrated in Figure 2, the teacher's reflection first focused on the *pre-speaking tasks*, which included *topic exploration*. The teacher-researcher implemented these activities using the interactive platform *Mentimeter*, which facilitates the conduct of online surveys and questions. In her records, the teacher mentioned: 'To activate knowledge about the topic, the students created a word cloud in Mentimeter. This activity allowed them to recall words and phrases they knew related to food'. In another journal entry, she stated: 'Students took a short survey on Mentimeter about the topic to activate vocabulary knowledge and visualize their responses on the screen'.

Pre-speaking tasks also incorporated the identification of words and phrases, where students performed gamified tasks using Kahoot and Wordwall. In her journal entries, the teacher mentioned that she considered the learners' age and interests in selecting both tools: 'I used Kahoot to review key lexis because its quizzes are visually appealing to students. They had images, and the sound made the activity look like a quiz show'. In addition to meeting the students' needs, the teacher utilized the Wordwall interactive platform, whose design features quickly captured the learners' attention. She explained this viewpoint: 'I implemented the identification of words and phrases using Wordwall. Various activities allowed me to cover different visual, kinesthetic, and auditory learning styles. The idea was that everyone could assimilate the new vocabulary'.

The teacher-researcher's reflection also centered on *speaking tasks*, where participants used the English language to communicate ideas and interact. These tasks involved a previous instance of student organization. In this case, the teacher attempted to generate individual and group interactions through *random participation*. To achieve this purpose, she utilized *Flippity*, a classroom management platform that enabled her to quickly and visually select participants and group them randomly. In her reflective journal, the teacher noted: 'I organized the students randomly through Flippity for the oral assignment. This action allowed for quick visualization of the pairs and optimized the lesson's time'.

The goal of the *speaking tasks* was to achieve *communicative interaction* among the participants. For this purpose, the teacher incorporated tasks on different types of discourse into her lesson plans, along with appropriate strategies to guide speaking development. She selected these tasks based on the students' interests and context, as evidenced in the following teacher's record: 'To achieve interaction, I chose a role-playing game because the students liked

to play a character. In addition, the theme was very familiar and relevant to the current situation, ordering take-out food'.

The researcher's reflection also focused on *post-speaking tasks*, a stage in which students were encouraged by assigning them scores for their performance, and what they had done during the lesson was revisited. The teacher recorded the *score accumulation* of each participant in *ClassDojo*, a classroom management platform that allowed assigning scores to each student's avatar. Scores were assigned based on criteria including vocabulary, pronunciation, participation, and group interactions. In this regard, the teacher mentioned using this gamification platform because it allowed her to reinforce the learners' progress positively: I had assigned scores to each avatar. This created much expectation among the learners. I always highlighted their progress, and they all received scores. This action was crucial in maintaining their enthusiasm and desire to continue speaking'.

Then, the *publication of scores* took place on a *leaderboard*. This digital resource enabled sorting the previously accumulated scores in *ClassDojo*. A *leaderboard* organizes scores in ascending order, so each student is assigned a place in the ranking. The teacher explained: 'Students visualized their progress numerically by observing their position in the ranking. Some even mentioned the actions they would take in the next lesson to advance to the top'.

Post-speaking tasks were also associated with language review. In this instance, the teacher revisited the lesson content and activities to help students reinforce their learning. This stage involved using question boards, a resource that the teacher selected for being a playful tool, which allowed students to revisit the lesson's linguistic content through a set of questions inserted into a digital board. In this context, the teacher justified her decision: I chose to end the lesson with a question board because it allowed us to return to the reviewed vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. This resource captured the students' attention and kept them engaged until the end'.

Evaluation of the English-speaking skills development of fifth graders from a primary school in southern Chile before and after a pedagogical intervention based on gamified tasks

Table 1 presents the results of the pre and posttest considering the participants' English-speaking performance in terms of vocabulary, pronunciation, and interaction criteria. The above is expressed in frequency and percentage distributions according to the six performance levels of the Pre-A1 rubric, which range from Level 0, indicating poor performance or the absence of it, to Level 5, representing the optimal level.

Table 1. *Pre and posttest results of the participants' English-speaking performance*

| Criteria Instrument | | Level 0 | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Level 4 | Level 5 | |
|---------------------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----|
| Vocabulary | Pretest | N | 4 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | % | 33.3% | 33.3% | 33.3% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| | Posttest | N | 0 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 0 |
| | | % | 0% | 25% | 33.3% | 16.7% | 25% | 0% |
| Pronunciation | Pretest | N | 4 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | % | 33.3% | 0% | 66.7% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| | Posttest | N | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| | | % | 0% | 16.7% | 16.7% | 33.3% | 33.3% | 0% |
| Interaction | Pretest | N | 4 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | % | 33.3% | 33.3% | 33.3% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| | Posttest | N | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| | | % | 0% | 16.7% | 16.7% | 33.3% | 33.3% | 0% |

The *vocabulary* criterion refers to the appropriate use of lexical content when expressing oneself orally. Regarding the pretest results for this dimension, the results concentrated among Levels 0 (33.3%), 1 (33.3%), and 2 (33.3%). In terms of the posttest, there were no students positioned in Level 0, and 25% of the subjects achieved Level 1, indicating that they used lexical items in a limited way when performing some tasks, making basic mistakes, or experiencing problems with communication. The performance with the highest frequency in the posttest was Level 2, achieved by 33.3% of the learners, indicating that the students exhibited characteristics of both Levels 1 and 3 when using vocabulary. While 16.7% of the participants achieved Level 3, indicating that students used vocabulary to perform most of the requested tasks and attempted to produce some simple expressions, they still made mistakes that hindered the meaning of their messages. Twenty-five percent of the students achieved Level 4, demonstrating that they exhibited traits associated with both Level 3 and Level 5 descriptors.

The *pronunciation* criterion refers to the quality of the sounds the students produce. As for the pretest, 33.3% of the learners were positioned in Level 0. Additionally, 66.7% showed a performance framed in Level 2, indicating that the evaluated subjects mostly attempted to produce the sounds of the English language when expressing themselves, sometimes intelligibly. Students were not positioned in Levels 1, 3, 4, and 5.

Considering the results of the posttest regarding the pronunciation criterion, the scores fluctuated between levels 1, 2, 3, and 4, reflecting an improvement, as no students had a performance level of 0. The largest number of participants was positioned in Level 3 (33.3%) and Level 4 (33.3%), indicating that the learners' pronunciation was sometimes intelligible, but they had limited control over word accentuation.

Responding appropriately and promptly to oral instructions and questions is what counts when it comes to the *interaction* criterion. Regarding the pretest results, 33.3% of the students were positioned at Level 0. Additionally, 33.3% achieved Level 1, indicating that the test takers struggled to maintain interaction, as they frequently required support from the evaluator and often failed to respond to instructions, questions, or visual cues. On the other hand, 33.3% of those evaluated were positioned at Level 2, meaning these students showed traits associated with Level 1 and Level 3 descriptors.

Regarding the posttest results, considering *interaction*, there were no students at Level 0. Sixteen and seven-tenths percent (16.7%) of the subjects performed at Level 1, and another 16.7% at Level 2. In addition, the posttest results showed that 33.3% of those evaluated were positioned at Level 3, indicating that these learners could respond to instructions, questions, and visual cues; however, they tended to hesitate when responding, which delayed their answers. On the other hand, 33.3% achieved Level 4, exhibiting that their performance shared traits associated with both Level 3 and Level 5 descriptors. Within this framework, most study subjects demonstrated Levels 3 and 4 of *interaction*, which reflected a performance improvement compared to the pretest.

Table 2 exhibits the descriptive statistics and Wilcoxon signed-rank test results for the speaking skill criteria, *vocabulary, pronunciation, and interaction*, evaluated before and after the implementation of gamified tasks. These analyses compared the participants' pretest and posttest scores. Reported values include the *minimum* (Min), *maximum* (Max), *mean* (M), and *standard deviation* (SD) for each criterion, along with the significance levels obtained from the non-parametric test (Sig.).

Table 2.Descriptive statistics and Wilcoxon test results for the participants' English-speaking performance

| Criteria | Instrument | N | Min | Max | M | SD | Sig. |
|---------------|------------|----|-----|-----|------|------|-------|
| Vocabulary | Pretest | 12 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0.85 | 0.002 |
| | Posttest | 12 | 1 | 4 | 2.41 | 1.16 | |
| Pronunciation | Pretest | 12 | 0 | 2 | 1.33 | 0.98 | 0.002 |
| | Posttest | 12 | 1 | 4 | 2.83 | 1.11 | |
| Interaction | Pretest | 12 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0.85 | 0.001 |
| | Posttest | 12 | 1 | 4 | 2.83 | 1.11 | |

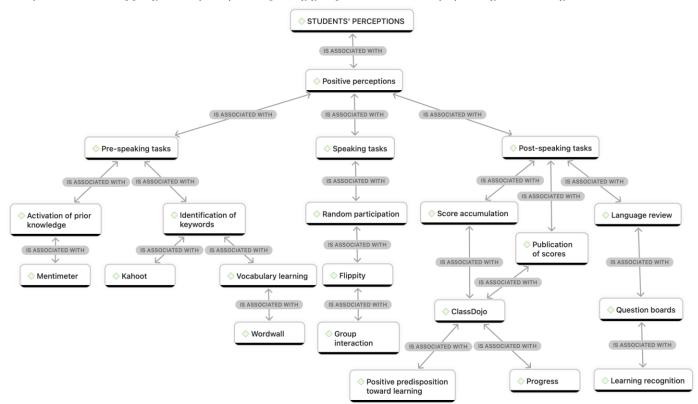
The descriptive analysis showed that the participants notably improved their *vocabulary* use in English oral production from the pretest (M = 1.00, SD = 0.85) to the posttest (M = 2.41, SD = 1.16). There was also an increase in the minimum score, which went from 0 to 1, and the maximum score climbed from 2 to 4. This fact confirms that all learners made progress, with some even reaching the highest score possible. The results from the Wilcoxon signed-rank test supported this advancement, suggesting that the gamified tasks had a positive impact on students' *vocabulary* growth in oral production, as the change was statistically significant (p = 0.002).

The descriptive analysis also revealed a considerable improvement in the participants' pronunciation in English oral production. Pretest scores averaged 1.33 (SD = 0.98) with a range of 0–2, whereas posttest scores averaged 2.83 (SD = 1.11) within a broader range of 1–4. This change demonstrates that most participants enhanced their capacity to pronounce in English while speaking after the intervention. The Wilcoxon test indicated a significant difference between pretest and posttest (p = 0.002), suggesting that using gamified tasks was beneficial for these EFL learners to boost their pronunciation while speaking in English.

Participants' *interaction* while speaking in English was one of the most substantial gains. Pretest scores averaged 1.00 (SD = 0.85), ranging from 0 to 2, while posttest scores increased to an average of 2.83 (SD = 1.11), with scores ranging from 1 to 4. The statistical analysis confirmed that this improvement was significant (p = 0.001), highlighting that the gamified tasks were beneficial for learners to participate more actively in discussions and communicative exchanges while speaking in English.

Fifth-year students' perceptions of using gamified tasks to develop speaking skills in English

Figure 3
Conceptual network on fifth graders' perceptions of using gamified tasks to develop speaking skills in English



Primary school students expressed *positive perceptions* about the pedagogical innovation implemented by the teacher-researcher (see Figure 3). Those, in the first place, focused on the *pre-speaking tasks*. They valued the *activation of prior knowledge* using *Mentimeter*, which enabled them to inquire about their experiences and knowledge related to the lessons' topics. One of the interviewees mentioned: 'I liked the activities where we made word clouds and answered surveys. They reminded me of what I learned. I always managed to write something down so that it would appear on the screen'. In addition, interviewees found it positive that the *Mentimeter* resource allowed them to observe on screen the words their peers knew about the topics, as evidenced in the following excerpt: 'I found the starter tasks fun because all the peers logged in and wrote their answers; we saw them all on the screen. Some knew more words than I did'.

The *positive perceptions* students expressed about the *pre-speaking tasks* also included *identifying keywords*. They stated that the digital tools they used facilitated *vocabulary learning*. One of these resources was *Kahoot*, about which one participant commented: 'Kahoot was my favorite aid because I was able to learn a lot of words. I used them when the teacher asked questions. It was also possible to see the mistakes we made immediately'.

Based on the previous point, the informants also alluded to the appropriate use of the *Wordwall* tool, considering the *identification of keywords*. They stated this resource was playful due to its sound effects and different practice activities. One interviewee mentioned: 'In Wordwall, I always answered correctly. What I liked most was that we practiced the same vocabulary with different activities. In some, we listened; in others, we saw images. There was a roulette wheel'.

Students also reported *positive perceptions* of the *speaking tasks*. These were mainly associated with *random participation* using the *Flippity* tool. This resource encouraged learners to participate individually or in groups, a process they valued due to the opportunity

for *group interaction*. This allowed them to express themselves orally in an orderly manner, avoiding the constant participation of more extroverted peers. The following comment evidenced these perceptions: 'I liked Flippity because this webpage organized us very well to participate. The best thing was that we all had a chance to talk. In other lessons, you don't get to do that because the same people always speak'. Other students considered it positive that this tool selected the learner with whom they had to perform the oral task, which is reflected in the following interview segment: 'I like to be assigned to work with other students. One can learn with them. Sometimes, one can even teach them. When I choose, I always work with the same person. I don't like that very much anymore'.

The EFL students' positive perceptions of the pedagogical intervention also focused on the post-speaking tasks. These participants referred to the accumulation of scores through the ClassDojo digital resource, which facilitated their positive predisposition toward learning. For the students, the platform's scoring system was attractive because it allowed them to use an avatar, and, in addition, it tracked their progress from class to class. One interviewee mentioned: 'Having an avatar was great. You could even personalize it. The scores also increased in each class. We always wanted to get more points, but we had to participate and speak English. That was the most important rule ever'. Another informant shared a similar perspective: 'I always wanted to speak and use the vocabulary we practiced at the beginning of the lesson. I tried hard to give scores to my avatar. I knew I had to use the words and pronounce them well'.

Additionally, in the context of the *post-speaking tasks*, participants expressed *positive perceptions* about the *language review* they conducted using *question boards*. They explained that seeing their progress on the leaderboard helped them to be aware of what they had learned. The informants also commented on how the resource helped them revise, through questions, the linguistic content used: 'You had to show that you had been attentive during the whole lesson. If I answered a question, I was happy because it meant that I had learned'. The interviewees also valued this practice because it helped them to recognize their strengths and weaknesses. In this regard, one informant explained: 'I understood the question on the board, but I could not put the whole sentence together. The teacher explained it to me again, and I could do it. I always had trouble composing sentences, but I improved at it'.

4. Discussion

While implementing pedagogical innovation, the teacher followed the action research cycle proposed by Latorre (2005), which included planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The lead author completed the cycle's final stage through a journal of reflection, which enabled her to record her observations regarding the first three cycles. Journaling is a pedagogical tool that promotes teachers' reflection and self-analysis, leading to the improvement of their practices (Farrell, 2015). Reflection enables educators to reexamine and question their performance, gaining new knowledge about teaching, learners, and themselves as professionals. This action is based on Schön's (1983, 1987) reflection-on-action model, which occurs after a pedagogical performance has been implemented. It differs from reflection-inaction, which happens during the teaching moment.

Regarding the pedagogical intervention, the teacher relied on the stages of the task-based approach proposed by Willis and Willis (2007). Therefore, she considered pre-speaking, speaking, and post-speaking tasks. The professional made this decision since it has been established that combining gamification with a strategy specific to English language teaching enhances students' linguistic progress (Daliranfirouz et al., 2024). The gamified tasks in each stage focused on using language to achieve authentic and meaningful interactions among participants. The study participants also stated positive perceptions of the pedagogical innovation. Research on language learners' perceptions indicates that incorporating gamification into tasks through suitable tools can enhance student engagement and interest in academic processes (Ebadi et al., 2021; Philpott & Son, 2022). These aspects are vital components of individuals' affective dimension that support EFL learning.

Firstly, the teacher-researcher designed and implemented pre-speaking tasks for students to activate prior knowledge based on lesson topics and identify key vocabulary. The teacher utilized interactive platforms, including Mentimeter, Kahoot, and Wordwall, to gamify these

tasks. Within this framework, the learners also expressed positive perceptions of this type of task, reporting higher engagement in interviews. Some studies suggest that using gamified resources enhances learners' lexical knowledge in English because they incorporate an entertaining component, thereby increasing their motivation (Quezada et al., 2021; Weissheimer et al., 2019).

Secondly, the teacher designed and implemented while-speaking tasks that she organized through the classroom management platform Flippity. This was not part of the proposal by Willis and Willis (2007); however, according to the characteristics of the students, particularly their age range, incorporating a random selector allowed for gamifying the task and, consequently, activating the learners' oral interventions. The participants positively valued this intervention phase, which enabled group interaction, allowing them to socialize with classmates from different backgrounds. Interaction among learners is a key component of EFL learning, as it encourages them to negotiate meanings by using the language through demands for clarification, confirmation, and repetition (Bailey, 2020). To achieve it, students must listen to their peers and know how to take turns or allow others to do so, using linguistic elements.

As part of the post-speaking tasks, the teacher-researcher implemented a score-accumulation system using the ClassDojo classroom management platform, posted scores through a leaderboard, and conducted a language review through a question board. Although the first two instances are not part of what Willis and Willis (2007) stipulated for this stage, the practitioner incorporated gamification components, hoping they would have a positive impact on her students' oral performance. Learners become more involved in completing a task by incorporating elements such as scoring, avatars, and levels (Dos Santos & Vélez Ruiz, 2021). From this perspective, the resource increases their willingness and engagement, keeping students in a state of permanent activity.

Additionally, students reported positive perceptions of the post-speaking tasks, highlighting that they promoted a positive attitude towards learning these skills. A study on using ClassDojo in teaching speaking states that the scoring system provided by this platform engages students in speaking activities, improving their disposition (Maimunah, 2019). Although this practice is behaviorist, a study by Larrenua (2015) points out that, due to the developmental stage of primary education students, it is natural for extrinsic motivation to prevail in them. However, this specialist notes that activities can be initiated to target extrinsic motivation, which can subsequently trigger intrinsic motivation.

Regarding the students' speaking evaluation, quantitative analysis showed an increase in speaking test scores after the pedagogical innovation, particularly in vocabulary and fluency. Considering the vocabulary criterion, it is possible to establish that reviewing words and phrases through gamified tasks using interactive platforms, such as Kahoot and Wordwall, enabled learners' progress in this linguistic dimension. These results are consistent with a study by Palate (2021), which suggests that intentional vocabulary learning strategies using technological resources foster improved oral interactions in a foreign language.

Students' performances in the pronunciation criterion also progressed. The above can be attributed to the fact that, during the implementation of gamified tasks, the teacher reinforced the learning of those sounds that were more difficult for the students to articulate. Alfulaih (2018) mentions that gamification platforms create a playful environment that motivates students' oral interventions. This view is related to a study conducted by Yürük (2020), which shows that, after performing tasks in Kahoot, learners improve their weaknesses in pronunciation, which stem from the articulation of sounds in their native language.

Regarding the interaction results, the students' performance showed an increase in the posttest, which was the best-achieved criterion of the Pre-A1 level rubric. There is research that evidences equivalent findings (see, for example, Jiménez & Gómez, 2019). Likewise, the study by Kaur and Naderajan (2019), which utilized Kahoot to enhance oral interaction in English, states that this gamification platform fosters the creation of a pleasant learning environment where learners feel a voluntary desire to use the language. This finding is particularly relevant in light of specific elements emphasized by the Chilean curriculum for the English subject, such as the interactive nature of the foreign language and the design of

diverse communicative situations to develop speaking skills (Chilean Ministry of Education, 2013).

5. Conclusion

The present study demonstrates that the design and implementation of a pedagogical innovation based on gamification tasks is favorable for enhancing the development of speaking skills in English. This is evidenced by the pedagogical reflection findings and the participants' results in terms of their linguistic performances and perceptions.

Conducting action research studies, where teachers assume the role of researchers, can be a beneficial tool for improving the levels of receptive and productive skills in English among students from contexts where this language is not their native language. Simultaneously, pre- and in-service teachers can enhance their professional development through systematic reflection on their pedagogical actions and decisions.

As action research concentrates on educators' teaching realities, this study involved only 12 fifth graders from a single primary school in southern Chile. From a quantitative research perspective, this sample limits the statistical power of the results and their generalizability. Therefore, future studies should prioritize students' EFL learning over teachers' reflection, including a more representative sample that incorporates individuals from diverse backgrounds or with varying characteristics. Additionally, future research could examine long-term language retention and intrinsic motivation.

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