

Baamboozle's Influence On Willingness To Communicate In English In Small Group Private Lessons

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Abstract

This paper examines the results of an action research project on the use of Baamboozle as a gamification strategy to influence students' willingness to communicate in English and their perception of the game. The study takes place in a context in which English does not play a fundamental part in the learning process during the early years of education. Therefore, a variety of relevant problems arise when learners need to work on their speaking skills. The sample of the research includes four private lesson students between 10 to 11 years old who usually work individually with the teacher, yet during the period the research took place, they worked together as one group. Considering this, several researchers have discovered that gamified activities play an essential role when teaching young learners since it provides unusual elements learners are not used to applying during class time. Seven interventions were carried out twice a week for three weeks to collect the data through observation, a Likert-type scale questionnaire, and a focus group. The data collected during the interventions suggested that Baamboozle is an effective tool to enhance willingness to communicate in an online teaching context.

Resumen

Este artículo examina los resultados de un proyecto de investigación-acción sobre el uso de Baamboozle como estrategia de gamificación para influir en la disposición de los alumnos a comunicarse en inglés y en su percepción del juego. El estudio tiene lugar en un contexto en el que el inglés no desempeña un papel fundamental en el proceso de aprendizaje durante los primeros años de educación. Por lo tanto, surgen diversos problemas relevantes cuando los alumnos necesitan trabajar en su destreza oral. La muestra de la investigación incluye a cuatro alumnos de clases particulares de entre 10 y 11 años que suelen trabajar individualmente con el profesor, sin embargo, durante el periodo en el que tuvo lugar la investigación, trabajaron juntos como un solo grupo. Teniendo esto en cuenta, varios investigadores han descubierto que las actividades gamificadas desempeñan un papel esencial a la hora de enseñar a alumnos jóvenes, ya que proporciona elementos inusuales que

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los alumnos no están acostumbrados a utilizar en clases. Se llevaron a cabo siete intervenciones dos veces por semana durante tres semanas para recoger los datos mediante la observación, un cuestionario con escala tipo Likert y un grupo focal. Los datos recogidos durante las intervenciones sugieren que Baamboozle es una herramienta eficaz para mejorar la disposición a la comunicación en un contexto de enseñanza en línea.

1. Introduction

Online private lessons have become an effective tool when learners decide how to start acquiring a new language. Nowadays, the Communicative approach and the integration of the four skills in a lesson are proposed methodologies when teaching English as a foreign language. Based on this, the Ministerio de Educación de Chile (2021) proposes in its program for 5th grade that for students to manage the language effectively when speaking in English, they should master vocabulary, morphosyntactic structures, and pronunciation. In addition to this, it is suggested that English must be used as the only means to express ideas during class time. As soon as the pandemic started in early 2020, I decided to teach English in online private lessons. In this context, I realized that students were not willing to participate in activities that involve using the target language, especially in the case of speaking activities. Two years have passed, and I have been teaching English online for individual and small-group lessons during this time. About this, I realized that there were frequent cases in which learners believed some activities, especially the ones that require speaking in English, were aimless, boring, or simply not attractive enough to be completed. In this context, Yassin and Abdulgalil (2022) state that gamified activities help promote second and foreign languages students' proficiency, reduce foreign-language learners' anxiety, promote autonomy, and help students become more engaged in the lesson materials.

Once the problem was identified, Baamboozle, (<https://www.baamboozle.com/>) a web-based platform game that requires an electronic device with an internet connection to be used, was identified as a potential tool to tackle this challenge. Research on this tool shows that Baamboozle made the spirit increase because it was fun, not boring, and biased to reflect on the material (Elis et al., 2022). In addition, students were enthusiastic and engaged in the learning process as they used gamification (Saud et al., 2022). In Baamboozle the teacher is the controller of the game and students are divided into teams with the purpose of answering questions about any topic discussed during the lesson. The platform allows students to answer questions directly from the screen shared by the teacher during

the video call. Considering the former, the following action research aimed at examining the effect that the website/game Baamboozle can have on students' willingness to communicate when doing speaking activities.

2. Literature review

2.1. Developing speaking in an EFL context.

Regarding speaking development in the EFL classroom, Toledo and Hoit (2016) claim that teachers must be able to carefully select the aspect of the language they want their learners to work on and choose the most proper assessment tool to provide feedback. To accomplish the former, these scholars state that providing students the opportunity to work with non-traditional types of tasks, gives them a chance to use the language not using textbooks since they participate in real spoken interactions. For instance, Sariçoban and Karakurt (2016) determine that in a university context, a task-based learning approach was able to improve students' listening and speaking abilities effectively, since it helped them to practice real-life language. Additionally, Sirisrimangkorn (2018) states that to boost learners' ability to produce the language fluently, it is of fundamental importance for the teacher to include communicative and authentic aspects into their context. Despite this, the author also claims that for students who have practiced the language for several years, it is still exhausting to use it outside of the classroom.

Regarding the young learners' ability to produce the language orally, Cameron (2001) indicates that for young learners, spoken language is considered to be more than one skill, but the actual channel through which language can be understood and learned while being practiced. The scholar also states two principal guidelines which need to be considered when teaching speaking to young learners. First, meaning needs to come first since children will not be able to learn the target language if they do not understand it. Second, children need to be active participants to expand their knowledge to participate in real-life situations where they can have the opportunity to communicate a message with a real purpose. In order to support this, Graham-Marr (2004) explains that some of the speaking skills that students need to work on are: fluency, phonology, and strategies while producing chunks of appropriate language using interconnected devices.

2.2. Learners' willingness to communicate in English.

The first authors to present the concept of Willingness to Communicate (hereafter WTC) were McCroskey and Baer in 1985. These scholars identified a regularity considering frequency and amount of talking in communication behaviors that can be defined as a personality variable

they decided to name WTC. This variable can be considered situationally dependent, which means that depending on the context the speaker is involved, their willingness to communicate might vary (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). Considering this as a personality-based construct might explain why some people seem more willing to communicate than others under the same circumstances. Almost a decade later, Richmond and Roach (1992) came up with a more constructed definition that illustrated WTC as a dominant communication personality aspect that is thought to have a significant impact on all facets of a person's life and greatly enhance their chances of succeeding in relationships, the workplace, and other areas of their lives.

Considering WTC in an L2 context, MacIntyre et al. (1998) redefined the former definitions by including the L2 factor and representing it as “a readiness to enter into a discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using an L2” (p. 547). These scholars also identified that it is almost impossible that WTC in L2 could be a reflection of WTC in L1, mainly since the factors that affect one or another are completely different and not correlated. Basöz and Erten (2018) indicate that, during the last two decades, WTC has been deemed as an essential aspect of the L2 learning and acquisition process and research has deepened its studies so as to explore learners’ L2 WTC. Considering this, Altiner (2018) studied Turkish EFL learners’ WTC, and the results show that in controlled situations that include pronunciation and vocabulary learning, students accounted for a higher level of WTC in comparison to less-controlled situations such as giving a speech. Moreover, Altiner’s research demonstrated that students were less willing to communicate using English when the task involved them being in the front of the class using a more complicated level of English.

2.3 Online Learning for young language learners.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the lessons were delivered online as a way to provide a safe learning environment for everybody involved. The former was a demanding challenge all teachers had to face around the world. As Turnbull et al. (2021) state, this impact has been deeply significant since education was rapidly forced to implement new technologies that could facilitate engagement when working remotely. In addition to this, continue the scholars, “This has led to the creative deployment of learning and communication platforms that have profoundly transformed the teaching and learning landscape for disciplines and institutions that traditionally were thought of as being conducted in a physical environment”. (p. 6402). Gonzalez and Louis (2018) defined it as any type of learning that is developed from a distance through electronic devices such as

smartphones, computers, or tablets using an internet connection. In addition to this, Rahman (2020) points out that the online learning context can be classified considering the type of communication used and the number of people who are involved in the process. First, asynchronous communication is basically one-way and there is no need for interaction in real-time for learning to take place. Second, synchronous communication demands an active real-time interaction that can be carried out through means such as live chats or video calls. Rahman (2020) indicates that online lessons can be considered a reasonably new way of teaching and learning and, undoubtedly, there is a need to deepen the knowledge and teaching methodologies since there is no common foundation to be served as a basis.

Regarding this, a study conducted by Manoharan et al. (2022) compares the principal challenges faced by young and adult learners when transitioning from traditional learning to online learning in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of learning styles, psychological effects, and low academic performance. Most of them were fairly similar except for the fact that adult learners were responsible for themselves since they have to be self-directed and self-independent so as to cope with online learning without any other external support. In this sense, the scholars continue, teachers and parents, play a fundamental role, especially when teaching young EFL learners, to maintain the level of learners' interest and motivation.

Following the same line, Marchlik et al. (2021) state that older learners can even take advantage of online distance education since their levels of autonomous work are more developed and they are able to control their own pace while working by themselves. However, asynchronous education is not a simple option for younger learners. They require constant assistance which, in such cases, needs to be provided by their parents or guardians. In addition, continue the scholars, young learners need "need a lot of fun, play, and movement. Frequent change in activities and forms of work is a necessity, as they have a short attention span. Language teachers should provide children with a variety of interactions" (p. 7109).

2.3.1. Gamified activities when teaching EFL.

The nature of gamification according to Kapp (2012) is the use of game-based mechanics such as levels, points, or badges to promote learning, engage people, and motivate action in a context that was not primarily developed to play games. Furthermore, Fajarina (2017) declares that children will always be happy to play interesting games as they act as an invitation for them to become active participants during the interaction. The scholar also suggests four rules that must be considered when playing games in teaching EFL for young learners. (1) the game needs to be interesting, (2) the game should have simple rules

for them to follow easily (3) the game should be connected to the material or the content being taught, and (4) the game should include values such as discipline, honesty, and respect.

Phuong (2020) emphasizes that the use of gamified activities must be more applicable in a language teaching context than in any other context of education. The former is because the use of games has been a crucial part of teaching foreign languages for decades. In addition, the author indicates that the increase of ICT in language education “would be a firm premise for gamification to thrive” (p. 243). Considering previous studies, Bicen and Kocakoyun (2018) investigated the perception students had toward a gamified approach. He concluded that this approach enhances students’ interest which leads them to be more motivated when learning the language. Moreover, these findings also evidence that students were able to work more collaboratively since they needed support from their peers. Students also commented that the reward system of the gamification tool helped them to be more encouraged to practice the language since they could see their own achievements anytime, they wanted to. Finally, this scholar also found out that students can learn a variety of topics while tackling different materials in a fun way to work with.

Considering gamification in the young learners’ EFL classroom, Mufidah (2016) investigated how this strategy could impact students’ anxiety and grammar achievement and the results showed that it helps reduce their levels of anxiety and contributed as a positive reinforcement to their grammar performance as well. Furthermore, Kayimbasioglu et al. (2016) explored the perceptions EFL teachers and learners at primary schools had regarding the use of gamified activities and the findings were mainly positive. The participants recognized that the activities were engaging and motivating and increased students’ confidence when achieving the learning outcomes.

3. Methodology

The following study corresponds to an action research study. Burns (2010) indicates that the primary motive for action research is to grow solutions for conundrums that arise in one’s specific context, where its main methods are qualitative, interpretative, and case studies carried out through regular means that may be observational or non-observational.

3.1. Aims of the study

To examine 4th and 5th-grade EFL learners’ willingness to communicate in English when working with Baamboozle during the interventions.

To analyze 4th and 5th-grade EFL learners’ perceptions regarding a gamified activity when speaking English after the intervention.

3.2. Participants and the context

The sample for this action research consists of 4 private lesson students from 4th and 5th grade, all of whom are girls between the age of 10 and 11. After 4 years of learning English formally at school, they have an overall beginner level of English that according to the Common European Framework of Reference corresponds to A1. In addition to this, the participants have been taking individual online English classes with the researcher once a week for an average time of 8 months. The participants took part in the study voluntarily, and their parents agreed to allow their children to participate by signing a consent. Since this group of EFL learners is accessible to the researcher and is both readily available and willing to participate, it can be classified as a purposive sample since the researcher had 10 students available for the research, however, only 4 of them were selected under the criteria of age and level of English. According to Maxwell (1996), in purposive samples, the participants are strategically selected since they are the particular group that can provide useful information that cannot otherwise be collected with the participation of people with different characteristics.

3.3. Stages of the study

The intervention plan developed in this study comprised 7 45-minute online sessions that took place twice a week via Google Meet. The main topic was “Minibeasts”. During each of the sessions, the participants worked in Baamboozle during the post-stage part of the lesson. During the last session, students answered a Likert scale questionnaire through a Google Doc document and participated in a focus group, these activities were carried out in Spanish. Table 1 displays the activities that were carried out in each session.

Session	Activity
1	In the game, there are 12 upside-down cards with a number, and students must choose one of them each time is their team’s turn. After that, the flashcards show statements such as “Name three minibeasts that have six legs” or “Name three minibeasts that have antennas”. Also, there are questions like “Which insect has antennas, six legs, and two wings?”. Each card is 15 points, and they include bonuses that give them points randomly.
2	Students work with the Baamboozle activity in which they look at a picture of an insect, say their name in English, and describe their characteristics using the information previously reviewed. They need to name at least 3 characteristics and they can discuss among them who is going to say each of them. The activity includes 15 points per card and extra bonuses which gives them points randomly.
3	Students work with Bamboozle to ask and answer yes-no questions about the insects’ characteristics. To do so, they choose a number that shows two pictures of insects; therefore, they have to ask each other questions about their characteristics (i.e., Do you have wings? Yes, I do). Each card is worth 20 points and there are bonuses that give them points randomly.

4	Students work in pairs with the Baamboozle activity. In the game, there are 14 upside-down cards with a number, and they must choose one of them. The cards contain all the questions they had previously answered on a live worksheet about the life-cycle of a butterfly, and some opinion questions such as “What do you think is the most important stage in a butterfly metamorphosis?” and “Why do you think this happens?”. Each question is 15 points except for the opinion questions which are 20 points. There are bonuses that give them points randomly.
5	Students work in pairs with the Baamboozle activity in which each flashcard shows a set of minibeasts from which one of them must choose one without saying their name. The other person must ask yes-no questions to guess which minibeast is their classmate thinking of. They must ask at least three questions about the minibeast’s characteristics. The ones who guess correctly, get the points, and the ones who do not guess the minibeast, do not get the points. Each question is 20 points and there are bonuses to give them points randomly.
6	Students work with the Baamboozle activity in which each flashcard has two pictures of different minibeasts, and they must create a short conversation “role-playing” the insect. Some possible answers are: A: Hello, I am a butterfly. B: Hello, I am a ladybug. A: do you have six legs? B: Yes, I have! Do you have wings? A: Yes, I have! Students have two minutes per flashcard to think about what they would like to say, and they have the possibility to ask questions to the teacher in case they have any. Each question is 20 points, and they get them all if they have at least 3 interactions.
7	Likert scale and focus group

Table 1. Action plan

Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 show how the Baamboozle activities are designed. First, there is a screen with numbers from which students must choose only one every time it’s their team’s turn (figure 1). On every “card”, there is one question related to the topic of the lesson. Therefore, after students choose the number, the question is shown (figure 2).

Figure 1. Baamboozle display

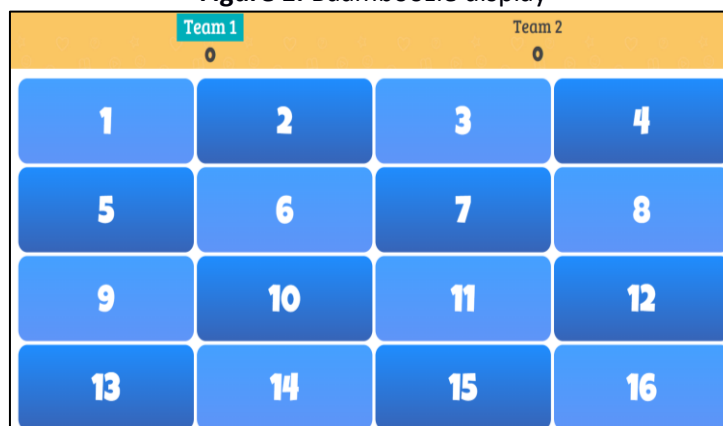
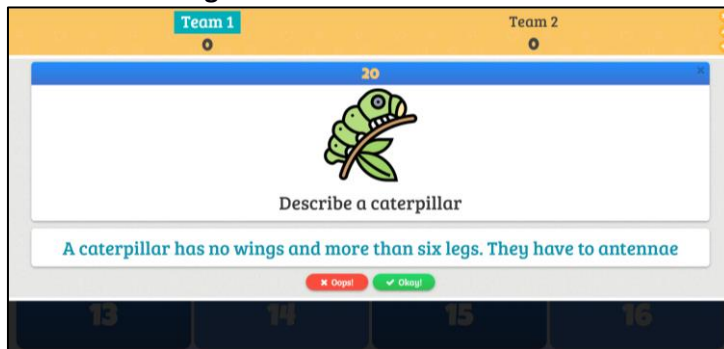


Figure 2. Bamboozle question



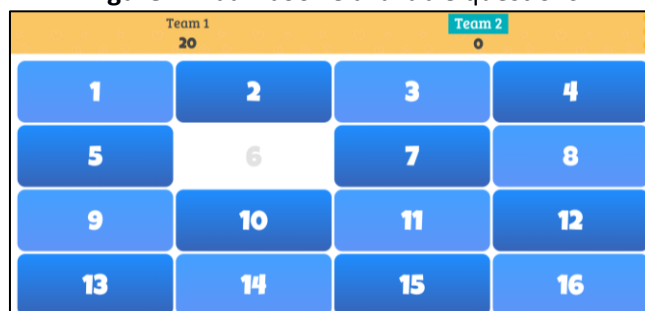
Once students answer the question, the teacher clicks on “Check”. Then, the teacher can either choose “Oops!” Or “Okay!” depending on the student’s answer (figure 3).

Figure 3. Bamboozle feedback



If the answer is correct, the team wins the points. If the answer is not correct, the number of the question appears with an ‘x’ on the screen. After that finishes, it is time for the following team to play, repeating the same process.

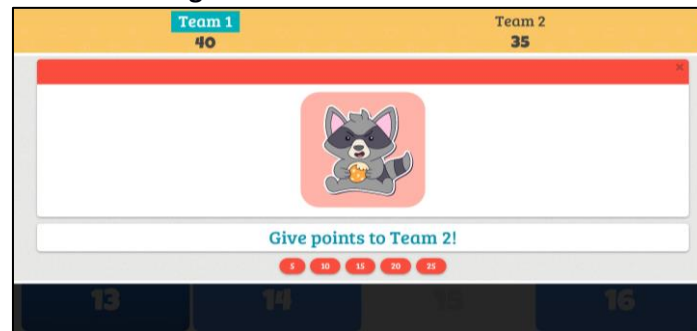
Figure 4. Bamboozle available questions



In some situations, “bonus” cards will show statements such as “give 20 points to team 1” or “take 15 points from team 2”. The picture

below shows a bonus card that allows the team can choose the number of points they will give to the other team.

Figure 5. Baamboozle's bonuses



3.4. Data collection tools and procedures

The data collection methods to be used during this action research consists of both quantitative and qualitative techniques that include observation, a Likert scale, and a focus-group interview. First, considering observation, Cowie (2009) explains that it can be defined as an intentional detailed analysis of the participant's behavior in a particular real-life context, that, in applied linguistics is basically any environment in which the language is being studied. In addition to the former, Gold (1958) indicates that there are four roles to classifying observers depending on the purposes of their research. The first one is the complete participant, the second is the participant as an observer, the third is the observer as a participant, and the fourth is the complete observer which can also be described as a non-participant observation. In this study, the researcher can be classified as a complete participant since the researcher will be carrying out the interventions as the teacher.

4. Findings and Discussion

The results analysis is organized into two sections, EFL learners' willingness to communicate in English during the interventions and learners' perceptions regarding Baamboozle.

4.1. Results on EFL learners' willingness to communicate in English when working with Baamboozle during the interventions.

In order to examine the participant's willingness to communicate both observation and notetaking processes were developed throughout the Baamboozle activity in each of the interventions and the findings were summarized through a thematic analysis (see Table 2). Three main themes and three sub-themes arose for each. The first one is *the use of L1*, and the sub-themes are *not trying, using "Spanglish"* and *asking for*

permission to use L1. The second one is *mistakes*, and the sub-themes are *communication over making mistakes, quick responses, and getting distracted*. Lastly, *Teamwork* was the last theme, and the sub-themes are *help a partner from their team, help a partner from the other team, and motivate a partner*.

Table 2. Thematic analysis of the note-taking process throughout the interventions.

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency	Examples
Use of the L1	Not trying English at first.	7	"Participant 2 said the answer in Spanish without trying English first." "Participant 1 answered a question in Spanish and did not correct herself afterward."
	Using "Spanglish"	16	"Participant 3 used <i>Spanglish</i> to answer a question from the activity." "Participant 2 asked to use <i>Spanglish</i> to answer a question from the activity."
	Ask for permission to use L1	5	"Participant 4 asked for permission to use L1 twice during the activity." "Participant 1 asked for permission to answer in Spanish because she forgot the words in English."
Mistakes	Communication over making mistakes	4	"Participant 1 did her best to formulate a sentence that was understood instead of taking much attention to the grammatical mistakes." "Participant 4 answered a question without paying much attention to the pronunciation of a particular word."
	Quick responses	9	"Participant 3 answered the question too fast that she realized her mistakes seconds later." "Participant 4 answered the question too fast, and the teacher had to repeat the sentence for her to notice the mistake."
	Getting distracted	6	"Student 2 was distracted and made a mistake answering a question a classmate asked her." "Student 4 was distracted and made a mistake answering a question the teacher asked her."
Teamwork	Help a partner from their team	8	"Participant 3 helped her team partner to formulate the answer for the question." "Participant 1 helped her partner to understand what the question was asking."
	Help a partner from the other team.	4	"Participant 2 helped her classmate from another team to understand what the question was asking." "Participant 1 helped Participant 3, who was from another team, to understand what the question was asking."
	Motivate a partner	6	"Participant 3 told her team partner that the activity was 'easy-peasy', and they were going to win." "Participant 2 told her team partner that she knew the answer, but she had to think deeper about it."

Regarding the notes taken during the interventions it is possible to say that first, the use of L1 was a significant aspect to consider during the activity. Participants used their mother tongue without trying English

first on several occasions and for a variety of reasons. In most cases, they felt the need to communicate a message in Spanish since they were not proficient enough to express themselves as they wanted to. However, as can be seen in Table 2, participants' most frequent response regarding L1 was using "Spanglish" rather than just Spanish. For instance, two participants answered the same question in Spanglish since they did not know the exact vocabulary they wanted to use. Second, participants demonstrated that they paid more attention to the message they wanted to communicate rather than using accurate grammar and vocabulary. The former was mainly provoked due to how quickly they answered the questions. Table 2 shows that in some situations participants were not aware of their mistakes and the teacher or their partner had to help them think about what they said afterward. Finally, participants demonstrated that they enjoyed working as a team since they helped each other during every intervention, most frequently, helping a partner from the same team.

4.2. Results on EFL learners' perceptions regarding Baamboozle when speaking English after the intervention.

To analyze the EFL learners' perceptions of Baamboozle when speaking in English, two instruments were carried out. First, the participants answered a Likert scale in their mother tongue, and their responses were analyzed based on frequency. In Figure 6 is possible to see that, first, all the participants strongly agreed that playing Baamboozle motivated them to participate in talking in English (statement 1), and they all felt safe while talking and playing the game (statement 6). Second, most of the participants agreed on that playing Baamboozle helped them to talk more in English (statement 2) and to feel more involved during the class. Third, all the participants disagreed that the answers they were supposed to respond to during the game were difficult. Lastly, half of them preferred to play games like Baamboozle instead of other types of activities that involve talking in English, and the other half did not know.

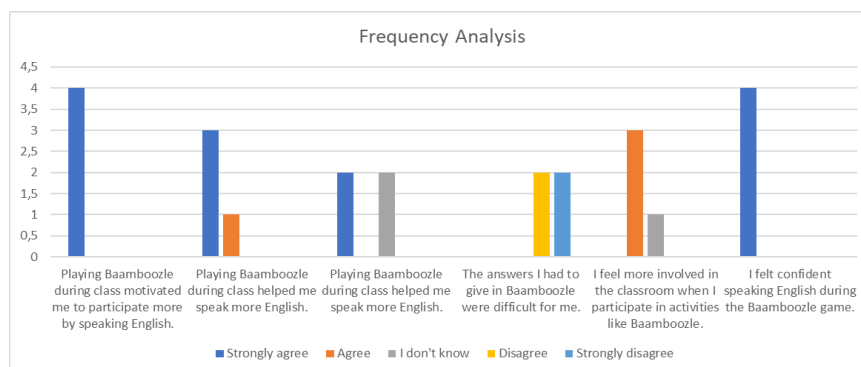


Figure 6. Likert-scale frequency analysis

To deepen the data from the Likert scale, a follow-up focus-group interview in their L1 was carried out, and their comments on the topic were summarized through thematic analysis, as it is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Thematic analysis of the participants' responses during the focus-group interview

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency	Examples
Willingness to communicate	Motivated to communicate something.	4	"I wanted to speak in English. The truth is that with several things because I liked to speak in English". "Yeah, I was really looking forward to answering the questions too."
	Feeling comfortable	3	"I was very motivated because like...I saw how they talked, and we went over what we were saying before we said it." "To me, because I also know that we were all trying and everyone made some mistakes, but we were still trying."
Enjoyment	More enjoyable than other activities	4	"... It's like going to school, only more fun, because in the game they give you some clues, they don't just ask us to say something in English." " The Baamboozle I liked the best was the Jamboard because we didn't speak everything in English there."
	The dynamic of the game.	4	"I believe that when ... I was talking to the ..., a conversation between ... two insects in the game." "I had more fun, for example when we were talking in the game, and I would say I have 10 antennas, and the ... would say yes and then realized it was wrong."
Class setting	Pair work	4	"I liked playing in pairs more because that way we were 2 teams, otherwise we would have been only 1." "I liked playing in pairs because we talked more."
	Teamwork	2	"I think it would be better in groups at school, because here there just are a few of us". "I think that I wouldn't like to work in groups... I would have to talk less and well; I like to talk."

Considering this information, it is possible to say that the participants felt motivated because of different reasons when participating in the Baamboozle activity. An important aspect to highlight is that they felt comfortable making mistakes since they knew all of them were in a learning environment, therefore making mistakes was part of trying to communicate a message in English. In addition to this, all four of them stated that they preferred the Baamboozle activity since they could talk in English while in other types of activities, they were not 'forced' to do it. Finally, all of them also indicated that playing in pairs was the best option since they were only four people taking the class, and playing in this way allowed them to participate more.

5. Conclusion

Data collected shows that integrating games like Baamboozle into the productive part of the lesson can influence students' willingness to communicate positively. In addition, the usage of their L1 became a more self-controlled problem since they were aware that the game was developed only in English. Considering this, students would ask for permission to use Spanish or would try 'Spanglish'

During the implementation of this action research, it was possible to identify the different perspectives learners may have regarding the activities they enjoyed doing while practicing the language. This can be addressed not only by considering the instruments to collect the data but also by the simple fact of being involved in the interventions. Considering this, it was evident how excited students were before starting the activity since, in some cases, they asked when we were going to start the game because they wanted to both play and practice what they were learning. They also stated that they preferred playing games such as Baamboozle instead of games in which they had to draw and guess since in such activities they did not speak much English.

There is no doubt that integrating games into the EFL lesson is nothing new, yet there is still a long path to study how to integrate ICTs into the online private lesson world to practice speaking. As we have been fully teaching online since the pandemic started in early 2020, we needed to conduct research to find strategies to engage students to produce the language. From the beginning, we knew that games could be helpful, yet finding the proper game that could promote speaking rather than any other skill was the most difficult part. There are plenty of platforms teachers can use to make traditional activities more attractive and engaging, except that most of those platforms are not principally focused on speaking, and this is the reason why we decided to work with Baamboozle.

We recommend using this platform not only to teach English but also to teach any other subject which requires oral production. Furthermore, we would recommend implementing it in small groups, therefore, every individual in each of the teams can have the opportunity to talk and answer at least a couple of questions.

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