ANALYZING THE IMPACT OF GAME-BASED TEACHING ON STUDENT'S ENGAGEMENT DURINGAN EFL CLASS

ANÁLISIS DEL IMPACTO DE LA ENSEÑANZA BASADA EN JUEGOS ENEL COMPROMISO DE LOS ESTUDIANTES EN LA CLASE DE INGLÉS

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Abstract

This paper reports an ongoing project developed within the Faculty of Education at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. This research was aimed to describe and analyze the impact that game-based teaching produced on students' engagement and participation in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class. Participants are 8th-grade students from a private institution in Bogota, Colombia. The information was gathered by different means of inquiry such as literature research, teacher's surveys, researcher's observations, and field notes. Likewise, the analysis was performed employing the principles of axial codification, a rigorous examination was done to set categories and recurrent patternsfor axial codification. The first phase of this research was focused on identifying the learner's participation patterns before following the game-based model. Later on to examine how learners perceived and adapted to game-based instruction. Consequently, its impact on pupils' engagement throughout the EFL class. Therefore, an analysis was conducted to explore insights of what literature had identified as participation patterns, student engagement, game-based teaching, online teaching, and inclusion. Initial findings disclosed that eighth-graders felt more comfortable when learning through the game-based model in theonline setting which contributed to a growth in participation and engagement in the EFL class.

Keywords: Engagement, Participation, Game-Based Teaching, Online Learning, Inclusion.

Resumen

Este artículo reporta un proyecto en curso desarrollado dentro de la Facultad de Educación de la Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo describir y analizar el impacto que la enseñanza basada en juegos produce en el compromiso y la participación de los estudiantes en una clase de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL). Los participantes son estudiantes de octavo grado de una institución privada en Bogotá, Colombia. La información se recopiló mediante diferentes medios de investigación, como el estudio de antecedentes, las encuestas a los maestros, las observaciones de los investigadores y las notas de campo. Asimismo, el análisis se realizó empleando los principios de codificación axial, se realizó un examen riguroso para establecercategorías y patrones recurrentes para la codificación axial. La primera fase de esta investigación se centró en identificar los patrones de participación de los estudiantes antes deaplicar el modelo basado en juegos. Más adelante para examinar cómo los alumnos percibieron y se adaptaron a la instrucción basada en juegos. Por consiguiente, su impacto en la participación de los alumnos en la clase de inglés como lengua extranjera. Por lo tanto, se realizó un análisis para explorar las percepciones de lo que la literatura había identificado como patrones de participación, participación de los estudiantes, enseñanza basada en juegos, enseñanza en línea e inclusión. Los hallazgos iniciales revelaron que los estudiantes de octavo grado se sentían más cómodos al aprender a través del modelo basado en juegos en el entorno en línea, lo que contribuyó a un crecimiento en la participación y el compromiso en la clase de inglés como lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: Aprendizaje en línea, Enseñanza basada en juegos, Inclusión, Compromiso, Participación.

Introduction

This pedagogical article aims to discover how eighth graders' engagement of a private school in Bogota can be impacted by the use of game-based learning, identifying participation factors, and how by understanding it could start being more aware of their attention to the class and how this generates motivation because of their virtual classes. It seems important to know the definition of gamification that was firstly used by Nick Pelling (2002), demarcated gamification as game principles for education, motivation design, and engagement design; this operates by the assumption of the engagement kind that players experience with games that can be translated into an educational context, towards the goals offacilitating learning and influencing student participation.

In a traditional learning environment, a students' motivation to learn effectively can be hindered due to manifold reasons. However, as Kiesler, S., Kraut, R. E., Koedinger, K. R.,Aleven, V., & Mclaren, mentioned in their article (2011), with the successful application of suitable gamification techniques, the delivery of the information can transform a simple or mundane task into an addictive learning process for the students. The use of different didactics could take an important role in the future dynamics of virtual education, leaving us even more out of the traditional education in which it had focused without taking into accountthe use of the tools that globalization gives us.

Given the low participation of students expressed by the teacher of the English area ofthe institution, the question arose of "What is the impact of game-based teaching towards students' engagement in an EFL class of eighth-graders at a private institution in Bogota?" The answer to this could help future pre-service teachers to increase the engagement of theirstudents, to reach a response the study had as a general objective to analyze the influence ofgame-based teaching on students' engagement in an EFL class.

Methodology

In the following categories it will be funded a detailed description of the main question that is the subject of the research, and the objectives for the intervention of secondary practicums in a private institution for eighth-grade students in the EFL class:

Research Question:

What is the impact of game-based teaching on students' engagement in an EFL class of eighth-graders at a private institution in Bogota?

General Objective:

To analyze the influence of game-based teaching on students' engagement in an EFL class of eighth-graders at a private institution in Bogota.

Specific Objectives:

To identify participation patterns in eighth-graders of an EFL class at a private institution in Bogota.

To describe the participation patterns while implementing game-based teaching in eighth-graders at a private institution in Bogota.

To contrast the impact of game-based learning regarding the participation patterns of eighth-graders at a private institution in Bogota.

Type of study

Throughout the study, it was attempted to examine the students' engagement and participation gathering information about their reactions when using game-based learning.

Due to this fact, a qualitative research method was conducted. Following Christensen's (2014) idea that qualitative inquiry "creates descriptions about the reactions acquired in a specific context". It was the most suitable type of research since our goal as mentioned above was to collect responses and analyze them. Besides, there was little previous research about the relation between game-based learning and students' engagement so a qualitative study was

necessary to examine this phenomenon. Agreeing with Creswell (2011) who stated that: "the literature might yield little information about the phenomenon of study, and you need tolearn more from participants through exploration."

Following the idea, Creswell (2011) mentioned that the essential notion in qualitative research is a central phenomenon to be researched. In this paper, the central phenomenon is addressed as students' engagement and participation. Then again, Rossman & Rallis (2016) commented that the qualitative research had another feature which was the naturalistic one where researchers collected data in real-world contexts about the human responses of the participants. A feature that is present in our study as well as the background of our proposal isset in the virtual classroom. Under the conditions of the pandemic, the virtual environment is the modern real-world for educational research.

Regarding the research method, we established it as an action research project that according to Creswell (2011) "addresses a specific, practical issue and seeks to obtain solutions to a problem." This investigation looked forward to exploring the impact of a teaching methodology trying to solve the lack of engagement in a middle school grade. We addressed an issue and implemented a plan to acquire possible answers and explanations to aproblem. According to Bryant & Bates (2010) "When educators take an action research approach to their teaching, they are, on one level, rejecting the notion that there is a fixed andpredetermined outcome as well as one perfected way to teach that can be mastered through the use of a good textbook and scripted curriculum." We intended to look from different perspectives at the online teaching that has arisen recently. Expecting to find outcomes that encourage and reshape the prevailing conception of online teaching and learning in Colombia.

Participants and Setting.

The sample population to develop this project was 20 students (13 girls and 7 boys) from eighth grade in a public school located in Bogota, Colombia. Their ages ranged from 13 to 15 years old and whose mother tongue was Spanish. They were part of the EFL class taught by the two preservice teachers-researchers in their practicum experience. According tothe headteacher of eighth grade when answering a survey the students presented a lack of active

participation and engagement in class which led to low proficiency in the English class. For instance, Rocca (2010) cited by Aslan et al (2020) described participation as 'an active engagement process' consisting of preparation, contribution to discussions, group skills, communication skills, and attendance." All of the elements described beforehand were evidenced very little in English class as it was stated in the survey and the observation formats.

Data Collection Instruments

Regarding the data collection instruments and the strategies for information gathering the main source used was the multidisciplinary databases offered by the Digital Library from Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. There it is possible to find numerous databases of different journals, books, publications, magazines, articles, and academic publications in general. For the development of this project, the researchers used primarily three search engines such as Oxford University Press, Taylor & Francis Group an Informa Business, Sage Journals and Publications, and ProQuest. The limits established for each one differ as to the search engine changes. But there were some general requirements to follow such as year, access, field, specific terms and words, and subject. For instance, the year rangeshould go from 2015 to 2021. All of the research documents should have open full access.

They had to be focused on education. The terms used to search them switched according to the constructs or categories. For example, in participation, the words were different from game-based learning. Finally, most of the articles were related to the subject of EFL teaching and learning.

Another alternative source employed was Google Scholar. Only a few articles weretaken from this source. However, it is worth emphasizing this source as well due to his helpfulness concerning the gathering of literature review.

To continue with the elaboration of the project we extracted information from different academic literature. It was done independently by the two teacher-researchers who read each article. Highlighting its important aspects and relevant information that could be beneficial for the ongoing article. Executing this information gathering manually allowed us to centre and spot on what we considered were the key components for each construct like the

findings, definitions, cites, and conclusions in diverse articles.

The criteria used to reduce the number of options in each category were different. Tobegin, for participation we included articles resulting from the search of participation in EFLclass, refining the search with words like patterns, online teaching and learning, education, and classroom. For engagement, the filters were very similar and did not change too much. We added enhancement, education, EFL, ESL, teaching, and learning. Then, for game-based learning, the filters were game-based teaching and learning, ESL, EFL, gamification, and gaming. Finally, for inclusion the filters used were: inclusive classroom, online teaching, and learning, inclusion in class, EFL, and ESL. As it could have been noticed most of the filters used in the categories were very similar and have little to no difference at all.

Gurbuz (2017) defined a survey as "a questionnaire form which features questionsrelated to the research subject.". A survey was designed and applied as well during this project. Its objective was to identify the perception of the main teacher concerning the behavior of the eighth graders towards the English class. Creswell (2012) claimed that surveys are useful to "describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviours, or characteristics of thepopulation." As mentioned above, this method was used to characterize the attitudes and behaviours of a specific population which was what we did. Furthermore.

Additionally, we used observation journals which can have different roles according to Creswell (2012). In this space, we took part as participant observers who joined in the research and pedagogical activities. This allowed us to address the experiences from the inside having better opportunities to understand and analyze the issues that arise.

Categories of the study

Participation

The word participation refers to the fact of being involved in an activity or exercise in which you are interested. It is important to highlight the influence of this construct in the development of the current project as it is aiming to study among other things the participation patterns evidenced when students learn through game-based activities.

Moreover, participation takes a key role in the learning process of a foreign language. As it was stated by Brigui (2017) who referred to the importance of participation and motivation in the language learning process and how they are directly connected.

There are several and diverse factors that affect directly or indirectly the participation evidenced in class. Reyhan et al (2020) referred to these issues stating that " there are several socio-cultural, affective, cognitive and other factors affecting student participation that should be considered in creating an active learning environment." Consequently, participation should be regarded as an important aspect to study when addressing L2 teaching and learning points in order to understand what it can say about their processes and what are the challenges or opportunities for improvement in class.

One of the factors that may affect participation can be the lack of knowledge in the second language which causes students to be confused and distracted. That is why some teachers resolve to use translanguaging like in the study carried out by Kwihangana (2021) inRwanda in a pre-sessional English course at an urban technical college. The author identifiedthat some students in the course were not participating equally in discussion activities. Therefore, the instructor implemented translanguaging to improve their English language skills, class participation, and engagement. Although, students demonstrated discomfort with this pedagogy stating that they preferred an L2-only classroom. In the findings, it was manifested that this method led to an increase in the participation and engagement of studentsin a mixed ability group during collaborative learning activities regardless of their level of fluency.

When learners feel confused about what they are doing it might result in a lack of participation evidenced in the classroom. Some pupils need to understand the approach the teacher is going

to implement in order to adapt to it. For instance, Chen et al (2019) centre their attention on researching how ESL students' knowledge and awareness of collaborative writing impacted their patterns of interaction, participation, and learning throughout the writing practice. There were two groups, one group knew about the collaborative writing method and the other one didn't. Initially, the analyses demonstrated not only that the learnerswho comprehended collaborative writing evidenced more participation, interaction, and language learning. But also, it affected learning and participation during three different phases like planning, writing down, and revising. Therefore, possessing various levels of metacognitive knowledge about the methodology might directly affect the interaction and participation patterns.

Another factor that hinders participation especially during the lockdown and COVID-19 times is online teaching and learning which has brought many issues for both students and teachers. Haniya et al (2020) attempted to investigate in a field where there wasan existing research gap. It aimed at analyzing and understanding the dynamics of open online courses and how the students participated in them. Furthermore, they inspect what are the participation patterns in these online courses, what motivates students, and what are obstacles they find throughout the class. The results indicated that even with different patterns of participation all of the students presented resemblant motivations and barriers.

However, there was a difference in the way their participation was affected by those factors. For example, the lack of time was a considerable factor as it was the most common barrier that hindered students' engagement and participation. The gained insights in this research will work as groundwork to improve and establish more flexible and complete learning experiences in these environments.

Students' Engagement

Throughout this pandemic, with the appearance of Covid-19, most of the educational contexts have been online. When learning or teaching online there are various aspects to consider when students and teachers are in class. One of those aspects is student engagement that according to Ma et al (2015) cited by Luan et al (2020) "is concerned with the time and energy paid by the students in the process of online learning." However, most institutions and instructors do not think about it when preparing their lessons.

Cole, et al (2019) aimed to explore students' perceptions of online learning practices and the numerous variables that affect student involvement in online courses. It was established that learners' online engagement compared to face-to-face classroom layouts might be unclear and vague. When there is a lack of human interactions, it becomes arduous to predict student enhancement aptly. Teachers are susceptible to feel insecure and helpless, acting sometimes improperly to resolve these issues. However, there are certain course components over which tutors have the necessary influence to yield online active learning practices such as a learning climate that promotes peer interaction, collaboration, and feedback. Nourishing those elements in online lessons might result in helping learners to overcome several barriers addressed in the text like student uncertainty about social belonging in college, belonging to a minority, insecureness, social class, lack of engagement, among others.

Muir, et al. (2019) focused on examining the different levels of students' engagement in online learning over a whole semester. The participants of the study were recruited from an Australian University and the information was gathered through weekly feedback to demonstrate the variation of the engagement levels and the influence of internal and external factors. It helped the author to comprehend the factors that affect learners' engagement in online classes such as students' self-management of high workloads, teacher presence and relationship, and work-life balance. In addition, its impact on the educational outcomes and the importance of planning, designing, and being present as an instructor for successfully engaging the online student.

Most teachers had to look for new strategies to implement in their lessons with the arrival of online teaching. Educators had to stop condemning the use of technology in class. Instead,

they had to take advantage of it and promote fellowship among students to fill the gap of socialization and communication left with the virtual classes. For instance, in the article carried out by Huang et al (2018) they reported the effects of peer help in the learner'sengagement throughout an online technology course following how students looked for and provided support in an online environment. The analysis took place through a forum where researchers investigated students' engagement, their perceptions, and the connection betweenpeer help and pupils' achievement. The outcomes highlighted that scholars engaged lively in peer support even further past the class stipulations. Besides, considerable participation and interaction patterns implied that looking for support was positive and beneficial for a small group of students who provided less help to the others. These online tools should aim to encourage scholars to look for help among their classmates and investigate deep ways to do so.

Engagement is a key aspect because as Al-Bogami (2020) declared "The more the students actively focus and participate in class, the more likely they will be able to learn, retain information, and find school more enjoyable." Which will result in creating more friendly and learning-safe environments for both students and teachers. Consequently, studentengagement should be regarded as a key element when planning syllabus and lessons in online and face-to-face classes.

For example, the research conducted by Luan et al. (2020) highlighted the important role of behavioural engagement suggesting that student engagement calls for more appreciation from EFL teachers and researchers. It could be done by different means such as targeted intervention strategies being incorporated into the course design reinforcing student'spositive behavioural engagement providing significant and stimulating activities and strategies along with feedback and attention from the teacher.

Game-based teaching

Among the strategies and schemes used recently for educators in online learning, there is game-based teaching. It might work efficiently if it is used in the correct context and in the right way. For instance, Chiang (2020) studied the student's perception towards game-based learning in English as a foreign language class (EFL), specifically the use of Kahoot. Throughout the analysis, the learners demonstrated positive and negative opinions regarding the application of Kahoot in EFL classes. Besides, most of the students agreed that Kahoot! made the English class interesting. Pupils claimed it allowed them to learn easily, increasing their motivation and participation during class.

Game-based learning is addressed in this article to encourage participation and engagement. However, it also has a positive impact on language learning. Franciosi (2016) described the effects learning with computer games had on Japanese university students in their English as a Foreign Language proficiency. It demonstrated significant improvement on vocabulary exams. But, the researchers wanted to test if the language used had improved as well. To do so they studied two cases. First, a group of students learned words in the game-based lesson and Quizlet, and the other group only in Quizlet. Both groups had to use that specific vocabulary in a writing activity. Secondly, an analysis compared the participation in the game-based activities and the use of learned vocabulary in writing exercises. The findings showed that computer game-based teaching improves language use in writing and they can be effective when used towards meaning-focused activities in EFL.

Gamlo, (2019) studied the consequences of game-based teaching applications in a beginner's course of EFL. The article focused especially on their motivation, perception, and attitudes towards language learning. The findings demonstrated that the use of game-based activities had a positive impact on the motivation and participation of the students when learning English. Additionally, students felt the three apps were profitable and useful for EFL learning and engagement. However, the author stated that it was external motivation as they had to complete the course to continue their major in the University.

As exposed by Gamlo (2019) above, the study of Almusharrafa (2021) also decided to research

the impact of game-based approach with question games like Kahoot into English literature lessons. Besides, it aimed to analyze the learner's attitudes about this approach, language learning, and whether the students' engagement had increased or not. Amid the analysis, it was clear that Kahoot had improved and boosted students' learning, motivation, and participation. The findings concluded that promoting competitiveness inside the classroom turns out in less interference and encourages exceptional learning processes.

Inclusion

The use of virtual resources might be very helpful and is a big advantage of the online teaching process when discussing inclusion in education. Andujar et al (2020) identified the impact flipped learning had on 39 students' learning including 6 students with physical and cognitive disabilities. During the development of the course, the material was designed taking into consideration the inclusive components. For instance, all the videos included subtitles, text, and sign language aimed at a big variety of students. As the classes were developed with the flipped approach the learners watched the videos before the lessons. The in-class time was spent clarifying the doubts of students. The results proved how beneficial flipped learning might be for students' needs and abilities. Furthermore, some considerations were mentioned such as the importance of teacher feedback and guidance for students who hadn't understood or had questions concerning the topic.

Teachers' beliefs and attitudes play an important role regarding inclusive education. Boitumelo et al (2020) explored inclusion inside the classroom in Botswana, an African country located in the south of the continent. Most teachers have little knowledge of SEN education and they are not aware of what it involves. However, a majority of them had contrasting experiences with inclusive education which affected their position about inclusionpositively and negatively depending on their background.

For Russak (2016) in her article, she surveyed 109 elementary school teachers to explore their attitudes and procedures about inclusive classrooms in EFL lessons. Followingthe guidelines of the Israeli government, SEN students should be included in standard classrooms with assistance from special education teachers. Nevertheless, it is not always done as it should due to the lack of preparation in many institutions and teachers. The results demonstrated that even though most of the SEN students are included inside regular classrooms most of the educators are not well prepared to assist these students. Additionally, most of the participants agreed that SEN learners should study in settings adequate for them with accurate material and not in standard classrooms.

Discussion

Participation

As pre-service teachers, we observed the participation patterns of students in the normal virtual context in which the EFL class was developed, in which at first it was evident how the participation of students was low, therefore the search was made for different ways of boosting their engagement in the class, thanks to this through game-based learning it was evident how students being in a context of competition without being pressured by a score, felt more comfortable to participate. Cantador and Conde (2010) analyzed the effects of competition in education and they identified the benefits and drawbacks of forcing students to compete themselves during their learning process and investigated various features a competitive learning activity should have to motivate students and improve their academic performance.

Although at the beginning of classes the students were more reluctant to participate, they began to feel more motivated not only to participate but to turn on their cameras, which showed how participation patterns were increasing. In addition to the above and, focusing on turning on the cameras and microphones, we realized that when explaining the theme of the class and wanting students to give examples the cameras and microphones were replaced by the use of the Meet platform; but at the moment of the games, students kept their cameras and microphones on to participate instead of typing through chat.

In addition, it should highlight what Rapp (2017) mentioned in his article "gamification is more and more used by researchers and designers to drive users' behaviours toward specific directions", it has been evidenced not only in the study just mentioned, but in many others the use of games to change people's behaviour and the classes object of our study was no exception, having a rewarding result evidenced in the increased participation of students.

To conclude the results of this category, it is important to continue researching how to influence the participation of students using tools that globalization can provide us as it advances, and it will be gratifying to see results on it and implement them.

Students' Engagement

The pandemic has changed our way of life for more than a year since the discovery of the virus that has made us all transform our daily lives. From the way we teach the students context to how we motivate them, these changes have become visible. As a result, school, work, and our home became the same place and we found ourselves in the need to face it, becoming a huge challenge for all the roles that a school represents in addition to the academic.

Looking for ways to increase the engagement of students regarding the English class we find that Ghaban and Hendley (2019) highlighted in their study that "Gamification plays an important role in enhancing learners' motivation and engagement." As an important focus, motivation is a great point to take into account if we want to show a change in the attitude of students in a positive way, thereby committing to participate and to learn in the class as they will see a purpose of using the topics taught.

Finally, Lunn, Lubensky, Hunt, Flentje, Capriotti, Sooksaman, Harnett, Currie, Neal and Obedin-Maliver in their study where they identify " *(...)* tactics to maintain participant engagement *(...)* in a digital-only experience is critical to longitudinal studies.", one of the strategies they used to increase engagement was the use of games, but in addition, it was evident that the motivation of women was greater than that of men. By the factor mentioned in the previous article, we also found how girls had a greater class engagement, this was evidenced in their participation and by turning on cameras and microphones.

Game-based Learning

In essence, most of the studies about game-based learning were more positive, Sailer, Hense, Mayr, and Madl (2017), demonstrate that it was because of the motivational power that it contains. The use of games in different contexts develops the need for competence and autonomy, those aspects that take place in the creation of our personalities as human beings that are pillars for the development of participation, enhancement, and engagement in a classroom.

In addition to the above, the fact of generating spaces in which confidence at the moment of the class and also in the use of the English language is a basis for the development of the communication in the classes. Highlighting what Al-Murtadha (2020) mentioned "In light of the importance of L2 linguistic self-confidence for EFL learners, the need to find ways to increase it seems necessary.". His research and our classes showed how depending on the activities, the learners' participation and engagement increased because we focused the activities on how to motivate students to use the English language.

As a result of the methodology we use in class, it increased students' confidence in taking the initiative to participate, since most times it was not necessary to call each child but they asked for the word to answer the games.

Inclusion

The main result was evidenced in how the participation and motivation of the inclusion student increased, making her strive to understand the theme to be able to participate in the games. Same as the results of the study of Bohl, Hung, Tabamo, Sandhu, Vajihollahi (2017), they said that "The results of the education intervention included three themes: *(...)* (b) healthy competitions among staff created fun learning experiences; (c) collective learning inspired commitment to actions." for planning the classes, the limitationsof the students who participate in the class were taken into account, that the activities do notgenerate a lack of understanding on the part of the students of inclusion, nor become tediousand notorious for the other students.

On the other hand, some of the biggest problems encountered in the aspects of inclusion are mentioned by Fox, Pearce, Massanari, Riles, Szulc, Ranjit, Trevisan, Soriano, Vitak, Arora, Ahn, Alper, Gambino, Gonzalez, Lynch, Williamson (2021) and Gonzales in their research " (...) openness while insufficiently addressing essential ethical principles: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Some recommended open science practices increase the potential for harm for marginalized participants, communities, and researchers."(P. 1), knowing these ethics-based issues to handle in these cases should be made more inclusion studies in Colombia that could be an important basis for future studies in the area. Limitations found in this study were the lack of information which makes it difficult to generalize the conclusions settled. This is a topic that can be used for future research to deepen more in the understanding of the impact of game-based interventions when learning and teaching in an online environment.

Results

The main findings for the results demonstrated that the students' participation was affected by different factors such as nervousness, distraction, internet disconnection, lack of understanding, among others. They all experienced different issues but there were similarities in most of them. Haniya et al (2020) supported in their article that even with different patterns

of participation all of the students presented resemblant motivations and barriers. For instance, in this paper, the lack of participation was evidenced in the observations at some points in each lesson. It was present in 80% of the observation journals. Which confirmed that with online learning these barriers vary and teachers have to be aware to address the problems causing it. Through a process of coding, some barriers were identified such as the necessity of using L1 to clear aspects of the class and promote participation. This category was found in 80% of the cases. This is supported by Kwihangana (2021) where the implementation of translanguaging improved the participants' English language skills, class participation, and engagement. Therefore, it can be considered as a reliable strategy to promote participation.

Other issues that arose were lack of participation and anxiety hindering participation. They were found in 40% of the cases. It was a more difficult aspect to identify for the teacher-researchers as it is not easily evidenced in online environments. Reyhan et al (2020) understand that anxiety and fear of making mistakes is an inherent part of learning EFL and they promote and encourage improvement in the language. Regarding connectivity problems teachers have to be patient and understand it is out of the hands of the students. However, it can be used as an excuse sometimes. Paying attention to the repetition of these behaviors is key to deal with it as a barrier or as an excuse.

Concerning students' engagement, there is a big resemblance between participation and the factors that affect both of them. The lack of engagement was present most of the time in different ways so it was possible to discriminate it individually. However, there was a reduction in the implementation of game-based learning which will be addressed afterward. For instance, little participation was considered as an agent of lack of engagement. It was present 80% of the time in the observation journals. Disconnection cases were present in 40% of the journals. It was not identified whether it was used as an excuse or if it really happened. That is why it is included here in case they were excuses leading to lack of engagement. Lack of attention was also mentioned in the observation journals and can be included in the

participation category. However, it was addressed differently. It was present in 40% of the cases as well. Different factors act as barriers to engagement and educators have to try to create safe environments taking into account the contingency situation the world is going through. Internal and external situations have an impact on both students and teachers and empathy rises as a key-value to overcome these challenges.

Cole, et al. (2019) commented on what was mentioned above that when there is a lackof human interactions, it becomes arduous to predict student enhancement aptly. However, there are certain course components over which tutors have the necessary influence to yield online active learning practices such as a learning climate that promotes peer interaction, collaboration, and feedback.

Muir, et al. (2019) also supported these results as in their article they demonstrated thevariation of the engagement levels and the influence of internal and external factors. It helpedthe author to comprehend the factors that affect learners' engagement in online classes such as students' self-management of high workloads, teacher presence and relationship, and work-life balance.

Game-based learning worked as a suitable strategy for online EFL teaching and learning with eighth-graders who seemed to be disconnected emotionally and mentally from the English class. Through the coding process, it was evidenced its positive impact in subcategories like active participation when using games, class management online when using game-based learning, or motivation through games that were noted 100% in the observation journals. Even though Ebadi et al (2021) in their study showed the negative part of the game-based approach regardless of its positive characteristics. Some of the reasons they presented were internet connectivity issues, the high pace of the game, stress caused by its competitiveness, and the lack of feedback subsequent to the game. In our article students reacted positively towards the game-based approach and felt motivated to compete. However, it is true that internet connectivity issues are a significant factor and might influence negatively.

Yükseltürk et al (2018) support the use of the gaming approach. In their findings, there was a positive impact on students' motivation, attitude, and language learning compared to the average scores of the same students after the implementation of gamification. It concludes that game-based approaches should be applied in EFL courses to improve languageproficiency.

In this research, there was an inclusive component for one of the students in the classroom with Mild Cognitive Impairment. So taking into consideration that the lessons with the game-based approach aimed to be inclusive promoting speaking and participation for every student. It was a significant aspect if we consider the lack of material development forinclusive classrooms. As Carrillo (2020) explained in his book, inclusion in education faces many challenges such as education for everyone. Educators should receive accurate training under the guidance of qualified professionals to enforce the existing policies concerned with inclusion. In his research it was evidenced the major flaws in planning, implementing, adapting, interest, and coverage of inclusive policies in public schools located in Bogotá, Colombia. These aspects became even more noticeable in the online teaching and the lack of interest for inclusion in this environment.

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