

Rural Children's Perceptions of Pedagogical Games for Learning English Grammar

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Abstract

This research examines how young learners in a rural bilingual extracurricular program in Colombia perceive the use of games for learning English grammar. In rural contexts characterized by limited instructional hours, scarce resources, and restricted exposure to English outside school, grammar instruction often generates anxiety and low engagement among learners. These conditions highlight the need to explore learners' emotional and cognitive experiences with alternative instructional strategies. Accordingly, the study addressed the following research question: *What do young EFL learners' reflections reveal about their perceptions of using games to learn English grammar in a rural bilingual program?*

Using a qualitative grounded theory approach, data were collected from six nine-year-old learners through semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, and focus group discussions. Data analysis through open, axial, and selective coding generated three core categories: *Games as Contextual Grammar Practice Tools*, *Games as Motivational and Emotional Support Tools*, and *Games as Participatory and Interactive Pedagogical Strategies*. The findings indicate that learners perceived games not as peripheral classroom activities, but as central learning spaces in which grammar became meaningful, emotionally safe, and socially shared.

The emergent theory suggests that game-based tasks provide contextualized opportunities for grammatical practice, reduce anxiety, and foster collaborative participation. These insights offer pedagogical implications for rural EFL programs by emphasizing the importance of aligning game mechanics with linguistic objectives and promoting supportive, interactive learning environments.

Keywords: game-based learning, English grammar, learner perception, young EFL learners, rural education, grounded theory.

Resumen

Esta investigación examina cómo los niños de un programa bilingüe extracurricular rural en Colombia perciben el uso de juegos para el aprendizaje de la gramática del inglés. En los contextos rurales, caracterizados por horas limitadas de instrucción, escasez de recursos y una exposición restringida al inglés fuera del entorno escolar, la enseñanza de la gramática suele generar ansiedad y bajos niveles de participación en los estudiantes. Estas condiciones evidencian la necesidad de explorar las experiencias emocionales y cognitivas de los aprendices frente a estrategias pedagógicas alternativas. En este sentido, el estudio planteó la siguiente pregunta de investigación: *¿Qué revelan las reflexiones de jóvenes aprendices de inglés como lengua extranjera acerca de sus percepciones sobre el uso de juegos para aprender gramática en un programa bilingüe rural?*

Mediante un enfoque cualitativo basado en la teoría fundamentada, se recopilaron datos de seis estudiantes de nueve años a través de entrevistas semiestructuradas, diarios reflexivos y discusiones en grupos focales. El análisis de los datos, realizado mediante codificación abierta, axial y selectiva, permitió identificar tres categorías centrales: *los juegos como herramientas contextuales para la práctica gramatical; los juegos como herramientas de apoyo motivacional y emocional; y los juegos como estrategias pedagógicas participativas e interactivas*. Los resultados muestran que los estudiantes no percibieron los juegos como actividades periféricas,

sino como espacios centrales de aprendizaje donde la gramática adquiriría significado, seguridad emocional y sentido social compartido.

La teoría emergente sugiere que las tareas basadas en juegos ofrecen oportunidades contextualizadas para la práctica gramatical, reducen la ansiedad y fomentan la participación colaborativa. Estos hallazgos aportan orientaciones pedagógicas relevantes para los programas de inglés en contextos rurales, al destacar la importancia de alinear la mecánica del juego con los objetivos lingüísticos y de promover entornos de aprendizaje interactivos y de apoyo.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje basado en juegos, gramática del inglés, percepción del aprendiz, jóvenes aprendices de EFL, educación rural, teoría fundamentada.

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Contextualization

The integration of engaging and context-sensitive strategies has become a central concern in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, particularly for young learners in rural settings. In these contexts, traditional teaching approaches often fail to address students' interests, needs, and socio-cultural realities. As a result, recent pedagogical efforts emphasize the importance of methodologies that increase participation, motivation, and meaningful learning by responding to learners' backgrounds and the conditions of their learning environments. One strategy that has gained considerable attention is game-based learning (GBL), recognized for its motivational benefits and ability to support language development through interactive experiences. Games such as role-playing activities, vocabulary puzzles, digital storytelling, and board games have been used successfully to teach grammar, encourage collaboration, and reduce language anxiety.

Recent studies highlight the value of context-responsive and interactive approaches, especially in environments where access to authentic English input is limited (Borg, 2018; Pinner & Sampson, 2020). Strategies that incorporate games, problem-solving tasks, and group activities have proven effective in fostering motivation, engagement, and retention among young EFL learners in rural and low-resource settings (DeHaan, 2020; Kangas, Koskinen, & Krokfors, 2017; Nguyen & Nation, 2022). Within this perspective, GBL emerges as a promising tool for grammar instruction, transforming learning into an active, participatory experience. By creating playful yet structured opportunities for communication, GBL helps learners connect linguistic forms to meaningful use while developing confidence and reducing anxiety (Bai, Hew, & Huang, 2022; Tsai et al., 2020).

This section presents the context of the present study by outlining international trends related to GBL in EFL instruction, followed by an examination of the Colombian context and the specific characteristics of the rural bilingual program where the research was conducted. Internationally, interest in GBL has increased as educators seek to align their practices with constructivist and socio-cultural theories that emphasize collaboration, participation, and learner autonomy (Gee, 2021; Plass et al., 2015). Research conducted in Asia, Europe, and Latin America indicates that game-based approaches can enhance linguistic accuracy, motivation, and social interaction when compared to traditional grammar-centered methods (Tsai et al., 2020; Bai et al., 2022). Large-scale initiatives in countries such as Finland and South Korea illustrate how GBL can promote communicative competence when games are purposefully integrated into curricular objectives (Kangas et al., 2017; Kim & Lee, 2020). These studies also emphasize that the effectiveness of GBL depends on adapting games to learners' proficiency levels, cultural contexts, and available resources (Reinders & Wattana, 2015), a factor that is particularly relevant in rural educational settings.

The Colombian educational system has increasingly prioritized bilingual education through initiatives aimed at strengthening English instruction in public schools. The *Colombia Bilingüe* program (MEN, 2016) positioned bilingualism as a national strategy to improve educational quality and expand academic and professional opportunities. However, rural schools continue to face significant challenges, including limited instructional hours, insufficient teaching materials, and a shortage of qualified English teachers (Sánchez-Jabba, 2018). Likewise, Bonilla and Tejada-Sánchez (2021) argue that although bilingual education policies aim to reach all regions, their implementation remains uneven, and rural

institutions frequently struggle to meet program expectations due to persistent infrastructural and pedagogical gaps.

Within this broader national landscape, the present study takes place in El Rosal, a rural area in the department of Cundinamarca, Colombia. The Local Bilingual Group established in this region seeks to increase learners' exposure to English through extracurricular classes, compensating for the one or two hours of weekly instruction typically offered in regular schools. While students in El Rosal are informally exposed to English through online games, YouTube, and social media, this exposure primarily supports vocabulary recognition and does not provide systematic opportunities for grammatical development. As a result, the extracurricular program represents a key space for guided learning and targeted grammar instruction.

Despite national efforts to promote bilingual education, rural contexts such as El Rosal continue to face structural and pedagogical limitations that significantly affect English language learning. Limited instructional time, scarce teaching materials, and restricted access to sustained teacher training constrain the implementation of communicative and learner-centered methodologies. Additionally, learners' exposure to English outside the classroom is often irregular and unsystematic, reinforcing a fragmented understanding of grammar as a set of isolated rules rather than as a resource for meaningful communication. These conditions frequently lead to teacher-centered practices that prioritize repetition and form-focused instruction, reducing student engagement, and limiting opportunities for interaction. Consequently, grammar instruction in rural EFL settings remains a pedagogical challenge,

underscoring the need to explore alternative strategies that are both context-sensitive and motivating within low-resource environments.

The participants in this study are six learners aged 9 to 10 who attend this bilingual extracurricular program. They are classified as beginners in English and frequently experience difficulties when learning grammatical structures. However, their participation and motivation increase noticeably when activities are dynamic, collaborative, and game-based. This observation aligns with pedagogical frameworks suggesting that young learners benefit from contextualized and interactive tasks that promote social interaction and meaningful language use (Pujolàs & Lago, 2020; Kangas et al., 2017). In particular, the introduction of games appears to support the acquisition of foundational grammar topics such as the verb *to be*, possessive adjectives, and *Wh-* questions.

Although previous research has established the benefits of GBL for linguistic development and classroom atmosphere (Nguyen & Nation, 2022; DeHaan, 2020), there is still limited evidence regarding how learners themselves perceive these strategies, particularly in rural and low-exposure contexts. Understanding students' perspectives is essential, as learners play an active role in shaping the effectiveness of instructional practices. Their perceptions provide valuable insights into the motivational, social, and cognitive factors that influence learning outcomes.

Therefore, this study examines how young learners in a rural bilingual program perceive the use of games in English grammar instruction. Through focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and reflective journals, the research aims to explore how game-based strategies contribute to more inclusive, meaningful, and effective EFL practices in rural Colombia.

In summary, this section describes the educational and sociolinguistic context in which the study takes place, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities for pedagogical innovation in rural EFL contexts. By situating the research within the rural setting of El Rosal and within broader discussions on game-based learning in EFL instruction, the stage justifies the need to explore alternative strategies for grammar teaching. It also emphasizes the importance of student agency, acknowledging that learners' motivations, expectations, and lived experiences shape the outcomes of instructional interventions. This contextualization provides a coherent foundation for defining the research problem, establishing the objectives, and selecting an appropriate methodological design, while underscoring the relevance of the study for the community involved.

Research Statement

In recent years, game-based learning (GBL) has gained prominence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education as part of a broader shift toward learner-centered and interactive pedagogies. Research consistently highlights its potential to increase motivation, reduce anxiety, and support deeper engagement with language learning, particularly among young learners (Plass et al., 2015; Bai et al., 2022). Within this framework, grammar instruction—which is often perceived as abstract or disconnected from students' interests—can become more accessible and meaningful when games are incorporated into classroom activities. Through playful, structured tasks, learners have opportunities to interact with grammar in communicative, contextualized ways that strengthen understanding and participation (Huang & Chen, 2022).

Despite these documented benefits, **a significant gap persists in the literature** regarding learners' own perceptions of game-based grammar learning, especially in rural or low-exposure educational contexts. Much of the existing research focuses on the effectiveness of GBL for improving achievement or motivation (Bai et al., 2022; Tsai et al., 2020), but far fewer studies investigate how young learners interpret, evaluate, and emotionally respond to grammar games (Aubrey & Shintani, 2021; Ramírez & Muñoz, 2023). This gap is even more pronounced in rural environments, where most GBL research has been conducted in urban or technologically supported settings. As a result, the needs, constraints, and voices of learners in under-resourced contexts remain largely unexplored (Bonilla & Tejada-Sánchez, 2021; González-Moncada, 2020). Understanding how learners perceive these strategies is crucial, since their agency and affective engagement directly influence the success of any instructional approach.

The **Colombian educational context** further underscores the relevance of this inquiry. National bilingualism initiatives such as Colombia Bilingüe (MEN, 2016) highlight the importance of strengthening English instruction to improve educational quality and competitiveness. However, rural schools often face persistent challenges, including limited instructional hours, scarce teaching resources, and minimal exposure to authentic English environments. Consequently, grammar instruction often becomes isolated from students' lived experiences, leading to low retention and reduced motivation. Learners may struggle to see the connection between grammar and meaningful communication, reinforcing the perception that grammar is mechanical or irrelevant. GBL—by embedding grammar within collaborative, age-appropriate tasks—offers a promising approach to bridge this gap and re-engage learners.

Within this national landscape, the present study is situated in **El Rosal**, a rural municipality in Cundinamarca, Colombia. Here, a bilingual extracurricular program was created to expand children's exposure to English beyond the one or two instructional hours typically available in public schools. The six participants in this study—learners aged 9 to 10—demonstrate beginner-level proficiency and frequently report difficulties understanding grammatical structures. At the same time, they show greater enjoyment and engagement when learning grammar through games. Their experiences were documented through reflective journals, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions, offering rich insights into how GBL functions in a rural context with limited language exposure.

These conditions reveal a central issue: **there is limited empirical evidence on how rural young learners reflect on and respond to grammar instruction delivered through games**, even though GBL is widely recognized for its pedagogical potential. Understanding

learners' perceptions is not only academically relevant but socially meaningful, as it highlights the voices of a population often marginalized by educational inequalities. This study therefore contributes to a more equitable and context-sensitive understanding of GBL by foregrounding learners' experiences in a setting where innovation is both challenging and necessary.

In theoretical terms, the study aligns with contemporary pedagogical perspectives that emphasize learner agency, motivation, and reflective participation (Yilmaz, 2021). From a practical standpoint, insights generated from learners' reflections can guide teachers in refining instructional strategies that better respond to students' interests, affective needs, and learning challenges. In rural programs where traditional instruction often falls short, understanding these perspectives becomes essential for designing meaningful and sustainable pedagogical interventions.

In sum, this research is justified on **social, practical, disciplinary, and theoretical** grounds. It addresses a critical gap in the literature, contributes to improving EFL teaching practices in underserved rural communities, and reinforces educational approaches that value learners' voices as central to the instructional process. The discussion above provides the foundation for the research question and objectives presented in the following section.

Research Question

What do young EFL learners' reflections reveal about their perceptions of using games to learn English grammar in a rural bilingual program?

General objective

To explore young EFL learners' reflections on the use of games to learn English grammar in a rural bilingual program.

Specific Objectives

1. To identify the key themes that emerge from young EFL learners' reflections on using games to learn English grammar in a rural bilingual program.
2. To examine how game-based learning influences motivation, participation, and confidence among young EFL learners in a rural bilingual program.
3. To generate pedagogical insights based on learners' experiences with game-based grammar instruction in a rural bilingual program.

Literature Review

This literature review presents an integrated analysis of the theories and empirical studies that inform the research question: What do young EFL learners' reflections reveal about their perceptions of using games to learn English grammar in a rural bilingual program? The section is organized around three central concepts—Game-Based Learning (GBL), Learner Reflections, and Rural EFL Education—which together establish the theoretical foundation of the study and support the research objectives. By examining these concepts, this part of the research study outlines the pedagogical relevance of game-based approaches, the importance of incorporating learners' voices into instructional evaluation, and the specific conditions that characterize rural English learning environments in Colombia.

Game-Based Learning (GBL)

Game-Based Learning (GBL) refers to the use of digital or non-digital games as instructional tools designed to increase motivation, engagement, and enjoyment in learning. In this approach, game elements such as rules, goals, challenge, feedback, and collaboration are intentionally incorporated into educational activities so that learners engage with content in meaningful and interactive ways (Plass et al., 2015). GBL has been shown to be especially effective for young learners, who often respond positively to learning environments that promote creativity, movement, and social interaction. Games reduce anxiety and stimulate active participation, which in turn fosters more positive attitudes toward language learning (Huang & Chen, 2022). Grammar learning, which can be perceived as abstract or disconnected from real communication, becomes more accessible when integrated into playful and contextualized tasks. Games allow learners to experiment with new structures, make mistakes without fear, and

collaborate with their peers, supporting not only linguistic development but also socio-affective skills such as confidence, teamwork, and communication.

Research also highlights the pedagogical value of GBL for language learning more broadly. Nguyen and Nation's (2022) systematic review of 45 studies on game-based vocabulary instruction showed that games are most effective when clearly aligned with learning objectives, when they offer opportunities for collaboration, and when they provide immediate feedback. Although their review focused on vocabulary, these principles are closely related to the needs of grammar instruction, where repetition, contextual practice, and meaningful use are essential for developing form-function connections. The reviewed studies therefore strengthen the justification for using GBL in this thesis project by demonstrating that games can enhance motivation, support repeated exposure to target forms, and promote contextualized language practice even in settings where instructional resources are limited.

GBL can be implemented through various formats such as board games, card games, digital tools, and role-play. Its educational value lies in its ability to create low-stress environments, scaffold language input, and provide immediate feedback, all of which are essential for effective second language acquisition (DeHaan, 2020). Because games can be adapted to learners' proficiency levels and sociocultural contexts, they are particularly suitable for rural or underserved classrooms that may lack consistent access to commercial educational materials. Bai, Hew, and Huang's (2022) meta-analysis of 51 studies confirmed the effectiveness of GBL for improving learning achievement and motivation across disciplines and age groups, emphasizing that success depends on the alignment between game mechanics and instructional goals. This insight is relevant for grammar learning among young rural EFL learners, who may

require additional scaffolding to remain motivated and engaged. For similar reasons, Tsai et al.'s (2020) exploration of problem-based learning, game-based learning, and flipped classrooms showed increased satisfaction and performance, particularly among learners with initially low motivation. Although their study was conducted at the university level, the implications resonate with rural young learners who may struggle with traditional grammar instruction.

Distinguishing Game-Based Learning and Gamification

Although the terms Game-Based Learning (GBL) and gamification are sometimes used interchangeably, research indicates that they refer to distinct pedagogical approaches. Understanding this distinction is essential for situating the present study. GBL involves the use of complete games as learning activities. The game itself serves as the medium through which educational content is presented, and learners engage with language through gameplay mechanisms such as rules, narratives, and challenges. According to Camacho-Sánchez, Rillo-Albert, and Lavega-Burgués (2022), GBL draws on constructivist and experiential learning theories in which learners acquire knowledge by doing, reflecting, and interacting. Educational content is integrated directly into the game mechanics, promoting exploration, decision-making, and meaningful practice.

By contrast, gamification refers to the addition of game-like elements—such as badges, points, levels, and leaderboards—to traditional instructional tasks. As described by Hashim, Low, and Tan (2019), gamification seeks to enhance motivation through reward systems without altering the learning activity itself. It is more closely aligned with behaviorist principles, where motivation is driven by external reinforcement. Research by Opreș, Bálint-Svella, and Zsoldos-Marchiș (2021) highlights that while both GBL and gamification can increase motivation, GBL

supports deeper learning because the gameplay is cognitively integrated with instructional goals rather than focusing on extrinsic rewards. Systematic reviews such as García-Lázaro et al. (2023) reinforce this distinction by demonstrating that GBL leads to stronger long-term retention, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

Empirical evidence further supports GBL's relevance to grammar instruction. Studies by Camacho-Sánchez et al. (2022) and Hashim et al. (2019) emphasize that full games promote intrinsic motivation and provide contextualized, repeated practice, which are essential for learning grammar. Opriş et al. (2021) showed that GBL helps reduce learners' fear of errors and encourages authentic language use, while García-Lázaro et al. (2023) found that GBL is particularly effective for young learners because of its immersive, playful nature. In the context of this thesis, the instructional intervention involved the use of complete educational games—not reward-based elements—meaning that the study is firmly grounded in the principles of Game-Based Learning rather than gamification. This distinction is reflected in the research question and objectives, all of which focus on learner reflections regarding the use of games, not external reward systems.

Learner Reflections

Learner reflections involve metacognitive awareness and insight into one's own learning processes, strategies, and challenges. This reflective dimension promotes autonomy, motivation, and self-regulation because learners consider what they learned, how they learned it, and how they felt throughout the experience (Brookfield, 2017). In this study, reflections gathered through interviews, study group discussions, and learning journals provide an essential source of data for understanding learners' perceptions of grammar instruction through games. Reflection also

allows learners to connect new knowledge with prior experiences, articulate their emotional responses, and evaluate their progress. For young EFL learners, expressing these reflections supports language development by encouraging more complex thinking and meaningful communication. At the same time, learner reflections inform teachers' pedagogical decisions, offering insight into the suitability and effectiveness of instructional strategies (Yilmaz, 2021).

Aubrey and Shintani (2021) demonstrated that reflective practices improved high school students' speaking performance by encouraging them to evaluate their own progress and collaborate through peer feedback. Although this study involved older learners, the findings illustrate how reflective practice strengthens confidence and supports metacognitive growth. Similarly, Ramírez and Muñoz (2023) found that primary students in Chile developed deeper awareness of their grammar challenges through reflective storytelling activities, showing that even young learners can engage meaningfully with reflection when supported by appropriate scaffolding. Yilmaz (2021) also reported that regular reflective activities improved motivation, focus, and accountability among university students in flipped classrooms. Together, these studies demonstrate that reflection is a powerful tool across age groups, enabling learners to articulate their understanding and difficulties. In the rural bilingual program examined in this thesis, students were similarly able to express their preferences, identify specific grammar challenges, and describe their enjoyment when learning through games.

Rural EFL Education in Colombia

Rural EFL education refers to the teaching and learning of English in contexts where access to resources, teacher training, and authentic language input is limited. In Colombia, rural schools often face structural inequalities that result in fragmented instructional experiences,

limited digital access, and shortages of qualified English teachers (MEN, 2016; Bonilla & Tejada-Sánchez, 2021). Learners commonly encounter English only during brief weekly lessons and rarely use the language outside the classroom, which restricts opportunities for natural acquisition and meaningful communication (Usma, 2019; Cely, 2019; Dearden, 2021). These conditions affect not only language outcomes but also students' perceptions of English, which may be viewed as disconnected from their daily lives or too difficult to master (González-Moncada, 2020).

In response to these challenges, innovative methodologies such as GBL and cooperative learning have been identified as effective tools for supporting language development in rural classrooms. Gillies (2016) emphasized that structured collaboration can compensate for limited teacher input and resource constraints by fostering peer support, problem-solving, and communicative interaction. Gamified and game-based approaches also provide meaningful learning opportunities by turning traditional teacher-centered lessons into interactive and engaging activities that simulate authentic language use (Rodríguez & Paredes, 2021; Rahman, Ali, & Arifin, 2023). Huang and Chen's (2022) findings on mobile-assisted GBL further suggest that playful, interactive designs improve grammar accuracy and engagement, even though rural contexts may require low-tech adaptations due to limited connectivity.

Rojas-Sosa and Torres (2024) showed that playful methodologies in rural bilingual schools in southern Colombia promoted inclusion, participation, and spontaneous language use. Simple, low-tech games such as grammar puzzles and sentence-construction challenges increased learners' motivation and reduced affective barriers related to grammar learning. Their study demonstrates that game-based and gamified strategies can bridge the gap between

classroom content and learners' sociocultural realities, offering equitable pathways to meaningful English learning in rural environments.

Across the themes of Game-Based Learning, Learner Reflections, and Rural EFL Education, the literature reveals a strong convergence around the value of playful, reflective, and context-sensitive approaches to grammar instruction. Studies consistently show that GBL enhances motivation, participation, and linguistic accuracy by engaging learners cognitively and emotionally (Su & Cheng, 2019; Bai, Hew, & Huang, 2022). At the same time, learner reflections deepen the learning process by fostering metacognitive awareness and helping students evaluate their progress (Aubrey & Shintani, 2021; Ramírez & Muñoz, 2023). These benefits become even more significant in rural settings, where limited exposure and resource constraints challenge traditional approaches to English instruction. In such environments, playful and collaborative methodologies are essential tools for promoting equitable and meaningful language learning (Bonilla & Tejada-Sánchez, 2021; Rojas-Sosa & Torres, 2024).

Despite substantial evidence supporting GBL, few studies have examined how young rural learners themselves perceive and reflect on these instructional strategies, particularly in the domain of grammar learning. This gap highlights the relevance of the present research, which centers learners' voices to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences with game-based grammar instruction in a rural bilingual program. By examining learner reflections, this thesis contributes to a more holistic understanding of how motivation, emotion, and context interact in the learning of English grammar, particularly in underserved communities where innovative pedagogical approaches are most needed.

Methodology

This part of the research project outlines the methodology employed in this study, which aims to explore the reflections of young EFL learners regarding the use of games in grammar learning within a rural bilingual education context. It provides a detailed account of the type of research, the instruments used for data collection, the context and participants, ethical considerations, and the implementation of the pedagogical intervention. The methodological decisions presented here were made in alignment with the research objectives and are intended to ensure validity, coherence, and transparency throughout the study.

Type of Research

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in interpretivism, which emphasizes understanding participants' subjective experiences within their social and cultural contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interpretivism assumes that knowledge is socially constructed rather than objectively measured, and therefore prioritizes the meanings individuals assign to their experiences. As Denzin and Lincoln (2018) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain, interpretivist inquiry seeks to uncover how participants make sense of their world through dialogue, reflection, and interaction. This perspective is particularly appropriate for the present study, in which young EFL learners' voices, emotions, and perceptions are central to understanding how game-based grammar activities shape their engagement and learning.

From this viewpoint, reality is understood as multiple and context-dependent, shaped both by participants' perspectives and the researcher's interpretive lens (Schwandt, 2015). The interpretivist stance allows for an in-depth exploration of how rural children perceive and reflect on grammar instruction through games, acknowledging that their insights are deeply influenced

by their linguistic, cultural, and educational realities. The qualitative tradition of constructivist inquiry further supports this approach, positioning the researcher as a co-creator of meaning who works collaboratively with participants to develop rich descriptions and nuanced interpretations (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2018).

This methodological orientation is complemented by a case study design, which facilitates an in-depth investigation of a bounded system—in this case, a rural bilingual extracurricular program where game-based grammar activities were implemented (Yin, 2018). Case study research is well suited for exploring a specific group, setting, or phenomenon in its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the environment are not clearly defined. In this study, the case refers to a small group of children participating in weekly English lessons in a rural setting. The aim is not to generalize findings to a broader population but to provide a detailed, contextually grounded understanding of how these learners experienced the pedagogical intervention.

Instruments

Reflective learning journals, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions were used to capture learners' evolving perceptions, emotions, and understandings throughout the pedagogical intervention. Each instrument was selected for its suitability for young participants and its ability to elicit authentic insights into their learning experiences.

Reflective learning journals

Reflective learning journals served as an essential qualitative tool, allowing students to express their learning experiences in an authentic and natural manner. The journals encouraged

learners to articulate what they learned, how they felt about the grammar activities, and what challenges they encountered. Reflective writing promotes metacognition by prompting learners to monitor their own thinking and emotional responses (Moon, 2015; Farrell, 2021). For young learners, the journals were designed with guiding questions and visual prompts to make reflection accessible and age-appropriate. These journals were completed after each instructional session and provided descriptive evidence of shifts in attitudes, comprehension, and engagement over time. In this study, the journals offered valuable insights into children's perceptions of the gamified grammar activities and helped trace how their reflections evolved throughout the intervention.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews complemented the journals by providing deeper, individualized accounts of learners' experiences. This interview format offers a balance between guided inquiry and conversational flexibility, enabling the researcher to explore emergent themes while maintaining focus on the research objectives (Kallio et al., 2016). Because the study involved children, the language of the interview protocols was simplified, and prompts were incorporated to ensure comprehension and comfort. As Brinkmann (2022) notes, semi-structured interviews create a child-friendly environment that encourages open expression. In this study, interviews provided nuanced insights into each learner's perceptions, motivations, and feelings about learning grammar through games.

Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions were also conducted to explore shared experiences and collective reflections among the participants. Focus groups capitalize on the social dimension of

meaning-making, allowing learners to respond to and build on one another's ideas (Morgan & Hoffman, 2018). This method is particularly effective with young learners, who often feel more comfortable sharing ideas in peer-supported settings. Gibson (2020) argues that focus groups reveal how participants make sense of instructional experiences collectively rather than individually. In this study, the focus group discussion conducted in the final week of the intervention provided a rich account of common themes, contrasts in experience, and social dynamics related to the game-based activities.

Context and Participants

This research was conducted in a rural bilingual program located in El Rosal, Cundinamarca, Colombia. The program serves children from underserved communities and aims to provide early exposure to English through extracurricular classes. It operates in collaboration with local schools and community organizations, offering English lessons twice a week with an emphasis on communicative and contextualized learning.

The participant group consisted of six children between the ages of nine and ten, all of whom demonstrated beginner-level English proficiency and had limited prior exposure to formal English instruction. Their participation in the bilingual program was motivated primarily by parental encouragement and community interest, which aligns with studies that highlight the role of family support in rural language learning (Chou, 2022). The rural environment presented both challenges and opportunities: limited technological resources restricted access to digital tools, yet the small class size allowed for personalized attention and the development of a close learning community. Research on rural education emphasizes the importance of contextually adapted

methods in such settings, where teacher-student relationships and cultural relevance play central roles (Gándara & Orfield, 2021).

Participants were selected through convenience sampling, a technique commonly used in qualitative classroom-based research because it allows researchers to work with naturally occurring groups that are readily accessible and directly relevant to the study (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018). This sampling method was appropriate for the goals of the study, which aimed to examine the reflections of learners already enrolled in the bilingual program rather than to generalize findings to a broader population. A pre-diagnostic session was conducted to establish rapport, confirm learners' participation, and validate the appropriateness of the instruments. Throughout the intervention, the students' consistent attendance, enthusiasm, and active involvement contributed significantly to the effectiveness of the instructional sessions and the richness of the data collected.

Ethical Aspects in Educational Research

Ethical considerations were central to the research process, particularly because the study involved children. Informed consent was obtained from the parents or legal guardians of all participants, who were provided with a clear explanation of the research purpose, procedures, and confidentiality measures. Participation was voluntary, and parents were informed that they or their children could withdraw from the study at any point without consequence. To protect participants' identities, pseudonyms were used in all data records and final analyses, in accordance with established ethical guidelines for educational research (BERA, 2018).

The researcher also ensured that ethical protocols were communicated in child-friendly language so learners understood their role and felt comfortable with the reflective processes they

were invited to engage in. Mukherji and Albon (2022) emphasize that research involving minors must prioritize transparency, safety, and respect for children's perspectives. These principles guided the entire implementation of the study, from the design of data collection instruments to the handling and storage of student-generated reflections.

Description of Pedagogical Implementation

The pedagogical implementation was initially planned for one month but was extended by nearly two additional months due to the extracurricular nature of the classes and occasional scheduling disruptions. Despite these adjustments, sessions maintained a coherent structure and were conducted weekly to ensure consistency in instructional practice and data collection. Each session introduced a specific grammar topic through gamified instructional activities designed to increase engagement and participation. These activities incorporated playful mechanisms such as team collaboration, time challenges, points, and immediate feedback, which have been shown to enhance motivation and sustain learners' attention (Kim, Song, & Yoon, 2018; Dicheva et al., 2019). Examples included board races, matching-card games, and role-playing tasks that integrated verb tenses, prepositions, and sentence structure.

Although these activities involved game-like elements, they did not constitute full Game-Based Learning experiences. Rather, they represented a gamified approach in which traditional grammar exercises were enhanced through playful techniques intended to motivate learners and encourage active involvement (Kapp, 2017). This distinction is important because, while GBL relies on complete games as the core instructional medium, gamification modifies existing lessons by embedding game elements within them. In this study, gamification helped transform

grammar practice into a more interactive and enjoyable experience while remaining feasible within the constraints of the rural context.

The implementation was informed by constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes experiential, student-centered approaches in which learners construct meaning through active participation, experimentation, and reflection (Fosnot, 2013). The gamified grammar activities encouraged learners to test hypotheses, negotiate meaning with peers, and reflect on their successes and challenges, aligning with the interpretivist orientation of the study.

A pre-diagnostic session was conducted before the implementation to validate the functionality and appropriateness of the data collection instruments. This session familiarized students with the reflective journals and enabled the researcher to refine interview and focus group protocols to ensure they were developmentally appropriate. These adjustments enhanced the reliability of the instruments and ensured their suitability for the target age group. The procedures, sequencing of activities, and specific stages of data analysis will be described in detail in the following section.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The data for this study was obtained from six young EFL learners aged nine to ten who participated in a rural bilingual extracurricular program in El Rosal, Cundinamarca, Colombia. Because the participants were beginners in English and still developing literacy skills in their first language, all data collection instruments were administered in Spanish. This decision ensured accessibility, reduced affective barriers, and enabled students to express their reflections more freely and comprehensively, which aligns with current recommendations for research involving young learners in multilingual contexts (Cummins, 2021; García & Li Wei, 2021).

The selection and implementation of these instruments responded directly to the study's objectives, which focused on analyzing learners' reflections regarding the use of games for grammar learning, examining how these activities influenced motivation, participation, and confidence, and identifying pedagogical insights emerging from learners' experiences in the rural bilingual program.

Instruments used for collecting data

Three qualitative instruments were used systematically to collect data: focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and reflective learning journals. Each instrument contributed a distinct yet complementary perspective on learners' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to the game-based grammar activities, strengthening the triangulation of data and supporting the validity of the analytical process. Together, these instruments provided a rich and multidimensional understanding of how children interpreted the grammar games and how these activities shaped their engagement with English.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus Group Discussions were conducted weekly in a classroom setting. These discussions encouraged learners to interact and build upon each other's experiences with game-based grammar learning. Young learners often benefit from collaborative talk, where hearing peers verbalize their experiences can stimulate their own reflections (Morgan, 2020). A child-friendly protocol was used, including visual prompts, turn-taking cues, and a semi-structured script that allowed learners to discuss both cognitive and emotional aspects of the learning games. The format supported the emergence of group-level patterns, shared preferences, and challenges that might not arise in individual interviews. (See Anex 2, Focus Group discussions).

Semi-Structured Interviews (SI)

Semi-structured interviews complemented the focus groups by creating a space for individual expression and personal reflection. Each participant engaged in a weekly one-on-one interview guided by open-ended questions related to their feelings, perceived learning, and opinions about the games used to teach grammar. This format balanced structure with flexibility, allowing the researcher to follow emergent ideas while maintaining consistency across participants (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The individualized setting was particularly important for learners who tended to be more reserved or hesitant to express themselves in front of their peers. In these interviews, students were able to share thoughts, emotions, and difficulties without fear of judgment or comparison, which facilitated more honest and nuanced responses. The rapport established between the researcher and the participants, along with careful attention to verbal and non-verbal cues, contributed to a supportive environment that fostered trust and emotional comfort. These conditions are essential when working with young children, who often require

reassurance and encouragement to articulate their ideas clearly (King & Horrocks, 2022; Cameron, 2020). As a result, the interviews yielded rich insights into learners' experiences, particularly in relation to moments of challenge, enjoyment, or confusion during the grammar games.

Reflective Learning Journals (J)

Reflective learning journals provided an additional and developmentally appropriate space for learners to document their experiences after each session. The journals were designed with scaffolds such as guiding questions, drawings, and visual symbols to help students express their learning, emotions, and preferred activities. These tools encouraged simple written reflections, depictions of favorite moments, and the use of emojis or facial expressions to indicate emotions. As Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith (2023) highlight, reflective journaling can foster metacognitive awareness even among young learners by helping them monitor their understanding and emotional reactions to learning tasks. Over time, the journals revealed changes in learners' perceptions of grammar learning, providing valuable evidence of their evolving motivation, enjoyment, and linguistic awareness.

To analyze the data rigorously, a Grounded Theory approach was employed following the procedures proposed by Charmaz (2014) and Corbin and Strauss (2015). This methodological choice was appropriate for an exploratory study in which theoretical insights emerge directly from participants' lived experiences rather than from pre-established categories. The analysis followed the standard stages of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, which facilitated the identification of patterns, conceptual relationships, and core themes grounded in the data. Additionally, the constant comparative method supported systematic

comparison across instruments and time, allowing the researcher to identify both recurring patterns and unique learner perspectives. This analytical process ensured that the findings remained deeply connected to participants' voices while generating a coherent and theoretically informed account of their experiences with game-based grammar learning.

Analytical Approach: Grounded Theory

To ensure a systematic and rigorous interpretation of the qualitative data, this study employed Grounded Theory as the primary analytical framework. Grounded Theory is a qualitative methodology that privileges theory generation through iterative and inductive analysis, allowing conceptual patterns to emerge directly from participants' voices rather than from predetermined assumptions (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Tie et al., 2019). This approach is particularly suitable for inquiries that seek to understand learners' perceptions and experiences in depth, as it supports the construction of meaning grounded in authentic, context-sensitive reflections.

Open Coding

The analytical process followed the three interconnected coding stages characteristic of Grounded Theory. The first stage, open coding, involved a line-by-line examination of all data sources, including learning journals, interviews, and focus group transcriptions. In this initial phase, the researcher generated preliminary codes by labelling meaningful segments of data that reflected learners' ideas, emotions, or reactions to the grammar games. These codes remained close to participants' wording in order to preserve the depth and nuance of their reflections.

Expressions such as "it's easier to remember when we play" or "I felt nervous speaking English in front of others" were coded as indicators of motivation through play or language

anxiety, revealing early patterns related to engagement, affective responses, and cognitive processing (Nowell et al., 2017).

Axial Coding

During axial coding, the second stage, the researcher examined relationships among the open codes and grouped them into broader, more abstract categories. Codes referring to motivation, enjoyment, and active participation were integrated into the category “Increased Engagement through Games,” while those associated with nervousness, fear of mistakes, or reluctance to participate formed the category “Affective Barriers to Participation.” This stage deepened the analysis by identifying how learners’ emotional and behavioral responses were interconnected and by exploring how game-based practices contributed to these dynamics (Borgatti, 2022). Axial coding therefore served as a bridge between descriptive coding and more conceptual interpretation, enabling the emergence of patterns across participants and data sources.

Selective Coding

The final stage, selective coding, involved identifying the core categories that encapsulated the central phenomenon of the study: young learners’ perceptions of game-based grammar learning in a rural context. These core themes integrated insights from all instruments and participants, revealing how game-based strategies fostered increased motivation, participation, and confidence. Selective coding thus allowed the synthesis of diverse reflections into a coherent analytic narrative directly aligned with the research question and objectives (Charmaz, 2021).

Throughout the entire process, the constant comparative method was used to refine categories, verify relationships, and ensure that interpretations remained grounded in the data. Each new segment of data was compared with existing codes and categories, enabling ongoing refinement and supporting analytical depth. Memos and analytic notes were written consistently to document interpretive decisions, emerging insights, and potential theoretical connections. This iterative documentation strengthened the credibility and transparency of the analytical process and ensured alignment with Grounded Theory's emphasis on emergent meaning-making (Maher et al., 2018).

The use of Grounded Theory was particularly appropriate in the rural EFL context of this study. Its learner-centered orientation foregrounds students' voices, emphasizing their interpretations rather than teacher-driven assumptions. Its sensitivity to context also allowed the researcher to attend closely to the socio-cultural and educational conditions shaping learners' access to English and their emotional and cognitive responses to grammar instruction. Moreover, Grounded Theory accommodates diverse modes of expression, which is especially relevant when working with children and beginner-level learners who may communicate through drawings, simple statements, or non-linear narratives.

By employing Grounded Theory, this study ensured that the themes and patterns identified were genuinely emergent and reflective of participants' lived experiences. The approach also produced insights that are not only theoretically informed but also pedagogically meaningful for practitioners seeking to design more inclusive, engaging, and contextually responsive EFL instruction. Through the triangulated analysis of focus groups, interviews, and reflective journals, the coding process generated a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of

how young learners in a rural Colombian setting perceive, experience, and internalize game-based grammar instruction. In this way, Grounded Theory served both as an analytical tool and as a guiding framework for interpreting learners' reflections within a low-exposure educational environment.

Data Organization

To ensure analytical rigor and preserve the authenticity of participants' voices, all qualitative data were first transcribed in Spanish (L1), the learners' native language. This decision was aligned with current literature indicating that children are more likely to articulate nuanced reflections, emotions, and experiences in their mother tongue, even when participating in second language learning environments (Cummins, 2021; García & Li Wei, 2021). The use of L1 in transcription was particularly important in this study, as the participants—young EFL learners aged 9 to 10—were still in the early stages of English acquisition and required accessible means of self-expression.

Once transcribed, all data were systematically labeled using pseudonyms to ensure anonymity and facilitate comparative analysis. The six participants were assigned the following pseudonyms: Andrés, Thiago, Ángel, Charid, Alisson, and Danna. The data were then categorized according to the instrument used—Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Semi-Structured Interviews, and Reflective Learning Journals—and further organized by weekly collection period, from Week 1 to Week 4. This process created a structured data matrix that enabled the tracking of each learner's reflections across time and instruments, allowing for longitudinal observation of progress, recurring patterns, and evolving themes.

To prepare the data for analysis, each transcript was read multiple times to develop deep familiarity with the content. This iterative reading process allowed for the identification of initial patterns in the data, such as recurring vocabulary, repeated grammatical structures, and frequently expressed emotions. Following this, the data were segmented into meaning units—discrete sentences or short paragraphs in which participants conveyed ideas related to grammar learning, motivation, classroom participation, or emotional experiences during gameplay. Meaning units provided the foundation for open coding, which was conducted in the subsequent analytical phase.

To support a transparent and organized coding process, a digital coding spreadsheet was developed. This tool included the following columns:

- Participant
- Instrument and Week
- Excerpt
- Initial Code (assigned during open coding)
- Emerging Category (to be developed during axial coding)

This format enabled both vertical and horizontal tracking of codes, facilitating comparisons across participants and between weeks, and supporting later synthesis during category development.

A color-coding system was also introduced to enhance visual clarity and support triangulation during the coding process. The color scheme included:

- **Blue:** Statements related specifically to grammar learning outcomes (e.g., use of verbs, possessives, question formation).

- **Green:** Expressions of emotional engagement, including motivation, enjoyment, and comfort during game-based activities.
- **Yellow:** Comments indicating broader pedagogical insights, such as preferences for game types or metacognitive observations about learning effectiveness.

Visual coding, combined with the structured spreadsheet, allowed for efficient tracking of thematic patterns and strengthened the study's analytical depth. This method is supported by recent recommendations in qualitative education research that highlight the importance of transparency, traceability, and responsiveness to participant voice in child-centered studies (Saldaña, 2021; McAlpine, 2016).

Moreover, working with beginner-level learners in a rural EFL context required sensitivity to linguistic simplicity and emotional expression. Many reflections were conveyed through repetition of learned structures, emotionally charged language (e.g., “me gustó,” “fue difícil,” “no entendí”), or symbolic visuals. By considering these elements in the organizational phase, the analysis remained faithful to the cognitive and affective realities of young language learners.

Finally, this rigorous data organization process ensured that the analysis remained not only systematic but also ethically grounded. By respecting the voices and developmental stages of the learners, the study positioned children not merely as research subjects but as active informants whose experiences can directly inform teaching practices in rural EFL settings. The preparation of the data thus reflects a commitment to learner-centered research, one that aligns with both academic standards and practical goals for improving pedagogical strategies through insights derived from students lived experiences.

Specific Data Analysis Procedures

Once the data were thoroughly organized and color-coded, the analysis proceeded using Grounded Theory principles, as proposed by Charmaz (2014) and later developments by Corbin and Strauss (2015). This approach enabled an inductive process in which patterns and meanings emerged directly from participants' voices, aligning with the study's learner-centered objectives and the socio-educational realities of rural EFL education.

The analytical process followed three interrelated stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, each of which contributed to the construction of grounded categories that reflect the young learners' perceptions and experiences.

Open coding constituted the initial stage of the analytical process and involved a line-by-line examination of all transcripts and visual data, including journals and drawings derived from focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and reflective journals. This close reading allowed the researcher to identify discrete meaning units and recurring linguistic and emotional patterns within learners' reflections.

Particular attention was given to the keywords learners used to describe their learning experiences, the grammar structures they explicitly mentioned—such as *is*, *isn't*, *my*, and *What is...?*—and the emotional expressions associated with games and classroom interactions.

Following best practices in child-centered qualitative analysis (Saldaña, 2021; Punch & Oancea, 2014), codes remained grounded in the learners' original language to preserve authenticity and represent their intentions faithfully. Short descriptive codes were therefore assigned to each meaning unit, capturing both linguistic details and affective nuances. Examples include expressions such as “learning *isn't* in games,” “repeating phrases in songs,” “fear

reduction during games,” “liking to ask questions,” “using *an* with apple,” and “preferring stories with dolls.” These codes provided an initial map of patterns across the learners’ experiences and served as the foundation for further analytical refinement.

Table 1.

Examples of Initial Codes from Open Coding

Participant	Instrument & Week	Excerpt	Initial Code
Andrés	FGD – Week 1	“Yo dije ‘I am a student’ y aprendí ‘I am not a teacher’.”	Using affirmatives and negatives with “to be”
Thiago	Journal – Week 2	“Dije ‘It is an apple’. Aprendí que se dice ‘an’.”	Learning article “an” with noun
Danna	FGD – Week 4	“Yo dije ‘Where is she?’ y me gustó aprender así.”	Using “where” questions

Axial Coding

In the second phase, axial coding, the researcher grouped initial codes into conceptual categories by examining similarities across participants, instruments, and weeks. This allowed for the identification of recurring patterns, emerging subthemes, and thematic connections.

The grouping process followed recommendations by Saldaña (2021) and Flick (2018), emphasizing thematic saturation and coherence across data sets. Codes were grouped under broader thematic clusters that reflect both pedagogical and affective aspects of game-based grammar learning.

Emergent Conceptual Categories.

- **Grammar Practice in Context:** Learners demonstrated active use of “to be” forms, possessives, wh- questions, and articles during gameplay and storytelling.

- **Motivation and Emotional Comfort:** Many participants highlighted feelings of enjoyment, reduced fear of speaking, and positive associations with learning through games.
- **Active Participation:** Learners expressed a desire to engage, lead, and take initiative during activities, indicating a sense of ownership in the learning process.
- **Learning Preferences:** Comments suggested clear preferences for storytelling, music-based games, drawing activities, and physical movement, which contributed to their engagement.

Selective Coding and Core Category Formation

The final stage, selective coding, involved identifying central categories that captured the essence of the data and directly addressed the study's guiding research question:

What do young EFL learners' reflections in a study group reveal about their perceptions of using games to learn English grammar in a rural bilingual program?

Through constant comparison and triangulation across data sources (FGDs, interviews, and journals), three core categories were established. These represent overarching themes that emerged consistently across participants and instruments:

Table 2.

The Three Core Categories

Question	Category
What do young EFL learners' reflections reveal about their perceptions of using games to learn English grammar in a rural bilingual program?	Games as Contextual Grammar Practice Tools.
	Games as Motivational and Emotional Support Tools.
	Games as Participatory, Interactive Pedagogical Strategies.

After completing the coding and triangulation process, the analysis led to the identification of three core categories that encapsulate young learners' perceptions of game-based grammar instruction. Each category represents a distinct yet interconnected dimension of how participants experienced and interpreted grammar learning through games. The following sections present and discuss each category in detail, integrating illustrative extracts from focus group discussions, interviews, and learning journals. These excerpts were chosen for their representativeness and their capacity to reveal both the cognitive and affective aspects of learners' engagement with grammar-focused games.

Category 1 Games as Contextual Grammar Practice Tools

The analysis of interviews, reflective journals, and focus group discussions showed that the six nine-year-old learners did not conceptualize grammar as decontextualized rules or isolated workbook exercises. Instead, they understood and described grammar as something used inside the games—to guess, to correct each other, and to complete gameplay objectives. Through the grounded-theory procedures of open, axial, and selective coding, initial codes such as *“repeating sentences in the game,” “friends correcting me,” “looking at the picture to remember the sentence,”* and *“learning words while playing”* were compared and grouped. These comparisons led to a higher-level category in which games emerged as contextual grammar practice tools. Within these game-based activities, target structures—including contractions, possessive adjectives, and wh- questions—were used repeatedly in meaningful interaction rather than in mechanical drills. This category therefore provides an analytical explanation of how young rural EFL learners practice and internalize grammar in context through gameplay.

Noticing, Repetition, and Self-Correction in Context

One illustrative example comes from a focus group discussion in Week 2, where Charid described how she corrected herself during a guessing game with pictures. Her reflection in Spanish was:

“Yo dije ‘She isn’t a boy’ y lo repetí varias veces en el juego porque al principio lo dije mal. Después mis compañeros me corrigieron y lo volví a decir bien. Luego me di cuenta de que ya no me equivocaba porque en el juego lo usamos muchas veces y pues era chévere y divertido.”

English translation:

“I said ‘She isn’t a boy’ and I repeated it many times in the game because at the beginning I said it wrong. Then my classmates corrected me and I said it again but right. Later I noticed that I was not making the mistake anymore because in the game we used it many times and it was cool and fun.”

This excerpt shows a clear progression from an initial error (“at the beginning I said it wrong”) to successful use (“later I noticed that I was not making the mistake anymore”) within a meaningful communicative situation. The repeated use of *isn’t* occurred naturally as part of the game’s rules, not as an imposed drill. The student repeated the structure because it was necessary to continue playing and achieve a goal. Such contextual repetition aligns with research on grammar learning that emphasizes the importance of form–meaning–use integration, where learners adjust forms more effectively when grammar is embedded in real communicative activity (Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murcia, 2016; Yılmaz, 2018; Yang, 2020).

In this case, *isn't* was not treated as an abstract rule; it was a functional resource for describing pictures. The learner's spontaneous noticing ("I noticed that I was not making the mistake anymore") illustrates how games create opportunities for natural, purposeful repetition that supports internalization of grammatical structures.

Peer Mediation and Sociocultural Support for Grammar Awareness

Another key example comes from Thiago's reflective journal. He wrote:

"Le pregunté a Danna 'Who is he?' y ella me respondió 'He is my friend'. Yo aprendí 'my' y 'his' así."

English translation:

"I asked Danna 'Who is he?' and she answered 'He is my friend.' I learned 'my' and 'his' like that."

Here, grammar awareness is tightly connected to social interaction. Thiago associates the possessive adjectives *my* and *his* with a specific exchange during the game, where the rules required him to ask questions and pay close attention to the answers. Grammar thus becomes part of a real-time communicative sequence, not an abstract rule to memorize.

From a sociocultural perspective, the classmate's answer functions as a mediating model within a meaningful activity. The learner internalizes forms through interaction that takes place inside the game, consistent with theories of mediated learning and the Zone of Proximal Development (Lantolf, Poehner, & Thorne, 2020). At the same time, interactionist perspectives help explain how the communicative demands of the game ("Who is he?" → "He is my friend") require both comprehensible input and pushed output, which together create fertile conditions for

grammatical development (Long, 2015; Jackson, 2022). This example reflects how peer exchanges during gameplay act as scaffolding for noticing and producing target structures.

Contextual Cues and Limited Exposure in a Rural Setting

Beyond individual excerpts, constant comparison across interviews, journals, and focus group data revealed that learners frequently relied on pictures, movements, and short story elements within the games to remember and use grammatical structures. Children described looking at cards, observing classmates' movements, or recalling a brief narrative from the game to produce sentences. These contextual cues were essential in a rural setting where learners have extremely limited exposure to English outside the classroom.

Research on contextualized grammar and game-based tasks suggests that visual and situational cues support learners' ability to connect grammatical forms to concrete referents, which facilitates recall and meaningful use (Ahmad, 2020; Yilmaz, 2018; Yang, 2020). In this study, such cues helped learners situate forms like *is*, *isn't*, *my*, *his*, or *Wh- questions* within recognizable mini-worlds created by games. For rural learners, these mini-worlds represent rare opportunities to use English in multimodal, meaningful ways, bridging the gap between abstract grammatical knowledge and practical communicative skills.

Grounded-Theory Outcome: An Emerging Explanation

From a grounded-theory perspective, this category reflects more than a thematic grouping. It is the outcome of a systematic analytic process in which:

- open codes (e.g., “correcting with friends,” “repeating in the game,” “learning with the picture,” “asking who is he”)

- were compared and refined into axial codes such as peer-supported correction, meaningful repetition, and use of contextual cues,
- and then integrated during selective coding into the core conceptualization of games as contextual grammar practice tools.

The emergent theoretical explanation is as follows:

In this rural bilingual EFL classroom, games function as contextualized practice spaces through which children transform grammatical forms from abstract rules into shared communicative resources. Through repeated, goal-oriented use of target structures—supported by peer mediation and contextual cues—learners notice, adjust, and gradually internalize grammar despite their limited exposure to English outside school.

This category directly addresses the study's general objective of exploring learners' reflections on using games to learn grammar and the specific objective related to understanding how game-based learning supports grammar development in a rural bilingual program. Importantly, the explanation arises from learners' own reflections; their words show that games are not secondary activities but the primary contexts in which grammar becomes visible, meaningful, and usable.

Category 2: Games as Motivational and Emotional Support Tools

The second core category that emerged from the grounded-theory analysis concerns the emotional and motivational impact of grammar-based games on the six nine-year-old learners in this rural Colombian EFL program. Given that these children have very limited exposure to English outside of school and often approach speaking activities with hesitation or insecurity,

affective variables such as anxiety, confidence, and sense of belonging become central to understanding how they experience grammar learning.

Through open, axial, and selective coding of interviews, journals, and focus-group transcripts, recurring codes such as “*I was not afraid,*” “*we laughed,*” “*my friends helped me,*” “*I want to win,*” and “*it is easier with games*” were identified. These were subsequently organized into three interrelated affective dimensions: lowered anxiety, positive emotions, and increased motivation. Together, these dimensions form the core category Games as Motivational and Emotional Support Tools, indicating that games not only assist learners in practicing grammar but also create emotionally safe and enjoyable spaces where they feel willing to take linguistic risks in English.

Lowering Anxiety and Creating Emotional Safety

One of the clearest examples of anxiety reduction appears in Ángel’s reflective journal in Week 4:

(Án, J, w4) “Dije ‘Where is she?’ y me sentí feliz porque no tenía miedo. Todos estábamos jugando y nadie se burló.”

English translation:

“I said ‘Where is she?’ and I felt happy because I was not afraid. We were all playing and nobody laughed at me.”

For Ángel, producing a *wh-* question—typically a task that triggers hesitation—became a positive emotional experience within the context of play. The absence of ridicule (“*nadie se burló*”) and the sense of shared engagement (“*todos estábamos jugando*”) created an emotionally safe environment. This reflects current findings on foreign language enjoyment and anxiety,

which demonstrate that learners' emotions are strongly shaped by classroom climate and by their perceptions of psychological safety (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020; Li, 2021; Dewaele et al., 2023).

Ángel's contrast between fear and happiness ("no tenía miedo... me sentí feliz") exemplifies how positive emotions can counterbalance anxiety and open space for language use, echoing recent studies that highlight the dynamic interplay between enjoyment and anxiety in L2 learning (Dewaele et al., 2025; Wu, 2025). In this sense, games do more than merely "make learning fun"; they restructure the affective conditions in which grammar is practiced.

A similar pattern appears in Charid's reflection during a Week 2 focus group:

(Ch, FG, w2) "Me dio pena al inicio, pero en el juego dije 'She isn't a boy' y mis amigas me ayudaron y me reí."

English translation:

"I felt shy at the beginning, but in the game I said 'She isn't a boy' and my friends helped me and I laughed."

Here, the shift from shyness ("me dio pena") to laughter underscores the role of peer support as emotional scaffolding. The presence of friendly help transforms the experience of producing a grammatical structure from a potentially threatening moment into an enjoyable one. Research on classroom emotions similarly highlights the role of relational support and group connection in lowering anxiety (Gkonou & Mercer, 2020; Li, 2021).

In both examples, games created a protective socio-emotional climate. Learners did not describe fear of correction; instead, they emphasized the absence of ridicule and the presence of peer assistance. This suggests that game-based tasks can reframe grammar learning as a safe endeavor, promoting participation where anxiety previously prevailed.

Joy, Music, and Implicit Learning

Beyond lowering anxiety, learners consistently described game-based grammar activities as enjoyable and engaging, particularly when music or rhythm was involved. Danna, who initially felt uncomfortable speaking, explained in her Week 4 interview:

(D, SI, w4) “Me gusta aprender con música y juegos porque no me da pena hablar y repito sin pensar.”

English translation:

“I like learning with music and games because I am not shy to speak and I repeat without thinking.”

Danna links music, play, and the disappearance of embarrassment (“no me da pena hablar”). The notion of “repito sin pensar” suggests a move toward greater automaticity: her attention is focused on meaning and enjoyment rather than on conscious monitoring of grammatical form. This resonates with research showing that multimodal and rhythm-based tasks can reduce anxiety and support more fluent language production (Zhou, 2024; Sadigzade, 2025).

Her comment also reflects implicit learning processes, in which repeated exposure within meaningful, low-stress contexts leads to the acquisition of grammatical patterns without explicit rule instruction. Studies in game-based and digital learning environments argue that emotionally engaging tasks frequently promote such implicit learning, particularly when learners are focused on completing a communicative goal (Jayanta et al., 2025; Zhou, 2024). Thus, emotional comfort and enjoyment actively support the internalization of grammar.

Motivation, Competition, and Desire to Participate

Games also served as powerful motivational tools. Thiago's Week 4 journal illustrates how competition encouraged repeated production of interrogative structures:

(T, J, w4) "Me gusta preguntar 'Is he your dad?' porque quiero ganar. Hago más preguntas así para conseguir puntos."

English translation:

"I like asking 'Is he your dad?' because I want to win. I ask more questions like that to get points."

His desire to win points leads him to produce more English questions. Game-based learning literature suggests that well-designed incentives can increase engagement and frequency of language use when directly linked to the task (Thurairasu, 2022; Eckerth, 2022; Sun et al., 2024). In Thiago's case, the mechanism and grammatical target are aligned: the only way to gain points is by producing successful English questions.

A different motivational pathway appears in Alisson's Week 3 interview:

(Ali, SI, w3) "Cuando jugamos a decir cosas de nosotros, yo dije 'My name is Alisson' y 'This is my book'. Antes me daba pena, pero con el juego fue más fácil."

English translation:

"When we played to say things about ourselves, I said 'My name is Alisson' and 'This is my book'. Before, I felt shy, but with the game it was easier."

Here, personalization—using language to talk about her own identity and belongings—enhances engagement and reduces hesitation. Research shows that personalized tasks increase

willingness to communicate, especially when integrated into playful or digital environments (Sun et al., 2024; Zhou, 2024).

Finally, Andrés' Week 4 reflection highlights the influence of group dynamics:

(And, FG, w4) “Antes no me gustaba decir cosas en inglés porque me confundía. Pero con los juegos, como todos hablan, yo también quiero hablar.”

English translation:

“Before, I didn't like saying things in English because I got confused. But with the games, because everyone speaks, I also want to speak.”

His participation is driven by collective engagement. Recent studies emphasize that learners' emotional states are shaped not only by individual factors but also by classroom climate and peer behavior (Li, 2021; Dewaele et al., 2024). For Andrés, the norm created by the group—“everyone speaks”—makes speaking English more attractive and socially supported.

Emerging Grounded-Theory Explanation: Game-Mediated Affective Support

From a grounded-theory perspective, this category emerged through constant comparison of codes related to emotions, motivation, and classroom climate. During open coding, affect-related codes such as “no tenía miedo,” “me reí,” “quiero ganar,” “ya no me da pena,” and “yo también quiero hablar” were identified. In axial coding, these were grouped into the dimensions of:

1. **Lowering anxiety** (emotional safety, absence of ridicule, diminished fear)
2. **Positive emotions and enjoyment** (happiness, laughter, music, multimodality)
3. **Motivation to participate** (competition, personalization, peer influence)

Selective coding then integrated these dimensions into the core category Games as Motivational and Emotional Support Tools.

Based on this analytic process, an emergent theoretical explanation can be articulated:

In this rural Colombian EFL classroom, grammar games do not merely facilitate grammatical practice; they also create emotionally safe and motivating spaces where learners become willing to speak. By lowering anxiety, generating joy, and providing meaningful reasons to participate—such as music, points, personalization, and group play—games function as affective scaffolds that support the internalization of English grammar.

This theory complements the first category (Games as Contextual Grammar Practice Tools) and responds directly to the research question concerning learners' perceptions of using games to learn grammar. Learners' reflections consistently indicate that grammar becomes easier to use when they feel safe, included, and emotionally engaged. Within a rural bilingual program where exposure to English is limited and initial confidence is often low, emotional and motivational support is not an optional component—it is a central condition for sustained engagement and gradual development of EFL competence.

Category 3: Games as Participatory, Interactive Pedagogical Strategies

The third core category that emerged from the grounded-theory analysis captures how grammar-based games promoted active participation, peer interaction, and collaborative meaning-making in this rural bilingual classroom. While the first category explained how games functioned as contextual spaces for grammar practice, and the second category addressed their motivational and emotional impact, this category focuses on the social and interactional dynamics that games generated.

Through open, axial, and selective coding, recurring student comments such as “*todos hablamos,*” “*yo lideré,*” “*jugamos juntos,*” “*hicimos turnos,*” and “*yo dije para ganar puntos*” were grouped into higher-order dimensions related to learner participation, classroom interaction, and the co-construction of language. Together, these patterns form the category Games as Participatory, Interactive Pedagogical Strategies, highlighting the central role of game-based tasks in mobilizing learners’ agency and engagement in grammar learning.

Participation Through Movement, Rhythm, and Collective Action

During focus groups and interviews, learners consistently emphasized that they participated more actively in English when games required physical movement, rhythm, or collective responses. For example, during a Week 3 discussion, Danna explained:

(D, FG, w3) “Canté ‘It is an apple’ mientras bailábamos. Lo dije muchas veces porque era parte de la canción.”

English translation:

“I sang ‘It is an apple’ while we danced. I said it many times because it was part of the song.”

Here, participation is anchored in coordinated group movement and singing. The multimodal nature of the task—combining physical, auditory, and verbal elements—generated opportunities for repeated participation from all learners. Research on embodied and multimodal approaches to language learning shows that movement and rhythm can increase engagement and help learners maintain attention during tasks (Tomlinson, 2014; Karpov, 2020). In this setting, the game created a shared rhythm in which participation was expected, enjoyable, and socially reinforced.

Collective singing also raises every learner's participation level because silence is not the norm; speaking, singing, and repeating together become the default classroom behavior. This shift from individual responsibility to collective action is especially important in rural contexts, where learners may have fewer opportunities to use English outside school and may rely more heavily on classroom interaction (Hedges, 2021).

Collaborative Grammar Use Through Peer Modeling and Co-construction

Beyond participation through movement, several learners described how they repeated structures after hearing their peers or copied phrases that others used. Alisson highlighted this process during her Week 3 interview:

(Ali, SI, w3) "Cuando jugamos, yo escuché a mis amigas decir 'This is my...' y yo también lo dije."

English translation:

"When we played, I heard my friends say 'This is my...' and I said it too."

This reflects a key interpretation from sociocultural theory: knowledge is co-constructed through social interaction, and learners often rely on peer models when producing unfamiliar linguistic forms (Karpov, 2020; Reinders & Benson, 2020). During the games, children did not practice grammar in isolation; instead, they observed each other's language use, imitated useful structures, and gradually incorporated those structures into their own repertoire.

Peer modeling also supports learners who may be hesitant or unsure. Hearing classmates use English successfully offers a scaffolded entry point into participation. This dynamic was also visible in Charid's earlier reflection (Category 2), where friends supported her production of

“She isn’t a boy.” In Category 3, however, the emphasis is not on emotional reassurance, but on the interactional mechanism by which peers facilitate each other’s linguistic participation.

Coordinated Turn-Taking and Learner Agency

Another important component of this category is the way games structured turn-taking and gave learners opportunities to lead or direct activities. Several learners described moments in which they took initiative during the game, asked questions to peers, or took responsibility for advancing the activity. For instance, Thiago explained in his Week 4 interview:

(T, SI, w4) “Yo hice las preguntas ‘Who is he?’ y ‘Is he your dad?’ para jugar bien. Yo quería dirigir el turno.”

English translation:

“I asked the questions ‘Who is he?’ and ‘Is he your dad?’ to play well. I wanted to lead the turn.”

Thiago’s reflection indicates an emerging sense of linguistic agency. Leading the turn provides a meaningful reason to produce English questions, and the game structure assigns real communicative value to directing the interaction. Interactionist studies in young learner classrooms highlight that structured games can create predictable turn-taking patterns that support participation, especially when children take on roles such as questioners, guessers, or team representatives (Hedges, 2021; Reinders & Benson, 2020).

In the rural context of this study, opportunities for such agency are particularly relevant. Learners often have fewer institutional or extracurricular spaces where they can initiate communication in English. Through games, the classroom becomes a space where they can lead dialogue, make choices, and take responsibility for linguistic actions.

Participation as a Social Norm: 'Everyone Speaks'

One of the strongest indications that games cultivated a participatory culture appears in Andrés' Week 4 reflection:

(And, FG, w4) “Antes no me gustaba decir cosas en inglés porque me confundía. Pero con los juegos, como todos hablan, yo también quiero hablar.”

English translation:

“Before, I didn't like saying things in English because I got confused. But with the games, because everyone speaks, I also want to speak.”

This statement suggests that participation became a social norm within the game context. The phrase “como todos hablan” indicates that the games generated a collective expectation of speaking, making participation feel natural and desirable. The group dynamic serves as a social motivator: learners join in because participation is what the group does. Research shows that learners' willingness to communicate is strongly influenced by peer participation and classroom atmosphere (Li, 2021; Dewaele et al., 2024).

In this context, the game environment helped establish English speaking as a shared practice rather than an individual pressure. This shift is particularly meaningful for rural learners, who may not see English use modeled frequently in their outside environments.

Grounded-Theory Outcome: Participation and Interaction as Pedagogical Engines

From a grounded-theory standpoint, this category emerged from iterative comparison of codes related to group behavior, peer collaboration, movement, turn-taking, and learner agency. In open coding, segments such as “*todos hablan,*” “*yo también quiero hablar,*” “*canté mientras*

bailábamos,” “*yo lideré el turno,*” “*jugamos juntos,*” and “*repetí lo que dijo mi amiga*” were identified. Axial coding grouped these into higher-order dimensions:

1. Multimodal participation (movement, singing, coordinated group activity)
2. Collaborative language use (peer modeling, co-construction, shared repetition)
3. Learner agency and turn-taking (leading turns, asking questions, directing the game)
4. Participation as a classroom norm (speaking because others speak, group momentum)

Selective coding then connected these dimensions to form the conceptual category

Games as.

Participatory, Interactive Pedagogical Strategies.

Based on this analytic process, the following emergent theory can be proposed: In this rural Colombian EFL program, games act as pedagogical engines that organize participation, structure turn-taking, and foster collaborative meaning-making. By providing multimodal and socially shared contexts, games enable learners to co-construct language, imitate and model forms for each other, and assume agentive roles within the interaction. Participation becomes a collective expectation, making English use more accessible and socially meaningful for young learners with limited exposure outside school.

This theory complements the first two categories by addressing the interactional dimension of learners' experiences. Together, the categories demonstrate that game-based grammar learning is not only contextual and emotionally supportive, but also socially distributed and interactionally rich — a set of conditions that supports sustained engagement and meaningful use of English in a rural bilingual setting.

Discussion

The grounded-theory analysis conducted in this study generated three interconnected categories that explain how young EFL learners in a rural Colombian bilingual program perceived and experienced grammar learning through games: **(1) Games as Contextual Grammar Practice Tools**, **(2) Games as Motivational and Emotional Support Tools**, and **(3) Games as Participatory, Interactive Pedagogical Strategies**. Together, these categories provide a comprehensive understanding of how grammar-focused games facilitated linguistic, emotional, and social engagement among six nine-year-old learners with limited exposure to English outside school. The discussion that follows integrates these categories to interpret the broader meaning of the findings in relation to the research objectives and existing literature.

Grammar Learning Through Contextualized Use

The first category demonstrated that learners engaged with grammar not as isolated rules but as linguistic resources embedded in meaningful game-based interactions. Their reflections showed that they internalized forms such as *is*, *isn't*, *my*, and *Wh-* questions through repeated, purposeful use. Learners' comments describing how they corrected themselves, noticed patterns, or repeated structures "many times in the game" indicate that grammar learning occurred through form–meaning–use connections rather than through explicit explanation. This aligns with usage-based perspectives and task-based studies emphasizing that repeated, meaningful exposure supports the gradual emergence of grammatical competence (Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murcia, 2016; Yılmaz, 2018; Yang, 2020).

In the rural context of this study, where opportunities for English input are extremely limited, games functioned as rare spaces where learners could use English for immediate

communicative purposes. The contextual cues built into the games—such as images, movements, or short narrative scenarios—helped learners anchor grammatical structures to concrete references. For these learners, games became micro-environments of language use, enabling them to practice grammar in ways that would otherwise not occur in their daily lives.

Affective Conditions Supporting Grammar Learning

The second category highlighted the emotional dimension of grammar learning. Learners frequently reported decreased anxiety, increased confidence, and heightened enjoyment when grammar tasks were embedded within games. This emotional shift is highly significant, particularly in early foreign language learning contexts, where fear of making mistakes or speaking publicly can restrict participation.

The children's reflections describing happiness (“me sentí feliz”), reduced fear (“no tenía miedo”), and the absence of ridicule (“nadie se burló”) illustrate how game-based environments can lower learners' affective filters, thereby enhancing their willingness to speak. These findings support recent research emphasizing the inseparable relationship between emotion and language learning (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020; Mercer & Gregersen, 2020; Li, 2021).

Additionally, multimodal elements—such as music, rhythm, and movement—played a crucial role in fostering positive emotional states. Learners reported “repeating without thinking” and feeling “less shy” when engaging in musical or rhythm-based games, indicating the emergence of more automatic, less monitored language production. The literature on multimodal and game-based learning similarly suggests that emotionally engaging tasks can facilitate implicit learning and contribute to fluency development (Zhou, 2024; Sadigzade, 2025; Jayanta et al., 2025).

These affective benefits are especially relevant in rural bilingual programs where learners may begin with limited confidence and little exposure to English. Games provided an emotional foundation that made grammar more accessible, less intimidating, and more enjoyable.

Participation, Interaction, and Collaborative Meaning-Making

The third category revealed that games functioned as interactive pedagogical structures that promoted active engagement, turn-taking, and peer collaboration. Learners consistently described participating through movement, singing, questioning, responding, and taking initiative during game-based tasks. The classroom atmosphere became one in which “everyone speaks,” transforming English use into a collective norm rather than an isolated act.

Peer modeling emerged as a key mechanism through which learners expanded their linguistic repertoire. Statements such as “yo escuché a mis amigas decir...” and “yo también lo dije” show how children relied on classmates as linguistic references. This social co-construction aligns with sociocultural theories of learning that highlight the central role of mediated interaction, imitation, and shared activity in early language development (Karpov, 2020; Reinders & Benson, 2020; Hedges, 2021).

Furthermore, learner agency became visible through moments in which children assumed leadership roles within the games—directing turns, asking questions, or guiding others. For learners with minimal prior experience speaking English, these structured opportunities to lead interactions are particularly meaningful. They signal an emerging sense of ownership over language use, facilitated by the predictable and engaging frameworks of the games.

Integrating the Findings: How Do Young Learners Perceive Learning Grammar Through Games?

Taken together, these three categories provide a rich, multi-dimensional explanation of the learners' perceptions. Grammar-based games were not experienced as isolated activities, but rather as integrated environments where linguistic practice, emotional comfort, and social participation converged.

1. **Cognitively**, games provided contextualized opportunities to notice, repeat, and internalize grammatical structures.
2. **Emotionally**, they lowered anxiety, increased confidence, and made speaking English feel safe and enjoyable.
3. **Socially**, they encouraged interaction, collaboration, and participation, transforming the classroom into a dynamic communicative space.

These findings contribute to a broader understanding of game-based grammar instruction by illustrating that young learners' perceptions are shaped not only by what they learn but by how they feel and how they participate while learning. The integration of cognitive, affective, and social dimensions reflects contemporary views of language learning as a holistic, deeply situated process.

In the specific setting of this rural bilingual program, the findings suggest that games can serve as essential pedagogical tools capable of counteracting limited exposure, low confidence, and restricted communicative opportunities. For these learners, games were not merely

enjoyable; they were foundational in enabling them to see English as something they could use, share, and build together.

Relevance to the Research Objectives

The discussion demonstrates that the findings respond directly to the study's three research objectives:

1. Learners' reflections on using games to learn grammar:

Learners perceived games as meaningful, contextual, and enjoyable ways to practice grammar, often linking specific structures with specific game-based experiences.

2. Influence of games on motivation, participation, and confidence:

The emotional and social benefits of games—reduced fear, increased willingness to speak, and group participation—were central to learners' positive perceptions.

3. Pedagogical insights for rural bilingual programs:

The categories highlight how game-based grammar activities can help overcome contextual limitations by providing accessible, affectively supportive, and interaction-rich learning environments.

Final Interpretation

The emergent theory across all categories suggests that, for young rural EFL learners, games serve as multifaceted pedagogical ecosystems in which grammar becomes learnable, speakable, and socially meaningful. Through contextual use, positive emotions, and interactive

participation, learners construct grammar knowledge in ways that would be difficult to achieve through traditional instruction alone.

For practitioners and program designers in similar contexts, these findings underscore the value of integrating game-based strategies into grammar instruction—not as supplementary “fun activities,” but as core pedagogical practices that address learners’ cognitive, affective, and social needs.

Conclusions

This thesis examined how a group of six nine-year-old learners from a rural Colombian bilingual program perceive the use of games to learn English grammar. The central research question guiding this study was:

What do young EFL learners' reflections reveal about their perceptions of using games to learn English grammar in a rural bilingual program?

A qualitative grounded-theory design was used to address this question. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, and focus groups, originally in Spanish and later translated into English. Through a systematic coding process—open, axial, and selective—three core categories emerged:

- **Games as Contextual Grammar Practice Tools**
- **Games as Motivational and Emotional Support Tools**
- **Games as Participatory, Interactive Pedagogical Strategies**

These categories informed the development of an emergent grounded-theory explanation that illustrates how young rural learners experience and understand game-based grammar instruction.

Main Findings and Emergent Grounded Theory

The findings reveal that, for these learners, games were not perceived as peripheral or recreational add-ons to the lesson. Rather, they were understood as the primary spaces where grammar was learned, used, and shared.

In **Category 1**, learners described encountering grammar within the game environment instead of as isolated rules on a worksheet. They explained how structures such as *She isn't a*

boy, There are two cats, Who is he?, and This is my notebook were naturally practiced while guessing, describing, or manipulating objects. Through these game-based “language worlds,” learners accessed contextual support, repetition, and peer scaffolding.

In **Category 2**, learners emphasized the emotional impact of games. They expressed feeling less afraid or shy when speaking English and valued environments where mistakes did not lead to ridicule. Games incorporating music, points, or personal content increased their motivation and willingness to participate. Thus, games acted as affective support tools, lowering anxiety and fostering enjoyment.

In **Category 3**, learners described games as collective, interactive, and collaborative experiences. They sang, danced, manipulated objects, played guessing games, and worked in teams to construct or check sentences. These activities made grammar learning participatory and socially meaningful, offering opportunities for turn-taking, peer modeling, and shared decision-making. Together, these categories informed the following emergent grounded theory:

In this rural Colombian EFL classroom, young learners perceive grammar games as the main spaces where English grammar becomes meaningful, emotionally safe, and socially shared. Within these game-based “micro-worlds,” children use grammar to interact, feel less afraid, and participate collaboratively in tasks where forms are modeled, practiced, and checked with classmates. As a result, grammar shifts from an abstract concept to a practical communicative tool supported by peers, emotions, and context.

This theory directly answers the research question and aligns with the study’s objectives. It clarifies how learners conceptualize games, how they associate them with motivation and emotional comfort, and how they view games as catalysts for interaction and communication.

Contributions to the Field

This thesis contributes to the fields of EFL teaching, young learner education, and rural bilingual programs in several important ways;

Learners' voices at the center.

The study foregrounds young rural learners' perspectives, showing that even at nine years old they can articulate their learning processes, recognize improvements, and describe the emotional and social conditions that support their engagement with English.

A contextual, grounded explanation of game-based grammar learning.

Rather than applying a predetermined framework, this study uses grounded theory to develop an explanation rooted in learners' reflections. The resulting categories and emergent theory reflect the realities of a rural bilingual setting with limited exposure to English.

Integration of form, emotion, and interaction.

While many studies examine games through motivation or grammar practice alone, this thesis shows that, in this context, games integrate grammatical practice, emotional safety, and social participation. This holistic perspective helps explain why games were so effective for these learners.

Pedagogical guidance for rural EFL classrooms.

The findings offer guidance for teachers in similar contexts. They suggest aligning game mechanics with grammatical targets, incorporating visual and physical elements, prioritizing emotional safety, and designing activities that encourage participation from all learners.

Pedagogical Implications

Based on the emergent theory, several implications can inform teaching practice and program design:

Games should be central, not marginal.

In rural EFL programs, games can serve as a core instructional strategy, not merely as rewards. Systematically planned grammar-focused games give learners multiple opportunities to use target structures in meaningful ways.

Align language targets with game mechanics.

Points, challenges, and victory conditions should require learners to use specific grammatical forms (e.g., yes/no questions, *there is/there are*, or present continuous structures) so that gameplay naturally reinforces learning.

Support emotional safety.

Teachers should establish norms that discourage ridicule, encourage peer help, and celebrate attempts. Music, humor, and shared enjoyment can reduce anxiety and make speaking less intimidating.

Promote participation from all learners.

Well-designed games can ensure that both confident and hesitant learners have opportunities to participate. Whole-class songs, small-group tasks, and structured turn-taking can help achieve this balance.

Connect grammar to learners' lives.

Games that involve personal information—such as names, family members, or familiar objects—can increase relevance, deepen engagement, and foster ownership of learning.

These implications are particularly relevant in rural contexts, where learners may have fewer opportunities for authentic English use. Carefully designed games can help compensate for this limited exposure.

Limitations of the Study

As a qualitative grounded-theory study, this research has several limitations:

Small, specific sample.

The study focused on six children from one rural bilingual program, meaning the emergent theory reflects this specific context and is not generalizable.

Reliance on learners' reflections.

Data were based on what learners reported experiencing. Although these insights are valuable, they may not capture all classroom processes or interactions.

No direct measurement of grammar gains.

The study prioritized perceptions, emotions, and participation. It did not measure grammatical accuracy or long-term learning outcomes, so conclusions about progress must remain interpretive rather than empirical.

These limitations are typical of qualitative research and should guide careful interpretation of the findings.

Suggestions for Future Research

The study opens several avenues for further investigation:

Replication in other contexts.

Studies with urban schools, different regions, or other age groups could determine whether similar categories and theories emerge.

Combination with classroom observations.

Future research could include audio or video recordings of lessons to examine the moment-by-moment interactional processes of game-based grammar activities.

Mixed-methods research.

Combining qualitative perceptions with quantitative measures of grammar performance could illuminate how emotional, contextual, and participatory dimensions relate to measurable learning outcomes.

Comparisons between different types of games.

Research could examine how board games, digital games, role-plays, or movement-based games differ in their impact on grammar learning, motivation, and participation.

Such studies could deepen the grounded-theory model developed here and inform more effective game-based grammar instruction across Colombia and beyond.

Final Reflection

This thesis began with a simple observation: young learners in a rural bilingual program seemed more active, confident, and engaged when grammar was taught through games. By carefully analyzing their voices and applying grounded-theory methods, this study revealed that, for these children, games are not merely entertaining activities. They are the environments where grammar becomes meaningful, where English is used to guess, laugh, tell stories, earn points, help friends, and feel proud of speaking.

In a context with limited educational resources and scarce exposure to English outside school, these game-based “micro-worlds” represent powerful opportunities for learning. They show that grammar teaching—especially at early levels—can be contextual, affective, and

collaborative. It is hoped that the insights from this study will support teachers, schools, and researchers in designing learning experiences where rural young learners can discover English grammar not as a barrier, but as a tool for communication, participation, and connection with others.

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Annexes

Annex 1. Formato de Consentimiento Informado para Padres de Familia

Estimados padres de familia,

Mi nombre es [Nombre del Investigador], docente en formación del programa de Licenciatura en Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera.

Me encuentro desarrollando un proyecto de investigación titulado: “Percepciones de los estudiantes sobre el uso de juegos para aprender gramática del inglés”.

Este estudio tiene como objetivo analizar cómo los estudiantes perciben el uso de juegos en el aprendizaje de la gramática del inglés, a través de reuniones reflexivas, diarios personales y entrevistas.

Para ello, se ha conformado un grupo de estudio en el que participará su hijo(a). Durante las sesiones, se recopilará información mediante observaciones, entrevistas y reflexiones escritas.

Toda la información será confidencial y utilizada únicamente con fines académicos.

La participación es completamente voluntaria y usted puede retirar su consentimiento en cualquier momento.

Autorizo la participación de mi hijo(a) en este proyecto de investigación.

Nombre del estudiante: _____

Nombre del padre/madre o acudiente: _____

Firma: _____

Fecha: _____

Annex 2. Informed Consent Form for Parents (English Translation)

Dear Parents,

My name is [Researcher's Name], a pre-service teacher in the B.A. in Teaching English as a Foreign Language program.

I am conducting a research project titled: "Students' Perceptions of Using Games to Learn English Grammar."

This study aims to analyze how students perceive the use of games in grammar learning through reflective meetings, personal journals, and interviews.

For this purpose, a study group has been formed in which your child will participate. During the sessions, information will be collected through observations, interviews, and written reflections.

All information will remain confidential and will be used solely for academic purposes. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw your consent at any time.

I authorize my child's participation in this research project.

Student's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Annex 3. Focus Group Discussions

Semana 1:

Agenda Reunión 1: Introducción al Grupo de Estudio

Objetivo: Presentar el propósito del grupo de estudio y explorar las experiencias previas de los estudiantes con la gramática del inglés.

Actividades:

- • *Bienvenida y presentación del grupo de estudio.*
- • *Explicación del propósito de la investigación.*
- • *Dinámica de apertura: '¿Qué pienso cuando escucho la palabra gramática?'*
- • *Discusión guiada sobre experiencias previas con la gramática del inglés.*
- • *Reflexión escrita: ¿Cómo me siento aprendiendo gramática en inglés?*

Preguntas de introducción:

- • *¿Qué piensas cuando escuchas la palabra 'gramática'?*
- • *¿Cómo ha sido tu experiencia aprendiendo gramática en inglés?*
- • *¿Qué te resulta difícil o fácil de la gramática?*
- • *¿Qué esperas de este grupo de estudio?*

Preguntas de reflexión:

- • *¿Qué te pareció el juego que usamos hoy para aprender los verbos?*
- • *¿Cómo te sentiste al jugar en inglés?*
- • *¿Qué aprendiste con el juego de hoy?*

Semana 2:

Agenda Reunión 2: Juegos y Aprendizaje de Gramática

Objetivo:

Explorar las percepciones de los estudiantes sobre el uso de juegos para aprender gramática.

Actividades:

- *Revisión de la reunión anterior.*
- *Presentación de ejemplos de juegos usados en clase.*
- *Discusión grupal: ¿Qué juegos recuerdas y cómo te sentiste?*
- *Reflexión escrita: ¿Qué aprendiste con esos juegos?*

Preguntas de reflexión:

- ¿Qué juegos recuerdas haber usado para aprender gramática?
- ¿Cómo te sentiste durante esos juegos?
- ¿Crees que aprendiste algo de gramática con ellos? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Qué tipo de juegos te gustaría usar para aprender?
- ¿Cómo te ayudó el juego a recordar palabras o reglas en inglés?
- ¿Hubo algo que te pareciera difícil durante el juego?

¿Te gustó trabajar con tus compañeros durante el juego?

Semana 3:

Agenda Reunión 3: Dificultades con la Gramática

Objetivo:

Identificar las preocupaciones y dificultades que los estudiantes tienen con la gramática del inglés.

Actividades:

- *Dinámica: 'Mi mayor reto con la gramática es...'*
- *Reflexión escrita: ¿Qué me frustra o me cuesta más?*
- *Lluvia de ideas: ¿Qué podría ayudarme a mejorar?*

Preguntas de reflexión:

- ¿Qué aspectos de la gramática te parecen más difíciles?
- ¿Qué emociones sientes cuando no entiendes algo de gramática?
- ¿Qué estrategias usas cuando no entiendes?
- ¿Qué te gustaría que hiciera el profesor para ayudarte?
- ¿Cómo crees que los juegos te ayudan a aprender la gramática en inglés?
- ¿Te sientes más cómodo/a hablando en inglés durante los juegos? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Qué cambiarías del juego para que te ayude a aprender mejor?

Semana 4:

Agenda Reunión 4: Juegos como Estrategia de Aprendizaje

Objetivo:

Profundizar en cómo los juegos pueden ayudar a superar dificultades gramaticales.

Actividades:

- Revisión de juegos usados recientemente.
- Discusión: ¿Qué juego me ayudó más y por qué?
- Reflexión escrita: ¿Qué aprendí con ese juego?
- Mapa mental: Juegos útiles para aprender gramática.

Preguntas de reflexión:

- ¿Qué juego te ayudó a entender mejor un tema gramatical?
- ¿Qué características tenía ese juego?
- ¿Cómo te sentiste al usarlo?
- ¿Qué juegos te gustaría repetir o cambiar?
- ¿Cómo te sientes ahora sobre aprender gramática usando juegos?
- ¿Qué juego te ayudó más a aprender gramática?

¿Te gustaría seguir aprendiend gramática con juegos? ¿Por qué?

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semana 1:

Fecha _____

Entrevistado(a)

PROPÓSITO:

Reforzar parte de la información recopilada a lo largo de las discusiones grupales y los diarios reflexivos realizados por los participantes del estudio.

Estimado(a) estudiante, la siguiente entrevista ha sido elaborada con la intención de explorar información adicional relacionada con el proceso de aprendizaje que estás teniendo en las clases de inglés. De antemano, quiero agradecerte por tu colaboración al responder las siguientes preguntas.

¿Te gustó el juego de hoy? ¿Por qué?

¿Qué aprendiste mientras jugábamos?

¿El juego te ayudó a entender palabras o reglas de gramática en inglés?

Semana 2

Fecha _____

Entrevistado(a)

PROPÓSITO:

Reforzar parte de la información recopilada a lo largo de las discusiones grupales y los diarios reflexivos realizados por los participantes del estudio.

Estimado(a) estudiante, la siguiente entrevista ha sido elaborada con la intención de explorar

información adicional relacionada con el proceso de aprendizaje que estás teniendo en las

clases de inglés.

De antemano, quiero agradecerte por tu colaboración al responder las siguientes preguntas.

¿Te sientes feliz cuando jugamos para aprender inglés?

¿Qué es lo más difícil para ti cuando jugamos?

¿Cómo te sientes al usar palabras en inglés durante el juego?

Semana 3:

Fecha _____

Entrevistado(a)

PROPÓSITO:

Reforzar parte de la información recopilada a lo largo de las discusiones grupales y los diarios reflexivos realizados por los participantes del estudio.

Estimado(a) estudiante, la siguiente entrevista ha sido elaborada con la intención de explorar información adicional relacionada con el proceso de aprendizaje que estás teniendo en las clases de inglés. De antemano, quiero agradecerte por tu colaboración al responder las siguientes preguntas.

- *¿Crees que los juegos te ayudan a aprender gramática?*
¿Cuál ha sido tu juego favorito hasta ahora? ¿Por qué?
- *¿Qué te ayuda a recordar la gramática cuando jugamos?*

Semana 4:

Fecha _____

Entrevistado(a) _____

PROPÓSITO:

Reforzar parte de la información recopilada a lo largo de las discusiones grupales y los diarios reflexivos realizados por los participantes del estudio.

Estimado(a) estudiante, la siguiente entrevista ha sido elaborada con la intención de explorar información adicional relacionada con el proceso de aprendizaje que estás teniendo en las clases de inglés. De antemano, quiero agradecerte por tu colaboración al responder las siguientes preguntas

- *¿Te gustaría seguir aprendiendo gramática con juegos? ¿Por qué?*
- *¿Cómo te hacen sentir los juegos sobre hablar en inglés?*
- *¿Qué te gustaría aprender con juegos en el futuro?*

Reflective Learning Journals

Semana 1:

- *Dibuja tu parte favorita del juego de hoy.*
- *Escribe una palabra que aprendiste en el juego.*
- *¿Cómo te sentiste durante el juego?*

Semana 2:

- *Dibuja o escribe algo que te pareció difícil en el juego.*
- *¿Qué aprendiste hoy con el juego?*
- *¿Te sentiste feliz mientras jugabas?*

Semana 3:

- *Dibuja una imagen de ti jugando el juego.*
- *Escribe algo que aprendiste de gramática en el juego.*
- *¿Cómo te sentiste al hablar en inglés durante el juego?*

Semana 4:

- *Dibuja tu juego favorito que jugamos.*
- *Escribe qué te gustó más de aprender con juegos.*
- *¿Cómo te sientes ahora sobre aprender gramática con juegos?*

Agenda Reunión 5: Cierre y Evaluación del Grupo de Estudio

Objetivo:

Reflexionar sobre el proceso vivido y evaluar el impacto del uso de juegos en el aprendizaje de la gramática.

Actividades:

- *Dinámica de cierre: 'Antes pensaba... ahora pienso...'*
- *Discusión grupal sobre cambios en percepciones.*
- *Reflexión escrita final: ¿Qué aprendí sobre mí y la gramática?*
- *Encuesta de satisfacción del grupo de estudio.*

Preguntas de reflexión:

- *¿Cómo ha cambiado tu forma de ver la gramática?*
- *¿Qué aprendiste sobre ti como estudiante?*
- *¿Qué juegos fueron más útiles para ti?*
- *¿Qué sugerencias tienes para mejorar este grupo?*

Agenda Meeting 5: Closing and Evaluation of the Study Group

Objective:

Reflect on the process and evaluate the impact of using games in grammar learning.

Activities:

- *Closing activity: 'Before I thought... now I think...'*
- *Group discussion about changes in perceptions.*
- *Final written reflection: What did I learn about myself and grammar?*
- *Study group satisfaction survey.*

Reflection Questions:

- *How has your view of grammar changed?*

- • *What did you learn about yourself as a student?*
- • *Which games were most useful for you?*
- • *What suggestions do you have to improve this group?*

Annex 4. Student's Instruments Extracts

Danna (9 años)

Focus Group Discussions**FGD #1 (Semana 1)**

Hoy jugamos bingo con canciones y me encantó porque podíamos cantar las frases de la profe mientras jugábamos. Dije "I am a girl" y la profe nos enseñó a decir "I am not a boy". Lo repetimos varias veces cantando y me gustó porque así me acuerdo mejor. También aprendimos a decir "Her name is Laura" con una canción de nombres, y me pareció muy divertido.

FGD #2 (Semana 2)

Jugamos a correr y buscar imágenes mientras sonaba la música. Cuando encontré la manzana, la profe me preguntó "What is this?" y yo canté "It is an apple". Ella explicó que usamos "an" porque "apple" empieza con vocal. Me gustó repetirlo y al tiempo bailábamos, aunque me daba pena moverme pero era más fácil porque así no me daba tanta pena hablar.

FGD #3 (Semana 3)

En el juego con preguntas y música, yo pregunté "Who is he?" con una imagen de un señor, y mi amiga respondió "He is my uncle". Luego yo dije "Is he your uncle?" con ritmo, porque la profe me ayudó a cantarlo para recordarlo. Me gusta mucho mejor aprender con música porque así me siento... siento que me acuerdo más fácil.

FGD #4 (Semana 4)

Jugamos con frases para ganar puntos y cantábamos y al tiempo jugábamos. Yo dije "Where is she?" y mi amiga respondió "She is at school". También dije "This is my pen" llevando el ritmo

con las manos. Me sentí feliz, mejor, más chévere de aprender inglés de una forma más chévere más divertida y cero presiones.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interview #1 (Semana 1)

Me gustó cantar las frases porque me ayudó a recordar las palabras y no teníamos que escribirlas. Dije “I am a girl” y “I am not a boy”, y la profe nos hizo repetirlas con el ritmo. Aprendí “Her name is Laura” y me gustó cantarla con mis amigas. Me sentí feliz y no tuve tanto miedo de hablar.

Interview #2 (Semana 2)

Hoy dije “It is an apple” mientras bailaba en el juego. La profe explicó que se usa “an” cuando la palabra empieza con vocal. Me gustó practicarlo moviéndome porque no se me olvidó más. Además, mis compañeros me aplaudieron cuando lo dije bien.

Interview #3 (Semana 3)

Pregunté “Who is he?” y dije “Is he your uncle?” en el juego con música. Me gustó porque podía cantar las frases mientras las aprendía. Me siento más segura cuando hablamos cantando, y la profe me dijo que lo hice muy bien.

Interview #4 (Semana 4)

Dije “Where is she?” y “This is my pen” en el juego final. Aprendí que puedo recordar más si repito con ritmo. Me encantó aprender inglés con música porque me sentí feliz todo el tiempo.

Reflective Learning Journals

Journal #1 (Semana 1)

Canté “I am a girl” y aprendí “Her name is Laura”. Me gustó hacerlo con mis amigas porque sonaba bonito. Me gustó porque pude hablar sin equivocarme.

Journal #2 (Semana 2)

Dije “It is an apple” y aprendí usar “an”. Bailé mientras hablaba y me gustó mucho. Creo que así aprendo más fácil.

Journal #3 (Semana 3)

Pregunté “Who is he?” y “Is he your uncle?”. Me gustó hacerlo con música porque me divertí y no me dio pena hablar.

Journal #4 (Semana 4)

Dije “Where is she?” y “This is my pen”. Me gustó que el juego tuviera canciones y puntos. Aprendí más inglés pasándola bien con mis amigos.

Andrés (10 años)

Focus Group Discussions

FGD #1 (Semana 1)

Jugamos bingo de palabras y yo dije “She is a teacher”. Después la profe nos explicó que cuando es negativo decimos “She isn’t a teacher”. Lo repetí varias veces hasta que me salió bien. También aprendimos que “her” significa “su” para ella, y dije “Her name is Sara”. Me gustó porque pude aprender diciendo las frases, no solo escuchando.

FGD #2 (Semana 2)

Hoy hicimos un juego de imágenes y yo levanté una y dije “He is a doctor”. La profe me preguntó “Who is he?” y yo dije “He is my dad”. Después mi amigo me preguntó “Is he your brother?” y yo respondí “No, he isn’t”. Aprendí que “my” es “mi” y “his” es “su de él”.

FGD #3 (Semana 3)

Jugamos con tarjetas para hacer preguntas y practicar artículos. Yo pregunté “What is this?” con una foto de un lápiz y la profe me dijo que podía decir “It is a pencil”. Después aprendimos que usamos “a” con palabras normales y “an” con palabras que empiezan con vocal, como “an apple”. Dije “I have an apple” en el juego y todos me aplaudieron.

FGD #4 (Semana 4)

Hoy jugamos a ganar puntos con preguntas y frases. Yo dije “Where is she?” y mi amiga respondió “She is at home”. También dije “This is my book”. Me gustó porque pude usar muchas frases y sentí que ya podía hablar mejor.

Semi-Structured Interviews**Interview #1 (Semana 1)**

Me gustó el bingo porque aprendí a decir “She is a teacher” y “She isn’t a teacher”. También aprendí “Her name is Sara” y lo repetí varias veces. Me sentí emocionado porque la profe me felicitó por hablar con buena pronunciación.

Interview #2 (Semana 2)

Dije “He is a doctor” y aprendí a preguntar “Who is he?”. También practiqué “my” y “his” con mis compañeros. Me gusta cuando la profe nos corrige porque entiendo más.

Interview #3 (Semana 3)

Pregunté “What is this?” y dije “It is a pencil”. Aprendí cuándo usar “a” y “an” con diferentes palabras. Me gustó repetirlo con mis amigos y escribirlo en el cuaderno.

Interview #4 (Semana 4)

Pregunté “Where is she?” y dije “This is my book”. Me sentí feliz porque pude hablar sin equivocarme. Me gusta mucho aprender inglés jugando con preguntas.

Reflective Learning Journals**Journal #1 (Semana 1)**

Dije “She is a teacher” y “She isn’t a teacher”. Aprendí “Her name is Sara” y me gustó repetirlo. Sentí que ya puedo hablar más inglés.

Journal #2 (Semana 2)

Dije “He is a doctor” y aprendí “Who is he?”. Me gustó practicar con mis compañeros y reírnos mientras hablábamos.

Journal #3 (Semana 3)

Pregunté “What is this?” y dije “It is a pencil”. Aprendí sobre “a” y “an” y ahora ya sé cuándo usarlos.

Journal #4 (Semana 4)

Pregunté “Where is she?” y dije “This is my book”. Me gustó ganar puntos y hablar en inglés durante el juego.

Thiago (9 años)**Focus Group Discussions****FGD #1 (Semana 1)**

Cuando jugamos bingo me emocioné porque quería ganar y todos hablábamos en inglés. Dije “He is a boy” y después la profe nos enseñó a decir “He isn’t a girl”. Me costó decir “isn’t” rápido, pero lo repetí con mis amigos hasta que me salió bien. También aprendí a decir “His name is Juan” y me gustó porque usábamos nombres de verdad.

FGD #2 (Semana 2)

Hoy hicimos un juego de correr a buscar imágenes y fue muy divertido. Yo encontré una manzana y la profe me preguntó “What is this?”, así que respondí “It is an apple”. Ella explicó que se dice “an” porque empieza con vocal, y me dio risa porque a veces digo “a apple”. Me gustó que la profe me corrigiera porque aprendí rápido.

FGD #3 (Semana 3)

Jugamos a hacer preguntas en equipos y cada uno tenía una foto. Yo pregunté “Who is he?” con la imagen de un hombre y mi amigo respondió “He is my dad”. Aprendí a usar “my” y “his” porque cada uno decía quién era quién. Me gustó mucho porque ganamos puntos por hablar bien en inglés.

FGD #4 (Semana 4)

Hoy tuvimos un juego de puntos con preguntas y respuestas. Yo dije “Where is she?” y mi amiga dijo “She is at school”. También dije “I am a student” y “I am not a teacher” para ganar puntos. Me gustó porque pude correr, hablar y aprender al mismo tiempo.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interview #1 (Semana 1)

Me gustó jugar bingo porque todos hablábamos y la profe nos ayudaba. Dije “He is a boy” y “He isn’t a girl”, y aprendí “His name is Juan”. Me gustó repetir las frases porque me ayudó a pronunciarlas mejor. Me sentí feliz porque la profe me dijo que estaba mejorando.

Interview #2 (Semana 2)

Dije “It is an apple” cuando la profe me preguntó “What is this?”. Aprendí que se dice “an” y no “a” antes de “apple”. Me reí porque me equivoqué al principio, pero después lo dije bien. Me gusta cuando aprendemos con imágenes porque puedo imaginar las palabras.

Interview #3 (Semana 3)

Pregunté “Who is he?” en el juego y aprendí “my” y “his” con ejemplos. Me gustó escuchar a mis amigos responder porque así aprendí más. Me gusta aprender inglés con juegos porque me siento tranquilo y no me da miedo hablar.

Interview #4 (Semana 4)

Dije “Where is she?” y “I am a student” en el juego. Me gustó porque pude usar frases completas sin equivocarme. Siento que ahora entiendo más inglés que antes gracias a los juegos.

Reflective Learning Journals**Journal #1 (Semana 1)**

Dije “He is a boy” y “He isn’t a girl”. Aprendí “His name is Juan” y me gustó decirlo en voz alta. Me divertí mucho jugando bingo con mis amigos.

Journal #2 (Semana 2)

Dije “It is an apple” y aprendí usar “an”. La profe explicó y lo practiqué varias veces. Me gustó aprender con imágenes.

Journal #3 (Semana 3)

Pregunté “Who is he?” y aprendí “my” y “his”. Me gustó hacerlo en grupo porque todos ayudamos. Sentí que hablé más inglés.

Journal #4 (Semana 4)

Dije “Where is she?” y “I am a student”. Me gustó ganar puntos por hablar. Aprendí más rápido con el juego.

Ángel (10 años)**Focus Group Discussions****FGD #1 (Semana 1)**

En el bingo me sentí tranquilo porque todos jugábamos y nadie se burlaba. Dije “I am a boy” y la profe me ayudó a decir “I am not a girl”. Me costó al principio, pero después lo repetí muchas veces hasta que salió bien. También aprendí “Her name is Ana” y me gustó escuchar cómo mis amigos también lo decían.

FGD #2 (Semana 2)

Jugamos con imágenes y me gustó porque aprendí palabras nuevas y podía hablar más. La profe me mostró una manzana y me preguntó “What is this?” y yo respondí “It is an apple”. Ella explicó que usamos “an” porque empieza con vocal y lo practiqué varias veces. Me gustó mucho aprenderlo así.

FGD #3 (Semana 3)

En el juego de preguntas yo pregunté “Who is he?” con la foto de un señor y mi amigo

respondió “He is my dad”. Luego dije “He isn’t my dad” para practicar el negativo. Aprendí a usar “my” y “his” y me gustó porque era como una adivinanza.

FGD #4 (Semana 4)

Jugamos para ganar puntos con frases y eso me motivó mucho. Dije “Where is she?” y mi amiga respondió “She is at home”. También dije “This is my book” mientras mostraba mi cuaderno. Me sentí feliz porque la profe dijo que mi pronunciación estaba mejorando.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interview #1 (Semana 1)

Me gustó el bingo porque pude hablar sin miedo. Dije “I am a boy” y “I am not a girl”. La profe explicó que “not” es para decir no, y lo practiqué varias veces. También aprendí “Her name is Ana” y me gustó repetirlo con mis amigos.

Interview #2 (Semana 2)

Hoy aprendí a decir “It is an apple”. Antes yo decía “a apple” pero la profe explicó que no es correcto. También aprendí “What is this?” para preguntar por cosas. Me gustó repetirlo porque ya me sale más natural.

Interview #3 (Semana 3)

Pregunté “Who is he?” y me ayudaron a decirlo correctamente. Aprendí a usar “my” y “his” con ejemplos como “my dad” y “his dad”. Me gusta aprender con juegos porque no me da pena hablar y la profe siempre nos anima y podemos decir más cosas y eso.

Interview #4 (Semana 4)

En el juego de puntos dije “Where is she?” y mi amiga respondió “She is at home”. También dije “This is my book” para mostrar mi cuaderno. Chévere cuando la profe me felicitó.

Reflective Learning Journals**Journal #1 (Semana 1)**

Hoy dije “I am a boy” y “I am not a girl”. Aprendí “Her name is Ana” y lo practiqué con mis amigos. Me sentí tranquilo y feliz de hablar más inglés.

Journal #2 (Semana 2)

Dije “It is an apple” y aprendí usar “an”. Lo repetí varias veces hasta que me salió bien. Me gusta aprender con juegos porque entiendo mejor.

Journal #3 (Semana 3)

Pregunté “Who is he?” y aprendí “my” y “his”. Me gustó hacerlo con mis amigos porque fue divertido. Cada vez hablo más inglés.

Journal #4 (Semana 4)

Dije “Where is she?” y “This is my book”. Me gustó cuando la profe dijo que lo hice bien. Aprendí que puedo hablar inglés sin miedo si practico.