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Ludic Activities to Learn Vocabulary in the EFL Classroom

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Resumen

Durante mucho tiempo, las estrategias tradicionales para enseñar vocabulario se han utilizado con bastante frecuencia en las clases de inglés como lengua extranjera. Como consecuencia, los estudiantes no han manifestado gran interés por aprender la lengua meta. Por otro lado, varios profesores han demostrado indiferencia al uso de estrategias no tradicionales tales como juegos o actividades lúdicas las cuales han sido percibidas como actividades de relleno más que como estrategias eficientes para la enseñanza. De esta manera, esta síntesis investigativa tuvo como objetivo desafiar dicha perspectiva proporcionando información importante sobre el uso de actividades lúdicas para enseñar vocabulario en el aula de inglés como lengua extranjera. Esta síntesis consideró un enfoque bibliográfico exploratorio. Por lo tanto, se seleccionaron y revisaron 20 estudios, y se establecieron cuatro categorías para analizar los efectos del uso de actividades lúdicas para enseñar vocabulario en las clases de inglés como lengua extranjera. Finalmente, los hallazgos revelaron que los juegos mejoran el conocimiento de vocabulario de los estudiantes en términos de tamaño y profundidad, que los aprendices y educadores consideraron los juegos como estrategias de aprendizaje eficientes; y que, los antecedentes y las necesidades educativas de los estudiantes son algunas de las implicaciones que los maestros deben considerar para utilizar actividades lúdicas eficazmente. Por lo tanto, se sugiere enfáticamente que los profesores implementen juegos para enseñar vocabulario en las clases de inglés.

Palabras clave: Juegos. Actividades lúdicas. Aprendizaje de vocabulario. Conocimiento de vocabulario. Juegos como estrategias. Juegos como técnicas. Enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera. Aprendizaje de inglés como lengua extranjera.



Abstract

For a long time, teachers have used quite often traditional strategies to teach vocabulary in EFL classes. Furthermore, they have disregarded the use of non-traditional strategies such as ludic activities because instructors have perceived games as time-filler activities rather than efficient strategies for teaching. As a consequence, students have not demonstrated a great interest in learning the target language. Hence, this research synthesis aimed to challenge such perception by providing important information about the use of ludic activities to learn vocabulary in the EFL classroom. This investigation considered an exploratory bibliographic approach. Thus, 20 studies were selected and reviewed in-depth, and four categories were determined to analyze the reported influence of using ludic activities to learn vocabulary in the EFL classroom.

The findings of the analysis revealed that games enhanced students' vocabulary knowledge in terms of size and depth, that apprentices and educators contemplated games as efficient learning strategies, and that certain pedagogical implications such as considering students' background and educational needs are key elements for teachers to use ludic activities efficiently. Finally, it is strongly suggested that teachers implement games to teach EFL vocabulary.

Keywords: Games. Ludic activities. Vocabulary learning. Vocabulary knowledge. Games as strategies. EFL teaching. EFL learning.



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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my beloved family, parents, siblings, grandmother, aunt, uncle, and son, who has never left me behind. To them, I express a special feeling of gratitude for helping me make this dream come true.

Daniela.



Dedication

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Verónica.



Introduction

Throughout the years, ludic activities have been recognized by some teachers as an effective strategy to increase students' lexical knowledge. Indeed, games engage apprentices in language learning since they involve features of the Social Constructivist Theory and the Communicative Approach (Light & Fawns, 2001; Harmer, 2007). Additionally, ludic activities provide an element of fun which motivates and makes students learn and recall vocabulary items quicker (Derakhshan & Khatir, 2015; Gozcu, 2016; Alavi & Gilakjani, 2019).

Unfortunately, other educators avoid using games despite the stimulation and collaboration they involve (Chou, 2014; Gozcu, 2016; Akdogan, 2017). Moreover, teachers' lack of knowledge about the positive effects of ludic activities in vocabulary learning make them consider games as activities without instructional value (Stojković & Jerotijević, 2011; Jafarpour-Boroujeni & Afshar, 2015; Akdogan, 2017).

Therefore, this research synthesis analyzes the influence of games on EFL students' vocabulary learning, examines the students' and teachers' perceptions of the use of ludic activities and describes the pedagogical implications of the use of games to learn vocabulary in the EFL classroom.

To achieve the research questions, this study is divided into six different chapters:

Chapter 1 encompasses the description of the research. It contains the background, the problem statement, the rationale, and the research questions.

Chapter 2 describes the theoretical framework. It includes the definition of ludic activities, its relationship with different approaches and theories, and its effect on EFL vocabulary learning.



Chapter 3 consists of the literature review. It presents a concise description of the selected studies to answer the research questions.

Chapter 4 provides the methodology and the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to select and analyze the research papers.

Chapter 5 encompasses the categorization and analysis of the data into tables pertaining to the revised papers.

Chapter 6 provides conclusions and some recommendations given by the authors after the analysis of the twenty research papers.



Chapter I

1. Description of the Research

1.1. Background

In the process of learning English as a foreign language, there are two components, vocabulary knowledge, and language use, which comprise a significant relationship. Hence, Nation (as cited in Alqahtani, 2015) qualifies the connection between said components as interrelated; thus, the knowledge of vocabulary allows language employment that leads to an expansion of lexicon. In other words, the more vocabulary the individual knows, the more the language can be employed. For this reason, there is a need to implement a strategy that allows the production of language, and one of the options that exist for this purpose is the use of ludic activities. To demonstrate how these activities permit language employment, it is necessary to illustrate the meaning of the word ludic. This term comes from the Latin word Ludus, which means game (Ferdig, 2008). Concretely, it expresses a characteristic of human behavior that encompasses social and instructional principles and provides a vehicle for expression, and imaginative action through the acknowledgment of information and regulations in a pleasant way (Ferdig, 2008). Then, the term ludic and games will be used interchangeably throughout this research work, since they denote the same meaning, that is, an activity that implies active socialization, communication, and imagination regulated by a series of rules. Based on this analysis, it can be identified that these activities involve both social and conceptual characteristics.

Thus, certain theoretical components of games have been distinguished. In particular, Freeman (as cited in Taheri, 2014) recognizes that games involve aspects of real-life communication. The aforementioned characteristics are considered valuable for social



constructivist theorists such as Vygotsky (as cited in Lightbown & Spada, 2013), who concludes that language evolves mainly from social interaction. Besides, Taheri (2014) concludes that social interaction in game-like activities allows learners to get help and support, permit participation in genuine communication, cooperate with others, raise their self-esteem, and manifest a greater willingness to socialize with their peers. In fact, social interaction can be observed in ludic activities since they are generally performed in groups. Thus, games are considered of great importance since all learning is solidly integrated into a given situation, which should be significant and applicable to real-life (Brown et al., as cited in Lainema & Makkonen, 2003). In this way, students learn while they socialize.

Regarding the prior theoretical components of ludic activities, another conceptual constituent such as the Communicative Approach can be identified. By applying this approach, students are able to use language through communicative activities such as games (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Derakhshan and Khatir (2015) propose that games create a context in which students learn meaningful and useful words; thus, they practice their communication skills. Furthermore, Gozcu (2016) states that games provide students with the stimulus to cooperate and communicate and the permanence to continue learning and developing the conditions to employ language significantly. Hence, Chen (2005) assures that games provide many benefits when learning a foreign language, one of them is the strengthening of creative and non-premeditated linguistic production. Likewise, the author indicates that, for learners, the objective of language games is language usage. Along with communicative games, Saricoban and Metin (2000) express that task-based games aimed to go beyond accurate speech production that functions as desirable communicative activities. Moreover, Saricoban and Metin (2000) affirm that through games, language is acquired unconsciously since the students' attention is on the task itself.



In the process of learning a foreign language, motivation in the learning environment plays an important role since it represents a determinant factor for success (Musso-Buendia & Ortega-Martín, 2018). This is supported by Krashen's monitor model in which it is ensured that attitudes and interests are the most dominant when it comes to acquiring the language unconsciously (Madrid et al., 1993). In like manner, Heras and Lasagabaster (2015) claim that students seem to be more motivated to learn foreign languages, since they experience less tension and anxiety. For this reason, educators need to employ specific teaching strategies to increase students' motivation and decrease language anxiousness (Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant, & Mihic, 2004). For example, the game strategy obtains positive results in the classroom and increases the motivation of the learners (Mahmoud & Tanni, 2014).

Throughout the years, several researchers such as Uberman (1998), Azar (2012), Bakhs (2016), and Bavi, (2018) have addressed the use of game strategies for vocabulary learning. Often games are perceived as a time-filler activity (Azar, 2012; Silvers, 1982). However, Bakhs (2016) and Uberman (1998) state that any game can be efficient as long as it is chosen correctly. Likewise, Richard-Amato (as cited in Tuan, 2012; Mahmoud et al., 2018) proposes that games reduce anxiety and increase the probability of vocabulary learning.

Additionally, Dolati and Mikaili (2011) showed that games provide benefits to learning vocabulary. Furthermore, Bastanfar and Hashemi (2010), Ahmadi, Ismail, and Abdullah (2012), Rahimy and Shams (2012), Rohani, and Pourgharib (2013) mentioned that ludic activities resemble real contexts and that contribute to the promotion of vocabulary knowledge. Besides, Huyen and Nga (2003) and Ramadhaniarti (2016) expose that students' perceptions towards the use of games are favorable and that learners prefer the use of new methods to learn vocabulary.



Additionally, the available empirical evidence shows that the use of games to learn vocabulary increases students' motivation and interest (Deesri, 2002; Haghghat, Jahandar, 2015; Akdogan, 2017).

Unfortunately, Huyen and Nga (2003) claim that vocabulary learning has been taught mainly through traditional ways; consequently, the learning of vocabulary has been labeled as boring. Public English teachers seem not to use strategies that strengthen communicative competence, since they continue to use traditional strategies that impede the progress of said competence (Calle et al., 2012). The lack of existing knowledge about the use of non-traditional strategies in the EFL classroom represents an insufficiently explored area of research work. Therefore, this research synthesis focuses on providing important information on the use of ludic activities as a non-traditional strategy or technique for learning vocabulary in the English as a foreign language classroom.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The Communicative Approach assumes that language develops in a social setting, and it should not be separated from its context when it is taught (Chang, 2011). Considering this perspective, learning a foreign language requires the involvement of students in real contexts where the target language can be utilized. Similarly, learners should acquire a significant range of words and should understand how to use them in real contexts (Azar, 2012). However, in the classroom, there are limited authentic situations to promote students' active learning. Indeed, the only place to practice the target language is the classroom; and, in the majority of EFL contexts, the educator is usually the unique antecedent of “teaching language input” and “linguistic model” for learners (Krashen, as cited in Turnbull, 2001, p. 532; Littlewood & Yu, 2011). Thence, Scrivener (2011) affirms that educators need to identify meaningful methods to assist



students to enhance their lexicon acquisition since the use of word definitions does not position vocabulary knowledge in the students' long-term memory.

In the matter of identifying the difficulties existent in the EFL teaching and learning process, other struggles about teachers' choice of methods are analyzed. For example, Berne and Blachowicz (as cited in Alqahtani, 2015), manifest that educators are indecisive about the best practice in lexicon teaching and, occasionally, do not know where to begin at the time of teaching vocabulary items. Other EFL educators even consider certain non-traditional strategies such as games a waste of time that only provides fun (Ojeda, as cited in Fotovatnia & Namjoo, 2013). Considering a more specific context, the use of traditional strategies is yet evidenced in Ecuador. For instance, a study carried by Calle et al. (2012) revealed that teachers continue employing traditional strategies that impede the progress of communicative competence. Likewise, educators do not use and even ignore modern strategies (CONCELT, as cited in Ortega-Auquilla, Vázquez-Avilés, Pacheco-Saetama, & Benalcázar-Bermeo, 2020).

Therefore, Natsir and Sanjaya (2014) specified that in some countries the grammar-translation method is still employed despite that it is a traditional method. Indeed, Matamoros - González, Rojas, Romero, Vera-Quiñonez, and Soto (2017) exposed that even though this approach has been replaced by different methods, it is yet possible to find some forms of its appliance in EFL classrooms. For instance, according to Burgin and Daniel (2017), some educators provide only definitions and do not consider the meaning-making process that students go through when they learn a foreign language. In short, in some EFL classrooms, there are still traces of the use of traditional strategies.

Doubtlessly, the problem arises from the limited knowledge teachers have about non-traditional strategies directed to enhance language learning, which prevents teachers from using



alternative methods. However, it should be noted that this lack of knowledge only constitutes one of several problems that affect the Ecuadorian teaching-learning process of English. As a result, poor performance in the English Proficiency Index 2020 is manifested in the country (EF EPI, 2020). According to Education First, the international language teaching company, the results of such an index illustrate that Ecuador ranked 93 out of 100 participating countries, occupying the last position among Latin American countries (EF EPI, 2020). It reveals that there is a problem affecting the EFL learning process.

1.3. Rationale

Following Mahu (2012), the English language has become the common language of the world. The author states that English is spoken as the official or co-official language in 45 countries, and in other countries where it does not have an official position due to academic and occupational purposes; besides, Malu (2012) explains that 1 out of 5 people in the world can understand it. As a matter of fact, in Ecuador, this importance has been acknowledged, and the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (2013) establishes that learning English as a foreign language has been given significant importance because it is considered a universal language or a lingua franca.

For this reason, in EFL learning, certain linguistic components are indispensable for language acquisition. Indeed, for Susanto and Fazlinda (as cited in Susanto, 2017), vocabulary knowledge and mastery are considered necessary elements of language; likewise, the authors determine that vocabulary mastery portrays an important role in reading, writing, speaking, and listening skill. Hence, to improve the language learning process, educators should consider that vocabulary is a basic part and a key element of a language; in fact, Nation (as cited in Alipour, Safari, & Molana, 2020) assures that omitting vocabulary when learning a language is a pointless



attempt. Whereas omitting grammar, very limited information can be communicated; omitting vocabulary, nothing can be communicated (Susanto, 2017). Therefore, because of the aforementioned statements, it is possible to assure that increasing vocabulary knowledge in the EFL classroom is indispensable for language learning.

Despite the importance of improving lexicon acquisition, Azar (2012), Mubaslat (2012), Heras and Lasagabaster (2015), Ramadhaniarti (2016) have discussed perspectives on whether to use or to avoid games in language learning. On one side, ludic activities have been perceived as time filler activities during class (Azar, 2012). On the other side, nowadays, teachers think of games as strategies to polish vocabulary learning since they are a form of play with rules, competitiveness, and fun which provides actual communication for language learning (Mubaslat, 2012). The features of games establish a reduction of tension and anxiety; and a growth of students' motivation to learn foreign languages; thus, students' perceptions about games usage in class become favorable (Heras & Lasagabaster, 2015; Ramadhaniarti, 2016).

As a result, educators should contemplate beginning from the basis: vocabulary learning. As stated by Krashen and Nation (as cited in Kang, 1995), a language cannot be learned without its vocabulary. From this idea, the question of what strategy or technique is effective to learn vocabulary emerges. Games can be labeled as a technique that can provide significant learning. Thus, Uberman (1998) suggests that a set of words can be understood better if it is taught in a meaningful way.

Likewise, this research synthesis analyzes the reported effect of games on students' vocabulary acquisition, the reported students' and teachers' perceptions towards this strategy, and the reported pedagogical implications of using games. Finally, the current inquiry is intended to contribute valuable information on the use of ludic activities as a non-traditional strategy to learn



vocabulary, which can assist teachers when they decide on the activities to use in vocabulary instruction in the EFL classroom.

1.4. Research Questions

1. What are the reported effects of using ludic activities on EFL vocabulary learning?
2. What are the reported students' and teachers' perceptions on the use of ludic activities to learn and teach vocabulary in the EFL classroom?
3. What are the reported pedagogical implications of using ludic activities to teach vocabulary in the EFL classroom?

1.5. Objectives

1.5.1. General Objective

To analyze the reported influence of using ludic activities to learn vocabulary in the EFL classroom.

1.5.2. Specific Objectives

To assess the reported effects of using ludic activities to learn vocabulary in the EFL classroom.

To examine the reported students' and teachers' perceptions on the use of ludic activities to learn vocabulary in the EFL classroom.

To describe the reported pedagogical implications of using ludic activities to learn vocabulary in the EFL classroom.



Chapter II

2. Theoretical Framework

This research synthesis is based on the use of games as strategies to learn vocabulary in the EFL classroom. Therefore, the definition of games, their pertinent aspects, and their relationship with the EFL classroom will be introduced first to supply the fundamental background to the readers.

2.1. Ludic Activities

2.1.1. Definition

According to Salen and Zimmerman, games are defined as a systematic process that immerses actors in simulated scenarios delimited by regulations that provide measurable results (as cited in Elias, Garfield, & Gutschera, 2012). In education, Mille (2009) mentions that games are considered motivational tasks to complement learning in class. Besides, the author describes these activities as instruments that engage apprentices in the learning process since teachers use ludic activities to drill facts, join thoughts or assist students to incorporate discrete information.

2.1.2. Ludic Activities and the Social Constructivist Theory

The Constructivist Theory has emerged as the result of various thoughts from different theorists such as John Dewey, Bruner, Piaget, and Vygotsky. Brown et al. (as cited in Lainema & Makkonen, 2003) state that the fundamental principle of the Constructivist Theory consists that all learning is solidly embedded in a given situation that should be significant, functional, and pertinent to the real world. Additionally, this theory consists of different sub-branches; however, it has been contemplated the social constructivist perspective for the purpose of this inquiry. It refers to people that construct knowledge by interacting with one another and with their



surroundings (Kim, 2001). Similarly, Shunk (as cited in Kim, 2001) mentioned that instructional models may include “reciprocal teaching, peer collaboration, cognitive apprenticeships, problem-based instruction... and other methods that involve learning with others” (p. 5). These situations refer to games considering that they provide learners the opportunity to not only speak, write and think but to use the language (Light & Fawns, 2001). In this manner, students become active agents and the learning process becomes meaningful. Hence, games involve features of the social constructivist perspective that influence the process of learning a foreign language.

2.1.3. Ludic Activities and the Communicative Approach

Harmer (2007) assures those ludic activities are arranged to stimulate communication between learners and that they usually depend on a series of elements such as information gaps or drilling activities, oral or written communication among learners, and a specific goal (Jafarpour-Boroujeni & Afshar, 2015). Moreover, Harmer (2007) suggests that teachers play three important roles such as prompters, participants, and feedback providers to encourage students to develop their communicative competence through communicative games.

Additionally, students can rely on language function rather than the consolidation of learning through grammatical rules (Dewi, Kultsum, & Armadi, 2016). Therefore, the completion of the task is more important than the accuracy of the language.

2.1.4. Ludic Activities and the Process of Learning English as a Foreign Language

As stated by Lee (2000), a language is learned by making use of it. In other words, the target language must be utilized communicatively. Unfortunately, learners utter only sentences or word phrases that cannot carry the language learning further. Hence, teachers should consider strategies such as ludic activities since they make students use the foreign language actively.

Indeed, instructors can use games to create contexts in which the language is learned



significantly. Likewise, certain games offer students a great opportunity to reuse language and help teachers to present new language items (Wright, Betteridge, & Bucky, 2005).

2.1.4.1. Ludic Activities and Vocabulary Learning

Considering vocabulary in foreign language learning, if students do not have enough lexicon, they are not able to convey or communicate ideas verbally or in written forms (Fauziati, as cited in Zahedi & Abdi, 2012). Scrivener (2011) states that “lexis is a powerful carrier of meaning” (p. 228). For example, the author mentions that beginners' ideas can be understood by saying some words such as “tomorrow”, “eat lunch”, “family”, “walking” without knowing grammatical structures.

For this reason, educators should know the way vocabulary is learned since it is essential at the time of learning a language. However, knowing a word entails more than acknowledging its definition. It also requires the understanding of its elements such as oral and inscribed forms, grammar rules, collocations, regularity, suitability, concepts, and correlations (Nation, 1990). In line with this, Jenkins and Dixon (1983) state that lexis learning develops primarily in context. Unfortunately, the acquisition of vocabulary in the EFL classroom relies on memorization (Taka, 2008). Also, the context's role during the first stages of lexicon learning is minor.

These implications affect the process of lexis learning. Thus, learners who lack linguistic knowledge must make premeditated endeavors to get lexica such as connecting the words to similar words, meanings, translation into the native language, or exemplifications (Taka, 2008). Then, to improve vocabulary learning, Taka (2008) concluded that the productive use of words is a suitable way to help enhance students' lexicon retention in long-term memory. Accordingly, educators may apply different vocabulary games that promote students' participation (Al Neyadi, 2007). They should also consider the usage of appropriate ludic activities to learners' age, socio-



cultural background, and curiosity where they encounter the experience of triumph (Lightbown & Spada, 1999).

Hence, in educational contexts, educators consider the needs of students in holistic and individual manners and motivate them to take part actively in the learning process (Ive, 2017). According to Nagaraju, Madhavaiah and Peter (2013), student-centered activities bring several benefits to learners working together in English e.g., they communicate more, share their thoughts, learn from one another, feel more confident and less distressed, and use the language in a significant manner.

2.1.4.2. Vocabulary Knowledge

Vocabulary knowledge represents an essential component in foreign language learning (Khan, Radzuan, Shahbaz, Ibrahim, & Mustafa, 2018). Unfortunately, it may be perceived as committed to memorizing the definitions of certain terms (Nagy, as cited in Karakoç & Köse, 2017). According to Qian (2002), students with a bigger lexicon have a broader database from which to figure the meaning and the function of new words. Thus, Adam (2016) proposes that the lack of lexicon knowledge largely impedes EFL students' real communication. For instance, Hamad (2013) indicates that poor performance of language is the result of students' limited vocabulary.

To avoid restricted language production in students and to enhance vocabulary learning, educators should consider two important components of vocabulary knowledge such as breadth and depth. A person's extent or amount of glossary is referred to as breadth (Chou, 2011). For instance, an EFL learner should recognize leastwise 2,000 terms to comprehend 90-94% of oral speech in diverse situations (Adolphs & Schmitt, as cited in Karakoç & Köse, 2017).



On the other hand, the depth of vocabulary knowledge involves a good understanding of vocabulary terms (O'Dell, Read & McCarthy, 2000; Qian, 2002). Thus, to expand vocabulary depth, Nation (as cited in Webb, 2012) explains that it is indispensable for teachers to plan lexicon learning. Educators should determine what terms are to be learned and reflect on how to create the necessary scenarios to use the language. Indeed, instructors' knowledge of vocabulary depth helps them recognize language issues and identify different tasks that promote language learning and increase words knowledge (Webb, 2012). In fact, Qian (2002) presumes that the two vocabulary knowledge dimensions may function collectively and autonomously since the more lexicon students recognize, the more probable they have a broader depth of lexicon knowledge.

2.1.4.3. Ludic Activities as Strategies to Teach Vocabulary

In education, there exist various strategies that educators use to aid students in learning EFL. In fact, ludic activities are considered teaching strategies. Thus, this subsection analyzes the relationship between strategies and games.

Deesri (2002), Mubaslat (2012), Birova (2013) refer to games as a useful strategy in EFL learning. They provide learners the chance to practice and use the language purposefully, and to make use of their creative skills in an enjoyable environment (Birova, 2013). Therefore, Birova (2013) emphasizes that “games have to be considered as a basic strategy in language education” (p. 8).

In class, educators are under a great responsibility since they are the ones who decide what strategies are the most appropriate to teach vocabulary items. For instance, teachers should consider the choice between traditional and non-traditional strategies to teach lexicon. This decision is a determinant factor for students' learning success. However, educators' tendency is



inclined towards traditional methodologies which are teacher-active and student-passive (Kuzu, 2007). Therefore, Derakhshan and Khatir (2015) suggest that instructors should seek methodologies that encourage learners to utilize the language creatively. Likewise, Dagarin (2004) states that instructors should consider an interactive class atmosphere because it involves two implications such as creating a satisfying environment in class with amicable relationships between learners, and emboldening students to become acceptable speakers in the target language. In this manner, instructors are responsible for students' learning by guiding them to get significant linguistic knowledge.

2.1.5. Ludic Activities and Motivation in the Process of Learning EFL

Motivation in the EFL process is related to students' disposition to learn the target language (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Vandergrift, 2005). It is also related to the magnitude of learners' efforts to learn the language regarding the willingness to perform it, and the satisfaction to do it (Alizadeh, 2016). Unfortunately, motivation is overshadowed by the tension of the learning process. For instance, there is a high level of stress in classrooms because learners face new grammatical rules, terms, and content (Deesri, 2002).

Additionally, the idea that learning must be formal and dignified in nature affects the process of learning the language. It is believed that if learners have fun and enjoy the process, they are not truly learning (Lee, 1995). However, Lee (1995) guarantees that it is possible to learn a language and have fun at the same time. For instance, educators can apply educational games to increase learners' motivation, promote learning, lower anxiety, and make students feel comfortable (Hansen, 1994; Deesri, 2002; Stojković & Jerotijević, 2011). Indeed, Al Neyadi (2007) expresses that motivational games are used by teachers to enhance vocabulary retention



and to foster learners' interaction and interest. In short, ludic activities represent a factor that increases motivation and creates a significant experience for vocabulary and language learning.



Chapter III

3. Literature Review

3.1. Introduction

In this section, studies based on educational games for teaching vocabulary in the EFL classroom will be covered. Then, a brief description of each study and key findings will be included. The studies were classified into three main categories: the effect of using ludic activities to learn vocabulary in the classroom, the students' and teachers' perceptions toward games, and the pedagogical implications of using ludic activities.

3.2. Effects of Using Ludic Activities on EFL Vocabulary Learning

Researchers indicate that there are divergent perspectives about the use of ludic activities to learn vocabulary. The results of several studies have revealed whether to use or avoid using such activities in class. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze these ideas and report what researchers have found. Thus, in this subsection, this study will analyze the positive and negative effects that ludic activities have on vocabulary learning and vocabulary knowledge.

Taheri (2014), and Alavi and Gilakjani (2019) state that games are strategies that create an entertaining and engaging situation that helps students increase their lexicon. The authors considered experimental research on the effect of games to learn vocabulary. The studies included participants who were divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental groups were exposed to ludic activities, but the control groups learned through traditional strategies. After applying the post-test on both groups, the results showed that the experimental group had superior performance. Therefore, the authors showed that games had a significant effect on students' repertory of words.



Similarly, Honarmand, Rostampour, and Abdorahimzadeh (2015), and Bavi (2018) carried out different investigations to know if the use of games has an effect on students' vocabulary. The researchers worked with control and experimental groups. Students in the control groups learned vocabulary items through the use of textbooks while the participants in the experimental group learned through games. The outcomes of the post-test revealed that there was an important difference between students' performance. Learners who were exposed to games overpassed students from the control group. Finally, the authors concluded that games were more outstanding strategies to learn vocabulary than the traditional ones and that teachers should consider games as a workable activity for vocabulary instruction.

Al-Furqon (2017), and Apdy and Asrifan (2019) conducted studies to understand the impact of ludic activities on learning the English target vocabulary items. The authors developed a pre-experimental study to quantify the effect of ludic activities without a control group. Each author used the same instrument for the pre-test and the immediate post-test. In both studies, the analysis of the participants' pre-test overall scores showed that it was less than 70, but after the intervention, the score increased to 85 and more. For this reason, the researchers concluded that games had a positive impact on participants' vocabulary learning.

Additionally, Mubaslat (2012), and Kabiri and Ghafoori (2014) conducted studies to understand the effect of games on teaching and learning vocabulary. Mubaslat carried out an experimental study, while Kabiri and Ghafoori conducted a quasi-experimental study. Nevertheless, participants were divided into control and experimental group.

The experimental groups learned vocabulary through games while the control groups received teacher-centered instruction. The authors applied pre-tests and immediate post-tests. The analysis of the results showed that the experimental groups surpassed the control groups in



vocabulary learning and retention. Thus, the authors concluded that ludic activities boosted learners' attention and motivation and increased the target word learning. Kabiri and Ghafoori (2014) also concluded that games had three positive effects on teaching vocabulary in the EFL classroom. They were:

1. Games involved relaxation and enjoyment for learners, which promoted lexicon learning and retention.
2. Generally, games provided students with amicable competition and maintained them involved in the learning process.
3. Educators were able to present real-life situations through vocabulary activities in the classroom, which improved learners' use of the target language in adaptable and communicative manners.

Tuan (2012) and Alipour et al. (2020) researched recall and retention of vocabulary items through games. The two studies were conducted by using a quantitative approach that involved experimental and control groups. The participants in the experimental groups were exposed to learning through games whereas the control groups were instructed without games. After the instruction period, apprentices completed an immediate and a delayed post-test. The immediate post-test revealed that there was a substantial difference in the groups' performance. For instance, the experimental group showed greater retention of words since they could recall vocabulary even after the delayed post-test. So, the learners from such groups were outstanding since they retained the target vocabulary. Conclusively, the studies demonstrated that games helped students to remember concrete words meaningfully.

In line with the previous idea, Al Masri and Al Najjar (2014) investigated the effect of using games on students' achievement in English vocabulary. In total 158 students were selected



and then categorized into two experimental groups and two control groups. The former learned vocabulary through games and the latter learned mainly through traditional strategies. After the authors applied a post-test to both groups, there was a statistical difference in favor of the experimental group. The researcher, thus, concluded that games were beneficial and efficient to learn vocabulary.

Similarly, Azar (2012) carried out an action research study on the use of games to learn vocabulary. The researcher incorporated games into the classes and experienced the effects of these activities. The investigation started with the selection of 23 students who learned vocabulary through games. During the lessons, the researchers observed students' performance and development of the target words while they learned with games. Consequently, Azar discovered that games were useful for students to enrich their repertoire of words since they were interacting and cooperating to learn new items.

Likewise, Alemi (2010) explored the role of using games to enhance learners' retention of words. The study was conducted with 60 students who were categorized into control and experimental groups. During the intervention, the researcher had the class instructor teaching the vocabulary items to both groups using traditional strategies. However, after each class session, the author provided training using games only to the experimental group students. Finally, the results of the vocabulary post-test, which was applied to both groups, revealed that games had a positive effect on expanding students' repertoire of words.

Chou (2014), and Adiyana, Dewi, and Wiguna (2018) conducted mixed-method studies with EFL learners to comprehend the effect of games in vocabulary learning. All of the participants received an intervention based on ludic activities. Thus, through the analysis of the



researchers' field notes taken during class observation, the author concluded that game activities enhanced learners' curiosity and interaction in the classroom.

Even though some of the previous authors found that the use of games had positive effects on vocabulary size and depth, Jafarpour-Boroujeni and Afshar (2015) found that games did not have a significant impact on vocabulary learning. The inquiry included control and two experimental groups. The control group learned vocabulary items in traditional ways. The experimental groups were taught vocabulary through games. However, games were the main method of instruction in one of the experimental groups; while in the other, games were a supplementary activity for lexicon instruction. After applying the post-tests, the authors discovered no significant difference in students' performance between the control and the experimental groups. Therefore, the researchers concluded that games had no substantial impact on students' overall performance.

Conclusively, research has shown that there are divergent results regarding the use of ludic activities. However, most of the data collected indicated a positive impact on the usage of games.

3.3. Students' and Teachers' Perceptions of the Use of Ludic Activities in the EFL Classroom

Several researchers point out that there are different students' and teachers' perceptions regarding the use of ludic activities to learn vocabulary. In this subsection, both perspectives will be presented, compared, and contrasted.

3.3.1. Students' Perceptions

Azar (2012) conducted a mixed-method research study on vocabulary learning. The qualitative analysis was aimed to comprehend students' perspectives on the use of games to learn



vocabulary. The researcher used an interview, and a post-class interview to understand students' opinions, thoughts, and feelings. As a result, learners pointed out that they liked the relaxing environment, the competitiveness, and the incentive scheme that was created in the classroom. The majority of the students mentioned that their use of vocabulary became more meaningful since they eagerly joined the activities and became involved in learning collectively.

Similarly, Chou (2014) and Akdogan (2017) developed a study aimed to determine how ludic activities assisted students to learn vocabulary. In Chou's study, learners from four different English proficiency levels completed a self-assessment questionnaire. In Akdogan's study, learners' responses were collected through online self-report questionnaires. In both studies, the results revealed that the participants considered games, related to a specific topic, motivating and helpful to increase vocabulary memorization and size.

In the same manner, Wang, Shang, and Briody (2011) conducted a parallel mixed-method study to understand the effect of applying ludic activities on EFL learners' perceptions. The participants had previous experience in learning the target language while they played games. Therefore, the researcher applied a twenty multiple-choice questionnaire and a semi-structured interview to the participants. The analysis of the data exposed students' favorable perceptions toward the use of games since it illustrated that ludic activities promoted learners' motivation and confidence to learn new lexicon items.

On the other hand, Gozcu (2016) conducted a qualitative case study to determine the importance of applying games in EFL vocabulary learning. The authors applied a semi-structured interview to 4 participants. The researchers also observed them during the interview and the intervention of the ludic activity. After the analysis of the data, the authors found that a female participant referred to the game activity as boring. She said that she could not express



herself using some words of the target language. Additionally, the researchers concluded that games usually increased learners' motivation and participation, but they demotivated them in certain circumstances.

3.3.2. Teachers' Perceptions

Even though, in the past, teachers considered games as time fillers with limited educational value (Silvers, 1982; Stojković and Jerotijević, 2011; Azar, 2012); over the last years, this perspective has changed. In fact, Stojković and Jerotijević's (2011), and Akdogan's (2017) interviewed EFL educators about the use of games in the target language learning. The analysis of the teachers' responses demonstrated that most of the teachers perceived games as productive ways that promote the learning of the target language lexicon placidly. It also showed that most educators acknowledged the positive impact that ludic activities had on language acquisition. Thus, they supported the use of games to teach vocabulary in EFL learning.

Similar results are illustrated by Azar (2012), Tuan (2012), and Alavi and Gilakjani (2019) who researched the use of games for vocabulary learning. The authors used a qualitative approach that included observations of teachers' classes and interviews with the educators. The findings revealed that the teachers had positive perceptions of the application of ludic activities in class. They mentioned that the students seemed to learn vocabulary more effectively since games created a relaxing and comfortable atmosphere. The authors concluded that the element of fun, which was added to the class, led students to feel less stressed and more motivated.

The data reported in this subsection indicates that teachers and students have positive perspectives toward the use of ludic activities to learn vocabulary.

3.4. Pedagogical Implications of Using Ludic Activities to Teach Vocabulary in the EFL Classroom



At the time of using ludic activities, there are several implications for teachers to consider. They will be presented and analyzed in this subsection.

Alemi (2010) mentioned that feedback was an important implication to be considered for effective learning when games were applied. The author revealed that feedback among students made them feel more independent. Thus, the students started to provide different insights into word meanings when new vocabulary items were introduced. Therefore, the author suggested that educators and even students could provide constructive criticism for more effective development of the class when a game is used.

Likewise, Azar (2012), and Tuan (2012) stated that instructors should choose suitable games according to learners' skill level, cultural context, timing, learning topic, and classroom settings for the correct development of the class. The authors indicated that such indicators constitute determining factors for the success of vocabulary learning.

Similarly, Al Masri and Al Najjar (2014) mentioned that there were other aspects teachers considered when they used ludic activities to teach the target vocabulary. For instance, the authors mentioned that instructors selected words that conveyed key concepts, that had meaning in students' lives, that were highly used in the language, and that were relevant to the content being learned. Thus, the authors concluded that educators should teach vocabulary items that are significant for learners' needs.

Therefore, Apdy and Asrifan (2019) suggested that educators must creatively select strategies according to students' needs. This careful method of selection and application improve the outcomes of the ludic activity in vocabulary learning.



To conclude, if game activities are applied in class to teach EFL vocabulary effectively, teachers should consider some important pedagogical aspects such as feedback, learners' educational needs and proficiency level, the relationship between games and the topic, and the provision of clear instructions.



Chapter IV

4. Methodology

The present work consists of a research synthesis with an exploratory bibliographic research approach. A research synthesis is a systematic secondary review of accumulated primary research studies (Norris & Ortega, 2006). To develop this research synthesis, data was collected from reliable online databases such as EBSCO, ERIC, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and Taylor & Francis. Similarly, to narrow the extent of the present work, the criteria considered to select the articles were as follows.

1) The articles referred to the application of ludic activities focused on vocabulary learning. Thus, the range of information remained narrow.

2) The articles reported on empirical studies to get a clear idea of the effect of ludic activities as a strategy to learn vocabulary.

3) The research designs of the studies reported in the articles encompassed quantitative and/or qualitative methods, to achieve in-depth insights on the topic.

4) The articles selected were published from the year 2010 onwards, to ensure the analysis of current information.

5) The articles selected were applied in schools, high schools, or language institutes in the EFL context to gather information relevant to the immediate context of the study.

Similarly, journals that were revised were the following: The Journal of Asia TEFL, Malaysian Journal of ELT Research (MaJER), Academic Conferences International Limited, Theory and Practice in Language Studies, International Journal of Basic and Applied Science, International Journal of Educational Investigations, Journal of Language Teaching and Research, American International Journal of Contemporary Research, among others that were considered



reliable. Moreover, the key terms for the present work were: (a) games, (b) ludic activities, (c) vocabulary learning, (d) vocabulary knowledge, (e) games as strategies, (f), EFL teaching and (g) EFL learning.



Chapter V

5. Analysis of the Data

The present research aims to understand the effect of using ludic activities to learn vocabulary. Twenty research papers were selected to gather the data, which were later coded into categories to analyze the information and answer the research questions. These categories were the year of publication, the effect of using ludic activities on EFL vocabulary learning, the students' and teachers' perceptions, and the pedagogical implications of games application. Finally, tables for each category were constructed to present the information and carry out the analysis.

5.1. Year of Publication of the Studies

Table 1 shows the year of publication of the studies which were published between 2010 and 2020. For this, all the 20 studies were considered. Table 1 was developed to illustrate the relevance of the present topic.

Table 1

Publication Year of the Studies

Year of publication	No. of studies	(%)
2010 – 2015	11	55%
2016 – 2020	9	45%

N= 20

During 2010 and 2020, several research projects focused on the use of tools such as ludic activities to improve target language learning. For example, 11 of the 20 studies were carried out between 2010 and 2015 (Stojković & Jerotijević, 2011; Wang et al., 2011; Mubaslat, 2012;



Chou, 2014; Kabiri & Ghafoori, 2014). Additionally, researchers did not lose interest in ludic activities since 9 of the studies were published between 2016 and 2020 (Gozcu, 2016; Akdogan, 2017; Al-Furqon, 2017; Adiyana et al., 2018; Apdy & Asrifan, 2019). Indeed, Shabaneh and Farrah (2019) pointed out that it was important to consider new teaching tools that focused on active students' participation.

5.2. The Effect of Using Ludic Activities in the EFL Classroom

Table 2 was designed to answer the first research question regarding the effect of using ludic activities to learn vocabulary in the EFL classroom. Only nineteen studies were counted for this purpose.

Table 2

The Effect of Using Games to Learn Vocabulary

	Effect ^a	N° of Studies	(%)*
Positive effect	Size and depth	12	63
	Enhancement of motivation	9	47
	Enhancement of participation	6	32
	Reduction of anxiety	3	16
Negative effect	No educational value as the main strategy	2	11

N=19

^a Studies are counted in more than one category

* Each percentage is calculated based on the total number of studies used



Table 2 shows that most of the studies concluded that the use of games positively affected students' EFL vocabulary learning. Indeed, the authors demonstrated that there was a significant impact on students' vocabulary knowledge in terms of size and depth. Additionally, Wang et al. (2011), Taheri (2014), and Alavi, and Gilakjani (2019) stated that games prompt students to learn more efficiently; thus, their repertoire of words increased and made them able to recall and keep terms for longer periods. For instance, games such as the Pantomime game, Dance of the Ostriches, Draw the Picture, Eyewitness, Four Corners are beneficial for improving the students' ability to recall meaning (Jafarpour-Boroujeni and Afshar, 2015; Alipour et al., 2020).

Similarly, 9 studies concluded that games enhanced learners' motivation in class (Wang et al., 2011; Mubaslat, 2012; Chou, 2014; Kabiri & Ghafoori, 2014; Gozcu, 2016; Adiyana et al., 2018; Apdy & Asrifan, 2019). In fact, when games were used in the class, students were unconsciously encouraged to take part in the learning process since they were involved in a comfortable setting (Tuan, 2012). Alemi (2010) concluded that the games namely Twenty Questions, Charades, Definition Games, Passwords, and Crossword Puzzles allowed students to be actively involved and engaged in the class. Moreover, Labeling games and Find Someone Who fostered motivation and group learning, and promoted cooperative abilities among students (Tuan, 2012; Adiyana et al., 2018). Additionally, Taheri (2014) and Kabiri and Ghafoori (2014) stated that students could get help and support from classmates through games that allowed them to engage in genuine conversation, collaborate with one another, boost their self-esteem, and prove a stronger disposition to interact in the classroom. Thus, Derakhshan and Khatir, (2015), Gozcu (2016), and Alavi and Gilakjani (2019) exposed that when games were applied in class, the element of fun helped students to learn and recall vocabulary items quicker since they were motivated.



Furthermore, table 2 demonstrates that 6 studies affirmed that games were useful activities to enhance apprentices' participation (Azar, 2012; Al Masri & Al Najar 2014; Chou, 2014; Taheri, 2014; Adiyana et al., 2018; Bavi, 2018). For example, Bavi (2018) found that the Chalk Board Acronym, Letter Scramble, and Charades improved vocabulary learning since an element of fun was incorporated into the classes. Taheri (2014) stated that when games were applied in the classroom, learners had several opportunities to interact with each other to achieve a common goal. Moreover, Alavi and Gilakjani (2019) established that students felt eager to take part in the process of learning vocabulary. Since games transformed the learning environment into an engaging and captivating atmosphere, learners felt more motivated to be active agents in the class (Derakhshan & Khatir, 2015).

Likewise, Alemi (2010) and Alipour et al. (2020) identified that games reduced anxiety. The authors explained that the use of ludic activities helped to overcome this problem by making students feel more secure and confident at the time of participating.

On the other hand, as a negative effect, researchers found that games did not have educational value. Stojković and Jerotijević (2011) and Jafarpour-Boroujeni and Afshar (2015) mentioned that games did not bring pedagogical benefits to students' learning when these activities were used as the main method of teaching. However, Jafarpour and Afshar (2015) explained that students benefited from the use of games when these strategies were implemented as supplementary activities.

Finally, the analyzed information provided evidence that the use of games had a positive effect on students' vocabulary knowledge, enhancement of motivation, enhancement of participation, and reduction of anxiety.



5.3. Students' and Teachers' Perceptions of the Use of Ludic Activities in the EFL

Classroom

5.3.1. Students' Perceptions

Table 3 was designed to answer the second research question regarding the students' perceptions about games. In this table, 7 out of the 20 studies were considered since they were the only ones that gathered information on students' perceptions about the use of ludic activities to learn vocabulary in the classroom.

Table 3

Students' Perceptions of the Use of Games to Learn Vocabulary

	Perceptions	No. of Studies ^a	(%)*
Positive perceptions	Feeling motivated	6	86
	Friendly competition	5	71
	Enjoy collaboration	4	57
Negative perceptions	Boredom	1	14

N=7

^a Studies are counted in more than one category

* Each percentage is calculated based on the total number of studies used

Table 3 suggests that there were more positive students' perceptions than negative ones toward the use of games. These positive perceptions were motivation, friendly competition, and collaboration. Concerning students' motivation, Stojković and Jerotijević (2011), Wang et al. (2011), and Chou (2014) exposed that learners reported that games made them feel more interested in class. Al Masri and Al Najar (2014), and Bavi (2018) explained that motivation



played an important role in students' learning; therefore, students felt curious about an activity that resulted in active involvement and participation. In the same manner, Ramadhaniarti (2016) mentioned that games helped students to learn vocabulary items more easily and efficiently, and to feel relaxed and interested in the subject.

Moreover, Azar (2012) indicated that friendly competition was a predominant perspective among students since it increased their learning interest; therefore, language learning was a valuable advantage. Lastly, Stojković and Jerotijević (2011) demonstrated that students enjoyed collaborating with classmates while they played. The previous authors indicated that ludic activities made learners develop some cooperation and kind competitiveness skills.

In contrast, boredom was considered a negative perception. Gozcu (2016) found that games were considered boring for one learner. The authors referred to this problem as a demotivating factor and explained that the student had limited vocabulary; which hindered the learner from producing language orally.

Finally, the analysis of the data shows that students considered that games increased their motivation, friendly competition, and collaboration in EFL vocabulary learning.

5.3.2. Teachers' Perceptions

Table 4 was designed to answer research question number 2 which is about the teachers' perceptions of games. In this case, only the studies that accomplished this purpose were selected. Moreover, 6 out of the 20 studies were considered since they were only the ones that gathered information on educators' perceptions about the use of ludic activities to teach vocabulary in the classroom.

Table 4

*Teachers' Perceptions of the Use of Games to Teach Vocabulary*

	Perceptions	No. of Studies ^a	(%)*
Positive perceptions	More effective learning	6	100
	Games are motivating	6	100
	Relaxing atmosphere	3	60
Negative perceptions	Complementary activity	2	33

N= 6

^a Studies are counted in more than one category

* Each percentage is calculated based on the total number of studies used

The analysis of the data in Table 4 suggests that teachers had more positive than negative perceptions about the use of ludic activities to teach vocabulary in the EFL classroom. These positive perspectives were that games produced more effective learning, were motivating, and provided a relaxing atmosphere. Thus, Stojković and Jerotijević (2011), Azar (2012), and Akdogan, (2017) described that educators agreed that games were an efficient strategy in language learning.

Additionally, Akdogan (2017), Stojković and Jerotijević (2011), Adiyana et al., (2018) demonstrated that teachers considered games motivating strategies for learning. Akdogan (2017) showed that instructors produced a relaxing atmosphere through games in class. In fact, Azar (2012) and Kabiri and Ghafoori (2014) affirmed that ludic activities provided a relaxing environment in the class and enhanced students' lexicon learning. Lastly, Stojković and Jerotijević (2011) expressed that teachers who were aware of the instructional value of ludic activities usually applied them to improve students' lexicon learning.



On the other hand, Stojković and Jerotijević (2011), Jafarpour-Boroujeni and Afshar (2015), and Akdogan (2017) exposed that teachers considered games as complimentary activities rather than main activities in the lesson. Stojković and Jerotijević (2011) exposed that some teachers considered that games did not have a significant educational value. Nevertheless, the authors concluded that this negative perspective depended on the educators' lack of familiarity with games.

Finally, the analyzed data demonstrated that most of the teachers perceived that games provided a relaxing atmosphere, and increased meaningful learning and motivation in EFL vocabulary instruction.

5.4. Pedagogical Implications of the Use of Games to Teach Vocabulary

Table 5 was designed to answer the third research question regarding the pedagogical implications of using games to learn vocabulary in the EFL classroom. Thus, 8 studies out of the 20 selected.

Table 5

Pedagogical Implications of Using Games to Teach Vocabulary

Implication	No. of Studies ^a	(%)*
Significant games for learners' needs	6	75
Criteria for choosing games	5	63
Criteria for choosing vocabulary items	1	11
Feedback	1	11

N=8

^a Studies are counted in more than one category

* Each percentage is calculated based on the total number of studies used



The information indicates that 6 research studies considered that games should be chosen according to students' needs (Chou, 2014; Al Masri & Al Najjar, 2014; Derakhshan & Khatir, 2015; Akdogan, 2017; Bavi, 2018; Apdy & Asrifan, 2019; Alavi & Gilakjani, 2019). Derakhshan and Khatir (2015) mentioned that it was difficult to find a game that met all learners' needs but with careful preparation and organization, it was possible.

Similarly, Azar (2012), Tuan (2012), mentioned the importance of appropriate criteria selection for games such as students' level, context, timing, subject matter, and classroom settings. Indeed, Apdy and Asrifan (2019) stated that learners' backgrounds, English proficiency level, class environment, and ludic activity timing were essential aspects to select and apply vocabulary games.

Likewise, Al Masri and Al Najjar (2014) considered it was necessary to determine criteria for choosing vocabulary items. In fact, the authors exposed that the new lexical terms were selected according to students' learning needs and English proficiency levels. Thus, apprentices' learning became meaningful. On the other hand, Alemi (2010) emphasized the importance of giving feedback when games were used in class since it was an indicator of students' participation and positive reinforcement.



Chapter VI

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This research synthesis aimed to understand the effect of using games to learn vocabulary in the EFL classroom. Therefore, it is concluded that the use of games brings positive outcomes for both educators and learners. Games have a positive impact on students' vocabulary knowledge, they are considered efficient strategies by teachers and students, and certain implications for the use of games are necessary to be considered.

Firstly, it is remarkable to mention that many researchers considered games as a topic of interest since several investigation projects were carried out during 2010 and 2020. Therefore, it demonstrates that ludic activities were widely used during such times. The reason is that teachers were suggested to seek methodologies to encourage learners to utilize the language creatively (Derakhshan and Khatir, 2015). Particularly, instructors should seek activities that develop an essential component in foreign language learning as vocabulary knowledge (Khan et al., 2018).

Second, regarding the effect of ludic activities on students' learning, it is concluded that learners' vocabulary size and breath improved after games were used in the classroom (Chou, 2014; Taheri, 2014; Alavi & Gilakjani, 2019). The improvement of students' vocabulary knowledge is the result of game instruction that includes some features of the Communicative Approach. In this manner, students have the opportunity to use the language in an oral or written manner; and expand their vocabulary knowledge (Jafarpour-Boroujeni & Afshar, 2015; Akdogan, 2017). Moreover, the use of ludic activities resulted in students' enhancement of motivation, interest, and engagement in the lesson (Mubaslat, 2012; Kabiri & Ghafoori, 2014). The aforementioned results illustrate that the use of appropriate games plays a major role in EFL vocabulary learning. The more motivating games are, the more enthusiastic students become.



Therefore, they learn words more efficiently and they show a willingness to participate in the lesson and interact with their classmates (Al Neyadi, 2007).

Third, even though games were contemplated as time-filler activities (Azar, 2012), this perspective has changed throughout time. Lately, ludic activities have been considered instruments that teachers utilize to engage apprentices in learning (Mille, 2009). Therefore, answering the second research question, both instructors and apprentices had positive perceptions of the use of games. They perceived ludic activities as helpers to foster the enjoyment of the target language learning, and the involvement and participation in the lesson (Chou, 2014; Gozcu, 2016; Akdogan, 2017). The enhancement of instructors' and learners' interest and involvement in the class occurs due to the fact that ludic activities include several characteristics of the Social Constructivist Theory (Taheri, 2014). For example, games can combine some instructional models of the theory such as “reciprocal teaching, peer collaboration, cognitive apprenticeships, problem-based instruction... and other methods that involve learning with others” (Shunk, as cited in Kim, 2001, p. 5). For that reason, educators must contemplate these activities as meaningful strategies that enhance learners' EFL vocabulary learning (Honarmand et al., 2015; Bavi, 2018).

Finally, concerning the third research question about the pedagogical implications of the use of games, it is strongly recommended that educators consider certain implications to apply ludic activities efficiently. For instance, instructors should choose games according to students' learning needs, backgrounds, and classroom settings (Azar, 2012; Tuan, 2012; Baksh, 2016). In the same manner, teachers must provide feedback during and after the application of a game. Besides, they should give students opportunities to give feedback among themselves to construct knowledge while they interact with their classmates (Kim, 2001; Alemi, 2010). Thus,



cooperative learning, students' experiences, and background become essential elements for teachers to obtain great results from using games (Brown et al., as cited in Lainema & Makkonen, 2003).

On the other hand, the use of technology is being incorporated more in the English classroom, and strategies such as games are being adapted to new teaching tendencies (Alsied & Pathan, 2013). Therefore, it is recommended that researchers carry out studies on the use of digital games to teach EFL vocabulary to evidence if the use in the classroom has any positive or negative effects on students' vocabulary. Finally, it is also suggested to conduct research that focuses on the use of digital games to develop English language skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening since lexicon proficiency portrays an important role in development of these language skills (Susanto & Fazlinda, as cited in Susanto, 2017).



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Appendix

List of Primary Sources for Analysis

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