

<https://doi.org/10.69639/arandu.v13i1.2116>

The Use of the Snakes and Ladders Game to Improve English Speaking Skills in EFL Primary Students

El uso del juego de serpientes y escaleras para mejorar las habilidades orales en inglés en estudiantes de primaria como lengua extranjera (EFL)

Devy Janeth Campaña Quel

<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-1721-5830>

djcampanaq@ube.edu.ec

Universidad Bolivariana del Ecuador
Durán – Ecuador

Jenny Rocío Daquilema Monge

jrdaquilemam@ube.edu.ec

<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-9494-1041>

Universidad Bolivariana del Ecuador
Durán – Ecuador

Carlos Lenin Álvarez Llerena

clalvarezl@ube.edu.ec

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7263-2611>

Universidad Bolivariana del Ecuador
Durán - Ecuador

Artículo recibido: 18 febrero 2026-Aceptado para publicación: 20 marzo 2026

Conflictos de intereses: Ninguno que declarar.

ABSTRACT

This study explored the effectiveness of the game Snakes and Ladders as a tool for improving the oral skills of A1-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at a public school in Carchi, Ecuador. The main objective was to determine whether the game promoted oral participation, vocabulary use, and fluency in an interactive classroom setting. The intervention focused on personal information and basic vocabulary, incorporating oral activities such as asking and answering simple questions during the game. This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative methods. Data collection included a pre-test, a post-test, assessment rubrics, and self-assessment surveys administered to students to evaluate linguistic progress and affective variables. The results showed a notable improvement in students' oral expression skills, particularly in fluency, vocabulary production, and active participation. Furthermore, the students demonstrated increased motivation and confidence during oral expression activities. Therefore, the Snakes and Ladders game created a pleasant, low-stress environment, which encouraged spontaneous language use and interaction among the students. Overall, the results supported the integration of gamified strategies into elementary school English as a Foreign Language classrooms as a practical approach to fostering communicative competence and positive learning experiences.

Keywords: elementary school students, EFL, gamification, snakes and ladders, speaking skills

RESUMEN

Este estudio exploró la eficacia del juego Serpientes y Escaleras como herramienta para mejorar las habilidades orales de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) de nivel A1 en una escuela pública de Carchi, Ecuador. El objetivo principal fue determinar si el juego promovía la participación oral, el uso del vocabulario y la fluidez en un entorno de clase interactivo. Se utilizó una intervención en el aula centrada en el tema de la información personal y en el vocabulario básico, que incorporó actividades orales, como formular y responder preguntas sencillas durante el juego. La presente investigación adoptó un enfoque mixto, integrando métodos cuantitativos y cualitativos. Para la recolección de datos se utilizaron una prueba previa, una prueba posterior, rúbricas de evaluación y encuestas de autoevaluación dirigidas a los estudiantes, con el propósito de evaluar el progreso lingüístico y las variables afectivas. Los resultados mostraron una mejora notable en la capacidad de expresión oral de los alumnos, en particular en la fluidez, la producción de vocabulario y la participación activa. Además, los estudiantes evidenciaron una mejora en su motivación y confianza al participar en actividades de expresión oral. De este modo, el juego de Serpientes y Escaleras proporcionó un ambiente agradable y de baja ansiedad, lo que favoreció el uso espontáneo del lenguaje y la interacción de los estudiantes. En general, los resultados respaldaron la integración de estrategias gamificadas en las aulas de inglés como lengua extranjera de primaria como una estrategia práctica para fomentar la competencia comunicativa y las experiencias de aprendizaje positivas.

Palabras clave: estudiantes de educación primaria, EFL, gamificación, juego de serpientes y escaleras, habilidades orales

Todo el contenido de la Revista Científica Internacional Arandu UTIC publicado en este sitio está disponible bajo licencia Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International. 

INTRODUCTION

One of the most essential aspects of learning English for EFL primary school students is speaking, as it plays an important role in building confidence, facilitating practical communication, and enhancing the development of other language skills. According to Babiker (2018), speaking is a productive skill that involves producing speech sounds. It is the interactive process of constructing meanings that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. Additionally, Kehing et al. (2021) highlighted that speaking practice helps consolidate vocabulary and grammar acquired through reading and writing, thereby developing a more comprehensive language-learning experience.

However, speaking remains a significant challenge for teachers and students, especially in countries where English is taught as a foreign language (Álvarez et al., 2024). According to Yan et al. (2024), in contrast to receptive skills such as reading and listening, oral abilities require learners to produce language in real time while simultaneously addressing grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and pronunciation. This integration requires not merely cognitive development, but also emotional, interpersonal, and linguistic competencies, making speaking one of the hardest skills to master (Ambawani et al., 2025).

In this context, games have emerged as an effective instrument for fostering motivation, participation, and language use in the classroom (Cruz & Suárez, 2019). It is a widely played activity that helps students learn the language (Hayuningtyas, 2022). One notable game that has attracted attention in EFL classrooms is Snakes and Ladders, an instructional game designed to help students practice speaking quickly. Therefore, students' speaking skills can potentially be enhanced through the use of Snakes and Ladders as they experience increased enthusiasm and enjoyment in class, creating a learning environment that encourages greater activity and interaction (Taka, 2019).

In Ecuador, the Ministry of Education has implemented an English-as-a-Foreign-Language curriculum that aims to "support the policy of developing citizens in Ecuador who can communicate effectively in today's globalized world" (Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 2). This curriculum establishes that pupils should reach an English proficiency level aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) for their grade, from A1 to B2. It is expected that graduate students have an exit profile at the B2 level. To achieve this, the core principles of the Ecuadorian EFL Curriculum (2016) demanded the development of communication skills and the conception of the student as the center of education. While this policy effort emphasizes communicative skills, many Ecuadorian schools remain rooted in traditional approaches and rely on textbook-based methods that offer minimal opportunities for speaking (Benalcazar & Ortega, 2019). Consequently, learners often struggle to express

themselves orally in English due to limited exposure to the language both inside and outside the classroom.

Several studies have shown that many students experience difficulties with oral communication in learning English (Bravo et al., 2019). For instance, educational authorities have analyzed the effectiveness of English in the current situation, especially within public institutions (Sevy et al., 2020). This outcome underscores the need to adopt and implement innovative teaching methodologies, such as games like Snakes and Ladders, to increase student participation and improve their oral English skills (Rismasari et al., 2025).

While many researchers have examined how communicative activities affect the development of speaking, few have specifically focused on using traditional games like Snakes and Ladders to encourage oral language acquisition in EFL environments. Ochoa and Cabrera (2016) agreed that there are many benefits to using dynamic, participatory activities as motivational learning techniques that help improve oral skills. Nevertheless, these board games have not been fully exploited, especially in Ecuadorian primary schools (Chuquitarco, 2024). Moreover, most current research focuses on the progress of adolescent and adult students, leaving a significant gap in the development of younger students in the use of these game-based strategies, which aim to improve oral expression skills (Hikmawan et al., 2023).

Given that oral expression is often the most neglected of the four language skills in classrooms for young learners (Al-Sobhi & Preece, 2018), incorporating a fun, student-centered activity such as Snakes and Ladders can help educators and students overcome or improve their oral skills. Therefore, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of the Snakes and Ladders game as a teaching tool for improving primary school students' oral skills. Specifically, it seeks to determine whether applying this game in the classroom enhances their confidence in expressing themselves, using appropriate vocabulary, constructing complete sentences, and participating more actively. Consequently, the relevance of this study lies in its focus on the common difficulties EFL primary students face in developing speaking skills, including limited practice opportunities, teacher-centered instruction, and affective barriers such as anxiety and fear of making mistakes. To accomplish the aim and objective of this research, the following research questions were established:

RQ1: How effective is the Snakes and Ladders game in developing speaking skills in EFL students at the A1-level learning English as a Foreign Language?

RQ2: How do A1-level EFL students perceive their learning experience using the Snakes and Ladders game to improve their speaking skills?

Literature Review

Gamification

Gamification in education has become an innovative strategy to transform traditional learning experiences into more interactive and motivating experiences for students. According to

Shoubashy et al. (2020), gamification is a ludic strategy that uses game-like elements across different environments to create game-like experiences, thereby promoting activities and behaviors. Gamification not only captures students' attention but also creates environments and conditions conducive to learning, facilitating understanding through rapid, constructive feedback cycles (Surendeleg et al., 2014).

According to Shoubashy et al. (2020), gamification has been understood in three fundamental approaches: the first is the use of game design components in non-game environments. Besides, this definition relates to two distinct activities: *paidia*, which refers to spontaneous, free behavior, and *ludus*, which involves a game with precise rules, objectives, and outcomes. On the other hand, the second approach defines gamification as a voluntary and enjoyable activity, known for its uncertain character, disconnected from the real world, lack of tangible productivity, and its function based on pre-established rules; finally, the third approach understands gamification as a process that enriches the gaming experience through the implementation of a system that promotes the creation of value by the user. Thus, gamification has been employed not only to strengthen each student's personal motivation across different contexts but also to shape students' behavior toward specific or desired activities (Mårell, 2022).

Snakes and Ladders Game

Snakes and Ladders is an ancient Indian Board game regarded today as a worldwide classic game. Two or more players play it on a game board with numbered, gridded squares; some "ladders" and "snakes" are pictured on the board, each connecting two specific squares (Annex 3). Thus, the main objective of the game is to navigate one's game piece from the start (bottom square) to the finish (top square), helped or hindered by ladders and snakes, respectively (Golchai et al., 2012).

According to Prabantari et al. (2017), "the elements used for playing snakes and ladders are the snakes and ladders board, a dice, question packs, and playing pieces or tokens" (p.4). The Snakes and Ladders game is ideal for teaching vocabulary to elementary students; it can be fun and active, helping them learn and engage with the material. The teacher can use it as a tool for practicing vocabulary across any content area (Naharuddin & Megawati, 2018).

Speaking Skills

One of the main skills that students must acquire when learning English is speaking. According to Babiker (2018), "speaking is the productive skill that refers to the production of speech sounds. It is the interactive process of constructing meanings that involve producing, receiving, and processing information" (p. 139). On the other hand, Marjonet et al. (2020) argued that speaking skills depend not only on communication but also on the use of a linguistic code, adequate vocabulary, and proper pronunciation in specific situations. That is why several components influence speaking communication, such as fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

According to Jong et al. (2012), speaking fluency is understood as the speaker's ability to produce speech fluently, quickly, and automatically, even under time pressure. Also, vocabulary learning is essential for language proficiency, and vocabulary instruction must be approached systematically, explaining meaning, form, and appropriate use in context to enable understanding and accurate, fluent expression (Nation, 2005). Furthermore, grammar is necessary because it provides the rules that organize words, sentences, and messages, giving them understandable meaning when spoken (Kusumawardani & Mardiyani, 2018). Likewise, pronunciation is crucial in speech and integrates individual sounds, rhythm, accentuation, and intonation, which facilitate effective oral communication (Burns & Seidlhofer, 2019).

Applying Snakes and Ladders in EFL Contexts

Gamification constitutes an alternative instructional strategy for teaching EFL learners. "English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is a term used to describe the study of English as a foreign language in a non-English speaking country" (Zhang & Hasim, 2023, p. 2). According to Waer (2021), the implementation of gamification in EFL environments is very effective, as it can enhance content retention through motivation, participation, and achievement satisfaction; thus, it is ideal for teaching and strengthening vocabulary learning, as this is crucial within the communication skills in the mastery of a language. Research by Zhang and Hasim (2023) found that gamified inverted classrooms were favorable for both teachers and students, as they were motivating, engaging, effective, and useful for learning, though they also posed certain challenges. From a teaching perspective, this approach strengthened engagement and increased motivation, as well as skills, confidence, and self-regulation in the learning process.

Hutama and Khoiriyah (2024) conducted a study with second-grade students in Indonesia, using the Snakes and Ladders game. They found that using this game helped students improve their comprehension and vocabulary. According to Naharuddin and Megawati (2018), the Snakes and Ladders game is effective in strengthening students' vocabulary. They believe that teaching English to young students requires creative, dynamic approaches and that it is essential to use appropriate teaching resources to motivate students throughout the learning process. Furthermore, a study by Azizah et al. (2025) found that Snakes and Ladders is an effective resource for strengthening oral expression skills, as it promotes active participation and increases students' confidence.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design and Methodology

A quasi-experimental mixed-method design was applied in this study. It involves both quantitative and qualitative approaches, collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data within a single study that investigates the same underlying paradigm (Carlisle et al., 2023). According to Creswell et al. (2018), qualitative data is defined as information collected in the form of words,

personal experiences, images, cultural texts, and observational data, aimed at understanding participants' perspectives, and quantitative data is the information that can be quantified and analyzed statistically, used to describe and determine patterns and relationships among variables. The game was adapted according to the teaching purpose (Annex 3). Therefore, quantitative data were collected through pre- and post-tests to validate the effectiveness of the Snakes and Ladders game during development and to measure students' satisfaction with game-based learning during implementation. Moreover, qualitative data were collected through a speaking survey that explored students' perceptions of the Snakes and Ladders game's effectiveness in enhancing their speaking skills.

Participants and Research Context

The research was conducted at a public primary school in the Highland region of Carchi Province, Ecuador. The participants, aged 11-12, are taught English as a Foreign Language in three 45-minute weekly lessons. The participants included 20 seventh-grade students (7 females and 13 males). The learners were selected using a convenience sampling technique, which, according to Taherdoost (2016), involves selecting participants based on their availability, accessibility, and ease of contact. The students' diverse language abilities provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of using the Snakes and Ladders game in enhancing oral communication. The study was carried out in students' regular classroom settings, allowing them to engage in the activities in a natural, comfortable environment that helped foster authentic responses, interaction, and confidence during the game's implementation.

Research Instruments

Speaking evaluation rubrics for pre-test and post-test (Annex 1)

Rubrics are conceptualized as effective formative assessment tools for managing the assessment process (Robertson et al., 2022). In addition, they are defined as versatile and objective matrices that can be used in various ways to assess and monitor students' work (Crespo-Cabuto et al., 2021). This tool allows each category to be evaluated under an assessment criterion, with specific descriptions and precise indicators, designed in a double-entry matrix. It facilitates the evaluation of observed performance and presents levels of progression based on the student's ongoing achievements (Brookhart, 2018). This rubric is based on four assessment criteria: fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Each criterion is scored on a scale of 1 to 4, with a maximum total score of 16. The rubric was aligned with the CEFR A1 speaking descriptors and reviewed for developmental appropriateness. It enabled standardized comparison of oral performance over time.

Speaking Survey (Annex 2)

According to Gul (2023), a survey is the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to structured questions. This sort of study allows for a variety of methods for selecting participants, using various instruments, and collecting data (Cohen et al.,

2014). A speaking survey was the primary instrument for collecting students' perceptions of the Snakes and Ladders game's use in developing speaking skills. It includes 10 items grouped into several aspects of oral performance: confidence, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar use, listening comprehension, interaction, motivation, participation, and general perception. A four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) was used to measure students' responses. Expert suggestions were incorporated to refine the indicators and better align them with the characteristics of A1-level students.

During the intervention, qualitative data were collected and analyzed through students' perceptions and classroom observations. The results showed that students felt more motivated and less anxious when speaking English through the Snakes and Ladders Game activities. Learners agreed that the game made speaking practice more enjoyable and interactive. Moreover, a significant increase in spontaneous participation and peer interaction was observed during the classes. These qualitative findings provide evidence of the game's effectiveness as a pedagogical strategy for enhancing oral communication among primary students. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data gathered from the speaking survey. The findings revealed a noticeable improvement in learners' speaking proficiency after the Snakes and Ladders game was applied.

Intervention Procedure

This study was conducted over 4 weeks, comprising 12 classes of 40 minutes each. During the first six classes, the students engaged in various activities based on the topic "Talk About Yourself," asking and answering related questions. Then, a pre-test (Annex 1) was applied to evaluate the students' initial speaking performance. After this stage, the Snakes and Ladders Game on the topic "Talk About Yourself" was implemented across four classes. The class consisted of 20 students, organized into five groups of four. Each group received a die and a colored counter (red, blue, green, or yellow) to play on a board numbered from 1 to 50 that contained 32 questions about personal information, such as family, hobbies, sports, and personal preferences.

During each round, one member of every group rolled the dice and moved forward the corresponding number of squares. Depending on the square reached, the student had to answer the question related to that number in English. If the answer was clear, coherent, and complete, the team remained in that position and waited for the next round; however, if the response was incorrect or incomplete, the team moved back two squares. When a team landed on the tail of a snake, they moved down to a lower square, and when they landed on the base of a ladder, they advanced to a higher square.

Throughout the activity, the other teams listened to the answers and interacted with one another while waiting for their turns, thereby encouraging collaborative learning and oral practice. The game continued until one team reached the final square (50), and the teams received academic

recognition in order of arrival. After the game was implemented, two additional classes were used to administer the post-test to evaluate progress in students' speaking skills. Finally, during the last two classes, a speaking survey was administered to gather students' perceptions of the game's use as a learning strategy.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, which used the game Snakes and Ladders, several ethical considerations were taken into account. Before conducting the study, authorization was obtained from the educational institution to conduct the study with the participants. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and their participation was entirely voluntary. As this research involved children, parental consent was obtained before the photography activity and the use of the instruments. The privacy and confidentiality of participants were protected by not including their names in the article and by keeping all data collected anonymous. In addition, the activity was conducted in a safe and respectful environment to ensure the game remained a positive and enjoyable experience for all participants throughout. These procedures were guided by established ethical principles for research involving human subjects (American Psychological Association, 2017).

RESULTS

This study was guided by the following questions: *1: How effective is the Snakes and Ladders game in developing speaking skills in EFL students at the A1 level learning English as a Foreign Language 2: How do A1-level EFL students perceive their learning experience using the Snakes and Ladders game to improve their speaking skills?* To present the empirical results, evidence from pre- and post-tests was analyzed. As shown in **Table 1**, students' speaking skills performance demonstrated a noticeable improvement after the intervention.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics of pre-test and post-test speaking scores

Criteria	Mean	Sample Maximum	Sample Minimum	Range	Variance	Standard Deviation
Pre-Test	9.45	16	4	12	18.05	4.25
Post-Test	13.95	16	9	7	7.00	2.65

The mean score increased from **9.45** in the pre-test to **13.95** in the post-test, indicating a substantial gain in students' outcomes following the implementation of the Snakes and Ladders game. In addition to the increase in the mean score, there was a clear reduction in the range, variance, and standard deviation from the pre-test to the post-test. The range decreased from 12 to 7, while variance dropped from 18.05 to 7.00, and the standard deviation was reduced from 4.25 to 2.65. These changes suggest that students' scores became more consistent over time, reflecting more homogeneous progress among participants.

Furthermore, **Table 2** showed notable improvements by students across all criteria. Significant increases were observed in speaking confidence, interaction, and participation, suggesting that the Snakes and Ladders Game improves students' willingness to speak.

Table 2

Comparison of pre- test and post-test scores

Criteria	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Improvement
Fluency	2.35	3.50	49%
Vocabulary	2.30	3.50	52%
Grammar	2.15	3.40	58%
Pronunciation	2.65	3.55	34%

According to the results, grammar showed the greatest progress, with a 58% improvement, indicating that learners were able to form short, accurate sentences during oral activities. The use of specific vocabulary increased by 52% as students became more confident using words related to personal information. Fluency also improved by 49%, reflecting continuity and greater ease when speaking English. On the other hand, pronunciation showed a smaller improvement of 34%, indicating that further practice is needed. Overall, these results demonstrate that using the Snakes and Ladders Game improves the development of oral skills in primary students.

In addition, the results in **Table 3** of the speaking survey showed a very positive overall perception of the Snakes and Ladders game. In general, over 90% of students *strongly agreed* that the game helped improve their speaking skills. Specifically, 95% of students reported increased confidence, 90% reported improved fluency, and 95% reported improved vocabulary learning. These results suggest that the game created a supportive and low-anxiety environment that encouraged students to speak English more comfortably.

Table 3

Results of the speaking survey

Aspect	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Confidence	I feel more confident speaking English after playing Snakes and Ladders.	65%	30%	5%	0%
Fluency	When playing Snakes and Ladders, I can speak more fluently and naturally when talking about myself.	45%	45%	10%	0%
Vocabulary	Through the Snakes and Ladders game, I learned and practiced useful words related to	90%	5%	0%	5%

	personal information, family, food, and hobbies.				
Pronunciation	My pronunciation improved through repetition and interaction while playing Snakes and Ladders.	70%	25%	5%	0%
Grammar Use	I can use short, correct sentences when talking about myself while playing Snakes and Ladders.	55%	40%	5%	0%
Listening Comprehension	The Snakes and Ladders game helped me better understand my classmates' questions and answers when speaking English.	100%	0%	0%	0%
Interaction	The Snakes and Ladders game helped me interact and speak more with my classmates in English.	60%	25%	10%	5%
Motivation	I felt more motivated to speak English because the Snakes and Ladders game was fun and enjoyable.	80%	20%	0%	0%
Participation	I participated actively in the speaking activities during the Snakes and Ladders game.	70%	30%	0%	0%
General Perception	The Snakes and Ladders game was effective for improving my English-speaking skills.	85%	15%	0%	0%

Moreover, the findings reveal significant improvement in other key aspects of speaking. 95% of students agreed that their pronunciation and grammar use improved while playing the game, and 100% stated that their listening comprehension increased through interaction with classmates. Additionally, 85% or more of learners reported higher motivation, active participation, and positive interaction, reinforcing the effectiveness of the Snakes and Ladders Game as an engaging strategy for developing speaking skills in the EFL classroom.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the Snakes and Ladders game in developing speaking skills among A1-level EFL students and to analyze their perceptions of its application. The results of this study showed a significant improvement in students' speaking skills after the Snakes and Ladders game was applied. According to the pre- and post-test comparison, the students improved their vocabulary, grammar, and fluency. The increase in the mean score from 9.45 in the pre-test to 13.95 in the post-test indicates that the strategy positively influenced learners' oral production. Moreover, the reduction in range, variance, and standard deviation suggests more consistent and homogeneous progress among participants.

These findings support the theoretical foundations of gamification proposed by Shoubashy et al. (2020), who describe it as the integration of game elements into non-game contexts to promote engagement and meaningful learning, and the structured nature of the Snakes and Ladders game reflects the concept of ludus, as it involves rules, objectives, and clear outcomes while encouraging active participation. Likewise, Surendeleg et al. (2014) emphasize that gamified environments facilitate learning through interaction and feedback, which may explain the improvements observed in students' speaking components.

Regarding specific speaking criteria, grammar showed the greatest improvement (58%), followed by vocabulary (52%) and fluency (49%), while pronunciation demonstrated a smaller increase (34%). The improvement in grammar supports Kusumawardani and Mardiyani's (2018) claim that grammar provides the structure necessary to convey meaningful messages when speaking. Similarly, the vocabulary gains align with Nation (2005), who highlights the importance of systematic vocabulary practice to achieve communicative competence. The repetitive, contextually appropriate use of language during the Snakes and Ladders game likely strengthened retention and accuracy.

Fluency development may be explained by the activity's interactive and dynamic characteristics. According to Jong et al. (2012), fluency involves producing speech smoothly and automatically, even under time pressure. During the Snakes and Ladders game, students were required to respond spontaneously to questions, which may have reduced hesitation and increased speech continuity. However, according to Burns and Seidlhofer (2019), the smaller improvement in pronunciation suggests that this component may require more explicit and focused instruction.

The findings also align with previous research on EFL contexts, particularly regarding the teaching of English in areas such as vocabulary, grammar, and listening comprehension before language production. These results are supported by Hutama and Khoiriyah (2024), who found that implementing the Snakes and Ladders game in the EFL classroom improved vocabulary and comprehension, and by Naharuddin and Megawati (2018), who reported its effectiveness in strengthening vocabulary learning among young learners. Furthermore, Azizah et al. (2025)

concluded that the game enhances oral expression and students' confidence. Furthermore, the present study similarly revealed high levels of confidence, participation, and motivation among learners.

In addition, students' perceptions reinforce the strategy's effectiveness. Over 90% of participants agreed that the game improved their speaking skills, confidence, and vocabulary. Additionally, high percentages for motivation and interaction suggest that the activity fostered a supportive, low-anxiety learning environment. This supports Waer's (2021) assertion that gamification increases motivation, participation, and satisfaction in EFL classrooms. Furthermore, the results indicate that students felt more comfortable and confident during oral activities when learning was presented through a game-based approach. This positive perception may also contribute to greater engagement and a willingness to communicate in English during classroom interactions. Consequently, gamified activities, such as the Snakes and Ladders game, can help create more dynamic and student-centered learning environments.

In summary, implementing the Snakes and Ladders game proved an effective gamified strategy for enhancing speaking skills among A1-level EFL students. The intervention in primary students improved grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and self-confidence while fostering motivation and active participation. Therefore, incorporating structured, gamified activities as learning mechanisms can contribute to more engaging and effective oral language instruction in EFL contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

This study revealed that the Snakes and Ladders game is an effective, structured pedagogical strategy for improving A1-level EFL primary learners' speaking skills. By incorporating this game into the classroom and using prompts for speaking exercises as well as tasks that supported the activity's interactive nature, students showed significant improvement in fluency, vocabulary development, grammar production, accuracy, and participation in classroom activities. Meaningful communicative opportunities were created by implementing the game in an engaging, supportive environment.

Quantitative results show that participants improved in fluency, vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, and pronunciation. Specifically, students showed notable progress in using topic-related vocabulary and in constructing short, accurate sentences more confidently. Furthermore, the game, in particular the structured and repetitive speaking tasks, gave rise to dialogic situations that allowed students to practice oral production with their peers and enhance their communicative skills in a safe classroom context.

Students' perceptions support the effectiveness of using the Snakes and Ladders game in speaking practice. The game's interactive and amusing characteristics helped reduce learners'

anxiety, promote participation, and create a stress-free environment conducive to language learning. Learners' confidence, motivation and willingness to use English were higher.

Overall, the results suggest that structured game-based learning can assist young learners with their language and affective development. The Snakes and Ladders Game was used in this study to improve the students' speaking abilities, increase their motivation to participate in speaking activities, and enhance their confidence when speaking.

Consequently, this study recommends to EFL teachers include Snakes and Ladders as a standard instructional strategy for spoken practice in primary classrooms as there are many advantages to using an interactive, structured yet playful instructional method for enhancing language development through interaction, providing a fun way to reinforce a target language, and developing a supportive and low-anxiety classroom atmosphere where students can reach their communicative competence and maintain oral participation.

Future studies could expand on this research by including larger samples and longer implementation periods to obtain more robust and generalizable results. In addition, future research could employ comparative or experimental designs to examine the effectiveness of the Snakes and Ladders game relative to other game-based or communicative teaching strategies in EFL classrooms.

Moreover, it would also be valuable to explore its impact on different language skills, proficiency levels, and educational contexts. Furthermore, qualitative approaches such as classroom observations or interviews with teachers and students could provide deeper insights into learners' attitudes, motivation, and interaction during game-based activities. These future investigations would contribute to a broader understanding of how structured games can support language development and communicative competence in primary EFL learners.

Despite the positive results from applying the Snakes and Ladders game, some limitations should be acknowledged. First, participants in the study were relatively few and thus, the ability to generalize from those results may be limited. Second, the intervention period was not very long and thus may not accurately reflect long-term effects on speech development. Additionally, external variables such as students' prior experience, differences in students' ability to learn, and students' levels of motivation influenced outcome measures and may have contributed to variance in the findings. Finally, using self-reported surveys to gather data will ultimately mean that the researchers may have biased the data collection due to the subjectivity of the surveys, therefore producing inaccurate findings.

REFERENCES

- Al-Sobhi, B. M. S., & Preece, A. S. (2018). Teaching English speaking skills to the Arab students in the Saudi school in Kuala Lumpur: Problems and Solutions. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 6(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.6n.1p.1>
- American Psychological Association. (2017). *Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct*. <https://www.apa.org/ethics/code/>
- Álvarez, C. L., Tamayo, M. R., & Coutinho dos Santos, J. (2024). Factors influencing the development of speaking skills among Ecuadorian EFL learners: Teachers' perspectives. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 14(2), 319-331. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v14i2.74889>
- Ambawani, S., Astasari, I., & Rukiati, E. (2025). Overcoming barriers to EFL speaking proficiency: A multidimensional analysis of language learning challenges. *Journal of English in Academic and Professional Communication*, 11(1), 23-36. <https://doi.org/10.25047/jeapco.v11i1.5769>
- Azizah, N. N., Widiarini, & Mubarak, T. A. (2025). The development of snake and ladder game to teach speaking skill. *Scripta*, 12(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.37729/scripta.v12i1.6184>
- Babiker, A. (2018). Improving speaking skills in EFL classes through collaborative learning. *American Scientific Research Journal for Engineering, Technology, and Sciences*, 44(1), 137-154. https://doi.org/https://asrjetsjournal.org/index.php/American_Scientific_Journal/article/view/4175
- Benalcázar-Bermeo, J., & Ortega-Auquilla, D. (2019). Effects of the CLIL approach in oral production of English students in the second year of the united general baccalaureate at a high school in Cuenca, Ecuador. *Revista Boletín Redipe*, 8(12), 117-128. <https://doi.org/10.36260/rbr.v8i12.878>
- Bravo, G. N. B., Fray, J. I. B., Coello, M. B. B., Mendoza, K. L. R., & Celorio, W. M. M. (2022). *Students' Perspectives on Improving their English Speaking Skills through Activities Based on the Communicative Approach*. *Latam: revista latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades*, 3(2), 98. <https://doi.org/10.56712/latam.v3i2.196>
- Brookhart, S. M. (2018, April). Appropriate criteria: Key to effective rubrics. In *Frontiers in education* (Vol. 3, p. 22). Frontiers Media SA. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2018.00022>
- Burns, A. C., & Seidlhofer, B. (2019). Speaking and pronunciation. *An Introduction to Applied Linguistics*, 3, 240–258. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429424465-14>
- Carlisle, V. R., Jessiman, P. E., Breheny, K., Campbell, R., Jago, R., Leonard, N., ... & Kidger, J. (2023). A mixed-methods, quasi-experimental evaluation exploring the impact of a secondary school universal free school meals intervention pilot. *International journal of*

environmental research and public health, 20(6), 5216..
<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20065216>

- Chuquitarco Simaluisa, R. M. (2024). *Using Board Games to Teach English Vocabulary* (Doctoral dissertation, Ecuador: Pujilí: Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi (UTC)).
- Cohen, J., & Chambaere, K. (2025). Survey research: design, methods of data collection, questionnaire design, and conduct. In *Research Methods in Palliative, Supportive, and End-of-Life Care* (pp. 54-81). Oxford University PressOxford.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/9780191924644.003.0008>
- Crespo Cabuto, A., Mortis Lozoya, S. V., Tobón Tobón, S. D. J., & Herrera Meza, S. R. (2021). Rúbrica para evaluar un diseño curricular bajo el enfoque socioformativo. *Estudios pedagógicos (Valdivia)*, 47(1), 339-353.
<https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-07052021000100339>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.
- Cruz Suárez, D. J. (2019). *The impact of using games on speaking skills* (Master's thesis). Universidad Técnica de Ambato, Ecuador. Retrieved from
<https://repositorio.uta.edu.ec/items/4561f411-cc1f-4ea0-b096-82adcf4b4509>
- English, N., Robertson, P., Gillis, S., & Graham, L. (2022). Rubrics and formative assessment in K-12 education: A scoping review of literature. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 113, 101964. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2022.101964>
- Fowler Jr, F. J. (2013). *Survey research methods*. Sage publications.
- Golchai, B., Nazari, N., Hassani, F., Nasiri, E., Ghasem nejad, R., & Jafari, Z. (2012). Snakes and ladders: A new method for increasing of medical. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 47, 2089-2092. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.06.954>
- Gul, Y. E. (2023). A theoretical perspective on survey method from quantitative research methods. *Universum: психология и образование*, (4 (106)), 64-68.
<https://doi.org/10.32743/UniPsy.2023.106.4.15254>
- Hamouda, A. (2020). The effect of virtual classes on Saudi EFL students' speaking skills. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 3(4), 175-204. <https://al-kindipublishers.org/index.php/ijllt/article/view/1096>
- Harmer, J. (2015). *The practice of English language teaching* (5th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Hayuningtyas, N. (2022). The implementation of snake and ladder game in teaching speaking: The advantages and the disadvantages. *Critical Review of English-Arabic World Journal*, 1(2), 69-80. <https://doi.org/10.35719/crewjournal.v1i2.1785>
- Hikmawan, I., Damayanti, I. L., & Setyarini, S. (2023). Integrating traditional games into EFL speaking class: A case of English for young learners. *Journal of English Language Studies*, 8(2), 249-268. <https://doi.org/10.30870/jels.v8i2.19432>

- Hutama, F. S., & Khoiriyah. (2024). Teaching vocabulary using snake and ladder games to second grade students at SDN Lirboyo 2. *ELTT*, 10(1), 176–181. <https://doi.org/https://proceeding.unpkediri.ac.id/index.php/eltt/article/view/6840>
- Jong, N. H., Steinel, M. P., Florijn, A., Schoonen, R., & Hulstijn, J. H. (2012). Linguistic skills and speaking fluency in a second language. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 34(5), 893–916. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0142716412000069>
- Kehing, K. (2021). A systematic review on language learning strategies for speaking skills in a new learning environment. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 10(4), 2055–2065
- Kusumawardani, S. A., & Mardiyani, E. (2018). The correlation between English grammar competence and speaking fluency. *PROJECT (Professional Journal of English Education)*, 1(6), 724-733. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22460/project.v1i6.p724-733>
- Mårell-Olsson, E. (2022). Teachers' perception of gamification as a teaching. *Interaction Design and Architecture(s)*(53), 70-100. <https://doi.org/10.55612/s-5002-053-004>
- Marjonet, J., Bahurudin Setambah, M. A., Nasrudin, N., Osman, N. A., Isa Azis, M., Asra A, N., & Rahim. (2020). Speaking skills a survey on malay language teachers in Malacca. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 509(1), 367-372. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.201215.057>
- Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador. (2016). *Currículo Nacional de Educación Intercultural: Inglés como Lengua Extranjera*.
- Naharuddin, A., & Megawati, F. (2018). Snakes and ladders game for enhancing young learners' vocabulary. *International Journal on Integrated Education*, 1(1), 30-34. <https://doi.org/10.31149/ijie.v1i1.294>
- Nation, P. (2005). Teaching and learning vocabulary. In N. Schmitt (Ed.), *An introduction to applied linguistics*. *Routledge*, 1, 10-24. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410612700-40>
- Ochoa, C., Cabrera, P., Quiñónez, A., Castillo, L., & González, P. (2016). The effect of communicative activities on EFL learners' motivation: A case of students in the amazon region of Ecuador. *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal*, 18(2), 39-48. <https://doi.org/10.14483/calj.v18n2.10018>
- Prabantari, A., Asib, A., & Sarosa, T. (2017). Improving the students' vocabulary mastery using snakes and ladders game. *English Education Journal*, 5(3). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.20961/eed.v5i3.35860>
- Rismasari, & Al Hakim, L. (2025). Using snake and ladder games in teaching speaking skill to the ninth year students of SMPN 18 Surakarta. *Journal of English Language Proficiency*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.36312/jelap.v2i1.4637>

- Sevy-Biloon, J., Recino, U., & Muñoz, C. (2020). Factors affecting English language teaching in public schools in Ecuador. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 19(3), 276-294. <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.19.3.15>
- Shoubashy, H., Kader, H. A., & Khalifa, N. (2020). What is gamification? Literature review of previous studies on gamification. *Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*, 14(8), 29-51. <https://doi.org/10.22587/ajbas.2020.14.8.4>
- Surendeleg, G., Murwa, V., Yun, H.-K., & Kim, Y. S. (2014). The role of gamification in education—a literature review. *Contemporary Engineering Sciences*, 7(29), 1609-1616. <http://dx.doi.org/10.12988/ces.2014.411217>
- Taherdoost, H. (2016). Sampling methods in research methodology; How to choose a sampling technique for research. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management (IJARM)*, 5(2), 18-27. <https://hal.science/hal-02546796v1>
- Taka, S. D. (2019). Teaching speaking by using snake and ladder board game. *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 7(2). <https://doi.org/10.24256/ideas.v7i2.1021>
- Waer, H. (2021). Using gamification in EFL vocabulary learning and learners' attitudes toward gamification use. 570-547),2(22 مجلة البحث العلمى فى التربية, <https://dx.doi.org/10.21608/jsre.2021.54341.1236>
- Wang, W., Rezaei, Y. M., & Izadpanah, S. (2024). Speaking accuracy and fluency among EFL learners: The role of creative thinking, emotional intelligence, and academic enthusiasm. *Heliyon*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e37620>
- Yan, W., Lowell, V. L., & Yang, L. (2024). Developing English language learners' speaking skills through applying a situated learning approach in VR-enhanced learning experiences. *Virtual Reality*, 28(4), 167. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10055-024-01061-5>
- Zhang, S., & Hasim, Z. (2023). Gamification in EFL/ESL instruction: A systematic review of empirical research. *Frontiers in psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1030790>

ANNEX 1

Instrument 1: Pre-test and Post-test

Skill: Speaking

Topic: Personal Information

Purpose: To evaluate the students' A1 level of oral expression before and after the application of the Snakes and Ladders game.

Questions:

1. What is your full name?
2. How old are you?
3. Where do you live?
4. When is your birthday?
5. Who is your best friend?
6. Who is your mother?
7. What is your favorite color?
8. What is your favorite sport?
9. What is your favorite food?
10. Do you like vegetables?

Speaking Evaluation Rubric for Pre-test and Post-test

Criteria	4- Excellent	3- Good	2- Basic	1- Needs improvement
Fluency	Answers quickly and confidently without hesitation.	Answers with small pauses; shows some confidence.	Hesitates frequently; needs teacher support.	Very shy or silent; does not answer.
Vocabulary	Uses accurate words for all answers (e.g., colors, foods, names).	Uses correct vocabulary for most answers.	Limited vocabulary; repeats or hesitates.	Very limited vocabulary; cannot answer without help.
Grammar	Uses complete and correct sentences (e.g., <i>My name is Ana. / I am nine.</i>).	Mostly correct sentences; minor mistakes.	Uses short or incomplete answers (e.g., <i>Ana, Nine.</i>).	Makes frequent mistakes; answers

				unclear or incorrect.
Pronunciation	Speaks clearly and pronounces words correctly and naturally.	Pronounces most words correctly; small errors don't affect understanding.	Some pronunciation errors that affect clarity.	Many pronunciation errors; difficult to understand.

ANNEX 2

Instrument 2: Students' Speaking Survey

Purpose: To evaluate Self-Perception on the Effectiveness of Snakes and Ladders game.

Aspect	Statement	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
1. Confidence	I feel more confident speaking English after playing Snakes and Ladders.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Fluency	When playing Snakes and Ladders I can speak more fluently and naturally when talking about myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Vocabulary	Through the Snakes and Ladders game I learned and practiced useful words related to personal information, family, food, and hobbies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Pronunciation	My pronunciation improved through repetition and interaction while	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	playing Snakes and Ladders.				
5. Grammar Use	I can use short and correct sentences when talking about myself while playing Snakes and Ladders.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Listening Comprehension	The Snakes and Ladders game helped me understand my classmates' questions and answers better when speaking in English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Interaction	The Snakes and Ladder game helped me interact and speak more with my classmates in English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Motivation	I felt more motivated to speak English because the Snakes and Ladder game was fun and enjoyable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Participation	I participated actively in the speaking activities during the Snakes and Ladders game.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. General Perception	The Snakes and Ladders game was effective for improving my English-speaking skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ANNEX 3

Snakes and Ladders Game Board



Questions About Yourself



QUESTIONS

“TALK ABOUT YOURSELF”



3 What is your full name?	5 What is your name?	7 Where do you live?	8 When is your birthday?	9 Who is your mother?
10 What is your favorite color?	11 What is your favorite sport?	14 What is your last name?	16 How old are you?	17 Who is your brother?
18 Who is your best friend?	19 What is your favorite song?	21 Who is your uncle?	22 Who is your grandfather?	23 What is your favorite Ecuadorian food?
24 Who is your sister?	25 Who is your grandmother?	27 What is your favorite drink?	28 What is your favorite genre of music?	31 Who is your favorite singer?
32 Who is your aunt?	33 What is your favorite animal?	34 What is your favorite weather?	35 What is your favorite subject?	36 What is your favorite hobby?
39 Do you like vegetables?	40 Who is your cousin?	41 What is your favorite fruit?	43 Where are you from?	44 What is your favorite season?
46 Who is your father?	48 What is your pet's name?			