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DOMINOES GAME TO IMPROVE THE STUDENTS' VOCABULARY IN MIDDLE BASIC EDUCATION

**EL JUEGO DE DOMINÓ PARA MEJORAR EL VOCABULARIO
DE LOS ESTUDIANTES EN LA EDUCACIÓN BÁSICA MEDIA**

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Dominoes Game to Improve the Students' Vocabulary in Middle Basic Education

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ABSTRACT

This investigation intended to know the use of Dominoes Game as media to improve students' vocabulary learning since integrating games into the teaching process aligns with modern pedagogical methodologies that advocate for interactive and student-centered learning environments. For that reason, the method of this research was the action research design using the mixed-method approach to execute this research to avoid misunderstandings or confusion. Moreover, the participants were students of Middle Basic Education from a public institution in Loja city, consisting of 37 students, which helped the researcher to obtain the result that showed how Dominoes Game could stimulate students to be active, motivated, and work perfectly in class. Furthermore, to gather the data, the researcher used the testing technique, with both pre-test and post-test, the survey technique, applying a questionnaire, and the observation technique, using field notes as the instrument. It successfully shows remarkable students' achievement where the data showed that students' achievement increased from 7,44 in the pre-test to 8,39 in the post-test. Consequently, it might be concluded that Dominoes Game possibly increases students' vocabulary since it is a clear example of how students learn while playing, having fun, paying attention, and learning, without losing the purpose of the lesson

KeyWords: dominoes game, vocabulary learning, student-center learning

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El Juego de Dominó para Mejorar el Vocabulario de los Estudiantes en la Educación Básica Media

RESUMEN

Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo conocer el uso del juego de dominó como un medio para mejorar el aprendizaje del vocabulario de los estudiantes, ya que la integración de juegos en el proceso de enseñanza está alineada con las metodologías pedagógicas modernas que promueven entornos de aprendizaje interactivos y centrados en los estudiantes. Por esta razón, el método de investigación utilizado fue el diseño de investigación-acción con un enfoque de métodos mixtos para evitar malentendidos o confusiones. Además, los participantes fueron estudiantes de Educación Básica Media de una institución pública de la ciudad de Loja, compuesta por 37 estudiantes, lo que permitió al investigador obtener resultados que demostraron cómo el juego de dominó podía motivar a los estudiantes, hacer que participaran activamente y trabajaran de manera eficiente en clase. Para recopilar los datos, el investigador utilizó la técnica de pruebas, aplicando una pre-prueba y una post-prueba, la técnica de encuesta con un cuestionario, y la técnica de observación, utilizando notas de campo como instrumento. Los resultados mostraron un logro notable por parte de los estudiantes, donde los datos indicaron que su rendimiento aumentó de 7,44 en la pre-prueba a 8,39 en la post-prueba. Como consecuencia, se puede concluir que el juego de dominó posiblemente aumenta el vocabulario de los estudiantes, ya que es un claro ejemplo de cómo los estudiantes aprenden mientras juegan, se divierten, prestan atención y aprenden, sin perder el propósito de la lección.

Palabras Clave: juego del domino, aprendizaje del vocabulario, aprendizaje centrado en el estudiante

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INTRODUCTION

This research explores the use of the dominoes game as an innovative technique to improve vocabulary learning among middle basic education students in a public institution in Loja during the school year 2023-2024. The study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of this game-based learning strategy in enhancing students' vocabulary learning and to understand students' perceptions of this method.

The EF English Proficiency Index (2023) indicates that Ecuador ranks 80th out of the evaluated countries, highlighting a significant gap in English language proficiency compared to other Latin American nations. This low proficiency level underscores the need for effective teaching strategies to improve English language skills among students. Vocabulary knowledge, in particular, is essential for language acquisition, serving as a foundation for developing reading, writing, speaking, and listening abilities (Staehr, 2008, as cited in Dakhi & Fitria, 2019).

Despite the critical role of vocabulary in language learning, traditional methods often fail to engage students effectively. Previous research has demonstrated that game-based learning can significantly enhance motivation and vocabulary retention (Indriani, 2023). However, there is limited research on the use of Dominoes Games specifically for vocabulary learning in the Ecuadorian educational context. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating how the Dominoes Game can be used to improve vocabulary learning among middle basic education students.

The necessity of improving English vocabulary skills arises from the observed weaknesses in students' language proficiency. Vocabulary is the cornerstone of language learning and its mastery is crucial for the development of other language skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Sari and Syafei (2013) emphasize that mastering vocabulary is essential for students to succeed in learning English. The Dominoes in the teaching process can offer several benefits. Games can make learning less stressful and more engaging, thereby encouraging active participation and sustained interest among students. Previous studies have demonstrated that the use of games in education can lead to better learning outcomes and improved student performance.

To make it possible the researcher proposes to identify the effectiveness of the dominoes game in enhancing vocabulary learning. And to recognize the students' perceptions regarding the use of the dominoes game in vocabulary development. By achieving these objectives, the study aims to contribute



to the development of innovative teaching strategies that can be incorporated into the English language curriculum, thus enhancing the overall learning experience and outcomes for students.

Finally, it is important to mention that integrating games into the teaching process aligns with modern pedagogical methodologies that advocate for interactive and student-centered learning environments. Games have shown potential as educational tools that cater to diverse learning needs (Shabaneh & Farrah, 2019). Specifically, the dominoes game offers a unique approach to vocabulary learning by combining play and education, making the learning process enjoyable and effective.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher applied an action research design. The data used in this research were quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative data was taken from questionnaires using the Likert scale to gather the students' perceptions at the end of the learning process, while quantitative data was taken from the result of the evaluation of learning. The researcher used pre-tests and post-tests to evaluate the students. A pre-test was conducted to identify the students' competence in vocabulary range, whereas the post-test was used to find out the extent of students' vocabulary learning.

Procedure

The procedure of this research follows the steps of action research proposed by Harley (1989). Before conducting this research, the researcher started identifying the problem in the learning process. The researcher did observation and interviewed the students to get the data. After collecting the data, the researcher analyzed and interpreted the data in qualitative data form. Based on the problem understood the researcher began to plan the action. In this research, the researcher applied the Dominoes Card game as the media of teaching. The card has been modified based on the topics. The researcher implemented this media for three different times. In the next meeting, the researcher gave the final test (posttest) to measure the implementation of the modified dominoes card game. The data was gathered in quantitative data form. The last step was evaluating and comparing the data obtained from the post-test and pre-test.

Data Collection Analysis

The data was collected from observation, interview, and test. The data obtained from the observation and interview were analyzed and interpreted as qualitative data. The data obtained from the test were analyzed statistically. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired sample T-tests. It



was to know the different scores before implementing dominoes game and after having implemented it.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To determine the improvement and effectiveness of vocabulary learning by using the Dominoes Game where the researcher used pretest and posttest instruments to collect quantitative information as well as field notes that recorded what the researcher lived daily during the lessons, regarding this, the results obtained were:

Indicators	Pretest	Posttest
Meaning (2.5/2.5)	1,89	2,50
Spelling (2.5/2.5)	2,24	2,19
Word use (2.5/2.5)	1,89	2,16
Word class (2.5/2.5)	1,42	1,54
Total means	7,44	8,39

The researcher works with indicators to have a clear idea of what is going to be tested for that reason the comparison of the results before and after using Dominoes Game in formative assessment for improving the learning vocabulary in aspects such as meaning, spelling, and words. These results are clear evidence of the performance of the students using the strategy where the researcher noticed how students could learn through the use of games without losing the purpose of improvement and learning since students are just children who want and expect to learn English in a didactic and enjoyable way to avoid being bored during the English lessons.

The results obtained from the study are consistent with previous research, such as the work of Pan and Sana (2021), who highlighted the benefits of interactive games in language learning, observing significant improvements in students' vocabulary acquisition. Similarly, Hodge's (2005) study highlighted those students demonstrated increased motivation and engagement when learning through game-based activities, which is corroborated by students' positive responses regarding the use of the Domino game in this study. However, it contrasts with Creswell's (2012) research, which suggested that while game-based learning can be effective, its success depends on the context and specific



implementation strategy, indicating that not all game-based methods can produce the same level of improvement.

Now to recognize the students' perceptions about the use of the Dominoes game in the development of English vocabulary learning, a questionnaire was taken, similarly, the researcher used field notes where the investigator recorded everything about the class, if something was right or not, and then use it to identify how well the researcher did it. Both were a formal and organized way to collect relevant information to support.

Question N° 1						
Level of success	Type of card					
	(f)		(f)		(f)	
	Picture card	%	Letter card	%	Written card	%
Successful	30	88%	21	62%	16	47%
Unsuccessful	4	12%	13	38%	18	53%
N° Students	34		34		34	

The first table regarding how successful each type of card was showing clear information that the picture card has better results than the other ones. The students' perceptions were recorded in the questionnaire using a Likert scale, where so the results were focused on the "agree" and "strongly agree" answers where students mentioned they feel more enthusiastic to learn vocabulary through the use of Dominoes Game despite the beginning the strategy seems to be difficult for them, then they understand what were the process and the way of using them. Equally, students remark that they have fun while they learn because it motivates them to improve and put more effort into learning English vocabulary during the lessons.

Question (Q) N° 2	Likert scale							
	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree	
	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)
Did lessons become enjoyable for me since the teacher made use of Domino's Game?	0	0%	0	0%	11	32%	23	68%
N° Students	34		34		34		34	



In the “agree” and “strongly agree” answers where students mentioned they felt more enthusiastic about learning vocabulary through the use of the Dominoes Game despite that at the beginning the strategy seemed to be difficult for them, then they understood what was the process and the way of using them. Equally, students remark that they have fun while they learn because it motivates them to improve and put more effort into learning English vocabulary during the lessons.

Question (Q) N° 3	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree	
	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)
The Dominoes game was a difficult strategy to understand so I could not work as I expected.	11	32%	9	26%	7	21%	6	18%
N° Students	34		34		34		34	

Question 3 where are mentions that 32% of the students “strongly disagree” and 26% “disagree” that the strategy was not difficult to use and understand since they could recognize and work with them perfectly. Subsequently, a few students 21% “agree” and 18% “strongly agree” about the difficulty of the strategy, because they did not understand the purpose and the way they have to work with the strategy.

Question (Q) N° 4	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree	
	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)
The instructions were very useful and direct so I fulfilled perfectly with the activities.	0	0%	1	3%	9	26%	25	74%
N° Students	34		34		34		34	

Regarding question 4 about how useful and direct the teacher’s instruction was, none of the students chose “strongly disagree”. However, 3% of students “disagree” regarding the teacher giving no clear explanation, then 26% of learners “agree” with the clear, useful, and direct explanation given by the teacher at the end of the lesson, at the end 74% were “strongly agree” since pupils did not understand the whole explanation, so they could not work as they expected, despite they asked to translate the



instruction into Spanish, the use of strategy was a little complicated, but which was worst was the explanation because for them it was not very clear.

Question (Q) N° 5	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree	
	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)
The strategy motivates me to continue working and learning more vocabulary during the lessons.	0	0%	1	3%	6	18%	27	79%
N° Students	34		34		34		34	

None of the students mentioned “strongly disagree” about feeling motivated with the using of the strategy to continue working and learning vocabulary, then 3% of students “disagree” about feeling motivated to continue working and learning more vocabulary during the lessons through the use of Dominoes Games regarding students mention that they do not understand at all the strategy so they did not like it. However, students who are 18% “agree” and 79% “strongly agree” mentioned that they learned and understood pretty good the vocabulary using the Dominoes Game so based on the results of the posttest the researcher can notice the effectiveness of some indicators using the Dominoes Game and the perceptions from students too.

Question (Q) N° 6	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree	
	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)
At the end of the lesson, I appreciated the vocabulary learned because the dominoes game helped me to manage.	0	0%	1	3%	6	18%	27	79%
N° Students	34		34		34		34	

Concerning the student's learning process using the Dominoes Game, where none of them “strongly disagree” with appreciating the vocabulary learning through the use of the game, then 3% of the students “disagree” with the use of Dominoes Games since for they it was not a useful strategy, they believe it was something that confused themselves. Compared to the 18% “agree” and 79% “strongly agree” of students who appreciate the use of the new and innovative strategies focused on the student’s vocabulary



improvement, which mention that since they understand the purpose and the way students have to work with the strategy had a remarkable incrementation in the results after their usage.

Along with the field notes and questionnaire responses, the majority of the participants had a positive opinion about the use of the Domino Game to enhance their vocabulary learning. For example, students described this game as an engaging tool that captures their attention and helps them to understand vocabulary through interactive play. In addition, the Dominoes Game encouraged active class participation, creating a more dynamic and effective learning environment. Furthermore, students mentioned that using a game related to learning contexts improved their vocabulary and increased their motivation, confidence, and autonomy in learning English vocabulary.

These results are consistent with Indriani's (2023) assertion that games such as Dominoes facilitate active participation and maintain classroom control by keeping students engaged. In summary, the effectiveness and positive impact of the Dominoes Game is remarkable, as students showed improvements in their vocabulary learning and expressed their enjoyment of this strategy.

CONCLUSIONS

This research expected to determine the impact of the Dominoes Game strategy on vocabulary learning among middle-basic education students, revealing significant improvements in vocabulary learning, comprehension, and usage.

The strategy, using various card types, proved effective and remarkable impact in helping students to understand, spell, and apply vocabulary in different contexts since students found it engaging and motivating, leading to enhanced participation and deeper learning. The strategy helps students to obtain a wide range of vocabulary for their benefit, not only for English lessons but also for daily life activities since they can work perfectly with verbs and adjectives such as was expected.

Likewise, students' perceptions of the Dominoes Game strategy have emphasized both its effectiveness and its attractiveness in the learning process. On the one hand, students found the cards of the strategy attractive and innovative, showing enthusiasm, motivation, and desire to learn in a new and interactive way. Moreover, students stated that the strategy helped them focus on specific words, retain essential meaning, identify correct spelling, and develop their critical thinking skills to recognize the correct



word patterns. Thus, this dual impact of the Dominoes Game strategy not only improves students' vocabulary learning but also fosters a more active and effective learning experience.

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