



**The Influence of Adapted Traditional Ecuadorian Games on English Vocabulary
Acquisition in Primary School.**

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RESUMEN

En Ecuador, el aprendizaje del inglés enfrenta barreras críticas: falta de conocimientos previos, acceso limitado a la tecnología y el predominio de métodos de enseñanza basados en la memorización y la repetición. Esta situación genera desmotivación y dificulta la comunicación entre los estudiantes. Ante este panorama, surge la necesidad de implementar estrategias innovadoras y de bajo costo. Esta investigación propone el uso de juegos tradicionales ecuatorianos como herramientas para el aprendizaje activo. Estos juegos, al ser parte integral de la vida diaria de los niños, reducen la ansiedad y ayudan a conectar el nuevo vocabulario con su

contexto cultural e identidad. Los resultados de este estudio demuestran que la gamificación basada en métodos tradicionales transforma el aula en un espacio dinámico donde los estudiantes dejan de ser receptores pasivos y se convierten en participantes activos. Esta estrategia no solo mejora el dominio del inglés, sino que también revitaliza la cultura local y fortalece la confianza de los estudiantes en contextos con recursos limitados. Empleando un paradigma mixto cualitativo-cuantitativo, esta investigación adopta un método descriptivo dedicado a la conceptualización y el análisis del problema central. La población estudiada provino de una escuela pública ubicada en Manabí, Ecuador, con una muestra de 59 estudiantes menores de 9 a 10 años. Participaron tres educadores expertos en la enseñanza del inglés. Este marco conceptual se refuerza rigurosamente con datos empíricos y métricas estadísticas. Metodológicamente, el estudio se operacionaliza mediante el despliegue simultáneo de tres instrumentos de evaluación actuales. Por lo tanto, se utiliza el juego tradicional constituye una estrategia académica para contribuir a un aprendizaje significativo que fomente la aplicación de los contenidos aprendidos en contextos del mundo real.

Palabras Clave: Juegos Tradicionales, gamificación, aprendizaje del inglés, comunidad

INTRODUCTION

Traditional games, according to Camargo et al. (2023), refer to recreational activities transmitted from generation to generation in a specific community or culture, reflecting historical, social and cultural aspects.

In many Ecuadorian public schools, learning English is a challenging process because students often have little to no prior knowledge of the language. Most children come from families with limited access to the internet or technology, which makes it hard for them to study or practice at home. Teachers often use traditional methods based on translation and repetition, where students only memorize words without understanding their meaning.

The school where this investigation was carried out is a public school located in the rural area of Tosagua, Manabi; a sample was taken from herewith a group of 59 students ranging in age from 9 to 10 and three teachers experts in English education.

These classes are frequently monotonous, and students tend to lose interest and motivation easily. As a result, they can recognize a few English words but cannot use them in real communication.

This situation affects the confidence and participation of the students during English lessons. Educators sometimes need to explain everything in Spanish because students do not understand the new vocabulary. For this reason, it is necessary to apply new strategies that are simple, motivating, and connected to students' cultural background.

Vente Micolta, (2019) manifests that the teacher must be resourceful in the face of a lack of ideas to develop new academic strategies in order to address the lack of interest of students in practicing English. The last premise combined with a lack of knowledge of traditional games, gives rise to the idea of using traditional games as a teaching strategy, highlighting students' cultural and indigenous values, and making them link the knowledge acquired with their roots.

Traditional Ecuadorian games are part of children's daily life and can be used as an active and enjoyable tool to learn English vocabulary. Through play, movement, and cooperation, students can remember new words more easily, stay focused, and feel more interested in learning.

Teaching English in Ecuadorian public schools is challenging because most students start from zero and have limited access to educational resources. For this reason, professors must find creative and low-cost strategies that help students learn in an active and fun way. Adapting traditional Ecuadorian games in English lessons can make vocabulary learning more natural and meaningful. These games are familiar to children, which helps them feel comfortable and motivated to participate.

Learning through games also promotes interaction, teamwork, and confidence in using new words. According to educational approaches like constructivism, students learn better when they are physically and emotionally involved in the learning process. The objective of this research is to evaluate the influence of adapted traditional Ecuadorian games on English vocabulary acquisition in primary school students. Therefore, this study is important because it introduces an innovative and culturally relevant method that can improve English vocabulary learning in Ecuadorian primary schools. It will also provide educators with a practical strategy to make their classes more dynamic and effective, especially in contexts where technology and resources are limited.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Adapted Traditional Ecuadorian Games

Play promotes language development, as many traditional games are associated with regional rhymes, which in turn foster creativity. This is a key factor that is closely linked to early childhood learning, and it is a universal element that supports a child's development by bringing them into contact with the outside world, allowing them to experiment and interact with different environments (Sancho, 2022).

Traditional games are a fundamental part of every student's childhood, as it is believed that for a child to develop naturally, therefore, they should know at least one game that is typical of their local area. When children play games with other student, games they all share and are familiar with, they feel comfortable and confident at school. This is why incorporating these games helps develop the skills needed academic planning (Guaranda et al, 2024).

Traditional games connect children with their past, which is invisibly woven into their surroundings, while fostering in students an empathetic and respectful bond with the customs of their ancestors. Traditional games promote values that help children develop the necessary tools to integrate into society (Barrios, 2018). They are being lost due to industrialization and the rise of new technologies. It is necessary this trend; therefore, developing educational strategies that encourage the integration of traditional games into academic settings helps preserve this cultural legacy, which must not be overlooked. (Quiñones Treinta et al, 2025).

By incorporating traditional games as educational strategies, the goal is not only to make learning more enjoyable for students, but also to use this approach to revive the traditional games unique to each region. (Perea et al, 2025).

García and Tarazona (2022) conducted this study: “The Importance of Traditional Games in Strengthening the Psychomotor Development of Children Aged 3 to 5.” Their study shows that educators who used traditional games helped children develop skills that significantly improved their academic performance, demonstrating the value of these games as a playful approach in the classroom.

Muñoz-Arroyave et al. (2020) conceptualize play as an educational resource that contributes to students’ holistic development, emphasizing the knowledge gained through classroom instruction. Play can be used by educators as a means of learning and developing new concepts; for this reason, play can be considered a pedagogical strategy that cannot be overlooked in a successful teaching process (González Romero et al., 2024).

According to Quispe Munares et al. (2025), game-based learning is fundamental to the teaching-learning process, as supported by constructivist theorists Piaget and Vygotsky, who consider learning through games to be an essential tool for exploring and constructing knowledge. Through playful interaction, students strengthen their cognitive and social skills while fostering curiosity and motivation. Therefore, incorporating traditional games into English classes helps children connect learning with their own culture, making vocabulary acquisition more natural, engaging, and effective.

Authors such as Marquez (2023), mentioned that traditional games are a tool that can be used to reinforce the learning process, not only in second-language instruction but also in subjects such as physical education, mathematics, and social studies. For this reason, they are useful and versatile and should be incorporated into academic planning.

Pujolá (2024), said in today’s educational landscape, play can become trapped in a conceptual loop where it is either referred to as a learning process or where learning is treated as if it were a game.

Currently, gamification plays a central role in various educational approaches that position play as the foundation of the learning process. Traditional games serve as a bridge between students' roots and knowledge and the curriculum content to be taught. Therefore, they are tools that should be incorporated when developing a gamified strategy for academic planning. (Hernández & Rosell, 2022).

These traditional games cannot be chosen at random by the educator; to be used effectively, they must be selected with a specific purpose in mind or as many authors said intentionally; the educator must carefully choose the game to be used in accordance with the academic objectives of the lesson plan. Because when the selected games and academic objectives align with the content to be taught, students are more receptive to developing the competencies needed to acquire the skills required for learning a second language, such as English. This, in turn, increases students' motivation to learn new content based on their traditional childhood games (Jimenez et al, 2020).

Traditional games evoke students' childhood memories, they are associated to their emotional connections, which, in an academic setting, facilitates the development of soft skills. Using them not only motivates students but also helps them connect the knowledge they have acquired with their motivations and their desire to learn and express themselves in another language.

Traditional games are embedded in students' memories, and using them in another language draws on that same memory to aid in language learning. (De Quezada et al, 2020).

English Vocabulary Acquisition

Language acquisition has been a topic of debate since the early days of education. Authors such as the linguist Chomsky (1928) propose a learning model that contrasts with rote memorization,

emphasizing that vocabulary acquisition is not simply a matter of learning words in isolation, but rather of understanding and applying grammatical rules in a meaningful way, allowing students to internalize the content.

With the previous premise the gamification through traditional games places the class content in a cultural context that is accessible to the student, making learning a more dynamic and less restrictive process for students, thereby boosting motivation to learn. Authors such as Pérez et al (2021) point out that incorporating traditional games into the teaching process results in highly motivated students, because using traditional games helps students form emotional connections with class content, thereby making that content meaningful. It is innovative to include these games, through traditional games places the class content in a cultural context that is accessible to the student.

Vidal (2023), mentioned that the use of traditional games such as Snakes and Ladders, Hangman, word search, and crossword puzzles helps students develop proper spelling, which in turn aids in the acquisition of English vocabulary that students can use more effectively, since learning through traditional games links this knowledge to their childhood memories.

Pérez, Y. B., & Pérez, K. J. B. (2020). Said that thanks to traditional games, words are not learned by rote or memorization, but within a context that is meaningful to the student. For example, when playing circle games or reciting rhymes, children associate the action with the word in a familiar context, which facilitates semantic memory and learning.

In summary, the literature highlights how traditional Ecuadorian games plays an important role in the acquisition of vocabulary in English because these activities link the English class content to the students' emotions and childhood memories. Also broadens the scope of learning, since when educators place students in a familiar context, such as traditional games; learning becomes not just a linear process, but one in which students become active participants in the teaching

process. Including traditional games in the educational curriculum is an effective strategy for the holistic development of students and the preservation of cultural identity. Because when traditional games are integrated, not only are academic contents taught, but students' overall values are also fostered. (Morejon et al, 2024).

METHODOLOGY

To executed this research, a mixed methodology was used to approach to explain how adapted traditional Ecuadorian games influence English vocabulary learning in primary school students.

This study utilizes a mixed-methods (qualitative-quantitative) research design, employing a descriptive methodology to conceptualize and contextualize the core research problem. To ensure empirical rigor, the qualitative framework is systematically substantiated by quantitative data and numerical analysis. Data collection is executed through the concurrent administration of three distinct research instruments. The research was conducted during the last quarter of the 2025-2026 school year.

For the purposes of this article, three research instruments were developed: a test, an interview, and an observation form. These were applied concurrently in the execution of this project.

The investigation was executed in a public school in Tosagua, Manabi-Ecuador with children from 9 to 10 years old, in 5th grade. The study include three stages: a diagnostic stage with a pre-test to identify students' initial vocabulary level, an implementation stage where traditional games will be used to teach specific English topics, and an evaluation stage with a post-test and observations to measure progress and motivation.

The traditional games used in this research included "Elastics," or "Chinese jump rope" in which students jump over an elastic band while reciting a rhyme, thus developing oral skills. "Chanton-Chanton" was also used in English to develop new vocabulary and grammar. But especially for the intervention, the jump rope game was used, in which the educator proposed a category and the student jumped rope while reciting as many words as possible from that category, for example, family members. The student who recited the most words in the shortest time won.

Data collected from tests, observations analyzed to understand how these games help students learn and remember new words in a fun and meaningful way.

The pretest and posttest were administrated to 59 students; between 9 and 10 years old from 5th grade basic education from public educational institution in Tosagua, Manabí. Also, semi-structured interviews with three expert professionals in English education were also sought to obtain quality premises that served as the basis for the analysis in this work.

The pretest was applied before used traditional Ecuadorian games as academic strategy, after applied this strategy and give it through the retro-alimentation that, the post test was applied.

The quantitative data obtained were tabulated and statistically analyzed using a mixed-methods approach those weights both quantitative and qualitative data, yielding findings that demonstrate the importance of the variables to be analyzed.

This study considered viable for the reason that of the accessibility of the educational context, the availability of participants, and the low-cost nature of the materials required for its implementation. School authorities and educators express openness to collaborate with the researcher.

RESULTS

Analysis of Interviews.

The gamification in classroom throw traditional games allows the student acquired competences required to develop the academic planning assertedly. Quiroz et al (2022), said that the game is the way to improve the quality of the education, students that play, learn faster and better. Participants mentioned that traditional games allow learn in a different and more dynamic way; adapting the traditional games to English helps students acquire significant knowledge. Educator should adapt the game rules and instructions in English; according to the students' level, all of that incentive the use of English during the game for create in students the necessity to improve their English production.

Ramos & Martel (2022), mentioned that traditional games are an important strategy for develop motivation and active participation in the students. Participants agree with that premise, cited that implementing traditional games increase the intrinsic motivation; creating meaningful knowledge, it is evident in this investigation that when the educator uses traditional games as academic strategy the students are more receptive to learn English.

When the educator used traditional game, they take cultural elements to send language for commands for the students, developing receptive and productive knowledge. Participants said traditional games demonstrates the evolution of learning and, above all, allows us to analyze what should be improved or enhanced in language leaning, they convert cultural elements making manage vocabulary meaningful for students.

The acquisition of new vocabulary is easier using traditional games. Participants mentioned that their use permits that student learn the vocabulary in an active and participatory way, because using traditional games makes students active members of their process of

learning. The principal cause of this is because students connect autochthone knowledge with new language words.

Analysis of pre-test and post-test results

Table 1. Pre-test Results

		PRE-TEST			
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	3	2	3,4	3,4	3,4
	4	7	11,9	11,9	15,3
	5	9	15,3	15,3	30,5
	6	16	27,1	27,1	57,6
	7	11	18,6	18,6	76,3
	8	10	16,9	16,9	93,2
	9	4	6,8	6,8	100,0
	Total	59	100,0	100,0	

Source: Own Elaboration

Table 2. Post-test Results

		POST-TEST			
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	6	3	5,1	5,1	5,1
	7	6	10,2	10,2	15,3
	8	16	27,1	27,1	42,4
	9	26	44,1	44,1	86,4
	10	8	13,6	13,6	100,0
	Total	59	100,0	100,0	

Authors such as Moya (2022) conceptualize play as the way to make learning a fun process, when the teacher uses traditional games in addition to making an academic contribution.

Initially in pre-test, the grades go to 3 up to 9 in comparison with the posttest where grades go to 6 up to 10, this data show the relevance of using gamified strategies in English classroom, especially using traditional games. The improvement to have grades >6 in the post-test realized why professors must have traditional game as ludic strategy in the academic planning.

The pre-test has an average range of students with grades within the mode of 6, while after the implementation of traditional games as a teaching strategy, it is evidenced in the post-test grades within the mode of 9. This shows the effectiveness of developing the content of planning through traditional games, the 50% improvement is unavoidable and is a wake-up call for the English teacher to look for an effective academic resource in traditional games.

Fajardo, (2023), recognizes in his research "Traditional Games, Significant Learning Strategy" that the use of traditional games is a strategy that generates a safe learning environment, thus improving the academic performance.

Even for students with low academic performance, that using traditional games as an academic strategy to consolidate knowledge is useful. The results reflect that the pre-test minimum grade is 3 versus the post-test the minimum grade is 6, which shows improvement in students who, due to various factors.

The results reflect conclusive findings in favor of the use of games as a recreational strategy, the average error within the pre-test is 201, while the post-test is 133 out of a total of 59 students tested show a positive trend that is consistent with the data.

Analysis of the observation sheets

The results of the observation sheet will be analyzed through categories, within which the field research was focused.

Curricular adaptation: According to Losada (2024), games, when well planned, will fill the class with another context, creating a better environment. These will develop empathy and better behavior in students, making the class a more interesting space.

With the observation, it is evident that students applied traditional games within the curricular planning are more motivated to execute the activities, since it is evident that by using traditional native games for students, they are being taught from their roots, which allows them to feel familiar with the contents taught.

Frequency and participation: Calle (2023), said that the importance of designing interactive and motivating classes; using only traditional games to generate interest and motivation in students.

According to the results of the observation, it is denoted that students are more participative when the teacher uses traditional games, when they know in their mother tongue the rules and instructions of the game, the active participation improves, thus improving the development of planning in general.

Cultural contextualization: It is evident that for students it is striking that the teacher adapts the games of their childhood to a foreign language, which helps them to associate more easily the vocabulary learned.

Receptive Knowledge: According to the results of the observations made, students prior to developing traditional games, did not usually explain instructions in English; however, the implementation of this strategy denotes an improvement in students expressing themselves in English to give commands and follow instructions in games.

Productive Knowledge: With the implementation of traditional games, students develop fluid handling of new vocabulary, this is mainly due to the fact that the student recognizes the rules, objects and instructions provided in traditional games, which benefits the learning of new concepts through them.

Long-term retention: According to the results of the observation, it is evident that the vocabulary taught was not fully consolidated in the students, while after the execution of this strategy the students more easily consolidate the new vocabulary.

DISCUSSION

The pedagogical intervention focused on developing the foundational skills necessary for student vocabulary acquisition. It utilized a specific didactic strategy named 'Traditional Games as a Cognitive Bridge'. This intervention was executed during the third academic term, approximately 40% of the instructional time in the English language curriculum was allocated to integrating traditional games as active learning strategies. Among these, 'jump rope' emerged as the most widely utilized activity. Students demonstrated high levels of engagement by attempting to maximize their retrieval of both familiar and newly acquired English lexicon while maintaining the physical rhythm of the game. This approach facilitated the achievement of core learning objectives by embedding linguistic acquisition within a culturally relevant, experiential framework.

Findings indicate that the use of gamification through traditional games is important in English language instruction. In the categories of long knowledge retention and vocabulary acquisition, there is a noticeable lack of these skills prior to the implementation of the strategy, whereas after the strategy is implemented, these skills are reinforced and consolidated. The results of the research instruments are conclusive regarding the use of traditional games because a considerable improvement in the academic performance of the students considered for the

execution of this work was evidenced, for which reason it is suggested that the educator should adapt the traditional game according to the age and level of vocabulary that the students use.

Before introducing traditional games, students were limited to being passive recipients of information and knowledge; this is why this category is present prior to the use of the strategy. However, it is important to note that with the introduction of traditional games, students become active participants in their own learning process. However, it should be noted that there is a dichotomy between the development of teaching strategies through traditional games and traditionalist positions that still adhere to classical teaching methods.

The widespread acceptance of traditional games as pedagogical strategies aligns with the work of authors like Palacios (2025), who assert that using traditional cultural elements in English classes not only reinforces cultural identity but also significantly increases student motivation. By gamifying academic planning with familiar games, English vocabulary and oral expressions are processed organically and functionally. This translates into more dynamic learning, with more assertive concept associations within the educational process.

Perez & Alvarez (2022) point out that traditional games serve as a cognitive bridge. Their studies indicate that learning based on traditional games allows for a more organic transition from the mother tongue to a foreign language, since the rules of the game are a universal language, even gaining an advantage over signs and more primitive forms of language.

In spite of the interest for innovation, the results also reveal critical confrontation from a sector that selects conservative methods (grammar-translation). This negative trend can be clarified through the perspective of García-Pérez (2024), who identifies that many teachers and students associate games strictly with leisure, perceiving a lack of "academic rigor" in playful activities. This distrust often stems from teacher training focused on repetition and standardized assessment.

The dichotomy found in this study reflects the current debate in Ecuadorian pedagogy. While traditional methods offer a predictable structure, they often lack the essential communicative component. In this regard, Lirola (2022) argues that the effectiveness of traditional games lies not only in their fun factor but also in their ability to foster social interaction, an element that textbook methods often omit.

Finally, to mitigate the negative perception, it is crucial to consider the proposal by Zambrano & Rueda (2024), who suggests that the key is not to replace the traditional method entirely but to integrate them through a "hybrid academic planning." This implies demonstrating that traditional Ecuadorian games have a solid pedagogical structure behind them, capable of meeting the standards required for a successful teaching process. In other words, gamification should not exist without planning.

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude is important to emphasize that traditional games, beyond being an educational innovation, are a strategy that encompasses English language learning through the revival of cultural traditions, often forgotten by students. In current contexts, it is evident that students are absorbed by technology, neglect traditional games from their own environment and culture. Therefore, this type of strategy is useful because it develops not only content but also soft skills in students.

Traditional games are academic strategies that work on both sides of the educational process; that is, they are useful for both the educator and the student. Among the findings, it was evident that for teachers they are useful because they liven up the classroom, increase student motivation, and foster a more productive learning environment. Meanwhile, for students, using traditional games not only helps them acquire English more easily but also creates a sense of belonging and builds confidence and greater empathy with their surroundings.

To use traditional games, it is recommended that the educator plan every detail of the strategy's implementation, because leaving elements to chance that include the traditional game can generate disorder within the classroom, reducing the effectiveness of the academic strategy.

Regarding the limitations of this research, the execution time is a factor because the timeframes were very close to the holidays, which limited the number of observed sessions and rushed the execution of the tests. Therefore, it is suggested that in future research, the end of the school year should not be used as a reference point for conducting field research.

In conclusion, this work demonstrates that traditional games are tools that create a pleasant classroom environment, contextualizing the content within a familiar setting for students. These games foster active participation and dialogue among students because they are group games, which encourages students to acquire new knowledge, develop healthy competition, and promote a positive exchange of ideas.

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