



BENEMERITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA DE PUEBLA
FACULTAD DE LENGUAS

**STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT USING TABLETOP
ROLEPLAYING GAMES AS A GAME-BASED LEARNING ACTIVITY
TO PRACTICE ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS.**

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Students' perceptions about using tabletop roleplaying games as a game-based learning activity to practice English speaking skills.

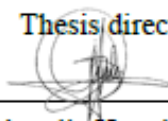
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Abstract

The present research arose from the interest in knowing BUAP students' perspective concerning using tabletop roleplaying games as a game-based activity to practice speaking. The sample included students from different BUAP faculties who had previously engaged with tabletop roleplaying games in their English classes. The present study followed a qualitative approach to meet objective set by the research and find answers for the research questions. Hence, this study was conducted through an interview, an instrument commonly used for qualitative research.

The findings revealed that all the students agreed positively on using tabletop roleplaying games. Furthermore, the participants shared five reasons for which they had a positive outlook on the use of tabletop roleplaying games. The reasons were that said games abate fear and nervousness, create collaboration, aid in learning vocabulary, help practice pronunciation, and improve speaking fluency.

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Chapter I: Introduction

1.0 Background

The speaking skill is an essential part of any English language classroom. One vital skill necessary in order to communicate effectively is speaking (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). According to Howarth (2001), this skill consists in exchanging oral speeches of varied lengths between individuals; this exchange applies to communicating information, thoughts, or feelings. Then speaking is a crucial means of communication to exchange ideas, making it an essential part of acquiring the language.

Despite its importance, teaching speaking continues to challenge many English teachers. Bouzar (2019) remarks that speaking is a formidable obstacle for teachers and learners to overcome. Burns (2019) explains that speaking involves many simultaneous processes that the speaker has to activate quickly in real-time thus making the skill complex and changing. The complexity and the need to express oneself with a time-constraint compound make learning and practicing speaking difficult.

This complexity has compelled teachers to experiment and apply different strategies to guide their students through learning and practicing speaking skills. One of these strategies is game-based learning. Glazer (2015) defines game-based learning as applying a game's or simulation's positive characteristics through interacting and overcoming the challenges presented by the game's rule set to enhance learning. Game-based learning seeks to harness game principles and their elements to fulfill an educational goal and to motivate and enhance students' engagement with the learning process. Several games could be applied to many teaching needs and desired outcomes within game-based learning. Currently, many teachers are acquainted with some of these games, such as Kahoot! Resmayani and Putra (2020) state that Kahoot! had an estimated 1 billion

users in 2018, and after the start COVID-19 pandemic and the enforcement of quarantines, this number has only increased. However, several games still need to be made familiar to teachers and researchers, such as tabletop roleplaying games.

Basir et al. (2020) defines tabletop roleplaying games as narrative-driven games in which players take control of a character and guided by a game master, start a quest with a clear objective. During the application of this tool, the students must keep notes and speak with each other to progress the story. These games are constructed through spoken interactions, and due to their oral and interactive nature, researchers have applied this game-based learning activities to analyze its impact on students, as shown in the following background.

Torres-Rodriguez and Martinez-Granada (2022) applied a set of task-based activities adapted as a tabletop roleplaying game to motivate oral communication in students. The participants in this research were 18 7th-grade students aged 11 to 13 years old from a rural school in Tolima, Colombia. The researchers concluded that the student's motivation to speak English increased. The tool facilitated verbal communication through collaborative work, oral experimentation, and the opportunity to produce pragmatic and meaningful language. The researchers further state that the game presented an environment where students felt safe interacting with their peers and experimenting with the language.

Johnson (2021) created and play-tested a tabletop roleplaying game to develop intrinsic motivation, vocabulary, organic speaking practice, and student cooperation. The study was carried out with 8 first and second year students of English as Foreign Language (EFL) studying at Woosong University, South Korea, at the time of the research. The author declared that although he observed organic speaking practice and student cooperation, the objectives of developing

vocabulary and intrinsic motivation still needed to be achieved. The author suggests further studies to be focused on more than the narrow scope of communicative nature.

Reed (2022) designed a course using several tabletop roleplaying games to develop the student's English skills. The participants consisted in 28 university students pursuing a degree in English at Otemon Kaguin University, located in the city of Osaka, Japan. The researcher applied three different tabletop roleplaying games of scaling difficulty throughout the course. The results showed that students could interact unassisted in the target language with the tool by creating their own stories and characters. A proposition for further research is to focus on a single tabletop game with a more structured and rigorous approach.

McCollum (2023) explored the degree of alignment between tasks found in tabletop roleplaying games the speaking skills intermediate and advanced English learners should possess according to guidelines established by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages. The participants were six pre-matriculated university students from an online, intensive English program. In this research, the participants were recorded during four sessions using tabletop role-playing games, and the recordings were transcribed for a detailed analysis. The results showed that the participants performed numerous target functions and suggested the tool's value in aiding the students in developing speaking skills at the previously mentioned levels. The author recommends further research to evaluate speech production quality during the game and examine its impact on other reading, listening, and writing skills.

Although the authors have focused their studies on the effect of tabletop roleplaying games on the students' speaking and communication skills, they have yet to focus their research on the students' perceptions of the use of tabletop roleplaying games. The studies have failed to consider

the student's points of view. Hence, the chief objective of the present study is to find the student's perception of tabletop roleplaying games to practice English speaking skills.

1.1 Rationale

My interest in tabletop roleplaying games as an educational tool was born out of my experience narrating and playing these games. In my teenage years, I was drawn to the creative narrative they offered, and I have spent many years playing them. These games are built upon the communication and social interaction of groups. Few rulesets have been translated into Spanish, so the players are forced to interact with the English language to play. The more I played, the more I noticed that even though the players' objective was not to learn English, their engagement with the game motivated them to learn about it, for instance acquiring vocabulary, correcting pronunciation and applying correct syntax. The players began searching for definitions of words and correcting mistakes among themselves. The game unintentionally provided the environment game-based learning seeks to create. All et al. (2015) explain that game-based learning is able provide a rich learning environment without pressure in which the students work together and interact with the material to improve their educational level. This unintended creation of learning opportunities in a non-teaching climate attracted my attention to the possible uses of this game in language education.

Furthermore, although these games might be used to strengthen other skills, I chose to focus on speaking skills for two reasons. First, the games rely on oral narration, and most of the interaction is through spoken words, making them ideal for practicing this particular skill. Second, through the experiences I had in the role of a student and in the role of a teacher, I have encountered that speaking is one of the biggest obstacles in the classroom. According to Reilly (2020), only about five to fourteen percent of Mexicans can communicate effectively in English. Borjian

(2015), through a series of interviews with Mexican English as Foreign Language teachers in public schools, concluded that learners show apathy, are of the opinion that the language is excessively intricate, and think that the methods applied in classrooms are too focused on the teacher and in the grammar. Nonetheless, speaking is a skill that must be developed by Mexican students in order to interact with the global community in several areas. Sharma and Puri (2020) state that English needs to be inculcated into the workforce because it predominates in areas like science, technology, trade, and tourism, among others. For these reasons, it is crucial to study how to help Mexican students to master this skill.

While other game-based activities are better known, tabletop roleplaying games have great potential to aid students in practicing and using their speaking skills. Torres-Rodriguez and Martinez-Granada (2022), Reed (2022), Farkas (2018), Johnson (2021), and McCollum (2023) have applied these games in a variety of contexts. Through their research, they have concluded that these games are beneficial for bolstering speaking and communicative skills. However, the authors missed considering the student's opinions. I consider furthering the research towards learning the students' points of view relevant to broadening the scope of knowledge.

1.2 Objectives

General objective:

To explore the students' perception and frequency of use of tabletop roleplaying games to practice English speaking skills.

Specific Objectives:

To identify the students' perception of using tabletop roleplaying games to practice English speaking skill.

1.3 Research questions

How frequently do students use tabletop roleplaying games as a game-based learning activity to practice English speaking skills?

What is the students' perception of using tabletop roleplaying games to practice English speaking skills?

1.4 Significance of the Study

In the modern age, English is undoubtedly a cosmopolitan language; thus, the importance of learning all of its aspects has been more significant than ever before. According to Sharma and Rachna (2020), the English language has established its presence and importance in all the areas of science and business, such as technology, media, trade, economics, tourism, research, etc. Practicing productive English skills, speaking, and writing, is vital to developing competence in using this language and excelling in the previously mentioned areas of knowledge. Despite this, teachers commonly face the challenge of the student's inhibition, low participation, lack of things to say, and lack of motivation (Yusuf, 2016). This study's significance lies in the need to evaluate and divulge an alternative tool to overcome these challenges.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

2.0 Introduction

The theoretical framework found for this research is presented in this chapter. At first, some elements of EFL and its context in Mexico will be discussed. After that, the speaking skill, its components, and possible obstacles for EFL learners to acquire it will be shown. Then, the research will delve into game-based learning and motivation. Finally, the research focus will be presented: tabletop roleplaying games and their application in language education.

2.1 English as a Foreign Language

The use of English has expanded well beyond the borders of English-speaking countries. Chitra and Puri (2020) remarked that English has proven essential in many areas, such as science, economics, technology, tourism, etc. This has led to a need to learn English in different contexts. According to Betti and Al-joburi (2015), English as a foreign language (EFL) refers to the process in which the English language is taught and learned in a country where there is little to no interaction with the language beyond classroom. Mexico, for instance, counts as an EFL country. EFL does not focus on using the language to address cultural needs that might arise outside of the classroom in an English-speaking context. Instead, it focuses more on grammar activities and tasks shaped by the student's particular needs and objectives (Harmer, 2015). Hence, EFL is taught in schools in contexts where English does not carry a significant in the learner's everyday life, and it is concerned with grammar needs.

Since English does not carry a vital role in the learners' daily communicative needs, practicing the language has little support outside the classroom (Setiyadi, 2020). Motivation, which tends to be low, depends significantly on the purpose of the student and the activities, materials,

and methods conducted by the teacher (Betti & Al-joburi, 2015). Therefore, EFL has limited opportunities to be rehearsed and used outside of schools, undermining the learner's motivation. Moreover, motivation is substantially influenced by the contents and methods presented within the classroom and the student's reason for studying the language.

2.2 EFL in Mexico

Terborg et al. (2007) state that Mexico possesses an intricate linguistic landscape with 62 recognized indigenous languages, an officially accepted language, Spanish, and a growing demand for English teaching at all levels of education. An estimated 20% of the population studies English in public and private education at several levels (British Council, 2015). Ramírez-Romero and Vargas-Gil (2019) further explain that in Mexico, English education is offered through various means such as educational programs, organizations, and online learning, among other channels, and it has an emphasis on a functional approach, for example, courses focused on Financial English, English for Academic Purposes, and others. The English language is seen as a commodity through which Mexicans hope to obtain larger salaries, social status, and opportunities for traveling, studying, or residing abroad. (Despaigne, 2019). In Mexico, English classes are widespread and sought after due to the belief that learning said language improves work and travel opportunities.

However, despite this context and the perceived importance of learning English, Davies (2020) emphasizes that it has been over 50 years since English became a curricular subject in Mexican schools, and still, English teaching seems to need to improve. Through a quantitative study, Gonzalez et al. (2004 cited in Santos & Weathers, 2016) observed that around 96% of learners from public institutions in Mexico still need to pass English linguistic Competency exams when entering higher education. Therefore, regardless of the perceived need for the language, there

are still problems in instructing and helping students achieve English proficiency, especially in public education.

2.3 English Language Skills

Polley (2011) asserts that human language differentiates itself from the mere communication of many living beings, such as insects and plants, because it combines many design features, like channel, function, exchange, learning, arbitrariness, imagination, and compositionality. Language is a complex skill aiming to impart information and knowledge, which involves four sub-skills: listening, writing, reading, and speaking. (Husain, 2015). Aydođan and Akbarov (2014) point out that these four skills, also known as macro-skills, contain many micro-skills like grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, etc. Burns and Siegels (2018) argue that the segregation of the macro skills is born out of accessibility and convenience rather than a truthful division based on how language works. Language is an elaborate process that allows humans to transmit intricate messages through many means. Although artificially divided, the subdivision of micro and macro skills is a convenient way to study and discuss them.

Between the four macro skills, there are more divisions. Sreena and Ilankumaran (2018) categorize the four skills into receptive skills, which refer to listening and understanding the language, and productive skills, which are the skills used to produce speaking and writing in the language. These skills are also known as passive and active skills. Nan (2018) adds that through linguistic production and reception, the people engaged in communication connect in both psychological and cognitive processes, assessing many factors such as vocabulary, syntax, and cognitive abilities, among others. receptive skills encompass listening and reading, and productive skills are speaking and writing. Through both skills, people interact and communicate while simultaneously creating assumptions about each other based on their chosen words, how they

create their sentences, etc. Therefore, developing productive and receptive skills to communicate meaningfully while leaving a good impression is essential. Due to the nature of the present study, the significance of speaking will be the focus of the research, though this does not mean other skills are less critical.

2.4 The speaking skill

Speaking is vital in our daily lives; thus, any English learner needs to develop this skill in their target language. Throughout the years, many definitions have focused on different aspects and perspectives of this skill. Mackey (1956, as cited in Bygate, 1987) summarized speaking as using proper intonation and cadence while also choosing the correct order of words and tone of voice to convey the intended message. Wilkins (1974) questions Mackey's emphasis on only producing what is considered correct and argues that speaking is an interaction skill. Students need to be competent to control their language production through choice-making instead of rote repetition of what is considered "proper" structures. Mackey's definition is focused on the concept of correctness. He remarks on the importance of producing certain sounds and rhythms and using a particular syntax. However, Wilkins disagrees with that rigid approach and asserts the importance of also applying a choice-making process while speaking instead of relying on the repetition of memorized sentences. There is an importance in producing the correct words, but it cannot be our only concern when creating language.

Bygate (1998) also advocates for defining the skills used in speaking-based interaction as a process in which the speaker makes constant decisions about communication. Eckard and Karny (1981) define speaking as a bidirectional process where there is an actual exchange of concepts, knowledge, and or feelings through cooperation between two or more people in a shared context.

Brown (1994) defines speaking as an intuitive process in which data is created and managed to develop a message, considering the members engaged in the exchange, the overall objective, and the settings surrounding the communication. All language is created within a context; without it, the message would be meaningless (Cornbleet & Carter, 2001). Burns and Seidlhofer (2010) add that competent speaking includes a detailed notion of the reasons, means, and moments when to communicate, and spoken language is bound to the social context where its meaning is negotiated. Hence, within spoken interaction, the message and the exchange of information cannot be divorced from the context, and without it, communication could be rendered meaningless and unintelligible. Identifying and considering the setting is integral to being a competent speaker.

Harmer (2015) affirms that speaking proficiency depends on reacting to the audience and changing depending on their feedback. These changes can include repeating certain words or phrases, changing the speed of speech, or even not uttering thoughts and phrases based on how the listeners respond. Goh and Burns (2021) remark that speakers should have strategies to cope with problems that may arise while speaking. Burns and Siegel (2018) delineate that besides being accurate and intelligible, speakers should know how to interact by taking turns, reacting to previous utterances, and asking for clarification when doubts arise. Speaking also involves changing and adapting depending on the speakers' reactions to fulfill the communicative need. These changes also include strategies to deal with miscommunication and to show interest.

Luoma (2004) synthesizes by defining the speaking skill as an interactional process in which meaning is constructed through the act of acquiring and analyzing linguistic information. The content, shape, and intended meaning of the messages depend and change depending on the situation, participants, and the reason and objective of the oral exchange. Speaking, despite being

a spontaneous process in constant evolution, is not unforeseeable and arbitrary. Speaking possesses patterns that tend to repeat themselves within certain situations.

2.5 Basic Types of Speaking

Brown and Abeywickrama (2018) categorized speaking into five categories focused on the performance side of the skill. The categories are Imitative, intensive, responsive, interactive, and extensive. The categories, as thought by Brown and Abeywickrama, are explained in the following section.

2.5.1 Imitative

Imitative performance refers to the ability to copy a word, an utterance, or even a complete sentence. This oral production is purely the imitation of sounds, structure, and grammar. This category does not consider the speaker's ability to understand meaning or participate in a meaningful exchange of words and ideas.

2.5.2 Intensive

Intensive performance refers to producing short sentences and brief messages of the language. It is used to demonstrate capacity within a small aspect of the language like grammar, phonetics, or vocabulary. The speaker must know how to respond to specific tasks, e.g., requests for particular speech production, but interaction remains minimal.

2.5.3 Responsive

Responsive performance involves brief spoken interactions and measures comprehension on a limited level. This usually includes simple greetings, small talk, simple requests, and similar things.

2.5.4 Interactive

Interactive performance is similar to responsive performance since both involve spoken interactions. However, they differ in length and complexity. Interactive performance may include multiple participants and multiple exchanges. This category is further divided into transactional and interpersonal. Transactional exchanges refer to communication with the purpose of giving and receiving specific information, while interpersonal exchanges refers to communication with the objective of simply interacting with other people and need to consider register, humor, colloquial language, and other social conventions.

2.5.5 Extensive

Extensive performance consists of producing complex stretches of language. In extensive speaking, the interaction is either highly limited or forbidden altogether. Extensive performance is also called monologue due to the sort of task associated with it. These tasks include things like speeches, oral presentations, and storytelling. This language is often planned and formal, although informal monologues and casual speeches exist.

2.6 Problems that Affect Speaking

Learning to be a competent English speaker is one of many English course objectives. However, many elements affect this process. Afshar and Asakereh (2016) categorized the problems and factors students face when speaking into three categories: linguistic problems, social problems, and affective problems. Linguistic problems refer to problems associated with an insufficiency of lexicon, syntax, incorrect spoken delivery, and grammar that stem from the inherent complexity of speaking. Burns (2018) asserts that to be considered a competent speaker, one must combine various skills, knowledge, and processes while considering the context and producing relevant and appropriate messages. This myriad of elements can overwhelm learners and educators alike. Bouzar (2019) adds that developing speaking is complicated due to the need to combine grammar knowledge and communication strategies while relying on the teacher's competence and feedback on the oral production and the learner's willingness to accept the corrections. Brown (2001) affirms that the main obstacles that interfere with speaking are the various grammar rules and the different sounds that define any language. Then speaking is difficult to practice and master since it asks the speaker to do many complex processes simultaneously.

Social problems include the conditions found in the student's context outside of the schools, the methods and strategies applied by teachers, and the comprehension and perceived usefulness of the class. Elements outside of the school, such as educational policies, impact the practice of the skill. Sometimes, teachers are pushed to relegate speaking skills due to learning goals centered around grammar and reading. If spoken production is not part of the evaluating process, teachers will prioritize other macro and micro skills such as grammar, writing, or reading (Pakula, 2015). In addition, the complexity of speaking requires time and practice that is not always available. Al-Seghayer (2014) advocates that more time should be allotted for teaching English in

EFL to reach most curriculum objectives because the students are often only exposed to the English language during English classes. Aleksandrask (2011) emphasizes that the lack of real speaking opportunities in their daily lives outside the classroom is one of the most significant problems that EFL students face. Furthermore, Senel (2012) says that factors such as the lack of native teachers, insufficient classes, inadequate strategies and materials, and constant interruption for error correction hampered the students' progress in speaking. English culture and the perception the student have of it also affect the process in favorable and unfavorable ways. Afebri et al. (2019) assert that if a student has a positive perception of the culture of the language, it might ease understanding and learning said language. The gist of the argument is that the EFL context leans towards a lack of opportunities for developing their skills beyond class time, and even within the classroom, there are hurdles such as insufficient time, a lack of importance placed in developing speaking, and unsatisfactory strategies. Lastly, the student's opinion of the culture influences their learning process. If they find learning English irrelevant or undesirable, this negatively affects the process.

Lastly, affective problems refer to the factors related to elements like self-assurance, motivation, and anxiety. Speaking is a process that occurs among people, and many students have many worries related to social interaction in vulnerable moments, such as when learning a new language. Leong and Ahmadi (2017) support this idea when they attribute fear of criticism and committing errors in front of their peers as a reason of why English language students sometimes inhibit themselves from speaking in the classroom. The fear of ridicule permeates the learning process of a new language. López et al. (2022) add that reluctance to speak in English is not only due to the fear of mockery from their friends and classmates but also because some feel anxiety from the teacher's reaction to the error, even if it is only a correction and feedback. Even among

fluent speakers, these elements can impact. Tong (2022) found, in a study conducted with 175 English major students, that self-confidence, lack of ideas concerning the topic, listening ability, and fear of mistakes were the most significant internal factors influencing speaking performance. These feelings of fear and anxiety hinder the process. Negative emotions during the interaction between the teacher, their classmates, their feelings, and even with the learning materials cause the students to stop doing a particular task. According to Abdul et al. (2019), nervousness or anxiety remains a significant obstacle to becoming a competent user of a foreign language, particularly in speaking. However, positive emotions can cause them to continue trying despite mistakes (López, 2015). In conclusion, affective factors can hinder the students' performance and willingness to participate and interact with activities.

2.7 Promoting Speaking

Due to speaking position as a macro skill, its importance cannot be understated. Thus, researchers and educators are predisposed to bettering the speaking abilities of English learners (Boonkit, 2010). Not only are teachers interested in enhancing speaking, but Graham (2007) states that many learners have the belief that sustaining fluid oral communication is a critical goal in learning English. However, An and Ho (2018) argue that some students in the EFL context do not realize the need or value of speaking English in real life, and they only care about using it to obtain a class grade. Therefore, building speaking competence is crucial for researchers, educators, and some students. In contrast, other students believe it is a useless skill for their context in a non-English speaking country.

Despite this importance, there are many obstacles, as shown in the past section of this study, and different authors carry different ideas on promoting speaking skills. Katsara (2021) states that to encourage speaking, it is vital to involve the students in the speaking activity and to

provide exciting material and activities that have them building up a conversation on a topic. Baker and Westrup (2003) claim that any activity must have some purpose within a context. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2013) add that it is essential to provide ample chances to speak in different situations and under varying social roles.. Activities must also be enjoyable to keep the learners motivated because, with motivation, students will make the necessary efforts to improve (Harmer, 2015). According to the authors, speaking activities must involve the learners, provide interesting materials, have a purpose, and expose the students to many different contexts. It is also remarked that said activities must be motivating to prevent students from giving up.

2.8 Game-based learning

Games have existed alongside humanity in many shapes and within several cultures and eras. They have fulfilled a purpose beyond entertainment in many contexts, including education. According to Shaffer et al. (2005), game-based learning uses games to achieve clear educative outcomes. Furthermore, Plass et al. (2010) explain that games with the intent of learning must balance the need to fulfill the pedagogical objectives with the desire to merely center on the gameplay itself. Game-based learning encompasses many games, from simple card games made for a lone player to intricate, online games with thousands of players and everything in between (Nazarova & Galiullina, 2016). Plass et al. (2015) warn that the precise definition of a game and not a game is an ongoing debate among researchers. Salen and Zimmerman (2004) define a game as a fictional conflict in which the players search or compete for a measurable outcome defined by a system of rules. Therefore, game-based learning consists of using a game to achieve a learning outcome through the game itself rather than entertainment. Many games can be selected and used to fulfill this goal. However, there has yet to be a consensus on what a game is. For this study, a

game is defined as a system defined by rules in which the students deal with artificial conflict and has an observable outcome.

Hafeez (2021) asserts that game-based learning motivates students and engages them to keep them focused and participating. Game-based learning also has the capacity to further the student's capacities to create and communicate while increasing their experience in a topic through the challenges presented by the game. (Haruna et al. 2018). Nazarova and Galiullina (2016) assert that the application game-based learning alters the student's position in the class, becoming active participants instead of passive listeners, fostering engagement and participation. Gee (2003) adds that games help students feel less pressure because they lower the consequence of failure and encourage them to take risks and try different things. Furthermore, Liu and Chu (2010) argue that in comparison with traditional environments, game-based learning environments created a higher intrinsic motivation for learners, and learners tended to be more engaged when solving problems actively. Apriani and Prastiawan (2019) add that intrinsic motivation declined in those students who were not involved in the learning process and when they had no say in the design or selection of game elements. Game-based learning motivates the students through the challenges presented in the game, and it makes them activate participants with high intrinsic motivation that may be kept if the students are also involved not only with the game but with the system and nature of the game itself. Game-based learning helps the students be less pressured and more likely to take different approaches to their learning.

Different games carry different activities, processes, and ideas behind them. According to Egenfeldt-Nielsen (2006), games can correspond with different educational approaches. Behaviorists see games as opportunities to drill and practice, cognitivists treat them as activities to challenge mental models, constructionists focus on games as places to simulate and learn by

experimenting, and the sociocultural approach treats games as context that foster teamwork, communities, and collaborative environments (Hammer et al., 2018). Plass et al. (2015) clarify that games have the potential to elicit all four learning approaches; however, the type will vary from game to game and will vary between contexts and learners. Each game element can be harnessed for different approaches and may impact differently in each context and classroom. The games analyzed through this research, tabletop-roleplaying games, are mainly reasoned through the constructivist and sociocultural approach, as they foster the making of a fictional world and work collaboratively through a fictional character with peers.

Game-based learning can be confused with another term that began appearing in 2010 in contexts outside gaming, such as business, healthcare, and education, which is named gamification (Deterding et al., 2011; Dichev & Dicheva, 2017; Mauroner, 2019; Lopes, 2014) before proceeding is essential to mark a clear distinction between the two. Fatta et al. (2019) points out that there is no standardized definition of what gamification is, but they share an agreement in theories of what it contains. Dole et al. (2011) explain that though its definition varies, gamification is understood as applying design elements used in games within a context outside of the game. Silpasuwanchai et al. (2016) add that gamification uses elements like scoreboards and badges, among other game elements, to encourage desired behaviors. Kapp (2014) states that game-based learning uses an actual game to develop skills and knowledge. Gamification, conversely, employs some game elements such as scores and achievements to reward students for finishing a task or problem (Fatta et al., 2019). Consider the following example: a gamified task may involve giving stars or levels to a student for completing an activity they might otherwise consider boring, and it does not apply to fully-fledged games. Conversely, although it may also contain stars or levels,

game-based learning would entail creating or employing a game that uses artificial conflict, rules, and an outcome to deliver an attractive, motivating learning experience and fulfill a learning goal.

2.9 Motivation

Motivation is deeply intertwined with the learning process and crucial to achieving learning objectives. Harmer (2015) states that, at its most basic, motivation is an internal process that drives someone to take specific actions. Dörnyei (2001) suggests that motivation is abstract, and through it we interpret why people act and think in certain ways. Because we cannot see motivation, only behaviors, we can only measure it indirectly like we measure other abstract concepts such as interests or values (Ihsan, 2016, p. 32). Motivation is an internal, non-physical drive that pushes forward to take specific action courses and cannot be measured directly. Ryan and Deci (2000) split the concept of motivation in two kinds: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

However, in the realm of language education, there is no agreed-upon definition of what motivation entails for the English learner (Al-Munawwarah, 2018). Honggang (2008, as cited in Al-Munawwarah, 2018) argues that motivation leads to initiating and sustaining the long undertaking of learning a foreign language. Conversely, Huriyah, and Contessa (2020) argue that motivated learners will do more than sustain their language learning journey; they will allocate more resources and feel more joy in their learning process. Although there is no consensus about the actions a motivated learner will take, it is agreed that motivation has an important part in the process, allowing students to persevere despite challenges they encounter.

2.10 Tabletop role-playing games.

Before defining the term, it is essential to emphasize that a Tabletop role-playing game is distinct from language role-plays usually employed in classrooms. According to Waggoner (2009), A tabletop role-playing game, commonly abbreviated as TRPG or TTRPG, is a type of game where the players take on the roles of imaginary characters who go on an adventure. These games are written systems containing rules for game mechanics that provide meaning and context to the players' actions and aid social interaction (Cheville, 2016). Oostveen (2020) explains that in a TTRPG, participants, ranging from two to eight people, sit around a table or in an online environment to play cooperatively. Participants take on different roles during the game to create a compelling narrative through planned and unplanned scenarios and encounters. All of this occurs in a fashion similar to childhood's make-believe games. Phillips (1994) goes on to say that due to their nature as cooperative games, tabletop role-playing games do not have winners or losers unlike other games, like chess, Monopoly, among others, in which winning is a clearly defined and desired outcome and losing is to be avoided. Then, the end goal of a TTRPG is having fun while cooperatively creating a story. Your character might have goals inside the collaborative story, but the end result of the goal made for this fictional character does not translate into losing or winning the game.

In TTRPGs, similar to other games, for example, football, players have different roles and responsibilities within the game's structure. Farkas (2018) states that in most tabletop role-playing games, there are two prominent roles filled by the participants: the players and their Player Characters, commonly called by its acronym PC, and one player in the role of a guide and referee known as the Game Master, also called by its acronym GM. These acronyms and names can vary from game to game. In some cases, the GM is also known as a storyteller, narrator, keeper of the

secret lore, etc. Something similar happens with the PCs, also known as investigators, characters, agents, etc. Regardless of the name, these roles have different responsibilities and perspectives in the game. A GM controls the story's plot and the game's setting. They interpret any non-player character or enemy and serve as a referee and advisor, interpreting rules, resolving the results of the PCs' actions, and describing the shared narrative world in which those actions occurred (Mizer, 2015). The role of the PC, Coe (2017) explains, consists of embodying a character they created through their imagination based on the rules of the specific TTRPG they will use. Through these characters, the PC will interact with the imaginary world narrated by the GM and each other as game players and as PCs within the narrative.

It can be said then that tabletop Role-playing games combine the paradoxical elements of free-form imagination similar to make-believe games and concrete rules to aid a group of people in creating a cooperative oral story in which they embody fictional characters within a specific genre, such as fantasy, horror, mystery, etc. These players will take on two roles. Several of them will create Player Characters, which are their avatars in the narrative world they are constructing, and one of them will be the Game Master, a player with the responsibility of setting the scene, embodying the inhabitants of the narrative world, and arbitrating the rules.

Unlike video games or board games, TTRPGs require fewer resources, though at the same time, they can be expanded with several props and objects. Woods (2016) states that TTRPGs are inexpensive, light on technology, and can be implemented in many places and times. The games mostly require the use of imagination and interaction between participants. However, depending on the specific TTRPG, the games can also use rulebooks, different kinds of die, tokens, miniatures, maps, etc.

As Cheville (2016) states, TTRPGs are written systems that contain rules for the game to give context to the player's actions and aid social interaction. These systems usually take the form of rulebooks. As the name implies, these books contain the rules for playing the game. The complexity, size, and presentation of the rulebooks can vary greatly, from a single page to hundreds of pages. For example, *QuestCrawl* by Austin Holm has only one page, while *Call of Cthulhu 7th edition: Keeper's Rulebook* published by Chaosium has 445 pages. A player will rarely have to read a long rulebook in its entirety to play the game. They will usually need to read a few chapters covering character creation and relevant systems to the particular, such as combat, magic, technology, social encounters, etc. Oosven (2022) explains that TTRPGs implement in their rules specific ways to resolve conflict inside of the stories, and they also tend to add an element of randomness and chance to decide success or failure to the action of players, often through the use of dice, cards, or details written down about the characters. This randomness permits an evolving story not tied to a rigid plan. It allows an experience that requires constant improvisation and problem-solving depending on the players' actions' results, failure, or success.

2.11 Tabletop role-playing games in language education.

Despite being first a way of entertainment, tabletop role-playing games have great potential in teaching and learning. The game's systems and social aspects can be harnessed to fulfill educational goals.

For instance, during the game, players embody a character within various changing contexts whose success depends on their ability to understand their current situation and apply the proper skills and course of action. Barab et al. (2012) argue that in a TTRPG, the learner considers the immediate situation and underlying context as something valuable within the game world and

has to think beyond rote facts outside of context. Woods (2016) highlights that TTRPGs encourage students to identify the context in which language is being used and to experiment within this context to perceive how the language that controls the scene changes. When players ask whether a creature *was in the room* or *is in the room*, understanding tenses becomes something relevant and valuable in their minds. Whitton (2014) emphasizes the importance of using varied contexts to aid the transfer from in-game learning to out-of-game application because the more in-game contexts they experience, the more able they are to generalize what they learned. Woods (2016) adds that TTRPG rules accept and use the multiple unexpected possibilities that emerge during play, and the practice of being faced with constantly changing elements of context creates a unique and productive learning space for the students. Then, embedded into the TTRPGs' systems, there is a need to identify and react according to the in-game context so players can succeed in their endeavors. Said contexts can vary greatly, from applying the correct etiquette to deal with a royal court to deceiving the leader of a thieves' guild. These emerging contexts allow the learners to apply acquired knowledge, give value to particular abilities, combine different skills, and, with enough practice and exposition, apply the same processes outside of the game when communicating in real-life situations.

Furthermore, Cheville (2016), though focused on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects, explains that TTRPGs focus on the development of a character within a social context, allowing the students to practice and develop several skills, for instance, communication, leadership, and problem-solving. According to Lieberoth and Trier-Knudsen (2016), TTRPGs build camaraderie, competence, a shared identity, and social skills in learners while engaging in activities of varying difficulties. Pulgarin-Alfonso (2022) states that the cooperative nature of TTRPGs fosters oral interactivity and allows the creation of different

activities within the classroom in EFL contexts that focus on teamwork and collaboration among students. A problem that students encounter is the fear of speaking and afterwards being mocked by their peers, as seen in a previous section. TTRPGs' collaborative system fosters an environment of interaction and teamwork that can help abate this fear. Moreover, Kusnierek (2015) suggests that TTRPGs also help shy students overcome their timidness because the games allow them to pretend to be someone else through their characters. Abbott et al. (2022) observed that TTRPGs make the students face fictional blunders and rivals while helping them to increase their self-assurance and accepting mistakes thus providing a learning opportunity through the fictional experience. Orr et al. (2020) concluded through their study that after playing TTRPGs, participants' social skills improved by becoming less shy, more participative, and better at building friendships. Thus, TTRPGs allow the students to develop and practice several communicative and social skills while fostering a learning environment based on cooperation and collaboration through the use of their fictional personas. This use of characters can also help abate shyness in students.

TTRPGs involve the learners through collaborative work and a focus on storytelling and oral narrative. Reinders (2011) explains that storytelling improves speaking performance by imagining and creating plots. In the game, the players constantly shift from storytellers to audience. Marzuki (2016) states that through storytelling, the students train a creative use of vocabulary to captivate the listeners' imaginations, and listeners will connect said stories and narratives to their experiences. Storytelling allows one to use and practice many language skills and competencies in a non-threatening way (Mall-Amriri & Ghanbari, 2014). Then, TTRPGs' storytelling can aid the students' language improvement through imagination, creative use of vocabulary, and integrating stories with previous knowledge in a non-threatening environment.

Motivation is a crucial element needed to push the learning process forward. TTRPGs have been used in research to foster motivation. According to Farkaš (2018), these games can garner much engagement, increasing the student's motivation to become proficient in the target language. Da Rocha (2018) warns that these games are engaging but often long, so teachers must plan classes carefully and have clear objectives to keep motivation high. An advantage of TTRPGs is that they can be modified during play to suit the players' needs and skills. Gameplay has to have challenging elements to avoid boring the players while, simultaneously, it must not be exceedingly tricky (Farkaš, 2018). These games motivate students by engaging them with imagination, fun, and challenges that can be catered to the players' skill sets and proficiency. Keeping clear objectives is essential not to lose the engagement garnered during the activity. The motivation created by the game can be extrinsic and intrinsic, as in the model proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000). The extrinsic motivators within the game can include the desire to collect resources in fictional money, more potent weapons, new clues for a case, etc., depending on the game and setting (Ferrante, 2022). The intrinsic is mainly found within the game in its element of relatedness. As Wang et al. (2019) explain, relatedness is the human need to connect with others. Pink (2009) adds that relatedness also presents as a need to ensure one's collaboration and work are meaningful to others. The motivation created by the game can present itself in an extrinsic manner through the game rewards and in an intrinsic manner through the collaboration and connection with other players. The games are constructed upon a foundation of teamwork, and no single player can achieve everything on their own, so every character's skill set, and abilities are valuable and appreciated.

Chapter III: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

The study has the objective of identifying and analyzing the student's perception of using tabletop roleplaying games as a gamification tool to practice English speaking. Hence, this chapter will detail the methodology, participants, instruments, research environment, and procedure chosen to fulfill the purpose of this research.

3.1 Method

Throughout the years, there have been several definitions of the concept of research method. Igwenagu (2016) defines research method as a set of systematic techniques used for research in a field of study. Patel and Patel (2019) add that methodology helps us understand the research steps, processes, and products. Then, the research method is the series of structured steps and tools used in research, and they aid us in understanding the research products and the process itself. MacDonald and Headlam (2009) explain that the information gathered will lack the necessary quality to build a strong foundation without properly using and designing research methods. Nowadays, there is a noticeable tendency to use method and methodology interchangeably; this is incorrect and can lead to confusion and misinterpretation (Igwenagu, 2016). Therefore, selecting the proper research methods to obtain valuable data and using the proper terminology to avoid mistakes is crucial.

Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods are the main accepted methods nowadays (Opoku et al., 2016). Cresswell (2003) argues that no method is superior to others, and the research questions guide the selection of a method. Mwita (2022) explains that to choose a method, one must consider several factors, such as the goal of the research, the intended scale and focus of the

study, the amount and type of participants, the types of data, time, approach, and theoretical framework. Then, it is essential to consider several factors when selecting what method will be applied for research. Due to the factors presented and analyzed, the qualitative method was selected for this research.

3.1.1 The qualitative method

The qualitative method was chosen for this research paper as it was deemed adequate to answer the research questions and achieve the objectives. To begin it is vital to define the qualitative method. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state that qualitative research as the use of multiple approaches in order to interpret the subject matter in its natural settings through the meanings people give it. Leavy (2014) explains that qualitative research is considered a blanket term encompassing several products and practices in research. This type of research seeks to understand a situation or phenomenon that tells a tale instead of focusing on finding what caused it and the effects it might have (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Philipsen and Vernooij-Dassen (2007, as cited in Busetto et al. 2020) state that qualitative research studies the qualities, manifestations, contexts, and perspectives from which phenomena can be perceived. Punch (2013) explains that the data obtained in this type of research generally takes the shape of words instead of numbers. Therefore, qualitative research uses a wide array of approaches to study the different characteristics of phenomena as seen from the lens of human perspective, and it focuses on interpreting the words of people and the story behind the situation instead of numerical data. These elements align with the research's objective to explore the student's perspective and opinion of using TTRPGs rather than its impact on the skill itself.

Furthermore, at its center, qualitative research may be used with many distinct purposes, for instance, explaining and predicting aspects of human behavior and improving our understanding of the experiences different groups of people have lived (Lincoln et al., 2013). It achieves this purpose since this research method considers and analyzes an individual's perspectives, considering the person's culture, context, and things such as behaviors, values, experiences, emotions, and ethnicity, among many other elements (Almalki, 2016).

Once again, the qualitative method was chosen for this research because it allowed us to peer into the students' feelings, thoughts, and experiences regarding using TTRPGs as a game-based tool to practice their English.

3.2 Instruments

In order to find answers for the research questions and gather the necessary information from the subjects, two instruments were applied: Interviews and the interview protocol refinement (IPR). The following paragraphs will focus on discussing this instrument alongside other considerations considered.

3.2.1 Interview

The interview was chosen as the main instrument of this research. Monday (2020) defines an interview as collecting relevant information through the use of the verbal exchange of data to fulfill the research purpose. Gray (2004) adds that interviews may be the best approach when the research objective is exploratory and involves the analysis of feelings or attitudes. Furthermore, interviews usually compile information about experiences, opinions, and beliefs surrounding a phenomenon (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008). Considering this, interviews align themselves with the

purpose of this study. Alamri (2019) states that one of the biggest strengths of interviews is their flexibility; researchers are able to adjust or modify the focus of the questions, and the interview allows the subjects' feelings and opinions to be explored. Bolderston (2012) adds that the interview also allows the participants to express their points of view without an imposed framework, and according to different types of interviews, the line of questioning can be adapted to explore emerging topics, something not possible in other instruments, such as surveys. Interviews allow us to uncover the meaning behind the social experiences of the subjects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). According to Dunwoodie et al. (2022), It provides a detailed description of unexplored phenomena that cannot be predetermined by hypothetical relationships between variables like in quantitative research.

3.2.2 Semi-structured interview.

The interview is a vital component of the research due to the fact that it is its main instrument for gathering information. However, there is more than one style of interview that could be applied. Babbie (2013) identifies three major categories of interviews: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. They can also be known as standardized, semi-standardized, and unstandardized. Due to its characteristics, the semi-structured interview was chosen.

Frances et al. (2009) argues that semi-structured interviews are adaptable and permit the sudden appearance of unexpected answers and topics. In semi-structured interviews, how questions are worded is flexible. This eases the use of different language levels and permits the interviewer to ask for clarification and elicit further information (Berg, 2009). Berg and Lune (2017) explain that this type of interview uses several planned questions and topics; these questions are asked in a predetermined order. However, the interviewers are permitted and even expected to

probe beyond the prepared questions based on the interviewee's responses, resulting in a much richer account from the participants. In this type of interview, the researcher applies open-ended questions to tackle the topics with greater detail than a questionnaire, which empowers the interviewer to collect data related to the topic with emotions, ideas, and personal feelings. (Hancock et al., 2007; Brinkman & Kvale, 2005; Elhami & Khoshnevisan, 2022). Adams (2015) suggests employing semi-structured interviewing when there is a need to ask open-ended questions, with a potential for probing to know the independent thoughts and opinions of every individual within a group.

This type of interviewing permits the researcher to react with more spontaneity to probe and enrich the interviewing process beyond what was expected and planned in response to the interviewee's accounts. Due to the research aims, it is necessary to have a degree of flexibility to expand the understanding of the subjects' perspectives while also considering each opinion in a small sample of participants. For these reasons, the semi-structured interview is deemed appropriate.

Creswell and Creswell (2015) state that researchers should develop an interview protocol, which will contain basic information about the interview and other crucial components such as an introduction, the content of the interview, probing questions, and closing instructions.

3.2.3 Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR)

For the purpose of developing a methodical interview protocol, the interview protocol refinement (IPR) framework created by Castillo-Montoya was applied. Castillo-Montoya (2016) defines IPR as a process of four phases to develop and calibrate the interview protocols. Ramzan and Rahman (2023) state that this protocol is an appropriate guide for new or inexperienced

researchers to bolster the standar of their interviews. Yeong et al. (2018) concluded through their research that IPR is a valuable tool in improving the reliability of the interview. According to Castillo-Montoya (2016), the IPR is composed of four phases that aid in developing and refining the interviews in congruency with the research aims. Those phases are:

1. Making certain that the interview questions correspond with the research questions. The phase consists of developing an interview protocol that aligns with the study's purpose and research questions.
2. Creating a question-based dialogue. The researcher will develop a series of questions that promote a conversation while ensuring the questions are clear and related to the research questions, though not identically written.
3. Obtaining feedback on the interview protocols. The researcher can receive advice from a more experienced advisor and use this feedback to refine the interview questions to make them clear, stimulating for the subjects, and devoid of academic language.
4. Piloting protocol. The researcher will simulate the application of the interviews with a sample that shares traits similar to the desired sample. This simulation will be conducted as close to reality as possible to measure the invested time and verify if the participants can answer the questions. After phase 4 has been applied, further revisions may be applied. Phase 3 is even more crucial for those researchers might lack time or access to further sample to pilot the interview.

The use of the IPR for this research will aid in improving the reliability of the study as a mean to to obtain meaningful data to achieve the goals and purpose of this study.

3.3 Sampling

How a sample of individuals is selected for research is a crucial step. It is essential to clarify some terminology. Lammers and Badia (2005) define a population as all the members that meet a shared characteristic or criteria, while a sample is defined as selected members from a population. Sampling is then understood as the act of selecting of a sample from within a population to study (Singh & Masuku, 2014).

Shaheen et al. (2019) argues that within qualitative research, the sample size does not depend on strict rules but rather on the purpose of the study and what can be achieved within the time and resources available. Omona (2013) adds that typically, the objective of qualitative research is not to generalize from a sample towards a population. Instead of applying mathematical formulae like quantitative research, qualitative research sampling involves deciding how many and how to select individuals (Curtis et al., 2000). Different sizes of the sample might be used for different objectives. Ample samples might be utilized to study behaviors, while smaller samples might be considered for in-depth analysis. A sample can be considered meaningful if it is rich in information and the researcher can analyze it properly (Shaheen et al., 2019).

In contrast with quantitative research, where there is a need for standardization procedures and a random selection of participants, qualitative research knowingly picks participants who are better able to shed light to information necessary to answer the research questions and enhance the knowledge of the phenomena being studied (Creswell, 2003). According to Sergeant (2012), the decisions regarding the selection are guided by the theoretical framework of the study, its research questions and the evidence that informs the research.

Lopez and Whitehead (2013) state qualitative research used non-probability sampling. This type of sampling can be further categorized into: Convenience, purposive, snowball, and theoretical sampling.

3.3.1 Convenience Sampling

As Lopez and Whitehead (2013) described, convenience sampling occurs when the participants are recruited in a study because they are available concerning factors such as location, willingness, time, etc. Convenience sampling, compared with other types of sampling, is fast and helps achieve a sample size. Cresswell (2003) warns that convenience sampling limits the ability to create generalizations from the findings.

3.4 Data Analysis

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines data as “factual information (such as measurements or statistics) used as a basis for reasoning, discussion, or calculation” and “information output by a sensing device or organ that includes both useful and irrelevant or redundant information and must be processed to be meaningful.” Then, data is numbers, images, and characters and can be perceived. Data, on its lonesome, only takes meaning when interpreted and becomes information. Ibrahim (2015) states that extracting relevant information from data through performing specific calculations and evaluations is called data analysis. Data analysis refers to various methods and procedures involving goals, decision-making, and working with the data (Migrant & Seasonal Head Start Technical Assistance Center, 2006). The data analysis consists of the decisions, methods, and ways used to analyze data that support the research objectives. Two types of data can be analyzed and interpreted: quantitative and qualitative.

3.4.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

One of the critical aspects of qualitative data is that instead of the numbers used in quantitative data, this type of data uses texts when the analysis begins. Usually, it lacks variables and hypotheses (Schutt, 2012). Hatch (2002) explains that qualitative data analysis is a way in which qualitative data is processed to share what has been learned, identify themes, interpret, discover relationships, and generate theories. Creswell and Creswell (2015) created a series of steps to conduct the analysis of the data, which are the following:

1. Organize and prepare the data to be analyzed. This step involves transcribing and arranging the collected data depending on the sources.
2. Read or observe all the data. This action supplies a general understanding of the information and provides a chance to contemplate the information.
3. Start coding the data. In this step, coding consists of organizing the data through the creation chunks of text or images and labeling them with a category based on a term found in the participant's language.
4. Generate descriptions and themes. Using the coding process, the research is able to create an interpretation of the backdrop or people alongside themes or categories for further analysis. The themes or categories ought to show more than one possible perspective and must be assisted by quotes and clear evidence. A theme can be interconnected into a storyline, developed into theoretical models, analyzed for individual cases, or shaped into general descriptions.
5. Represent the description and themes. The representations can take the shape of narrative passages, discussions with chronology of events, detailed discussions of the themes, and

discussions of the interconnection of said themes. Tables, visuals, and figures can also be used.

3.4.2 Coding

Creswell and Creswell (2015) define coding as fragmenting and classifying data to create explanations and themes. Attride-Stirling (2001) states that the researcher tags the content to a specific theme or idea through this process. Akinyode and Khan (2018) explain that coding aims to reduce the data into manageable and meaningful information. According to Creswell and Creswell (2015), codes fall into three categories. Expected codes are expected topics based on good sense and information found in literature. Surprising codes: these are unanticipated and surprising codes that emerge during the study. Codes of conceptual interest: codes that by themselves are interesting to readers. Tesch (1990) proposes eight different steps for the process of coding.

1. Obtain an overall idea of all the information. Thoroughly read everything and commit to paper ideas that appear while you read.
2. Pick one document, perhaps the most interesting, the shortest, or closest to your hand. Ask yourself what it is about, focusing on the underlying meaning.
3. After you have done this for several participants, list the topics. Cluster, through columns or other structures, similar topics.
4. Take this list, abbreviate the previous topics as a form of code, and jolt them down in adequate segments of your data. Review emerging codes and categories that might appear.
5. Search for the most evocative topic wording and make them into categories. Find ways to decrease the total categories by joining them into groups.

6. Choose abbreviations and order the codes alphabetically.
7. Gather the data related to each category and analyze it.
8. If it is deemed necessary by the research, give new codes to your data.

Chapter IV: Findings

4.0 Introduction

The chapter is focused on examining and interpreting the results obtained through the data collection and presenting the main points of this research's discussion. The following sections will include excerpts of the participants and the objectives this study set to achieve alongside tables in order to make the data more manageable. Furthermore, the findings are also compared with other findings found for the theoretical framework of this study.

4.1 general objective

To explore the students' perception and frequency of use of tabletop roleplaying games to practice English speaking skills.

4.1.2 specific objectives

1. To describe the frequency in which students use tabletop roleplaying games as a gamification tool to practice English speaking skill.
2. To identify the student's perception of using tabletop roleplaying games to practice English speaking skill.

4.2 Participants

The study consisted of four participants practicing their English-speaking skills using Tabletop roleplaying games (TTRPG) when the interviews were conducted. To maintain their identities as private, they will be named as participant number 1, participant number 2, and so forth. Further data about the participants is presented in the chart below.

Table 4.1

Information about the participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Attitude toward the use of TTRPGs
Participant 1	25	Female	Positive
Participant 2	21	Female	Positive
Participant 3	22	Male	Positive
Participant 4	25	Female	Positive

4.3 Game-based learning activities students use to practice English speaking skills.

The participants were selected as a sample due to their experience using TTRPGS as a game-based activity to practice speaking. Nonetheless, due to the purposes of the activity, the researcher was also interested in learning what other game-based activities the participants had been exposed to. Game-based learning is defined by Plass et al. (2010) as utilizing a game with the intent of learning and fulfilling a clearly defined learning outcome. Nazarova and Galiullina (2016) further add that a great variety of games can be applied, from single-player card games to complex, massive multiplayer online (MMO) games.

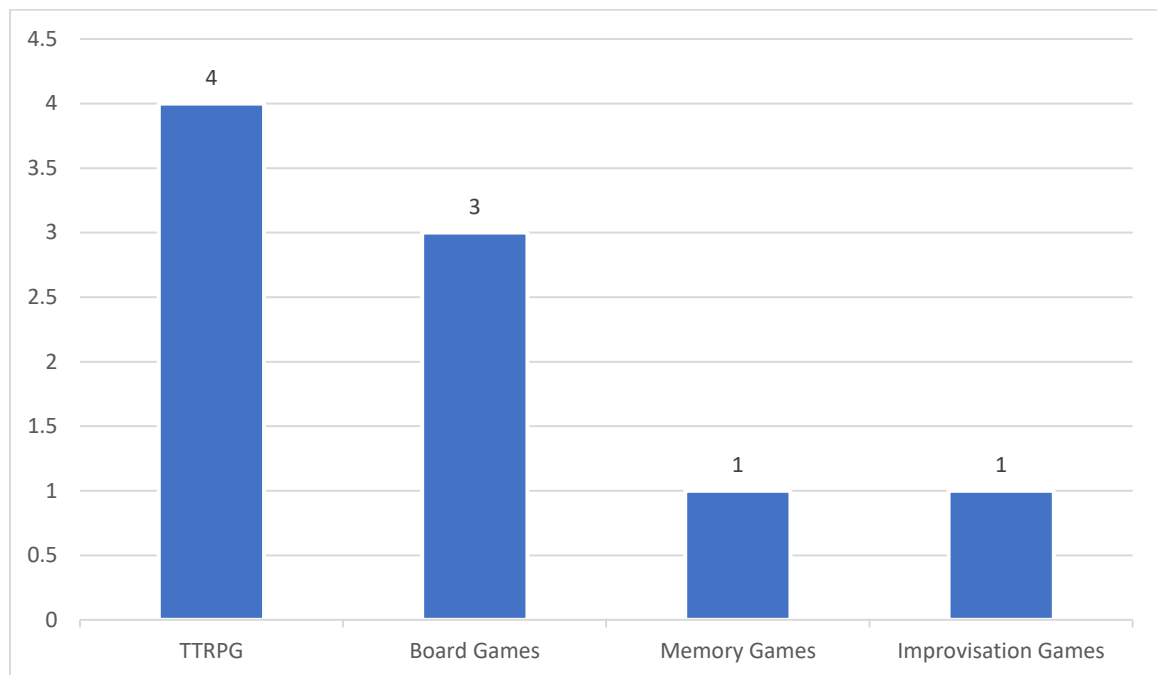
The interviews showed that the most common game-based activities used by the participants, besides TTRPGs, are board games such as Scrabble, monopoly, and a modified version of Jenga. Improvisation games and memory games were also applied.

The prevalence of board games can be explained by the fact that, according to Salen and Zimmerman (2004), game-based learning games must have defined rules that end in measurable outcomes. Games like Scrabble and Monopoly, among other board games, have a written, usually non-negotiable, ruleset that ends in the measurable outcome of winning or losing the game. The use of memory and improvisation games could have been used to help the students overcome

shame or fear. Gee (2003) states that games help students feel less pressure and encourage them to try different things.

Figure 4.1

Game-based activities used by the participants

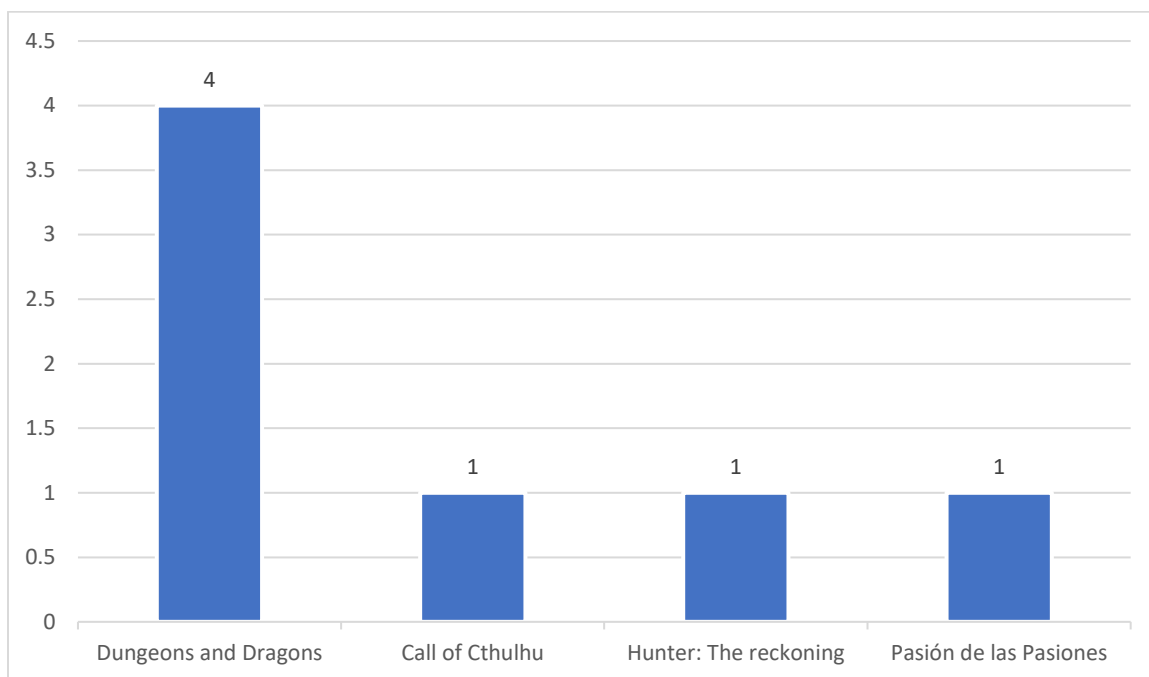


All participants used a specific TTRPG, Dungeons & Dragons, as their starting point. Dungeons and Dragons is a fantasy TTRPG in which the players create characters, or adventurers as the game calls them, that go on perilous adventures. From there, the participants used various TTRPGs to train their speaking skills, such as *The Call of Cthulhu*, *Hunter: The Reckoning*, and *Pasión de las Pasiones*. Respectively, the games are about solving gruesome mysteries in the 1920s inspired by H. P. Lovecraft's books and stories, hunting monsters in a modern setting, and being a flamboyant character of a telenovela. These games were not taught to the participants; they sought and learned them by their initiative. This process of actively searching for an activity to practice speaking that the participants enjoy can be explained by Narazova and Galiullina (2016)

and Liu and Chu (2010) statements that game-based learning motivates and engages students while also changing their roles from passive to active participants in their learning.

Figure 4.2

TTRPGs used by the participants



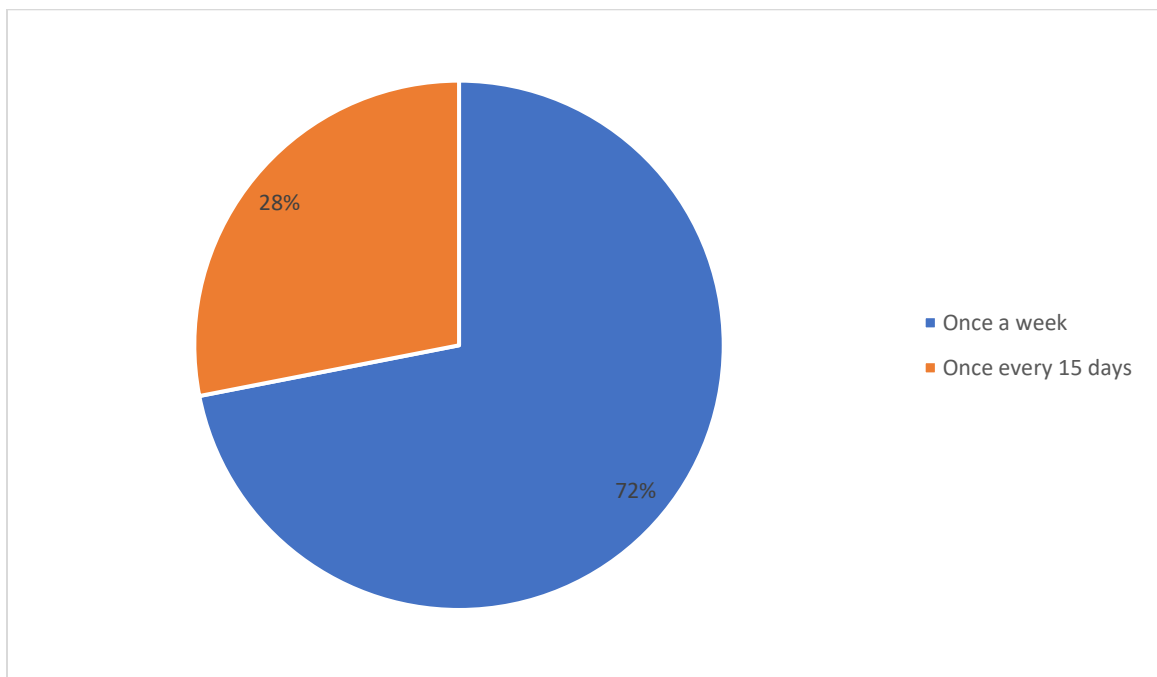
4.4 TTRPGs and their frequency of use

Speaking is considered an intricate skill; improving it necessitates chances to practice under different contexts (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013). Katsara (2021) states that to promote speaking, it is vital to provide exciting material and activities that require the learners to converse on a topic. An enjoyable activity is more likely to give intrinsic motivation to a student, making it more likely to be conducted just for the delight of conducting the action itself (Harmer, 2015). Then, an activity that promotes speaking has to be both an opportunity to practice under different contexts and entertaining enough for the students to carry it out.

This study found that TTRPGs were motivating enough for most participants to independently organize a game with their peers weekly without a teacher figure. These games last three to five hours, which is ample practice time and a considerable investment of time.

Figure 4.3

Frequency of use of TTRPGs by the participants



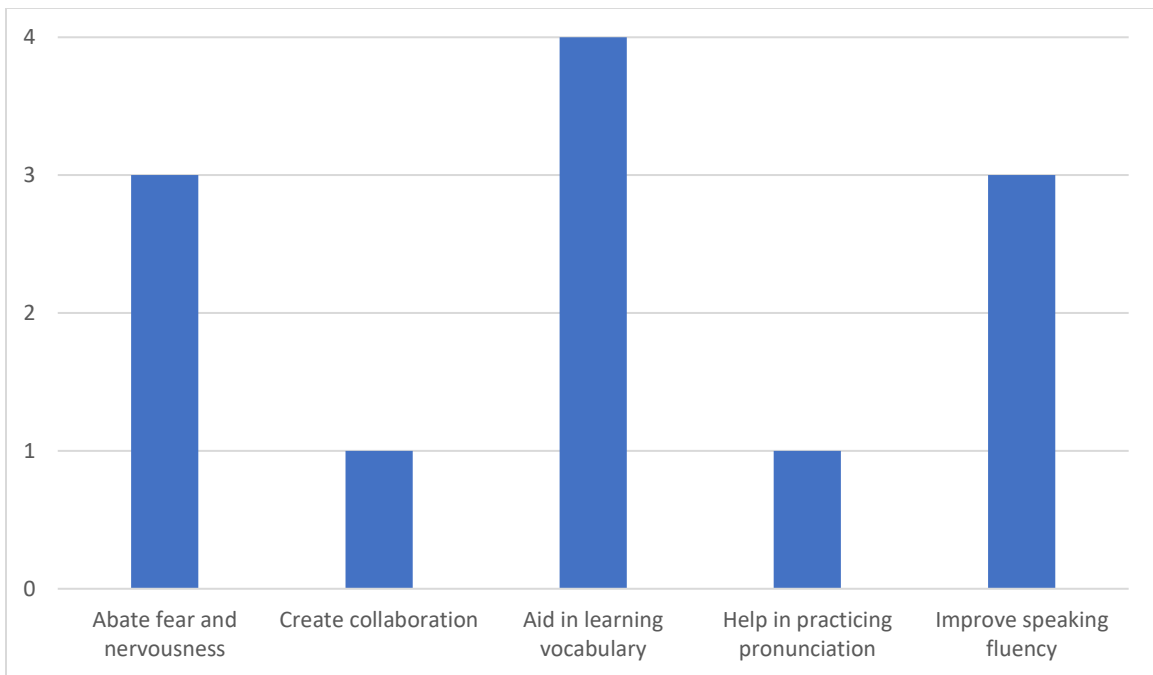
This corresponds with the conclusion Huriyah and Contessa (2020) reached, arguing that motivated learners will allocate more resources and do more for their learning process. In his study, Reed (2022) found similar results with college students, showing they could interact unassisted in the target language through the characters and stories they created with their chosen TTRPG.

4.5 Student's perception of using tabletop roleplaying games to practice English speaking skill.

One of the objectives this study set out to achieve was learning the student's perceptions of the use of TTRPGs to practice speaking. The participants agreed unanimously that they had a positive perception of using this game-based activity. However, the reasons the participants had to report this positive outlook towards TTRPGs varied. The reasons the participants revealed were that TTRPGs abate fear and nervousness, create collaboration, aid in learning vocabulary, help in practicing pronunciation, and improve speaking fluency.

Figure 4.4

Participant's reasons for having a positive perspective on the use of TTRPGs



4.5.1 Abate fear and nervousness

Three participants explained that using the activity aided them in overcoming the fear and nervousness they felt when communicating or made the fear and nervousness more bearable while practicing.

P.1: *Well, I feel it helped me a lot because as I told you eh there isn't that much nervousness so it helps me to make English flow better.*

P.1: *...I do not doubt as much as before, I mean like I feel safer.*

P.2: *They had a great impact because they let me, well, stop feeling fear towards being able to talk, to develop in certain situations maybe everyday ones.*

P.3: *They have helped me greatly to develop myself and to lose this fear to speak with people in another language.*

This finding coincides with what has been concluded in other studies. Kusnierek (2015), Abbott et al. (2022), and Orr et al. (2020) stated that the cooperative nature of the game, alongside its use of fictional personas, helps students increase their confidence and overcome nervousness.

4.5.2 Create Collaboration

One participant revealed that the activity gave her a sense of collaboration with her peers when practicing that was not present during class time.

P.1: *“My pronunciation is improving because, well, we all listen to how we pronounce words and eh we correct on some occasions. Because we are outside a classroom context, well, let us say that there is not that much stress, and I do feel that we can help each other like we go well playing, chatting and helping each other in a way a little more natural.”*

P.1: *I think it is a good idea to use roleplay games because they allow us to learn vocabulary together and we practice and ehh well ah yes, speaking and working together, helping each other, like making us be understood.*

Leong and Ahmadi (2017). López et al. (2022). Tong (2022) and Abdul et al. (2019) stated that English language students may inhibit themselves from speaking, this caused by the fear of criticism and committing errors in front of their peers, among other factors. This obstacle that many students face can be overcome through many means and activities, such as those that create a rich collaboration environment. In the literature, authors such as Lieberoth and Trier-knudsen (2016), Pulgarin-Alfonso (2022), Johnson (2021), and Torres-Rodriguez and Martinez-Granada (2022) coincide in stating that TTRPGS can create an environment where students feel safe to collaborate and experiment with the language alongside their peers.

4.5.3 Aid vocabulary learning

All participants had the same perception that TTRPGs helped them grow their vocabulary.

P.1: *I think it is a good idea to use roleplay games because they allow us to learn vocabulary together and we practice.*

P.2: *it helped me a lot to tell them what I was feeling and how I wanted to continue the story with words that maybe I did not expect like dungeons, like labyrinths, words that I would not use daily, but were very fun to use.*

P.3: *It helps a lot to be able to develop this questions and words that are not common in daily life in a new language.*

P.4: *It seems to me that is good to use it because there will be words that you must to say in English or dialogues that will have more impact in English than in Spanish.*

P4: *Mainly it impacts in my..uhm how is it called?.. Mainly in knowing the meaning of words that help me to link them with sentences.*

Though Johnson (2021) reported in his research that the use of TTRPGs only partially fulfilled the objective of developing vocabulary, McCollum (2023) and Marzuki (2021) argue that TTRPGs focus on shared storytelling train students to use and acquire vocabulary constantly and creatively. Furthermore, the participants report using uncommon words in their daily lives and needing to deliver impactful dialogues. This can be explained by Barab et al. (2012), who explain that the learner constantly considers the immediate situation and context inside the game world. Woods (2016) highlights that these games encourage students to identify a context and then perceive how language and the words they utter control how the scene changes. These contexts are varied, and due to the adventure genre, they are faced with new words that the participants learn and apply to play the game.

4.5.4 Help in practicing pronunciation

One of the participants revealed that practicing through TTRPGs helped her improve her pronunciation. According to the student, this improvement was due to peer feedback.

P.1 My pronunciation is improving because, well, we all listen to how we pronounce words and eh we correct on some occasions.

Bouzar (2019) explains that developing speaking is complicated due to the need to combine grammar knowledge and communication strategies and the willingness to accept corrections. Further exacerbating this, according to Setiyadi (2020), English practice outside the classroom has little support in an EFL context. TTRPGs are games constructed through oral interaction, requiring the participants to listen and speak constantly, providing an environment for practice. This result

can be explained by Torres-Rodriguez & Martinez-Granada (2022), Johnson (2021), Reed (2022), and McCollum (2023), who concluded through their studies that TTRPGs present an environment where students could interact, practice, and develop their skills, among them pronunciation.

4.5.5 Improves Speaking Fluency

The participants also reported that using TTRPGs affected the manner and speed in which they produced sentences in their target language.

P.1: *...there isn't that much nervousness so it helps me to make English flow better.*

p.1: *I mean, like I feel more secure and also in the, the speed because like I don't doubt as much because I go more secure.*

P.3: *"I have seen a great change on not only thinking about what I am going to do in the role play, but it comes a point in which for speed I do not even think the word in Spanish instead directly using the phrase in English, it has helped me in this this mental agility mainly."*

P.4: *It makes you coexist with the language constantly; it makes you learn it faster and to be faster in using it and also you can adapt it to your everyday life.*

This last reason mentioned by the participants as a positive aspect of TTRPGs was not presented in the consulted literature when writing the theoretical framework of this study. Hence, this particular finding is not compared with other studies or authors.

Chapter V: Conclusion

5.0 Introduction

This chapter shows the conclusions reached by this research. The research followed a qualitative approach and used a semi-structured interview and the Interview Protocol Refinement, as presented in Chapter III. This chapter answers the two research questions posited at the beginning of this project, provides suggestions for further research, and clarifies the research limitations.

The general objective of this research was:

- To explore the student's perception and frequency of use of tabletop roleplaying games to practice English speaking skills.

5.1 RQ1: How frequently do students use tabletop roleplaying games as a game-based learning activity to practice English speaking skills?

In this study, it was found that the participants found TTRPGs motivating enough to be used alongside friends and peers outside of their English classroom once a week by three participants and once every fifteen days by one participant. The TTRPGs varied between the participants depending on the likings of the group of players each participant had.

5.2 RQ2: What is the student's perception of using tabletop roleplaying games to practice English speaking skills?

In the present study, the four participants had a unanimous positive perception regarding using TTRPGs to practice English speaking skills. The study further explored the reasons the participants had to hold a positive perception of this game-based activity. The five reasons found

among participants to perceive TTRPGs as something positive for their speaking practice were: they abate fear and nervousness, create collaboration, aid in learning vocabulary, help in practicing pronunciation, and improve speaking fluency.

All the participants shared that TTRPGs aid in learning vocabulary, which, according to the literature, is one of the benefits of using this particular game-based activity (Marzuki, 2021; McCollum, 2023; Woods, 2016).

Three participants reported that the activity helped them to deal with the fear and nervousness they felt when speaking. Other studies have already observed this finding (Abbott et al., 2022; Kusnierek, 2015; Orr et al., 2020).

One participant shared that the game allowed her to collaborate with her peers to give and receive feedback, which she felt was stressful in a classroom context. The reviewed literature states that TTRPGs can create safe environments for collaboration and experimentation with the language (Johnson, 2021; Lieberoth & Trier-Knudsen, 2016; Pulgarin-Alfonso, 2022; and Torres-Rodriguez & Martinez-Granada, 2022).

One participant shared that through feedback, she felt that the activity improved her pronunciation in the target language. This aligns with the conclusions reached by other authors that TTRPGs allow the creation of conditions in which the students can practice and develop language skills and subskills, among them pronunciation.

Lastly, three participants stated that using TTRPGs affected their fluency when producing sentences in English. This reason was fascinating because it was not mentioned in the literature consulted for this research and might provide a relevant topic for further research.

5.3 Limitations

The present study had some limitations that might have interfered with the findings. The sample was minimal due to the difficulty of finding participants who used this game-based activity to practice pronunciation. Hence, these findings cannot be used to reach generalization due to chosen sample size. Furthermore, for some participants, the interview could only be conducted through a video call due to a sudden emergency that forced them to leave the state. Though the information obtained was still valuable, the difference in setting changed factors and imposed new difficulties like sentences muffled by faulty microphones and problems in the internet connection.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

Further research about the perception of using TTRPGs to practice speaking should be explored with a larger sample to find and analyze more points of view and broaden the possible results obtained through the instrument.

Furthermore, this research revealed an element not found in the literature reviewed for the study: the impact of TTRPGs on the fluency to produce spoken language.

This study focused on the student's perception of using the activity. However, whether this activity helped them achieve their perceived improvement is still the question. Further research may be focused on measuring the impact of TTRPG activities on groups through mixed studies and designing courses or tools around this activity,

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Appendix

Appendix A: Interview questions

Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla

Facultad de Lenguas

Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés



Entrevista acerca de la percepción de los estudiantes acerca del uso de Tabletop Roleplaying Games como una herramienta para practicar la habilidad del habla en inglés.

Objetivo: El objetivo principal del presente instrumento es recolectar información acerca de la percepción los estudiantes de inglés con respecto al uso de Tabletop Roleplaying Games para practicar su habilidad oral. La información recopilada será utilizada con propósitos meramente académicos de una manera confidencial y protegiendo la privacidad de las y los participantes.

Preguntas:

1. ¿Hasta ahora qué juegos se han usado en tus clases para practicar tu habilidad oral en inglés?
2. ¿En algún momento has utilizado los juegos de rol para practicar tu habilidad oral en inglés, y si es así, cuáles han sido? con juego de rol me refiero a juegos como Calabozos y Dragones, por ejemplo.
3. ¿Con que frecuencia has utilizado los juegos de rol como una actividad para practicar tu habilidad oral en inglés?

Teniendo en cuenta tu experiencia...

4. ¿Cuál es tu percepción con respecto al uso de los juegos de rol para practicar tu habilidad oral en inglés?
5. ¿Cómo describirías el impacto que tuvieron los juegos de rol en tu practica de como hablar inglés?
6. En específico ¿Que aspecto de la práctica de la habilidad oral te ayudo más el juego de rol?