The Development of Functional Language Through Games in First Grade of Primary Education

El desarrollo del lenguaje funcional a través de juegos en primer curso de Educación Primaria

Daniel Delgado Arévalo
Cuerpo de Maestros de la Comunidad de Madrid
CEIP Ntra. Sra. de Valvanera (Madrid)

Abstract

Learning English as a foreign language is a challenge for the majority of newcomers to Primary Education in a bilingual school. It is a principal objective to develop a progressive and efficient use of the language by means of motivating tasks. This research aims at proving how games are relevant in order to motivate learners to use simple structures of functional language in a meaningful way.

Keywords: functional language, motivation, games, communication, spontaneity.

Resumen

El aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera supone un reto para la mayoría del alumnado recién llegado a la Educación Primaria en una escuela bilingüe. Es un objetivo prioritario conseguir desarrollar un progresivo y eficiente uso del lenguaje a través de actividades motivadoras. Esta investigación pretende demostrar cómo el uso de juegos es relevante a la hora de motivar al alumnado a usar de manera significativa estructuras sencillas de lenguaje funcional.

Palabras clave: lenguaje funcional, motivación, juegos, comunicación, espontaneidad.

1. INTRODUCTION

Effective bilingual education is not a simple or automatic consequence of using a child's home language in school –as in heritage language education– or a second language –as in immersion education (Baker, 2011). Accordingly, Baker (2011) suggests that various home and parental, community, teacher, school and society effects and may influence how effective the bilingual education is. From a teacher's perspective, I strongly believe that there is a need to provide learners with effective language tools. These tools may enable students to cope with the great amount of content entailed within a Content Language Integrated Learning (henceforth CLIL) environment. Based on my teaching experience, students struggle to deal with learning a second language during the first year of immersion in the Bilingual Program.

In CLIL settings, it is necessary for learners to progress systematically in both their content learning and their language learning and using (Coyle, Marsh & Hood, 2010). Hence, using the language to learn is as important as learning to use the language (Coyle et al., 2010). In the same vein, Savignon (2004) emphasizes the fact that language, when dealing with principles of communicative language learning, is a tool for communication on the one hand, and that the goal is language using as well as language learning on the other. If communication is then the main objective of language learning and teaching, it seems sensible to argue that there is a need for the implementation of a communicative approach. This approach may not only highlight the purposeful and meaningful use of the language, but also help EFL students make efficient oral exchanges in a fluent and confident way. In this light, learners may find the new language as an easy-to-deal-with resource to learn and communicate.

Richards & Rodgers (2001) addressed that the most valuable way language teaching can be improved is when teachers apply the best approach or method available. From my point of view, communication using the target language is the main goal of language learning. Research on communicative language teaching reveals that language acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language –natural communication– in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances, but with the messages they are conveying and understanding (Krashen, 1987).

In this research, I will attempt to deal with communication by means of the use of functional language. Indebted to Wilkins (1972), I will provide stu-

dents with both notional categories (e.g. time, sequences, location) and categories of communicative functions (e.g. regrets, denial, etc.) in order to be able to negotiate meaning in classroom tasks.

Needless to say, accomplishing this objective is a challenging task. As Bowen (2015) points out, criticisms of functional approaches include the difficulty in deciding the order in which different functions should be presented. Since there is not an established hierarchy for the introduction of language functions, I will concern myself with providing second language beginners with language exponents of high communicative value: the language used for turn-taking and request-making in games. I will do so by creating a fun environment where students are engaged into meaningful learning activities. Given that games provide a wide variety of learning situations (Brewster, Ellis & Girard, 1992) and are considered to be one of the most effective learning moments for all language learners, using games will allow me to help them actively and consciously use the target language with a specific and communicative purpose. In order to do so, the following explorative research questions were stated:

- Is instructional functional language an effective tool to negotiate meaning while carrying out communicative tasks?

And if so:

- Can turn-taking techniques and making requests be taught in order to help students communicate among themselves without the need for direct teacher supervision?

These research questions have led me to the following hypotheses:

- By the end of the research, students will be able to use basic turn-taking techniques and make simple requests whilst playing games in order to make themselves understood with their peers and complete the tasks successfully.

- As a result, students will demand more language tools to communicate among themselves while playing, since there will be an increase of motivation towards the use of more chunks of language in oral interactions among students, without direct teacher supervision.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Main foundations of the communicative language teaching approach

If foreign language teaching takes place within a communicative perspective, students can no longer be considered mere recipients of language, but creators of the learning goals and contents. Following Alharbi (2013), CLT emphasizes the use of the language as a whole and enables EFL learners to communicate in the target language fluently and confidently. It also concentrates on the communicative use of language in everyday and real world situations (Alharbi, 2013). With regard to the exposure to communicative situations in the second language, there always has to be a first step to be taken, especially with young learners. For this reason, Gass & Mackey (2006) described CLT as a methodology which is based on the exposure to the language by input, interaction and output, components which help learners understand how language learning takes place.

In an attempt to provide an accurate overview of the main features of CLT, I will summarise its most relevant characteristics.

Firstly, CLT is constructed upon knowing what the learning goals are, how learners learn the language, what activities better facilitate the learning process, and what the roles of both the learner and the teacher are in class (Richards, 2006). Secondly, there are activities in CLT that require frequent interaction among learners or with other interlocutors to exchange information and solve problems. The activities are learner-centred; taking into account the learners' backgrounds, their language needs and goals, and generally allow learners some creativity and role in instructional decisions (Wesche & Skehan, 2002, p. 208). Thirdly, as Shaikh (1993) suggests, CLT is based on authentic situations as the most effective materials for learners and focuses on what people want to do or what they want to accomplish through speech and it supports learners to communicate in different contexts. Finally, CLT has two basic systematic attentions for the aspects of language: functional and structural (Shaikh, 1993).

Following the last characteristic, the functional aspect of language appears to be a fundamental element of communication (Shaikh, 1993). By introducing the concept of speech act and proposing a certain internal organisation for

the meaning of utterances, CLT, as Sambou (2012) states, focuses on the essential needs of learners as social individuals naturally inclined to communicate and interact with others. It is therefore essential for learners to know not only what language they need in order to successfully communicate in English, but also to know what they are using the language for.

2.2. The functional view of language

CLT is anchored in Halliday's functional view of language. In Halliday's words (1970, p. 145) «Linguistics is concerned with the description of speech acts or texts, since only through the study of language in use are all the functions of language, and therefore all components of meaning, brought into focus». According to Harmer (2008), a language function is a purpose you wish to achieve when you say or write and, by 'performing' the function, you are performing an act of communication.

The functional view of language teaching contemplates the process as a set of specific contents and objectives designed for the acquisition of a given set of pragmatic[1] skills (Sambou, 2012). Given that language always occurs in a social context, which suggests that it is possible for people to concentrate learning upon the forms of language that are most appropriate to their needs (Wilkins, 1979). Hence, the implementation of a functional language metho-|dology has to consider, not only the relevance of the language that is used and its purpose, but also the speaker's intention and the context in which the communicative exchange takes place.

In order to learn to use a language, we have to become involved in it as an experience and we do this by using it for real communication, for genuinely giving and receiving real messages (Halliwell, 1992). In a bilingual language teaching and learning environment, contextualised oral exchanges in the second language require teachers to provide learners with clear functional language elements to help them infer meaning. By doing so, learners will subsequently be capable of negotiating meaning in communicative situations.

Although several authors and approaches have compiled, categorized and analysed different language functions, I will pay special attention to the

---

[1] If we follow Yule (1996), Pragmatics is the study of the speaker's meaning in a specific context.

functions put forward by van Ek and Trim (1990, pp. 15-21) since all the essential language functions are covered. Language functions are what people do by means of language. According to van Ek and Trim (1992, p. 15), the principle of selection has been throughout, that the functions selected should meet the most likely and urgent needs of the learners and together they should be manageable within the estimated average learning time stated for the objective. From this conception, they sorted language functions in six broad categories:

– **Imparting and seeking factual information:** e.g. identifying, reporting, asking, correcting and answering questions.

– **Expressing and finding out attitudes:** e.g. expressing agreement or disagreement with a statement, expressing ability or disability, expressing desire and intention, expressing satisfaction and approval, denying, apologizing.

– **Getting things done (suasion):** e.g. suggesting a course of action, requesting and inviting others to do something, accepting or declining an offer or invitation, advising, warning.

– **Socialising:** e.g. greeting people, addressing and introducing someone, reacting to being introduced, congratulating and taking leave.

– **Structuring discourse:** e.g. opening, hesitating, correcting, enumerating, summing up, closing.

– **Communication repair:** e.g. signalling non-understanding, asking for overall repetition, asking for clarification, asking to spell something, asking for confirmation of understanding, expressing ignorance, asking for assistance.

As Harmer (1991) claims, the study of functions and how they are realised in language has had a profound effect on the design of language teaching materials, making language purpose a major factor in the choice of syllabus items and teaching techniques. A feature of language functions is that they do not have one linguistic realisation. When we attempt to achieve a communicative purpose, we have to choose which language form to use (Harmer, 1991). In the light of this, the teacher's role has to be, to identify what students

need to learn. Once those needs have been identified, specific language functions can be implemented and help learners develop their ability to communicate using concrete language exponents. This ability can be developed by means of the use of specific functional language in games. In connection to the aims of my research, my students will be provided with instructional functional language to deal with turn-taking and make simple requests, whilst playing games in order to make themselves understood with their peers and complete the tasks successfully

2.3. Games and the development of functional language

Given that my research objectives are related to the contribution of instructional functional language in order to negotiate meaning whilst carrying out communicative tasks, I decided to use games in order to create a friendly learning environment where students are engaged and motivated. I made that decision in the conviction that games provide a context for meaningful communication and are effective learning resources, which have to be present in all learning environments. Even if the game involves discrete language items, such as spelling games, meaningful communication takes place as students seek to understand how to play the game and as they communicate before, during, and after the game (Wright, Betteridge & Buckby, 2005). Meaningful communication provides the basis for comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985), i.e. what students understand as they listen and read.

Of particular interest here for my research objectives, is that language functions are directly related to communicative situations, and games are an effective tool to develop communicative exchanges among learners. Furthermore, games can be used to drill language structures (i.e. linguistic games) and to foster communication (i.e. communicative games) and help students exchange ideas (Hadfield, 1999). Given that this research focuses on managing turn-taking and making requests, I will concern myself with communicative games. In doing so, I will try to prove that, on the one hand, games are the perfect tool to help my students– first graders and newcomers in the bilingual program –understand the great amount of contents in the foreign language in an easier and more controlled environment and, on the other hand, I will try to give evidence that an appropriate use of language functions is crucial for learning a foreign language. In other words,

games not only create a fun environment where potential anxiety is reduced and language can be contextualised, but they also help learners see the functional dimension of language as they will need structures to be part of the activity.

3. METHODOLOGY AND WORK PLAN

3.1. Design

There were three major research moments that took place during each one of five sixty-minute sessions. The first part consisted of pre-testing learners by means of the collection of data about the chunks of language students would already use in class and the number of times they used them while playing «Hangman» in groups of six. The second part of the data collection process was aimed at presenting the experimental group (1ºA) with new functional language to deal with while playing games with the vocabulary from the unit. The control group (1ºB) was introduced to the same language by means of ordinary activities proposed by the classbook. Finally, the third part of the data collection process comprised of a post-test in which data was collected from both groups, while students were playing the same game as in the pre-test. All gathered data would enable me to value and measure the influence of games in functional language learning and use for communication in a meaningful and effective way.

3.2. Implementation

3.2.1. Session 1

In the first session of the research, learners would play Hangman for thirty minutes in groups of six using one mini-whiteboard and a marker in each group. The words used for this session were related to familiar vocabulary such as: numbers, colours, planets, days of the week or the months of the year. Learners were observed by two language assistants, a practicum teacher and myself. We collected data using a rubric (Appendix 1) where we compiled information about the number of students who used the functional language chunks they already knew or had been taught since the beginning of the school year, and took accountability of the times each chunk of

language was used. We also took notes about the times each student used English to communicate.

3.2.2. *Sessions 2, 3 and 4*

In the second session, learners were introduced to the new functional language, regarding turn-taking and making requests. The control group was given the new language via ordinary classroom communicative activities (i.e. picture dictionary, vocabulary song) and the experimental group was facilitated the language, by means of games. For the both the control and the experimental groups, the first part of each session would be the same for the sake of dealing with some similar activities and working on the same unit vocabulary and structures with both groups. However, the experimental group would work with the new language by means of games during the second part of sessions two, three and four. In session two, in addition, students played Bingo in groups of six; in session three they played a Memory Game in pairs; and they played a Guessing Game in session four.

3.2.3. *Session 5*

In session five, both the experimental and the control groups would play Hangman again, as they did in session one. This time, as groups were observed, data collectors would pay special attention to the turn-taking language and the use of the new requests introduced.

4. THE STUDY: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Session 1

During the first session, learners would play Hangman for thirty minutes in groups of six using one mini-whiteboard and a marker in each group. The data was collected using a rubric (Appendix 1) where I compiled information about the number of students who used the functional language chunks they already knew or had been taught since the beginning of the school year. This language was displayed on big, colourful posters above the classroom board. The data collected during Session 1 can be summarized as follows:

Figure 1. Overall use of English while playing Hangman in Session1.
*Source*: Author.
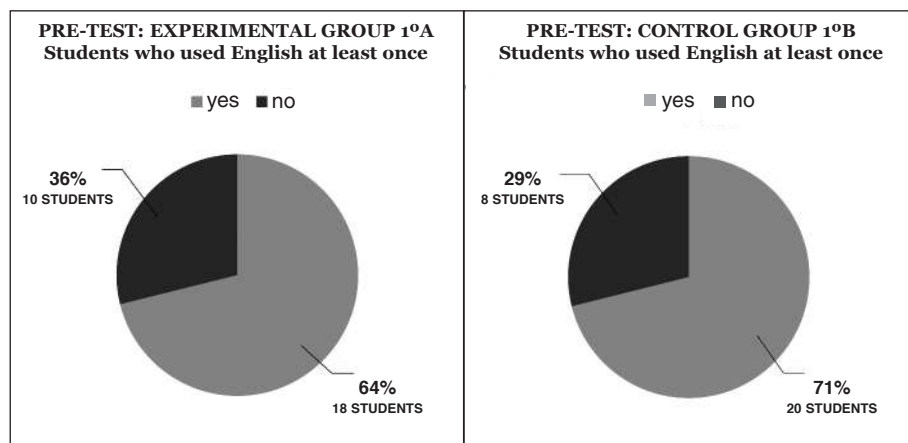
All students used different structures in Spanish, especially for turn-taking, and 64% of students in the Experimental group and 71% in the Control Group used at least one chunk of language in English during the game. However, there was a high number of students who never used any of the phrases in English. This might be due to the fact that they had recently learnt how to play Hangman on their own, in teams, and they got very excited with the use of the mini-whiteboards. It might have also been caused by the fact that they all wanted to guess the hidden words in order to become the game leader in the next round.

After taking accountability of the overall use of the English language during the first time students played Hangman in teams, I proceeded to study the data regarding the use of specific chunks of functional language. For this reason, I only paid attention to the data, which was taken from the students who used English at least once during the game in order to specifically analyse their use of each chunk of functional language.

Figure 2. Times each specific chunk of language was
used whilst playing Hangman in Session 1.
Source: Author.
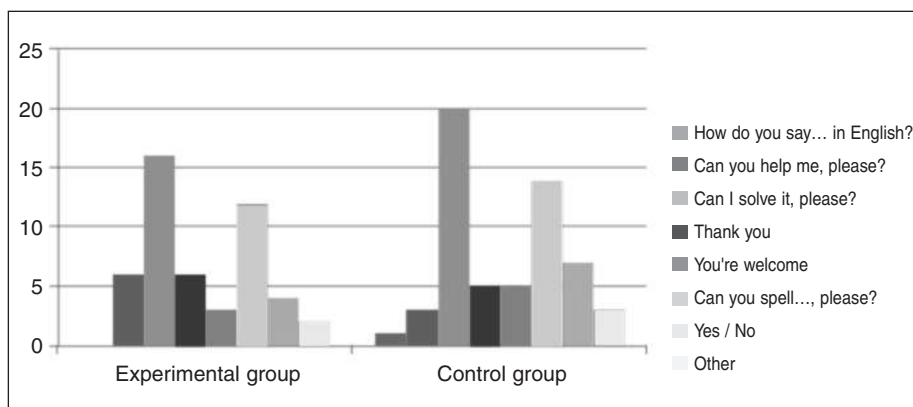
In both groups, the most used language item was the phrase «Can I solve it, please?». This is the chunk that enables a student to become the winner of the round and gives her/him the chance to be the game leader for the next round. Even though there was a very low use of the language provided, the frequent use of this phrase was relevant because learners already knew which the key to letting them be the winner was and they knew that they needed to say «Can I solve it, please?» in order to succeed in the game.

The second most used chunk of language was «Can you spell…?». According to the rules of the game, learners not only have to guess the hidden word, but to spell it correctly in order to win the round. The game leader was in charge of asking this question and she/he would let the winner be the new game leader if spelling was correct. Students also know that, despite the high use of Spanish for turn-taking, this is a key element for turn-taking or, at least, changing game leader, and deliberately used the most important phrases in English to deal with the most relevant part of the game.

4.2. Session 2

During the second session of the research, the experimental group was facilitated the new functional language by means of playing Bingo and the control group was given the new language via ordinary classroom communicative activities. Prior to collecting data, both groups were introduced to

the language they would require to use in class throughout the session. Then, this language would be displayed on big posters above the classroom board.

For the experimental group, learners would play Bingo for thirty minutes. Since the subject topic we were dealing with was Tropical Fruit, the words for Bingo would be the vocabulary related to this topic. After an explanation of the rules of the game, I asked my students to use the language provided as many times as they required during the game in order to get more possibilities to become game leaders.

For the control group, the new language was introduced at the beginning of the session. First, learners were shown some examples about how to use the language. Then, they were informed of the fact that they had to use the new language during the class every time they would participate in any of the classroom activities. In order to collect data during the same amount of time in both groups, data collection in the control group also took place for thirty minutes. The data was collected by means of a rubric and the information about the performance of both groups in Session 2 is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Times each specific chunk of language was used in Session 2.
Source: Author.
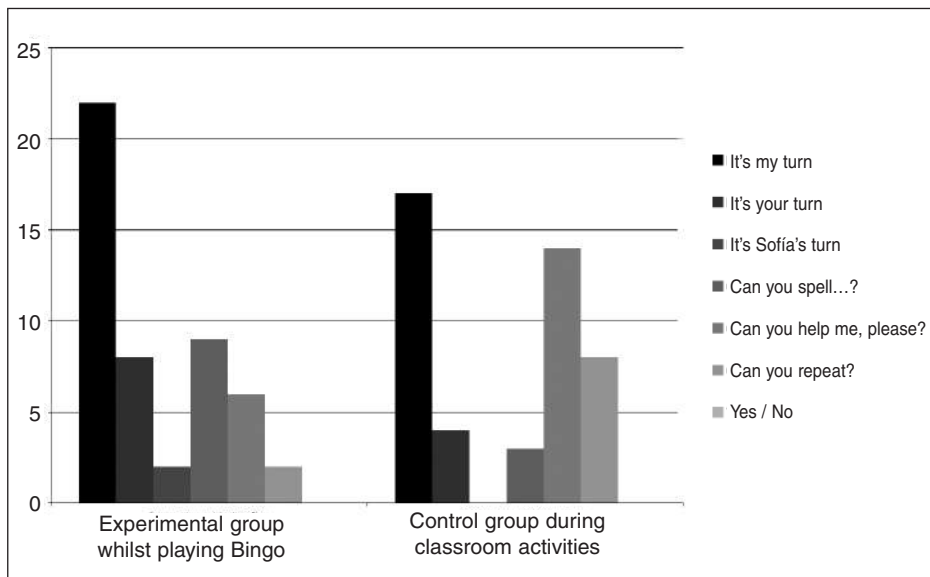
It was a remarkable aspect, the fact that there was such a little difference in the use of the new language presented in both groups. Even though they were dealing with different activities, the number of times learners used functional language phrases was very similar. It was surprising the fact that the control group used chunks of language four more times than the experimental group. This aspect might have been caused due to the motivation students got when they knew that they were going to be rewarded with points in the Class Dojo system whenever they participated using the new language. The experimental group was very motivated because they were playing an exciting game and the use of functional language was often promoted and encouraged by the teachers and assistants who were supervising the groups.

In spite of the fact that there still was a low use of functional language structures, after the first two sessions, there was a subtle increase in the use of turn-taking phrases in both groups during the second research day. This might be caused by the fact that, on the one hand, learners in the experimental group were very motivated in turn-taking correctly in order to win rounds and become game leaders. On the other hand, students in the control group were engaged with the correct use of language items in order to be rewarded with points.

4.3. Session 3

During the third session of the research, the experimental group was facilitated the new functional language by means of playing a Memory Game and the control group was given the new language via ordinary classroom communicative activities. Prior to collecting data, both groups were introduced the language they would require to use in class throughout the session. For both groups, all of the language structures to deal with were the same except for «Is it a match?» which would only be used by the experimental group while playing the Memory Game.

Learners in the experimental group would play a Memory Game for around thirty minutes. Since the subject topic we were dealing with was Tropical Fruit, the words for the Memory Game were the vocabulary related to this topic. After a reminder of the use of the language by some students and I proceeded to provide learners with an explanation of the game rules which can be summarized as follows:

Students in the experimental group were given a set of ten word cards and ten picture cards. They had to put them face down on the table and shuffle them. The goal is to match pictures and words. One student has to lift two cards and the other student asks him/her «Is it a match?». If it is not a match, cards are put face down again. If it is a match, cards remain face up on one side of the table. Students can ask each other to spell the word saying; «Can you spell…?». In case they need help, they can ask their peer or a teacher «Can you help me, please?». Whenever they changed turns, they had to say «It's my turn», «It's your turn» or «It's Sofía's turn». As the game went on, learners had to memorise where they saw pictures and words before in order to pair up all the cards. The student who had more pairs matched was the winner of the round.

For the control group, the new language was introduced at the beginning of the session and they would not practise it by means of a game but through ordinary classroom activities. First, some learners were asked to volunteer and explain how to use the language during the class for their classmates as these language structures were already used in previous sessions. Then, they were informed of the fact that they had to use the new language during the class every time they would participate in any of the classroom activities. In order to collect data during the same amount of time in both groups, data collection time in the control group was also thirty minutes.

The data was collected by means of rubrics and the information about the performance of both groups in session 3 is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Times each specific chunk of language was used in Session 3.
Source: Author.
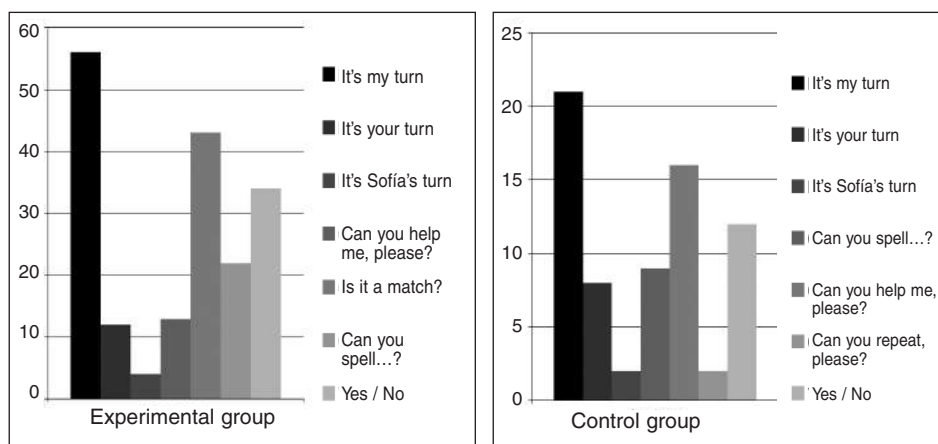
There was a great increase in the use of the structure «It's my turn» if we compare the results to session 2. In the experimental group, the great use of this structure was due to one of the rules of the Memory game in which each member of a pair had to say the phrase every time she/he had to try to pair up pictures and words. In the control group, the increase in the use of this phrase in the control group was caused by the intervention of teachers and assistants who reminded the students of the use of this phrase every time somebody participated during the class activities. At the beginning of the data collection process in the control group, all learners would use this chunk when the teacher reminded them of it, but there were seven students who used «It's my turn» spontaneously without the need of a reminder. With regard to the other turn-taking structures («It's your turn» and «It's Sofía's turn»), they were poorly used in both the experimental and the control group for the same reason as it happened in session 2: first grade students are aged six or seven years old and they tend to focus on their own interests and pay little attention to others' issues. These structures were used whenever a data collector asked learners to use them, hence there was no spontaneity from the students. The use of language structures was much higher in both groups compared to session 2. The Memory Game was very motivating and the language items were used very frequently without any reminder from the data collectors. The language use was also slightly higher in the control group compared to session 2, but teachers and assistants had to remind learners of its use very often.

4.4. Session 4

In the fourth session of the research, the experimental group practised the language by means of a Guessing Game and the control group practised the language by means of ordinary classroom communicative activities. Prior to collecting data, both groups were introduced the language they would require to use in class throughout the session. For both groups, all the language structures were the same except for «Is it a... ?» which would only be used by the experimental group while playing the Memory Game. Once all chunks of language were introduced in both groups, they would be displayed in big posters above the classroom board as we did in the previous sessions.

The data was collected by means of rubrics and the information about the performance of both groups in the fourth session of the research is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Times each specific chunk of language was used in Session 4.
Source: Author.
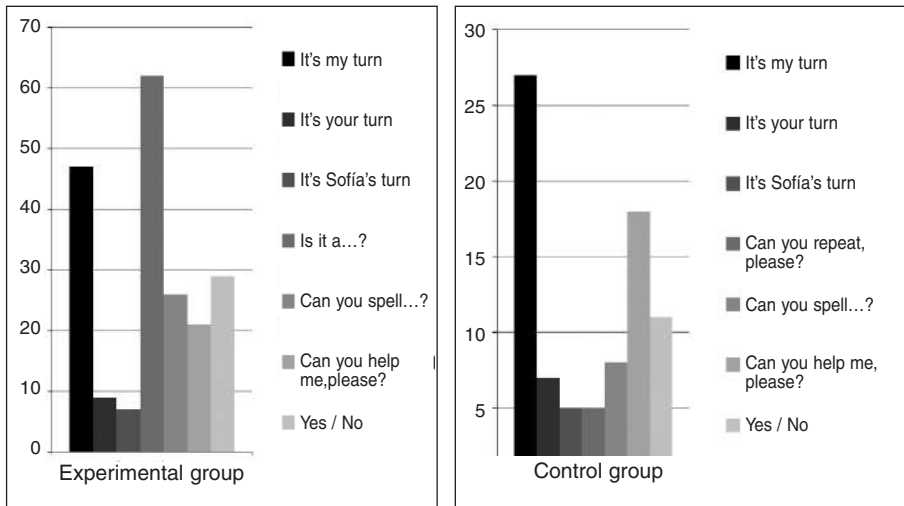
Similarly to what happened in sessions 2 and 3, all students from both groups participated at least once using the target language. The use of language structures was much higher in both groups compared to session 2 and similar to session 3. The Memory Game was very motivating and the language items were used very frequently without any reminder from the data collectors. According to the comments from the data collectors, the spontaneous use of the language items in the experimental group was higher than in all of the previous sessions even though there was not any accountability for these data. The language use was also slightly higher in the control group compared to previous sessions but teachers and assistants had to remind learners of its use very often.

4.5. Session 5

In the fifth and last session of my research, learners in both the experimental and the control groups played Hangman again. The objective of playing the same game as in session 1 was to compare the results from both sessions after the students were introduced to and practised turn-taking phrases and requests by means of games and classroom activities. Prior to playing the game, the students were reminded of the language they had to use. The posters with the language for this session were displayed on the class board. After the introduction of the language, learners were told that, unlike in pre-

vious sessions, teachers and language assistants would not be helping with the language since they would just observe and collect data. Learners would play Hangman for approximately thirty minutes in groups of six using one mini-whiteboard and a marker in each group. This process of gathering information was considered as a post-test and the data was collected using a rubric (see Appendix 2) which results are shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Times each specific chunk of language was used in Session 5.
Source: Author.
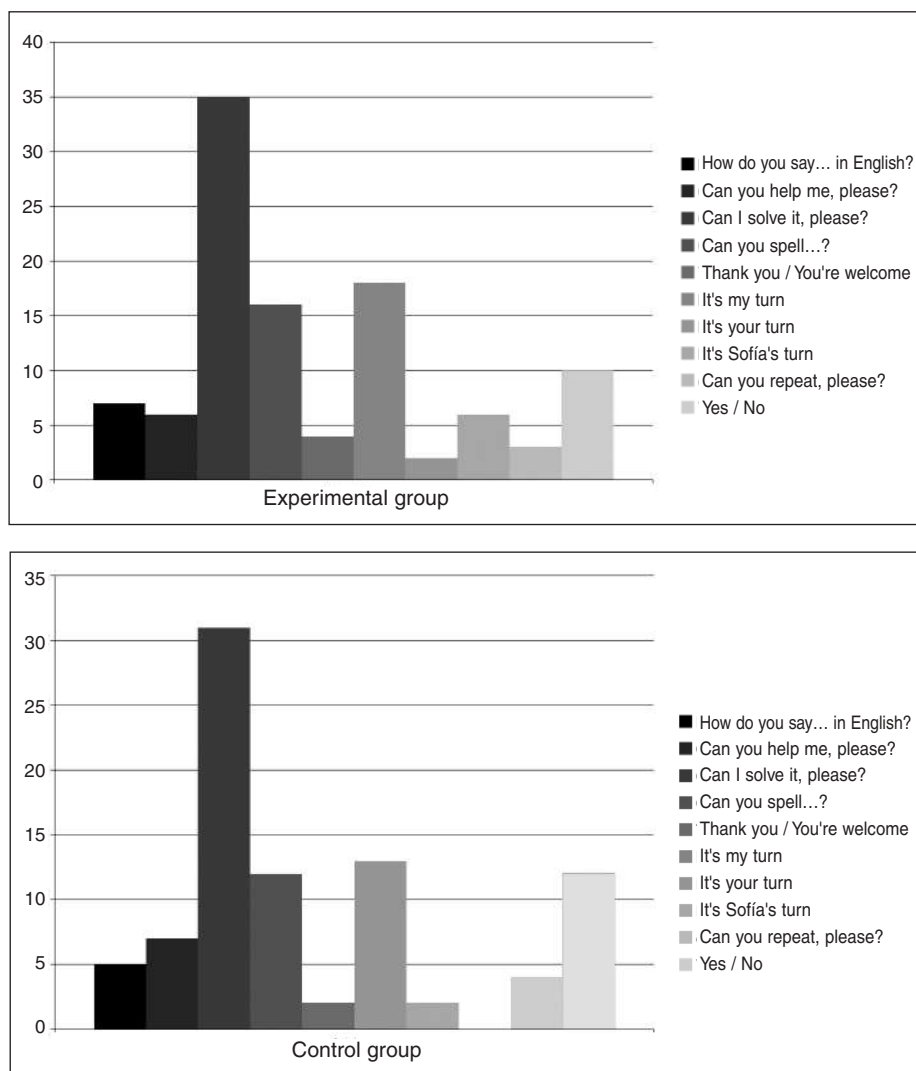
There was a higher use of language in the experimental group and this datum might be caused by the fact that students had been learning and practising the chunks of instructional functional language by means of games. The intrinsic motivation that games add to the use of the language in a communicative situation might be a reason of such a high use in the experimental group. But there also were high numbers in the control group; hence the language that was presented through classroom activities was also effectively introduced, even though students in this group did not play any games. The level of enthusiasm was great since learners liked being left playing by themselves and using the mini-whiteboards which have turned out to be an effective tool for many classroom activities and games throughout the whole school year.

Even though students kept on using Spanish many times to communicate among themselves, the overall use of English notably increased compared to session 1. But the most remarkable aspect was that all this language use was spontaneous because in session 5, the teachers and language assistants in charge of the data collection only helped the students with the game procedures but we did not help learners with language, which came out spontaneously from the need to communicate and negotiate meaning while playing Hangman. Even though there also was a great level of enthusiasm and excitement, learners knew that teachers and assistants were taking notes about their performance using the language and they might have interpreted this as a test. Hence most of them took it very seriously and made an effort to pause and reflect upon the right poster to look at and the right moment to use the language. Some students helped other classmates with the language they should use. The two students with Special Needs and the student diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder also used some of the language chunks as they were helped by their teammates. Both groups are aware of the special situation of these three students and everybody was always willing to help them integrate into the activities.

Once I gathered the information from session 5, I wanted to establish a comparison between the times students had been using chunks of language ever since the first session of the research. Information about the evolution in the use of functional language structures is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Times each group used language items in all sessions.
Source: Author.

Group	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5	TOTAL
Experimental	49	57	184	201	107	598
Control	58	61	70	81	88	358

According to the numbers shown in Table 1, the overall use of language structures after five sessions was much higher in the experimental group than in the control group. The cause for this difference between both groups might be the effect of using the language by means of games in the experimental group. There was a higher use of language by the control group in the first two sessions but the differences grew up from the third session. In sessions two, three and four learners received help from teachers and assistants and most of the language use was monitored, especially in the control group where there was less spontaneity than in the experimental group. The information from session 3 in the experimental group is not a total number since teachers and assistants were not able to cope with all the pairs playing the Memory Game at the same time.

Therefore, the number of times learners used the target language in session 3 in the experimental group was higher than what is shown in Table 1. In sessions 1 and 5 there was no help or assistance from the data collectors and the students used all the language items autonomously. According to Table 1, there was an increase in the spontaneous use of language in both groups but in the fifth session, the difference between both groups was not a big as I expected. Games might have had an effect in the use of language in the experimental group but students in the control group also made an effort to learn and practice the language. Data in Table 1 might be totally reliable since in sessions 3, 4 and 5, some language items were different in the experimental group and some of them were used automatically and rapidly in order to play more rounds or try to guess words, whereas most of the language use in those sessions in the control group was elicited by teachers and assistants.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Regarding the explorative research questions, I firstly wanted to know if instructional functional language was an effective tool to negotiate meaning while carrying out communicative tasks. The answer to this question is affirmative since, according to the data collected and my students' performance during the activities, chunks of functional language were used effectively in order to convey meaning and enable students to communicate among themselves in communicative tasks regardless of if they were games or ordinary classroom activities.

Since the answer to the first question was affirmative, it led me to formulate a second one where I wanted to know if turn-taking techniques and making requests could be taught in order to help students communicate among themselves without the need for direct teacher supervision. The answer to this question is also affirmative, but there are some aspects that I wanted to highlight. Learners were able to communicate among themselves using the target language but there was a great degree of assistance and monitoring by teachers and language assistants in sessions 2, 3 and 4. The use of the chunks of language was progressively gaining spontaneity in my students but it was not until the fifth session when they were left alone dealing with the language. In this session, many students knew that they were being tested and tried to make an effort to use the language and helped other classmates to do so. However, even though they were not assisted, learners were being supervised and language use was not one hundred per cent spontaneous or natural, but conditioned by the presence of a teacher or a language assistant.

With reference to the first hypotheses I formulated, I stated that by the end of the research, students would be able to use basic turn-taking techniques and make simple requests whilst playing games in order to make themselves understood with their peers and complete the tasks successfully. This first hypothesis was confirmed because, even though there was assistance and supervision by teachers and assistants, learners made an effort to negotiate meaning and communicate among themselves using the target language. Even the students in the control group improved their use of turn-taking structures and requests in spite of the fact that they did not have any practise through games.

The second hypothesis was connected to the first one. I claimed that, as a result of being able to properly use the target language to make themselves

understood with their peers and complete the tasks successfully, students will demand more language tools to communicate among themselves while playing, since there will be an increase of motivation towards the use of more chunks of language in oral interactions among students, without direct teacher supervision. This hypothesis was not confirmed since there were no new language demands from the students. From my point of view, the amount of language items presented and practiced was overwhelming sometimes and students did not want to learn more language even though they were using some different structures in their mother tongue, especially while playing games.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Alharbi, A. (2013). *Communicative approach*. Retrieved from https://goo.gl/GXwSb8 [Last accessed: 28/07/2017].

Baker, C. (2011). *Foundations on bilingual education and bilingualism.* Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Brewster, J., Ellis, G., & Girard, D. (1992). *The Primary Teacher's Guide.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Coyle, D., Marsh, D., & Hood, P. (2010). *CLIL: Content Language Integrated Learning.* Cambridge: CUP.

Gass, S., & Mackey, A. (2006). Input, interaction and output: an overview. AILA Review, 19, 3-17. doi: 10.1075/aila.19.03gas

Hadfield, J. (1999). *Intermediate vocabulary games.* Harlow, Essex: Longman.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1970). *Communicative Language Teaching.* Retrieved from https://goo.gl/t12bFr [Last accessed: 28/07/2017].

Halliwell, S. (1992). *Teaching English in the Primary classroom.* New York: Longman.

Harmer, J. (1991).*The practice of English language teaching.* London: Longman.

Harmer, J. (2008). *How to teach English.* London: Pearson Longman.

Krashen, S. D. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications.* New York: Longman.

Richards, J. C. (2006). *Communicative Language Teaching Today.* Cambridge: CUP.

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching.* Cambridge: CUP.

Sambou, A. (2012). Functional approach to applied language teaching. *Macabéa: Revista Eletrônica do Netlli*, *2*(1), 161-182. Retrieved from https://goo.gl/ZFbLpb [Last accessed: 28/07/2017].

Savignon, S. (2004). Language, identity and curriculum design: communicative language teaching in the 21st century. In C. Van Esch & O. Saint John (eds.), *New Insights in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching* (pp. 71-88). Frankfurt Am Main: Peter Lang Verlag.

Shaikh, A. A. (1993). *Methods of Teaching English as a Foreign Language*. Lahore: The Caravan Book House.

Van Ek, J. A., & Trim, J. L. M. (1990). *Waystage 1990*. Cambridge: CUP.

Wesche, M. B., & Skehan, P. (2002). Communicative, task-based and content-based language instruction. In R.B. Kaplan (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of applied linguistics*. Oxford: OUP.

Wilkins, D. (1972). *Linguistics in language teaching*. London: Arnold.

Wilkins, D. A. (1979). Notional syllabuses and the concept of a minimum adequate grammar. In C. J. Brumfit & K. Johnson (eds.), *The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching*. Oxford: OUP.

Wright, A., Betteridge, D., & Buckby, M. (2005). *Games for language learning* (3rd ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford: OUP.

APPENDIX 1
PRE-TEST: SESSION 1 RUBRIC. DATA COLLECTION FROM HANGMAN

STUDENT 1									
Language	1	2	3	+	**Language**	1	2	3	+
How do you say… in English?					Thank you				
Can you help me, please?					You're welcome				
Can I solve it, please?					Cand you spell…?				
Yes / No					OTHER:				

STUDENT 2									
Language	1	2	3	+	**Language**	1	2	3	+
How do you say… in English?					Thank you				
Can you help me, please?					You're welcome				
Can I solve it, please?					Cand you spell…?				
Yes / No					OTHER:				

STUDENT 3									
Language	1	2	3	+	**Language**	1	2	3	+
How do you say… in English?					Thank you				
Can you help me, please?					You're welcome				
Can I solve it, please?					Cand you spell…?				
Yes / No					OTHER:				

STUDENT 4									
Language	1	2	3	+	**Language**	1	2	3	+
How do you say… in English?					Thank you				
Can you help me, please?					You're welcome				
Can I solve it, please?					Cand you spell…?				
Yes / No					OTHER:				

STUDENT 5									
Language	1	2	3	+	**Language**	1	2	3	+
How do you say… in English?					Thank you				
Can you help me, please?					You're welcome				
Can I solve it, please?					Cand you spell…?				
Yes / No					OTHER:				

STUDENT 6									
Language	1	2	3	+	**Language**	1	2	3	+
How do you say… in English?					Thank you				
Can you help me, please?					You're welcome				
Can I solve it, please?					Cand you spell…?				
Yes / No					OTHER:				

APPENDIX 2
POST-TEST: SESSION 5 RUBRIC. DATA COLLECTION FROM HANGMAN

STUDENT 1																			
Language	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	+	**Language**	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	+
How do you say… in English?										It's my turn									
Can you help me, please?										It's your turn									
Can I solve it, please?										It's Sofía's turn									
Can you spell…?										Can you repeat, please?									
Thank you / You're welcome										Yes / No									

STUDENT 2																			
Language	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	+	**Language**	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	+
How do you say… in English?										It's my turn									
Can you help me, please?										It's your turn									
Can I solve it, please?										It's Sofía's turn									
Can you spell…?										Can you repeat, please?									
Thank you / You're welcome										Yes / No									

STUDENT 3																			
Language	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	+	**Language**	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	+
How do you say… in English?										It's my turn									
Can you help me, please?										It's your turn									
Can I solve it, please?										It's Sofía's turn									
Can you spell…?										Can you repeat, please?									
Thank you / You're welcome										Yes / No									

STUDENT 4																			
Language	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	+	**Language**	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	+
How do you say… in English?										It's my turn									
Can you help me, please?										It's your turn									
Can I solve it, please?										It's Sofía's turn									
Can you spell…?										Can you repeat, please?									
Thank you / You're welcome										Yes / No									

STUDENT 5																			
Language	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	+	**Language**	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	+
How do you say… in English?										It's my turn									
Can you help me, please?										It's your turn									
Can I solve it, please?										It's Sofía's turn									
Can you spell…?										Can you repeat, please?									
Thank you / You're welcome										Yes / No									

STUDENT 6																			
Language	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	+	**Language**	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	+
How do you say… in English?										It's my turn									
Can you help me, please?										It's your turn									
Can I solve it, please?										It's Sofía's turn									
Can you spell…?										Can you repeat, please?									
Thank you / You're welcome										Yes / No									