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TITULO: The use of games to enhance reading comprehension in a EFL class

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The use of games to enhance reading comprehension in a EFL class

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Resumen

Reading comprehension is not only important as a skill that demonstrates competency in learning a foreign language but it is also a tool that is needed for life. After assessing third grade middle school groups, I found out that reading was one of their weakest skills and thus representing a need in their language learning, thus deriving the main reason for this research. Another factor that influenced the selection of this topic was my previous experience working as a soccer coach where I observed similarities between teaching English and coaching soccer. What inspired me was how games in soccer transformed a task into a very

competitive, rewarding and motivating activity. With that in mind my aim was to match aspects of a game into reading tasks in order to improve their reading competency. The lessons used in this researched were designed on Presentation, Practice, Production Approach (PPP), incorporating readings with the use of games. I tried my best to enhance reading through three different games with the characteristics that Lindemans et. al. (2019) suggests. Each lesson analysis was based on Burn's Framework for reflection which allowed me to derive to the following results. Many students were not attentive to the games, therefore not participating. The evidences that these gamified tasks gave hints of development in reading comprehension from the students within controlled activities in reference to the sub-skill; reading for detail. Lastly, some students continued to rely on the use of Spanish within the class in order to confirm comprehension.

Palabras clave/Key words: Games, Reading Comprehension, Gamification, Skills, Foreign Language

Introducción

The document at hand, describes the topic of the use of games to enhance reading comprehension in a third-grade classroom of a junior high school. The school where this intervention took place was the Escuela Secundaria Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama. In this document, games were the key element in order to improve reading comprehension. This was something that I considered would be different and motivating for students and might be an agent that would facilitate them the comprehension of texts using the reading skills.

Reading is a skill that belongs to the four skills considered and evaluated by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). It is part of the receptive skills in learning. I considered this because in my opinion it suited the circumstances and characteristics of the students in that school. One of these circumstances and characteristics is that the students, with whom this practice was developed, had a level below the expectations of the syllabus of basic education in Mexico for third grade in junior high. It says that by the time students get to this grade they should demonstrate competence in areas that are still out of their reach.

Another situation that I took into consideration was my personal point of view. I consider that productive skills are more difficult for students to use than receptive skills. Paraphrasing De Villiers & De Villiers (1978) who say that when people acquire their L1 by interpreting what surrounds them. The process of articulation and production comes after that and if students are not used to a foreign language and their level is low, they might as well get to know the language first, then acquire parts of it and after that maybe with a little bit of extrinsic and a bit more of intrinsic motivation, they would be able to produce linguistically.

One more reason for choosing reading for this document, is that I considered that Spanish and English share the same alphabet. Understanding that both languages have Latin roots, it is common that some words in English are similar in Spanish and therefore when reading students would be able to understand even when they are not aware of its pronunciation. On the other hand, phonetics is different between these two languages and it would be complicated for students therefore demotivating.

The last thing that I want to add about the reason for choosing reading is that I considered what they did not know but I had to take advantage of what they know even if it was in Spanish about learning a language and that was that they already knew how to read. Khaled (2010) says that the reading process “includes recognizing letter, characters, and words; analyzing the syntactic and semantic structure of clauses and sentences, and generating inferences” (p. 49). I thought that with the correct context and an engaging

activity such as a game, students would be excited and with that able to interpret and challenge themselves to try to understand letters, words and characters that enhance their reading comprehension.

I have to say that I was eager to use games because before starting studying at the Benemérita y Centenaria Escuela Normal del Estado. I started working as a soccer coach and with that experience and the preparation that I had before working there, I got the idea that every task in soccer can be gamified. Later on, in the Encuentro Nacional de Idiomas hosted by the Normal del Estado, during my first semester there, a teacher from Cambridge in a conference said that “every language learning task can be gamified” and I became interested in that idea.

The idea consolidated in my mind when I attended in 2018 an international course specialized in the soccer development of children and teenagers, where I saw more about the gamification of specific tasks that allowed children and teens to acquire the different aspects of soccer such as technical, tactical and physical skills without them knowing that they were learning. In the course I heard the word “drills”, a word that I heard before in classes at the BECENE and even though those drills were different from the ones in language teaching, both of them had the same essence, doing something over and over again.

The instructor told us that these were the easiest tasks to gamify but they were meaningless for the cognitive development of our teams. Instead of that, he suggested that we had to extract small parts from the game that would help our students to think what they would do if they found themselves in that kind of situation. Exposing them to that kind of situations would strengthen their decision-making skills by repeating “real life situations” in the field as in the communicative approach.

Even the planning format for the soccer lessons was similar to the PPP methodology. There are three stages of the lesson in that methodology that I immediately linked with PPP. Those stages are: Orientation, Practice and Game. In both methods, before starting the warm-up or lead in was important in order to get students prepared for the lesson. Orientation stage is where the lesson goes from the basics and gives an idea of what the lesson is going to be about. This stage is all about input as in Presentation stage.

Then, during Practice as in PPP, the students get to do as much as they can to get involved with the concepts. It is during this stage where feedback is more present. The tasks have to be controlled in this stage. Finally, in the Game, in words of the instructor -it is where all the holistic aspects soccer

is presented, it is where players are free to do. Hopefully, using the concepts review during the training. The relation between this stage and Production is clear, let students do with soccer as in language. At the end, the wrap-up is important to give feedback and let students know what went right or wrong and why and make them think how are they going to solve those situations.

For me that course opened my mind. It gave me a way of connecting two things that I am passionate about and left me to new ideas that I did not come up before, not only in my soccer lessons but for my English practices. From that moment ahead, I have been trying to get some concepts from the field to the classroom and vice versa. I consider that this is what inspired me to do this document.

The purpose of studying this topic was to learn if games had an impact in students when working on reading tasks and if so, observe if they could improve their comprehension. It was important for me to see if I was capable to adapt reading tasks into games to get students attention which has been a situation in which I had struggled and I have carried with me as a teacher trainee, and see if with their attention, students would be able to improve reading comprehension by playing.

This pedagogical essay describes three research activities developed where games were used to improve reading comprehension in students. All of them contains gamified reading tasks considering aspects that are described in chapter one. Each game gave students a challenge in order to demonstrate if they were capable of comprehending the text. These lessons involved different topics because they belong to three different units. In order to describe the analysis of that activities developed I decided to use Gibb's framework for reflection.

With this document I hope that I have increased my experience to understand what aspects of games permitted students enhance their reading comprehension. Even though that I faced a lot of challenges that normally are not confronted by teachers of any subject, I feel that I got enough experience to deal with circumstances that I was not used to. I have learned that adapting myself to conditions or environments is something that I have to deal with from now on if I want to become a teacher. An English teacher.

Applying the interventions was very interesting, considering the fact that I used soccer to make a relation between what I did there and what I got here. There is a factor that impacts a lot the dynamic in the classroom and in the field and I see it as a difference between teaching English in a public junior high school and teaching soccer in a soccer academy, which is that students in my team go to soccer practice and it is not an obligation. Maybe they go because they like soccer or they enjoy playing with their teammates, there is an interest when it comes to training soccer.

However, when it comes to teaching English in a public junior high school it is very different. The students go because it is an obligation and that obligation goes from preschool to high school at least. Attending school means studying from seven o'clock to one thirty in the afternoon when the shift is in the morning. There are not only English classes but six or seven other subjects that mean work for students. Therefore, trying to get the same energy from students is not the same and even when I make relation between both language and soccer, I should have considered that they are not the same.

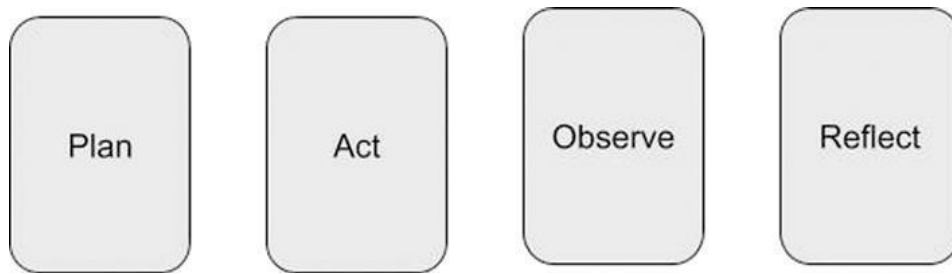
For that reason, the usefulness for my professional life is that I have to consider far from where I stand so I can make better interventions and provide students with strategies that suit the environment where I would work and with that, I could get better results. Other thing that this document leaves me is the opportunity to learn from my mistakes and try new things and strategies. Some work and some did not work but that will be described in the following chapters. Finally, I think that this document provided me with the experience of working with games in an atmosphere where I never imagined working. For this reason, when I get the chance to participate in a face to face class, I feel that I will have enough security in myself to make things as good as I can, recognizing what I need to make games work and considering all aspects in classroom to get the best from my students.

Metodología

For these classes I decided to use the PPP methodology. The games were realized during the presentation stage in synchronic classes that I had with the third-grade students by the application of Zoom. I decided to use Zoom because this program allows creating separated rooms where team work can be used and that was part of the first game that was applied in this research intervention.

For this document the methodology for research that was used is Action Research. Burns (2015) defines Action Research as “the superordinate term for a set of approaches to research which, at the same time, systematically investigate a given social situation and promote democratic change and collaborative participation” (p. 99) The aim of the intervention is to intend to make a change and improve the reading comprehension of the students in the Soto y Gama Junior High.

Burns (2015) also mentions that Action Research follows four steps: Plan, Act, Observe and Reflect.



Burns' (2015) Typology of phases and processes in action research

She says that Plan involves identifying a problematic, what outcomes are desired, the people involved in the problematic and what resources are needed to change this problematic. The Act step is compound by finding strategies and actions that have been implemented to solve this and then applying those theories with the people involved in the situation.

Observation means that while the development of the theory is being tested, it is necessary to evaluate and gather evidence about what has been happening with the problem. And finally, reflect is the step where after the observation, the outcome of the Act stage is analyzed in order to obtain new information. There the intervention in the problematic is examined determining if it was successful or not and defining why it impacted or not.

Broadly speaking, in order to accomplish the educative goal, it is needed to research about the different elements that would participate in the intervention. Elements such as: what is reading comprehension? What is a game? how to gamify a task? Once all the elements were researched, then it was necessary to plan the activities for the intervention and after applying them, the analysis of the outcome comes along.

Resultados

Class one: Game On! Watching TV Shows: Yesterday and Today.

Based on my observation it was a positive experience because at the end of all the participants that played the game answered correctly and fulfill the expectations that I had in them. I expected more from all the group, I thought that the students were going to be more participative in the game, but I noticed since the beginning of the class that the students were not responding. It seemed as if the students turn on the computer, enter to the meeting and then with the camera turned off they returned to sleep.

Nevertheless, the velocity that both students that represented their teams in the game impressed me and the fact that both of them answer two questions at the same time. Even though that most of the students were not attentive to the class and the majority of them had a low level of English it was very interesting to see that both of the students tried to use as much English as they could and they used Spanish when they did not know how to say something. (Appendix C)

Paraphrasing Cadena et. al. (2018) I found that when an L2 is learned in a monolingual environment where teacher and student share the same L1, is common that both of them use their native language to aid their productions to make themselves more understandable. This does not mean that students cannot understand L2 but it means that they are comprehending but they are capable of producing in a foreign language yet, they are still in the process.

I understand that following instructions for teenagers is really hard considering that their attention span is very dispersed and more considering that they were at home with a lot of distractors that make the class even harder for them and for me. This situation was a challenge for everyone involved in the learning process of the students. Teachers, parents, students, we all struggled with the platforms, internet services or devices.

It was very interesting to work like this, as a teacher now I feel that I have more resources to deal with difficulties such as the ones that were present during this pandemic isolation. Standing in front of students has never been easy and in my opinion is easier than working the way we had to do it. I felt that the game that was used in face to face classes would be better in terms of following instructions, collaborating with each other and to change the students' attitude towards the subject.

I think that I could record an example of what I expected them to do. I also consider that I could repeat even more the instructions to make an even bigger emphasis on what I expected them to do. Maybe in order to make the activity more competitive I should use more than two groups and that way students could feel more confident about talking with others. Lowering down a little bit more the level of the text could be other aspect that I could have done.

If I find myself in a similar situation, I would arrange the groups, selecting the members of each one in order to level the groups. I also consider that by the time that I apply a game, the students would be used the dynamic of work that I set. In the future, I would motivate students to try to collaborate, to speak and to take risks. It is common to find students that does not want to participate because they are afraid of making a mistake. During this model of work not every student have the chance or resources to be connected online a lot of time, in the future I will try to establish a good rapport with the students so they find easy to express what they feel so I can act faster to the situations that may appear.

Class two: Solving an Enigma! Kahoot.

This class was a positive experience because it allowed me to see some students that did not participate during the class but were improving in their reading skills. Then products that they handed in were most of them correct. Considering that the average amount of students that showed up to class was around from eleven to fifteen, the products were not that bad. Some students did not have the chance to attend the class but they watched the recording of the class and then they sent their work. For the lesson, it was positive that more students showed improvement but for the whole week it was really good to see that some students despite their lack of resources, were finding the way to work in the classes.

For my personal development I found that I cannot expect all the students to participate, as teachers have their own teaching style to work with students, leaving aside the students' learning styles, they also have their own style of work. When growing up, attending to class in junior high I saw situations like these ones. Classmates that were more effective when they were not leading a team, or when they felt no pressure of standing to participate.

I hope that in the future I am able to identify this kind of things and have the judgement to see if the students take those attitudes because work best for them or because they are just being lazy or distracted. I understand that is not something that is achieved in a year or two, the experiences, the rights and wrongs that happen during this journey are key aspects for my personal development.

I also consider that if I was able to manage working with synchronized and asynchronous lessons during the COVID-19 pandemic, setting up games and lesson plans like these ones will not be as difficult as before. Changing the way of working in my opinion would strengthen the strategies that are worked with in face to face classes.

I considered that what I could have done is creating a more interesting enigma text. After the class was one of the first things that popped into my head. The reading was not boring but it is not something that student felt related to. There are lots of books with the topic of an enigma that I consider that could have been more interesting and not only readings but cartoons, series and YouTube videos that are really popular between teenagers.

In a similar situation and if I have the chance to work face to face I would ask students to bring in teams one enigmatic topic for discussion in the classroom and in order to engage students into the topic, I would dedicate a class to come up with theories of what students think that might have happened. After that, I would give them some other theories with more and more information create a scavenger's hunt where they had to predict and interpret clues in order to see what happened or might happen.

I also consider that if I find students with the same characteristics as the one that I discovered during this lesson, that are quiet but they are learning I would encourage them to keep working hard and inviting them to share in small portions their participations to help others understand what they are able to see and with the students that on contrary have a lot of energy and enthusiasm for participation giving them more participation.

Class three: who is the fastest?

The positive side of this class was that some students that did not participate regularly were active, giving answers and participating in the game. It was good to see that the winner of the game was one of the students that was not very common to see participating and that the time that he needed to defeat his classmates was short. It was also positive to observe that the students were engaged to the lesson. I consider that the topic and the use of element that were of their interest impacted the attention that they paid to it.

On the other hand, observing that some students found the game confusing was negative for me. I tried to plan a game that was easy for students to comprehend. We went over the slide dedicated to explain the instructions for the game but even with that aid the students felt confused but even with that in mind, I consider this experience very enriching for the following experiences that I will be facing and it left me a bunch of ideas to consider for this kind of games.

For example, using visual aids such as drawings make the students more interested in the lesson. Using teams would be another idea that I think that might work but due to the circumstances and the previous experience during the lesson number one of this intervention, I considered that it would not be a good idea. Other idea, would be instead of setting the challenge among the students maybe setting the game with the students against the clock could lead to other results.

It was a positive experience. I struggled to get students' attention but, in this lesson, they seem to enjoy and relate to the predictions that the fortune teller made in the video. I tried to be funny while making the predictions. Most of the time I tried to show a serious face or attitude because I have had some experiences where students disrespect the presence of the teacher trainee because of the age or the attitude shown. It is important to make students feel relax though. It is easier to work with a group that laughs than a group that does not want to be there.

The application of the game left me some ideas for the future. I realized that some students are not familiar with any kind of competition and that was surprising for me, but I should not assume that all the students have the same abilities or experiences. The survey showed me that even when the students

say that they understand something, I cannot rely on them. This lesson also gave me the opportunity to manage better the pace and time. One of the problems that I have had during my teacher trainee development is the use of time and the pace I gave to activities. Having order and measuring the level of difficulty of the tasks are some aspects that I have to keep working in order to improve my teaching development.

If I find myself in a similar situation, I think that I would try to make my class even funnier with predictions that are almost surreal to create some kind of discussion and create an environment where the student has the urge to say what he or she wants to say. I also consider that I made myself very predictable with the prizes, that would be something that I would change for future occasions. Working in distance learning makes giving prizes harder. For the prizes I had planned things such as sitting wherever the student wanted, an erased absent, homework, or a checkmark in the period's exam. These options were not possible and negotiating with the head teacher was not very easy.

I also consider that if I have the chance to apply this activity in a face to face lesson, I would not have so few students in the classroom, so to make things more interesting, I think I would make the text bigger and maybe setting an alarm that would make students feel more excited about the time and the correct answers. The results of the game showed that students were participative and after reviewing the survey I saw that they were liked working with games. I observed that even when the students say that they understand the instructions, for the future I have to come up with ideas to make sure that students know what to do, in order to obtain better results and less confusion in the students.

Conclusions

This document has given to me experience in something that I have never imagined that I would do. That being working online. When I started studying at the Benemérita y Centenaria Escuela Normal del Estado, I did not think that I would need to learn how to edit videos, teach students that I did not observe before my intervention, use online resources that I had never heard before or work from home. It was not easy but I am satisfied with what I have done.

During this time, I gave a lot of effort and thought lots of strategies to get students to work. Some of them worked and some did not have an impact. An example for those ideas that worked might be the use of pre-task activities such as watching videos that contained an introduction for the topic of the lesson. At the beginning this strategy worked but as I continued using it, I noticed that students lost interest in watching these audiovisual aids.

Although sometimes it was a bit frustrating, I would work again with games again. The situation that we all had to face during this pandemic was challenging but I think that if I have the opportunity to work with games to enhance reading comprehension face to face with students, the games would get more attention from students and they would be more interested in playing them. Most of the students were not attentive to the games, therefore they did not participate. If working face to face, I think that I would be able to get their attention introducing prizes that would be more attractive for them.

In my head before everything with the COVID-19 happened, I have already chosen the topic for this document. I imagined giving them prizes when working on gamified reading activities that would motivate them to improve every time they would participate. I visualized students getting excited when they would win prizes such as getting to sit wherever they wanted or getting to choose whoever they want for the follow-up activities in teams. I hope that I get the chance to work in a similar document in the future focusing on the use of games but this time with that face to face interaction and the rapport that we could not build with students.

With this document I learned concepts from the biggest one such as teaching English as a foreign language going through communicative skills and subskills and landing on the specifics for this pedagogical essay. I had some experience working with games but in another area, which is teaching soccer. Now, with the research that I did, I will be able to transmit those experiences plus the knowledge acquired to the classroom where it is important to take advantage from every concept, every analysis and every situation that I faced.

As I mentioned before, COVID-19 limited a lot of things not only for the students but for me. I went through a period where I had to get used to the fact that I could not leave my house and all the routines that I had were gone. It was not easy for me. Before the pandemic, I used to imagine what would be to skip going to school, being able to receive lessons from the comfort of our homes and being able to receive classes in our pajamas.

Now that seems as something that I want it to end. COVID made everything more difficult for everyone and although people tried to adapt it is not the same, but it was in the small victories where I found the strength to go on.

Small victories such as the constant participation from students that I do not know personally but they turned into students that I would never forget, checking a production with an excellent presentation, reading a student trying to communicate something or observing shy students trying to say something in English kept me from going insane during the intervention. I understand that by the time students are in third grade they should be able

to do more than that but there are some issues that go way back and have nothing to do with them nevertheless I had been affecting students in junior highs for years.

Those small victories made some of my days, but unfortunately, I had more unpleasant situations than good ones. For example, the attendance of the students to the lessons, the lack of interest in participating, leaving the online meeting then they were asked to participate, the incomplete homework, the constant messages asking the same questions even when they were asked to communicate through the chat group or the requests of making less homework than the other students from the most irregular ones. Without a doubt this intervention was the most difficult that I had to face.

The present document let me some three questions for future research. The questions being: Is task-based learning (TBL) a more appropriate methodology for the use of games in a classroom? What kind of prizes do students find motivating in order to be engaged in a game? And finally, is it possible to use a methodology focused on a sport to teach English and vice versa? The first one came up to me while applying the sequences, noticing that the process of the game was similar to TBL. I thought of the second question when I noticed that most of the students were not interested in the rewards of the games and the last one is something that I have wondered since the course I mentioned in the introduction.

Regarding the profile of graduation, Dirección General de Educación Superior para Profesionales del Magisterio (DGE SuM) (2012) says that the competencies that define that profile are divided in five groups: Specific intellectual abilities, mastery of the purposes and contents of secondary education, didactic competences, professional and ethical identity, and the ability to perceive and respond to the social conditions of the school environment.

Taking these aspects and using the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis, I found that my strengths are in the last two groups. I try to be realistic consider the aspects that surround the teaching practice every chance I had to be in front of a junior high group. I also understand that this profession is an opportunity to form the citizens of the future and for that reason I have to be constantly adapting my teaching style to the circumstances and possibilities that the context where I am at offers.

I understand that I have weaknesses in each area but I will highlight the weaknesses that I have in the didactic competence's group. I have found that is not very easy to me to change within the lessons and I find hard to identify on the spot the problems that affect the development of my lessons. I recognize that this is something that I have to change in order to improve my teaching competence and I have to learn to be more attentive to all situations happening in the classroom before starting the lessons.

I found opportunities in the mastery of the purposes and contents of secondary education group. Although, in my opinion, I domain the contents present the in the current curriculum of the subject, it is important to come up with a strategy to manage students that are in a lower level of what is expected not only in the subject but in the competences that should have been consolidated in the previous steps of basic education. Teaching English is hard as it is, finding out that even in their L1, students have problems following instructions, using logical thinking and creativity, is an opportunity to use transversally to create that scaffolds that were not created before.

The threats that I found in the graduating profile were in the first group. The BECENE got meused to read, write, analyze and being critic within my practice and work during the four years I have been there, but a part of my personality, which is that I tend to procrastinate a lot, threats my possibilities to be well organized and quick at problem solving. I know that this has to change and I will strong changes to achieve that.

To conclude with this document, I will address the key questions from chapter one. The questions being:

How were games incorporated in online classes?

How did games affect the development of reading comprehension in students?

How did students feel in the development of the games?

The games were incorporated using the elements that Lindemans et. al. (2019) mention. Those being a challenge, a theme, a reward or prize and the element of progress. The challenges were three. On the first one, the challenge was a competition between two classmates representing two teams. They had to answer before the other team correctly to get the points of the game. The theme was TV shows. Then, the reward was an extra participation and finally a totem was given to the winner team as an element of progress.

On the second lesson, the challenge was answering individually, quick and correct in the Kahoot! App. There, the quicker (and correct) you answer, more points you get. The theme was TV and how it has evolved. The reward was an extra participation and as in the previous lesson, the totem was used as an element of progress. In the last lesson, both the elements of progress and the reward were the same. Working online did not allow to think of other kinds of prizes. The challenge was writing the answer of questions about a text before anyone else. The theme for this class was predictions.

The feelings of the students in the development of the game did not vary much between the three lessons. The students seem to enjoy the games and considered that they helped them understand better the texts. However, I

found that in some cases students informed that they did not understand the games therefore they did not participate. This is bit contradictory because in one hand they say that they liked the games but they did not understand it. Considering that those comments were two in the three lessons, I would say that students feel joy while playing and they felt that they understand better with the use of games. I have to be clearer in the design of the instructions, though.

Finally, the evidences that these gamified tasks gave hints of development in reading comprehension from the students. In the first game, the participants showed that they were able to answer correctly even though one of them used Spanish to give the answer. In the second game, where students did not have the spot in them and they could participate in the game just by answering questions about the text, they seem to respond more and that led three winners that answer correctly four out of five questions. On the last game, students showed that they were able to fill in predictions in a text using a controlled activity. The chat of the meeting showed that they were able to use modal verbs to complete the task and answer correctly.

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The use of games to enhance reading comprehension in a EFL class

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Área temática: Prácticas educativas en espacios educativos

Línea temática: vida cotidiana, contexto, agentes e interacciones en la práctica docente

Selecciones el tipo de ponencias que presenta: Reporte parcial o final de investigación (X) Aportaciones teóricas () Intervenciones educativas ()

Resumen

Reading comprehension is not only important as a skill that demonstrates competency in learning a foreign language but it is also a tool that is needed for life. After assessing third grade middle school groups, I found out that reading was one of their weakest skills and thus representing a need in their language learning, thus deriving the main reason for this research. Another factor that influenced the selection of this topic was my previous experience working as a soccer coach where I observed similarities between teaching English and coaching soccer. What inspired me was how games in soccer transformed a task into a very

competitive, rewarding and motivating activity. With that in mind my aim was to match aspects of a game into reading tasks in order to improve their reading competency. The lessons used in this researched were designed on Presentation, Practice, Production Approach (PPP), incorporating readings with the use of games. I tried my best to enhance reading through three different games with the characteristics that Lindemans et. al. (2019) suggests. Each lesson analysis was based on Burn's Framework for reflection which allowed me to derive to the following results. Many students were not attentive to the games, therefore not participating. The evidences that these gamified tasks gave hints of development in reading comprehension from the students within controlled activities in reference to the sub-skill; reading for detail. Lastly, some students continued to rely on the use of Spanish within the class in order to confirm comprehension.

Palabras clave/Key words: Games, Reading Comprehension, Gamification, Skills, Foreign Language

Introducción

The document at hand, describes the topic of the use of games to enhance reading comprehension in a third-grade classroom of a junior high school. The school where this intervention took place was the Escuela Secundaria Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama. In this document, games were the key element in order to improve reading comprehension. This was something that I considered would be different and motivating for students and might be an agent that would facilitate them the comprehension of texts using the reading skills.

Reading is a skill that belongs to the four skills considered and evaluated by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). It is part of the receptive skills in learning. I considered this because in my opinion it suited the circumstances and characteristics of the students in that school. One of these circumstances and characteristics is that the students, with whom this practice was developed, had a level below the expectations of the syllabus of basic education in Mexico for third grade in junior high. It says that by the time students get to this grade they should demonstrate competence in areas that are still out of their reach.

Another situation that I took into consideration was my personal point of view. I consider that productive skills are more difficult for students to use than receptive skills. Paraphrasing De Villiers & De Villiers (1978) who say that when people acquire their L1 by interpreting what surrounds them. The process of articulation and production comes after that and if students are not used to a foreign language and their level is low, they might as well get to know the language first, then acquire parts of it and after that maybe with a little bit of extrinsic and a bit more of intrinsic motivation, they would be able to produce linguistically.

One more reason for choosing reading for this document, is that I considered that Spanish and English share the same alphabet. Understanding that both languages have Latin roots, it is common that some words in English are similar in Spanish and therefore when reading students would be able to understand even when they are not aware of its pronunciation. On the other hand, phonetics is different between these two languages and it would be complicated for students therefore demotivating.

The last thing that I want to add about the reason for choosing reading is that I considered what they did not know but I had to take advantage of what they know even if it was in Spanish about learning a language and that was that they already knew how to read. Khaled (2010) says that the reading process “includes recognizing letter, characters, and words; analyzing the syntactic and semantic structure of clauses and sentences, and generating inferences” (p. 49). I thought that with the correct context and an engaging

activity such as a game, students would be excited and with that able to interpret and challenge themselves to try to understand letters, words and characters that enhance their reading comprehension.

I have to say that I was eager to use games because before starting studying at the Benemérita y Centenaria Escuela Normal del Estado. I started working as a soccer coach and with that experience and the preparation that I had before working there, I got the idea that every task in soccer can be gamified. Later on, in the Encuentro Nacional de Idiomas hosted by the Normal del Estado, during my first semester there, a teacher from Cambridge in a conference said that “every language learning task can be gamified” and I became interested in that idea.

The idea consolidated in my mind when I attended in 2018 an international course specialized in the soccer development of children and teenagers, where I saw more about the gamification of specific tasks that allowed children and teens to acquire the different aspects of soccer such as technical, tactical and physical skills without them knowing that they were learning. In the course I heard the word “drills”, a word that I heard before in classes at the BECENE and even though those drills were different from the ones in language teaching, both of them had the same essence, doing something over and over again.

The instructor told us that these were the easiest tasks to gamify but they were meaningless for the cognitive development of our teams. Instead of that, he suggested that we had to extract small parts from the game that would help our students to think what they would do if they found themselves in that kind of situation. Exposing them to that kind of situations would strengthen their decision-making skills by repeating “real life situations” in the field as in the communicative approach.

Even the planning format for the soccer lessons was similar to the PPP methodology. There are three stages of the lesson in that methodology that I immediately linked with PPP. Those stages are: Orientation, Practice and Game. In both methods, before starting the warm-up or lead in was important in order to get students prepared for the lesson. Orientation stage is where the lesson goes from the basics and gives an idea of what the lesson is going to be about. This stage is all about input as in Presentation stage.

Then, during Practice as in PPP, the students get to do as much as they can to get involved with the concepts. It is during this stage where feedback is more present. The tasks have to be controlled in this stage. Finally, in the Game, in words of the instructor -it is where all the holistic aspects soccer

is presented, it is where players are free to do. Hopefully, using the concepts review during the training. The relation between this stage and Production is clear, let students do with soccer as in language. At the end, the wrap-up is important to give feedback and let students know what went right or wrong and why and make them think how are they going to solve those situations.

For me that course opened my mind. It gave me a way of connecting two things that I am passionate about and left me to new ideas that I did not come up before, not only in my soccer lessons but for my English practices. From that moment ahead, I have been trying to get some concepts from the field to the classroom and vice versa. I consider that this is what inspired me to do this document.

The purpose of studying this topic was to learn if games had an impact in students when working on reading tasks and if so, observe if they could improve their comprehension. It was important for me to see if I was capable to adapt reading tasks into games to get students attention which has been a situation in which I had struggled and I have carried with me as a teacher trainee, and see if with their attention, students would be able to improve reading comprehension by playing.

This pedagogical essay describes three research activities developed where games were used to improve reading comprehension in students. All of them contains gamified reading tasks considering aspects that are described in chapter one. Each game gave students a challenge in order to demonstrate if they were capable of comprehending the text. These lessons involved different topics because they belong to three different units. In order to describe the analysis of that activities developed I decided to use Gibb's framework for reflection.

With this document I hope that I have increased my experience to understand what aspects of games permitted students enhance their reading comprehension. Even though that I faced a lot of challenges that normally are not confronted by teachers of any subject, I feel that I got enough experience to deal with circumstances that I was not used to. I have learned that adapting myself to conditions or environments is something that I have to deal with from now on if I want to become a teacher. An English teacher.

Applying the interventions was very interesting, considering the fact that I used soccer to make a relation between what I did there and what I got here. There is a factor that impacts a lot the dynamic in the classroom and in the field and I see it as a difference between teaching English in a public junior high school and teaching soccer in a soccer academy, which is that students in my team go to soccer practice and it is not an obligation. Maybe they go because they like soccer or they enjoy playing with their teammates, there is an interest when it comes to training soccer.

However, when it comes to teaching English in a public junior high school it is very different. The students go because it is an obligation and that obligation goes from preschool to high school at least. Attending school means studying from seven o'clock to one thirty in the afternoon when the shift is in the morning. There are not only English classes but six or seven other subjects that mean work for students. Therefore, trying to get the same energy from students is not the same and even when I make relation between both language and soccer, I should have considered that they are not the same.

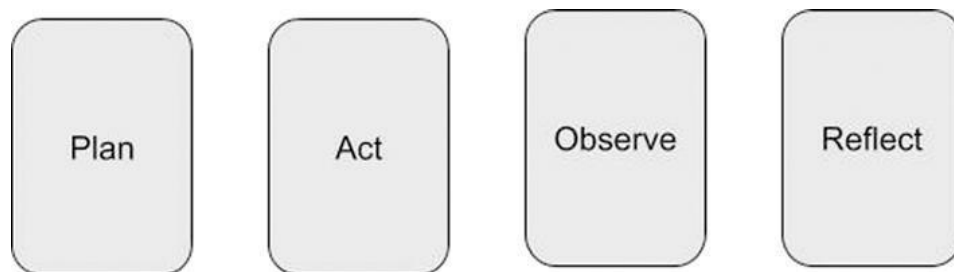
For that reason, the usefulness for my professional life is that I have to consider far from where I stand so I can make better interventions and provide students with strategies that suit the environment where I would work and with that, I could get better results. Other thing that this document leaves me is the opportunity to learn from my mistakes and try new things and strategies. Some work and some did not work but that will be described in the following chapters. Finally, I think that this document provided me with the experience of working with games in an atmosphere where I never imagined working. For this reason, when I get the chance to participate in a face to face class, I feel that I will have enough security in myself to make things as good as I can, recognizing what I need to make games work and considering all aspects in classroom to get the best from my students.

Metodología

For these classes I decided to use the PPP methodology. The games were realized during the presentation stage in synchronic classes that I had with the third-grade students by the application of Zoom. I decided to use Zoom because this program allows creating separated rooms where team work can be used and that was part of the first game that was applied in this research intervention.

For this document the methodology for research that was used is Action Research. Burns (2015) defines Action Research as “the superordinate term for a set of approaches to research which, at the same time, systematically investigate a given social situation and promote democratic change and collaborative participation” (p. 99) The aim of the intervention is to intend to make a change and improve the reading comprehension of the students in the Soto y Gama Junior High.

Burns (2015) also mentions that Action Research follows four steps: Plan, Act, Observe and Reflect.



Burns' (2015) Typology of phases and processes in action research

She says that Plan involves identifying a problematic, what outcomes are desired, the people involved in the problematic and what resources are needed to change this problematic. The Act step is compound by finding strategies and actions that have been implemented to solve this and then applying those theories with the people involved in the situation.

Observation means that while the development of the theory is being tested, it is necessary to evaluate and gather evidence about what has been happening with the problem. And finally, reflect is the step where after the observation, the outcome of the Act stage is analyzed in order to obtain new information. There the intervention in the problematic is examined determining if it was successful or not and defining why it impacted or not.

Broadly speaking, in order to accomplish the educative goal, it is needed to research about the different elements that would participate in the intervention. Elements such as: what is reading comprehension? What is a game? how to gamify a task? Once all the elements were researched, then it was necessary to plan the activities for the intervention and after applying them, the analysis of the outcome comes along.

Resultados

Class one: Game On! Watching TV Shows: Yesterday and Today.

Based on my observation it was a positive experience because at the end of all the participants that played the game answered correctly and fulfill the expectations that I had in them. I expected more from all the group, I thought that the students were going to be more participative in the game, but I noticed since the beginning of the class that the students were not responding. It seemed as if the students turn on the computer, enter to the meeting and then with the camera turned off they returned to sleep.

Nevertheless, the velocity that both students that represented their teams in the game impressed me and the fact that both of them answer two questions at the same time. Even though that most of the students were not attentive to the class and the majority of them had a low level of English it was very interesting to see that both of the students tried to use as much English as they could and they used Spanish when they did not know how to say something. (Appendix C)

Paraphrasing Cadena et. al. (2018) I found that when an L2 is learned in a monolingual environment where teacher and student share the same L1, is common that both of them use their native language to aid their productions to make themselves more understandable. This does not mean that students cannot understand L2 but it means that they are comprehending but they are capable of producing in a foreign language yet, they are still in the process.

I understand that following instructions for teenagers is really hard considering that their attention span is very dispersed and more considering that they were at home with a lot of distractors that make the class even harder for them and for me. This situation was a challenge for everyone involved in the learning process of the students. Teachers, parents, students, we all struggled with the platforms, internet services or devices.

It was very interesting to work like this, as a teacher now I feel that I have more resources to deal with difficulties such as the ones that were present during this pandemic isolation. Standing in front of students has never been easy and in my opinion is easier than working the way we had to do it. I felt that the game that was used in face to face classes would be better in terms of following instructions, collaborating with each other and to change the students' attitude towards the subject.

I think that I could record an example of what I expected them to do. I also consider that I could repeat even more the instructions to make an even bigger emphasis on what I expected them to do. Maybe in order to make the activity more competitive I should use more than two groups and that way students could feel more confident about talking with others. Lowering down a little bit more the level of the text could be other aspect that I could have done.

If I find myself in a similar situation, I would arrange the groups, selecting the members of each one in order to level the groups. I also consider that by the time that I apply a game, the students would be used the dynamic of work that I set. In the future, I would motivate students to try to collaborate, to speak and to take risks. It is common to find students that does not want to participate because they are afraid of making a mistake. During this model of work not every student have the chance or resources to be connected online a lot of time, in the future I will try to establish a good rapport with the students so they find easy to express what they feel so I can act faster to the situations that may appear.

Class two: Solving an Enigma! Kahoot.

This class was a positive experience because it allowed me to see some students that did not participate during the class but were improving in their reading skills. Then products that they handed in were most of them correct. Considering that the average amount of students that showed up to class was around from eleven to fifteen, the products were not that bad. Some students did not have the chance to attend the class but they watched the recording of the class and then they sent their work. For the lesson, it was positive that more students showed improvement but for the whole week it was really good to see that some students despite their lack of resources, were finding the way to work in the classes.

For my personal development I found that I cannot expect all the students to participate, as teachers have their own teaching style to work with students, leaving aside the students' learning styles, they also have their own style of work. When growing up, attending to class in junior high I saw situations like these ones. Classmates that were more effective when they were not leading a team, or when they felt no pressure of standing to participate.

I hope that in the future I am able to identify this kind of things and have the judgement to see if the students take those attitudes because work best for them or because they are just being lazy or distracted. I understand that is not something that is achieved in a year or two, the experiences, the rights and wrongs that happen during this journey are key aspects for my personal development.

I also consider that if I was able to manage working with synchronized and asynchronous lessons during the COVID-19 pandemic, setting up games and lesson plans like these ones will not be as difficult as before. Changing the way of working in my opinion would strengthen the strategies that are worked with in face to face classes.

I considered that what I could have done is creating a more interesting enigma text. After the class was one of the first things that popped into my head. The reading was not boring but it is not something that student felt related to. There are lots of books with the topic of an enigma that I consider that could have been more interesting and not only readings but cartoons, series and YouTube videos that are really popular between teenagers.

In a similar situation and if I have the chance to work face to face I would ask students to bring in teams one enigmatic topic for discussion in the classroom and in order to engage students into the topic, I would dedicate a class to come up with theories of what students think that might have happened. After that, I would give them some other theories with more and more information create a scavenger's hunt where they had to predict and interpret clues in order to see what happened or might happen.

I also consider that if I find students with the same characteristics as the one that I discovered during this lesson, that are quiet but they are learning I would encourage them to keep working hard and inviting them to share in small portions their participations to help others understand what they are able to see and with the students that on contrary have a lot of energy and enthusiasm for participation giving them more participation.

Class three: who is the fastest?

The positive side of this class was that some students that did not participate regularly were active, giving answers and participating in the game. It was good to see that the winner of the game was one of the students that was not very common to see participating and that the time that he needed to defeat his classmates was short. It was also positive to observe that the students were engaged to the lesson. I consider that the topic and the use of element that were of their interest impacted the attention that they paid to it.

On the other hand, observing that some students found the game confusing was negative for me. I tried to plan a game that was easy for students to comprehend. We went over the slide dedicated to explain the instructions for the game but even with that aid the students felt confused but even with that in mind, I consider this experience very enriching for the following experiences that I will be facing and it left me a bunch of ideas to consider for this kind of games.

For example, using visual aids such as drawings make the students more interested in the lesson. Using teams would be another idea that I think that might work but due to the circumstances and the previous experience during the lesson number one of this intervention, I considered that it would not be a good idea. Other idea, would be instead of setting the challenge among the students maybe setting the game with the students against the clock could lead to other results.

It was a positive experience. I struggled to get students' attention but, in this lesson, they seem to enjoy and relate to the predictions that the fortune teller made in the video. I tried to be funny while making the predictions. Most of the time I tried to show a serious face or attitude because I have had some experiences where students disrespect the presence of the teacher trainee because of the age or the attitude shown. It is important to make students feel relax though. It is easier to work with a group that laughs than a group that does not want to be there.

The application of the game left me some ideas for the future. I realized that some students are not familiar with any kind of competition and that was surprising for me, but I should not assume that all the students have the same abilities or experiences. The survey showed me that even when the students

say that they understand something, I cannot rely on them. This lesson also gave me the opportunity to manage better the pace and time. One of the problems that I have had during my teacher trainee development is the use of time and the pace I gave to activities. Having order and measuring the level of difficulty of the tasks are some aspects that I have to keep working in order to improve my teaching development.

If I find myself in a similar situation, I think that I would try to make my class even funnier with predictions that are almost surreal to create some kind of discussion and create an environment where the student has the urge to say what he or she wants to say. I also consider that I made myself very predictable with the prizes, that would be something that I would change for future occasions. Working in distance learning makes giving prizes harder. For the prizes I had planned things such as sitting wherever the student wanted, an erased absent, homework, or a checkmark in the period's exam. These options were not possible and negotiating with the head teacher was not very easy.

I also consider that if I have the chance to apply this activity in a face to face lesson, I would not have so few students in the classroom, so to make things more interesting, I think I would make the text bigger and maybe setting an alarm that would make students feel more excited about the time and the correct answers. The results of the game showed that students were participative and after reviewing the survey I saw that they were liked working with games. I observed that even when the students say that they understand the instructions, for the future I have to come up with ideas to make sure that students know what to do, in order to obtain better results and less confusion in the students.

Conclusions

This document has given to me experience in something that I have never imagined that I would do. That being working online. When I started studying at the Benemérita y Centenaria Escuela Normal del Estado, I did not think that I would need to learn how to edit videos, teach students that I did not observe before my intervention, use online resources that I had never heard before or work from home. It was not easy but I am satisfied with what I have done.

During this time, I gave a lot of effort and thought lots of strategies to get students to work. Some of them worked and some did not have an impact. An example for those ideas that worked might be the use of pre-task activities such as watching videos that contained an introduction for the topic of the lesson. At the beginning this strategy worked but as I continued using it, I noticed that students lost interest in watching these audiovisual aids.

Although sometimes it was a bit frustrating, I would work again with games again. The situation that we all had to face during this pandemic was challenging but I think that if I have the opportunity to work with games to enhance reading comprehension face to face with students, the games would get more attention from students and they would be more interested in playing them. Most of the students were not attentive to the games, therefore they did not participate. If working face to face, I think that I would be able to get their attention introducing prizes that would be more attractive for them.

In my head before everything with the COVID-19 happened, I have already chosen the topic for this document. I imagined giving them prizes when working on gamified reading activities that would motivate them to improve every time they would participate. I visualized students getting excited when they would win prizes such as getting to sit wherever they wanted or getting to choose whoever they want for the follow-up activities in teams. I hope that I get the chance to work in a similar document in the future focusing on the use of games but this time with that face to face interaction and the rapport that we could not build with students.

With this document I learned concepts from the biggest one such as teaching English as a foreign language going through communicative skills and subskills and landing on the specifics for this pedagogical essay. I had some experience working with games but in another area, which is teaching soccer. Now, with the research that I did, I will be able to transmit those experiences plus the knowledge acquired to the classroom where it is important to take advantage from every concept, every analysis and every situation that I faced.

As I mentioned before, COVID-19 limited a lot of things not only for the students but for me. I went through a period where I had to get used to the fact that I could not leave my house and all the routines that I had were gone. It was not easy for me. Before the pandemic, I used to imagine what would be to skip going to school, being able to receive lessons from the comfort of our homes and being able to receive classes in our pajamas.

Now that seems as something that I want it to end. COVID made everything more difficult for everyone and although people tried to adapt it is not the same, but it was in the small victories where I found the strength to go on.

Small victories such as the constant participation from students that I do not know personally but they turned into students that I would never forget, checking a production with an excellent presentation, reading a student trying to communicate something or observing shy students trying to say something in English kept me from going insane during the intervention. I understand that by the time students are in third grade they should be able

to do more than that but there are some issues that go way back and have nothing to do with them nevertheless I had been affecting students in junior highs for years.

Those small victories made some of my days, but unfortunately, I had more unpleasant situations than good ones. For example, the attendance of the students to the lessons, the lack of interest in participating, leaving the online meeting then they were asked to participate, the incomplete homework, the constant messages asking the same questions even when they were asked to communicate through the chat group or the requests of making less homework than the other students from the most irregular ones. Without a doubt this intervention was the most difficult that I had to face.

The present document let me some three questions for future research. The questions being: Is task-based learning (TBL) a more appropriate methodology for the use of games in a classroom? What kind of prizes do students find motivating in order to be engaged in a game? And finally, is it possible to use a methodology focused on a sport to teach English and vice versa? The first one came up to me while applying the sequences, noticing that the process of the game was similar to TBL. I thought of the second question when I noticed that most of the students were not interested in the rewards of the games and the last one is something that I have wondered since the course I mentioned in the introduction.

Regarding the profile of graduation, Dirección General de Educación Superior para Profesionales del Magisterio (DGE SuM) (2012) says that the competencies that define that profile are divided in five groups: Specific intellectual abilities, mastery of the purposes and contents of secondary education, didactic competences, professional and ethical identity, and the ability to perceive and respond to the social conditions of the school environment.

Taking these aspects and using the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis, I found that my strengths are in the last two groups. I try to be realistic consider the aspects that surround the teaching practice every chance I had to be in front of a junior high group. I also understand that this profession is an opportunity to form the citizens of the future and for that reason I have to be constantly adapting my teaching style to the circumstances and possibilities that the context where I am at offers.

I understand that I have weaknesses in each area but I will highlight the weaknesses that I have in the didactic competence's group. I have found that is not very easy to me to change within the lessons and I find hard to identify on the spot the problems that affect the development of my lessons. I recognize that this is something that I have to change in order to improve my teaching competence and I have to learn to be more attentive to all situations happening in the classroom before starting the lessons.

I found opportunities in the mastery of the purposes and contents of secondary education group. Although, in my opinion, I domain the contents present the in the current curriculum of the subject, it is important to come up with a strategy to manage students that are in a lower level of what is expected not only in the subject but in the competences that should have been consolidated in the previous steps of basic education. Teaching English is hard as it is, finding out that even in their L1, students have problems following instructions, using logical thinking and creativity, is an opportunity to use transversally to create that scaffolds that were not created before.

The threats that I found in the graduating profile were in the first group. The BECENE got meused to read, write, analyze and being critic within my practice and work during the four years I have been there, but a part of my personality, which is that I tend to procrastinate a lot, threats my possibilities to be well organized and quick at problem solving. I know that this has to change and I will strong changes to achieve that.

To conclude with this document, I will address the key questions from chapter one. The questions being:

- How were games incorporated in online classes?
- How did games affect the development of reading comprehension in students?
- How did students feel in the development of the games?

The games were incorporated using the elements that Lindemans et. al. (2019) mention. Those being a challenge, a theme, a reward or prize and the element of progress. The challenges were three. On the first one, the challenge was a competition between two classmates representing two teams. They had to answer before the other team correctly to get the points of the game. The theme was TV shows. Then, the reward was an extra participation and finally a totem was given to the winner team as an element of progress.

On the second lesson, the challenge was answering individually, quick and correct in the Kahoot! App. There, the quicker (and correct) you answer, more points you get. The theme was TV and how it has evolved. The reward was an extra participation and as in the previous lesson, the totem was used as an element of progress. In the last lesson, both the elements of progress and the reward were the same. Working online did not allow to think of other kinds of prizes. The challenge was writing the answer of questions about a text before anyone else. The theme for this class was predictions.

The feelings of the students in the development of the game did not vary much between the three lessons. The students seem to enjoy the games and considered that they helped them understand better the texts. However, I

found that in some cases students informed that they did not understand the games therefore they did not participate. This is bit contradictory because in one hand they say that they liked the games but they did not understand it. Considering that those comments were two in the three lessons, I would say that students feel joy while playing and they felt that they understand better with the use of games. I have to be clearer in the design of the instructions, though.

Finally, the evidences that these gamified tasks gave hints of development in reading comprehension from the students. In the first game, the participants showed that they were able to answer correctly even though one of them used Spanish to give the answer. In the second game, where students did not have the spot in them and they could participate in the game just by answering questions about the text, they seem to respond more and that led three winners that answer correctly four out of five questions. On the last game, students showed that they were able to fill in predictions in a text using a controlled activity. The chat of the meeting showed that they were able to use modal verbs to complete the task and answer correctly.

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