

## **Improving intercultural relations through educational games**

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### **Abstract.**

Our society is undergoing rapid and intense changes that require educational innovations of a similar scale. If we focus on the game in the educational context, it becomes a highly effective pedagogical tool, because through it learning becomes more enjoyable. Social relations are also made more visible as direct and physical contact is used and this makes it possible to strengthen these relations. Therefore, the subject of the game can become of vital interest to educators and they can use it as a highly effective teaching tool. This research arises from the interest in knowing how play can intervene and enhance intercultural relations. To this end, the behaviour of a multicultural class was studied with the help of different techniques and instruments. First, a sociometric test was carried out to find out the degree of social relations in the classroom. Secondly, with the help of video and audio recordings, an estimation scale was made to analyse the behaviours that took place in the different spaces studied (Playground, English class and in Physical Education). In addition, an anecdotal record was used to collect more data. After the analysis of the results, it was concluded that there are statistically significant differences depending on the spaces that are compared with each other.

**Keywords:** Game, interculturality, didactic tool, innovation, integration.

### **1. Introduction**

Our society is undergoing rapid and intense change, requiring various educational innovations to keep up. When we refer to the concept of "Intercultural Education", there are different conceptualizations related to this term, but we refer to such innovations and changes. Among the objectives pursued by Intercultural Education, we can find, fighting against social exclusion and the adaptation of education to take into account the diversity of the student body in order to guarantee equal opportunities with the aim of guaranteeing what education pursues in section 26 of the human rights: equal opportunities, equity and social cohesion (Díaz-Aguado, 2003; Neto, 2019).

Today, our schools, like those in European countries, are undergoing a transformation in the educational process as students from other cultures are living together. For this reason, within the education sector, many authors use different concepts such as "intercultural school" and

"intercultural education" to refer to the fact that we must work with an educational model that helps and encourages democratic values and that helps students to integrate in all areas. In other words, anything that leads to improved educational practice. While the concept of multiculturalism refers to describing different situations of different cultures living together in the same educational context (Ccahuana and Cuarez, 2020; Leiva, 2012;).

The aim of "intercultural education" is to seek the integration of the immigrant into the host society. But not just any kind of integration, but one that allows them to continue with the values of their own culture, while adapting to the new context and respecting the values of the new culture. To be able to carry out all this in a practical way can imply changes at the level that affects language, classroom content and the media, since building a new society where there is social integration is not only the task of the school, but of society as a whole (Soriano, 2007; Neto, 2019).

If we focus on the game in the educational context, it becomes a highly effective pedagogical tool, because through it learning becomes more enjoyable. Social relations are also more visible as direct and physical contact is used and this makes it possible to strengthen these relations.

With respect to the educational perspective of play, from the perspective of physical education, Devís and Peiró (Aguilar et al., 2018; Hinostraza, 2018; Pérez López et al., 2009) find it very useful to have spaces for reflection and moments during class practice. The aim is to make students aware that they are experimenting, that they reflect and can adapt to their learning and not only in a cognitive way, but also physically, producing a significant learning.

For this reason, we intend to carry out a qualitative study to find out how the role of play in the school context affects intercultural relations. This paper presents the methodology to be followed, as well as the instruments that were designed for data collection.

The aim of this research is to find out the degree of interaction that the 6th grade students at a certain school in the periphery of Granada have, in order to know if intercultural relations are fostered through play.

The general objective and the specific objectives that this research aims to achieve are shown below.

#### General

- Describe and analyse play-related behaviour among children from different cultures.

#### Specific

- Objective 1. To describe and observe the relationships or behaviours that are generated between immigrant and non-immigrant children within the school context through play.
- Objective 2. To observe if the interactions between students are different according to the game and the different situations studied.

## 2. Methodology

From the point of view of the research model, systematic observation of a descriptive type has been chosen. We chose this type because our objective is the description and analysis of play-related behaviour among students from different cultures in the classroom, and the observational methodology is the best for analysing and describing this type of behaviour.

The study developed uses systematic observation as a research method. Systematic observation takes place under specific rules on a properly delimited field and with a specific purpose (García et al., 2008). Based on (Croll, 2000), we can define systematic observation as a process by which an observer develops a set of systematic rules to record and classify the events that occur in the classroom. Furthermore, according to Sabiron (2007) it can be classified as descriptive, as he observes to describe events or behaviour that occur within the observable context. Therefore, systematic observation has been the methodological strategy used for the field work, as it was possible to directly observe social relations by using estimation scales to describe the behaviours and relations that are generated within the classroom and in certain subjects where gambling prevails. As mentioned by Bunge (1979, p. 22), the aim is to observe the reality of the classroom in order to see and connect how intercultural relations can be fostered through play. With this strategy, it is expected that the subjects observed manifest behaviours that make them see that play enhances intercultural relations.

The subjects observed were the physical education class and the foreign language class, specifically English. In addition to the playground where spontaneous game is predominant.

The main technique, and as mentioned above, of this research was observation, as it is used to describe the events that the researcher observes in a direct and systematic way, and from this description, it generates the interpretation of meaning of the research. In our case, we observed the subjects of physical education and English, and the playground, which are the moments where different types of games, both spontaneous and directed, predominate.

Another technique used was sociometry, which is characterised by the set of procedures to determine and study social relationships (Villanueva et al., undated). The classroom is a natural place where all kinds of social relations take place, and through this technique it is possible to know the degree of relationship that students have.

In addition, audio and video recordings were used as technical support for ethnographic observation. For the design of the materials, authors were taken into account who have considered the instrument to be valid and who have been adapted for this research. The first one used was a sociometric test, as it is an alternative and complementary procedure to direct observation to evaluate the relationships between peers. This consists of asking all the students about their classmates and thus finding out about their level of popularity and friendship, among other aspects (Díaz-Aguado et al., 1995). The second instrument was used for the observation itself. A descriptive estimation scale was used to assign features or characteristics to be studied within the different spaces to be evaluated (playground, language classroom and physical education classroom) (Buendía et al., 2010). For this purpose, video and audio recordings were used, as well as the transcription of the text. For the estimation scale, several categories

describing a behavioural trait were assigned. The classroom observation scale was adapted from the instruments used by Aguado et al. (1999) and from the theoretical framework prior to the research. The descriptive type scale was used because the description of the trait or characteristic is greater than the other types, thus preventing the observer from assigning a personal meaning to the observed behaviour (Buendía et al., 2010). Table 1 shows the categories of observation and definition of these.

*Table 1: Categories of observation and definition*

Category	Definition
You start the game in a calm manner	You know how to initiate and maintain a conversation within your group during the game
They give their opinion about the activities and games to be carried out	The conversation is used in the usual way within the game period
If there are teams, they are divided equally regardless of the culture of origin	They talk about their personal and group interests and wishes during the game or activity
Game groups are done spontaneously	They address all colleagues with respect
Play groups are conducted in a teacher-led manner	They ask colleagues from other cultures for help when they need it
There is some disagreement about the groups formed	They help each other when asked
They are sensitive, observant, and aware of the world around them	All students participate equally in the tasks and/or games proposed
They actively participate in the games	They are well motivated and have a good attitude towards the activities and games proposed
There is no competitiveness in the proposed game	They understand their own feelings and those of others
They ask to speak when they want to participate	Apply the indications they hear to follow a rule of the game, an instruction, or a command in a few steps
Pay attention to the person speaking	Games from different cultures are performed
They are grouped in different ways to play	If a partner is missing, the others explain what they have done the day before

Source: Own production

The third instrument used and as a complement to the observation scale has been the anecdotal record (Buendía & others, 2010) which allowed to collect information that otherwise could not be recorded. To do this, anecdotes that were told by teachers at some point and that were relevant to the research were taken as references.

To analyse the data collected, SPSS 20.0 software was used, as well as Excel to collect the sociometric test data in a matrix (See figure 1).

Figure 1: Sociometric matrix



Source: Own production

### 3. Results and discussion

Within the class group, the social relations between the students of the investigated group are generally good. There are some discrepancies between some students because of the subject of the game, as some were cheating, and others did not like it. Also, because of the type of game, as some liked to play a type of game that other classmates did not like. Although in general, the relations between them are good. Confronted with the theoretical framework, it can be said that coexistence within the classroom is good, and that the social relations that take place within it improve and make students learn to live together. Following the ideas of Soriano (2007), living together in a society where multiculturalism is encouraged can mean designing and practising a teaching method that is capable of giving and encouraging democratic values where coexistence, collaboration, respect, cooperation, etc. are reinforced. That is why the teacher of this class, through games, promotes intercultural education.

After the use of the sociometric test as a research instrument, I consider it convenient and of vital interest to use sociometry in teaching practice, since it makes known the relationships within the class and allows for their improvement. In addition to being an important resource for the individualized guidance of each student.



After the description and analysis of the behaviours by means of the scale of estimation through observation, it has been possible to verify that at a general level the variables observed quite frequently have been collected. This has helped us for the statistical analysis.

Within the subjects evaluated, it has been verified that there are no significant differences between them (See table 2).

*Table 2: Example of a table for comparison between subjects*

Variable	Sig. (Bilateral)	P-value $< \alpha \geq \alpha$	Accepted hypothesis (H0 o H1)
The groups to play are made spontaneously	0,258	$> \alpha$	H0
The groups to play are made in a teacher-directed way	0,057	$> \alpha$	H0
There is some disagreement about the groups formed	0,423	$> \alpha$	H0
They help each other when asked	0,423	$> \alpha$	H0
They apply the directions they hear to follow a rule, instruction, or instruction	0,667	$> \alpha$	H0
They rejoice in the achievement of others	0,423	$> \alpha$	H0

Source: Own production

However, if we compare each of the subjects separately with the playground moment, there are statistically significant differences (See table 3).

*Table 3: Comparison between English and playground*

Variable	Sig. (Bilateral)	P-value $< \alpha \geq \alpha$	Accepted hypothesis (H0 o H1)
The game starts quietly	0,038	$< \alpha$	H1
The groups to play are made spontaneously	0,184	$> \alpha$	H0
Play groups are conducted in a teacher-led manner	0,010	$< \alpha$	H1
There is some disagreement about the groups formed	0,020	$< \alpha$	H1

They ask to speak when they want to participate	0,015	< $\alpha$	H1
They wait their turn without getting impatient	0,057	> $\alpha$	H0
They pay attention to the person who is speaking	0,184	> $\alpha$	H0
They know how to initiate and maintain a conversation within their group during the game	0,184	> $\alpha$	H0
They talk about their personal and group interests and wishes	0,423	> $\alpha$	H0
They address all colleagues with respect	0,423	> $\alpha$	H0
They are well motivated and have a good attitude towards the activities and games proposed	0,423	> $\alpha$	H0
They apply the indications they hear to follow a rule of the game	0,667	> $\alpha$	H0
Games from different cultures are performed	0,008	< $\alpha$	H1

Source: Own production

In comparison with the three moments observed in the research, the type of play that promotes social relations is different, since only spontaneous play is used in the playground, while in the subjects of English and physical education both spontaneous and directed play have been used.

It should also be noted that most of the games observed at all three times were cooperative. Although in Physical Education and Recreation, some of the games did generate competitiveness. However, most of the games, in comparison with the theoretical framework, were characterised by being cooperative, action-oriented, constructive, social, and shared.

#### 4. Conclusions

For all these reasons, and taking into account the results obtained, we can conclude that through play, intercultural relations are fostered and the atmosphere of coexistence in the classroom is very good, although there are some differences and problems that may be due to

the type of play used at that time. The game is an especially important subject of study, as it helps the teaching-learning process of the students, as well as enhancing social relations.

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