

USE OF GAMIFICATION TOOLS TO DEVELOP WRITING SKILLS IN A1-LEVEL SCHOOL STUDENTS

USO DE HERRAMIENTAS DE GAMIFICACIÓN PARA DESARROLLAR HABILIDADES DE ESCRITURA EN ESTUDIANTES DE NIVEL A1

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Resumen

El propósito de este estudio fue determinar cómo las herramientas de gamificación pueden mejorar las habilidades de escritura en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) de nivel A1. La investigación se llevó a cabo en la Unidad Educativa Particular Cristiana New Life con una muestra intencional de 40 estudiantes de séptimo grado de 11 a 12 años, que demostraron alfabetización digital básica y estaban activamente matriculados en clases de escritura de EFL. El estudio empleó un enfoque de métodos mixtos para recopilar datos cualitativos y cuantitativos. Se utilizó una metodología pretest-posttest para el componente cuantitativo, que se evaluó mediante una rúbrica vinculada al MCER que priorizaba el vocabulario, la estructura de la oración, la gramática, la coherencia y la fluidez. Con el fin de investigar las reacciones emocionales y motivacionales durante los

ejercicios de escritura gamificada utilizando plataformas como Wordwall y Quizizz, el componente cualitativo consistió en un cuestionario de percepción de los estudiantes. Los resultados revelaron mejoras notables en la construcción de frases, el uso del vocabulario y la fluidez general de la escritura. Además, al participar en tareas de escritura gamificadas, los estudiantes demostraron mayores niveles de creatividad, confianza e implicación. Según estos resultados, la inclusión de técnicas de gamificación en la enseñanza de la escritura puede crear un aula más atractiva y acogedora. En base a los resultados de este estudio, la gamificación puede considerarse una estrategia pedagógica eficaz para desarrollar las destrezas básicas de escritura en jóvenes estudiantes de EFL de nivel A1.

Palabras clave: Gamificación, Habilidades de escritura, Proceso de aprendizaje, Motivación, Estudiantes de nivel A1, EFL.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine how gamification tools can enhance writing skills in A1-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The research was conducted at Unidad Educativa Particular Cristiana New Life with a purposive sample of 40 seventh-grade students aged 11 to 12, who demonstrated basic digital literacy and were actively enrolled in EFL writing classes. The study employed a mixed-methods approach to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. A pretest-posttest methodology was used for the quantitative component, which was assessed using a rubric linked with the CEFR that prioritized vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, coherence, and fluency. In order to investigate emotional and motivational reactions during gamified writing exercises using platforms like Wordwall and Quizizz, the qualitative component comprised a student perception questionnaire. The results revealed notable improvements in sentence construction, vocabulary usage, and overall writing fluency. Additionally, when taking part in gamified writing assignments, students demonstrated increased levels of creativity, confidence, and involvement. According to these results, including gamification techniques into writing teaching can create a more engaging and welcoming classroom. Based on the outcomes of this study, gamification can be considered an effective pedagogical strategy for developing foundational writing skills in young A1-level EFL learners.

Keywords: Gamification, Writing skills, Learning process, Motivation, A1 level students, EFL.

Sumário

O objetivo deste estudo foi determinar de que forma as ferramentas de gamificação podem melhorar as competências de escrita dos alunos do nível A1 de Inglês como Língua Estrangeira (EFL). A investigação foi realizada na Unidad Educativa Particular Cristiana New Life com uma amostra intencional de 40 alunos do sétimo ano, com idades entre os 11 e os 12

anos, que demonstraram literacia digital básica e estavam ativamente inscritos em aulas de escrita de EFL. O estudo utilizou uma abordagem de métodos mistos para recolher dados qualitativos e quantitativos. Foi utilizada uma metodologia pré-teste-pós-teste para a componente quantitativa, que foi avaliada através de uma rubrica ligada ao QECR que dava prioridade ao vocabulário, à estrutura das frases, à gramática, à coerência e à fluência. A fim de investigar as reacções emocionais e motivacionais durante os exercícios de escrita gamificada utilizando plataformas como o Wordwall e o Quizizz, a componente qualitativa incluiu um questionário de percepção dos alunos.

Os resultados revelaram melhorias notáveis na construção de frases, na utilização de vocabulário e na fluência geral da escrita. Além disso, ao participarem em tarefas de escrita gamificadas, os alunos demonstraram níveis mais elevados de criatividade, confiança e envolvimento. De acordo com estes resultados, a inclusão de técnicas de gamificação no ensino da escrita pode criar uma sala de aula mais envolvente e acolhedora. Com base nos resultados deste estudo, a gamificação pode ser considerada uma estratégia pedagógica eficaz para desenvolver competências fundamentais de escrita em jovens aprendentes de EFL de nível A1.

Palavras-chave: Gamificação, Habilidades de escrita, Processo de aprendizagem, Motivação, Alunos de nível A1, EFL.

Introduction

One of the most difficult abilities to master when learning a second language is writing, which calls for students to combine their knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, organization, and creativity to create works that are meaningful and cohesive (Hyland, 2019). Among the four main language skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing is often described as the hardest to learn, especially for beginner-level students, because it demands

both linguistic knowledge and cognitive processing According to the CEFR, learners at level A1 have difficulty making sentences, choosing words, and expressing their thoughts clearly (Lightbown & Spada, 2021). - Writing is more challenging to learn than speaking and listening because it gets less time in school. Students may not meet the goals of what they learn, which can make them less confident and successful in speaking and writing. Writing well at an early age is very important. Writing helps you think critically, express yourself, and participate in school and work, and it also helps you communicate with others. When students learn how to write well at an early age, they can handle harder writing tasks as they get older. They can think more clearly and use words more accurately. This helps them in their education (Harmer, 2015). However, typical teaching methods often cause young students to become disengaged, which leads to low motivation and passive involvement. Children may learn rules by doing worksheets, drills, and following the teacher, but these methods do not help them be creative or involved. This situation calls for innovative pedagogical strategies that make writing a meaningful and enjoyable experience for beginners.

In recent years, gamification has emerged as a promising solution to these challenges, this term describes the practice of applying elements such as points, badges, levels, challenges, and rewards in non-game contexts, including education (Deterding et al., 2011; Kapp, 2012). The purpose of gamification is not to turn learning into a game, but rather to harness the motivational power of games to increase engagement and persistence. Gamification has been demonstrated in educational contexts to increase intrinsic motivation, motivate students to take responsibility for their own learning, and support active learning (Dichev & Dicheva,

2017; Majuri et al., 2018). Because they can provide interactive, real-time learning experiences, platforms like Wordwall and Quizizz have become increasingly popular. These tools allow teachers to design personalized activities that provide instant feedback, track student progress, and foster healthy competition. Teachers can make fun games like word searches, quizzes, and matching exercises with the Wordwall web platform. It can be used in classrooms with different technological resources because it has both printable and interactive digital tasks. Wordwall makes it easy to write in different ways. You can choose from many templates that you can change to fit your level of language skills. Quizizz is a game-based learning platform that lets educators create tests and learning contests for students. Students may participate in these assessments or competitions alone or in groups. Students can learn more and have fun by playing games that allow them to compete with others, see how well they do, and receive immediate feedback (Quizizz, 2023). Students can learn through play in a safe setting with prompt feedback to help them grow thanks to these technologies, which also promote active involvement.

Studies on gamification in language learning have reported encouraging results. Particularly in the context of writing abilities, Hung (2017) and Wang (2020) found that gamification improved learners' language usage, inventiveness, and concept organization. These results suggest that using game-based tactics in writing classes can make them more dynamic and engaging. Despite these encouraging results, the body of extant material still has gaps. Most research on gamification has focused on intermediate or advanced learners, while beginner-level students particularly those at the A1 level remain underrepresented

(Pereira et al., 2022). Since they are still learning the fundamentals of grammar and vocabulary, beginners need more direction and scaffolding. Additionally, while gamification has been investigated in a number of skill areas, such as vocabulary learning and reading comprehension, fewer studies have looked specifically at its effects on writing growth. This makes it necessary to do empirical research that examines how gamification can help A1 learners with the particular difficulties they encounter when writing texts in the framework of Ecuadorian education. Even though English is taught as a foreign language all over the country, challenges still face both teachers and pupils. Inadequate technological integration, large class sizes, and a lack of resources all hinder the development of important skills like writing (Education Ministry, 2016). Writing is frequently overlooked in favor of more readily evaluated abilities like oral participation or grammar drills. Because of this, a large number of pupils graduate from elementary school with just rudimentary writing skills, which has an impact on their confidence and performance in subsequent grades. Implementing gamification in this context offers an opportunity to address these problems by providing a motivating, student-centered approach that encourages consistent practice and improvement.

Similar difficulties are faced by Unidad Educativa Particular Cristiana New Life, the school where this study was carried out. According to CEFR standards, the seventh-grade pupils at this institution, who range in age from 10 to 11, are at the A1 level of English. In writing assignments, observations showed that many students had trouble with language usage, sentence structure, and fluency. Teachers said that in order to maintain students' motivation and engagement throughout writing courses, traditional

approaches were not enough. These factors made the school an ideal setting to explore the potential of gamification as an instructional strategy. The main objective of this study was to determine how gamification tools can enhance the writing skills of A1-level English language learners. To achieve this aim, the research focused on three specific goals: first, to analyze the effects of gamified writing activities on students' development of sentence formation, vocabulary usage, and writing fluency using a pretest-posttest design with an analytic rubric; second, to explore students' perceptions and levels of engagement during gamified writing tasks through questionnaires; and third, to identify the perceived impact of gamification tools on students' motivation, confidence, and creativity in writing tasks through post-intervention reflections and feedback. These objectives guided the design of the study and helped ensure a comprehensive understanding of how gamification could influence both the cognitive and affective dimensions of writing skill development.

To accomplish these goals, Wordwall and Quizizz were incorporated into four instructional sessions designed to develop writing skills progressively. Through interactive games, Wordwall was utilized to teach and practice grammar and vocabulary, while Quizizz supported writing challenges in which students constructed sentences and brief texts both independently and cooperatively. These platforms offered a controlled setting where students could complete worthwhile writing assignments and get prompt performance evaluation. The primary standards for assessing writing in compliance with CEFR A1 descriptors were coherence, grammar accuracy, and vocabulary utilization. While pretest and posttest results monitored gains in writing abilities,

questionnaires and student responses provided information on motivation, engagement, and opinions of the gamification process. The results of this study are intended to support local and global conversations about creative approaches to language instruction. At the local level, they offer evidence-based suggestions to educators and policymakers for incorporating gamification into writing teaching in Ecuadorian schools. This study contributes to the expanding corpus of research on game-based learning worldwide, with an emphasis on beginning students who are frequently disregarded in studies also demonstrates the importance of instructional innovation in fostering motivation, creativity, and linguistic competence among young EFL learners by demonstrating how Wordwall and Quizizz may support writing development. Ultimately, this research responds to the ongoing need for dynamic, student-centered classrooms where writing is not perceived as a mechanical task but as an engaging and rewarding process. Teachers can provide kids with worthwhile opportunities to enhance their basic writing abilities while fostering the self-assurance and drive required for long-term language learning success by fusing organized instruction with enjoyable, game-based learning.

Materials and Methods

In order to give a thorough grasp of how gamification technologies affect A1-level students' writing abilities, this study used a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques (Creswell & Plano, 2018). The quantitative component employed a pretest–posttest methodology to gauge gains in writing abilities, while the qualitative component examined students' opinions and motivational responses. The research was conducted. at Unidad Educativa Particular Cristiana New Life, a

private urban school in Ecuador renowned for its innovative pedagogy and dedication to digital learning. According to CEFR descriptors, 40 seventh-grade kids, ages 11 to 12, who had been diagnosed with A1 level English proficiency, participated in the study. Purposive sampling was employed to select students, ensuring that participants had parental permission to participate and possessed a minimal level of digital literacy (Etikan et al., 2016). The study consisted of three phases: diagnosis, intervention, and evaluation. In each phase, specific instruments were applied to align with the research objectives: Pretest and Posttest Writing Tasks: Administered before and after the intervention, these tasks measured students' writing performance using a CEFR-aligned rubric with five criteria: vocabulary usage, sentence formation, grammar and syntax, coherence and organization, and fluency (Aguayo et al., 2023; Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019).

The posttest was conducted via the gamified platform Word wall and Quizizz, integrating interactive elements to reinforce engagement (Khaleel et al., 2021). Student Questionnaire: A 16-item Likert-scale survey explored student perceptions regarding motivation, confidence, creativity, and engagement when participating in gamified writing tasks (Gupta & Pathania, 2021; Alqurashi & Alshahrani, 2023). Quantitative data from pretests and posttests were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores and percentage improvements in each rubric criterion. Qualitative data from the questionnaire was analyzed through thematic coding to identify emerging patterns in student attitudes and behaviors (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The use of triangulation helped ensure the reliability of the findings by cross-verifying results from multiple data sources.

Results and Discussion

The results of this study provide clear evidence that gamification technologies significantly impact the writing abilities of A1-level English language learners. The data establish a strong positive link between gamified learning and enhanced student performance, offering a convincing answer to the research question. The results of the pre-test gave a clear baseline and showed how much trouble the kids were having prior to the intervention. Sentence construction, concept organization, and the proper use of grammar and vocabulary were among the major areas where persistent difficulties were found. Simple, repetitive structures were a common feature of student texts, which showed a conspicuous lack of originality. Furthermore, the main barriers to effective communication were identified as a noticeable lack of writing fluency and a significant frequency of spelling errors. Following the intervention, the post-test results confirmed a dramatic shift in a positive direction. The usage of gamification technologies improved the quality and consistency of students' work while also evidently improving their writing abilities. Notably, students were motivated to write more creative, coherent, and structurally sound works by the tools' compelling features. This change suggests that gamification can both effectively correct basic writing deficiencies and develop the abilities required for more complex text output. (see Table 1).

Table 1. Overall results of pre-test and post-test

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre- test	40	7	19	12,82	3,14
Post-test	40	13	20	16,48	2,14

Own elaboration

Table 1 presents the minimum and maximum grades, along with the means and standard deviations obtained in the pre- and post-test. The mean increased to 16.48 (SD = 2.14).

Additionally, the greatest score rose from 19 to 20 and the lowest score improved from 7 to 13 following the intervention. Improved student consistency is indicated by the post-test's smaller standard deviation, which suggests a considerable improvement in these outcomes. The gamification tools promoted considerable improvements in writing skills throughout the instructional period, which was supported by the size of the intervention, likely having a medium to significant effect.

Table 2. Results according to the categories of performance Pre and Post-test

CRITERIA	Pre-test				Post-test			
	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Vocabulary Usage	2	4	3.55	0.68	4	4	4.00	0.00
Sentence Formation	1	4	2.48	0.75	4	4	4.00	0.00
Grammar & Syntax	1	4	2.45	1.04	2	4	3.28	0.60
Coherence & Organization	1	4	2.13	1.10	1	4	2.78	1.10
Writing Fluency	1	4	2.35	0.83	1	4	2.63	0.84

Own elaboration

Table 2 shows the detailed results by writing categories. The results show that pupils improved in every assessed area following the use of gamification tools: The "Vocabulary Usage" category reached a perfect score in the post-test (M = 4.00), suggesting that gamified activities enhanced students' word choice, expanding their creative language use. Additionally, the "Sentence Formation" category received a maximum score of 4.00, indicating that pupils have acquired the ability to construct varied and accurate sentences. Although minor errors remained, scores in the "Grammar & Syntax" category improved from M = 2.45 to M = 3.28, suggesting better command of grammar rules.

- From M = 2.13 to M = 2.78, the "Coherence & Organization" category improved,

indicating that although students improved their text structure, some still had trouble properly arranging their thoughts.

- Lastly, “Writing Fluency” increased from $M = 2.35$ to $M = 2.63$, reflecting more fluid sentence production, though with some ongoing variability.

Overall, the results indicate that the use of gamification technologies enhanced the caliber and originality of writing produced by A1-level pupils. Students were able to write more actively, expand their vocabulary, refine their sentence structure, and create more well-structured works. (see Table 2).

How often gamification was used

During the intervention, methods of gamification were utilized often, and certain resources quickly became favored by both educators and learners. Notably, applications and platforms like Wordwall and Quizizz were reported as being in regular use by 83% of participants. Additionally, 64% of students indicated that they frequently utilized points, badges, and leaderboard systems, contributing to a light-hearted competitive atmosphere that encouraged student motivation. Activities often showcased role-playing games and interactive narratives, which changed writing tasks into fun and captivating experiences, inspiring students to participate more actively and enjoy their learning journey (Figure 1).

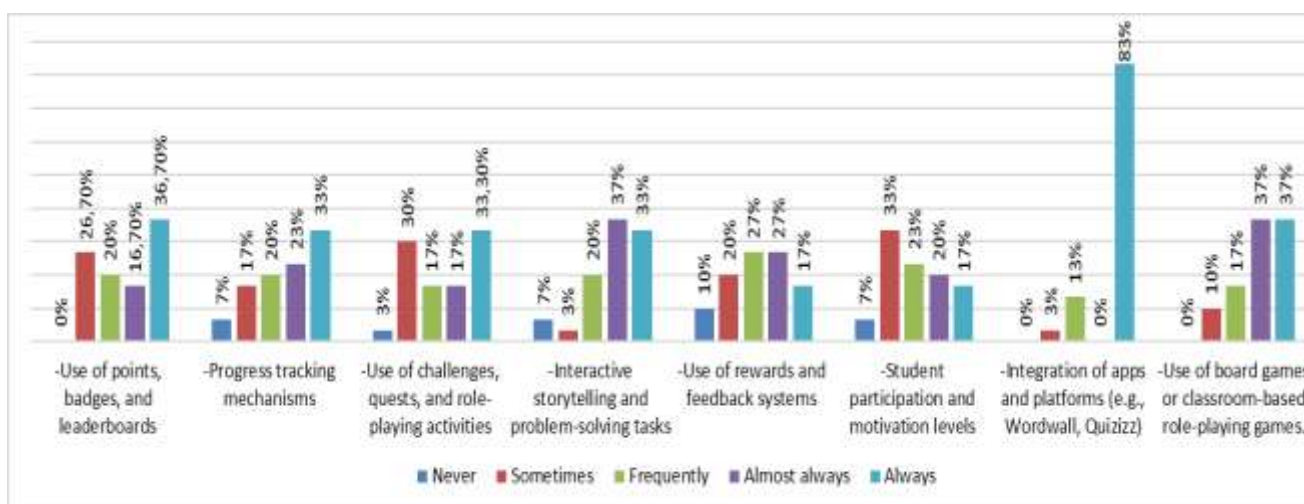


Figure 1. Questionnaire Results on Gamification Strategies. This figure illustrates the frequencies of students' responses related to the use of gamification strategies in writing activities.

Growth in writing skills and attitudes

The second figure shows a marked enhancement in students' writing skills over the course of the project. Changes in grammar and sentence construction were particularly evident; by the conclusion, nearly half of the students were using them accurately on a regular basis. Furthermore, it was uplifting to see that after incorporating gamification, 57% of learners reported feeling eager to complete their writing tasks. Other remarkable progress included more creative and vivid expressions, enhanced structuring of ideas using suitable transition phrases, and a heightened eagerness to engage in writing tasks. Overall, these results indicate that gamified writing education not only enriched the students' vocabulary and grammar but also sparked their enthusiasm for writing, which is a vital factor for sustained success and confidence in language learning (Figure 2).

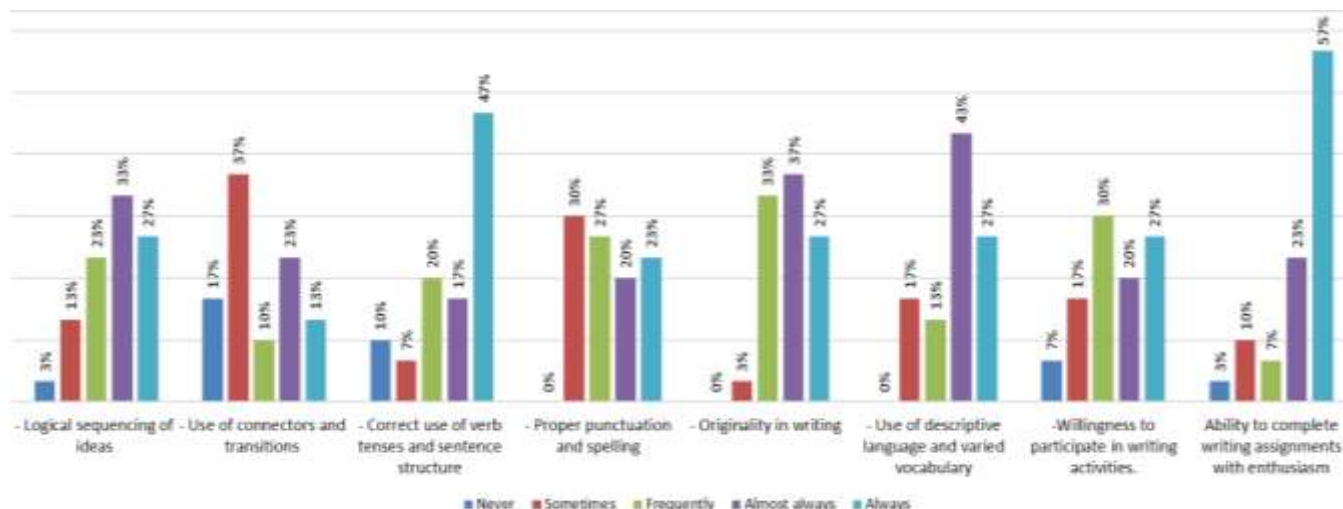


Figure 2. Questionnaire Results on Motivation and Writing Performance. This figure illustrates the frequencies of students' responses related to their motivation and performance in writing tasks

Implementing gamification techniques in the classroom significantly transformed A1-level students' attitudes toward writing. Through enjoyable and interactive components such as games, challenges, and digital resources, learners grew more self-assured, imaginative, and enthusiastic. Their writing not only improved but also became more reflective, expressive, and enjoyable to create. These findings align with the research conducted by Ariyanti et al. (2022), which indicated that gamification fostered the use of more intricate sentence structures and a broader range of vocabulary in English as a Foreign Language scenarios. Similarly, García and Luján (2021) confirmed the effectiveness of gamification in enhancing the engagement of elementary school pupils. In contrast, this particular study highlighted marked advancements in grammar and coherence, likely due to its writing-centered approach and a consistent six-week intervention, while Romero et al. (2022) observed that gamification mainly boosted participation rather than precision. These outcomes also corroborate the motivational theories proposed by Dörnyei (2001) and recent reviews on gamification (Chen & Hwang, 2023;

Sailer & Homner, 2020), which stress the ability of game-oriented techniques to foster intrinsic motivation and promote ongoing engagement. Finally, the integration of gamification tools significantly improved both the cognitive dimension (writing quality) and the affective dimension (motivation and engagement) of A1-level learners.

Conclusions

This research investigated how the implementation of gamification tools such as Wordwall and Quizizz benefits A1-level learners in improving their writing abilities, yielding very positive outcomes. Following the introduction of these tools in lessons, students not only excelled in writing assignments but also felt increased motivation and reliance when communicating in English. The activities assisted students in constructing more complex sentences, enhancing their vocabulary, and presenting their ideas more coherently. Notable progress was observed particularly in areas like vocabulary use and sentence creation. Students' feedback emphasized their enjoyment of game-based learning, which in turn increased their willingness to engage and put forth their best

efforts. What rendered this research particularly significant was the diverse range of data gathered: assessment scores, observations made in the classroom, and students' feedback all supported the same conclusion that gamification truly impacted learning. It transformed the writing experience into one that was pleasurable rather than daunting. In short, the incorporation of gaming into writing lessons led to advancements in both students' writing capabilities and their confidence in writing. This approach created a more engaging, supportive, and positive educational environment. It provides educators teaching beginner-level students with an enjoyable and effective strategy to foster essential writing skills. Future studies could explore how these tools operate with learners at different levels of English proficiency or over extended periods.

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