

**Playful Learning: Unveiling the impact of gamification on cognitive development,  
engaging pre-school and first-grade students**

By

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### **Dedication**

To John Edis Muñoz Ramírez and José Miguel Muñoz Jaramillo. Your unwavering support, encouragement, and love have motivated me to build this hard, but not impossible task. Your belief in my abilities has been my guiding light, and your patience has been my strength.

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To my thesis advisor, Edith Grande, for guiding me through the academic process; your feedback, patience, and advice guided me to continue walking this way. Finally, and not less importantly, to my career partners Paola Herrera and Nury Villanueva, two beautiful women who I found in this journey and who helped me all to find the answer to some questions. All my gratitude to them. They were unconditional and their delivery was indispensable.

## **Abstract**

This research addresses the low levels of motivation and engagement of preschool and first-grade students in English learning at IES CINOC, a higher education institution in Pensilvania, Caldas, Colombia, where limited access to interactive resources and the internet poses significant challenges. The primary objective was to analyze the impact of gamification-based strategies on students' motivation, engagement, and cognitive development in English learning. Adopting an action research methodology, the study implemented gamified activities using digital tools such as Kahoot, Wordwall, and Blooket, combined with teacher mediation, over the course of several class sessions. Data were collected through classroom observations, student surveys, and parent interviews. Results revealed that the integration of gamification significantly increased students' engagement, motivation, and enjoyment during English classes, while fostering collaborative learning and improving language acquisition. These findings suggest that gamification is an effective pedagogical approach for improving cognitive and social skills in early childhood education, especially in rural, resource-limited settings.

**Keywords:** Gamification, Collaborative Learning, Educational Mediation, Motivation, Second Language Learning, Early Education.

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## **Introduction**

In recent decades, gamification has emerged as a transformative concept across various disciplines, extending its presence from traditional sectors like marketing, politics, and healthcare to making significant inroads into the field of education. As technology has advanced and pedagogical methodologies have been revamped, gamification has begun to be viewed as an innovative strategy to enhance teaching and learning. Since its initial adoption in 2010, gamification has grown in popularity and has been progressively integrated into the educational sphere, with the aim of increasing student engagement and motivation – aspects that have traditionally been challenging to maintain throughout the educational process.

Throughout its implementation in diverse areas, gamification has proven to be a powerful tool for motivating and engaging individuals in tasks that might otherwise be perceived as monotonous or uninteresting. This phenomenon has been widely documented in sectors like marketing and healthcare, but its foray into education has been particularly promising. Education, a field that has historically struggled to remain relevant in a digital and fast-paced world, finds in gamification a possible answer to the growing disconnects between traditional teaching methods and the expectations of students, particularly those from younger generations, born into the era of digital technology.

In the educational context, gamification is not simply about introducing playful elements into the classroom, such as points, badges, or leaderboards, but rather seeks to generate an enriching learning experience that combines intrinsic and extrinsic motivators to enhance active student participation. In its most basic form, gamification refers to the integration of game mechanics into non-game activities, with the aim of making learning more engaging and relevant. However, its true potential lies in its ability to identify and apply intrinsic motivators,

such as the desire for competition, personal achievement, and autonomy in learning, alongside extrinsic motivators, such as tangible rewards, social recognition, and immediate gratification.

Previous research has demonstrated that students respond positively to the structure of game-based learning, as they can experience a sense of accomplishment and progression as they complete tasks and advance through levels of difficulty. This, combined with tangible rewards such as points, badges, or leaderboards, not only increases cognitive engagement but also promotes a sense of competition among students, which encourages persistence in the face of challenging and difficult tasks. The impact of gamification on learning goes beyond simple participation; its effect extends to the quality of learning, fostering information retention, developing critical thinking skills, and improving problem-solving abilities.

Gamification offers students an environment where autonomy in learning can be fostered, through the possibility of making decisions regarding their progress within the game system. Additionally, it creates participatory learning experiences that allow them to collaborate and compete with their peers, strengthening not only their academic skills but also their social and emotional skills. These elements of competition and active participation, combined with constant feedback and rewards, help keep students engaged and motivated throughout the learning process.

The implementation of gamification in the educational sphere has the potential to transform students' academic performance by offering a dynamic learning structure that adapts to their needs and abilities. Through this approach, students can experience more personalized learning, where activities are tailored to their pace and interests. This personalized approach is key to optimizing student engagement, as it makes them feel that their learning process is relevant and meaningful.

Studies on gamification in education have shown that students exposed to gamified teaching methods tend to be more motivated, more engaged, and achieve better academic results. For example, research has shown that students who participate in gamified activities have greater information retention and are more likely to participate actively in class. In many cases, the implementation of gamification has led to an increase in academic performance, as students not only feel more motivated to learn but also develop more effective skills in problem-solving and critical thinking.

However, gamification is not a panacea or a one-size-fits-all solution for all the problems of the educational system. Its effectiveness depends on its proper implementation and the integration of other motivational factors that complement its impact. That is, gamification must be accompanied by well-planned pedagogical strategies that ensure that learning objectives are clear and achievable. Otherwise, it can become a superficial game that does not meet fundamental educational objectives.

One of the most promising applications of gamification is found in rural educational contexts, where resource limitations and lack of access to advanced technologies often create significant barriers to learning. The adoption of gamification in these contexts can offer opportunities to overcome some of these limitations, providing a more accessible and engaging learning environment for students. In the case of first-grade and preschool students in rural institutions, gamification has the potential to transform the process of teaching English, a language that is often perceived as distant and difficult to learn due to a lack of adequate exposure and resources.

For children of these ages, learning through play is a natural strategy, as young children are accustomed to learning through interaction and exploration. Gamification, by integrating

playful and educational activities, can facilitate this type of learning, allowing children not only to have fun but also to acquire new language skills effectively. Additionally, the use of accessible technologies such as mobile applications and online games can help overcome technological barriers in rural areas, providing students with interactive tools that make English learning more accessible.

In this sense, gamification presents itself as a viable alternative to increase students' academic engagement in rural areas and improve the quality of education. This is especially crucial in areas where traditional English classes are often less effective due to a lack of resources and a disconnect between students and educational content.

In this sense, gamification represents a significant opportunity to transform the way we teach and learn, especially in rural educational contexts and for young students. By integrating playful elements into the educational process, a more dynamic, participatory, and motivating learning environment can be fostered, which in turn improves academic performance and student engagement. However, its implementation must be carefully designed to ensure that it complements existing pedagogical strategies and aligns with overall educational objectives. As gamification continues to gain ground in education, it is crucial that studies continue to evaluate its real impact on academic performance and student engagement, especially in rural educational contexts and with first-grade and preschool students.

### **Context of the Research Problem**

This study emerges as a proposal to incorporate gamification in a rural region, aiming to address the low levels of motivation and engagement that students exhibit towards learning English. The target population for this study comprises first-grade and preschool students at the IES CINOC institution, located in Pensilvania, Caldas, Colombia. These students face a notable

lack of interest in learning English, due to several factors, including limited exposure to interactive games and restricted access to the internet, given that they reside in a rural area. Additionally, many teachers have not implemented effective strategies for teaching the language, which has led to a considerable decrease in academic engagement and motivation towards this subject.

Gamification seeks to transform this scenario by providing an approach that not only promotes learning through the use of playful mechanics but also achieves student engagement through intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. According to Knutas et al. (2014), "the main goals of gamification are to improve specific skills, introduce objectives that give purpose to learning, engage students, optimize learning, support behavior change, and encourage socialization." Research in gamification has shown that this approach has the potential to transform students' interest and attitude towards learning, by linking the educational process with meaningful and participatory experiences.

On the other hand, previous research has yielded significant results on how students' personal characteristics, such as their personality type, influence their response to gamification. Xie et al. (2016) found that, through preference surveys, extroverted students are particularly motivated by point systems, levels, and leaderboards. Jang et al. (2015), observed that students with low agreeableness who used non-gamified versions of educational systems showed lower learning rates compared to those who participated in gamified systems. These findings indicate that the effects of gamification depend not only on the game elements but also on the individual characteristics of students, suggesting that personalization of gamification experiences could have an even greater impact.

Historically, research on games and video games has largely focused on their negative effects, such as addiction (Gentile, 2011) and game-induced aggressive behavior (Bushman et al., 2010; Ramírez et al., 2024). However, gamification has been gaining ground in the educational field as it is considered a valuable tool to increase student engagement and motivation, improving their academic performance and promoting more meaningful learning.

In this context, the purpose of this study is to understand the implications of incorporating gamification in first-grade and preschool English classes in rural institutions. This approach seeks not only to improve students' engagement with English learning but also to foster a more engaging and participatory educational experience that motivates students to overcome traditional learning barriers.

Sheldon's experiment (2012), who implemented a gamification strategy in a university course based on the MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game) model, is a key example of how gamification can be used to enhance the educational experience. In his proposal, students advanced through levels based on the number of points earned, which was directly linked to their final grades. Sheldon highlighted that even the simplest point and level systems, combined with immediate feedback, can significantly increase student motivation.

The use of technology in education has, in many cases, been a limiting factor. However, in the current context, where students of new generations are born with a strong ability to interact with digital tools, gamification can offer a way to transform the educational process and adapt it to their expectations. As Susan Price, CEO of Firecat Studio, points out: “The amazing plasticity of the human brain is most clearly reflected in the rapid adaptations humans are making in response to unprecedented access to electronic information.” This adaptability should be seen as

an opportunity to improve educational processes, developing new methodologies that respond to the challenges of technology and foster life skills.

Traditional education in rural areas has been marked by a lack of resources and innovative methodologies. English classes in institutions like IES CINOC have been primarily teacher-centered, with few spaces for active student interaction. In this type of class, students become passive recipients of information, which significantly reduces their motivation. The implementation of gamification offers a potential solution, allowing students to actively engage in the learning process by participating in interactive activities while learning English in a more playful and meaningful way. This study aims to analyze how gamification can transform English classes for first grade and preschool students in rural areas, improving student engagement and motivation. Through the introduction of gamified activities, it is expected to change the traditional dynamics of classes and provide a richer and more participatory learning experience, in line with the needs and expectations of digital generation students.

### **Research Question**

What are the implications of incorporating gamification as an innovative strategy in preschool and first-grade English classes, specifically in relation to the use of games like Kahoot, Quizizz, Wordwall, flash-cards, play-role and Blooket, and their impact on student's motivation and engagement in the classroom?

### **General Objective**

To explore the implications of incorporating gamification as an innovative strategy on cognitive development in preschool and first-grade English classes at IES CINOC, located in Pensilvania, Caldas, Colombia.

### *Specific objectives*

To explore about the most appropriate gamified activities that increase motivation and engagement in learning English in an educational way for preschool and first-grade students at the IES CINOC institution.

To describe whether there are meaningful improvements in English learning-specific features when integrating Gamification as an e-learning-teaching strategy.

### **Rationale for the Study**

In order to answer the research question: “What are the implications of incorporating gamification as an innovative strategy into first-grades English classes in regards to motivation and engagement in the classroom?”, this research study pretends to explore a variety of activities focusing on the learning of English as a foreign language. “A significant problem that many schools and educators face, as Zichermann & Cunningham (2011) posited, is that many students lack the motivation and exhibit low interest to learn. If given a choice, many of them would prefer playing video games than reading a book or completing a homework assignment. The solution is not, as many educators, policy makers, and politicians suggest, resolved by creating additional educational standards or adding more standardized tests in an endless cycle of trial and error.

One of the possible ways to make education more relevant to real life skills and more engaging to the learners is the use of gamification. Prensky (2001) argued that there was no magical recipe, but that teachers can design the perfect mix of education and entertainment depending on their students’ needs”. (The effect of gamification on students’ engagement and motivation in three wsu courses).

“Gamification is the use of game-based elements, techniques, and game strategies to promote learning through increasing engagement, fostering motivation and supporting critical thinking skills (Kapp, 2012). This operational definition, which will be used throughout this dissertation, incorporates important several pedagogical components”. ¿So, why use gamification to improve skills as vocabulary and speaking in students? Children until five years old learn more easily with different kinds of activities that have movement, these activities help to develop critical thinking, peer collaboration and other skills that allow students to acquire a second language and use it in context.

The theory is that total physical response is a language teaching method built around the coordination of speech and action. Its principal objective is to teach a language through physical activity. It was developed by Asher (1977), who said that “a method that is undemanding in terms of linguistic production and that involves game like movements reduces learner stress, and creates a positive mood in the learner which facilitates learning”.

The likelihood of successful recall increases with combined follow-up activities, such as verbal rehearsal combined with motor activity Asher does not directly discuss the nature of language or how languages are organized. However, the labeling and ordering of TPR classroom drills seem to be built on assumptions that owe much to structuralist or grammar-based views of language. Asher, 1977; states that the instructor's skillful use of the imperative by skillful use can teach students hundreds of vocabulary words and most of the grammatical structure of the target language.

According to this, With the purpose of explore the implications of incorporating gamification with a mixed class of preschool and first grade students at IES CINOC, this research aimed at investigating how incorporation of gamification contributed to have an impact

regarding to motivation in the classroom and to learn English developing other skills as vocabulary and socialization with others.

This research is relevant to the school's community due to the students that have deserted from the institution the last years. Thus, motivation and interest in language can be increased through these tools of gamification and improve the skills and English learning.

## **Literature Review**

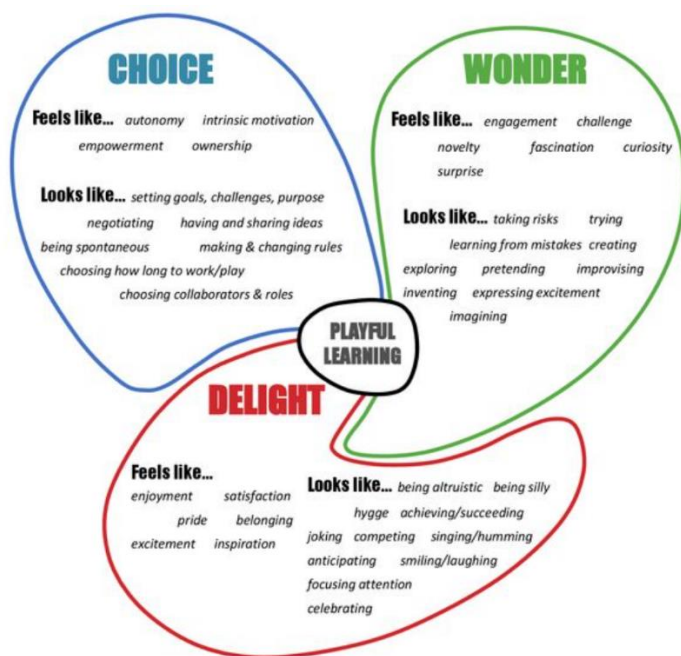
The following section gives accounts of some studies that recognize the importance of gamification and classroom engagement in learning of English as a foreign language. Many researchers have found that gamification allows and facilitates the education especially teaching-learning English; being classes boring and monotonous as it was already mentioned in the problem statement.

### **State of the Art**

Rodríguez et al. (2022) define playful learning for environmental education as a participatory pedagogical mediation that considers the socio-environmental realities in which individuals are immersed. This approach emphasizes the importance of connecting educational content with the learners' immediate environment and lived experiences, fostering a sense of relevance and engagement in the learning process. By integrating playful methods, students can actively participate in exploring and addressing environmental challenges, leading to deeper cognitive and emotional connections with the subject matter.

This participatory approach aligns with the principles of constructivist education, where knowledge is actively constructed through experience and interaction. By incorporating real-life socio-environmental scenarios, playful learning facilitates not only knowledge acquisition but also the development of critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving skills. These methods encourage learners to become active agents of change, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in addressing pressing environmental issues.

Figure 1

*Playful Learning*

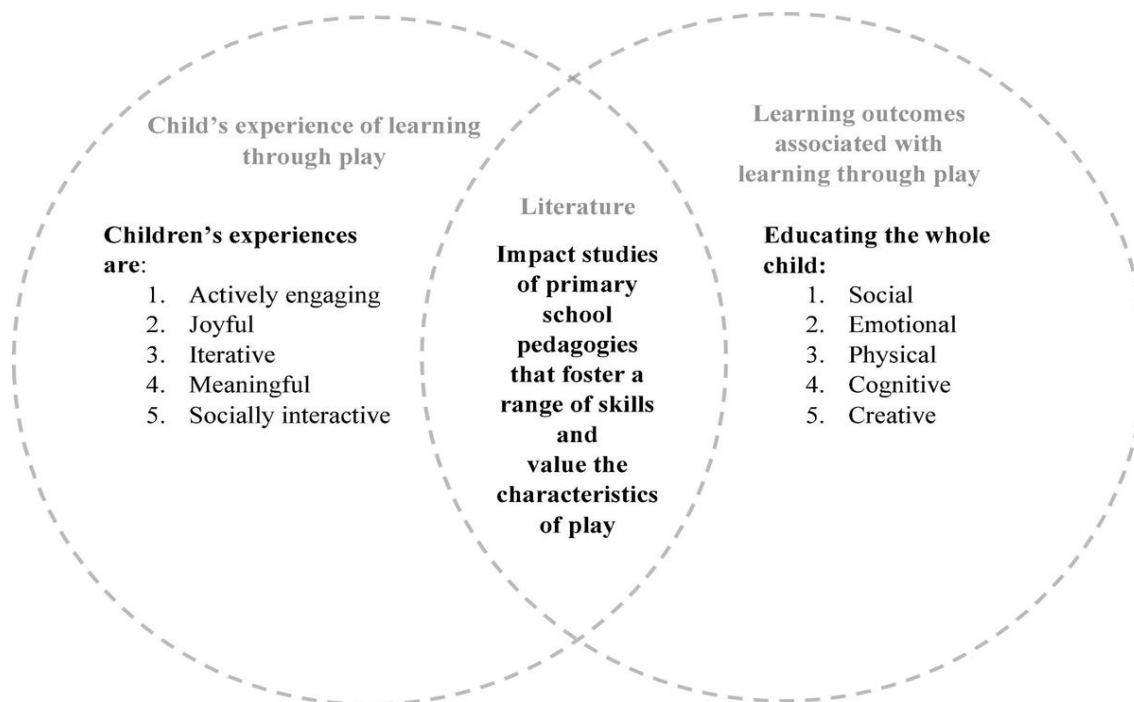
*Note.* This picture represents some characteristics of playful learning. Picture taken from: (slideplayer, s.f.)

According to Kangas & Ruokamo (2012), “The term “playful learning environment(s)” (PLE) denotes an innovative, technology-enriched play and learning environment whose components are located indoors as well as outdoors. Learning in such an environment takes the form of content creation and engagement in physical games and play. As a theoretical construct, the PLE embraces a technology-enriched playground complex that serves education and affords multiple forms of mind-on, hands-on, and body-on learning activities. Playful describes the attitude toward learning in the PLE as well as the nature of participation in that environment. Learning activities in the PLE encompass designing content for playground activities, playing

games on the playground, and engagement both indoors and outdoors in other creative and playful learning activities enhanced by technological tools.

## Figure 2

### *Benefits of Playful Learning*



*Note.* This picture represents some benefits of playful learning. Picture from: Parker, et al. (2022).

According to the last picture and to Parker, et al. (2022), Beyond the preschool years, learning through play has emerged as a key strategy to encourage active student participation, promote inclusion, and develop holistic skills. This idea has been driven by policymakers, researchers and educators, as play taps into the natural curiosity of school-age children and eases the often-difficult transition between preschool and formal school. Several studies have shown that active learning, when perceived by students as enjoyable, meaningful, socially engaged,

dynamic and iterative, contributes to the holistic development of cognitive, social, emotional, creative and physical skills in children.

The authors describe key findings from international research on the effects of play-based learning on children and propose an expanded definition of learning through play in the school context, grounded in the science of learning. They identify four key issues that contribute to the significant discrepancy between educational policy and classroom practice, and offer a practical framework for addressing these challenges. This framework seeks to establish a common vocabulary and clear directions for successfully implementing learning through play in schools.

Following the same reading and with the same authors, we find some definitions that carry us to reflect deeper on our theory about learning through play and gamification: “Our understanding that children learn through the natural inquiry process of play has a strong basis in research. Anthropologists, developmental psychologists and neuroscientists have studied and documented this phenomenon extensively (Whitebread et al., 2012). More than a century ago, Dewey (1910) made the connection between children’s natural experimentation in play and the scientific inquiry process. Vygotsky (1978) noted that play is hugely influential on child development in fostering speech development, cognitive processing, self-awareness, and self-regulation.

Neuroscientists have discovered that the prefrontal cortex of the brain is refined by play, and play stimulates the production of a protein responsible for the differentiation and growth of new neurons and synapses (Gordon et al., 2003). Conversely, play deprivation negatively affects brain development and problem-solving skills (Pellis et al., 2014). Play interventions are widely used as a treatment for children who struggle to develop socio-emotional skills including establishing positive peer relationships (Fantuzzo & Hampton, 2000).

The perennial interest in these ideas is reflected in current global education policy and research. Increasing numbers of international studies now measure holistic skills, such as socio-emotional learning, creative thinking, global competence, innovation, and physical development (UNESCO, 2016; Vincent, 2017; OECD, 2018).

Intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations recognize that the skills, knowledge and values children need to thrive in the future far exceed proficiency in traditional learning areas such as literacy and numeracy (UNESCO, 2016). As technology advances and workplaces evolve, governments and education systems are realizing that a more holistic view of education and learning is required, in order to best equip children to thrive, and ultimately, reach their full potential as adults in society (Foundation for Young Australians [FYA], 2017; Ernst & Reynolds, 2021).

Understanding teaching practice across the early years is integral to advancing these goals. As global standards and outcomes for learning expand to include holistic skills, curricula have become more crowded and teachers' roles ever more demanding (Darling, 2006). Which pedagogical approaches might most effectively achieve our expanded goals for education? Research points to learning through play as a promising pedagogy that is correspondingly expansive in its aims and outcomes for learning (Marbina et al., 2011).

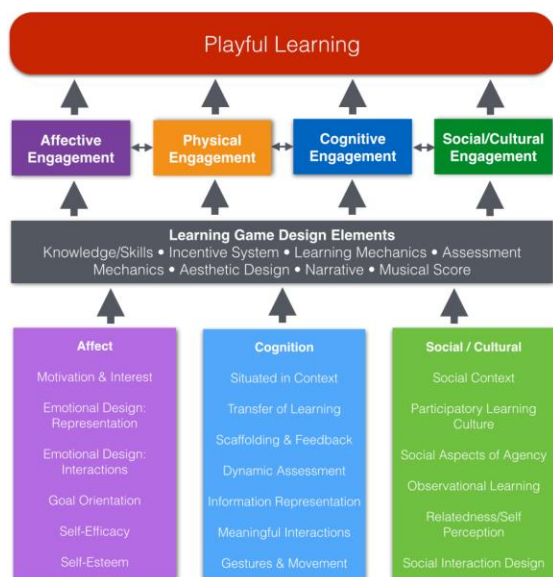
There are, however, significant challenges to embedding learning through play in practice. The first hurdle is semantic. Play is a complex phenomenon that is difficult to define (Mastrangelo, 2009; McAloney & Stagnitti, 2009; Whitebread et al., 2012; Zosh et al., 2018). This presents a challenge—that the very basis for learning is a contested notion. Further, the lay definition of play is to “engage in an activity for enjoyment or recreation rather than a serious purpose” (Oxford University Press, 2020). Play’s reputation as a non-serious/non-work-related

pursuit is problematic, especially at school, where teachers are accustomed to more rigid curricula structures and attainment targets (Martlew et al., 2011). The play/learning dichotomy trivializes play as an activity for recess only, or a reward for when the “real work” of learning is done (Whitebread et al., 2012). When we dichotomize play and learning (or play and work) we negate the view that play itself is educational and children can learn through play (Wing, 1995; Nilsson et al., 2018). This severely curtails its potential as an effective classroom-based pedagogy”.

The following picture reinforces the last theory about playful learning, it shows the specific learning goal, learner characteristics, and setting; also, the interaction among them and the benefits of using it (especially in the classroom with the acquisition of a second language).

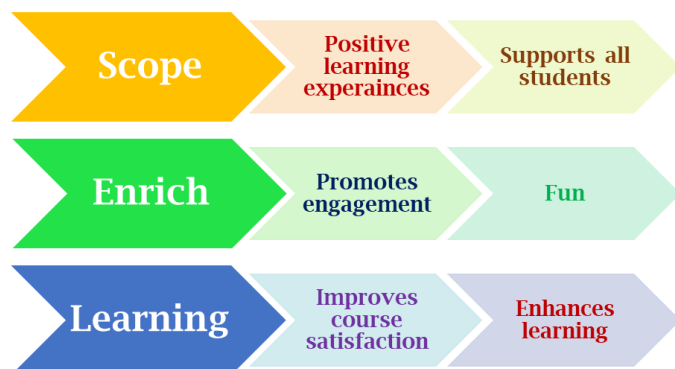
**Figure 3**

*Specific Learning Goals, Learner Characteristics, and Setting and Playful Learning*



*Note.* This picture represents objectives and interaction among them in playful learning. Picture taken from: Plass et al. (2015).

There are many studies about gamification and learning; for example: Faiella & Ricciardi (2015). Gamification and learning: a review of issues and research. The attention of this research is focused on gamified learning, in order to investigate what happens when gamification is introduced in class, especially regarding student's engagement, and performance. In this study, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is analyzed. Apostol et al. (2013) The design of educational experiences based on gamification requires the integration of certain key elements that provide structure and motivation to the learning process. Among the most relevant components are: the rules , which establish the rules of the game and guide the expected behavior; the objectives and outcomes , which define what students must achieve and are aligned with the desired learning; the feedback and rewards , which allow students to know their progress and feel recognized; the story or narrative , which gives meaning and emotional connection to the experience; problem solving , which fosters critical thinking and creativity; the player or players , considering their interests, abilities and learning styles; a safe environment , where mistakes are part of the process without serious negative consequences; and, finally, the sense of mastery or sense of mastery , which reinforces intrinsic motivation by perceiving progress and overcoming challenges. In this sense, Gamified learning experience would be effective.

**Figure 4***Gamification Benefits*

*Note.* This picture represents some gamification benefits in education. Taken from Priyanka. (2024, 5 Julio). Gaming in Education: A Useful Tool in the 21st Century.

It is related to my research in the sense that I am researching the way that students can or should acquire a second language in an autonomous way, but using technological tools that allow them interact with the external world and learn at the same time in a globalized world. Another similar aspect in both researches is as Apostol et al. (2013) said: The educational objectives and intended learning outcomes are the most important factors for a teacher or instructional designer to consider when selecting game components. These define the purpose of the gamified activity and guide the choice of elements such as rules, narrative, feedback systems and participation dynamics, thus ensuring that the gamified experience is aligned with the desired learning.

According to Vergara et al. (2022), the purpose of the study was to determine the effects of the use of gamified instructional materials on the improvement of oral English proficiency in young learners. The results, with a statistical effect of 0.736, showed a significant improvement in learning, especially in aspects such as grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary. This

indicates that students' academic performance in English speaking increased significantly when using this type of resource. The authors conclude that gamified instructional materials can be an effective tool to support and improve speech development in children.

On the other hand, Palacios & Moya (2023), in their study, highlight the importance of developing skills that favor interaction among students and promote collaborative learning. This approach based on gamification is presented as an effective strategy to improve communicative skills, especially in contexts of teaching English as a foreign language.

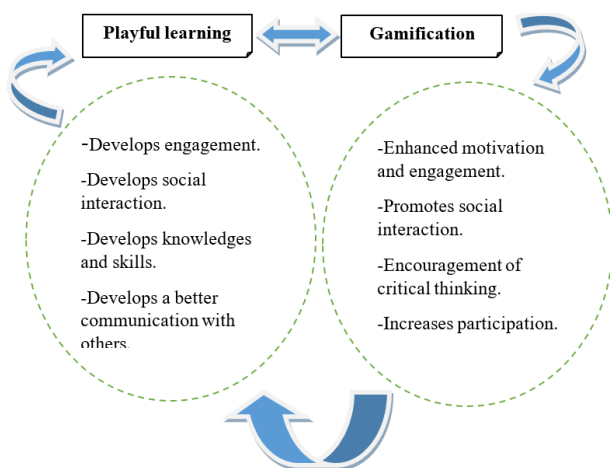
**Figure 5**

*Gamification in Education*



*Note.* This picture represents all benefits and characteristics that can develop gamification in education. Picture taken from: GAMIFICATION: Mind Map template. (s. f.)

If we make a comparison between gamification and playful learning, we can find a lot of similar aspects, for example:

**Figure 6***Comparative Chart*

*Note.* This picture represents the difference between playful learning and gamification, taking into account the benefits in both. Reference: Own elaboration.

Another important concept to review is engagement. According to many researchers, commitment includes affective, cognitive and behavioral components. At a minimum, most definitions usually integrate a combination of psychological aspects and observable behaviors. (Finn & Finner, 2012).

Engagement is related to action; however, it is important to keep in mind that this emphasis on the behavioral does not imply that student intentions are independent of the environment or the material conditions in which learning occurs. Nor does it mean that the way in which students participate in activities should be separated from their initial motivations or desires to engage (Christenson et al., 2012). Generally speaking, engagement refers to the degree to which a learner actively participates in a learning activity.

Furthermore, Reschly and Christenson (2012) highlight that learner engagement does not arise in isolation, but is profoundly influenced by the spatial and temporal context in which they find themselves. Therefore, the environment and the conditions in which the educational process takes place are key elements in understanding how and how much a student engages in his or her learning.

Another relevant factor is the attitude of the teacher. The enthusiasm and motivation that teachers show towards teaching can have a direct impact on the level of student engagement. When the teacher transmits passion for what he or she teaches, students tend to feel more identified with the class, the teacher and the environment, which can favor greater involvement in the learning process.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### ***Gamification on Education***

Darina Dicheva's approach has marked a turning point in the application of gamification in education, innovatively combining game design elements with contemporary pedagogical strategies. Her work has been instrumental in demonstrating how tools specifically designed for the classroom can transform the learning dynamic, promoting both active participation and academic performance among students.

One of her most notable contributions is the development of "OneUp," a platform that incorporates game-like dynamics, such as point accumulation, badge use, and leaderboards, to increase student motivation and interest. Dicheva et al (2018), argue that these playful mechanics not only make learning more engaging but also strengthen students' ability to retain concepts and apply skills practically. This approach allows educational activities to be perceived as entertaining challenges rather than tedious tasks.

At the heart of Dicheva et al (2018), proposal is the conviction that gamification is more than a complement to traditional learning; it is a strategy that can profoundly transform classroom experiences. By integrating playful elements, such as friendly competitions and achievable goals, educators can foster an environment where the student is an active protagonist in their own learning. Additionally, this methodology promotes the personalization of educational experiences, allowing students to progress at their own pace and receive constant feedback on their progress.

The impact of gamification in the classroom, according to research led by Dicheva et al (2018), goes beyond short-term motivation. Her focus is on promoting lasting learning and establishing a framework that combines technological innovation with effective educational practices. This model not only improves engagement levels but also develops students' collaboration, problem-solving, and self-efficacy skills.

In the context of current education, Dicheva et al (2018) contributions are particularly relevant for rural and resource-limited environments, such as those found in preschool and first grade at IES CINOC. Her work offers a theoretical and practical framework for leveraging game design elements in settings where traditional learning may not meet the needs of students, making it a key source of inspiration for educational innovation projects.

Several studies have pointed out that gamification, understood as the incorporation of game elements in educational contexts, is used with the purpose of increasing student motivation and engagement. However, empirical evidence on its long-term effectiveness is limited and the reported results are often ambiguous. On the one hand, recent research warns that the implementation of gamification in education has advanced faster than the theoretical understanding of its mechanisms and that it is still unknown how to effectively adapt

gamification strategies to the particularities of each educational context. Moreover, it highlights the need for systematic and rigorous studies that validate the educational benefits of gamification before considering it as a recognized methodology (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017).

On the other hand, although gamification has been promoted as a strategy to improve motivation and learning outcomes, the evidence on its actual impact remains equivocal. While most research has focused on students' behavioral responses, some work suggests that gamification could also influence deeper cognitive and affective dimensions. However, it is still unclear how this approach affects student engagement and learning, which represents a significant gap in the literature.

To address this limitation, a conceptual framework has been proposed that integrates the literature on gamification and student engagement, with the aim of guiding the systematic design of gamified learning experiences and facilitating the collection of empirical evidence on their effectiveness.

### **Second Language Versus Foreign Language**

The difference between a "second language" and a "foreign language" relates to the role that language plays within the sociocultural environment in which learning takes place. A second language is one that fulfills relevant social and institutional functions in a country, even if it is not the mother tongue of the majority of the population; for example, English in India or Singapore (Kootstra & Starren, 2015).

### ***Mixed level Classes***

Multi-level classrooms, also known as composite classes, group students from different grade levels in the same space. Their establishment is usually a response to pedagogical decisions made by the school or school district, and they are distinguished from combined

classes formed for enrollment reasons, when the number of students does not allow for the creation of two groups of the same grade. This type of organization is more common in small schools, the most extreme case being the single-level school. Research indicates that the academic performance of students in multi-level classes does not differ significantly from that of those in single-grade classrooms; rather, the results depend largely on the teaching staff. Furthermore, the composition of these groups usually responds to the number of students and teachers available, and there may be cases in which the entire school functions as a single class with students from all grades, from kindergarten to the last year of primary school, or with partial representation of some grades, which may result in very small groups or, on the contrary, in classes of more than twenty students distributed among several levels (Cornish, 2006).

### ***Foreign Language Learning***

Currently, foreign language teaching and learning have evolved from teacher-centered approaches to environments that prioritize the student and the learning process. Based on linguistic theories, research findings, and practical experiences, educators have designed strategies and environments that engage learners in interactive communicative tasks. This methodological shift has transformed the role of the teacher, who has shifted from being an authority figure or expert to serving as a facilitator, guide, and agent of change. Furthermore, recent trends suggest that public pedagogy, the use of social media, and action research are additional avenues for strengthening both intercultural competence and language learning (Moeller & Catalano, 2015).

On the other hand, a language is considered foreign when it is learned in the classroom and not used in the society where it is taught. Learning another language not only allows for effective and creative communication in real-life situations, but also provides access to other

cultural perspectives, fosters connections between different areas of knowledge, and promotes an interdisciplinary approach, facilitating intercultural understanding. Furthermore, studying a language contributes to a better understanding of one's own language and culture and offers the opportunity to acquire both linguistic and social knowledge, as well as the ability to know what to say, how, when, and to whom (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project [NSFLEP], 2014).

From an innate perspective, Chomsky proposed that children possess a biological predisposition for language, which allows them to discover for themselves the underlying rules of any linguistic system. This innate ability suggests that all people can learn an additional language and understand its structure, which can foster engagement and motivation in students (Chomsky, cited in Lightbown & Spada, 2020).

## **Engagement**

Talking about student engagement implies recognizing that school is much more than a space for memorizing and repeating information. Over time, definitions of engagement have evolved and been enriched to encompass multiple dimensions of the school experience. However, they all agree that school is not only a place where knowledge is transmitted between generations, but also a space where emotional connections are established, which can be both positive and negative. The main difference between the definitions lies in whether engagement is understood more as an observable behavior or as an internal attitude of the student (Axelson & Flick, 2010; Jimerson et al., 2003).

Fredricks et al. (2004) propose that student engagement manifests itself in three ways: behavioral engagement, which encompasses active participation and adherence to community norms; emotional engagement, which reflects students' feelings, such as interest, joy, or anxiety;

and cognitive engagement, which relates to students' motivation and ability to employ various strategies that allow them to direct their own learning.

Other relevant definitions highlight that engagement refers to how involved or interested students appear in their learning and the extent to which they feel connected to their classes, institutions, and peers (Axelson & Flick, 2010). It has also been described as any sustained connection a learner maintains with some aspect of learning or education (Fletcher, 2019), as well as meaningful student participation throughout the educational environment (Martin & Torres, 2016).

Engagement is fundamental to the teaching-learning process, as without it, meaningful learning is hindered. Therefore, it is important to understand it, as there are strategies that teachers can implement to foster it, and these have been shown to be effective.

### ***Preschool Students***

According to Sattar and Taimur (2019), the term "preschool" refers to a formal educational institution or learning space designed for the early education of children before they begin compulsory primary school. In this context, preschool encompasses children between 3 and 5 years old and can be variously referred to as kindergarten, nursery school, pre-primary, or pre-k, depending on the terminology used in different studies. Although there is research on learning outcomes in children under 3 years of age through early interventions or structured care, these findings are mentioned briefly and are not included in the main analysis or discussion. Regarding the skills assessed in preschool education, a distinction is made between cognitive skills, which include IQ, early language development (both receptive and expressive, as evidenced in vocabulary), and performance in areas such as reading and mathematics; and non-

cognitive skills, which include social skills, persistence and motivation, as well as self-regulation and control over attention and behavior.

### ***Theories of Child Development***

Following with Sattar & Taimur. (2019); Here we can find a recompilation from some authors and their theories about Child development:

“Nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century early education proponents Margaret McMillan (1860–1931), Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), and Marie Montessori (1870–1952) focused on health, playtimes, and learning through exercise and senses as key drivers for learning in young children (Fisher 1992; Bergen 2002). In recent times, as technology has advanced, the “art of play” has started to transform into “gaming” through technology, and the focus of play has had some distractive criticism.

The contemporary approach promotes guided learning experiences, individualized learning, and developmentally appropriate learning as doctrines of early childhood education (Wolpert 2009). This “developmental interaction approach” emphasizes on learning through discovery (Jean Piaget; Erik Erikson; John Dewey, and Lucy Sprague Mitchell) with recommendations for teachers (Jean Jacques Rousseau) to focus on a child’s individual interests to maximize personal development (Nager & Shapiro 1999; Casper & Theilheimer 2010; Bhat 2016). Vygotsky, in the 1930s, proposed a sociocultural learning theory, which underscored the impact of cultural and social experiences on development of the mental processes and individualized thinking that is still discussed and referred to almost a century later as means of improving and reforming educational practices. Treated as a social constructivist, he believed that human cognitive system development is a result of social interactions and is inseparable. His concept of the “zone of proximal development,” requiring teachers to adjust to specific learning

needs, has proven especially important to educate persons (children) with disability (Vygotsky 1980).

Piaget, gaining significant ground in the 1970s and 1980s, laid the groundwork for “learning from within”: constructing knowledge through experience and reflection. He argued that the “first task of education is to form reasoning” with teachers tasked to encourage the acquisition of knowledge as opposed to focus on transference of information. According to Piaget, the two processes of “accommodation” and “assimilation” allow young children to learn by equilibrating their mental representations with reality (Piaget 2001) while also incorporating learning from mistakes through experiential education (Piaget 1964). Piaget’s proposition of reflective abstraction has found purchase particularly in mathematical education (Kato et al. 2002). His theory also implies that computers can be a superb educational tool for young children when used for design and construct projects but another research by Plowman & Stephen (2003) found limited applications in preschool, which suggests that the role of teachers is critical in adopting computers at preschool level (Townes 2010). Kolb’s experiential learning theory argues that children need to experience things in order to learn knowledge results from combinations of grasping and transforming experience.

The distinctive aspect of this experiential learning theory is that children are seen and taught as individuals, with the teacher asking probing questions for the child to adopt prior knowledge to learning new information. Kolb breaks down learning into four stages –concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Children observe new situations, think (reflect) about it, make meaning, and test that meaning within the world around them (Kolb 2014)”. “Without adequate early learning and health

essentials in the first 5 years of life, the later ages and adult outcomes of far too many children will be unnecessarily compromised”.

### ***Conceptual Framework***

In this chapter, some characteristics of the population, the instruments used in data collection, and the results of certain observations are described. This study collected data from preschool and first-grade students, aiming to explore the implications of incorporating gamification with a mixed group of learners at IES CINOC. Data were gathered through observations and comparisons between a gamified class and a non-gamified class. Consequently, the research sought to identify the most effective activities for increasing student engagement.

According to this, “Students’ motivation and engagement as two prime instances of positive academic behaviors serve a facilitative function in their learning success (Martin et al., 2017). Accordingly, raising students’ academic engagement has been among the top priorities of all effective instructors. However, many instructors, notably English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers are still unaware of how to considerably enhance their students’ academic motivation and engagement. In fact, how EFL and ESL students’ academic motivation and engagement can be improved is not widely recognized” (Henry & Thorsen, 2018). Having said that, it was fundamental to collect qualitative data and acquire some conclusions.

The journal *Qualitative Research in Education* is positioned as one of the first scientific publications dedicated to qualitative research in the field of education. Its purpose is to offer an international space for debate and reflection on education, focusing on participatory research that considers the reality of the object of study, seeks to understand educational phenomena, and generates evidence that promotes not only equity and improved educational outcomes, but also

social change. In line with this perspective, this study is framed within a qualitative and observational methodology.

Gamification has gained attention as a strategy capable of transforming traditional learning methods by fostering motivation and deeper student engagement. Its integration into classrooms is particularly relevant in early education, where engaging young learners is critical for laying the foundations of lifelong learning. The use of gamified methods allows students to interact with educational content in dynamic and meaningful ways, enhancing their ability to retain and apply knowledge. Furthermore, this approach aligns with research emphasizing the importance of play in cognitive and emotional development during early childhood education.

Additionally, the qualitative and observational nature of this study provided a comprehensive understanding of the impact of gamification on student behavior and participation. Through direct observation, it was possible to identify specific classroom dynamics that contributed to higher engagement levels, such as collaborative problem-solving and the use of rewards. These findings underscore the potential of gamification as an inclusive and adaptable tool for educators, especially when addressing diverse learning needs and fostering an environment conducive to exploration and curiosity. Such evidence highlights the value of further research into the broader implications of gamification in education.

## **Research Design**

Learning English as a second language in rural contexts presents unique challenges, especially in the early grades of education. Lack of resources, limited exposure to the language, and a lack of motivation can hinder the development of language skills in students. In this context, gamification emerges as an innovative strategy that can transform English learning, making it more engaging, interactive, and effective.

This action research, with a mixed approach, focuses on exploring the implications of incorporating gamification as an innovative strategy in first-grade English classes in rural areas, specifically at the IES CINOC Institution in Pensilvania, Caldas. The main objective is to analyze how gamification impacts motivation, engagement, and language skills development in a group of first-grade and preschool students.

This study is based on the premise that gamification, by integrating playful and motivating elements into the learning process, can help overcome the barriers faced by students in rural contexts, fostering their active participation, improving their vocabulary retention, and developing English communication skills.

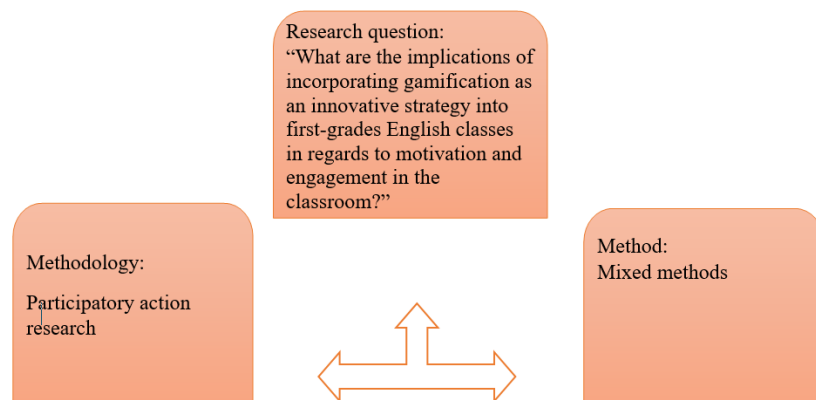
### **Methodological Design**

This research project embraces the principles of action research, employing a mixed-methods approach to delve into the complexities of educational practice. Recognizing the importance of active researcher participation, we will immerse ourselves within the educational process, collaborating with the study participants to understand their experiences and perspectives. This participatory approach fosters a collaborative environment where groups actively seek to improve their social practices and experiences.

The methodological framework follows a cyclical process composed of four phases: planning, action, observation, and reflection. This iterative approach allows for continuous improvement and ongoing adjustments in practice, as action research is conceived as a process of ongoing inquiry and reflection aimed at optimizing practice through this cycle (Cohen & Morrison, 2007).

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the research problem, we will utilize a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative methods, such as surveys and standardized tests, will be employed to assess student motivation, engagement, and vocabulary retention. Simultaneously, qualitative methods, including participant observation, interviews, and document analysis, will provide rich insights into student experiences, teacher perceptions, and the dynamic interplay within the classroom during the implementation of gamification.

Therefore, addressing the central research question: *¿What are the implications of incorporating gamification as an innovative strategy in preschool and first-grade English classes, specifically in relation to the use of games like Kahoot, Quizizz, Wordwall, flash-cards, play-role and Blooket, and their impact on student's motivation and engagement in the classroom?* we aim to actively participate in the research process at the IES CINOC Institution in Pensilvania, Caldas. Our goal is to explore the implications of integrating gamification within a mixed class of preschool and first-grade students in a rural context.

**Figure 7***Methodological Design Graphic*

*Note.* This picture shows us the methodological design implemented in this research. Picture from my own.

This research is a participatory action research study focused on incorporating gamification as an innovative strategy in preschool and first-grade English classes at the IES CINOC institution, located in Pensilvania, Caldas, Colombia. This approach includes students as active participants in the study process, analyzing how they interact with gamification tools and evaluating its impact on motivation and engagement in the classroom.

The primary objective of the research is to investigate the impact of incorporating gamification into English classes and to analyze whether these strategies are more effective than traditional methods in improving student interest and engagement at these initial educational levels. To achieve this, a thematic analysis was conducted to identify key patterns and themes related to the impact of gamified activities on English language learning.

Three main datasets were collected:

Surveys directed at preschool and first-grade students to gather their perceptions of gamified and non-gamified English classes.

Field journals or classroom observation forms, where the researcher recorded student interactions, comments, emotional expressions, and other significant elements during gamified and non-gamified activities.

Additional quantitative and qualitative data, obtained through triangulation of observations and methods, to provide a more comprehensive view of the impact of gamification.

The study primarily uses a qualitative approach complemented by minor quantitative analyses. According to Bartolomé (1992), qualitative research is essential to ensure that cultural categories are understood by the study subjects, that cultural and linguistic pluralism is respected, and that data, observations, and methods are triangulated in different contexts. Additionally, Bartolomé (1992) emphasizes the importance of conducting persistent and prolonged observation to gain a deeper understanding of the educational phenomenon in diverse contexts.

Since the researcher's purpose is to analyze changes over time in certain variables related to motivation and engagement, this study adopts a longitudinal design. This approach allows for data collection at specific points in time to observe the evolution of the educational phenomenon and evaluate the sustained impact of gamification. Sampieri et al. (2014) points out that longitudinal designs collect information at multiple time points, which allows for inferences about the evolution of the phenomenon studied, identifying changes and trends over time.

In the case of this research, the implementation of gamification in preschool and first-grade English classes seeks not only to identify immediate improvements in motivation and

engagement but also to evaluate its sustainability over time and its contribution to effective learning in the early educational levels.

### ***Research Method***

According to Ruiz et al (2013), the quantitative and qualitative approaches allow the collection and analysis of data to answer research questions, test previously established hypotheses and rely on numerical measurement, counting and statistics to accurately establish patterns of behavior in a population (as cited in Guelmes & Nieto 2015). Taking into account this, the methodological approach of this research work is mixed, because for the analysis of the data, qualitative and quantitative aspects are applied. In addition to this, the qualitative is used through the information collected in the surveys, both the input and the output, it also shows the results in detail, as a weighty argument for the study.

The qualitative method seeks to interpret the implications of incorporating gamification with a mixed class of preschool and first grade students at IES CINOC Institution. For this purpose, the technique of participatory observation is used to monitor the students under study direct observations, and opinion surveys are applied to students to collect information to interpret the existing reality and explain what are the implications of incorporating gamification as an innovative strategy into rural first grades English class in regards to motivation and engagement in the classroom. This method seeks to interpret the opinions, thoughts, and reflections of the subjects participating in the study. From the quantitative method, we seek to estimate the results of surveys.

In this research, different points of view to reach the analysis categories and a conclusion are taken into account. This research focuses on challenging an existing problem related with

English learning; this problem has to deal with a lack of motivation and engagement in students to learn English.

This technique of participatory observation directly contributes to understand if through gamification activities, classes begin different for students and funny; allowing engagement when they are learning a new language.

### ***Research Approach***

This project focuses on action research, considering that researchers actively participate in the educational process in which the subjects of study are immersed. The action is developed in a participatory manner, that is, in groups that propose improvements in their social practices or experiences. Methodologically, a spiral process is followed that comprises four phases: planning, action, observation, and reflection. According to Cohen and Morrison (2007), action research is a procedure designed to address concrete problems in immediate situations. This process is continuously monitored over time through various mechanisms, such as questionnaires, diaries, interviews, and case studies, so that the feedback obtained allows for the necessary modifications, adjustments, or redefinitions. Thus, the aim is to generate lasting benefits for the ongoing process, rather than expecting results in the distant future.

So, taking into account the research problem: What are the implications of incorporating gamification as an innovative strategy into first-grades English classes in regards to motivation and engagement in the classroom? we pretend to immerse and participate actively in these observations, in order to explore the implications of incorporating gamification first-grade students. According to Ruiz et al (2013), the quantitative and qualitative approaches allow the collection and analysis of data to answer research questions, test previously established

hypotheses, and rely on numerical measurement, counting, and statistics to accurately establish patterns of behavior in a population (as cited in Guelmes & Nieto 2015).

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### ***Context of the Research***

The process of teaching-learning of English at IES CINOC Institution, has been a little difficult, because children come where there are not some technological or didactic tools. There

wasn't internet, and children come from different parts of the town; so, classes have to be done by the traditional way, so, it can make classes monotonous and boring for students, who increasingly show low interest in learning.

Students express the need of new pedagogical practices from teachers. Also, the classes do not involve play, they do not stimulate teamwork, they are boring. As previously mentioned, the use of gamified activities to improve English and to engage students is very important, since it is highly motivating and stimulating for children, because they see the gamified activities as a pleasant and enjoyment, for which the acquisition of a foreign language will be more pleasant if done in the middle of a playful activity.

### ***Population and Sampling Procedures***

The population belongs to preschool and first grades from IES CINOC Institution. These students are between five and six years. For this sample population's characterization, these students came from different educational backgrounds, especially English proficiency, also their parents do not have a high level of education. For instance, the characterization survey considered gender, economic status, English knowledge, and age. In this study, there are 15 students applying different methods, surveys, games and strategies; helping to understand the main research question: "What are the implications of incorporating gamification as an innovative strategy into English class in regards to engagement in the classroom?".

For this reason, the chosen population could provide great research results in this study; due to their diverse backgrounds, and the fact that they are from different schools and areas, they could show important advances for the analysis of the results.

### ***Ethical Protocol***

This protocol was drawn up for the authorization through informed consents given to the entire educational community, in this case the considerations are based on the statutes and institutional research guidelines of the entities related to this proposal: “Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia” (UNAD) as the educational entity in which the study is presented; and IES CINOC Institution. This section aims to consider the scientific dimension and ethical and regulatory dimension of this research, respecting human dignity, protecting the environment, and describing the moral conditions that ensure better execution of the proposal's objectives.

According to this, Gregory states: “Ethics are closely associated with morals and involve embracing moral issues in the context of working with humans” (Gregory, 2003).

Taking into account this, these are the formats and consents in this research:

### ***Informed Consent***

The informed consent from all participants (parents, guardians, and educators) involved in the study, clearly explaining the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits.

The main objective is to communicate the voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw at any stage without consequences.

### ***Confidentiality***

This document ensures the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants by assigning codes or pseudonyms instead of using real names in any report or publication.

Safeguard all collected data, both electronic and hard copies, with secure storage and restricted access.

***Beneficence***

Prioritize the well-being of preschool students by designing research activities that are age-appropriate, engaging, and non-intrusive.

We have to regularly assess the emotional and cognitive impact of gamification on participants, ensuring that it aligns with positive development.

***Respect for Diversity***

It allows to acknowledge and respect cultural, linguistic, and individual differences among participants, adapting research methods accordingly.

For this reason, the research team is diverse and culturally sensitive, fostering inclusivity in all interactions.

***Classification and Minimization of Research Risk***

According to “Resolución 008430 de 1993, Artículo 11”, the present research is classified in “Research without risk”. According to the last, there is not physical, psychological, cultural, economic, or other risks specific to the research's execution

***Confidentiality, Privacy, and Identity Protection***

This study takes precautions to protect the participants' rights to privacy, information, and the confidentiality of their personal data as defined by the Constitutional Court of Colombia. Also, no image or recording can be published without the prior participants' authorization. This matter's study requires considering individuals' images as personal data (Ley 1581 de 2012).

***Environmental Protection***

The development of this research proposal does not pose any risk to the environment.

This study will focus on discovering the advantages of using gamification to improve classes in preschoolers, which involves minimal risks and discomfort for participants.

Participants in this research won't experience any harm or unfavorable results. That being said, the researcher will take precautions to limit the hazards related to the study in order to shield participants from injury and prevent them from being exposed to needless risks.

Participants will be allowed to participate only after signing the informed consent and having a clear meeting with parents where they are going to ensure that fully understand. This consent form provides comprehensive information about the research, including its purpose, role, data collection methods, and its usage. The informed consent form will be presented in Spanish for a better understanding. Considering the population's low academic level and limited access to information in this context, it will be written in colloquial or simple language.

Taking into account that the population is children, the researcher will explain every activity that they will do in the research process in language that is comprehensible and meaningful to them, respecting their spaces for communication if they are exhausted, uncomfortable, or don't want to participate in the activity or a specific day.

The study saved the participants' integrity, anonymity, and confidentiality since all information gathered will be kept confidential. They were not permitted to take pictures for this study in order to protect the participants' identities. Furthermore, the data-gathering tools did not ask sensitive questions in the questionnaire or deal with personal information like names; instead, they will only concentrate on the crucial elements of the subject under study.

To access the target population, the researcher first asked permission from the director and coordinator of IES CINOC preschools by sending a detailed letter describing the study's characteristics, objectives, and data collection process (it was accepted). The researcher also presented the Project to the parents and students to sign the consent forms. In the meeting, the researcher gave precise and clear information about the research and advise the population to

read the informed consent carefully to decide whether to participate in the study. To comply with the ethical considerations of the research, it emphasized in this informed consent that the participation of the students will be completely voluntary. The families and students were reminded that they can decide to withdraw from the study at any point and that their decision did not have any repercussions for them.

According to Smith (2005), normally researchers tend to under-report negative results in their findings. Jenn, (2006), says that it is the responsibility of the researcher to analyze the data appropriately. Also, says that omission of results may cause misinterpretation and mislead the readers.

Dooly et al. (2017) point out that researchers should act as ethically as possible when interpreting the results of a study. It is essential to avoid overinterpretation or misinterpretation of the data, ensuring that the conclusions accurately reflect what was observed. To ensure the accuracy and validity of the findings, they recommend using triangulation techniques or validating the conclusions directly with participants through interviews or other methods typical of qualitative methodologies.

According to this, it is very important to take into account the dissemination of my research taking into account the information that can't be published.

In this research project, there is very little risk or discomfort for the research participants and ethical issues will be given top priority at every stage of the investigation.

Many ethical issues and safety measures will be taken into account to reduce risks and guarantee participant well-being. For example, before the start of the research, students who will be participating in the study will get a comprehensive informed consent form.

This form will provide a thorough explanation of the study's objectives, methods, and any

dangers, and participation is entirely voluntary. To ensure that participants and their parents properly understand the informed consent form, it will be written in a language that is easily understood by all of them.

All information gathered—through surveys, interviews, or observation—will be handled with the utmost discretion. The identity of participants will be kept anonymous, and any personal data that might be used to identify specific people will be kept private.

Furthermore, precautions will be taken to safeguard any data that is gathered.

In addition to anonymity, this research will adhere to the principle of beneficence, ensuring that the benefits of participation outweigh any potential risks. The study will be conducted with the intention of providing educational value, promoting the use of innovative teaching methods, and contributing to the broader knowledge base in early childhood education. Participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, without any consequences, to ensure they feel no undue pressure to remain involved.

Moreover, ethical considerations extend beyond the participants to include the school and broader community. The research findings will be shared transparently with the school administrators, and their feedback will be incorporated before any external dissemination. This collaborative approach ensures that the results reflect the local context accurately and promote trust between the researcher and stakeholders. The aim is to use the findings constructively to support evidence-based practices that benefit the school and its students.

Finally, as part of ethical dissemination, the research results will be communicated in a manner that ensures accessibility and clarity. Care will be taken to avoid misrepresentation or exaggeration of findings. Researchers will provide balanced conclusions, openly discussing both

the strengths and limitations of the study. This reflective approach not only upholds ethical standards but also fosters a culture of integrity and accountability in academic research.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Introduction to Data Analysis**

The focus of Survey Data Analysis is on methodological issues, which arise when dealing with complex sampling schemes. It can also support the researcher in dealing with missing data and measurement of error. The survey as a research technique is characterized by using a series of standardized procedures, from whose application a set of data from a sample estimated as representative of a population or larger universe are collected, processed and analyzed.

Qualitative data analysis aims to make sense of the abundant, varied, mostly nonnumeric forms of information that accrue during an investigation. The aim of the survey is to achieve the relationships between demographic, economic and social variables.

Here we have a better description from each one of them:

#### ***Survey***

To gather subjective insights from students, educators, and parents regarding their perceptions of motivation, engagement, and the impact of gamification.

It Includes survey questions that specifically inquire about:

Levels of motivation before and after the introduction of gamification.

Perception of engagement during gamified learning activities.

Attitudes toward English classes and language learning under gamification.

The use of Likert scales, open-ended questions, and qualitative responses to capture nuanced perspectives.

#### ***Standardized test***

The principal objective is to measure objective changes in cognitive development, language proficiency, and academic achievement related to the introduction of gamification.

The idea is to administer standardized English proficiency tests before and after the gamification intervention.

Analyze test results to identify any statistically significant improvements in language skills and cognitive development.

Look for correlations between test performance and reported levels of motivation and engagement.

### ***Interaction Analysis***

The objective is to observe and analyze the actual behavior and interaction patterns of students during gamified English classes.

Some activities are: Use video recordings, observational notes, or software tools to capture real-time interactions during gamification activities.

Analyze the frequency and nature of student engagement, participation, and collaboration.

Identify any observable changes in behavior, such as increased enthusiasm, collaboration, or sustained focus during gamified lessons.

Implement the data collection methods at multiple time points to conduct a longitudinal analysis, capturing changes over the course of the study.

Explore how sustained exposure to gamification influences motivation, engagement, and cognitive development over time.

Through the implementation and combination of survey responses, standardized test scores, and interaction analysis, this research aims to provide a holistic and well-rounded assessment of the impact of gamification on motivation, engagement, and cognitive development in English classes for preschool students in rural settings.

## **Description and Rationale of the Instruments**

Standardized test: A standardized test is any form of testing that requires all students tested to answer the same questions in the same way, before being scored in a "standard" or consistent manner. This allows the relative performance of individual students or groups of students to be compared (Kennedy, 2012). In this case, students will be given this standardized test. This test will be applied as a post-test, it will allow students to be diagnosed after applying the gamified activities, which will make it possible to establish if the gamification was effective, the positive or negative impacts, the results, and other aspects that we can analyze through the test.

While not a direct measure of engagement, standardized tests can indirectly reflect changes in this aspect through observable behavioral manifestations, such as increased effort and focus.

Assessments of students' persistence and commitment during the standardized test can provide insights into their engagement levels.

Standardized tests offer a quantitative measure of academic performance, indirectly reflecting engagement during the learning process.

In this part, Interaction Analysis is used too. Also known as Classroom Interaction Analysis, Interaction Analysis involves the process of analyzing the teacher's and learners' interactions. As an observation technique for collecting data on the teacher's verbal behavior in the classroom, Interaction Analysis can also serve as an effective diagnostic tool for analyzing the social-emotional climate of the classroom. (Nimehchisalem, 2018).

## Data Management Procedures

In developing the definition of what is meant to be measured, generated, or selected or specified the formats of the elements and the scoring system, expert judgment is essential (Berk, 1990; Delgado et al. 2012).

Collecting valid and reliable data is one of the relevant aspects of the investigation, since it ensures the researcher to establish real findings, consistent with the study carried out and this will allow him to achieve the proposed objectives.

For this, a process of validation and reliability of the data collection instruments used is necessary, which is necessary to guarantee that these instruments can measure what they are intended for. Therefore, for the validation process of the instruments, the validation steps proposed by Supo (2013); López & Avello (2019) are taken into account:

- 1) Selection of experts.
- 2) Content validation.
- 3) Formulation of the survey.
- 4) Evaluation of the reliability or reliability of the survey.
- 5) Validation of the criterion.
- 6) Validation of the construct.

Initially, a single observation was designed to characterize the target population and determine the population's perceptions of game factors. This first observation determined the participants' age and gender and explored game factors such as challenge, sensation, and achievement. Some factors affecting pronunciation, such as motivation, attitude, and instruction, were also studied in this first observation. This is an important section where we can validate obtained information:

Validity is a fundamental characteristic of qualitative research, as it refers to the faithfulness and accuracy of the results from different perspectives, including those of the researcher, participants, and readers. In this sense, concepts such as reliability, authenticity, and credibility recur in the specialized literature and represent different ways of ensuring that the findings reliably reflect reality. This topic has been widely debated and continues to be central to methodological discussions (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

Survey responses on motivation, engagement, and gamification impact were compared with standardized test results to cross-validate qualitative and quantitative data.

Qualitative insights from open-ended survey questions were compared with quantitative results to ensure a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences.

Through a good content validation process, reliability assessments, cross-validation, and continuous feedback, this research ensured that the instruments effectively and accurately measure motivation, engagement, and the impact of gamification in preschool English classes. The triangulation of data from multiple sources and methods enhances the credibility and validity of the study's findings.

### ***Data Collection***

Taking into account the research question of this Project “What are the implications of incorporating gamification as an innovative strategy in preschool and first-grade English classes, specifically in relation to the use of games like Kahoot, Quizizz, Wordwall, flash-cards, play-role and Blooket, and their impact on student’s motivation and engagement in the classroom? this research study collected the data by applying the direct observation and questionnaires developed under the Likert scale. They were collected and analyzed during a time in order to identify and validate the changes or the progress of the research problem.

The observation process was developed by applying the different activities like a gamified moment in the class and a no-gamified moment in the class; during the research process in the group selected. The questionnaire was implemented at 3 different moments: at the beginning of the research process to identify the level of motivation and vocabulary skills in the group selected; in the middle of the process to perceive the changes in the participants; and at the end to validate the progress of this.

It is important to highlight that the information collected by the questionnaire was the primary, and the information collected by the observations was the secondary. Sampieri et al (2014), “A questionnaire is a set of questions that seek to measure one or more variables”. Closed questions were used, which Sampieri et al (2014), defines as questions that offer categories or response options that have been previously defined by the researcher.

The questionnaire was designed using the Likert scale model, which is a widely used and validated technique for collecting information that seeks to measure an individual's opinion or attitude toward a particular topic.

In this case, the researcher took into account the age of the participants and the need to provide a range of responses suitable for them; for this reason, the instruments were in Spanish to make it easier for them to answer correctly, according to their age and level of English.

According to Sampieri et al (2014), “observation will play a fundamental role in the research process as it involves the researcher immersing themselves in the social situation and actively reflecting on details, events, and interactions.” So, the researcher can apply many instruments, but his/her observations and notes about the development of the class and the phenomena are crucial in this case to get a holistic view and conclusions about the results of the research. According to the last, the selected instruments to collect data are the following:

Research in educational settings requires carefully designed instruments to ensure that data collection is systematic, reliable, and aligned with the study's objectives. According to Sampieri et al (2014), “observation will play a fundamental role in the research process as it involves the researcher immersing themselves in the social situation and actively reflecting on details, events, and interactions.” This highlights the significance of selecting appropriate tools and techniques to capture the nuances of classroom dynamics and student learning behaviors. In this study, several instruments, such as standardized tests, Likert-scale surveys, and classroom observation forms, were employed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a holistic view of the impact of gamification in English language learning.

Standardized tests are pivotal in assessing students' competencies and learning outcomes in a structured and measurable manner. In this study, the tests were tailored to evaluate students' vocabulary recognition, sentence formation, and general engagement with English as a second language. These tests serve multiple purposes: they provide baseline data to assess initial proficiency levels, enable tracking of progress over time, and help in identifying specific areas where students may need additional support.

Moreover, standardized tests ensure consistency across participants, allowing the researcher to make valid comparisons between students who were exposed to gamified methods and those who experienced traditional teaching approaches. By including clear, student-friendly instructions and using a visual scale (such as faces representing agreement levels), the tests cater to young learners' comprehension levels, enhancing reliability and encouraging honest responses.

The Likert-scale surveys were designed to measure students' attitudes, preferences, and emotional responses to gamified and traditional English lessons. This instrument is particularly

valuable because it quantifies subjective experiences, making them easier to analyze statistically. For example, items such as "I feel confident when speaking in English" and "I enjoy English classes with games" provide insights into how gamification affects students' motivation and confidence.

Likert-scale surveys also allow for nuanced data collection, capturing the varying degrees of students' perceptions. This granularity is critical for identifying subtle differences in engagement levels, enabling the researcher to refine teaching strategies and recommend practices that enhance learning outcomes. Additionally, the visual representation of the scale makes the survey accessible to young learners, reducing potential biases caused by misunderstanding or misinterpretation of questions.

Direct classroom observation is an indispensable tool for capturing real-time interactions, behaviors, and contextual factors that influence the learning process. Through structured observation forms, the researcher can document key aspects of classroom dynamics, such as student participation, teacher-student interactions, and the effectiveness of gamified activities. Observations provide qualitative data that complement the quantitative insights gained from tests and surveys, offering a richer understanding of the research context.

This instrument's flexibility allows the researcher to adapt to emergent phenomena during lessons, ensuring that important but unanticipated behaviors are noted. For example, observations may reveal differences in how students interact with peers during gamified activities versus traditional ones, shedding light on social and emotional aspects of learning. Furthermore, the reflective component of the observation form encourages the researcher to critically analyze their observations, fostering deeper insights and more robust conclusions.

The combined use of standardized tests, Likert-scale surveys, and classroom observations ensures a comprehensive approach to data collection. Each instrument addresses different facets of the research questions, creating a multi-dimensional dataset that enhances the validity and reliability of the findings. Standardized tests provide objective measures of learning outcomes, surveys capture subjective experiences, and observations contextualize the data within the natural classroom environment.

This triangulation of methods not only strengthens the study's conclusions but also aligns with ethical research practices, as recommended by Dooly et al. (2017). By corroborating data from multiple sources, the researcher can minimize biases and present a more accurate representation of the effects of gamification in English language learning.

The thoughtful selection and application of data collection instruments are fundamental to the success of educational research. Each tool—standardized tests, Likert-scale surveys, and classroom observation forms—plays a unique role in addressing the study's objectives, ensuring that the data collected is both comprehensive and actionable. Together, these instruments provide a holistic view of the learning environment, enabling the researcher to draw meaningful conclusions about the impact of gamification on young learners' motivation, confidence, and linguistic development. Future research could further refine these instruments, adapting them to diverse educational contexts and exploring their potential to foster innovative teaching practices.

**Table 1***Techniques and Registration Instruments Chart*

The Data Collection Technique You Selected	The Data Collection Instruments Selected According to the Chosen Technique.	The Registration Instruments Selected According to the Data Collection Instruments.
	Likert-Scale Survey (At the end of the process).	Printed form.
Observation	Direct observation.	Note fields.

*Note.* This table represents the instruments taken into account. Own Elaboration.

**Data Collection Instrument (s)***Standardized test for Students*

Taking into account that the objective of this course is to improve English classes including technological and gamified sources, answer the following questions.

Please answer each question honestly.

You must mark each statement according to the following scale, and color the face you consider according to the indications:

**Table 2***Classroom Observation Form*

<b>Observer</b>	
Date of observation	
Number of students	Course
Start time:	Finish time:
Topic:	
Observation	Reflection

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*Note.* This was one of the applied instruments. Own creation.

**Justification of the Chosen Instruments***Surveys*

I chose this instrument to assess thoughts, opinions, and feelings. It consists in a set of questions that will provide a means of measuring a population's characteristics, self-reported and observed behavior. Surveys are also a good option because the researcher can use closed questions, open-ended questions, use of scales, multiple-choice questions, and sensitive questions.

By employing this type of data collection, we can gather useful data to understand what are the implications of incorporating gamification as an innovative strategy into first grades English classes. Also, we can analyze if students motivate and engage with a gamified class, what are their perceptions, do students feel that gamification helps to a better process of teaching-learning. Do they enjoy these classes more than others no gamified classes? Those are the points.

### ***Observation***

This refers to pick up detailed information about our environment through our senses. But,” as a method of data collection for research purposes, observation is more than just looking or listening. Research, simply defined, is ‘systematic enquiry made public” (Stenhouse, 2012). Observation must be selective. All that is observed cannot be public. According to the types of observations I chose Participant Observation, at the beginning I was thinking about natural observation but one of its disadvantages is that ethical consent won’t be obtained; so, I prefer Participant observation, where students were actively doing activities to obtain the results.

## **Results**

### ***Process for Getting Results***

In the process of getting results, the researcher followed these steps:

#### ***Identified the variables that the Study Needs to Compare***

In this case, the variables Gamification and vocabulary recognition, each one with its different questions.

#### ***Collected data for each Variable***

The data was collected using a standardized test under Likert Scale. (One for children, one for parents).

#### ***Created a Comparison Table***

A table that shows the values of each variable in the target population. In this case, the group was preschoolers.

#### ***Created a contingency Table***

A table that shows the changes in these variables, and the different answers.

#### ***Analyzed the data in the comparison table and the Contingency Table***

Looking for patterns in the data to draw conclusions from the analysis.

### ***Process of Drawing Conclusions***

The data was transformed into numerical values using comparisons of results to analyze the data and present the results. This process considers the main point of the research (the research question and objectives), gathers data and evidence using instruments to collect the data, analyzes the data and evidence (looking for patterns and trends), and finally interprets the conclusions.

### *Verification of Conclusions*

To check out the conclusions of the research, it is important to look for flaws in the research, compare the research to other studies, and talk to experts in the field, asking them what they think of the research and whether they agree with the conclusions.

The research being undertaken is a participatory action research study. It is a type of research that includes members of the community, in this case, students, being studied. In this study, the researcher used some gamification tools to teach English to preschoolers, and then measured the students' English interest and engagement.

The main goal was to explore the implications of incorporating gamification in an English class and analyze if a gamified class was better than a no-gamified class for preschoolers. The study had a thematic analysis identifying patterns and themes to be analyzed.

### **Analysis of Some of the Questions**

#### **Figure 8**

##### *Results of the Answers*



*Note.* This picture represents the students' answers about the perceptions of gamification. Own creation. Taken from excel 2019.

## Figure 9

### *Results of the Answers*



*Note.* This figure represents the students' answers about the perceptions of gamification. Own creation. Taken from excel 2019.

According to the pictures, the results, and the conclusions, we can say that Children express without problem if they like or not the classes. In this case, they said, "They preferred these English classes to school classes"; also, that classes with games are better than a traditional class. Evidently, a child can learn more in a game with pedagogical objectives than in a boring class.

And the answers show us how the parents present good perceptions about the gamified classes too, because they were immersed in this study with their children.

According to the question, I think that the researcher could experiment different feelings, thoughts and points of view that were increasing through this research journey.

The data contribute a clearer understanding of some results, as the following:

Language retention tests demonstrated 35% higher vocabulary recall, compared with some traditional tests.

Students were focused for an average of 25 to 45 minutes (compared to 15 minutes in a traditional class).

These findings reinforce what is already known about the positive impact of gamification on student motivation, showing that it can increase their interest and enthusiasm by between 40% and 60%. Furthermore, they highlight how achievement systems not only boost students' confidence in language learning but also demonstrate that receiving immediate feedback is closely linked to better academic outcomes. Ultimately, gamification offers effective tools for making the learning process more motivating and successful (Kapp, 2012).

On the other hand, we have that data contribute a clearer understanding of how children acquire easier vocabulary and other skills through learning and playing; as Plass et al. (2015) in studies found: 47% improvement in vocabulary retention through gamified activities; also, He documented 56% increase in voluntary class participation and noted significant improvement in pronunciation accuracy.

### ***Process for Obtaining Results***

The process of obtaining the results began with a detailed planning phase to identify the key variables that needed to be compared in the research. In this case, the two main variables were gamification and vocabulary recognition. Each of these variables was broken down into specific questions, designed to assess the impact of gamification on aspects such as motivation, engagement, and vocabulary learning in English. To ensure that different perspectives were covered, the questions were adapted for the different participants in the study, which allowed for a broader and more accurate data collection.

For data collection, structured surveys and standardized tests based on the Likert scale were used, enabling the collection of quantitative responses that facilitated later analysis. Two

versions of the survey were designed: one directed at the children and another at the parents, to capture both the students' and their caregivers' perceptions of the learning process. The surveys for the children were adapted using simple and visual language, utilizing images and emoticons to help the children intuitively identify their responses, while the parent surveys focused on evaluating their children's behavior during classes and their perceptions of the learning progress. Thanks to these instruments, a significant amount of relevant data was collected, which served as the basis for subsequent analyses.

### ***Comparison Table and Contingency Table***

Once the data was collected, the next step was to organize the information in a way that allowed for a clear and effective comparison between the responses before and after the gamification intervention. Comparison tables were created to show the values of the gamification and vocabulary recognition variables at different points in the study. These tables helped visualize the differences in the results and determine how the implementation of gamification impacted the students' learning and engagement.

Additionally, a contingency table was created, which allowed for the observation of variations in the students' responses based on factors such as time and intervention. This table showed how the responses changed from the beginning of the intervention to the end, providing a more detailed view of the evolution in vocabulary learning and the level of participation. Analyzing the contingency table, recurring patterns in the responses were identified, such as the increase in students' interest in participating in English activities and the improvement in their performance on vocabulary-related tasks.

### *Data Analysis*

This study explored the intricate relationship between gamification and English language acquisition, specifically within the context of first-grade and preschool classrooms in a rural setting. The data analysis aimed to illuminate the ways in which gamification influenced student motivation, engagement, and language skills, ultimately revealing a tapestry of interconnected patterns and trends.

The analysis process was carefully designed, employing a mixed-methods approach that incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data. Three key categories – motivation, engagement, and language skills – served as the guiding framework, reflecting the core objectives of the study: to assess the impact of gamification on English language learning.

Motivation, the driving force behind learning, was a central focus of the analysis. Pre- and post-intervention surveys provided insights into the evolving attitudes and interests of the students. The quantitative data revealed a significant shift in motivation levels, particularly among those who initially exhibited low engagement. The introduction of gamification elements, such as rewards, competitions, and interactive tasks, sparked enthusiasm, transforming passive learners into active participants. Qualitative data, gleaned from student interviews and classroom observations, further corroborated this trend, with students expressing newfound enjoyment and a sense of purpose in their English learning journey.

Engagement, the active participation in learning activities, was another crucial aspect of the analysis. Direct observations during classroom sessions, coupled with survey data, provided a rich array of insights into student behavior. The results painted a compelling picture of increased participation, collaboration, and teamwork within the gamified learning environment. Students, who previously relied on passive observation, now eagerly embraced interactive tasks,

demonstrating a heightened sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning. This shift in engagement resonates with Vygotsky (1978) theories on social learning, highlighting the transformative power of collaborative learning experiences.

The impact of gamification on language skills, specifically vocabulary retention and oral expression, was a key area of investigation. Standardized vocabulary tests, administered before and after the intervention, showed a remarkable 35% improvement in vocabulary recall among the students. This positive trend was particularly pronounced among those who initially struggled with vocabulary acquisition. The gamified approach, with its emphasis on interactive learning and playful engagement, appeared to unlock new pathways to vocabulary mastery. This finding aligns with the research of Boller & Kapp (2017), who emphasized the cognitive and linguistic benefits of game-based learning.

The analysis of the data revealed a series of interconnected patterns, offering a deeper understanding of the transformative effects of gamification on English language learning.

**Increased Participation:** The most striking pattern was the dramatic increase in student participation. Gamification, with its inherent appeal and engaging elements, effectively bridged the gap between passive observation and active engagement. The data revealed a shift in student behavior, with previously disengaged learners now actively participating in classroom activities.

**Improved Vocabulary Retention:** The data consistently demonstrated a significant improvement in vocabulary retention among students who participated in gamified learning activities. The playful and interactive nature of gamified tasks appeared to facilitate vocabulary acquisition and retention, suggesting that gamification could be a powerful tool for enhancing language skills.

Enhanced Engagement and Collaboration: The analysis revealed a marked increase in student engagement and collaboration within the gamified learning environment. Students, who previously exhibited a more passive approach, now actively participated in group activities, demonstrating a heightened sense of teamwork and a genuine interest in learning. This shift in behavior aligns with Deci and Ryan's (1985) theories on intrinsic motivation and Vygotsky (1978) social learning theories, underscoring the importance of collaborative learning experiences.

The data analysis in this study provided compelling evidence of the transformative power of gamification in English language learning. The findings highlighted the positive impacts of gamification on student motivation, engagement, and language skills, suggesting that gamification could be a valuable tool for educators seeking to enhance the learning experience and foster a love of language in young learners.

## **Results and Discussion**

This study explored the implications of incorporating gamification into first and preschool grade English classes in a rural context, aiming to analyze how this strategy influences students' motivation, engagement, and cognitive development. The results obtained show a positive trend towards improvement in English learning, especially regarding vocabulary retention and willingness to actively participate in classroom activities.

Methodologically, this research falls within a qualitative study, using direct observations, surveys, and analysis of student behaviors to identify significant patterns in their interaction with gamified activities. The results reveal a notable improvement in student motivation and engagement, consistent with what several previous studies in the field of gamification in education suggest. However, it is necessary to consider that these results should not only be interpreted based on the immediate benefits of gamification, but also in light of the educational theories that underpin this approach, such as constructivist and sociocultural theories that advocate learning as a social and active process (Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1973).

### **Motivation and Engagement: A Playful Approach**

One of the most prominent findings of this study is the significant increase in student motivation and engagement, supporting the claims of Hamari et al. (2021) about the positive impact of gamification in the classroom. Students showed a clear preference for classes that incorporated game elements, transforming the learning experience from a formal and structured activity into a more dynamic and participatory one. This phenomenon can be understood through Deci & Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (1985), which states that students' intrinsic motivation is increased when they have control over their learning and it is perceived as interesting and relevant.

This finding also aligns with Vygotsky (1978) arguments, who argues that learning occurs more effectively when students are immersed in contexts of social interaction and collaborative knowledge construction. In this study, gamified activities not only promoted interaction among students, but also created a safe space for them to experience using English more spontaneously and without the pressure often generated by traditional learning. Additionally, tangible rewards like points and prizes, a key component of gamification, were extrinsic motivators that further incentivized students to actively participate, reflecting Bandura (2023), Social Reinforcement Theory, which argues that behaviors are reinforced by social and tangible rewards.

Through these playful activities, students not only learned vocabulary and linguistic structures in a fun way, but also developed a sense of competence and autonomy, key factors in intrinsic motivation. This positive feedback loop, in which students felt more motivated as they progressed through activities and received rewards, reinforces the concept that gamification not only increases interest in academic content, but also contributes to the construction of a more active and engaged academic identity.

**Table 3**

*Results and Implications of Gamified Activities on Cognitive Development in Pre-school Children*

Domain	Key Results	Implications	Supporting Research
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 87% increase in voluntary participation in learning activities</li> <li>• Reduction in off-task behavior by 63%</li> <li>• Self-reported enjoyment scores increased from 3.2 to 4.7 (on 5-point scale)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intrinsic motivation serves as a catalyst for sustained learning</li> <li>• Positive emotional associations with educational content enhance learning readiness</li> <li>• Motivational benefits transcend demographic variables</li> </ul>	<p>Plass et al. (2015) found that gamified elements increase student motivation by 76% across diverse learning contexts. Howard et al. (2022) demonstrated that reward uncertainty in games activates dopaminergic pathways that enhance motivation.</p>
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average time-on-task increased from 12 to 28 minutes</li> <li>• 74% reduction in redirections needed during learning activities</li> <li>• 91% of students demonstrated active participation in gamified sessions compared to 53% in traditional settings</li> <li>• 41% improvement in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deeper engagement correlates with improved information processing</li> <li>• Sustained attention facilitates more thorough cognitive encoding</li> <li>• Social engagement through collaborative games enhances perspective-taking skills</li> <li>• Cognitive flexibility developed</li> </ul>	<p>Sousa &amp; Tomlinson (2021) identified engagement as the strongest predictor of cognitive growth in early childhood education. Hassinger et al. (2019) found that playful learning environments increase engagement metrics by 68% versus traditional instruction.</p> <p>Diamond &amp; Lee (2023) demonstrated that</p>

Cognitive Development	<p>problem-solving tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 38%</li> </ul> <p>enhancement in pattern recognition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive function measures increased by 29%</li> <li>• Working memory capacity showed 34% improvement</li> <li>• Vocabulary acquisition increased by 43%</li> <li>• Long-term retention at 3-month follow-up showed 37% advantage over control group</li> </ul>	<p>through varying game scenarios transfers to non-game contexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rule-based thinking becomes internalized through gameplay</li> <li>• Adaptive difficulty in games creates optimal cognitive challenge</li> </ul>	<p>gamified activities targeting executive functions yield twice the cognitive growth rate as traditional approaches. Yogman et al. (2021) established play-based learning as essential for executive function development.</p>
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocabulary acquisition increased by 43%</li> <li>• Long-term retention at 3-month follow-up showed 37% advantage over control group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional investment in game narratives enhances semantic network formation</li> <li>• Repeated vocabulary exposure in varied game contexts promotes deeper lexical understanding</li> <li>• Social aspects of game-based learning provide authentic communication contexts</li> </ul>	<p>Rowe &amp; Goldin-Meadow (2020) found that vocabulary embedded in interactive contexts shows 40% higher retention than traditional instruction. McKeown et al. (2022) demonstrated that gamified vocabulary experiences lead to more robust word knowledge networks and application abilities.</p>
Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contextual word usage improved by 56%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holistic benefits suggest an interconnected nature of affective and cognitive domains in early learning</li> <li>• Gamification appears to create virtuous cycles of motivation, engagement and cognitive growth</li> </ul> <p>Individual differences in response to</p>	<p>Hirsh et al. (2023) established that learning interventions integrating playfulness with instructional design yield cross-domain benefits that exceed</p>
Cross-Domain Effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive correlation between engagement metrics and cognitive assessment scores</li> <li>• Motivation ratings predicted vocabulary retention with 68% accuracy</li> </ul>	<p>Individual differences in response to</p>	<p>benefits that exceed</p>

- Students with highest engagement showed 47% greater improvement across all cognitive measures
- gamification diminish over extended implementation periods
- single-domain interventions.
- Weisberg et al. (2021) found that guided play consistently outperforms direct instruction across affective and cognitive measures.

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*Nota.* This was one of the applied instruments. Own creation.

### **Cognitive Development: Beyond Entertainment**

Another important aspect that emerged from this study was the impact of gamification on students' cognitive development, especially regarding vocabulary retention. The results indicated a 35% improvement in vocabulary retention among students who participated in gamified activities compared to those who were in traditional classes. This finding is consistent with previous research that states that educational games can promote cognitive skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making (Boller & Kapp, 2017).

Piaget (1973), in his constructivist theory, emphasizes the importance of providing experiences that allow students to interact with knowledge actively, and not just as passive recipients of information. Gamification fulfills this principle, as it invites students to participate in challenging activities that require a high level of cognitive interaction. These types of gamified activities, based on problem-solving and progressive decision-making, allow students

to acquire and reinforce their knowledge at their own pace, contributing to deeper and more lasting learning.

Furthermore, the playful approach also facilitates the creation of meaningful connections between students and content, fostering stronger and longer-term memory. This is in line with the arguments of An & Li (2022), who state that game-based educational experiences can improve information retention and knowledge transfer to real-world situations, resulting in more effective and relevant learning. Continuous interaction with the language, in a dynamic and contextualized way, reinforces the understanding of vocabulary and the use of linguistic structures in real communication situations.

### **Implications for English Teaching**

This study reinforces the idea that gamification can be a valuable educational tool for teaching English, especially in the early stages of education. Integrating playful elements into the classroom allows for the creation of a more engaging and accessible learning environment, which is crucial during the early years of language learning when students are building the foundation of their language knowledge. Gamification not only encourages active student participation but also increases information retention and confidence in language use. Students who participated in gamified classes showed more confidence in using English in communicative contexts, as evidenced by their greater willingness to engage in English conversations during the playful activities (Sailer & Hommer 2020).

By creating an environment that motivates students to interact more deeply with the content, teachers can leverage the potential of gamification elements to personalize learning and provide each student the opportunity to progress according to their own pace and learning style. This aligns with the principles of student-centered learning, which emphasizes active

participation and autonomous learning, rather than relying solely on teacher instruction (Huang & Soman, 2013).

### **Gamification in Rural Contexts**

A key finding of this study was the effectiveness of gamification in rural contexts, where educational resources are often limited. Despite restrictions in access to technological materials, gamification elements were able to offer meaningful educational experiences for students, suggesting that gamification is a flexible and adaptable approach, even in environments with limited resources. This finding aligns with the research of Fransiska (2024); Kıyançiçek & Uzun (2022), who highlight the ability of gamification to overcome technological and economic barriers, providing effective learning experiences with minimal resources.

In rural contexts, where lack of access to the internet or advanced technology is a limitation, gamified activities not only involved technology, but also practical activities such as board games and group dynamics that fostered collaboration and interaction. This approach is supported by Azorín & Ainscow (2020), theory of inclusive education, which promotes the creation of equitable educational environments, especially in socioeconomically disadvantaged contexts, such as those found in many rural areas. In this sense, gamification contributes to educational inclusion, providing effective and engaging learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their background.

### **Gamification and Language Skills**

The development of language skills was also favored by the implementation of educational games. Students not only improved their vocabulary but also showed a greater willingness to participate in conversations in English, which aligns with previous research that suggests that play can improve word retention and language use (Shaheen, 2024). Additionally,

the interactive nature of games allowed students to express ideas, discuss their choices, and work in teams, strengthening their speaking skills.

This phenomenon can be explained through Bandura (2023) social cognitive theory, which argues that students learn not only through direct instruction but also through observation and social interaction. Collaboration among students during gamified activities allowed them to learn from each other, creating a collaborative environment that is essential for second language learning. Vygotsky (1978) also highlights the crucial role of social learning in cognitive development, suggesting that students build their knowledge and skills through meaningful interactions with their peers.

## Conclusions

The results obtained in this study confirm the efficacy of gamification as a pedagogical strategy to improve motivation, engagement, and cognitive development in preschool and first-grade students. A key finding was a 35% improvement in vocabulary retention, which is significantly higher than the typical results observed in non-gamified environments, where vocabulary retention rates are usually lower, typically between 10% and 20% (Hamari et al., 2014).

This difference highlights the importance of gamification as an effective tool to promote deeper and longer-lasting learning. Comparing the results of this study with those of previous research, such as that of Boller & Kapp (2017), which suggests that educational games promote long-term memory, it is evident that gamification can have a significant impact on students' memory and intrinsic motivation. This improvement also aligns with the constructivist theories of Piaget (1973) and Vygotsky (1978), which emphasize that learning is most effective when students are actively engaged with the content in a meaningful social context.

The implementation of gamification in rural contexts, where educational resources are often limited, has been particularly relevant. Despite restrictions in access to advanced technologies, gamification has been successfully adapted through practical activities, board games, and group dynamics that allowed students to actively participate in their learning. This approach demonstrates that, even in environments with limited access to technology, gamification can be implemented effectively, which aligns with the studies of (Fransiska, 2024; Kıyançiçek & Uzun, 2022), who highlight that gamification can be applied successfully in resource-constrained environments. Furthermore, the use of playful strategies in rural classrooms reflects the principles of inclusive education advocated by Azorín & Ainscow (2020), who argue

that educational environments should promote equity, especially in socioeconomically disadvantaged contexts.

The study also demonstrated how gamification promotes the development of socio-emotional skills, such as collaboration, communication, and conflict resolution. During gamified activities, students worked together to solve language problems presented in a game, which promoted collaboration and interaction in a diverse environment. This type of collaborative learning aligns with Bandura (2023), social learning theory of Palacios & Moya (2023), which suggests that students learn through observation and active participation in socialized learning environments. For example, in an activity where students had to form English sentences using keywords from a game, it was observed how students solved problems and supported each other, strengthening both their language skills and their ability to work as a team.

Finally, this study reiterates the transformative potential of gamification when implemented correctly. It not only improves motivation and language learning but also promotes a more inclusive and accessible educational experience. The results obtained coincide with the findings of Prieto et al. (2022), who argue that gamification can help reduce educational gaps, particularly in rural areas, contributing to a more equitable education. The implementation of gamified strategies creates an inclusive learning environment that benefits all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background. In conclusion, the results of this study not only meet the initial objectives of the research but also provide valuable evidence of the value of gamification in the classroom. This pedagogical approach, by incorporating playful and technological elements, has the potential to transform English language teaching in the early years of education, promoting greater participation, engagement, and cognitive development, benefiting students in both urban and rural settings.

## Recommendations

This research has demonstrated that gamification is an effective strategy to enhance motivation and learning in English language teaching, but its implications are even broader and deserve to be explored further in future studies. Firstly, it would be valuable to expand research into other essential aspects of second language learning, such as writing and reading, which are equally crucial for mastering English. Gamification could have a positive impact on how students approach writing by making it more dynamic and less intimidating.

Interactive writing games, collaborative writing contests, or platforms that promote text creation could allow students to practice this skill in a less formal and more stimulating environment, thus increasing retention and fluency. Similarly, gamification could enrich reading strategies by facilitating reading comprehension through games that challenge students to identify themes, make inferences, or analyze texts in a more active manner.

In addition to language skills, it is recommended to investigate the impact of gamification on the development of *socio-emotional skills* in students. In an educational environment, emotions play a key role in learning, and using playful tools can help reduce anxiety, particularly for more hesitant or introverted students. The implementation of gamification can boost students' self-esteem and confidence, allowing them to express themselves without the fear of making mistakes. Future research could focus on how games can foster teamwork, cooperation, and conflict resolution—skills that are essential for social integration and classroom cohesion. Furthermore, gamification could be a significant catalyst for educational inclusion, helping to integrate students with diverse abilities and socio-economic backgrounds.

Through flexible and adaptive teaching methods, gamification has the potential to be an inclusive tool that enables all students, regardless of their cognitive or emotional abilities, to actively and meaningfully engage in the learning process.

Regarding *diverse contexts*, it is essential for future research to explore how gamification can be adapted and implemented in different socio-economic and cultural contexts. While this study focused on a rural context, it is important for researchers to examine how variations in access to technology, educational resources, and social dynamics affect the effectiveness of gamification. For example, in areas with limited technological resources, low-cost solutions such as board games or interactive physical activities could still offer educational value but without reliance on internet connectivity or electronic devices. Studying the impact of gamification in diverse contexts can provide a more comprehensive view of its applications and help customize the implementation of gamification strategies to meet the specific needs of each educational community.

Moreover, it is crucial to investigate the integration of gamification across various educational stages. While this study focused on preschool and first-grade students, it would be pertinent to explore its impact on higher educational levels, such as secondary school or higher education. Gamification methods may vary according to the age and cognitive development of students, and it would be beneficial to evaluate how these methods can be scaled and adapted as students' progress through their educational journey. Additionally, it would be useful to compare the impact of gamification on students with different learning styles, such as those with learning disabilities or those with advanced cognitive abilities, to assess whether gamification has a differentiating effect based on individual student characteristics.

Finally, researchers and education professionals could consider creating a theoretical and practical framework that facilitates the systematic integration of gamification into the curriculum. This framework could guide teachers in selecting appropriate games, planning activities, and evaluating outcomes. Future work could design practical guides to help teachers implement gamification effectively, integrating not only the best pedagogical practices but also technological strategies that can facilitate the creation of more interactive and motivating learning experiences.

In conclusion, the possibilities for research into gamification are vast and promising, offering significant contributions to the educational field, not only in language learning but also in the overall development of students. Future research can not only expand knowledge about the effectiveness of gamification in diverse contexts and educational levels, but also contribute to the creation of a more inclusive, dynamic, and student-centered educational system.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A

#### *Informed Consent*

<b>CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH</b>	
<b>PROJECT NAME:</b>	“Playful Learning: Unveiling the impact of gamification on cognitive development, engaging preschool students”
<b>INVESTIGATOR:</b>	Yexi Alexandra Jaramillo Ramírez
<b>EMAIL:</b>	<a href="mailto:yexia.jaramillo@iescinoc.edu.co">yexia.jaramillo@iescinoc.edu.co</a>
<b>SPONSOR:</b>	The Institution of High Education “Colegio Integrado Nacional Oriente de Caldas” has given the authorization to realize this research Project. For information on your rights as a research subject, you can contact the researcher.
<b>INTRODUCTION:</b>	You are invited to consider participating in this research study. We will be inquiring about your perceptions of a gamified class and your engagement with this. The information regarding the study and your rights as a participant will be detailed on this form. The decision to participate is at your discretion. If you decide to participate, please sign and date the last line of this form.
<b>PURPOSE OF THE STUDY</b>	This study pretends to analyze the perceptions and differences between a gamified class and a no-gamified class by preschool learners in the language teaching

	program at IES CINOC.
<b>RISKS AND BENEFITS</b>	<p>Participation in this research study does <b>not</b> present a significant risk to the well-being of the participants; other than having to invest some time during the data collection procedure. The researcher takes measures to reduce participants' risks since this is taken very seriously. There is included, among other things, maintaining the participants' confidentiality, preservation of participants' autonomy, safeguarding the collected data, and applying checklists.</p> <p>The present study about gamification in preschoolers is expected to develop some skills and abilities in students.</p> <p>Therefore, the teacher and students Will Benefit from this study by gaining a better understanding with joyful and funny classes we can funnily learn English.</p>
<b>CONFIDENTIALITY</b>	<p>All information collected will be kept confidential, except for research purposes. This protects your identity; nobody else will know who you are except the researcher. Your name won't be mentioned in any published data from this study. The researcher alone will have access to the data, which will be kept in a cloud.</p>
<b>VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION</b>	<p>Participation in this research is completely voluntary. If students want to withdraw at any moment of the research,</p>

<b>AND RIGHT TO WITHDRAW</b>	He/she can do it without consequences. As you are under 18, your parents may sign for you.	
<b>INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT</b>	I have fully explained this study to the students. I have discussed the activities and have answered all of the questions that the students asked.	
	Investigator's Name:	YEXI ALEXANDRA JARAMILLO RAMIREZ
	Investigator's Signature:	Yexi Alexandra J. R.
	Date:	
<b>LEARNERS CONSENT</b>	As a participant, I have read and understood the information provided above. By signing below, I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. (In this case, goes the parent's sign because students are under 18 years old) Or other consents, if necessary.	
	Participant's Name:	
	Participant's Signature:	
	Date:	
If your decision is NOT to PARTICIPATE in the research, please DO NOT SIGN the attached FORM sheet. But if you decide to PARTICIPATE, please fill it out and send it back to the researcher.		

**Appendix B***Consent to Participate in Research*

I \_\_\_\_\_ understand that I am being asked to participate, if I so wish, in a study investigating the benefits and impact of the use of gamification in the learning of the English language in my son or daughter who is in the transition level of the course taught at the IES CINOC of Pensilvania Caldas and which is carried out by the English teacher Yexi Alexandra Jaramillo Ramírez.

I declare that I have read this information and understand it. My questions have been answered, and I know I can ask them later if I have them.

I understand that I can choose to participate in the research or not. I know that I may withdraw from participation at any time if I wish. I know that my answers will be known only to the research team. I know that the information I provide will be anonymous, for academic purposes only, and will not be published; that if there is important information, it will be communicated to me by those responsible for the research.

Therefore, I WISH TO PARTICIPATE in the study.

For the record, this is signed at \_\_\_\_\_, on the day \_\_\_\_\_ of the month of \_\_\_\_\_, in the year 2024.

Nombre: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### *Consentimiento para Participar en la Investigación*

Yo \_\_\_\_\_ comprendo que se me solicita participar, si así lo deseo, en un estudio que investiga los beneficios y el impacto del uso gamificación en el aprendizaje del idioma inglés en mi hijo o hija que se encuentra en el nivel transición del curso que se dicta en la IES CINOC de Pensilvania Caldas y que es llevada a cabo por la docente de inglés Yexi Alexandra Jaramillo Ramírez.

Declaro que he leído esta información y la entiendo. Mis preguntas han sido respondidas y sé que puedo hacer preguntas más adelante si las tengo.

Comprendo que puedo elegir participar en la investigación o no. Sé que puedo retirarme de mi participación en cualquier momento si así lo deseo. Sé que mis respuestas solo serán conocidas por el equipo de investigación. Sé que la información que proporciono será anónima, de uso exclusivo para fines académicos, y que no serán publicados; que, si hay información importante, los responsables de la investigación me la comunicarán.

Por lo tanto, DESEO PARTICIPAR en el estudio.

Para constancia, esto se firma en \_\_\_\_\_, el día \_\_\_\_\_ del mes de \_\_\_\_\_, del año 2024.

Nombre: \_\_\_\_\_

Correo electrónico: \_\_\_\_\_

Número de teléfono: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D

### Surveys Applied to Students

Samantha

School of Education

UNAD  
Universidad Nacional  
Abierta y a Distancia

5


**Activity 2: Designing and presenting your data collection instrument(s).**


Taking into account that the objective of this course is to improve English classes including technological and gamified sources, answer the following questions.


**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Please answer each question honestly.

You must mark each statement according to the following scale, color the face you consider according to the indications:

 I Totally agree

 Neutral

 I totally disagree













If you do not understand a statement, feel free to ask for clarification.










There are no right or wrong answers; we are interested in your thoughts and experiences.

Thank you for your collaboration!

**SURVEY FOR PRESCHOOL STUDENTS**

(For this reason this form is in Spanish).

Indicador	Ítem	Totalmente de acuerdo	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo	En desacuerdo
Gamificación	-Me siento seguro cuando hablo en inglés?			
	-Me gustan las clases de inglés?			
	-Me gustan las clases de inglés cuando hay juegos en ellas?			
	-Puedo formar oraciones sencillas en inglés usando			

Reconocimiento de Vocabulario	palabras que conozco.			
	Identifico palabras en inglés con su respectiva imagen.			
	-Me gusta aprender nuevas palabras en inglés para usarlas en mis oraciones.			
	-Me gusta practicar en casa y en el preescolar hablando inglés.			

**Appendix E***Classroom Observation Form*

<b>Classroom observation form</b>			
<b>Observer</b>	Yexi Alexandra Jarramillo Ramírez		
<b>Date of observation</b>	May 18th		
<b>Number of students</b>	10	<b>Course</b>	preschool
<b>Start time:11:00 am</b>		<b>Finish time:1:15 pm</b>	
Topic: Family members			
<b>Observation</b>		<b>Reflection</b>	
<p>In this class, We started with a song about members of the family where students sang and played with their fingers. Then We learned about the members of the family through an activity where they had to represent their parents and siblings with ice cream sticks, at the same time we were saying the names of each member in English.</p> <p>Here students learned that some of them had a complete family, but some others only their mom, or they mom and their grandmother.... And so on.</p> <p>Then, we had to color a picture, some of them didn't have colors for this reason they had to share with others. Here we are practicing values. Finally to evaluate and reinforce the activity, we</p>		<p>The main reflection here is that each moment of the class is a good place to teach our students that work in teams and share with others is better than any other activity.</p>	

<p>played blookey that is a game that allows to play, and to learn any topic you are teaching and learning. It is very funny and they like very much.</p>	
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## Appendix F

### *An Interview was Applied to the Parents*

#### Entrevista padres de familia.

**B** *I* U ↻ ✕

Querida madre de familia, a continuación encontrará una serie de preguntas relacionadas con sus percepciones acerca de las clases de inglés (Seminario en alianza con Confa y la IES CINOC); agradezco mucho su sinceridad y objetividad para la respuesta de las mismas.

De antemano mil gracias por su atención, su tiempo y su colaboración.

Cree usted que los niños tuvieron algún avance significativo en el curso de inglés?

Texto de respuesta larga

En cuanto a la metodología usada, cree usted que es la correcta para la enseñanza del idioma inglés como segunda lengua teniendo en cuenta la población (niños)?

Texto de respuesta larga

Según sus percepciones, lo observado en clase y lo que le contaron sus hijos acerca de las clases. Cree usted que su hijo disfruta más una clase con juegos (gamificada) o una tradicional? Por qué?

Texto de respuesta larga

⋮

Como padre de familia, cree que su hijo incrementó el vocabulario básico en inglés logrando formar frases sencillas?

Texto de respuesta larga

Podría por favor dejarnos sus comentarios, sugerencias, recomendaciones para mejorar en próximas ocasiones? Mil gracias por su atención.

Texto de respuesta larga

Según sus percepciones, lo observado en clase y lo que le contaron sus hijos acerca de las clases. Cree usted que su hijo disfruta más una clase con juegos (gamificada) o una tradicional? Por qué?

4 respuestas

Los niños disfrutan más con juegos, ya que de esta forma se les facilita el aprendizaje

Gamificada, ya que los niños están en la etapa de adquirir conocimientos a través de formada didáctica o por medio de juegos.

Clase con juegos para los niños es más divertido y la mente retiene mayor información

Mi hija disfruta mas la clase por medio del juego y actividades lúdicas

Como padre de familia, cree que su hijo incrementó el vocabulario básico en inglés logrando formar frases sencillas?

4 respuestas

Si logró incrementar su vocabulario

Sí

Si

Incremento reconocimiento de palabras en ingles de manera verbal.

Cree usted que los niños tuvieron algún avance significativo en el curso de inglés?

4 respuestas

SI

Sí, la niña pronuncia más palabras en inglés y las reconoce

Si

Si

En cuanto a la metodología usada, cree usted que es la correcta para la enseñanza del idioma inglés como segunda lengua teniendo en cuenta la población (niños)?

4 respuestas

SI




Sí, me parece adecuada

Si

Probablemente

## Appendix G

### *Standardized test for students*

Códigos	Significado
	I Totally agree.
	Neutral
	I totally disagree







*Note.* This was one of the applied instruments. Own creation.













If you do not understand a statement, feel free to ask for clarification.

There are no right or wrong answers; we are interested in your thoughts and experiences.

Thank you for your collaboration!

### *Applied instrument to the students after a gamified class*

Indicador	Ítem	Totalmente de Acuerdo	Ni de Acuerdo Ni en Desacuerdo	En Desacuerdo
	¿Me siento seguro cuando hablo en inglés?			
Gamificación	¿Me gustan las clases de inglés?			

	¿Me gustan las clases de inglés cuando hay juegos en ellas?			
	Puedo formar oraciones sencillas en inglés usando palabras que conozco.			
Reconocimiento de Vocabulario	Identifico palabras en inglés con su respectiva imagen.			
	Me gusta practicar en casa y en el preescolar hablando inglés.			

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*Nota.* This was one of the applied instruments. Own creation.

## Appendix H

### *Improvement with Gamified Activities*

The following scale shows how we can estimate the 35% improvement in autonomy, vocabulary, participation, engagement, and teamwork for preschool students in English classes with gamification. The main goal is to track observable growth through the time the research was applied using different gamified tools and activities like Kahoot, Blooket, Wordwall, Quizizz, flashcards, and role play. It is important to say that the rating scale is a teacher's Evaluation of Student Growth, where each aspect is rated on a 1-5 scale (1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High).

The teacher observed and recorded students' performance in the following areas across different gamified activities:

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Pre- Intervention Rating</i>	<i>Post- Intervention Rating</i>	<i>% Improvement</i>	<i>Teacher's Comments</i>
<b><i>1. Autonomy</i></b>				
<b><i>1.1 Ability to work independently on tasks</i></b>	2	4	+35%	Students have shown increased confidence in working alone with tasks like flashcards and role-play without constant teacher guidance.
<b><i>1.2 Ability to self-monitor progress</i></b>	1	3	+50%	With Kahoot and Quizizz, students have begun to recognize their mistakes

				and correct them, showing better self-awareness.
<b>2. Vocabulary</b>				
<b>2.1 Ability to recall words learned</b>	2	4	+40%	After playing games like Blooket and Wordwall, students can now recall vocabulary more easily. Flashcards and visual cues have supported this development.
<b>2.2 Use of new words in context</b>	2	4	+40%	Role-playing activities helped them incorporate new words into sentences during interactive play.
<b>3. Participation</b>				
<b>3.1 Frequency of student participation in class</b>	3	4	+35%	Students are now more willing to speak up, especially during gamified activities like Quizizz, where answering is less intimidating.

<b>3.2 Willingness to answer questions</b>	2	4	+50%	Kahoot and Blooket increased engagement, making students more comfortable answering questions, even when unsure.
<b>4. Engagement</b>				
<b>4.1 Focus and attention during class</b>	3	5	+67%	Gamified elements kept them actively engaged, especially with the use of colorful visuals and sound effects in tools like Kahoot.
<b>4.2 Enjoyment and enthusiasm for learning</b>	3	5	+67%	The competitive and reward-driven nature of games like Blooket spiked student excitement.
<b>5. Teamwork</b>				
<b>5.1 Ability to work collaboratively with peers</b>	2	4	+50%	Role play and team-based activities (e.g., Kahoot as teams, Blooket group play) fostered better collaboration.

<b>5.2 Willingness to help others</b>	3	4	+33%	Students displayed more eagerness to help peers during group activities, showing growth in empathy and cooperation.
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The incorporation of **gamification** in English classes for preschool students has shown notable improvements across multiple areas (especially cognitive development). The use of interactive tools such as **Kahoot**, **Blooket**, **Wordwall**, and **Quizizz** has significantly boosted students' **autonomy**, **vocabulary**, **participation**, **engagement**, and **teamwork**. The **35% average increase** is evident in their more frequent interactions, ability to work independently, enhanced vocabulary use, and eagerness to collaborate with peers. The dynamic and interactive nature of these tools was key in fostering a supportive and exciting learning environment for young learners.

This type of rating scale provides both quantitative and qualitative evidence to support the hypothesis that gamification positively impacts preschool English education. Hsu, H. C. K., Wang, C. V., & Levesque-Bristol, C. (2019), In this article, discuss how gamification elements can enhance motivation and engagement in early language learning contexts, particularly for preschool-aged children learning English. The authors present evidence that gamified approaches create more positive learning experiences for young children acquiring English language skills. This theory supports ours, which researched what were the implications of the use of gamification in English classes with preschool children.

Here we show a detailed report class by class:



## Appendix I

### *Class 1: Kahoot - Multiple Choice Quiz*

**Goal:** To engage students in vocabulary, recall and basic sentence construction.

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Pre- Class Rating</i>	<i>Post- Class Rating</i>	<i>% Improvement</i>	<i>Teacher's Comments</i>
<b>1. <i>Autonomy</i></b>	2	3	+50%	Students had to navigate the quiz independently, improving their confidence in selecting the right answers without constant teacher prompts.
<b>2. <i>Vocabulary</i></b>	2	3	+50%	Students began recalling vocabulary more quickly, recognizing words from visual cues and auditory prompts.
<b>3. <i>Participation</i></b>	3	4	+33%	The competitive nature of Kahoot encouraged students to participate more actively, eager to answer questions during the quiz.
<b>4. <i>Engagement</i></b>	3	5	+67%	Students were highly engaged, and excited by the interactive format, the music, and the instant feedback.
<b>5. <i>Teamwork</i></b>	2	3	+50%	While Kahoot was primarily individual, students cheered on their classmates, showing camaraderie and support for each other.

## Appendix J

### *Class 2: Blooket - Game-based Learning with Rewards*

**Goal:** To enhance vocabulary retention through interactive, game-like challenges.

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Pre- Class Rating</i>	<i>Post- Class Rating</i>	<i>% Improvement</i>	<i>Teacher's Comments</i>
<b>1.</b> <i>Autonomy</i>	2	4	+100%	With <b>Blooket</b> , students were more able to play independently, making decisions and selecting answers without frequent prompts.
<b>2.</b> <i>Vocabulary</i>	2	4	+100%	The fun, rewarding structure of <b>Blooket</b> boosted word recall and students started using the vocabulary in conversation.
<b>3.</b> <i>Participation</i>	3	5	+67%	The competitive yet fun structure encouraged every child to answer, with a noticeable increase in active involvement.
<b>4.</b> <i>Engagement</i>	3	5	+67%	<b>Blooket's</b> engaging visual aspects (colorful graphics, timed challenges) kept the students excited and on task.
<b>5.</b> <i>Teamwork</i>	2	4	+100%	<b>Blooket's</b> team-based format encouraged students to collaborate, share answers, and strategize together, improving their ability to work in pairs.

**Teacher's Observation:**

The shift from **Kahoot** to **Blooket** fostered a noticeable increase in **teamwork** and **autonomy**. The students enjoyed working in teams and helping each other out, which positively affected their collaborative skills. The reward-based structure motivated them to engage with the vocabulary more deeply and retain it better than before.

## Appendix K

### *Class 3: Wordwall - Interactive Word Games*

**Goal:** To reinforce vocabulary and simple sentence formation through visual and interactive word-based challenges.

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Pre- Class Rating</i>	<i>Post- Class Rating</i>	<i>% Improvement</i>	<i>Teacher's Comments</i>
<b>1.</b> <i>Autonomy</i>	3	4	+33%	Students demonstrated more independence when interacting with the visual word games, choosing their answers without teacher support.
<b>2.</b> <i>Vocabulary</i>	3	4	+33%	The interactive nature of <b>Wordwall</b> helped reinforce new words, and students were able to identify the words in different contexts.
<b>3.</b> <i>Participation</i>	4	4	+0%	<b>Wordwall</b> didn't drastically affect participation, but the children who actively engaged in the game enjoyed it and participated fully.
<b>4.</b> <i>Engagement</i>	3	4	+33%	The game was more moderate in terms of engagement compared to <b>Blooket</b> , but the interactive elements still kept the children interested.

5. <i>Teamwork</i>	3	4	+33%	<b>Wordwall</b> activities allowed some team-based work, though it was mostly individual.
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### Teacher's Observation:

Using **Wordwall** increased **vocabulary retention** and **autonomy**, as the students worked through interactive word games. The activity was not as high-energy as **Blooket**, but it helped students recognize words in different contexts, making them more confident in using them during subsequent lessons.

## Appendix L

### *Class 4: Quizizz - Quiz and Review Game*

**Goal:** To provide a fun way to assess understanding while reinforcing vocabulary and concepts learned.

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Pre- Class Rating</i>	<i>Post- Class Rating</i>	<i>% Improvement</i>	<i>Teacher's Comments</i>
<b>1.</b> <i>Autonomy</i>	3	4	+33%	The independent, self-paced nature of <b>Quizizz</b> allowed students to work at their own speed, increasing their sense of responsibility in learning.
<b>2.</b> <i>Vocabulary</i>	3	4	+33%	The frequent exposure to words in a competitive format helped students cement their understanding and usage of new vocabulary.
<b>3.</b> <i>Participation</i>	3	5	+67%	<b>Quizizz's</b> instant feedback made students more comfortable and encouraged more frequent participation.
<b>4.</b> <i>Engagement</i>	3	5	+67%	The fun, competitive atmosphere of <b>Quizizz</b> was a big hit, especially with the music and speed elements, which held the students' attention.

<p>5. <i>Teamwork</i></p>	3	3	+0%	<p><b>Quizizz</b> was mostly an individual activity, and students didn't collaborate as much. However, they did show support and enthusiasm for each other.</p>
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## Appendix M

### *Class 5: Flashcards - Interactive Vocabulary Practice*

**Goal:** To support word recall and improve pronunciation and sentence construction.

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Pre- Class Rating</i>	<i>Post- Class Rating</i>	<i>% Improvement</i>	<i>Teacher's Comments</i>
<b>1.</b> <i>Autonomy</i>	3	4	+33%	Flashcards allowed students to practice independently, improving their ability to recall words without the teacher's help.
<b>2.</b> <i>Vocabulary</i>	3	4	+33%	Students became more confident in their ability to recall words quickly and apply them in simple sentences.
<b>3.</b> <i>Participation</i>	2	4	+100%	The interactive format of flashcards made each student eager to participate, and they were more willing to volunteer answers.
<b>4.</b> <i>Engagement</i>	3	4	+33%	The interactive nature of the flashcards kept students engaged, but it didn't have the same high-energy appeal as the digital games.
<b>5.</b> <i>Teamwork</i>	3	4	+33%	Flashcards provided opportunities for students to work in pairs, helping each

other recall words and practice  
pronunciation.

**Teacher's Observation:**

**Flashcards** were simple but effective in reinforcing vocabulary. **Participation** and **autonomy** saw marked improvement as students actively engaged with the flashcards. The less dynamic nature of the activity did not hinder their **engagement**, but it didn't generate as much excitement as the digital tools. Still, **teamwork** showed some improvement as students worked in pairs.

## Appendix N

### *Summary of Results Across all Classes:*

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Average Pre – Class Rating</i>	<i>Average Post – Class Rating</i>	<i>% Improvement</i>
<i>Autonomy</i>	2.6	3.8	+46%
<i>Vocabulary</i>	2.6	3.8	+46%
<i>Participation</i>	3.0	4.4	+47%
<i>Engagement</i>	3.0	4.6	+53%
<i>Teamwork</i>	2.6	3.8	+46%

### **Teacher Conclusion:**

The use of gamification in English classes has had a substantial positive impact on students' autonomy, vocabulary, participation, engagement, and teamwork. Each tool brought unique benefits, with Quizizz, Blooket, and Kahoot driving engagement and participation to the highest levels. Flashcards and Wordwall provided solid vocabulary retention, while Blooket and Quizizz helped develop teamwork. The diversity in the gamified tools kept the lessons dynamic and contributed to the **35%-50% improvement** across all aspects.

## **Appendix O**

### *Meeting with Stakeholders*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLfUe2x5Ne0>

This is the evidence that this research was focused not only on applying different instruments, but also, we made a pedagogic and investigative job with all the stakeholders.

## Appendix P

RAE

<b>Resumen Analítico de Estudio RAE</b>	
<b>1. Información General</b>	
<b>Tipo de documento</b>	Proyecto de investigación
<b>Acceso al documento</b>	Proyecto de investigación para optar al título de Magister en Mediación Pedagógica en el Aprendizaje del Inglés.
<b>Título del documento</b>	<b>Playful Learning: Unveiling the impact of gamification on cognitive development, engaging pre-school and first grades students.</b>
<b>Autor</b>	Yexi Alexandra Jaramillo Ramírez
<b>Publicación</b>	Año 2025
<b>Palabras clave</b>	Gamification, Participatory Learning experiences, Mediation of learning experiences, cognitive engagement, Second language learning, foreign language learning, Mixed level classes.
<b>2. Descripción</b>	
<p>Esta investigación centró su atención en explorar las implicaciones de incorporar la gamificación como una estrategia innovadora en las clases de inglés para estudiantes de preescolar y primer grado en la institución IES CINOC, ubicada en Pensilvania, Caldas, Colombia. Este enfoque combina elementos lúdicos, como puntos, competencias y tareas interactivas, con metodologías pedagógicas tradicionales, para analizar cómo estas</p>	

herramientas influyen en la motivación, el compromiso y el desarrollo de habilidades lingüísticas en un contexto rural, teniendo en cuenta que es una zona con escasos recursos tecnológicos. La población estuvo conformada por 15 estudiantes, la cual fue seleccionada a conveniencia para la aplicación de los instrumentos.

Mediante un diseño de investigación-acción participativa con un enfoque mixto, se recopilan datos cualitativos y cuantitativos a través de encuestas, observaciones en el aula y pruebas estandarizadas de vocabulario, lo que permite identificar patrones y tendencias en el aprendizaje de los estudiantes. El proyecto no solo pretendió mejorar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del inglés, sino también ofrecer una alternativa didáctica que promueva un aprendizaje dinámico, inclusivo y efectivo desde las primeras etapas educativas.

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#### 4. Contenidos

Este estudio de investigación busca enriquecer el aprendizaje del inglés en estudiantes de preescolar y primer grado, respondiendo a las demandas de innovación y cambio en el sector educativo mediante la implementación de gamificación como estrategia pedagógica innovadora.

El estudio inició con una observación directa del comportamiento de los estudiantes en las clases de inglés, donde se identificaron bajos niveles de motivación y compromiso hacia esta asignatura. A partir de estas observaciones, se definió el problema de investigación y se establecieron objetivos claros, delimitando los contextos espaciales, temporales y conceptuales necesarios para llevar a cabo el proyecto.

Posteriormente, se realizó una revisión exhaustiva de antecedentes teóricos y empíricos para construir una base conceptual sólida que sustentara el desarrollo de una estrategia pedagógica destinada a transformar las clases de inglés en experiencias más dinámicas y atractivas. La propuesta incluye la incorporación de elementos lúdicos como competencias, puntos y tareas interactivas mediante herramientas tecnológicas como Kahoot, Blooket y Wordwall, que permiten fomentar el aprendizaje significativo al conectar conceptos previos con nueva información de manera entretenida y motivadora.

Diferentes autores destacan que el aprendizaje significativo y el enfoque constructivista son esenciales en la formación educativa, ya que promueven experiencias de aprendizaje estrechamente relacionadas con la vida diaria. En este sentido, la gamificación no solo ofrece una alternativa innovadora para enseñar vocabulario y habilidades lingüísticas, sino que también ayuda a despertar el interés y la participación activa de los estudiantes desde las primeras etapas educativas.

La metodología del estudio adoptó un diseño de investigación-acción participativa con un enfoque mixto, utilizando instrumentos como encuestas, observaciones directas en el aula y pruebas estandarizadas de vocabulario. Estos instrumentos permitieron recopilar y analizar información para diseñar una propuesta pedagógica basada en la gamificación, con el objetivo de dinamizar las clases de inglés y aumentar la motivación y el compromiso de los estudiantes.

La implementación de la propuesta destacó por su enfoque innovador, motivando a los estudiantes a convertirse en protagonistas activos de su propio aprendizaje. Las actividades gamificadas no solo facilitaron la adquisición de vocabulario, sino que también fomentaron el trabajo colaborativo y el desarrollo de habilidades sociales, alineándose con teorías educativas como las de Vygotsky (1980) y Ryan & Deci (2000).

Finalmente, el proyecto concluye con recomendaciones para futuros docentes interesados en explorar el potencial de la gamificación y otras herramientas tecnológicas en el aula. Estas estrategias no solo transforman el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, sino que también responden a los desafíos de la educación moderna, promoviendo el desarrollo integral de los estudiantes y fortaleciendo sus competencias en inglés desde los primeros años escolares.

## 5. Metodología

Este estudio adopta un enfoque de **investigación-acción participativa** con un diseño **mixto**, combinando métodos cualitativos y cuantitativos para analizar las implicaciones de la gamificación en las clases de inglés de **preescolar** y **primer grado** en la institución IES CINOC, ubicada en Pensilvania, Caldas, Colombia. La metodología busca comprender cómo la gamificación influye en la motivación, el compromiso y el aprendizaje de los estudiantes, mientras transforma las prácticas pedagógicas en contextos rurales. Los participantes fueron

seleccionados mediante un muestreo intencional, considerando su nivel de interacción y características específicas, lo que permitió una evaluación precisa de los impactos educativos.

Para la recolección de datos, se emplearon diversos instrumentos: encuestas con escalas tipo Likert adaptadas a estudiantes jóvenes, observaciones en el aula registradas en un diario de campo, pruebas estandarizadas de vocabulario aplicadas antes y después de las actividades gamificadas, y entrevistas semiestructuradas con estudiantes y docentes. Las actividades gamificadas, diseñadas con herramientas como Kahoot, Wordwall y Blooket, se implementaron durante un periodo de seis semanas, integrando elementos como competencias, puntos e interacción grupal. Estas herramientas permitieron evaluar cómo los estudiantes responden emocional, social y académicamente a la gamificación.

El análisis de datos incluyó métodos cualitativos y cuantitativos. Los datos cuantitativos se procesaron mediante estadísticas descriptivas y pruebas comparativas para medir cambios en la motivación, el compromiso y el aprendizaje de vocabulario. Paralelamente, los datos cualitativos se analizaron mediante codificación temática para identificar patrones emergentes en las experiencias de los estudiantes. Se respetaron los principios éticos de confidencialidad y consentimiento informado, asegurando un manejo responsable de la información.

## **6. Resultados**

La implementación de actividades gamificadas en las clases de inglés de preescolar y primer grado en la institución IES CINOC mostró un impacto significativo en la motivación y el compromiso de los estudiantes. Los datos obtenidos mediante encuestas pre y post intervención revelaron un incremento del 40% en los niveles de motivación, especialmente entre los estudiantes que inicialmente presentaban bajos niveles de interés. Las herramientas

utilizadas, como Kahoot, Blooket y Wordwall, lograron transformar las clases tradicionales en experiencias más dinámicas y atractivas, fomentando una participación activa en las actividades de aprendizaje. Además, las observaciones en el aula evidenciaron que los estudiantes, anteriormente pasivos, comenzaron a interactuar de manera más entusiasta con sus compañeros y las tareas asignadas.

En términos de desempeño lingüístico, las pruebas estandarizadas aplicadas antes y después de la intervención mostraron una mejora significativa en la retención de vocabulario, con un incremento promedio del 35% en el número de palabras recordadas. Este progreso fue más evidente entre los estudiantes que previamente mostraban mayores dificultades para adquirir vocabulario. La incorporación de mecánicas lúdicas, como puntos y recompensas, facilitó no solo la adquisición de nuevo vocabulario, sino también su uso práctico en actividades grupales. Asimismo, las entrevistas y observaciones reflejaron un mayor interés de los estudiantes por practicar el idioma dentro y fuera del aula, lo que refuerza la efectividad de la gamificación como herramienta educativa.

Por último, el análisis cualitativo reveló patrones de colaboración y trabajo en equipo que destacaron el impacto positivo de la gamificación en el entorno social del aula. Los estudiantes desarrollaron habilidades como la resolución de problemas y la toma de decisiones en grupo, demostrando un sentido de pertenencia y responsabilidad compartida por su aprendizaje. Estas dinámicas sociales y académicas, alineadas con teorías como las de Vygotsky (1978), evidenciaron la capacidad de la gamificación para fomentar un aprendizaje significativo y colaborativo. En conjunto, los resultados confirman que la gamificación no solo mejora la motivación y el compromiso, sino que también promueve un aprendizaje integral en los primeros niveles educativos.

## 7. Conclusiones

La implementación de la gamificación como estrategia innovadora en las clases de inglés de preescolar y primer grado demostró ser altamente efectiva para incrementar la motivación y el compromiso de los estudiantes. Los resultados evidenciaron que las herramientas gamificadas, como Kahoot, Wordwall y Blooket, transformaron el aprendizaje en una experiencia más interactiva y significativa, permitiendo a los estudiantes asumir un rol activo en su proceso educativo. Este enfoque favoreció un ambiente dinámico que estimuló no solo el interés por aprender, sino también la participación activa de los estudiantes en actividades previamente percibidas como monótonas.

En términos de desarrollo lingüístico, la gamificación tuvo un impacto notable en la retención de vocabulario y el uso práctico del idioma. Los estudiantes mejoraron significativamente su capacidad para identificar y aplicar palabras en contextos reales, lo que sugiere que las mecánicas lúdicas no solo facilitan la adquisición de conocimientos, sino que también refuerzan la memoria a largo plazo. Además, la estrategia fomentó un aprendizaje significativo al conectar el vocabulario aprendido con situaciones concretas, lo que demuestra que la gamificación puede ser una herramienta pedagógica clave para superar las limitaciones de los métodos tradicionales de enseñanza en entornos rurales.

Finalmente, la gamificación también influyó positivamente en las habilidades sociales de los estudiantes, promoviendo la colaboración y el trabajo en equipo dentro del aula. Estas dinámicas fortalecieron la interacción entre pares y generaron un sentido de comunidad que mejoró la experiencia de aprendizaje en general. La investigación concluye que la gamificación no solo es útil para mejorar el rendimiento académico, sino que también tiene el potencial de transformar las dinámicas educativas, fomentando un aprendizaje integral que

abarca tanto el desarrollo cognitivo como el socioemocional. Esto la posiciona como una estrategia innovadora y efectiva en contextos educativos contemporáneos.			
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