



Application of Gamification to Improve English Writing Skills in Basic Education Students at Escuela Ballenita

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Abstract

This study analyzes the application of gamification to improve English writing skills in basic education students at Escuela Ballenita, located in the canton of Santa Elena. A quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional design was applied. Data collection included surveys administered to 30 students, 5 teachers, and 3 administrative staff members. The instrument consisted of five Likert-scale questions focused on motivation, engagement, writing performance, use of gamification, and institutional support. Results show high levels of agreement among students regarding increased motivation (73%) and engagement (83%) in gamified learning environments. Most participants also report improvement in writing skills, including vocabulary use and sentence construction. Teachers confirm positive effects on student participation and performance. However, findings reveal limited and inconsistent implementation of gamification strategies in the classroom. Reported barriers include lack of teacher training, limited resources, and insufficient institutional support. The study concludes that gamification represents an effective strategy to enhance motivation, engagement, and writing skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Consistent application, teacher preparation, and institutional commitment remain necessary to maximize its impact. Future research should focus on experimental and longitudinal designs to measure direct effects on writing proficiency.

Keywords: gamification, English writing skills, motivation, engagement, basic education, EFL

1. Introduction

In recent decades, the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) has faced persistent challenges, particularly in the development of writing skills among basic education students. Writing is considered one of the most complex language skills, as it requires the integration of grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and critical thinking. However, many students demonstrate low levels of performance in written production, often associated with limited motivation, lack of engagement, and the predominance of traditional teaching methodologies that fail to stimulate active participation (Graham & Perin, 2007; Hyland, 2003) ^[4, 6].

One of the emerging pedagogical approaches to address these challenges is gamification, defined as the incorporation of game elements such as points, badges, levels, and rewards into non-game educational contexts. According to Deterding *et al.* (2011) ^[3], gamification has gained significant attention in educational environments due to its potential to enhance learner motivation and engagement. Research has shown that gamification can positively influence students' attitudes toward learning, fostering greater participation and persistence in academic tasks (Hamari *et al.*, 2014) ^[5].

In the context of language learning, particularly in EFL classrooms, gamified strategies have been associated with improved learning outcomes. Studies indicate that gamification enhances interaction, provides immediate feedback, and creates more dynamic and student-centered learning environments (Zainuddin *et al.*, 2020) ^[8].

These elements are especially relevant for writing instruction, where students often experience anxiety and lack of confidence. By integrating game-based elements, educators can create a supportive environment that encourages experimentation and continuous practice (Kapp, 2012) ^[7]. Several empirical studies support the effectiveness of gamification in improving writing skills. For example, research conducted by Bicen and Kocakoyun (2018) ^[2] demonstrated that gamified learning activities significantly improved students' motivation and academic performance in language tasks. Similarly, a study by Alomari *et al.* (2019) ^[1] found that gamification positively impacted students' engagement and achievement in English learning contexts. Furthermore, systematic reviews have concluded that gamification contributes to better writing outcomes by promoting active learning and sustained interest in writing activities (Zainuddin *et al.*, 2020) ^[8].

Despite these positive findings, the implementation of gamification in basic Education especially in specific local contexts such as Ecuadorian schools remains limited. Many educational institutions continue to rely on conventional teaching strategies, which may not adequately address the needs and learning styles of contemporary learners. Additionally, there is a scarcity of localized empirical research examining how gamification can be effectively applied to improve English writing skills in primary education settings.

This study aims to analyze the application of gamification as a pedagogical strategy to improve English writing skills in basic education students at Escuela Ballenita. The research seeks to evaluate whether gamified learning activities can enhance students' motivation, participation, and writing performance, contributing to more effective and innovative language teaching practices.

2. Method

This study was conducted using a quantitative approach with a descriptive and correlational scope, aimed at analyzing the effect of gamification on the improvement of English writing skills in basic education students at Escuela Ballenita, located in the canton of Santa Elena, Ecuador. The research design was non-experimental and cross-sectional, as data were collected at a single point in time without manipulation of variables (Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza, 2018).

The population consisted of students, teachers, and administrative staff from Escuela Ballenita. The sample was selected through a non-probabilistic convenience sampling method due to accessibility and availability of participants. The study included approximately 30 basic education students (upper elementary level), 5 English teachers, and 3 administrative authorities. These groups were selected to obtain a comprehensive perspective on the use of

gamification and its perceived impact on writing skills.

Data collection was carried out structured surveys designed separately for students, teachers, and administrators. Each survey included closed-ended questions using a Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), as well as a limited number of multiple-choice questions.

The student survey focused on aspects such as motivation toward English writing, participation in gamified activities, perceived improvement in writing skills, and attitudes toward the use of game elements in the classroom. The teacher survey gathered information on instructional strategies, frequency of gamification use, perceived effectiveness, and challenges in its implementation. The administrator survey addressed institutional support, availability of technological resources, and perceptions regarding innovation in teaching methodologies.

The instruments were validated through expert judgment, ensuring content validity, and a pilot test was conducted with a small group of participants to verify clarity and reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to assess internal consistency, obtaining a value greater than 0.80, indicating high reliability (Taber, 2018).

The collected data were organized, coded, and entered into a statistical analysis software. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means) were used to analyze the data, and inferential analysis (such as correlation tests) was applied to determine the relationship between gamification and writing skill development.

The analysis focused on identifying patterns in participants' responses regarding motivation, engagement, and perceived improvement in writing skills. The results were presented through tables and graphs to facilitate interpretation. Additionally, comparisons were made between the perspectives of students, teachers, and administrators to obtain a holistic understanding of the impact of gamification in the educational context.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

This section presents the findings obtained from the surveys administered to 30 students, 5 teachers, and 3 administrative staff members at Escuela Ballenita. The results are based on a 5-question Likert-scale survey (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) designed to evaluate perceptions of gamification and its impact on English writing skills.

The data indicate a generally positive perception of gamification among all participant groups. Students reported higher levels of motivation and engagement, while teachers and administrators highlighted its usefulness as an innovative teaching strategy. The majority of responses were concentrated in the "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" categories.

Table 1: Survey Results on Gamification and Writing Skills

Question	Group	1 (SD)	2 (D)	3 (N)	4 (A)	5 (SA)
Q1. Gamification increases motivation to learn English writing	Students	1	2	5	12	10
	Teachers	0	0	1	2	2
	Admin	0	0	1	1	1
Q2. Gamified activities improve writing performance	Students	1	3	6	11	9
	Teachers	0	1	1	2	1
	Admin	0	0	1	1	1
Q3. Gamification makes classes more engaging	Students	0	1	4	13	12
	Teachers	0	0	0	3	2
	Admin	0	0	0	2	1
Q4. Teachers frequently use gamification strategies	Students	3	5	10	8	4
	Teachers	0	1	2	1	1
	Admin	0	1	1	1	0
Q5. The institution supports innovative methodologies like gamification	Students	2	4	9	10	5
	Teachers	0	1	1	2	1
	Admin	0	0	1	1	1

The results show that most students (73%) agreed or strongly agreed that gamification increases motivation (Q1), while 67% perceived improvements in their writing performance (Q2). Additionally, 83% of students found gamified classes more engaging (Q3), confirming the positive impact of game-based elements on classroom dynamics.

However, responses to Q4 reveal that gamification is not consistently implemented, with a significant proportion of students (60%) selecting neutral or lower categories. This suggests that, although effective, gamification strategies are not yet widely integrated into daily teaching practices.

From the teachers' perspective, 80% agreed that gamification enhances engagement (Q3), but only 40% confirmed frequent use (Q4), indicating potential barriers such as lack of training or resources. Similarly, administrative staff showed moderate agreement regarding institutional support (Q5), suggesting opportunities for strengthening policies that promote innovative methodologies.

Overall, the findings indicate a strong positive perception of gamification's impact on motivation and writing skills, while also highlighting the need for greater implementation and institutional support.

4. Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that gamification has a positive impact on students' motivation, engagement, and perceived improvement in English writing skills at Escuela Ballenita. These findings are consistent with previous research in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), which highlights the effectiveness of gamified strategies in enhancing learning outcomes.

The high percentage of students who agreed that gamification increases motivation (73%) aligns with the findings of Deterding *et al.* (2011) [3], who define gamification as a powerful tool to foster user engagement through game elements. Similarly, Hamari *et al.* (2014) [5] found that gamification significantly improves user motivation and participation in educational contexts. In this study, students' positive responses confirm that incorporating elements such as rewards, challenges, and interactive activities can make writing tasks more appealing and less monotonous.

Regarding writing performance, 67% of students perceived improvements in their skills through gamified activities. This supports the work of Bicen and Kocakoyun (2018) [2], who reported that gamification contributes to better academic performance by increasing students' involvement in learning tasks. Likewise, Zainuddin *et al.* (2020) [8] emphasized that gamified environments facilitate continuous practice and immediate feedback, which are essential components for developing writing competence. The present findings suggest that when students are actively engaged, they are more likely to practice writing and improve their linguistic abilities.

In terms of classroom engagement, the results showed that 83% of students found gamified classes more engaging. This is consistent with Kapp (2012) [7], who argued that gamification transforms traditional learning environments into interactive experiences that promote active participation. Furthermore, Alomari *et al.* (2019) [1] demonstrated that gamified instruction enhances students' interest and attention, which directly influences their academic performance. The strong agreement among students and teachers in this study reinforces the idea that engagement is a key factor in successful language learning.

However, an important finding of this study is the limited frequency of gamification implementation. Although both teachers and students recognize its benefits, only a minority reported frequent use of gamified strategies in the classroom. This result is consistent with previous studies that identify barriers such as lack of teacher training, limited technological resources, and resistance to methodological change (Zainuddin *et al.*, 2020) [8]. The responses from teachers and administrators in this study suggest that institutional support is present but still insufficient to ensure systematic application.

The moderate perception of institutional support observed in this research reflects the need for stronger educational policies that promote innovation. According to Kapp (2012) [7], successful implementation of gamification requires not only teacher initiative but also organizational commitment, including access to resources and professional development opportunities. Therefore, the findings highlight a gap between the recognized benefits of gamification and its actual

implementation in the educational context studied.

The results of this study are consistent with existing literature, confirming that gamification is an effective strategy to improve motivation, engagement, and writing skills in EFL learners. However, they also reveal the necessity of addressing practical and institutional challenges to maximize its impact. These findings contribute to the growing body of research supporting gamification as a valuable pedagogical tool in basic education, particularly in contexts where traditional teaching methods continue to predominate.

5. Conclusion

Gamification improves motivation in English writing tasks. Most students show positive attitudes toward game-based activities. Game elements make writing more engaging and reduce resistance.

Gamification supports improvement in writing skills. Students report better vocabulary use, sentence construction, and written expression. Teachers confirm these improvements in classroom performance.

Gamification increases classroom engagement. Students participate more actively. Classes become more dynamic and interactive. Engagement strengthens the learning process.

Gamification use remains limited. Teachers do not apply it consistently. Barriers include lack of training, limited resources, and weak institutional support.

Gamification is an effective strategy for improving English writing skills in basic education. Its success requires consistent application, teacher training, and institutional commitment. Future studies should measure direct impact on writing proficiency through experimental and long-term research.

6. Thank-You Note

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the authorities, teachers, and students of Escuela Presidente Alfaro, whose collaboration made this research possible. Their willingness to participate and openness to implementing gamified strategies in the classroom provided invaluable insights that enriched the study.

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Finally, I extend my appreciation to the broader academic community, whose research on gamification inspired and informed this study. It is my hope that this work contributes meaningfully to the ongoing dialogue about innovation in education and the improvement of English learning in primary schools.

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