GAMIFIED-LEARNING ON ENHANCING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS AMONG A1 LEARNERS AT FINETUNED ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTITUTE, AUGUST 2024 TO JANUARY 2025 ACADEMIC PERIOD

APRENDIZAJE BASADO EN JUEGOS PARA MEJORAR LAS DESTREZAS DE LA COMPETENCIA COMUNICATIVA ORAL DEL INGLÉS ENTRE ESTUDIANTES A1 EN FINETUNED ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTITUTE, PERÍODO ACADÉMICO AGOSTO 2024 - ENERO 2025

Mg.Sc. Ana Karen Robles Juárez
Universidad Nacional de Loja

Ph.D Adriana Elizabeth Cango Patiño
Universidad Nacional de Loja

Gamified-Learning on enhancing English speaking skills among A1 learners at FineTuned English Language Institute, August 2024 to January 2025 Academic Period

Mg.Sc. Ana Karen Robles Juárez[1]
ana.k.robles@unl.edu.ec
https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5049-7106
Universidad Nacional de Loja
Ecuador

Ph.D Adriana Elizabeth Cango Patiño
adriana.cango@unl.edu.ec
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3073-477X
Universidad Nacional de Loja
Ecuador

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the impact of gamified learning on the English oral proficiency development of A1 students at Fine-Tuned English Language Institute from August 2024 to January 2025. The study is focused on action research, and mixed methods approach, quantitative data from pre-and post-tests were combined with qualitative surveys. The sample included nine students aged eight to nine years, according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The aim was to evaluate the effectiveness of gamified learning and to explore students' attitudes towards this methodology. The intervention followed Mertler's action research cycle, which is to plan, act, develop, reflect, and employ the Presentation, Practice, Production (PPP) methodology. The gamified activities were based on the second unit of the Fly Higher book published by Richmond ELT in 2022 and adapted to the student's level. The results showed significant improvements in fluency, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Finally, the study concludes that gamified learning is a dynamic and effective approach to improving speaking in EFL contexts, promoting a participatory environment that overcomes the limitations of traditional methods.

Keywords: gamified-learning, english speaking skills, improvement

[1] Autor principal
Correspondencia: ana.k.robles@unl.edu.ec

Aprendizaje basado en juegos para mejorar las destrezas de la competencia comunicativa oral del inglés entre estudiantes A1 en FineTuned English Language Institute, período académico Agosto 2024 - Enero 2025

RESUMEN

Este estudio analiza el impacto del aprendizaje basado en juegos en el desarrollo de competencias orales en Inglés de estudiantes A1 de Fine-Tuned English Language Institute durante Agosto 2024-Enero 2025. El estudio está enfocado en la investigación-acción explicativa y métodos mixtos, se combinaron datos cuantitativos de pruebas previas y posteriores con encuestas cualitativas. La muestra incluyó nueve estudiantes de ocho a nueve años, según el Marco Común Europeo de Referencias (MCER). El objetivo fue evaluar la eficacia del aprendizaje basado en juegos y explorar las actitudes de los alumnos hacia esta metodología. La intervención siguió el ciclo de investigación-acción de Mertler, es decir, planificar, actuar, desarrollar, reflexionar, y empleó la metodología Presentación, Práctica, Producción (PPP). Las actividades basadas en juegoss se basaron en la segunda unidad del libro Fly Higher, publicado por Richmond ELT en 2022, y se adaptaron al nivel de los alumnos. Los resultados mostraron mejoras significativas en fluidez, gramática, vocabulario y pronunciación. Finalmente, el estudio concluye que el aprendizaje aprendizaje basado en juegos es un enfoque dinámico y eficaz para mejorar la expresión oral en contextos del inglés como lengua extranjera, promoviendo un entorno participativo que supera las limitaciones de los métodos tradicionales.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje basado en juegos, destrezas de la competencia comunicativa oral del inglés, fortalecimiento

INTRODUCTION

English has become the second language of choice in some countries, being the main lingua franca for global communication. Its widespread use in various international economic, cultural, and digital settings has strengthened its status as an international language, as observed by Marlina and Xu (2018), who notes that "the global spread of English, its predominant use in various international economic and cultural settings, and the dramatic expansion of electronic communication have enabled the language to achieve the status of an international language or global lingua franca" (p. 1). This role of universal reach has led to increased promotion of English language learning among young learners, intending to equip them with language skills that can open doors to academic, professional, and social opportunities in an increasingly globalized world. However, speaking, or oral expression, is distinguished as one of the most difficult language skills for non-native English learners to master (Chamorro et al., 2020), especially in countries where the predominant language is not English.

Ecuador, for example, is a country where Spanish is still the primary language, which creates obstacles in English acquisition due to limited interaction in the foreign language. As Chamorro et al. (2020) explain, "Ecuador has 14 ancestral languages and Spanish is the official language, which limits students' exposure to English" (p. 310). This linguistic environment can limit opportunities for students to practice English, often limiting them to formal educational settings where they have few opportunities to engage with the language outside of the classroom. In addition, many children begin learning English at a relatively late age and are exposed to it primarily in settings where Spanish dominates everyday conversations, further complicating their ability to develop effective oral expression.

Several factors hinder the development of students' oral proficiency in English. Scarce class time is one of the main problems, as foreign language learners typically have only a few hours of class time per week. According to Lightbown and Spada (2013), this minimal exposure of a few hundred hours over several years prevents students from gaining fluency and confidence. Another obstacle is the lack of engaging classroom activities, such as games, which Yu (2023) stresses are essential for motivation. Without these methods of stimulation, students may lose enthusiasm and face increased anxiety, which may further hinder their willingness to speak English.

These challenges are familiar to educators at the Fine-Tuned English Language Institute in the canton of Yantzaza in Zamora Chinchipe province, where teachers strive to improve students' English-speaking skills through creative techniques such as games, songs, and other playful activities. However, doubts remain as to whether these gamified approaches serve as a stimulus for students to speak English with confidence, without fear of making mistakes. Gamification, or the application of playful elements to learning, has been widely studied and recognized as a motivational strategy in education. Nevertheless, there is still a gap in the literature on its specific effects on young learners' English speaking skills, particularly for A1 learners. By addressing this aspect, this research aims to contribute to the understanding of how Gamified-learning activities can effectively improve speaking skills in an engaging and accessible way for young learners, providing teachers with tools to support their students' progress.

This study investigates how gamified learning can improve the English speaking skills of A1 students at the Fine-Tuned English Language Institute from August 2024 to January 2025. By evaluating the effectiveness of the method and students' perceptions, the research aims to highlight the potential of gamification to overcome common barriers in the development of speaking skills. The results are expected to guide educators in adapting teaching methods, fostering a dynamic and supportive learning environment, and implementing engaging, low-stress gamified activities to improve language acquisition outcomes for young learners.

METHODOLOGY

The present research aims to analyze Gamified-learning on enhancing English speaking skills among A1 learners at Fine-Tuned English Language Institute, August 2024 to January 2025 Academic Period. This research aims to identify the effectiveness of Gamified-learning activities in enhancing students' speaking skills while describing their perceptions of these activities. The proposed research was conducted during eight weeks of the academic cycle: September 2024-January 2025, at Fine-Tuned English, language institute, located in the Yantzaza canton, in the city of Zamora Chinchipe, in the south of the Amazon region of Ecuador, on the outer flanks of the Eastern Cordillera of the Andes at an altitude of 887 meters above sea level.

The study population consisted of 9 students enrolled in the curriculum between the ages of 8 and 9 years old. These participants have an A1 learner proficiency level according to the Common European

Framework of Reference for Languages and presented difficulties in the process of speech acquisition in English. Given their age, consent forms were obtained from their legal tutors for the researcher to implement different activities and strategies in the classroom.

This action research study followed a cycle of planning, action, development, and reflection to explore the effectiveness of gamified learning in improving English oral skills in EFL classrooms. It aims to provide practical strategies for integrating Gamified- activities with A1 students at the Fine-Tuned English Language Institute in Ecuador. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research collected quantitative data through pre- and post-tests of oral expression and qualitative data from student surveys, providing information on possible improvements in English language skills through game-based learning.

The mixed methods design integrated quantitative and qualitative analysis to comprehensively address the research questions. Pre- and post-tests assessed the impact of gamified activities on students' speaking skills, while surveys collected their perceptions of these methods. This approach allowed for a detailed analysis of the relationship between the independent variable, that is, gamified learning strategies, and the dependent variable referring to A1 learners' speaking skills, thus providing valuable information for educators seeking to improve English language learning through gamification. Moreover, the application of correlational research in this study was crucial to identifying the relationship between gamified learning activities and the improvement of English language skills among A1 learners.

To achieve the specific objectives of this research, a mixed methods approach was employed, incorporating quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. Taherdoost (2021) claims that qualitative data may be suitable for obtaining more information to explore and determine new effects and consequences of research programs and, ultimately, to improve the quality of quantitative results. On the other side, quantitative data were suitable for exploring and determining new effects and consequences of research programs.

For the first objective, which is to identify the effectiveness of Gamified-learning on enhancing English Speaking Skills, among A.1 learners, quantitative data were collected through pre and post-tests. These tests measured the improvement of students' speaking skills before and after the intervention proposal in the gamified activities. For the second objective, which aims to describe students' perceptions about Gamified-learning on enhancing English speaking skills among A1 learners, qualitative data were collected

through student surveys. These surveys included Likert-scale questions to select students' attitudes and experiences with gamified activities. This qualitative approach complemented the quantitative results, providing an overall understanding of how Gamified-learning influences children's English-speaking skills. Quantitative data collected from the pre- and post-tests were analyzed and organized using inferential statistics and JAMOVI software for quantitative data analysis, organizing the data, tabulating the information, and generating automatic tables summarizing the descriptive statistics and the results of the applied statistical tests, the data were also analyzed and the results interpreted in real time, showing clear tables that helped to interpret the relationship between variables, as well as the statistical significance of the findings. Qualitative data were interpreted through student surveys to discover patterns and insights into their perceptions of Gamified-learning activities. The analysis was represented through tables and graphs aligned with descriptive statistics. Subsequently, the research provided valuable information on how gamified activities improve oral skills.

This research used practical action research to improve English speaking skills during the academic period of August 2024 to January 2025. This study employed Mertler's (2024) action research model, which comprises four stages: planning, acting, developing, and reflecting. In the planning stage, a proposal focused on speaking skills was designed based on the identification of the research gap. In the action stage, the proposal was implemented, incorporating learning strategies, at the same time, research instruments such as pre and post-tests were used, as well as surveys to collect data. In the development and reflection phases, the main results were interpreted and discussed to conclude. This research was conducted during eight weeks of the school year from September 2024 to January 2025. Throughout the intervention plan, several Gamified-learning activities were conducted in the classroom to improve students' English language skills.

The classes were structured using the PPP (Presentation, Practice, Production) teaching methodology to improve English speaking skills. In the Presentation phase, innovative Gamified-learning activities were presented to improve English speaking skills. In the Practice phase, children participated in Gamified-learning activities designed to reinforce their speaking skills. In the final Production phase, students demonstrated their speaking skills through different games. By incorporating dynamic lesson designs, students were encouraged to improve their oral proficiency in an engaging environment. Importantly, the

activities were specifically designed to fit the age group of A1 learners The eight-week intervention proposal of Gamified-Learning activities aimed at A1 students of the Fine-Tuned English Language Institute of Yantzaza was based on Unit Two of the book FLY HIGHER by Richmond ELT, whose first edition was published in 2022.

RESULTS

The results of the pre-test, post-test, and survey provide a comprehensive overview of the impact of Gamified-learning on enhancing English speaking skills among A1 learners. The pre-test results established a baseline, highlighting initial challenges and areas needing improvement. Thus the post-test outcomes demonstrated significant progress, reflecting the effectiveness of the gamified learning approach. Additionally, the survey responses captured students' perceptions, revealing high levels of engagement, motivation, and enjoyment. Together, these findings offer valuable insights into how gamified activities foster a dynamic learning environment that encourages active participation and enhances speaking skills. Due to this fact, the first objective is going to present the following line:

Objective: To identify the effectiveness of Gamified-learning on enhancing English Speaking Skills, with A.1 learners.

Table 1 Pre-test results

	N	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
FLUENCY (2,50)	9	1.75	0.48	1.00	2.50
PRONUNCIATION (2,50)	9	0.84	0.25	0.50	1.25
GRAMMAR (2,50)	9	1.18	0.52	0.50	1.80
VOCABULARY (2,50)	9	1.14	0.34	0.90	2.00
TOTAL (10)	9	4.92	0.91	4.05	6.30

Elaborated by Robles and Cango, 2024

Table 1 shows the results of the pre-test, which indicate that some students have moderate "fluency", with an average score of 1.75 out of 2.5, while other students show basic fluency, some of whom are closer to the maximum score, which shows the existence of different levels of proficiency within the group. Moreover, "pronunciation" proves to be a major challenge, with a low average score of 0.84 out of 2.5.

because of most of the students have similar difficulties in articulating words clearly and accurately. Likewise, the mean "gramar" score is 1.18 out of 2.5, reflecting limited proficiency in using basic structures. The wide range of scores indicates that while some students understand simple grammar, others have difficulty getting through elementary sentences.

The average "vocabulary" score is 1.14 out of 2.5 (SD), indicating that students have a basic knowledge of words, but lack depth and variety. The minimal variability suggests a constant need to expand vocabulary to improve expression. Overall, the total speaking score is 4.92 out of 10, indicating below-average performance in all areas. The data show significant difficulties in pronunciation and grammar, and there is also a need for improvement in fluency and vocabulary.

Furthermore, following the intervention plan with gamified activities, post-test results indicate significant improvements in all areas of A1 learners' speaking skills, demonstrating the effectiveness of gamified activities in engaging learners and improving their performance. Given this fact, the first specific objective was established as the following:

Table 2 Post-test results

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max.
FLUENCY (2,50)	9	2.24	0.33	1.50	2.50
GRAMMAR (2,50)	9	1.90	0.52	1.00	2.50
PRONUNCIATION (2,50)	9	1.74	0.46	1.10	2. 50
VOCABULARY (2,50)	9	1.83	0.43	1.30	2.45
TOTAL (10)	9	7.69	1.35	6.20	9.80

10

Elaborated by Robles and Cango, 2024

Post-intervention results show a significant improvement in students' speaking skills, due to the implementation of gamified activities. As "Fluency" showed significant progress, with the mean increasing to 2.24 out of 2.5. This indicates that students became more comfortable and coherent in speaking, and the lower variability (SD 0.33) indicates more consistent improvement. Correspondingly, "Grammar" scores also improved, with the mean increasing to 1.90 out of 2.5 this indicates that students have developed a

better command of the language, this indicates that students developed a better command of basic grammatical structures. However, the standard deviation (0.52) and the range (1.00 to 2.50) show that although most of the students improved, some still have difficulties.

Regarding the "pronunciation" experienced a marked increase, with a mean of 1.74 out of 2.5, indicating greater clarity and accuracy in speech. Variability (SD 0.46) shows varying rates of progress, but overall improvement is evident. In terms of "Vocabulary" scores improved to a mean of 1.83 out of 2.5, reflecting a broader word set and better word usage. The relatively low variability (SD 0.43) suggests steady progress among students. The overall speaking score increased significantly to 7.69 out of 10, demonstrating that the play activities had a positive impact in all areas assessed. The improvement in fluency, pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary highlights the effectiveness of the intervention in improving A1 learners' speaking skills.

Table 3

| | | Shapiro-Wilk | |
	N	W	p
Pre.test	9	0.822	0.036
Post-test	9	0.858	0.091

Elaborated by Robles and Cango, 2024

The results found in the Shapiro-Wilk test reveal that for the pre-test (N = 9, p = 0.036), the p-value is less than 0.05, indicating that the data deviates from normality. In contrast, the posttest (N = 9, p = 0.091) shows a p-value greater than 0.05, suggesting a normal distribution.

Table 4 Correlation

	TOTAL 1		TOTAL 2
Pre-test	—		
Post-test	0.866	**	—

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Elaborated by Robles and Cango, 2024

Correlation analysis between scores obtained pre-test (Total 1) and post-test (Total 2) reveals a strong positive relationship, with a correlation coefficient of 0.866 (p < 0.01). This indicates a statistically significant correlation, suggesting that improvements in post-test scores are closely related to pre-test performance.

Students who performed better on the pretest were more likely to have higher scores on the posttest, demonstrating consistent progress across skill areas. The strong correlation also implies that the gamified intervention had a positive impact, reinforcing initial strengths and addressing weaknesses. Thus, this result supports the effectiveness of the applied methodology, highlighting its role in improving the oral skills of students with different proficiency levels.

The qualitative information was collected through surveys that allowed gathering information on the attitudes, experiences, and commitment of the students with the gamified activities, complementing the quantitative data from the tests. This process enabled to respond to the second specific objective.

Objective: To describe students' perceptions about Gamified-learning on enhancing English speaking skills with A1 learners.

Table 5 Survey results

CRITERIA	QUESTIONS	Always	%	Sometimes	%	Never	%	TOTAL
		0	0%	8	89%	1	11%	100 %
Interaction	**1. How often do you participate in the Gamified-learning activities with your**							

	teacher?						
	2. How often do you participate in the Gamified-learning activities with your classmates?	1	11%	7	78%	1	11%	100 %
Active participation	**1. Do you like to participate actively in Gamified-learning activities?**	9	100%	0	0%	0	0%	100%
	2. Did you like the Gamified-learning activities purposed for enhancing Speaking skills?	9	100%	0	0%	0	0%	100%
Motivation	**1. When do you play Gamified-learning activities that make you want to speak more?**	4	44%	4	44%	1	11%	100%
	2. Do you feel comfortable participating in the Gamified-learning activities?	7	78%	2	22%	0	0%	100%
Engagement	**1. Do you like your English teacher using more Gamified-learning**	8	89%	1	11%	0	0%	100%

	activities?							
Enjoyment	**1. Do you have fun during the Gamified-learning activities?**	9	100%	0	0%	0	0%	100%

Elaborated by Robles and Cango, 2024

The survey results provided a detailed understanding of students' experiences with gamified learning activities, focusing on interaction, participation, motivation, engagement and enjoyment. Concerning "Interaction" engagement with the teacher was primarily rated as "Sometimes" (89%), indicating that there is room to encourage more teacher-student interaction. Interaction with peers was higher, with 11% marking "Always" and 78% "Sometimes". Regarding "Active participation" the two questions in this area obtained a unanimous 100% "Always", which shows the full involvement of the students in the activities while the results obtained in "Motivation" showed split answers, with 44% choosing "Always" and 44% "Sometimes". which reveals that comfort in participating was high, with 78% indicating "Always". Regarding "Participation" comfort during activities was highly rated, with 89% choosing "Always." Finally, according to "Enjoyment" the results indicate that all students (100%) claimed to "Always" enjoy the gamified activities, highlighting the attractiveness of the method.

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study are in agreement with those of several previous studies highlighting the positive impact of Gamified-learning on enhancing students' English speaking skills. Comparing this study results with other related research reveals both similarities and differences in terms of learner engagement, active participation, interaction, enjoyment, and motivation.

From this study, it was observed that most of the students occasionally participated in gamified activities. While Arista and Tri Halisiana (2021) observed an initial disinterest in game-based learning, participation improved with activity adjustments. Similarly, Zapata (2023) highlighted increased participation through interactive games, emphasizing adaptive strategies to encourage immediate student engagement.

This study identified that more than half of the students surveyed showed significant motivation to participate in speaking activities during gamified activities. This finding is aligned with the research

conducted by Jácome (2022), who evidenced an improvement in students' vocabulary development after they participated in gamified activities. Likewise, Simbaña (2023) noted that interactive games contributed significantly to the development of students' vocabulary, fluency and grammar, evidencing that gamified learning fosters a higher motivation for active participation in the classroom.

The results of this study reveal that all students experienced enjoyment during the implementation of gamified activities. This finding agrees with that reported by Jácome (2022), who highlighted an improvement in the interaction and enjoyment of students when participating in this kind of game. Nevertheless, this finding contrasts with the study of Arista and Tri Halisiana (2021), who reported an initial lack of interest on the part of the students, which changed after modifying the levels and rules of the game. The results show that students participated positively in gamified learning due to the accurate design of activities.

Both Jácome and Simbaña's studies and previous research support the notion that Gamified-learning activities enhance speaking skills. Jácome (2022) and Simbaña (2023) found improvements in students' speaking skills, such as and fluency. The present study echoes these findings, in which students' interaction, active participation, motivation and enjoyment to speak and their engagement with gamified activities had a positive impact. Furthermore, Arista and Tri Halisiana (2021) and Zapata (2023) highlight that gamified learning not only improves students' speaking but also motivates them to engage more in language learning.

The current study found that almost all students are comfortable participating in gamified activities. This high level of enjoyment is consistent with the findings of Zapata (2023) in his research, where gamified activities helped increase student engagement by creating a more relaxed and engaging learning environment. Meanwhile, Arista and Tri Halisiana (2021) found similar improvements in student behavior and comfort, suggesting that Gamified-learning can create a less intimidating environment for students, thus promoting active participation.

The results of this study are consistent with previous research and confirm that gamification is an effective method for improving language learners' speaking skills. Despite variations in initial engagement, the general trend highlights its positive impact on interaction, motivation, engagement, participation and enjoyment, reinforcing the importance of gamified strategies in the language learning process.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions drawn from this study highlight the meaningful impact of gamified learning on the enhancement of English speaking skills among A1 learners.

The analysis of gamified learning found a significant impact on the improvement of English speaking among A1 learners. The incorporation of gamification strategies fostered a learning environment that encouraged active participation and engagement. These activities not only captured students' interest but also facilitated notable improvements in fluency and confidence. Furthermore, the results underscore the effectiveness of Gamified-learning as a comprehensive pedagogical approach that integrates participation with structured instructional methods to achieve significant and measurable progress in oral language proficiency.

The research showed that the implementation of Gamified-learning activities significantly improved English oral skills among A1 students at the Fine-Tuned English Language Institute. Initial assessments revealed deficits in fluency, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, and that students had difficulty articulating words, constructing sentences, and expressing ideas. Nevertheless, after the intervention, the students showed considerable progress in all areas assessed, especially in fluency and general speaking skills. These results highlight the effectiveness of Gamified-learning in addressing key language problems and promoting skill development. The use of gamification facilitated the practice of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and conversational skills through engaging activities, leading to measurable improvements in speaking skills.

The results of this research showed that learning through games is a practical and effective strategy for approaching the various skill levels of A1 learners. Although initial problems with pronunciation and grammar were evident, the structured and interactive nature of the intervention facilitated significant improvements, reducing performance gaps among students. In addition, survey findings indicate that encouraging teacher-student interaction can further increase engagement. By taking advantage of gamification, educators can integrate fun into learning while simultaneously addressing key language challenges. The results also highlight the importance of adapting activities to the diverse needs of the students, ensuring sustained motivation. For future research, developing gamification strategies can optimize results, making this approach a cornerstone of English language teaching. The combination of

academic benefits and positive learner perceptions underscores its importance for speaking development in similar contexts.

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