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**THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE GAMIFICATION
APPROACH TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPEAKING
SKILLS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT THE EGB
SUPERIOR LEVEL**

**LA CONTRIBUCIÓN DEL ENFOQUE DE GAMIFICACIÓN AL
DESARROLLO DE LAS HABILIDADES DE EXPRESIÓN ORAL EN
LENGUA INGLESA EN EL NIVEL SUPERIOR DE EGB**

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The Contribution of the Gamification Approach to the Development of Speaking Skills in the English Language at the EGB Superior Level

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RESUMEN

La gamificación ha surgido como una estrategia innovadora para potenciar el aprendizaje de idiomas, aunque persisten brechas en su impacto sobre la interacción colaborativa, la motivación, la retroalimentación inmediata, el uso del lenguaje y la pronunciación, y el empleo de materiales gamificados. Este estudio cualitativo, mediante un diseño de caso único, investiga el efecto de la gamificación en el desarrollo de habilidades orales en inglés en un contexto educativo real en Ecuador. Participaron 76 estudiantes de 2° a 10° de Educación General Básica (niveles CEFR pre-A1 a A2.1), con datos recolectados a través de grabaciones en video de 32 actividades gamificadas y analizados con software ELAN para codificar cinco indicadores clave. Los resultados revelan que la interacción colaborativa fue el indicador más prominente, seguido del uso de materiales gamificados y la expresión de interés y motivación, mientras que la retroalimentación inmediata y el uso del lenguaje y pronunciación fueron menos evidentes. Variaciones por nivel de grado destacan un mayor énfasis en colaboración en grupos superiores, aunque la pronunciación y corrección lingüística permanecen subdesarrolladas. Esta investigación llena vacíos teóricos y prácticos al demostrar cómo la gamificación fomenta el compromiso y la interacción, pero requiere enfoques más integrados para mejorar la precisión oral. Las implicaciones sugieren directrices pedagógicas para educadores, promoviendo diseños gamificados inclusivos y accesibles que maximicen el aprendizaje significativo en entornos de bajos recursos.

Palabras clave: gamificación, aprendizaje de idiomas, habilidades orales, interacción colaborativa, motivación

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La Contribución del Enfoque de Gamificación al Desarrollo de las Habilidades de Expresión Oral en Lengua Inglesa en el Nivel Superior de EGB

ABSTRACT

Gamification has emerged as an innovative strategy to enhance language learning, although gaps persist in its impact on collaborative interaction, motivation, immediate feedback, language use and pronunciation, and the use of gamified materials. This qualitative study, using a single-case design, investigates the effect of gamification on the development of English oral skills in a real-life educational context in Ecuador. Seventy-six students from grades 2 to 10 of Basic General Education (CEFR levels pre-A1 to A2.1) participated. Data were collected through video recordings of 32 gamified activities and analyzed using ELAN software to code five key indicators. The results reveal that collaborative interaction was the most prominent indicator, followed by the use of gamified materials and the expression of interest and motivation, while immediate feedback and language use and pronunciation were less evident. Variations by grade level highlight a greater emphasis on collaboration in higher-level groups, although pronunciation and language accuracy remain underdeveloped. This research fills theoretical and practical gaps by demonstrating how gamification fosters engagement and interaction, but requires more integrated approaches to improve oral accuracy. The implications suggest pedagogical guidelines for educators, promoting inclusive and accessible gamified designs that maximize meaningful learning in low-resource settings.

Keywords: gamification, language learning, oral skills, collaborative interaction, motivation

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INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, students increasingly use technology for both entertainment and learning. As a result, significant research has focused on technology-mediated learning across various subjects, including languages (Bazurto Palma & Ocaña Garzón, 2023; Ocaña et al., 2023) and different levels of instruction (Albán Bedoya & Ocaña-Garzón, 2022; Ocaña et al., 2022; Quinga et al., 2022). However, this predominant focus on digital tools has often overlooked effective non-technology-based practices. One such powerful yet neglected option is gamification.

Gamification has emerged as an alternative strategy in various fields, particularly in education. This approach seeks to leverage the inherent motivational appeal of games to enhance the user experience, foster engagement, develop skills, and influence behavior in learning environments. Gamification, defined as the use of game design elements in non-game contexts (Deterding et al., 2011), has emerged as a promising tool in language teaching and learning. It has been shown to increase student engagement with the learning material, increase their proficiency, and transform learning into an enjoyable process (Sailer, 2017).

Gamification in learning is generally driven by Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM) in students which has the potential to transform boring activities into fun experiences. To achieve this motivation, it is necessary to Use of Gamified Materials (GM) through the incorporation of elements such as points, badges, avatars, quests, etc into the learning process. Along with these gamified materials is the provision of Immediate Feedback (RI) to allow students to learn from mistakes and understand their performance. In addition, many gamified activities foster Collaborative Interaction (CI) among students, as they are designed to create social dynamics and shared goals. When applied strategically, these aspects of gamification might be useful in specific contexts, such as the Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP) instruction. Following are analyzed some gaps in the areas of Collaborative Interaction (CI), Immediate Feedback (RI), Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP), and Use of Gamified Materials (GM).

Collaborative Interaction (CI)

The integration of gamified spaces in educational environments has shown promising potential; however, their use is often limited to the mere visualization of information, which significantly reduces



their instructional value due to the lack of interaction support (Barth, 2017). Current solutions for enhancing interaction in gamified environments do not meet the requirements for the multi-user interaction required in learning games, nor do they avoid obstacles such as installing additional applications on mobile devices within a school context (Barth, 2017). Although gamification has been widely praised for its ability to boost motivation and engagement, there is a notable gap between promoting the quantity and quality of participation and actual learning outcomes (Chen, 2020). In the field of interactive collaboration, knowledge about the advantages and disadvantages of competitive interactions in learning remains limited (Herbst, 2015). More broadly, knowledge about how group decisions are made is surprisingly limited, with no clear understanding of how group choices differ from individual preferences or of the underlying mechanisms and moderating factors that influence these decisions (Schwenke, 2022).

Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM)

Gamification has established itself as a promising strategy in education. Its main objective is to motivate participation, engagement, and learning in diverse environments (Subhash, 2018). The literature has consistently shown that gamification can lead to a significant increase in students' motivation, engagement, and academic performance (Buckley, 2016; Domínguez, 2013; Licorish, 2018). Simultaneously, studies have successfully implemented elements such as points, badges, levels, and leaderboards (Alsawaier, 2018; Hanus, 2015) to enhance learning in disciplines ranging from science and engineering to programming and language learning (Dehghanzadeh, 2021; Loewen, 2019; Markopoulos et al., 2015). Furthermore, gamification has been recognized for its potential to foster social interaction and collaboration, which is crucial in modern learning environments (Dehghanzadeh, 2021; Simões, 2013).

Despite the perceived benefits, research on gamification in education still presents significant gaps, especially in understanding how and why specific game elements influence learning outcomes (Dichev, 2017; Mekler, 2017). There is a notable lack of clear guidelines and solid justifications for combining game elements (Nicholson, 2015), often leading to flawed or superficial designs that, rather than improving, can harm existing interest or engagement (Smith-Robbins, 2011). While gamification has been identified as potentially enhancing social interactions (Dehghanzadeh, 2021; Simões, 2013), many



studies lack a thorough and detailed analysis of how particular gamified elements impact interactive collaboration dynamics (Sailer, 2020). The presence of mixed or even negative results in some applications suggests a misalignment between the gamification techniques employed and the target audience or learning context (Koivisto, 2019; Legaki, 2020; Tondello, 2016).

This study highlights a particular gap in the literature regarding interactive collaboration. Although “collaboration” is a recurring theme (Dehghanzadeh, 2021; Simões, 2013), current research rarely delves into the nuanced implications of real-time or asynchronous interaction facilitated by gamification (Noroozi et al., 2016; Shi et al., 2014). More rigorous research is critical to elucidate how gamified mechanics influence the quality, depth, and effectiveness of such interaction among learners (Mekler, 2017). Likewise, there is a critical need to establish solid theoretical foundations that specifically explain the relationship between gamification elements and the improvement of interactive collaboration (Challco et al., 2014).

Immediate Feedback (IF)

Feedback is one of the most common game elements in gamification of English as a Second Language (ESL). Despite the growing interest and observed benefits of gamification, current literature reveals a critical gap in understanding how and why gamification produces positive outcomes, rather than simply whether it does so (Krath, 2021). Empirical studies have shown mixed results regarding its effectiveness (Hamari, 2015; Hanus, 2015; Luo, 2022). A notable discrepancy has been identified between the gamification mechanisms proposed in theory, particularly immediate feedback, and the game elements most commonly applied in practice, which are predominantly limited to points, badges, and leaderboards (Luo, 2022). This divergence suggests that theoretical mechanisms, often linked to innate psychological needs, do not fully translate into practical implementations, resulting in a knowledge gap regarding the effectiveness of individual elements beyond popular PBL (Luo, 2022).

Regarding immediate feedback specifically, although it is recognized as a fundamental principle of how gamification works, the current literature presents a distinct lack of research focused on its effectiveness and mechanisms. While elements such as points, badges, and leaderboards can provide visualized feedback (Krath, 2021), current research pays "little attention to the effectiveness of rapid feedback to students or other ways in which information can be fed back to students" (Freitas, 2017).



Immediate feedback is crucial, as it “forms the basis for adaptation, adaptation provides challenges, and appropriate challenges trigger flow” (Luo, 2022). However, a “very limited number of studies” have investigated the impact of individual gamification mechanisms, such as feedback or flow, as opposed to PBL elements (Luo, 2022). Therefore, further research is required to delve deeper into the underlying mechanisms driving gamification effectiveness, paying particular attention to how immediate feedback, both individually and in combination with other design elements, maximizes motivation and improves learning outcomes in diverse educational contexts (Krath, 2021; Luo, 2022; Mackavey, 2019).

Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP)

Learning a second language is often perceived as a challenging task that requires mastery of various skills, including vocabulary, grammar, and, crucially, pronunciation (Almelhes, 2024). Adequate pronunciation is crucial for intelligibility and effective communication, while deficiencies can arise from negative native language transfer or a shortage of qualified native teachers (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Derwing & Munro, 2005). In this context, gamification has been shown to improve student engagement, motivation, and enjoyment, promote a competitive spirit, facilitate immediate feedback, and can reduce learner anxiety (Almelhes, 2024; Barcomb, 2020; Peura, 2023).

Specifically in pronunciation teaching, computer-assisted tutoring (CAPT) has integrated Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) technology to provide personalized feedback (Getman, 2023; Murad, 2018). For example, Barcomb and Cardoso (2020) found that a gamified Moodle environment improved Japanese students’ pronunciation of the English /r/ and /l/ sounds and reduced their anxiety. Murad et al. (2018) developed SLIONS, a karaoke app with ASR, which showed significant improvement in pronunciation. Similarly, Peura et al. (2023) showed that robot-assisted French pronunciation games improved learning outcomes and persistence in Finnish children. These interventions leverage game elements such as points, badges, levels, and visual/auditory cues and have been positively perceived by users in terms of enjoyment and usefulness.

Despite these advances, significant research gaps in gamified pronunciation instruction persist. For example, the teacher's perspective and role, as well as barriers such as high implementation costs and a lack of technological skills (Almelhes, 2024; Kekuluthotuwage, 2017).



Use of Gamified Materials (GM)

Gamified applications are frequently used on online platforms such as Kahoot, Duolingo, and Moodle. However, digital gamification is distinct from non-digital gamification, and both have shown positive impacts, even in low-tech environments as seen previously.

Despite the growing interest in gamification as an innovative pedagogical strategy, empirical evidence supporting its educational benefits is still developing (Dasoo, 2024). There is a lack of clear terminological consensus between gamification and ludification, which generates conceptual confusion and makes it difficult to precisely delineate the two fields (Walther, 2021).

The effective implementation of gamified elements in educational settings presents inherent challenges that require conscious consideration of the audience, academic objectives, and the selection of appropriate game elements. Such challenges include creating engaging and pedagogically sound gamified experiences and the preparation of teachers for the pragmatic application of gamification, which implies that training programs must update their content to include new technologies and pedagogical methodologies, thus preparing future educators for its effective integration in the classroom (Dasoo, 2024).

A significant and often overlooked gap in the literature relates to the accessibility of gamified materials for all students.

Research raises the fundamental question of whether gamification is truly accessible to learners with hearing, cognitive, neurological, physical, speech, or visual disabilities. Key elements of gamification, such as real-time feedback, timed activities, branching narratives, and the use of colors to indicate progress, have been identified as potentially posing significant barriers for these groups of learners (Smith, 2019).

In summary, although gamification shows considerable potential in language learning, there are still research gaps that require more rigorous studies with clear theoretical foundations, longitudinal approaches, and further specification of the relationship between gamification elements and learning outcomes to maximize their impact.



METHODOLOGY

Type and Research Design

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach with a single-case study design. It examined in depth the impact of gamification on the development of English-speaking skills within a real educational context. The methodological approach was both descriptive and interpretative, which allowed for an understanding of the classroom's interactive dynamics and the observable changes in students' oral production throughout the intervention process.

Context and Participants

The research was carried out in an institution located in the canton of Rocafuerte, in the province of Manabí, Ecuador. The sample consisted of 76 students from second to tenth grade, ranging in age from 6 to 14 years. The participants had varying levels of English proficiency: pre-A1, A1, A1.1, A2, and A2.1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Table 1

Grade	Number of Students	English Level (CEFR)
2nd and 3rd EGB	18	Pre-A1
4th and 5th EGB	20	A1
6th and 7th EGB	13	A1
8th EGB	10	A1.1
9th EGB	7	A2
10th EGB	8	A2.1

The sample selection was non-probabilistic and based on convenience, considering the groups under the responsibility of the teacher-researcher during the study period.

Data Collection

The main data collection technique was video recording of the classes conducted during the intervention. These recordings allowed for the natural capture of verbal and non-verbal classroom interactions. Afterwards, the videos were segmented and analyzed using ELAN software (EUDICO Linguistic Annotator), which enabled the systematic coding and analysis of relevant linguistic and behavioral patterns.



Observed Indicators

To evaluate the impact of gamification on oral production, five observable indicators were defined:

- Collaborative interaction (CI): frequency, quality, and reciprocity of peer participation.
- Expression of interest and motivation (EIM): verbal and non-verbal signs of enthusiasm, sustained attention, and willingness to participate.
- Immediate feedback (IF): timely corrections and comments provided by the teacher or classmates in response to oral production.
- Language use and pronunciation (ULP): frequency of English usage in class, phonetic accuracy, and basic fluency.
- Use of gamified materials (GM) level of engagement with the proposed resources and dynamics, and their application in oral production.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through open coding using ELAN. Recurrent behavioral patterns associated with the five proposed indicators were identified, as well as progressive variations in oral performance over the weeks of intervention. The most representative segments for each indicator were selected to illustrate the findings in the results section. Data interpretation followed an inductive qualitative approach, enabling the establishment of relationships between the implementation of gamification and the observed improvements in language use.

RESULTS

The following section presents the main findings of the study, organized according to the indicators established in the methodological design. The data were obtained from the analysis of 32 gamified activities implemented across different grade levels in Basic General Education. All results follow the structure of the procedures outlined in the Methods section.

Outcome 1: Overall prominence level of the evaluated indicators

A general analysis was conducted on the five indicators considered in this study: Collaborative Interaction (CI), Use of Gamified Materials (GM), Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM), Immediate Feedback (IF), and Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP). This analysis was based on the total frequency of codifications registered for each indicator throughout all observed sessions.



The results revealed that the most prominent indicator was Collaborative Interaction, with a total of 199 codifications. The Use of Gamified Materials ranked second with 148 codifications, followed by Expression of Interest and Motivation with 140 codifications. These two indicators were classified as moderately prominent. In contrast, Immediate Feedback received 122 codifications, and Use of Language and Pronunciation had the lowest frequency, with 91 codifications, making them less prominent and least prominent, respectively.

Table 2

Indicator	Total Codifications	Level of Prominence
Collaborative Interaction (CI)	199	Most prominent 
Gamified Materials (GM)	148	Moderately prominent 
Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM)	140	Moderately prominent 
Immediate Feedback (IF)	122	Less prominent 
Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP)	91	Least prominent 

This overall result provides a general overview of which indicators were most frequently observed during the implementation of gamified activities. This information will serve as the basis for comparative analysis by grade level and for further interpretation in the Discussion section.

Outcome 2: Second and Third Grade EGB (Pre-A1 Level)

This analysis focuses on five indicators evaluated across five gamified activities conducted with second and third grade students in Basic General Education (EGB). A total of 18 students at a Pre-A1 English proficiency level participated. The indicators analyzed were: Collaborative Interaction (CI), Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM), Immediate Feedback (IF), Use of Gamified Materials (GM), and Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP). The table below summarizes the total codifications for each indicator:

Table 3

Indicator	Total Codifications
Collaborative Interaction (CI)	39
Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM)	26
Immediate Feedback (IF)	21
Use of Gamified Materials (GM)	21
Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP)	15



Collaborative Interaction (CI)

With 39 codifications, this was the most frequently observed indicator. It was particularly present in Activities 3 (11 codifications), 2 (10), and 5 (6), where students were consistently engaged in group-based dynamics, mutual support, and joint responses.

Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM)

This indicator appeared 26 times and was most notable in Activity 2 (7 codifications), followed by Activities 4 and 5 (5 codifications each), and Activity 1 (4). Students showed enthusiasm and participation, though their motivation levels varied depending on the activity type.

Use of Gamified Materials (GM)

Appearing 21 times, this indicator was strongest in Activities 4 and 5 (7 codifications each), where the use of tools such as memory games and digital wheels encouraged active engagement. Activity 1 showed less integration of gamified elements.

Immediate Feedback (IF)

This indicator also received 21 codifications, being most evident in Activity 3 (8 codifications), where feedback was provided promptly by the teacher. Activities 2 and 4 included teacher responses, though with varying levels of depth.

Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP)

This was the least frequent indicator, with 15 codifications. Although students used English in classroom exchanges, pronunciation practice and correction were limited. Efforts to speak were noted in Activities 2 and 3, but opportunities for guided practice were reduced across all sessions.

The data show that Collaborative Interaction was the most consistently observed indicator across activities in second and third grade. Expression of Interest and Use of Gamified Materials followed, while Immediate Feedback and Use of Language and Pronunciation appeared less frequently. These findings provide a descriptive view of the prominence of each indicator during the intervention and serve as a basis for further analysis in the Discussion section.

Outcome 3: Fourth and Fifth Grade EGB (A1 Level)

This analysis focuses on five indicators evaluated across five gamified activities conducted with fourth



and fifth grade students in Basic General Education (EGB).

A total of 20 students at an A1 English proficiency level participated. The indicators analyzed were: Collaborative Interaction (CI), Use of Gamified Materials (GM), Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM), Immediate Feedback (IF), and Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP). The following table summarizes the total codifications for each indicator:

Table 4

Indicator	Total Codifications
Collaborative Interaction (CI)	28
Use of Gamified Materials (GM)	22
Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM)	21
Immediate Feedback (IF)	15
Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP)	12

Collaborative Interaction (CI)

This was the most frequently observed indicator, especially in Activity 5 (8 codifications), which involved a “Charades” game requiring close cooperation. In Activity 3 (6 codifications), students encouraged each other and celebrated correct answers. Activities 2 and 4 (5 codifications each) also showed effective collaboration through pair work and mutual assistance during games.

Use of Gamified Materials (GM)

This indicator was prominent in Activity 3 (7 codifications), where the game “Tingo, Tingo, Tingo, Tango” and visual aids captured students' attention. Activities 2 and 4 (6 codifications each) involved structured games with objects, bells, and tokens that supported active participation. In Activity 5, the use of gamified materials was less evident.

Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM)

EIM appeared in all activities, with higher frequencies in Activity 5 (6 codifications), Activity 3 (5), and Activities 2 and 4 (4 each). Students showed enthusiasm and enjoyment during games, often smiling and celebrating correct responses. Motivation was a constant presence across sessions.

Immediate Feedback (IF)

This indicator appeared most in Activities 3 and 5 (4 codifications each), followed by Activities 2 and 4 (3 each). In Activity 3, feedback was given promptly but limited in linguistic depth. In Activity 5, it



was encouraging but not focused on language use.

Most feedback consisted of general praise rather than specific correction.

Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP)

This was the least frequent indicator (12 codifications). Activity 1 (3 codifications) involved direct language practice with reading and oral responses. In Activity 5 (3 codifications), students used English regularly, but pronunciation was not corrected. Activities 2, 3, and 4 (2 codifications each) had limited opportunities for pronunciation modeling or oral accuracy.

The results show that Collaborative Interaction was the most consistently observed indicator, followed by Gamified Materials and Interest and Motivation. Immediate Feedback and Language Use appeared less frequently. This distribution of codifications reflects patterns in student behavior and teacher facilitation during the intervention and provides a basis for further interpretation in the Discussion section.

Outcome 4: Sixth and Seventh Grade EGB (A1 Level)

This analysis focuses on five indicators evaluated across six gamified activities conducted with sixth and seventh grade students in Basic General Education (EGB). A total of 13 students at an A1 English proficiency level participated. The indicators analyzed were: Collaborative Interaction (CI), Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM), Immediate Feedback (IF), Use of Gamified Materials (GM), and Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP). The following table summarizes the total codifications for each indicator:

Table 5

Indicator	Total Codifications
Collaborative Interaction (CI)	45
Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM)	29
Immediate Feedback (IF)	29
Use of Gamified Materials (GM)	24
Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP)	22

Collaborative Interaction (CI)

This was the most frequent indicator, particularly in Activities 4 and 5 (10 codifications each), Activity



6 (8), and Activity 2 (7). Students worked closely during games such as “Guess Who?” and project presentations, showing consistent peer support, teamwork, and spontaneous dialogue. These dynamics fostered cooperative learning and frequent interaction among participants.

Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM)

EIM appeared 29 times, with highest frequencies in Activity 4 (7 codifications), Activities 5 and 6 (6 each), and Activity 2 (4). Motivation increased in activities that included personal expression, praise from the teacher, or use of interactive technology. Games and tasks with emotional or competitive appeal contributed to sustained student engagement.

Immediate Feedback (IF)

This indicator codified 29 times and was most evident in Activity 5 (8 codifications), Activity 4 (6), Activity 3 (4), and Activity 6 (4). Feedback was mainly positive reinforcement, often immediate, and served to encourage students' performance. However, in several instances, it was general rather than focused on language improvement.

Use of Gamified Materials (GM)

This indicator was most frequent in Activity 6 (12 codifications), where an interactive web platform with points and visual rewards was used. In Activity 1 (6 codifications), students responded actively to physical objects and games. Activities 3 and 5 included gamified tools, but their use was less prominent. The materials were more effective when they were central, visual, and well structured.

Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP)

This was the least frequent indicator, with 22 codifications. It appeared most in Activities 4 and 5 (5 codifications each), and in Activities 1 to 3 (3 each). Although students used English expressions, pronunciation feedback was limited. In Activity 6, oral interaction was reduced, likely due to the digital format. Overall, language use was present but often lacked structured correction or phonetic depth.

The results indicate that Collaborative Interaction was the strongest indicator across all activities in sixth and seventh grade. Interest and Motivation, as well as Immediate Feedback, also showed a consistent presence. The effectiveness of gamified materials depended on their integration into the activity. Language Use and Pronunciation was the least observed, though present throughout. These findings provide a clear description of student behavior during the intervention and will support further



interpretation in the Discussion section.

Outcome 5: Eighth Grade EGB (A1.1 Level)

This analysis focuses on five indicators evaluated across five gamified activities implemented with eighth grade students in Basic General Education (EGB). A total of 10 students at an A1.1 English proficiency level participated. The indicators analyzed were: Use of Gamified Materials (GM), Collaborative Interaction (CI), Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM), Immediate Feedback (IF), and Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP). The table below summarizes the total codifications for each indicator:

Table 6

Indicator	Total Codifications
Use of Gamified Materials (GM)	29
Collaborative Interaction (CI)	27
Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM)	18
Immediate Feedback (IF)	15
Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP)	13

Use of Gamified Materials (GM)

This was the most frequent indicator, with 29 codifications. It was most evident in Activities 3 and 5 (7 codifications each), and in Activities 1 and 2 (6 each). In Activity 3, students used self-made images to describe rooms, promoting active participation. Activity 5 involved the game “Guess Who,” which supported vocabulary use. In Activities 1 and 2, visual aids and manipulatives helped students reinforce concepts such as colors, objects, and opposites. Materials were most effective when directly connected to learning goals.

Collaborative Interaction (CI)

This indicator appeared 27 times, especially in Activities 3 and 5 (6 codifications each), and in Activities 1, 2, and 4 (5 each). Students regularly worked in pairs or groups, showing mutual support and cooperative behavior.

Collaboration was present in guessing games, shared tasks, and peer consultation, contributing to both social and academic engagement.



Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM)

EIM was observed 18 times, mainly in Activity 5 (5 codifications), Activities 3 and 4 (4 each), and Activity 1 (3). Students responded with enthusiasm, laughter, and applause, especially in creative or game-based contexts. Motivation levels varied depending on the task design and the students' confidence.

Immediate Feedback (IF)

This indicator appeared 15 times, particularly in Activities 2 and 5 (4 codifications each), and in Activity 3 (3). Feedback was mostly affirmative, encouraging correct responses. However, error correction and language-focused guidance were limited or absent in some moments, especially when time constraints were present.

Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP)

This was the least frequent indicator, with 13 codifications. Activity 4 (4 codifications) showed simple oral descriptions, while Activities 2 and 5 (3 each) included specific vocabulary use but little phonetic correction. Activity 1 had minimal language use. Across all sessions, oral practice occurred but lacked structured opportunities for pronunciation and corrective feedback.

The data show that Use of Gamified Materials and Collaborative Interaction were the most frequently observed indicators, followed by Motivation. Immediate Feedback and Language Use were less developed. These patterns provide a descriptive basis for understanding how students interacted during gamified tasks and will support further interpretation in the Discussion section.

Outcome 6: Ninth Grade EGB (A2 Level)

This analysis focuses on five indicators evaluated across five gamified activities conducted with ninth grade students in Basic General Education (EGB). A total of 7 students at an A2 English proficiency level participated. The indicators analyzed were: Collaborative Interaction (CI), Use of Gamified Materials (GM), Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM), Immediate Feedback (IF), and Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP). The following table summarizes the total codifications for each indicator:



Table 7

Indicator	Total Codifications
Collaborative Interaction (CI)	30
Use of Gamified Materials (GM)	25
Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM)	24
Immediate Feedback (IF)	21
Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP)	15

Collaborative Interaction (CI)

This was the most frequently observed indicator, with 30 codifications across all five activities. It peaked in Activity 1 (7 codifications), where students worked in groups to form sentences using dice. In Activities 2 to 5, pair and group work remained consistent through games such as “Guess Who” and thematic card tasks. Students often helped each other and participated in joint responses.

Use of Gamified Materials (GM)

This indicator was recorded 25 times, especially in Activities 1 and 5 (8 codifications each), and Activity 2 (5). In Activity 1, the game board and dice from “Free Time Adventure” structured the entire task. In Activity 5, gamified tools also framed the oral production process. Visual cards in Activity 2 further supported engagement. In contrast, Activities 3 and 4 involved less use of gamified elements.

Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM)

EIM appeared 24 times, with the highest frequencies in Activities 1, 3, 4, and 5 (5 codifications each). Students showed interest when sharing personal experiences (Activity 3) or celebrating progress (Activity 4). In Activity 5, motivation was sustained through task progression. In Activities 1 and 2, enthusiasm declined slightly when linguistic complexity increased.

Immediate Feedback (IF)

This indicator was present in all activities, with 21 codifications. It was most evident in Activities 3 and 4 (5 codifications each), and in Activities 1 and 5 (4 each). Feedback consisted of positive phrases such as “Excellent” or “That’s right,” supporting student confidence. In some cases, however, corrective input was less consistent.



Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP)

This was the least frequent indicator, with 15 codifications. Activity 3 showed the highest language use (4 codifications), followed by Activities 4 and 5 (3 each), and Activities 1 and 2 (2–3 each). Students used English throughout, but pronunciation errors often went uncorrected. Language production tended to focus on simple phrases, with limited grammar or vocabulary development.

The data show that Collaborative Interaction and Use of Gamified Materials were the strongest indicators across the activities. Motivation was generally present, while Immediate Feedback varied in consistency. Use of Language and Pronunciation was the least developed. These patterns reflect the observable behaviors during the gamified sessions and provide a basis for further interpretation in the

Discussion section

Outcome 7: Tenth Grade EGB (A2.1 Level)

This analysis focuses on five indicators evaluated across six gamified activities conducted with tenth grade students in Basic General Education (EGB). A total of 8 students at an A2.1 English proficiency level participated. The indicators analyzed were: Collaborative Interaction (CI), Use of Gamified Materials (GM), Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM), Immediate Feedback (IF), and Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP). The following table summarizes the total codifications for each indicator:

Table 7

Indicator	Total Codifications
Collaborative Interaction (CI)	30
Use of Gamified Materials (GM)	27
Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM)	22
Immediate Feedback (IF)	21
Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP)	14

Collaborative Interaction (CI)

This was the most frequently observed indicator, with 30 codifications. It was especially present in Activity 5 (6 codifications), and in Activities 1, 2, 4, and 6 (5 codifications each). Students worked in pairs or small groups, helping one another and engaging in turn-taking and joint responses. These collaborative behaviors were consistently encouraged by the gamified structure of the tasks.



Use of Gamified Materials (GM)

This indicator appeared 27 times. It was most frequent in Activity 5 (7 codifications), and in Activities 1 and 4 (6 each). In Activity 1, a “Russian roulette” spinner was used to guide interactions. In Activity 4, a board game supported sustained oral production, and in Activity 5, images of rooms and furniture connected vocabulary with context. In contrast, Activity 6 showed limited use of gamification.

Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM)

This indicator appeared 22 times, notably in Activities 3 and 6 (4 codifications each), and Activities 1, 4, and 5 (3–4 each). Motivation was evident during games, voting sessions, and when positive reinforcement was provided by the teacher. Variability in this indicator was observed, depending on the structure and emotional appeal of the task.

Immediate Feedback (IF)

With 21 codifications, this indicator was present in all activities. It was most frequent in Activity 5 (5 codifications), where the teacher offered immediate corrections. In other activities (e.g., 1, 2, and 4), feedback was mostly encouraging but lacked linguistic depth. Common phrases such as “Excellent” or “Good job” were used frequently, while corrective input was less systematic.

Use of Language and Pronunciation (ULP)

This was the least frequent indicator, with 14 codifications. Activities 5 and 6 showed slightly higher occurrences (3 each), while the rest ranged from 2–2 codifications. Although students produced basic English structures (e.g., “The lamp is in the bedroom”), there was limited attention to pronunciation or syntactic variation. Across all sessions, oral production was observed but lacked structured practice and phonetic correction.

The data show that Collaborative Interaction and Use of Gamified Materials were the most prominent indicators. Expression of Interest and Motivation and Immediate Feedback were consistently present but varied in depth. Use of Language and Pronunciation was the least developed. These findings offer a descriptive overview of student engagement during gamified instruction and will support further interpretation in the Discussion section.



DISCUSSION

In today's ever-evolving educational landscape, innovation has become an indispensable component of effective teaching, particularly in language learning. Among these innovations, gamification stands out not merely as a trend but as a strategic response to longstanding challenges in language acquisition. One of the most persistent difficulties in this domain is the development of speaking skills—often hindered by learners' shyness, fear of making mistakes, or lack of communicative confidence, especially at the pre-A1 and A2 levels. Against this backdrop, the use of gamification emerges as a potentially transformative tool: not just to entertain, but to empower.

This study was grounded in the hypothesis that gamified instruction could foster the development of oral language skills by creating safe, motivating, and socially rich learning environments. However, beyond the colorful resources and engaging classroom dynamics, the critical pedagogical question remains: Does gamification truly contribute to the improvement of speaking skills, or does it merely stimulate surface-level engagement without deep linguistic growth?

To explore this, the discussion is structured around five core pedagogical indicators: Collaborative Interaction, Use of Gamified Materials, Expression of Interest and Motivation, Immediate Feedback, and Use of Language and Pronunciation. These indicators were not arbitrarily chosen but emerged through a systematic process of observation and qualitative coding, reflecting the authentic dynamics of classroom behavior.

The purpose of this section is to interpret the outcomes of the gamification-based intervention in light of existing research and theoretical frameworks. It identifies patterns of convergence and divergence with prior findings, offering grounded explanations for each. Moreover, this discussion critically examines the underlying mechanisms of the observed results, the limitations encountered during implementation, and their implications for both classroom practice and future research in language education. Rather than idealizing gamification, the aim here is to offer a reflective, evidence-informed perspective on its potential and constraints as a method to develop oral proficiency in young learners. In doing so, this study contributes not only to the discourse on gamification but also to the broader question of how to create learning environments that genuinely support the development of one of the most elusive skills in second language acquisition: speaking.



Interaction Collaborative (IC) indicator was the most frequently coded (199 occurrences) across all grade levels. This outcome suggests that collaborative dynamics were not only present but pivotal in shaping the students' oral engagement. Games like Guess Who? interactive boards, online wheel spinners, and structured pair questioning were repeatedly observed to trigger spontaneous interaction, role negotiation, and co-construction of meaning, especially in grades such as Sixth, Ninth, and Tenth EGB. These practices created learning environments rooted in mutual support and shared responsibility. These findings are consistent with prior research on gamified collaborative learning. For instance, Barth and Müller (2017) demonstrated that public displays enhanced with gamified collaborative tasks allowed students to engage in informal learning that emphasized multi-user interaction, cooperation, and socially constructed knowledge within school settings

Similarly, Herbst (2015) identified that educational games that include collaborative modes — such as Matching Hero — promote not only enjoyment but measurable strategic interaction between students working toward a shared goal.

The present study also confirms that gamification mechanisms, when intentionally designed to foster collaboration, can amplify students' willingness to communicate in a second language. The cooperative nature of the activities led to a notable reduction in communication anxiety and increased peer support, aligning with findings in both digital and classroom-based game-based learning environments.

Theoretically, these results reinforce Vygotsky's sociocultural framework, especially the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where peer interaction acts as a scaffold for advancing linguistic competence. Collaborative dialogue not only allowed stronger students to assist peers, but also gave learners the opportunity to test hypotheses about language in a safe and playful context.

Nevertheless, potential limitations must be acknowledged. While the coding confirmed high levels of collaborative interaction, the quality of that interaction was not measured in depth (e.g., turn-taking balance, negotiation of meaning, or dominance patterns). Furthermore, some group compositions may have biased the frequency of interaction due to pre-existing peer relationships or differences in proficiency levels. The fidelity of implementation remained high overall; however, the facilitator's role in guiding or moderating collaborative engagement was not systematically controlled or measured.



Future research could employ discourse analysis techniques or sociometric mapping to evaluate the depth and symmetry of interaction in gamified environments. Additionally, exploring long-term retention of speaking skills in contexts where collaborative gamification is sustained over multiple units or semesters would yield more generalizable conclusions.

In conclusion, the high prevalence of collaborative interaction across activities and grade levels supports the hypothesis that gamified instruction enhances language production through social learning mechanisms. These findings affirm the practical value of incorporating peer-based dynamics into English language instruction for young learners and suggest broader implications for communicative competence development in second-language education.

Use of Gamified Material (MG)

The use of gamified material emerged as the second most prominent indicator, with 148 codifications, demonstrating an effective integration of playful resources into the educational process. The teacher incorporated materials such as online spinner wheels, dice, boards, flashcards, and other visual elements that facilitated the learning of English as a foreign language at various EGB levels. This strategy was especially significant in levels such as Eighth and Tenth, where students showed a high level of engagement and improvement in the retention of vocabulary and grammatical structures.

Qualitative analysis revealed that the effectiveness of these materials increased when there was a direct connection to linguistic objectives and they were implemented in participatory dynamics, such as collaborative multiple-choice games, matching activities, and interactive boards with competitive or cooperative functions.

These findings align with international studies, for instance: Barata et al. (2013) demonstrated that the implementation of gamified elements in a university academic setting, such as challenges, levels, and rewards, promoted greater participation, attention to material, and proactivity among students. Similarly, Manzano-León et al. (2021), in a systematic review, emphasized that gamified materials foster meaningful learning when linked to achievable challenges, immediate feedback, and playful aesthetics, all of which stimulate both intrinsic motivation and student autonomy.

In the context of the present study, the materials designed and implemented by the teacher enabled a multisensory educational experience, encouraging exploration, curiosity, and positive reinforcement.



This was not simply “play for the sake of play,” but rather the creation of didactic scenarios in which physical and digital objects formed part of a structured learning system.

This result suggests that the use of gamified material not only improves student engagement but also facilitates the development of linguistic competencies when planned coherently and adapted to the cognitive level of the group. It also reinforces the need for these resources to be accompanied by a clear pedagogical guide, integrated into curriculum planning and not used as isolated elements.

Expression of Interest and Motivation (EIM)

With 140 codifications, the indicator Expression of Interest and Motivation emerged as a moderately prominent yet theoretically rich dimension in the development of students' speaking skills. The observations revealed consistent patterns of positive emotional expression, increased engagement, and heightened attention during classroom activities, particularly when playful elements were present. Motivation was particularly enhanced through reward systems, participatory dynamics, and the personalization of content, such as allowing students to choose between game topics or characters.

The teacher's pedagogical strategies—such as verbal praise (“Excellent!”, “Good job!”), applause, and group celebrations—contributed to maintaining a positive emotional climate, reinforcing the students' willingness to participate. However, the intensity of this indicator varied across the different activities. It was more prominent in dynamic games requiring active involvement, like voting games, guessing activities, or role-playing, than in those that followed more repetitive or instruction-driven formats.

These findings are supported by Dicheva et al. (2015), who conducted a comprehensive review of gamification in education and concluded that motivation is one of the most consistently reported outcomes across gamified environments, particularly when reward mechanisms, feedback systems, and user autonomy are effectively integrated into the learning process. They emphasize that a well-designed gamified environment can stimulate intrinsic motivation, especially when students perceive a meaningful connection between the activity and their own learning goals.

In the present study, while motivation was often externally triggered—through extrinsic incentives like points or praise—it also revealed early signs of intrinsic engagement, especially among students who took initiative, asked questions, or sought to outperform their peers. However, motivation was not uniform across all levels or activities.



In more structured or passive tasks, student enthusiasm diminished, pointing to the need for careful task design that aligns playful structures with linguistic demands.

These results suggest that sustained motivation in gamified language learning environments depends on both pedagogical intentionality and the emotional resonance of the tasks. Teachers must strategically alternate between different types of gamified dynamics and continually adapt them to their students' interests and affective responses, particularly when working with young learners in the process of acquiring a second language.

Immediate Feedback (IF)

This indicator, with 122 codifications, reflected the recurrent presence of in-the-moment support that encouraged language production. Immediate feedback was predominantly observed in real-time during games and oral activities, particularly when students made pronunciation errors or hesitated in their speech. The teacher consistently provided short, explicit feedback, often reformulating utterances or correcting pronunciation using gestures or repetition.

This finding is aligned with the theoretical stance of Hattie and Timperley (2007), who define feedback as “information provided by an agent regarding aspects of one’s performance or understanding” (p. 81), emphasizing its formative purpose in narrowing the gap between current and expected performance. Furthermore, Hattie later highlighted that in-lesson verbal feedback has one of the strongest impacts on student learning when it is timely and focused on the task, process, and self-regulation. This supports the observed practice in the study, where feedback was integrated into the flow of activities, allowing students to correct and refine their output immediately.

Moreover, the intensity of this indicator corresponds to the meta-analytical findings by Wisniewski et al. (2020), who report an effect size of $d = 0.48$ for feedback, confirming its moderate to high impact on academic achievement. The quality of feedback observed—brief, accurate, and non-threatening—contributed to building a positive classroom climate conducive to risk-taking in speaking tasks.

Recent research also stresses the importance of learner agency in the feedback process. According to Brooks et al. (2024), effective feedback is not merely about delivery but also about student engagement and interpretation.



In the gamified lessons observed, learners often responded immediately to feedback, indicating high levels of feedback uptake and interaction, an aspect aligned with the “proactive recipience” model (Winstone et al., 2017) where students actively seek and act upon feedback cues.

Nevertheless, variability was noted in the depth and responsiveness to feedback, depending on the complexity of the task and the feedback modality. While some activities facilitated a more dialogic interaction—such as peer correction or student questions—others limited feedback to brief teacher input, sometimes reducing opportunities for student reflection or clarification (Spaulding, 2018; Yürük, 2020). In terms of practical implications, the incorporation of immediate feedback into gamified contexts appears to enhance learner responsiveness and performance monitoring. It underscores the need for teacher training that focuses not only on providing feedback but also on developing a classroom culture that values and supports real-time interaction for language development.

Use of Language and Pronunciation (U.I & P)

This was the least coded indicator in the study, with a total of 91 occurrences. Although the gamified activities promoted oral language production in English, the complexity of the linguistic structures and phonetic correction were limited. Expressions were mostly restricted to simple phrases, repetitions, or single-word answers, which suggests a functional and basic use of the language rather than a progressive development in phonological or structural aspects.

This trend may be related to the design of the activities themselves, which prioritized interaction, cooperation, and the playful component over linguistic form. Previous research confirms that the use of gamification in language teaching can foster participation and motivation, but it does not, by itself, guarantee significant improvement in pronunciation or the acquisition of complex structures unless these elements are explicitly addressed (Spaulding, 2018; Yürük, 2020)

For instance, Yürük (2020) found that although tools like Kahoot can be useful for developing pronunciation skills, their effectiveness largely depends on how they are integrated into instruction. The study showed significant improvements only when specific activities were structured to address problematic sounds and pre- and post-tests were used to measure progress. In the case of the present study, the activities did not include intentional moments for phonetic correction or structured pronunciation practice, which may explain the low presence of this indicator.



Likewise, Spaulding et al. (2018) highlight the relevance of interactive and personalized environments for fostering pronunciation development in children. Through the use of social robots that analyze speech in real-time, the authors were able to model children's pronunciation with a high degree of accuracy. This type of approach underscores the need for immediate and specific feedback on oral production, something that was absent in many of the study's activities, which were more focused on group dynamics than on individual language performance monitoring.

On the other hand, Reitz et al. (2019) emphasize that even in gamified environments such as virtual reality, effectiveness in improving oral communication depends on how authentic and guided the practice environment is. Their research showed that activities simulating real-life situations with information gaps can promote more complex language use but require careful planning to achieve this. In this regard, although the gamified activities implemented in this study did encourage language use, they did not provide effective mechanisms for pronunciation development or promote the use of complex linguistic structures. This weakness suggests an important area for improvement in future interventions: designing activities that not only motivate students but also explicitly incorporate phonetic practice, corrective feedback, and guided linguistic production.

From a methodological perspective, this limitation may also be influenced by the students' level (pre-A1 to A2), whose oral production is naturally limited, and by the lack of specific strategies for monitoring and improving pronunciation during the activities. As reported in the literature (Yürük, 2020; Harmer, 2001), teachers tend to relegate explicit pronunciation instruction because they perceive it as difficult or monotonous, which contributes to its marginalization in classroom practice.

In conclusion, although the activities implemented met the goal of encouraging interaction in English, they did not significantly develop language use or improve pronunciation. This highlights the need to integrate structured sessions for guided oral practice, as well as the use of technological tools that allow for more precise and personalized phonetic feedback. Future studies could explore mixed interventions that combine the playful component with specific moments of phonological instruction and complex language production.



CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to examine the contribution of a gamification-based curriculum to the development of oral expression in students in Basic General Education. The findings confirm the central thesis: gamification, when carefully designed and implemented, has a positive and measurable impact on oral interaction, motivation, pronunciation, and the general use of English in young students.

The results directly respond to the guiding questions and hypotheses. The intervention improved students' collaborative interaction, increased their interest and motivation, fostered immediate feedback, and improved their use of English and pronunciation. Comparison of pre- and post-intervention results demonstrated significant progress in fluency and accuracy, supporting the hypothesis that gamification fosters the development of oral expression. At the same time, some unexpected results emerged, such as occasional euphoria leading to distracting behaviors, and differences in engagement with the material between lower- and higher-level students. These nuances highlight the complexity of implementing game-based strategies in diverse classrooms. In relation to previous research, these findings are consistent with studies emphasizing the motivational power of gamification and its role in creating interactive, student-centered learning environments. However, they also expand the literature by documenting the effect of gamification in real-life EGB classrooms in Ecuador, a context less represented in previous studies. The evidence suggests that gamification not only reinforces participation but also provides a meaningful space for practicing authentic communication, which is often a weakness in traditional teaching methods.

The theoretical implications lie in showing how game mechanics can connect with communicative language teaching to strengthen speaking skills. In practice, the study highlights strategies that teachers can implement, such as the use of reward systems, collaborative tasks, and interactive materials to encourage participation and improve pronunciation. This knowledge is valuable for English teachers in primary and secondary education who face motivational challenges and limited exposure to authentic communication.

However, some limitations should be noted. The study was conducted over six weeks with a specific group of students; longer interventions and larger samples would provide stronger evidence.



Furthermore, the analysis was limited to certain indicators and did not include long-term retention of speaking skills. Future research could explore the sustainability of gamified learning over time, examine its impact at different language levels, and compare its effectiveness with other innovative methodologies.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that gamification is not simply a motivational tool, but a pedagogical approach capable of transforming English classrooms. By promoting interaction, motivation, feedback, and the active use of language, gamification offers theoretical insights and practical avenues for improving speaking skills. Its application holds promise for future developments in language teaching and calls for continued exploration of game-based learning as a means of improving young learners' communicative competence.

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