



## **Gamification as a Strategy to Strengthen Motivation in Adult A1-Level English Learners**

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Bachelor's Degree in Foreign Languages: English

Working Paper

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Bogotá D.C

2026



### **Abstract**

This working paper analyzes the influence of gamification as a pedagogical strategy on the motivation of adult A1-level students in the learning of English as a foreign language, within the context of Fundación Alianza Social Educativa, whose classes were held at Colegio Laureano Gómez during the 2025-1 and 2025-2 academic periods. The literature review highlights the importance of active methodologies, particularly gamification, in promoting student motivation, participation, and engagement in English language learning. It also identifies the need for more studies focused on adult learners and reflective analyses of real classroom experiences. The research followed a qualitative approach through the systematization of experiences proposed by Jara (2018), which allowed for the recovery, organization, and interpretation of pedagogical practice in the classroom. The conceptual framework draws on Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism, Pennycook's (2010) critical perspective on language teaching, Kumaravadivelu's (2006) contextualized approach to language learning, and Jara's (2018) proposal for the systematization of experiences. Data collection was carried out through classroom observations, field journals, a needs analysis survey, and teacher reflective processes. The information was analyzed through categories related to students' motivation, participation, and interaction. The results show that the implementation of gamification through mechanics such as challenges, points, immediate feedback, recognition, and rewards integrated into role-plays, vocabulary games, and collaborative speaking activities increased students' oral participation and confidence when using English in the classroom. The study concludes that gamification enhances the motivation of adult beginner-level English learners by creating dynamic, supportive, and participatory learning environments that encourage confidence and meaningful language use.

**Keywords:** Gamification; motivation; A1 English; adult education.



## Resumen

Este working paper analiza la influencia de la gamificación como estrategia pedagógica en la motivación de estudiantes adultos de nivel A1 en el aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera, en el contexto de la Fundación Alianza Social Educativa, cuyas clases se desarrollaron en el Colegio Laureano Gómez durante los períodos académicos 2025-1 y 2025-2. La revisión de la literatura destaca la importancia de las metodologías activas, particularmente la gamificación, para promover la motivación, la participación y el compromiso de los estudiantes en el aprendizaje del inglés. Asimismo, identifica la necesidad de desarrollar más estudios centrados en estudiantes adultos y en análisis reflexivos de experiencias reales de aula. La investigación siguió un enfoque cualitativo mediante la sistematización de experiencias propuesta por Jara (2018), la cual permitió recuperar, organizar e interpretar la práctica pedagógica desarrollada en el aula. El marco conceptual se fundamenta en el constructivismo social de Vygotsky (1978), la perspectiva crítica de la enseñanza de lenguas de Pennycook (2010), el enfoque contextualizado del aprendizaje de lenguas de Kumaravadivelu (2006), el concepto de gamificación de Deterding et al. (2011) y la propuesta de sistematización de experiencias de Jara (2018). La recolección de información se realizó mediante observaciones de clase, diarios de campo, una encuesta de análisis de necesidades y procesos de reflexión docente. La información se analizó a partir de categorías relacionadas con la motivación, la participación y la interacción de los estudiantes. Los resultados muestran que la implementación de la gamificación, mediante mecánicas como retos, puntos, retroalimentación inmediata, reconocimiento y recompensas integradas en juegos de roles, actividades de vocabulario y tareas colaborativas de expresión oral, incrementó la participación oral y la confianza de las estudiantes



al utilizar el inglés en el aula. El estudio concluye que la gamificación fortalece la motivación de estudiantes adultos de nivel inicial al crear ambientes de aprendizaje dinámicos, participativos y de apoyo que favorecen la confianza y el uso significativo del idioma.

**Palabras clave:** gamificación; motivación; inglés nivel A1; educación de adultos.



## **Introduction**

The teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) holds a significant place in contemporary educational processes, as proficiency in this language is an important tool for students' academic, professional, and personal development. In this context, teachers face the challenge of implementing pedagogical strategies that not only promote the development of linguistic and communicative competencies but also foster students' motivation and active participation in the classroom. In this regard, creating meaningful learning experiences becomes a key element in strengthening English teaching and learning processes (Harmer, 2015).

In recent years, various pedagogical approaches have emphasized the importance of incorporating innovative methodologies that enhance students' motivation and active participation in the learning process. Among these are active learning methodologies, which promote a more central role for students in the construction of their own knowledge. Within this group, gamification has gained special relevance in the educational field, as it incorporates game elements into teaching contexts with the purpose of increasing students' motivation, engagement, and participation (Deterding et al., 2011).

One of the main challenges when teaching English as a foreign language, especially at beginner levels, is the limited confidence and oral participation that many adult A1 learners experience when using English in classroom interactions. Fear of making mistakes, insecurity regarding pronunciation, and lack of confidence in their linguistic abilities can significantly limit their participation in the classroom. Several studies have shown that anxiety associated with foreign language learning can create communicative blocks and reduce student participation, even leading them to avoid oral interaction activities (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre &



Gardner, 1991). As a result, some students tend to participate minimally or remain silent during class activities, which may negatively affect both their learning process and their motivation to use the language in communicative contexts.

In light of this situation, it is essential for teachers to create safe, participatory, and dynamic learning environments that encourage students' interest and willingness to use the language. In this context, gamification emerges as a pedagogical strategy capable of fostering students' motivation, engagement, and active participation by integrating game mechanics such as challenges, points, levels, rewards, and collaborative tasks into the learning process. Rather than relying solely on isolated games, gamification structures the learning experience around meaningful goals and progressive achievements, creating an environment in which students feel encouraged to participate, interact, and use English with greater confidence.

Reflection on pedagogical practice and the systematization of experiences are fundamental for teacher professional development. They allow teachers to identify challenges, recognize achievements, and improve their educational practice. In the case of pre-service teachers, this process is especially relevant, as it helps bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge acquired during academic training and the realities of the educational context. Likewise, it promotes a critical understanding of how gamification influences students' motivation and participation.

In this sense, this working paper systematizes a pedagogical experience to analyze how gamification influenced adult A1-level learners' motivation, participation, and confidence in the English classroom. Throughout this process, evidence collected through the needs analysis survey (Appendices A and B), classroom observations, and the teaching journal (Appendix C)



revealed several challenges related to students' motivation and oral participation in English. In response to this situation, gamification strategies were implemented, which allowed for observable changes in classroom dynamics, particularly in students' willingness to participate in proposed activities, interact with their peers, and use English more actively.

From this experience, the need arises to reflect on the role that gamification plays in the teaching of English as a foreign language. The observed difficulties suggest that teacher-centered strategies, such as repetitive drills, decontextualized vocabulary memorization, and mechanical language practice, do not always respond effectively to students' needs, particularly at beginner levels. In contrast, gamification integrates game mechanics such as challenges, points, levels, rewards, and collaborative tasks into the learning process, creating more dynamic, participatory, and meaningful learning experiences. Within this context, gamification emerges as a pedagogical alternative that fosters students' engagement and strengthens their willingness to learn and use English.

Considering these challenges and the changes observed during the implementation of gamified activities, it becomes relevant to examine how such strategies influence students' motivation in the language-learning process. Reflecting on this experience can contribute to a better understanding of the pedagogical value of gamification in adult English language education and its potential to create more engaging learning environments. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research question:

### **Research Question**

How did the implementation of gamification strategies influence the motivation of adult A1-level English learners during English classes at Colegio Laureano Gómez?



### **Methodological Approach**

To address the research question, a qualitative approach based on the systematization of experiences was adopted, following the critical reflection framework proposed by Jara (2018). This approach allowed the analysis of pedagogical practice based on lived classroom experiences and facilitated an understanding of the processes involved in the implementation of gamification strategies in English teaching.

First, the experience was reconstructed through the detailed a series of English class sessions carried out with adult A1-level students from Fundación Alianza, whose classes were held at Colegio Laureano Gómez. For this purpose, field journals were used, focusing on the observation of gamification activities, especially role-plays, interaction dynamics, and tasks oriented toward oral participation.

Subsequently, the information was organized through an inductive categorization process focused on aspects related to students' motivation, such as their willingness to engage in proposed activities, their involvement in gamified dynamics, and their use of the target language in the classroom.

In a third stage, explanatory frameworks were developed through triangulation of information obtained from field journals, classroom observations, the Needs Analysis Survey (Appendices A and B), and teacher reflective processes. This process made it possible to identify patterns and insights related to students' motivation during the implementation of the proposed activities.



Finally, the experience was communicated and transformed through pedagogical reflections aimed at strengthening strategies that foster motivation and active participation in English learning. This stage involved critically analyzing the findings obtained throughout the systematization process and identifying lessons learned from the implementation of gamification activities. The reflections made it possible to recognize both the strengths and challenges of the pedagogical strategies used, as well as their impact on students' motivation and participation. Furthermore, this process contributed to the improvement of future teaching practices by generating contextualized knowledge grounded in classroom experience.

This approach is characterized by its interdisciplinary nature, as it integrates different theoretical and pedagogical perspectives. From the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, the contributions of Vygotsky (1978) are highlighted, particularly the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, which helps explain the importance of interaction and mediated learning in educational processes. Likewise, the proposals of Pennycook (2010) are incorporated, offering a critical and contextualized view of language teaching, understanding language learning as a situated social practice shaped by students' experiences, interactions, and contexts.

Finally, the study integrates gamification as the main pedagogical strategy, drawing on Deterding et al. (2011), together with the principles of cooperative learning to foster motivation, engagement, and collaborative knowledge construction.. These strategies allow students to participate more actively in classroom activities, develop communicative skills, and build meaningful learning through challenges, games, and collaborative tasks. In this way, the connection between theory and practice enables a deeper understanding of the educational experience in relation to students' motivation and provides an answer to the research question.



### **Originality of the Study**

This systematization offers a contextualized and reflective perspective on the teaching of English as a Foreign Language, focusing specifically on the motivation of adult learners within a real educational context. Based on the experience gained during the teaching practicum, it examines students' willingness, participation, and engagement in using English, all of which are closely related to their motivation. In this regard, the work draws on the contributions of Dörnyei (2001), who identifies motivation as one of the key factors for successful foreign language learning.

Furthermore, this study is relevant because it is developed in an authentic teaching environment, which allows for a closer understanding of adult learners' needs and characteristics. From this perspective, the study analyzes how the implementation of gamification influenced participants' motivation, participation, and confidence throughout the learning process.

### **Specific Contributions to Existing Literature**

#### **Particular Context**

In contrast to other studies on the teaching of English as a Foreign Language that mainly focus on the development of linguistic competencies, this work examines the motivation of adult A1-level students within a real educational context. In this way, it seeks to understand how specific pedagogical strategies influence their willingness to participate and use the target language during classroom activities.



### **Situated Perspective**

This study integrates the systematization of experiences proposed by Jara (2018) with the didactics of English as a Foreign Language, allowing for the analysis of student motivation based on concrete classroom situations. From this perspective, emotional, social, and contextual factors are understood as key elements that shape students' engagement in gamified learning experiences.

From a situated perspective, learning is understood as a process that is closely connected to the learners' experiences, characteristics, and educational context. The participants in this study were two female adult A1-level English learners enrolled in the English program offered by Fundación Alianza Social Educativa. They were approximately 34 and 82 years old, representing two markedly different stages of adulthood. Although both shared the same English proficiency level, they differed in their educational backgrounds, previous learning experiences, confidence when using English, and learning pace. These individual characteristics influenced their motivation, participation, and interaction throughout the pedagogical process. The classes were conducted at Colegio Laureano Gómez in Bogotá, Colombia.

Although different teaching methodologies were implemented throughout the teaching practicum, gamification was incorporated as a complementary pedagogical strategy to foster students' motivation, participation, and engagement across lessons. Rather than relying solely on isolated game-based activities, the learning experience was structured through game mechanics such as challenges, points, rewards, immediate feedback, and recognition, which were integrated into different classroom activities according to each lesson's objectives.



Whenever gamification was incorporated into a lesson, it followed a similar structure that included an initial motivational challenge, guided practice through interactive and collaborative activities, continuous feedback during task completion, and a final reward or recognition for students' participation and achievement. These activities included vocabulary games, matching tasks, role-plays, pronunciation challenges, collaborative speaking exercises, interactive digital resources such as Wordwall, and printable flashcards and worksheets adapted from educational platforms such as Pinterest. Students earned points for active participation, homework completion, oral interaction, teamwork, and successful completion of classroom tasks, while small rewards, such as candies and verbal praise, reinforced their effort and celebrated their progress. Furthermore, gamification was implemented as a flexible strategy that accompanied different teaching methodologies rather than replacing them. The mechanics were continuously adapted based on the students' learning pace, confidence, interests, and classroom needs, creating a supportive environment that encouraged active participation, reduced anxiety when using English orally, and promoted meaningful learning. These mechanics were implemented repeatedly across multiple lesson plans throughout the two academic periods, adapting their complexity and classroom dynamics according to the objectives of each lesson and the students' learning progress. The main gamification mechanics implemented throughout the teaching practicum are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1***Implementation of Gamification Strategies Throughout the Teaching Practicum*

| Gamification mechanics     | Implementation                                                                                                      | Purpose                                                |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Learning challenges</b> | Students completed vocabulary, pronunciation, role-plays, and speaking tasks with progressive levels of difficulty. | To encourage participation and continuous improvement. |



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|                                 |                                                                                                                                  |                                                                       |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Points system</b>            | Points were awarded for participation, homework completion, oral interaction, teamwork, and successful completion of activities. | To reinforce effort, responsibility, and sustained engagement.        |
| <b>Rewards</b>                  | Candies, verbal praise, and recognition of progress were provided after completing challenges or demonstrating improvement.      | To increase motivation and celebrate achievements.                    |
| <b>Vocabulary games</b>         | Flashcards, matching games, memory activities, and digital games (Wordwall) were used to introduce and reinforce vocabulary.     | To promote vocabulary acquisition in an enjoyable and meaningful way. |
| <b>Role-plays</b>               | Students simulated everyday communicative situations using the target language.                                                  | To develop oral communication skills and confidence.                  |
| <b>Collaborative activities</b> | Pair and group activities encouraged students to solve tasks and practice speaking together.                                     | To foster interaction, cooperation, and authentic language use.       |
| <b>Immediate feedback</b>       | Continuous oral feedback, encouragement, and guidance were provided during and after each activity.                              | To support learning, reduce anxiety, and strengthen confidence.       |

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*Note.* Gamification was implemented as a cross-cutting pedagogical strategy throughout the teaching practicum. Although different teaching methodologies were required during the practicum, game mechanics were consistently integrated and adapted to the participants' characteristics, learning pace, and educational needs.

### **Critical Reflection**

The study argues that English learning should not be evaluated solely in terms of linguistic performance, but also in relation to factors that influence students' motivation and participation. This perspective is consistent with student-centered approaches, such as those proposed by Pennycook (2010) and Kumaravadivelu (2006), which recognize the importance of context and learning experiences.

This study highlights that students' engagement with the language is influenced by



emotional, social, and contextual factors that are often overlooked in traditional assessments. Throughout the pedagogical experience, it became evident that confidence, willingness to participate, and perceptions of the learning environment played a significant role in students' use of English. The findings suggest that, in this pedagogical experience, meaningful learning was fostered when students felt supported and motivated to engage with classroom activities.

Furthermore, the study encourages educators to critically reflect on the limitations of approaches that focus exclusively on linguistic outcomes. By considering motivation and participation as essential dimensions of language learning, teachers can develop more inclusive and responsive pedagogical practices that address students' diverse needs and experiences.

### **Contribution to Reflective Understanding**

As a systematization of experiences, this study transforms pedagogical practice into contextualized knowledge through the processes of recovery, organization, interpretation, and transformation of experience described by Jara (2018). Likewise, it integrates the contributions of Vygotsky (1978) with contemporary perspectives in English language teaching to understand how classroom interactions and dynamics influence students' motivation during English learning.

Beyond documenting classroom events, this study provides a reflective analysis of the pedagogical decisions made throughout the teaching process. The systematic examination of classroom experiences allowed for the identification of patterns, challenges, and opportunities related to student motivation and participation. In this way, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how teaching practices can shape learners' attitudes toward language learning.



Additionally, the study demonstrates the value of systematization as a tool for professional growth and pedagogical inquiry. By reflecting on classroom experiences, teachers can generate knowledge grounded in practice and use these insights to improve future instructional strategies. Therefore, the study contributes not only to the understanding of student motivation but also to the development of reflective teaching practices in English language education.

### **Contribution to the Educational Field**

The originality of this work lies in analyzing how the implementation of gamification strategies can enhance the motivation of adult learners in real learning contexts. In this way, it provides reflective insights that are useful for designing more dynamic, participatory, and context-sensitive pedagogical practices.

This contribution is particularly relevant because several studies on English language teaching have primarily focused on linguistic outcomes and academic performance, while fewer studies examine motivation through the reflection of authentic classroom experiences. By documenting and analyzing a real pedagogical experience with adult A1-level learners, this study offers practical insights into how gamification can be adapted to learners' characteristics and needs.

Furthermore, the findings may support teachers in designing learning environments that encourage participation, confidence, and engagement in the language-learning process. The study also highlights the importance of reflective practice and the systematization of experiences for improving teaching strategies and generating contextualized knowledge.



### **Importance and Contribution**

This study is relevant to the teaching of English as a Foreign Language, as it addresses a common issue in EFL education related to students' motivation toward learning and using the target language. Motivation has been identified as a key factor in successful language learning (Dörnyei, 2001), while communicative and meaningful learning experiences are considered essential for effective English teaching (Harmer, 2015).

At a theoretical level, it contributes to the integration of English didactics, systematization of experiences, and contemporary perspectives in applied linguistics, broadening the understanding of language learning beyond purely linguistic aspects. This perspective is supported by Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, which emphasizes the role of interaction and mediated learning, as well as by Pennycook (2010) and Kumaravadivelu (2006), who argue for contextualized and learner-centered approaches to language teaching.

At a practical level, it informs the design of pedagogical strategies, such as gamification, aimed at strengthening students' motivation and active participation. It also highlights the importance of considering emotional and contextual factors when planning educational experiences, promoting a more holistic understanding of English teaching. In addition, the use of systematization of experiences as a methodological approach is grounded in Jara's (2018) proposal, which emphasizes reflective practice as a means of generating contextualized pedagogical knowledge.



## **Objective**

Considering the importance of motivation in English language learning and the potential of gamification to enhance students' engagement, this working paper examines a pedagogical experience developed with adult A1-level English learners at Fundación Alianza, whose classes were held at Colegio Laureano Gómez in Bogotá, Colombia. Through the systematization of experiences proposed by Jara (2018), the study reflects on the implementation of gamification strategies and their influence on students' motivation during the English learning process.

### **General Objective**

To analyze, through the systematization of experiences, how the implementation of gamification strategies fostered the motivation of adult A1-level English learners in English classes at Fundación Alianza, held at Colegio Laureano Gómez, Bogotá, Colombia.

### **Specific Objectives**

1. To reconstruct the pedagogical experience following Jara's (2018) systematization of experiences approach, identifying the gamification strategies implemented during the teaching practicum.
2. To reflect on how the implemented gamification strategies influenced adult A1-level learners' motivation, participation, and oral interaction in the English classroom based on the evidence collected throughout the pedagogical experience.

## **Literature Review**

Recent research on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching has increasingly emphasized the importance of student motivation, active learning methodologies, and learner engagement as key factors in successful language learning. In particular, studies



conducted between 2016 and 2026 have explored the use of gamification and other innovative pedagogical strategies to create more meaningful and participatory learning experiences. This body of literature highlights the growing interest in understanding how classroom practices can foster motivation and improve students' willingness to use English in authentic communicative situations. The following review examines relevant studies related to pedagogical relevance, methodological innovation, and student motivation in EFL contexts.

### **Pedagogical Relevance**

Research on the teaching of English as a Foreign Language has highlighted the importance of implementing pedagogical strategies that foster not only language learning but also students' motivation, participation, and interest in the classroom. In this regard, different authors agree that language learning is strengthened when students engage in dynamic and communicative environments that allow them to interact meaningfully with English (Brown, 2007; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Within these strategies, gamification has gained relevance as an active methodology aimed at enhancing student motivation. According to Deterding et al. (2011), gamification consists of incorporating game elements into educational contexts with the purpose of fostering participants' motivation and engagement.

More recent studies have confirmed the positive impact of gamification in language learning environments. For example, Subhash and Cudney (2018) found that gamified learning experiences can increase student engagement, participation, and motivation. Similarly, Zainuddin et al. (2020) reported that game-based and gamified activities promote active learning and improve learners' attitudes toward language learning. Recent research has also highlighted the effectiveness of collaborative and interactive activities in fostering



communication skills and increasing students' confidence when using a foreign language.

Activities such as role-plays, group challenges, and collaborative dynamics have shown positive results in improving oral participation, commitment to tasks, and reducing anxiety related to language use.

Likewise, research conducted by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) and MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) shows that emotional factors such as fear of making mistakes and lack of confidence can negatively affect students' motivation and participation in English classes.

Although these studies remain foundational in understanding language anxiety, more recent research continues to demonstrate that emotional factors significantly influence learners' willingness to communicate in English. Consequently, active methodologies and gamified environments have been recommended as effective approaches for creating supportive learning spaces that encourage participation and reduce anxiety (Zainuddin et al., 2020).

### **Methodological Innovation**

In recent years, methodological innovation in the teaching of English has generated growing interest in student-centered pedagogical strategies and in reflection on teaching practice. These approaches aim to move beyond traditional models based solely on memorization and repetition of grammatical content.

Within this context, the systematization of experiences proposed by Jara (2018) becomes relevant as a tool that allows for the recovery, organization, and interpretation of pedagogical experiences developed in real classroom settings. This approach fosters the construction of contextualized knowledge and strengthens the relationship between theory and practice in English language teaching.



Similarly, recent studies have shown that strategies such as gamification promote more dynamic and participatory learning experiences, especially among beginner-level students. By integrating game mechanics such as challenges, points, rewards, and immediate feedback into classroom activities, gamification strengthens students' motivation, interaction, and willingness to engage in language learning.

### **Diversity of Perspectives**

Research on the teaching of English as a Foreign Language has incorporated different theoretical perspectives that allow for an understanding of language learning beyond purely linguistic development. From a social constructivist perspective, Vygotsky (1978) highlights the importance of interaction and collaborative learning in cognitive development. His contributions help explain how group dynamics foster knowledge construction and student participation in the classroom.

On the other hand, authors such as Pennycook (2010) and Kumaravadivelu (2006) propose a critical and contextualized view of foreign language teaching, understanding English learning as a social practice influenced by cultural, emotional, and contextual factors. These perspectives help explain how students' motivation is also related to the experiences, interactions, and contexts in which learning takes place.

Likewise, recent research has shown interest in analyzing English teaching across different educational and sociocultural contexts. However, much of this research continues to be developed mainly in urban or university settings, highlighting the need to expand studies to more diverse educational environments and adult populations.



### **Meaningful Organization**

Recent literature on English as a Foreign Language teaching can be organized around different thematic axes related to active methodologies, student motivation, and pedagogical innovation. One of the most relevant themes is the implementation of gamification strategies aimed at strengthening student motivation and, in turn, promoting participation and communicative use of the language in the classroom.

Another important axis concerns the incorporation of critical and contextual perspectives in English teaching. From this viewpoint, language learning is not limited to the development of linguistic competencies, but also involves experiences, emotions, and classroom interaction dynamics that influence student motivation.

Finally, an emerging topic is the systematization of pedagogical experiences, understood as a tool for reflecting on teaching practice and generating contextualized knowledge based on real teaching experiences.

### **Identification of Gaps**

Despite the growing body of research related to active methodologies and English language teaching, there are still research gaps concerning the systematization of pedagogical experiences in real classroom contexts. For example, studies such as those conducted by Subhash and Cudney (2018) and Zainuddin et al. (2020) primarily focused on the effects of gamification on student engagement, participation, and academic performance. However, these studies paid less attention to the reflective analysis of pedagogical experiences and the ways teachers interpret and learn from their classroom practices.

Likewise, there is limited research examining how gamification strategies influence the motivation of adult learners at beginner levels of language learning. Although previous



studies have reported positive effects of gamification on engagement and participation (Subhash & Cudney, 2018; Zainuddin et al., 2020), most of this research has been conducted with larger student populations or in secondary and higher education settings. Consequently, there is still a need to better understand how gamification supports motivation among adult A1-level learners in real educational contexts.

Furthermore, the literature reviewed reveals limited documentation of pedagogical experiences analyzed through the systematization of experiences framework proposed by Jara (2018). This indicates a need for studies that not only examine learning outcomes but also critically reflect on classroom processes, teacher decision-making, and students' lived experiences. In addition, there is scarce documentation of pedagogical experiences developed in multicultural settings or in contexts with limited educational resources.

### **Current Trends**

Current trends in English language teaching emphasize the integration of digital resources, active methodologies, and learner-centered approaches to promote meaningful language learning. Within these trends, gamification has become one of the most widely studied pedagogical strategies because of its positive effects on motivation, engagement, and classroom participation (Subhash & Cudney, 2018; Zainuddin et al., 2020).

Recent research has increasingly emphasized student-centered approaches that recognize learners' active role in the construction of knowledge and the influence of emotional and contextual factors on language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Within this perspective, the systematization of experiences proposed by Jara (2018) has become a valuable methodological approach for critically reflecting on teaching practices and understanding how pedagogical strategies influence students'



motivation and participation in specific educational contexts.

### **Critical Analysis**

The reviewed research shows that active methodologies and gamification strategies can enhance students' motivation and, consequently, strengthen their participation and interest in English classes. However, studies such as those by Subhash and Cudney (2018) and Zainuddin et al. (2020) primarily report improvements in motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes, while giving less attention to the analysis of teachers' pedagogical experiences and the emotional factors that influence language learning.

In addition, although different studies highlight the benefits of pedagogical innovation, they do not always explore in depth the difficulties and challenges teachers face when implementing these strategies in real classroom contexts. In this sense, the systematization of experiences makes it possible to make visible both the achievements and the limitations present in educational practice, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of teaching and learning processes.

### **Limitations and Biases**

One of the main limitations identified in the reviewed literature is the scarcity of studies focusing on the systematization of teaching experiences in English as a Foreign Language. Most of the studies reviewed, such as those by Subhash and Cudney (2018) and Zainuddin et al. (2020), examine the effects of gamification on motivation, engagement, or learning outcomes but provide limited analysis of teachers' reflective experiences and classroom decision-making processes. Likewise, many of these studies were conducted in urban or university contexts, reducing the visibility of pedagogical experiences developed in other educational settings and with diverse learner populations.



Similarly, several of the reviewed studies emphasize measurable linguistic outcomes, such as participation, engagement, or academic performance, while giving less attention to students' emotions, motivation, and lived classroom experiences. This highlights the need for more contextualized research that documents not only learning outcomes but also the pedagogical processes through which those outcomes are achieved, particularly through approaches such as the systematization of experiences (Jara, 2018).

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks**

This working paper is based on different conceptual frameworks related to English language teaching and pedagogical reflection. First, the contributions of social constructivism proposed by Vygotsky (1978) allow for an understanding of the importance of interaction, mediation, and collaborative learning in the development of communicative skills.

Likewise, the critical perspectives proposed by Pennycook (2010) and Kumaravadivelu (2006) contribute to interpreting English language teaching as a situated social practice, in which cultural, contextual, and emotional factors influence both the learning experience and students' motivation.

Finally, the systematization of experiences approach proposed by Jara (2018) guides the process of critical reflection on the pedagogical experience developed in the classroom, allowing for the recovery, interpretation, and transformation of educational practice based on lived experiences.

In addition, this study is grounded in the concept of gamification proposed by Deterding et al. (2011), who define it as the use of game elements in non-game contexts to increase users' motivation and engagement. In educational settings, gamification involves the incorporation of mechanics such as challenges, points, rewards, immediate feedback, and



recognition to encourage active participation and meaningful learning. These principles guided the design of the classroom activities implemented throughout the teaching practicum and provided the conceptual foundation for analyzing their influence on students' motivation and participation.

### **Adaptation to the Context of the Working Paper**

#### **Relevance**

The review of the state of the art made it possible to understand how active methodologies and the systematization of experiences can enrich the teaching of English as a foreign language. Likewise, it highlighted the importance of analyzing pedagogical experiences developed in real classroom contexts, especially those related to students' motivation during the language learning process. In this sense, the present working paper was relevant because it focused on the systematization of a pedagogical experience carried out with adult students at A1 level in a real educational context. Through the implementation of gamification strategies, this study sought to understand how these dynamics influenced students' motivation and their willingness to use English in the classroom.

#### **Conciseness**

Although there is a wide body of research on the didactics of English as a foreign language, this working paper focuses particularly on studies that help to understand the relationship between gamification, student motivation, and pedagogical reflection. In this way, the most relevant contributions on active methodologies and the systematization of experiences are synthesized, highlighting their value for understanding teaching and learning processes in real educational contexts.



## **Methodological Route**

### **Starting Point**

The pedagogical experience that gives rise to this working paper emerged within the framework of the teaching practicum carried out during the first and second academic periods of 2025 at Fundación Alianza, whose classes were held at Colegio Laureano Gómez. The practicum focused on the in-person teaching of English as a foreign language to adult A1-level students and was conducted on Saturdays.

The group consisted of two adult students with different characteristics and learning rhythms. One of them, aged 34, showed greater ease in understanding and participating in the proposed activities, while the other, aged 82, required more constant support and presented a slower learning pace. This diversity made it possible to recognize how factors such as age, prior experiences, and self-confidence can influence the learning processes of a foreign language.

During the initial sessions, classroom observations and field notes revealed difficulties related to students' motivation and willingness to use English. In several moments, insecurity, fear of making mistakes, and limited participation in communicative activities were documented in the field journal. These situations led to reflection on the need to implement pedagogical strategies that could foster a more dynamic, participatory, and motivating learning environment.

In response to this need, gamification was progressively incorporated as a complementary pedagogical strategy throughout the teaching practicum. Rather than relying on isolated games, the lessons integrated gamification mechanics such as challenges, points, immediate feedback, verbal recognition, and small rewards to encourage students' active participation and reduce their anxiety when using English.

These mechanics were incorporated into a variety of classroom activities, including role-



plays, vocabulary games, matching activities, pronunciation challenges, question-and-answer tasks, interactive digital resources, such as Wordwall, and printable flashcards and worksheets adapted from educational platforms such as Pinterest. Throughout the practicum, these gamified activities were implemented consistently across different lesson plans, with the level of challenge difficulty and classroom dynamics adjusted according to the learning objectives and the students' progress. Students earned points for participation, homework completion, oral interaction, and successful completion of classroom tasks, while small rewards, such as candies and verbal praise, reinforced their effort and celebrated their progress.

As these gamification strategies were implemented, gradual changes in classroom dynamics were observed, particularly in the students' willingness to participate, interact with each other, and use English more spontaneously during communicative activities.

### **Formulation of a Systematization Plan**

In order to analyze the pedagogical experience developed during the teaching practicum, the systematization of experiences proposed by Jara (2018) was adopted from a qualitative approach. This approach made it possible to recover, organize, interpret, and reflect on the experiences lived in the classroom in order to understand the processes related to students' motivation during English learning.

The objective of the systematization process was to analyze how the implementation of gamification strategies influenced students' motivation and their willingness to participate in the proposed activities. Likewise, it sought to reflect on the possibilities and challenges involved in incorporating active methodologies in real educational contexts.

The experience analyzed was mainly concentrated in the second academic period of 2025, a stage in which the teaching practicum was fully led by the researcher and in which



gamification-related activities were implemented more frequently. However, significant experiences from the first period were also revisited to enrich the reflective process.

For data collection, field journals were used, in which observations related to participation, motivation, students' reactions to the proposed activities, and reflections from each session were recorded. Additionally, one class session was video-recorded in order to analyze in greater detail the interactions and dynamics developed during gamification activities. Teacher self-assessment processes were also included to reflect on the strategies implemented and the outcomes observed in the classroom.

Subsequently, the collected information was organized into categories related to motivation, participation, interaction, and students' willingness to engage in English learning. This process made it possible to identify patterns, progress, and challenges throughout the pedagogical experience.

### **Integration of Theoretical Elements**

The interpretation of the experience was supported by different theoretical frameworks related to English language teaching, active methodologies, and pedagogical reflection.

First, the contributions of the communicative approach proposed by Richards and Rodgers (2014) were considered, highlighting the importance of promoting real interaction situations in the classroom. From this perspective, language learning is strengthened when students use English in meaningful contexts that are close to their communicative needs.

Likewise, the contributions of Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism were taken into account, especially those related to social interaction and mediated learning. These ideas helped explain how collaborative activities and game-based dynamics foster joint knowledge construction and strengthen student participation.



Similarly, the perspectives of Pennycook (2010) and Kumaravadivelu (2006) contributed to interpreting English teaching as a situated social practice, influenced by students' characteristics, experiences, and contexts. These perspectives highlight the importance of adapting pedagogical strategies to participants' real needs.

Finally, Jara's (2018) systematization of experiences guided the analysis and reflection process, allowing the pedagogical experience to be transformed into contextualized knowledge. From this perspective, critical reflection on teaching practice becomes a key tool for understanding educational processes and strengthening the teaching of English as a foreign language.

### **Recovery of the Lived Process**

The pedagogical experience was developed during the first and second academic periods of 2025 with two adult A1-level students from Fundación Alianza, whose classes were held on Saturdays at Colegio Laureano Gómez.

At the beginning of the process, limited participation in oral activities was observed. The results of the Needs Analysis Survey (see Appendix A and Appendix B) revealed that both students identified speaking as their weakest English skill (100%) and reported feeling nervous when using English orally (100%). These findings suggested a lack of confidence in oral communication and provided evidence to explain their limited participation during communicative activities. Additionally, classroom observations indicated that students were often hesitant to engage in pronunciation exercises and basic conversational tasks, which appeared to be related to fear of making mistakes and uncertainty about their language performance.



In order to strengthen students' motivation and create a more dynamic learning environment, gamification was progressively incorporated throughout the teaching practicum. Rather than being implemented in a single lesson, gamified strategies were integrated into different sessions according to the objectives of each lesson and the students' learning progress.

The first gamified activities focused on vocabulary development through flashcards, matching games, and Wordwall exercises. Students earned points for correctly completing each challenge, actively participating in class, and completing homework assignments. Immediate feedback and verbal praise were provided after each activity to reinforce confidence and encourage continued participation.

As students became more confident, the activities gradually incorporated communicative tasks such as question-and-answer challenges, collaborative speaking exercises, and role-plays based on everyday situations, including greetings, shopping, personal information, and daily routines. These activities encouraged students to use English in meaningful contexts while continuing to earn points and receive recognition for their effort and progress. Small rewards, such as candies, were used to celebrate achievements and maintain students' motivation.

Throughout the practicum, the level of challenge was progressively adjusted according to the students' confidence and language development. While one participant required additional guidance and more structured support, the other completed the activities with greater autonomy. This flexible implementation allowed gamification to respond to each learner's needs while maintaining a motivating and supportive classroom environment. Examples of the gamified activities and lesson plans are included in the appendices to illustrate how these strategies were implemented during the teaching practicum. As the process progressed, gradual changes were



observed in the students' willingness to engage in the proposed activities. The 34-year-old student began to participate with greater confidence in oral exercises, while the 82-year-old student, although maintaining a slower learning pace, showed an increasingly positive attitude toward the classroom dynamics.

Field journal entries documented moments in which both students participated more naturally during gamified activities. In particular, communicative simulations fostered more spontaneous interaction and allowed them to use basic English expressions in a less error-focused environment.

Similarly, classroom observations and field notes showed that the gamified activities promoted a closer and more collaborative classroom atmosphere. Activities such as role-plays, vocabulary challenges, matching games, and collaborative speaking tasks encouraged students to participate more actively. These observations were consistently documented throughout the field journal and later contrasted with the classroom observation records, strengthening the credibility of the systematization process.

Another relevant aspect was the need to continuously adapt the gamified activities to the characteristics of each student. Given the considerable differences in the participants' age, confidence, and learning pace, the implementation of each activity was adjusted to ensure that both students could participate successfully. For example, additional time and guidance were provided to the older student during simulated everyday situations and speaking tasks, while vocabulary activities were reinforced through flashcards, repetition, and visual support. Likewise, the level of challenge was adapted according to each student's progress, although both participants continued to earn points, receive immediate feedback, and be recognized for their



effort and participation. These adjustments allowed both learners to remain engaged without experiencing frustration or discouragement.

### **Core Reflections**

The experience made it possible to understand that motivation in English language learning does not depend solely on students' linguistic abilities, but also on emotional, social, and contextual factors present in the classroom.

One of the main insights was related to the construction of trust-based learning environments. As students perceived activities as dynamic, approachable, and free of judgment, their willingness to participate and take communicative risks increased. This situation aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) view, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction as a fundamental element for learning.

Likewise, it was evident that active methodologies foster more meaningful learning experiences in adult learners. Gamification activities facilitated interaction, promoted a more positive attitude toward the language, and helped reduce the tension typically associated with oral use of a foreign language.

However, some important challenges were also identified. The difference in learning pace required constant adaptation of activities in order to maintain both students' engagement and participation. In addition, the weekly class schedule limited continuity in the learning process and required continuous reinforcement of previously covered content.

Finally, the experience highlighted the importance of the teacher as a reflective practitioner capable of adapting strategies to the real needs of the context. In this sense, Jara's (2018) systematization of experiences allowed the pedagogical practice to be transformed into a



source of knowledge and reflection on teaching and learning processes.

### **Results, Analysis, and Discussion**

The systematization allowed for the conclusion that the implementation of gamification strategies fostered the motivation of the adult students who participated in the experience. By integrating gamification mechanics such as challenges, points, immediate feedback, recognition, and small rewards into role-plays, vocabulary activities, and collaborative speaking tasks, the classroom environment became more dynamic, participatory, and motivating, encouraging students to engage more confidently in English language use.

One of the main findings was the progressive increase in students' willingness to participate in oral activities. Although there were initial signs of insecurity when using English, the development of the activities led to greater confidence in intervening, answering questions, and engaging in communicative exercises. This finding is supported by the Needs Analysis Survey (Appendix B), in which both participants identified speaking as their weakest skill and reported feeling nervous when using English orally.

The results also showed that motivation is closely related to the emotional climate of the classroom. When students perceived the activities as accessible, meaningful, and enjoyable, their interest in participating and using the language increased. This observation is consistent with the work of Horwitz et al. (1986) and MacIntyre and Gardner (1991), who argue that anxiety and fear of making mistakes can negatively affect participation in foreign language learning.

Likewise, the importance of adapting pedagogical strategies to each student's characteristics was confirmed. The experience demonstrated that teaching flexibility is essential



when working with heterogeneous groups and different learning paces. Evidence of this can be found in the teaching journal (Appendix C), where reflections highlighted the need to adjust activities according to the significant age difference and learning needs of the participants.

From a professional perspective, the process strengthened the reflective capacity of the preservice teacher, allowing for critical analysis of the decisions made during the practicum and recognition of both achievements and challenges in the classroom. This reflective process aligns with Jara's (2018) proposal of systematization as a means of transforming pedagogical practice into contextualized knowledge.

Consequently, the findings suggest the value of continuing to promote active methodologies and gamification strategies in English language teaching, especially in adult education contexts and at beginner levels. Similarly, the importance of the systematization of experiences is highlighted as a tool that allows for a deeper understanding of real classroom dynamics and the development of contextualized pedagogical proposals.

Finally, the experience showed that English learning does not depend exclusively on the acquisition of linguistic content. Factors such as confidence, interaction, motivation, and participation play a fundamental role in meaningful learning experiences. This finding is supported by the teaching journal (Appendix C), where the preservice teacher documented how students participated more actively and confidently during gamified activities. Furthermore, these results are consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist perspective, which emphasizes the role of interaction in learning, and with Deterding et al. (2011), who highlight the potential of gamification to increase engagement and motivation in educational contexts.



## Conclusions

This working paper allowed for the analysis, through the systematization of experiences, of how the implementation of gamification strategies influenced the motivation of adult A1-level students from Fundación Alianza during English as a foreign language class. The experience developed during the teaching practicum showed that motivation for language learning does not depend exclusively on students' linguistic abilities, but also on emotional, contextual, and pedagogical factors present in the classroom.

The findings, supported by field journals, classroom observations, a recorded session, and teacher self-assessment processes, made it possible to identify gradual changes in the students' willingness to engage in the proposed activities. The gamification strategies implemented—such as role-plays, flashcards, game-based activities, and interactive exercises—helped create more engaging, participatory, and motivating learning environments, which in turn strengthened the students' confidence to use English in the classroom.

Likewise, the experience highlighted the importance of adapting pedagogical strategies to each student's specific characteristics and needs. The difference in age and learning pace demonstrated the need for a flexible teaching practice capable of responding to diverse contexts and promoting participation opportunities aligned with each learner's abilities and possibilities.

From a theoretical perspective, Jara's (2018) systematization of experiences allowed the pedagogical practice to be transformed into a source of reflection and contextualized knowledge construction. Similarly, the contributions of Vygotsky (1978), Pennycook (2010), and Kumaravadivelu (2006) helped to understand English teaching as a social practice in which interaction, context, and students' experiences significantly influence learning and motivation



processes.

The findings of this experience suggest the importance of continuing to incorporate active methodologies and gamification strategies in English language teaching, especially in adult education contexts and at beginner levels. They also highlight the need to promote ongoing processes of pedagogical reflection and systematization of experiences that strengthen teaching practices and allow for a deeper understanding of real classroom dynamics.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that this systematization presents some limitations related to the small number of participants and the duration of the observed process. Therefore, future research could expand the analysis to other educational contexts and diverse populations in order to deepen the understanding of the relationship between gamification, motivation, and English language learning. Nevertheless, the experience developed supports the conclusion that the implementation of gamification strategies can be a valuable tool for enhancing student motivation and generating more meaningful learning experiences in the classroom.



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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Needs Analysis Survey

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade or Academic Level: \_\_\_\_\_

School or Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Self-assessed English level:

☐ Beginner ☐ Intermediate ☐ Advanced

1. Why do you want to learn English?

☐ For school

☐ For work

☐ For travel

☐ For fun

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Which skill is easier for you?

☐ Listening

☐ Speaking



☐ Reading

☐ Writing

3. Which skill is more difficult for you?

☐ Listening

☐ Speaking

☐ Reading

☐ Writing

4. How do you prefer to learn?

☐ Games

☐ Music

☐ Videos

☐ Conversations

☐ Grammar exercises

5. How do you feel when speaking English?

☐ Confident

☐ Nervous

☐ Excited

☐ Shy

6. What motivates you more in class?

☐ Teamwork



☐ Individual activities

☐ Using technology

☐ Creative projects

7. What would you like to achieve by the end of this course?

☐ Speak more fluently

☐ Understand English better

☐ Improve writing

☐ Learn more vocabulary

8. Is there anything else you would like me to know about you as a student?

## Appendix B

### Needs Analysis Results

**Table B1**

*Summary of Students' Responses*

| Survey Item                   | Result                                  |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| English level                 | Beginner (100%)                         |
| Strongest skill               | Listening (100%)                        |
| Weakest skill                 | Speaking (100%)                         |
| Feeling when speaking English | Nervous (100%)                          |
| Preferred learning approach   | Teamwork and creative projects (100%)   |
| Main goals                    | Improve speaking fluency and vocabulary |

*Note.* Results obtained from the Needs Analysis Survey.



## **Appendix C**

### **Teaching Journal Excerpts**

The following excerpts were taken from the preservice teacher's reflective journal developed during the pedagogical practicum. These excerpts provide evidence of students' motivation, participation, confidence, and engagement during the implementation of gamification strategies.

#### **Excerpt 1: Gamification and Student Engagement**

"One class marked a turning point for me: the gamification lesson. That day I realized that when my students play, they understand faster, participate more, and most importantly they feel safer. We learned vocabulary, practiced instructions, and reinforced simple structures without them noticing how much they were actually learning. It was proof that learning can be fun and deep at the same time."

This excerpt illustrates how gamified activities increased students' participation and created a safe learning environment that promoted motivation and engagement.

#### **Excerpt 2: Confidence and Oral Participation**

"The most meaningful moment of the semester was the final presentation. Watching my students perform, laugh, make mistakes without fear, and speak English with greater confidence was the clearest reflection of our progress."

This reflection provides evidence of the students' increased confidence and willingness to use English orally throughout the learning process.

#### **Excerpt 3: Adapting Teaching Strategies**

"The younger student may be more used to a faster pace and professional contexts, while the older one requires more repetition, patience, and memory-focused activities."



This excerpt highlights the importance of adapting pedagogical strategies to students' individual characteristics, learning needs, and learning pace.

**Excerpt 4: Building a Supportive Learning Environment**

"From the start, I had a clear goal: I wanted my students to lose their fear of speaking English. I wanted them to feel that making mistakes was not something to be ashamed of, but a natural part of the learning process."

This reflection demonstrates the teacher's intention to create a supportive classroom climate that encouraged participation and reduced anxiety related to language learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

The complete teaching journal, classroom observation journal, lesson plans, and additional evidence collected during the pedagogical practicum are available at the following link:

[Working Paper – Supporting Evidence](#)