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The Use of Gamification to Improve Reading Comprehension in A1 Level Students.

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## **Dedicatory**

I dedicate this achievement to the most important people in my life. To my mother, Neida, whose unwavering support and example have inspired me to pursue my dreams. To my beloved husband, Luis Alfredo, whose love and encouragement have been my strength. To my dear sister, Génesis, who has always motivated me to persevere. Finally, to God and my loved ones who are no longer with me but continue to guide and inspire me every day.

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## Table of Contents

### Contenido

FICHA SENESCYT PARA .....	2
Copia Informe de Similitud (Anti-Plagio).....	3
Certificación de Autoría y Cesión de Derechos del Autor .....	4
Certificado de Aval del Tutor de Tesis .....	5
Dedictory .....	6
Acknowledgements .....	7
Table of Contents .....	8
List of tables.....	11
List of figures.....	12
Resumen.....	13
Abstract .....	15
Introduction.....	17
Statement of the Problem.....	19
Justification of the Research.....	19
Relationship with the University’s Research Lines .....	19
Research Objectives.....	21
General Objective: .....	21
Specific Objectives:.....	21
Research Variables.....	21
Research Methodology .....	21
Description of the Research Context.....	23
Practical Contributions of the Proposal .....	23
Chapter I Theoretical framework .....	26
1.1 Research background .....	26
1.2 Independent variable: Gamification.....	29
1.2.1 <i>Guidance and Instruction</i> .....	29
1.2.2 <i>Type of Gamification Elements</i> .....	29
1.2.3 <i>Application of Gamification</i> .....	30
1.2.4 <i>Student Engagement and Motivation</i> .....	31
1.3 Dependent variable: Reading Comprehension.....	32
1.3.1 <i>Reading Accuracy</i> .....	32
1.3.2 <i>Reading Fluency</i> .....	33

1.3.3 Reading Comprehension .....	34
1.3.4 Reading Engagement .....	35
1.3.5 Theories: behaviorism, cognitivism and interactionism .....	35
Chapter II Methodological Design .....	38
2.1 Conceptualization and Operationalization of Main Categories.....	43
2.1.2 Definition and Explanation of Main Categories.....	44
2.1.3 Operationalization of Main Categories .....	44
2.2 Beneficiaries Description .....	45
2.3 Delimitation of population, sample, and sampling.....	46
2.4 Research context.....	46
2.5 Research stages.....	47
2.6 Scope of the research: .....	49
2.7 Research purpose (design).....	49
2.8 Description of the Instruments.....	50
2.8.1 Pre-tests and Post-tests:.....	50
2.8.2 Surveys: .....	51
2.8.3 Semi-Structured Interviews: .....	51
2.8.4 Classroom Observations:.....	52
2.9 Implications for the Methodological Proposal: .....	53
2.10 Description of the Evaluation and Validation of the Proposal.....	53
2.11 Description of the Data Processing for the Diagnostic Stage.....	54
2.11.1 Data Collection and Organization: .....	54
2.11.2 Data Entry and Coding:.....	55
2.11.3 Descriptive Analysis:.....	56
2.11.4 Thematic Analysis: .....	56
2.11.5 Comparative Analysis:.....	56
2.11.6 Triangulation and Integration: .....	56
2.11.7 Interpretation and Conclusions:.....	57
2.12 Ethical considerations.....	57
2.13 Description and Analysis of the Results of the Diagnostic Stage.....	59
Chapter III Presentation and Validation of the proposal.....	61
3.1 Validation of the Proposal.....	61
3.2 Characteristics of the proposal.....	63
3.2.1 Theoretical foundations.....	63
3.2.2 Objectives of the proposal.....	65
3.3 Requirements .....	65

3.3.1 Methodological Requirements.....	65
3.4 Research question.....	66
3.4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis:.....	66
3.4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis:.....	72
3.5 Limitations of the Study.....	79
3.5.1 Time Constraints.....	80
3.5.2 Participant Characteristics .....	80
3.5.3 Sample Size .....	80
3.5.4 Students' Proficiency Level .....	81
Conclusions.....	81
Recommendations:.....	87
References: .....	89
Appendixes.....	95
Appendix 1: Presentation of the topic letter .....	95
Appendix 2: Investigation planification for the study proposal .....	96
Appendix 3: Communication of the assigned tutor.....	104
Appendix 4: Letter to the school principal to request permission .....	105
Appendix 5: Authorization to conduct the research.....	107
Appendix 6: Certificate of validation of instruments by experts.....	108
Appendix 7: Pre and Post test.....	110
Appendix 8: Survey to students .....	114
Appendix 9: Interview to students .....	117
Appendix 10: Classroom observation .....	120
Appendix 11: Reading Comprehension test rubric (pre-test and post-test) .....	123

**List of tables**

<b>Table 1.</b> Operationalization of the variables .....	40
<b>Table 2.</b> Sample .....	46
<b>Table 3.</b> Stages of the research project.....	48
<b>Table 4.</b> Pre-Test and Post-Test Results.....	67
<b>Table 5.</b> Survey Results on Student Perceptions .....	70

### List of figures

<b>Figure 1.</b> Reading Comprehension Pre-Test Results .....	59
<b>Figure 2.</b> Pre-Test and Post-Test Results.....	67
<b>Figure 3.</b> Survey Results on Student Perceptions.....	70
<b>Figure 4.</b> Student Engagement Levels During Gamified Reading .....	73
<b>Figure 5.</b> Students' Perception of Improvement in Reading Comprehension.....	75
<b>Figure 6.</b> Student Preference for Gamified Learning Compared to Traditional Methods.....	78

## Resumen

La creciente importancia global del inglés como lengua franca ha hecho necesario mejorar la enseñanza del idioma, especialmente en los niveles fundamentales. En Ecuador, los estudiantes de inglés de nivel A1 enfrentan desafíos persistentes en la comprensión lectora debido a su limitado vocabulario, conocimiento gramatical y falta de compromiso con los materiales de lectura. Los métodos de enseñanza tradicionales a menudo no abordan eficazmente estas dificultades. Este estudio explora el impacto de la gamificación como estrategia didáctica para mejorar la comprensión lectora en estudiantes de 11 a 12 años de nivel A1 en la Unidad Educativa Verbo Divino.

La investigación emplea un enfoque de métodos mixtos, integrando metodologías cuantitativas y cualitativas para proporcionar una comprensión integral de la efectividad de la gamificación. La variable independiente es la implementación de la gamificación, que incluye el uso de puntos, insignias, desafíos y elementos de aprendizaje interactivos. La variable dependiente es la mejora en la comprensión lectora, medida en términos de precisión, fluidez, participación y habilidades generales de comprensión. Los métodos de recolección de datos incluyen pruebas de diagnóstico y seguimiento, encuestas a los estudiantes, entrevistas semiestructuradas y observaciones en el aula. Los análisis estadísticos evalúan el impacto de la gamificación en el desempeño lector de los estudiantes, mientras que el análisis temático explora sus percepciones y niveles de compromiso.

Los resultados indican una mejora significativa en las habilidades de comprensión lectora de los estudiantes tras la implementación de la gamificación. Los puntajes promedio de comprensión lectora aumentaron notablemente de la prueba inicial a la final, lo que sugiere que el aprendizaje basado en el juego mejora la interpretación y retención del texto. Además, las encuestas revelan una fuerte preferencia de los estudiantes por las

actividades de lectura gamificadas en comparación con los métodos tradicionales, destacando los beneficios motivacionales de integrar mecánicas de juego en la enseñanza. Los datos cualitativos refuerzan estos hallazgos, ya que los estudiantes reportaron mayor compromiso, motivación y confianza en sus habilidades lectoras.

En conclusión, el estudio demuestra que la gamificación es una herramienta pedagógica efectiva para fomentar la comprensión lectora en estudiantes de nivel A1 al promover la participación, la motivación y el desarrollo cognitivo. Se recomienda la integración de estrategias estructuradas de gamificación en los planes de estudio de inglés para mejorar la competencia lectora. Futuros estudios deberían explorar los impactos a largo plazo y la escalabilidad de esta estrategia en diferentes entornos de aprendizaje.

**Palabras clave:** Gamificación, Lectura, Comprensión, Motivación, Educación.

### **Abstract**

The increasing global significance of English as a lingua franca has necessitated the enhancement of English language instruction, particularly at the foundational levels. In Ecuador, A1-level English language learners (ELLs) face persistent challenges in reading comprehension due to limited vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, and engagement with reading materials. Traditional teaching methods often fail to address these difficulties effectively. This study explores the impact of gamification as an instructional strategy to improve reading comprehension among 11–12-year-old A1-level students at Unidad Educativa Verbo Divino.

The research employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to provide a comprehensive understanding of gamification's effectiveness. The independent variable is the implementation of gamification, which involves the use of points, badges, challenges, and interactive learning elements. The dependent variable is the improvement in reading comprehension, measured in terms of accuracy, fluency, engagement, and overall comprehension skills. Data collection methods include pre- and post-tests, student surveys, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. Statistical analyses assess the impact of gamification on students' reading performance, while thematic analysis explores student perceptions and engagement levels.

Findings indicate a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension skills following the gamified intervention. The mean reading comprehension scores increased notably from the pre-test to the post-test, suggesting that game-based learning effectively enhances text interpretation and retention. Additionally, survey results reveal strong student preference for gamified reading activities over traditional methods, highlighting the motivational benefits of incorporating game mechanics into instructional design.

Qualitative data further support these findings, as students reported higher engagement, increased motivation, and greater confidence in their reading abilities.

In summary, the study demonstrates that gamification serves as an effective pedagogical tool for fostering reading comprehension in A1-level learners by promoting engagement, motivation, and cognitive development. The research recommends the integration of structured gamification strategies into English language curricula to enhance reading proficiency. Future studies should explore long-term impacts and scalability across different learning environments.

**Keywords:** Gamification, Reading, Comprehension, Motivation, Education

## **Introduction**

The Ecuadorian educational landscape presents a significant challenge regarding the proficiency levels of English Language Learners (ELLs), particularly those at the A1 level. These students frequently struggle with comprehending written English texts due to limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. Traditional instructional approaches have often failed to effectively address these difficulties, resulting in persistently low levels of reading comprehension. Given the importance of reading proficiency for academic success, there is an urgent need to explore innovative strategies that can engage and motivate learners while improving their reading skills. Gamification, which integrates game elements into educational contexts, emerges as a promising solution to transform the learning experience and enhance outcomes for A1-level ELLs with reading difficulties.

This research project seeks to examine the relationship between research methodology, instructional design, and the socio-cultural and economic contexts that shape the learning experiences of A1-level English language learners in Ecuador. By leveraging gamification to enhance reading comprehension, the study aims to explore instructional design while considering both psycho-pedagogical and socio-linguistic dimensions. Understanding the socio-cultural and economic background of learners is crucial in instructional design, as various external factors influence students' learning trajectories. Therefore, this project endeavors to analyze these elements and identify potential barriers impeding reading comprehension while developing targeted interventions to overcome them.

Cultural influences significantly impact classroom dynamics, creating indirect, context-dependent communication styles that may not align with conventional instructional methods. Family structures and parental involvement play a crucial role in

shaping students' learning strategies, values, and motivation. Additionally, gender roles and societal norms influence classroom interactions, potentially affecting student participation. Economic factors further compound these challenges, as disparities in resource access are evident even within the middle class. While many parents are public employees with varying levels of economic stability, their financial situation often determines students' exposure to diverse learning environments. Furthermore, urban residency affects students' access to technology and educational resources, further complicating the learning process.

Amid these challenges, this research project focuses on addressing the core issue of reading comprehension difficulties. Many A1-level learners struggle with decoding unfamiliar vocabulary and grasping implicit meanings in texts. Given the limited English exposure outside the classroom and constraints in technology access, it is essential to explore innovative strategies that can support students in developing reading skills. Gamification, which incorporates visual aids, hands-on activities, peer collaboration, and game-based learning techniques, offers a compelling solution to circumvent these challenges.

By adopting a structured research approach, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the efficacy of gamification as a tool for enhancing reading comprehension among A1-level students. It seeks to generate evidence-based strategies that can be integrated into instructional design frameworks, addressing both cognitive and socio-cultural dimensions of learning. The findings will serve as a valuable resource for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers, offering innovative methodologies to bridge the gap in English language proficiency. Ultimately, the study aspires to empower students by fostering academic success and promoting a more engaging and interactive learning experience.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The research investigates the impact of gamification as a reading strategy for 11- to 12-year-old A1-level English language learners struggling with reading comprehension. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research question: How effective is integrating gamification into reading instruction for A1-level ELLs with reading comprehension difficulties?

### **Justification of the Research**

Reading comprehension difficulties among A1-level ELLs pose substantial obstacles to academic achievement and future learning opportunities. Despite the growing interest in gamification, existing literature lacks comprehensive empirical evidence on its effectiveness as a reading intervention for this specific population. By addressing this gap, the proposed study aims to provide valuable insights into the potential of gamification to enhance reading comprehension skills among A1-level ELLs. The findings can inform the development of targeted interventions and instructional practices, ultimately fostering improved academic outcomes and enriching the overall learning experience.

### **Relationship with the University's Research Lines**

This research proposal aligns closely with the university's general research line of Pedagogy, Didactics, and Management of Education, as it explores the implementation of gamification as an innovative teaching methodology to enhance reading comprehension among A1-level students. By focusing on this approach, the study makes a significant contribution to various specific research lines within the institution.

One key area in which this research is relevant is Pedagogical Innovations, as it introduces gamification as a modern instructional strategy aimed at increasing student engagement. By incorporating interactive and game-based learning elements, the study

explores new methods that effectively capture students' interest while enhancing their reading comprehension skills. In doing so, it supports the advancement of contemporary pedagogical approaches that prioritize student motivation and participation in the learning process.

Additionally, the study contributes to the research line of Research, Evaluation, and Application of Educational Models by systematically assessing the effectiveness of gamification in reading instruction. Through an empirical analysis of pre- and post-tests, student feedback, and academic performance, the research provides valuable evidence on the impact of game-based learning on students' reading comprehension. This evaluation not only validates gamification as a teaching strategy but also informs future improvements in instructional practices.

Furthermore, the research examines the integration of gamification in different educational settings, both digital and non-digital, which aligns with the Learning in Different Educational Contexts and Technological Resources research line. By assessing the adaptability and effectiveness of gamified learning tools in diverse educational environments, the study highlights the importance of leveraging technology to enhance educational outcomes. It also underscores the potential of gamification to create engaging, student-centered learning experiences that cater to the specific needs of A1-level English language learners.

By aligning with these research lines, the study reinforces the university's commitment to advancing innovative and effective teaching methodologies. The findings will contribute to the ongoing development of student-centered approaches that promote engagement, motivation, and meaningful learning experiences in English language instruction. Ultimately, this research serves as a valuable resource for educators,

curriculum developers, and policymakers seeking to enhance language learning through evidence-based, pedagogically sound strategies.

### **Research Objectives**

#### **General Objective:**

- To evaluate the impact of integrating gamification into reading instruction on improving reading comprehension skills among A1-level English language learners with reading comprehension difficulties.

#### **Specific Objectives:**

- To analyze the theoretical foundations of gamification as a tool to improve reading comprehension.
- To validate the effectiveness of gamification in developing students' reading skills
- To explore students' perceptions and experiences regarding gamification as a reading strategy.

### **Research Variables**

The present study focuses on two key research variables: the independent variable, which is the use of gamification, and the dependent variable, which is the improvement of reading comprehension in A1-level students.

The independent variable, gamification, refers to the integration of game elements and design principles into non-game contexts to enhance engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes.

The dependent variable, reading comprehension in A1-level students, is defined as the ability to understand, interpret, and extract meaning from written texts.

### **Research Methodology**

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of

gamification on reading comprehension in A1-level students. By combining these two methodological perspectives, the research aims to capture both measurable learning outcomes and subjective student experiences, offering a more holistic understanding of the effectiveness of gamification in language learning (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The quantitative component focuses on assessing students' reading comprehension skills before and after exposure to gamified learning activities. To achieve this, pre- and post-tests will be administered, providing objective, numerical data on students' academic performance. The pre-test will establish a baseline measurement of students' initial reading abilities, while the post-test will evaluate any improvements following the implementation of gamification. Through statistical analysis, the study will determine whether gamification has a significant impact on reading comprehension, offering empirical evidence to support its effectiveness.

In parallel, the qualitative component seeks to explore students' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences regarding gamification as a reading strategy. This will be achieved through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, which will allow for in-depth insights into how students interact with gamified learning environments. Semi-structured interviews will capture students' perspectives on motivation, engagement, and perceived benefits of gamification, while classroom observations will provide real-time data on student behavior, participation, and interactions during gamified reading activities. These qualitative findings will serve to complement the quantitative results, offering a deeper understanding of how students emotionally and cognitively respond to gamification in reading instruction.

### **Beneficiaries and their main characteristics**

The primary beneficiaries of this study are 11- to 12-year-old A1-level students enrolled in the eighth year of secondary basic education at Unidad Educativa Verbo

Divino. The research is conducted in an urban school setting, where students come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The study takes place in a face-to-face class modality, utilizing institutional resources to implement gamified activities effectively.

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

This study was conducted at Unidad Educativa Verbo Divino, a Fiscomisional institution located in the urban area of Guaranda, specifically on Av. Cándido Rada and Av. General Enrique streets. The school serves a diverse student population, with learners coming from various social classes and family structures, reflecting a broad socio-economic background.

The participants in this study were students from the eighth year of secondary basic education, ranging in age from 11 to 12 years old. Given their academic level and language proficiency, these students were selected to evaluate the impact of gamification on reading comprehension at the A1 English proficiency level. To ensure the effectiveness of the intervention, the institution provided the necessary educational resources and materials required for the study.

The research was carried out in a face-to-face classroom setting, as students were engaged in mandatory instruction classes. This in-person interaction allowed for direct observation of student engagement, facilitated the implementation of gamified activities, and enabled the researcher to gather first-hand qualitative and quantitative data on the effectiveness of the proposed instructional strategies. The structured classroom environment also ensured that all students received the same level of exposure to gamified learning techniques, contributing to the reliability and validity of the study's findings.

### **Practical Contributions of the Proposal**

The research will provide practical recommendations for integrating gamification into reading instruction, helping educators design effective teaching strategies tailored to

the needs of A1-level ELLs. Additionally, insights into student engagement and motivation will contribute to creating a more dynamic and enriching learning environment.

The significance of this research proposal extends across multiple dimensions, including professional, methodological, technological, and social perspectives. By investigating the effectiveness of gamification as a strategy to enhance reading comprehension among A1-level English language learners, this study aims to contribute valuable insights that can inform educational practices, research methodologies, technological advancements, and social inclusion in language learning.

From a professional perspective, this research holds important implications for educators, curriculum developers, and language education specialists. By examining how game-based learning strategies impact students' reading comprehension, the study provides practical recommendations for integrating gamification into English language instruction. The findings can support teacher training programs, helping educators adopt innovative pedagogical approaches that align with students' cognitive and motivational needs. Additionally, the study contributes to the development of inclusive teaching practices, ensuring that A1-level learners receive engaging and effective instruction tailored to their specific challenges.

From a methodological standpoint, this research enriches language education studies by employing a mixed-methods approach, which integrates quantitative data from pre- and post-tests with qualitative insights from interviews and classroom observations. By combining these two research paradigms, the study enhances the validity and reliability of its findings, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how gamification influences reading comprehension. The methodological framework used in

this research can serve as a reference for future studies, contributing to ongoing advancements in educational research and assessment techniques.

In terms of technological relevance, the study aligns with the growing integration of digital tools in education. Gamification leverages interactive learning elements such as points, badges, and leaderboards, creating an engaging and dynamic learning environment that fosters student motivation. By incorporating ICT tools into reading instruction, this research supports the development of technology-enhanced educational strategies that prepare students for the digital competencies required in the 21st century. Furthermore, the study highlights the flexibility of gamification, demonstrating its applicability in both digital and non-digital learning contexts.

From a social perspective, addressing reading comprehension difficulties among A1-level learners is essential for promoting educational equity and inclusivity. Language proficiency is a critical skill that enables individuals to communicate effectively, access academic opportunities, and participate fully in society. However, students struggling with reading comprehension often face barriers to academic success and social integration. By exploring gamification as a strategy to enhance reading skills, this study contributes to reducing these barriers, fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment that encourages student participation. Furthermore, by promoting innovative teaching methodologies, the research advocates for educational practices that address the diverse needs of learners, ultimately fostering greater social inclusion and academic achievement.

## **Chapter I Theoretical framework**

This section explores the impact of gamification on reading comprehension in A1-level learners, examining how game-based instructional strategies can improve engagement, motivation, and overall language proficiency. By analyzing existing literature and empirical studies, this research aims to provide insights into the role of gamification in enhancing reading comprehension and offer recommendations for its effective application in language education. Furthermore, this chapter provides a theoretical framework to support the research objectives around the use of gamification to improve reading comprehension for A1 level students in Ecuador.

**Independent variable:** The use of gamification

Gamification, refers to the integration of game elements and design principles into non-game contexts to enhance engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes (Figuerola, 2015).

**Dependent variable:** Improving reading comprehension

Reading comprehension in A1-level students, is defined as the ability to understand, interpret, and extract meaning from written texts (Healy, 2002).

### **1.1 Research background**

A growing body of research has examined the impact of gamification on reading comprehension, particularly among A1-level English language learners (ELLs). These studies explore how incorporating game-like elements such as points, badges, and challenges into educational tasks can enhance engagement and improve learning outcomes. By integrating these motivational components, gamification has shown promising effects in fostering student persistence, participation, and comprehension development.

One significant study conducted by Matyakhan et al. (2024) investigated the effectiveness of gamification in improving reading engagement and comprehension among Thai EFL university students. Utilizing a mixed-methods research design, the study employed pre- and post-tests to measure changes in reading proficiency. The findings revealed that the experimental group, which engaged in gamified reading tasks, demonstrated substantial improvements in both engagement and comprehension compared to the control group. This research highlights gamification's ability to increase student involvement in reading activities, which is crucial for enhancing comprehension skills among A1-level learners.

Similarly, a systematic review by Zainuddin et al. (2020) assessed the effectiveness of gamification in learning environments, with a particular focus on language acquisition. The study emphasized how game elements such as rewards and feedback play a key role in boosting student motivation, which is essential for language learning success. The findings indicated that students in gamified settings consistently demonstrated greater persistence and effort, leading to notable improvements in reading skills over time. Additionally, the review highlighted that the effectiveness of gamification depends on careful implementation, as game elements must align with learning objectives to maximize their educational benefits.

Further exploring the influence of gamification on motivation, Mekler et al. (2017) investigated how specific game mechanics, such as points and rewards, affect user engagement and performance. Although the study was conducted within broader learning contexts, its findings are relevant to reading comprehension strategies. The researchers concluded that points and rewards significantly motivated learners to complete tasks, suggesting that these elements could be effectively integrated into A1-level reading instruction to promote active engagement.

Moreover, gamification has demonstrated its effectiveness in collaborative learning environments, enhancing group cohesion and academic achievement. A study by Uz-Bilgin and Gul (2020) examined the impact of gamification on student attitudes, teamwork, and performance in an online learning platform (Edmodo). Using a quasi-experimental design, they compared a gamified learning group to a traditional learning group, both following the same curriculum.

While the study found no significant differences in student attitudes, the gamified group exhibited higher levels of group cohesion and improved academic performance. These results suggest that gamification fosters stronger collaboration, which is particularly beneficial for language learning environments that emphasize peer interaction.

The findings from Uz-Bilgin and Gul (2020) align with previous research emphasizing the benefits of gamification in social learning contexts. For instance, De-Marcos et al. (2016) found that when gamification is integrated with social elements, it has a positive influence on student engagement and learning performance. Similarly, Marti-Parreño et al. (2016) conducted a bibliometric analysis, demonstrating that gamified learning enhances student motivation and collaboration across various educational disciplines. These studies collectively suggest that gamification's effectiveness extends beyond individual engagement, reinforcing teamwork and cooperation, which are critical components in second-language acquisition.

Furthermore, the importance of group cohesion in language learning is emphasized by Knutas et al. (2014). Their study found that gamified elements, such as badges and challenges, significantly enhance peer support and collaboration in online learning environments. Given that language acquisition relies heavily on cooperative learning, gamification provides an interactive framework that encourages students to

participate actively. Collaborative reading activities, when gamified, not only reinforce comprehension skills but also promote engagement, motivation, and long-term retention.

## **1.2 Independent variable: Gamification**

### *1.2.1 Guidance and Instruction*

Gamification in education involves integrating game-like elements, such as points, badges, leaderboards, and challenges, into non-game contexts to enhance engagement, motivation, and interaction. By incorporating these elements into learning environments, educators can translate the captivating aspects of gaming into instructional settings, making tasks more immersive and stimulating (Figueroa, 2015). Similarly, Werbach and Hunter (2012) define gamification as the application of game design principles to non-game contexts, aiming to foster student participation and motivation. Through these mechanisms, gamification offers an innovative approach to increasing student involvement in learning activities, particularly in language acquisition (Kapp, 2012).

Beyond engagement, gamification contributes to improving learning outcomes by enhancing cognitive and problem-solving skills. Kapp (2012) notes that gamification promotes learning and motivation by incorporating game-based mechanics and aesthetics that encourage students to take an active role in their education. Additionally, a meta-analysis by Hamari et al. (2014) highlights that gamification significantly improves motivation, particularly when intrinsic motivation is lacking. These findings suggest that well-designed gamified environments can foster both short-term engagement and long-term learning retention.

### *1.2.2 Type of Gamification Elements*

Gamification integrates various mechanics and dynamics to create engaging learning experiences. Elements such as levels, challenges, and instant feedback have been

shown to sustain student motivation and encourage active participation (Deterding et al., 2011). Amaya-Díaz and Bajaña-Zajia (2020) highlight that platforms like *Hot Potatoes* allow students to experience language practice interactively, shifting away from conventional, monotonous learning techniques.

Moreover, gamification supports vocabulary and grammar acquisition by embedding game-based activities into reading and writing exercises. According to Gil-Acirón (2022), game elements provide structured feedback and social learning opportunities, reinforcing student motivation. Similarly, research by Amaya-Díaz & Bajaña-Zajia (2020) emphasizes that embedding challenges and immediate feedback into the learning process fosters a positive and motivating classroom environment. This aspect is particularly relevant for beginner students, who often struggle with focus and engagement in traditional instructional settings (Figuroa, 2015).

### *1.2.3 Application of Gamification*

The successful application of gamification requires careful design and implementation to align with educational goals. Several empirical studies support the long-term benefits of gamification in education. According to Zainuddin et al. (2020), students exposed to game-like challenges, rewards, and feedback demonstrate greater persistence and effort in their learning. Likewise, Buckley and Doyle (2014) conceptualize gamification as a pedagogical tool that leverages intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to influence student behavior, performance, and engagement levels. These studies indicate that well-structured gamification strategies not only increase motivation but also support students in reaching higher academic achievements.

Additionally, in a meta-analysis, Sailer & Homner (2020) examined gamification as a learning strategy, focusing on point systems, competition, collaboration, and social interaction. Their findings suggest that while gamification generally has a positive impact

on cognitive and motivational dimensions, its effectiveness depends on specific contexts and design. For example, the inclusion of narrative elements and team-based tasks amplifies engagement and persistence, while a combination of competitive and cooperative elements effectively enhances motivation and attentiveness. This reinforces the need for carefully designed gamified activities that align with students' learning needs and goals.

#### *1.2.4 Student Engagement and Motivation*

Gamification enhances language learning by addressing key psychological factors such as achievement, autonomy, and social relatedness (Deterding et al., 2011). Digital tools like Duolingo have been particularly successful in this regard, as they capitalize on reward systems and self-assessment mechanisms to reinforce vocabulary retention and grammatical proficiency (Reinhardt, 2019). These findings suggest that digital gamification has the potential to optimize language learning experiences through interactive, self-paced study sessions.

Additionally, gamification encourages risk-taking and active problem-solving in a low-stakes learning environment. Zarzycka-Piskorz (2016) notes that platforms like *Kahoot!* significantly increase student motivation, fostering both competition and collaboration. Likewise, Perry (2015) found that mobile-based gamified tools provide interactive language practice, leading to greater retention and practical application of language skills. Such tools allow learners to engage in structured, goal-oriented activities, promoting consistent practice and gradual skill development.

However, while gamification has demonstrated positive effects on student motivation and learning outcomes, its effectiveness is highly dependent on proper implementation. Rigby and Ryan (2011) argue that the mere addition of game elements does not automatically increase engagement; rather, the design must be aligned with

learners' needs and preferences. If implemented successfully, gamification can transform the classroom experience, making it more captivating and enjoyable, particularly for younger learners. This highlights the importance of personalized, adaptive gamification strategies in ensuring optimal educational benefits.

Beyond motivation, gamification fosters collaborative learning and social interaction, which are crucial components of second language acquisition. Many gamified platforms encourage teamwork, communication, and collective problem-solving, enhancing both linguistic and interpersonal skills. According to Figueroa (2015), structured feedback and peer interactions in gamified environments help students maintain motivation and build a sense of accomplishment, leading to improved language learning outcomes.

Furthermore, studies by Zainuddin et al. (2020) and Perry (2015), indicate that gamification effectively bridges the gap between entertainment and education, creating a low-stakes, immersive learning journey. When implemented correctly, gamification allows students to experience language practice in an engaging and rewarding way, making it an invaluable tool in modern pedagogical frameworks.

### **1.3 Dependent variable: Reading Comprehension**

#### *1.3.1 Reading Accuracy*

Reading accuracy is a fundamental component of reading comprehension, as it involves the ability to decode words correctly and recognize their meanings within a given context. According to Pourhosein Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), reading accuracy plays a crucial role in the overall comprehension process, as errors in word recognition can lead to misinterpretation of text meaning. Readers who struggle with accuracy often experience difficulties in understanding sentences and extracting key information, which directly affects their ability to grasp the main ideas of a passage.

Moreover, Baier (2005), emphasizes that structured reading strategies, such as phonetic decoding and word recognition exercises, help learners improve their reading accuracy. These strategies enable students to identify words with greater precision, reducing cognitive overload and allowing them to focus more on comprehension rather than decoding individual words. For A1-level learners, systematic phonics instruction and vocabulary-building activities can significantly enhance reading accuracy, ultimately contributing to better overall reading performance.

### *1.3.2 Reading Fluency*

Reading fluency, defined as the ability to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression, is an essential factor in developing reading comprehension skills. Skellie (2024) highlights that fluency facilitates the reading process by allowing learners to allocate cognitive resources to understanding text meaning rather than focusing on individual word recognition. Fluent readers are better equipped to engage with longer texts, make inferences, and retain information more effectively.

A key strategy to enhance fluency is repeated reading, which has been shown to increase reading speed and accuracy over time (Skellie, 2024). By exposing students to frequent reading practice, educators can help learners transition from slow, laborious decoding to fluid and automatic reading. Additionally, providing structured feedback and scaffolded support during reading exercises enhances students' confidence and fosters a positive reading experience. Research indicates that fluent readers comprehend texts more efficiently, as they are not burdened by constant decoding challenges.

Furthermore, Woolley (2011) underscores that fluency serves as a bridge to comprehension, emphasizing that structured practice, immediate feedback, and interactive reading tasks are essential for developing both fluency and comprehension skills. For A1-level learners, reading fluency is particularly important, as it enables them

to engage with texts more independently and develop a stronger foundation for language acquisition.

### *1.3.3 Reading Comprehension*

Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process that involves extracting meaning from text, interpreting ideas, and integrating new information with prior knowledge. Woolley (2011) defines reading comprehension as the ability to construct meaning beyond simple word recognition, requiring students to engage in critical thinking and inference-making. This process is influenced by factors such as vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge, and reading strategy use.

For A1-level learners, developing reading comprehension can be particularly challenging due to limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. Moreillon (2007) advocates for collaborative reading activities, where students work together to decode, analyze, and interpret texts, fostering higher levels of engagement and understanding. These strategies allow students to actively participate in the learning process, helping them develop essential reading skills through social interaction.

In addition, Guthrie et al. (2007) emphasize that reading comprehension growth is closely linked to student motivation. When learners are engaged with texts that are relevant and interesting, they are more likely to apply reading strategies, leading to better comprehension outcomes. For A1 learners, structured instruction in summarizing, questioning, and making inferences has been shown to improve comprehension significantly. Educators can facilitate this process by integrating guided reading activities, comprehension checks, and discussion-based learning into their instructional approaches.

Furthermore, several factors influence comprehension, including familiarity with the text, prior knowledge, and the use of strategic reading techniques. According to

Kintsch (1998), comprehension results in the formation of a mental model, where new information is integrated with existing knowledge to develop a holistic understanding.

#### *1.3.4 Reading Engagement*

Reading engagement refers to the level of interest, motivation, and persistence that students demonstrate when interacting with texts. According to Guthrie and Klauda (2014), motivated readers are more likely to engage deeply with texts, leading to stronger comprehension and knowledge retention. Engagement is particularly important for A1 learners, as early exposure to interactive and meaningful reading experiences can foster long-term reading habits and academic success.

One effective way to boost engagement is through gamified reading activities, which integrate elements of challenge, rewards, and collaboration into the learning process. Research by Zainuddin et al. (2020) suggests that gamification enhances student motivation, making reading a more active and enjoyable experience. By incorporating game-like features such as reading challenges, interactive quizzes, and digital storytelling, educators can encourage students to persist in their reading efforts, ultimately leading to improved comprehension.

Furthermore, Prados Sánchez et al. (2021) conducted a study on gamified reading platforms and found that students who engaged with interactive, game-based reading activities demonstrated significantly higher levels of engagement and comprehension compared to those who followed a traditional reading approach. These findings highlight the importance of making reading an enjoyable and rewarding activity, particularly for young language learners.

#### *1.3.5 Theories: behaviorism, cognitivism and interactionism*

Due most traditional reading comprehension teaching methods for A1 level students are generally based on memorization activities and repetitive exercises, they can

have difficulties in engaging students and maintaining their interest and motivation. However, currently gamification emerges as a great alternative, since it is based on the principles of behaviorism, cognitivism and interactionism theories for language learning.

In this sense, Behaviorism, with its emphasis on stimulus-response associations and positive reinforcement, forms the foundational beat of gamified learning. According to Skinner, “learning is the result of practical imitation, reinforcement or positive feedback, and habit formation” (as cited in Assaiqueli, 2013). Gamification on its part, transforms reading tasks into engaging challenges, rewarding correct answers with points, badges, and level-ups.

This intrinsic motivation drives students to actively engage with the reading material, solidifying their understanding through repeated practice. Moreover, immediate feedback provided through hints, pop-up explanations, and adaptive difficulty levels further reinforces accurate comprehension, shaping desired reading behaviors through operant conditioning. Therefore, Behaviorism serves as the metronome, keeping the flow of learning steady and ensuring consistent progress.

However, learning is not just about stimulus-response; it is about building and polishing internal representations of knowledge. Here, cognitivism favors the mental processes that precede understanding (Ausubel, 1960). Gamification, with its interactive narratives and problem-solving activities, provides an environment conducive to knowledge activation and development. Students actively connect new information to existing knowledge frameworks, building and refining their understanding of the textual world.

As they face challenges and explore options within the game, they internalize vocabulary, grammar rules, and reading strategies, fostering deeper understanding. Through repeated exposure to gamified tasks, students develop cognitive structures that

allow them to process textual information more efficiently. Therefore, cognitivism acts by constructing new knowledge in the student's mind, enabling them to integrate and refine their understanding of language through active participation and cognitive engagement.

Finally, the human capacity for social learning comes to the fore, guided by the principles of interactionism. This is how the collaborative features of gamification, such as team challenges, problem-solving activities, and cooperative tasks, create a learning environment where students benefit and contribute to each other's progress (Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

In summary, gamified reading instruction for A1 students benefits from a well-coordinated interplay of behaviorism, cognitivism, and interactionism. Behaviorism provides the reinforcement and motivation, cognitivism adds the knowledge construction, and interactionism enriches the learning experience with the harmony of social collaboration.

## Chapter II Methodological Design

The paradigm chosen to design the project "The use of gamification to improve reading comprehension in A1 level students" was a mixed-method approach. This approach integrated both quantitative and qualitative methods to comprehensively investigate the research question, offering a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study. By employing a mixed-method approach, the study leverages the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research to provide a more robust and nuanced analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The quantitative component focuses on measuring the impact of gamification on students' reading comprehension scores. This involves the administration of pre- and post-tests, which will yield objective, numerical data on students' reading comprehension abilities before and after they engage with gamified learning activities. The pre- and post-tests are crucial as they provide empirical evidence through statistical analysis, highlighting any improvements in reading comprehension attributable to the gamification strategies (Bryman, 2012). This data is essential for validating the effectiveness of gamification as an instructional approach.

In parallel, the qualitative component delves into the students' experiences and perceptions regarding the gamification process. This aspect of the research will be explored through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Semi-structured interviews are designed to elicit detailed, personal insights from students about their attitudes towards gamification, the perceived benefits, challenges faced, and any suggestions for improvement. Classroom observations will supplement this by providing real-time data on student interactions with gamified activities, thus offering a contextual understanding of how these activities influence learning dynamics (Merriam, 2009). The

qualitative data is invaluable as it captures the subjective experiences of students, which quantitative data alone cannot fully elucidate.

The integration of both data types—quantitative and qualitative—through triangulation is a key feature of the mixed-method approach. Triangulation involves cross-validating the results from different data sources to enhance the study's overall validity and reliability. Quantitative data from test scores provides a solid foundation of empirical evidence regarding the impact of gamification, while qualitative data from interviews and observations offers deeper insights into the underlying reasons and contextual factors affecting these outcomes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This complementary approach ensures that the findings are not only credible but also richly detailed, providing a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of gamification in improving reading comprehension.

In summary, the mixed-method paradigm was chosen because it allows for a more holistic and robust analysis of the impact of gamification on reading comprehension in A1 level students. Quantitative data provides measurable evidence of improvement, while qualitative data offers insights into students' experiences and engagement, making the findings more comprehensive and meaningful.



The alignment of game elements with learning objectives, the relevance of game mechanics to the content being taught, and the appropriateness of game mechanics for the target audience.

#### Application

#### Student Engagement and Motivation

Levels of student participation, time spent on tasks, and self-reported motivation and interest in the learning activities.

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<b>DEPENDENT VARIABLE</b>	<b>CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION</b>	<b>DIMENSIONS</b>	<b>INDICATORS</b>	<b>SCALES</b>
Reading comprehension	Reading comprehension involves grasping the meaning of the written words, understanding the message being conveyed, and extracting the intended significance from the text (Healy, 2002).	Reading accuracy	Ability to identify main ideas, supporting details, and inferences	
		Reading fluency	Speed and accuracy to decode words, reading rate.	
		Reading comprehension	Ability to answer comprehension questions	Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always
		Reading engagement	Level of interest and motivation to read	

Note: Operationalization of the variables. Authored by Guaranga, T. (2024)

## **2.1 Conceptualization and Operationalization of Main Categories**

To conduct a thorough and effective investigation, particularly within the academic realm, it is essential to clearly define the variables that will address the research question or hypothesis. A variable refers to the entity or subject being examined, or a portion of it, which can fluctuate depending on the research context (Smith, 2015). In essence, its relevance to the research can shift based on geographic and temporal considerations. The operationalization matrix serves as a critical tool for researchers, enabling them to identify and implement the appropriate instruments and techniques to contextualize the study's variables, thus ensuring the feasibility and validity of the research.

In this context, this section identifies and defines the main categories that establish the groundwork for exploring the effectiveness of gamification to improve reading comprehension among the eighth year of basic education students at Unidad Verbo Divino in Guaranda. These categories are crucial for organizing and analyzing the data collected during the research process.

The main categories identified for this study include:

1. **Gamification:** Refers to the integration of game-design elements and principles in non-game contexts, particularly in educational settings, to enhance student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes. Gamification includes elements such as points, badges, leaderboards, challenges, and feedback systems.

2. **Reading Comprehension:** Encompasses the ability to understand, interpret, and analyze written texts. It involves various cognitive processes including decoding, vocabulary knowledge, making inferences, summarizing, and critical thinking. Reading comprehension is essential for academic success and overall literacy development.

### 2.1.2 Definition and Explanation of Main Categories

#### **Gamification:**

“The objective for integrating Gamification towards education is to unchain a more attractive and effective learning experience for the student” (Figueroa, 2015)

#### **Reading comprehension:**

Reading comprehension involves grasping the meaning of the written words, understanding the message being conveyed, and extracting the intended significance from the text (Healy, 2002).

### 2.1.3 Operationalization of Main Categories

The operationalization of the main categories involves defining specific dimensions and indicators to measure and assess each category's variables. In the context of this research, the operationalization process will entail the following steps:

**Gamification:** A set of clear, concise instructions outlining the objectives and rules of the gamified activities was developed. These instructions were crafted to ensure that students comprehended the goals and guidelines for participation effectively. Various game mechanics, including points, badges, leaderboards, challenges, and narrative elements, were implemented to stimulate student engagement and motivation. These elements were selected based on their potential to enhance the learning experience.

The gamification elements were meticulously aligned with specific reading comprehension objectives. This alignment ensured that the game mechanics supported the educational goals of the study. The relevance of the game mechanics to the reading content was evaluated, ensuring that they were suitable for the tasks assigned. Additionally, the appropriateness of these mechanics for the A1 level students was carefully considered. Teacher observations and student feedback were collected to assess the effectiveness of the alignment and relevance of the game mechanics.

Levels of student participation during the gamified activities were monitored. This monitoring provided insights into how actively students were involved in the learning process. The time students spent on gamified reading tasks was tracked to measure their engagement. This data helped in understanding the impact of gamification on students' commitment to the tasks. Self-reported data on student motivation and interest were collected through surveys and feedback forms. This information was crucial in evaluating the motivational effects of gamification on students' learning experiences.

**Reading comprehension:** The students' ability to discern and articulate the central themes of the texts was evaluated. This included their proficiency in recognizing the primary message conveyed by the reading material. The research assessed how effectively students could identify and recall specific details that supported the main ideas of the text. The students' capacity to make logical inferences and draw conclusions based on the content of the text was measured, indicating their depth of understanding.

The study monitored students' proficiency in decoding and pronouncing words correctly and promptly, reflecting their reading fluency. The research evaluated students' ability to answer questions related to the text, testing their understanding of both explicit and implicit information. The students' capability to summarize the text effectively was assessed, indicating their overall comprehension of the material. The level of students' interest in reading was measured through self-reports, where students rated their enjoyment and engagement with the reading activities. Teacher observations were used to evaluate the students' motivation and enthusiasm towards participating in reading tasks.

## **2.2 Beneficiaries Description**

The research proposal "The use of gamification to improve reading comprehension in A1 level students" has a primary focus on 11-12 years old, A1 level students of the eighth year of secondary basic education, parallel C of Unidad Educativa

Verbo Divino as the key beneficiaries. Adopting a mixed-method approach, the study aims to investigate the impact of gamification on enhancing the reading comprehension abilities of this target population.

### **2.3 Delimitation of population, sample, and sampling.**

According to Davies (2022), the sample is the representative part of a population where its elements share common or similar characteristics. The sampling applied to this research is purposive or intentional. This non-probabilistic sampling was selected under the following considerations or criteria: 1) This group manages an A1 English level. 2) All the students go to the same school. 3) The group shares the same labor schedule. 4) They study English compulsorily. 5) The ages of these students fluctuate between 11 to 12 years old. 6) Students have the time to participate in this study. 7) Parents of this group agreed and permitted their children to participate in this study. 8) These students are characterized by facing significant challenges in reading comprehension, such as difficulties with decoding unfamiliar vocabulary, grasping implicit meanings, and maintaining engagement with the text.

**Table 2. Sample**

<b>Population Participants</b>	<b>Sample Population</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Women	14	46.67%
Men	16	53.33%
Total	30	100%

Note: Sampling population description. Authored by Guaranga, T. (2024)

### **2.4 Research context**

The study was conducted at Unidad Educativa Verbo Divino. It is a Fiscomisional institution located in the city of Guaranda, on Av. Cándido Rada y Av. General Enrique streets. It is in the urban area of Guaranda. Students who belong to this school come from

different social classes and family structures. The participants belong to the eighth year of basic education. Their ages range between 11 and 12 years old. The different means and resources were provided by the institution. The interaction with the students was a face-to-face class modality because they were receiving mandatory instruction classes.

## **2.5 Research stages**

The investigation was divided into six periods: delimitation of the problem, theoretical revision, elaboration of the instruments, application of the instruments, data analysis, and redaction of the conclusions and recommendations. In the first stage, it was required to apply for an observation checklist to gather information about the problem in the institution. In other words, this was the diagnostic stage to define the object of the study and to choose the correct methodology. In the second stage, the researcher gathered information about previous studies and researchers who had studied and developed several projects about the topic in question. In the third stage, the instruments were elaborated to be submitted to the students who participated in the project. The instruments used were a pretest, a posttest, a survey, a semi-structured interview and an observation. These instruments were reviewed and approved by two experts. In the fourth stage, the researcher applied a pretest, a posttest, a survey, and an interview to obtain data for the analysis and results of the study. In the fifth stage, data was analyzed to gather results that allowed to realize the improvement of the students. In the sixth and last stage, the results were presented as well as the conclusions and recommendations in a final report of the information obtained during the study.

**Table 3.** Stages of the research project

<b>Stages</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Performers</b>
Delimitation of the problem	Define the object of the study and the methodology	Review of previous information and researchers	Research tutor
Literature review	Define the theoretical framework	Explore bibliographic information	Researcher
Elaboration of Instruments	Establish the required criterio to obtain data for the study	Elaboration of a pre test, a post test, a survey, an interview and an observation.	Researcher
Application of Instruments	Apply the instruments to gather information	Apply for the pre test, post test, survey, interview and classroom observation.	Researcher
Data analysis	Elaborate a report with the results to realice the situation of the students	Application of the statistical analysis for the data attained to infer conclusions	Researcher
Final report of data and conclusions	Gather the results of the investigation	Elaborate a final report with the data and write	Researcher.

conclusions and  
recommendations

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Note: Characterization of the research stages. Authored by Guaranga, T. (2024)

## **2.6 Scope of the research:**

The scope of this research encompasses a comprehensive investigation into how gamification can enhance reading comprehension among A1 level students. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to provide a holistic understanding of the impact of gamification. The research will involve a quasi-experimental design with a non-probabilistic sample, focusing on a specific group of 30 students. Over a defined period, various gamified reading activities will be implemented and their effects on students' reading comprehension will be measured. The geographical context is limited to a specific educational institution, and the study will operate within the constraints of available resources and budget. The findings aim to contribute valuable insights into educational strategies and their effectiveness in improving literacy skills at the A1 level.

## **2.7 Research purpose (design)**

The primary aim of this research is to explore and evaluate the effectiveness of incorporating gamification elements into educational activities to enhance the reading comprehension skills of A1 level students. By integrating game-like features such as points, badges, leaderboards, and challenges into the learning process, the study seeks to increase student engagement, motivation, and interaction. The research employs a mixed-method approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data to measure the impact of these gamified activities on students' reading comprehension abilities.

This includes pre- and post-tests to assess improvements in comprehension, surveys to capture students' attitudes and motivation, semi-structured interviews for in-

depth insights, and classroom observations to document student engagement and behaviors. The ultimate goal is to determine whether gamification can provide a more attractive and effective learning experience, thereby improving students' ability to understand, interpret, and analyze written texts.

## **2.8 Description of the Instruments**

In this section, the data collection instruments used in the study are described. The instruments were carefully selected to align with the research objectives and to gather comprehensive data on the effectiveness of gamification activities in developing reading comprehension skills among students of the eighth year of basic secondary education in the city of Guaranda.

### **2.8.1 Pre-tests and Post-tests:**

The pretest and posttest were standardized reading comprehension assessments designed to evaluate the initial and final reading skills of the students. These instruments included multiple-choice questions based on age-appropriate texts, such as "My Pet Cat" for the pretest and "The Picnic" for the posttest. Each test consisted of five questions measuring key reading comprehension skills:

1. Identifying main ideas and supporting details.
2. Understanding vocabulary in context.
3. Making inferences about the text.

The pretest was conducted at the beginning of the study to establish a baseline for each student's reading comprehension level, while the posttest was administered after the intervention to measure progress. Scoring was guided by a detailed rubric that evaluated main idea identification, detail recognition, vocabulary understanding, and inference-making on a six-point scale (0–5). This approach ensured consistency and clarity in analyzing the impact of the gamified learning activities.

### **2.8.2 Surveys:**

A survey with Likert-scale and open-ended questions was designed to capture students' attitudes, motivation, and engagement with the gamified learning activities. Surveys provided both quantitative (Likert-scale responses) and qualitative (open-ended responses) data, complementing the mixed methods approach. These instruments were administered at two points: mid-way through the intervention period to gather ongoing feedback, and at the end of the study to capture final perceptions and attitudes.

The survey was divided in sections to gather both quantitative and qualitative feedback from the students. It comprised 10 Likert-scale questions (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) to assess students' motivation, engagement, and attitudes toward the gamified learning activities. Example statements included:

- "The gamified activities make reading more interesting."
- "The instructions for the gamified activities are clear and easy to follow."

The second section featured open-ended questions, allowing students to elaborate on their preferences, challenges, and perceived improvements. For instance, students were asked, "What did you like most about the gamified learning activities?" and "How did the activities help you improve your reading skills?" Demographic information such as age, gender, and participation duration was also collected to contextualize responses.

### **2.8.3 Semi-Structured Interviews:**

Interviews were conducted with a representative sample of students to gain deeper insights into their experiences with the gamified activities. Interviews provided rich, qualitative data that helped to explain the quantitative findings from the pre- and post-tests and surveys.

The interviews explored students' experiences in greater depth. Questions were designed to elicit detailed reflections on their interaction with gamified activities, such as:

- "Can you describe your overall experience with the gamified learning activities in your reading class?"
- "Have you noticed any changes in your attitude towards reading since starting these activities?"

The interviews were conducted at the end of the intervention, encouraging students to reflect on their experiences and progress. Follow-up questions were used to ensure clarity and depth in responses. This qualitative data complemented the survey findings, offering insights into students' perspectives and identifying areas for improvement.

#### **2.8.4 Classroom Observations:**

Systematic classroom observations were conducted throughout the intervention to document real-time interactions and engagement. Observers used a checklist to rate behaviors on a five-point scale (1 = Not Observed to 5 = Always Observed) across categories such as:

1. **Student Engagement:** Focus, participation, and enthusiasm during activities.
2. **Peer Interaction:** Collaboration, communication, and mutual support.
3. **Teacher Interaction:** Clarity of instructions, encouragement, and feedback.
4. **Use of Gamified Elements:** Effective application and understanding of gamified features like points and badges.
5. **Reading Comprehension Skills:** Demonstration of understanding and retention of reading material.

Qualitative notes captured additional observations, such as classroom dynamics and specific challenges faced during the activities. These insights were instrumental in evaluating how well the gamified activities aligned with instructional objectives.

### **2.9 Implications for the Methodological Proposal:**

The description of the initial diagnosis served as a cornerstone for shaping the methodological proposal. The identified needs, strengths, and weaknesses of the participants, along with their preferences and challenges, guided the design and implementation of gamified activities. By aligning the proposal with the diagnostic findings, the research ensured that the intervention addresses the nuanced language requirements of the eight year of basic secondary education students and paved the way for meaningful and effective reading comprehension skills development.

### **2.10 Description of the Evaluation and Validation of the Proposal**

The evaluation and validation of the methodological approach for enhancing reading comprehension among eighth-grade students involved a thorough and multi-dimensional process to assess its effectiveness and impact on language development. This process included both formative and summative evaluation methods, as well as expert review.

#### **Expert Validation:**

The proposal underwent rigorous validation by experts, including the proposal advisor and a distinguished language educator Msc. Carmen Andrea Letamendi Lazo. They reviewed and assessed the proposal's design, methodology, and alignment with established language learning theories and practices. Their feedback and recommendations contributed to refining and validating the proposal's validity and educational effectiveness.

#### **Summary Evaluation:**

The summative evaluation provided a final assessment of the proposal's impact on students' reading comprehension skills. A post-test, similar to the pre-test, was administered to measure improvements in students' abilities to make inferences, decode unfamiliar vocabulary, identify main ideas, understand context, and respond to follow-up questions. By comparing the results from the pre-test and post-test, the extent of progress achieved through the intervention was quantitatively assessed. This evaluation offered a comprehensive view of the proposal's effectiveness in enhancing reading comprehension skills.

## **2.11 Description of the Data Processing for the Diagnostic Stage**

The data processing during the diagnostic stage followed a methodical and thorough approach for gathering, organizing, and analyzing information from the diagnostic test (pre-test), post-test, student survey, semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. This phase was crucial for deriving valuable insights into the students' language abilities, needs, and expectations, which would guide the development and execution of the methodological proposal.

### **2.11.1 Data Collection and Organization:**

The data collection process was meticulously structured to ensure the reliability and validity of the information gathered. A combination of pre- and post-tests, surveys, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations was employed to comprehensively assess the impact of gamification on reading comprehension among A1-level students.

The pre- and post-tests, consisting of multiple-choice questions, were administered at the beginning and end of the study to measure improvements in reading comprehension. These tests evaluated students' ability to identify main ideas, understand vocabulary in context, and make inferences about the text. Surveys, incorporating Likert-

scale and open-ended questions, were conducted mid-way and at the end of the intervention to assess students' motivation, engagement, and perceptions of the gamified activities. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with a representative sample of students to gain deeper insights into their experiences, attitudes, and challenges regarding gamification in reading comprehension. Additionally, systematic classroom observations were conducted using a checklist to evaluate student engagement, peer interaction, teacher support, and the effective use of gamified elements.

All collected data were systematically categorized based on key variables such as reading comprehension performance, motivation levels, and student engagement. This structured organization facilitated a comprehensive analysis of trends and patterns within the dataset, ensuring that the research findings accurately reflected the impact of gamification on students' reading comprehension skills.

### **2.11.2 Data Entry and Coding:**

Following data collection, a rigorous data entry and coding process was implemented to maintain accuracy and consistency. Quantitative data from pre- and post-tests and Likert-scale survey responses were entered into statistical software for analysis. Each response was assigned a unique identifier to facilitate tracking and prevent data duplication. Numerical coding was applied to categorical variables, such as reading comprehension performance and motivation levels, enabling statistical computations and comparative analysis.

For qualitative data, thematic coding was employed to identify recurring patterns and significant insights from open-ended survey responses, interview transcripts, and classroom observation notes. Content analysis techniques were utilized to extract key themes related to students' perceptions of gamification, learning experiences, and observed engagement in reading tasks. To ensure data accuracy, a double-checking

procedure was implemented during data entry, in order to obtain reliable and insightful findings.

### **2.11.3 Descriptive Analysis:**

Descriptive analysis was the initial step in processing quantitative data. Measures of central tendency, including the mean, median, and mode, were calculated to summarize students' performance on the diagnostic and pre-tests. These analyses provided a clear understanding of students' current language proficiency, identifying both their strengths and areas requiring improvement. (Healey, 2002)

### **2.11.4 Thematic Analysis:**

For the qualitative data from open-ended survey responses, thematic analysis was performed. The coded themes were thoroughly examined to uncover key trends, recurring narratives, and significant patterns in students' views, difficulties, and expectations related to their reading comprehension skills. This analysis provided a deeper understanding of the contextual factors affecting language learning in the given educational setting. (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

### **2.11.5 Comparative Analysis:**

A comparative analysis was conducted by comparing the results of the diagnostic test (pre-test) with those of the post-test. This comparison revealed insights into the students' progress in reading comprehension skills before and after the intervention. It assessed the impact of the proposed methodological approach on improving language proficiency and confirmed the effectiveness of the gamified activities. (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017)

### **2.11.6 Triangulation and Integration:**

To ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, a triangulation method was used, combining both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative results from the

diagnostic and post-test were cross-checked with qualitative data from the survey. This integrated analysis provided a well-rounded view of the students' language needs, challenges, and expectations, enhancing the overall understanding of the research context.

#### **2.11.7 Interpretation and Conclusions:**

The data were analyzed within the framework of the research objectives and theoretical background. Patterns, trends, and correlations were examined to draw meaningful conclusions about students' reading comprehension skills, proficiency levels, and specific needs. These conclusions informed the next steps in the research, including the development of the methodological proposal and targeted interventions.

In summary, the data processing in the diagnostic phase involved a detailed procedure that included data collection, entry, coding, descriptive and thematic analysis, comparative analysis, triangulation, and interpretation. This thorough approach provided valuable insights into students' language proficiency and needs, guiding the creation of an effective methodological proposal aimed at improving their reading comprehension skills within the context of Unidad Educativa Verbo Divino.

#### **2.12 Ethical considerations**

All participants and their guardians will receive detailed information about the study, including its objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Written consent will be obtained from the students and their guardians before participation. The consent form will explain that participation is voluntary, and participants can withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. "Ethical considerations such as informed consent and confidentiality are crucial to maintaining the integrity and credibility of educational research" (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Personal information of the participants will be kept confidential. Data will be anonymized to ensure that individual responses cannot be traced back to specific

participants. All data will be securely stored, with access limited to the research team. Digital data will be encrypted, and physical documents will be kept in locked storage.

The research will be designed to avoid any psychological distress. Gamified activities will be age-appropriate, engaging, and supportive, ensuring a positive learning environment. Furthermore, participants will receive constructive feedback and support throughout the study to address any concerns or difficulties they may encounter.

The design of surveys and questionnaires will be straightforward, avoiding any sensitive or intrusive questions. Participants will be informed about the purpose of these instruments and how their responses will be used.

Interviews will be conducted in a respectful and non-judgmental manner. Participants will have the option to skip questions or terminate the interview if they feel uncomfortable.

Observations will be conducted discreetly to minimize any disruption to the classroom environment. The focus will be on general classroom dynamics rather than individual behaviors.

Participation in the study will be entirely voluntary. Students and their guardians will be informed that they can choose not to participate or withdraw at any point without facing any negative repercussions.

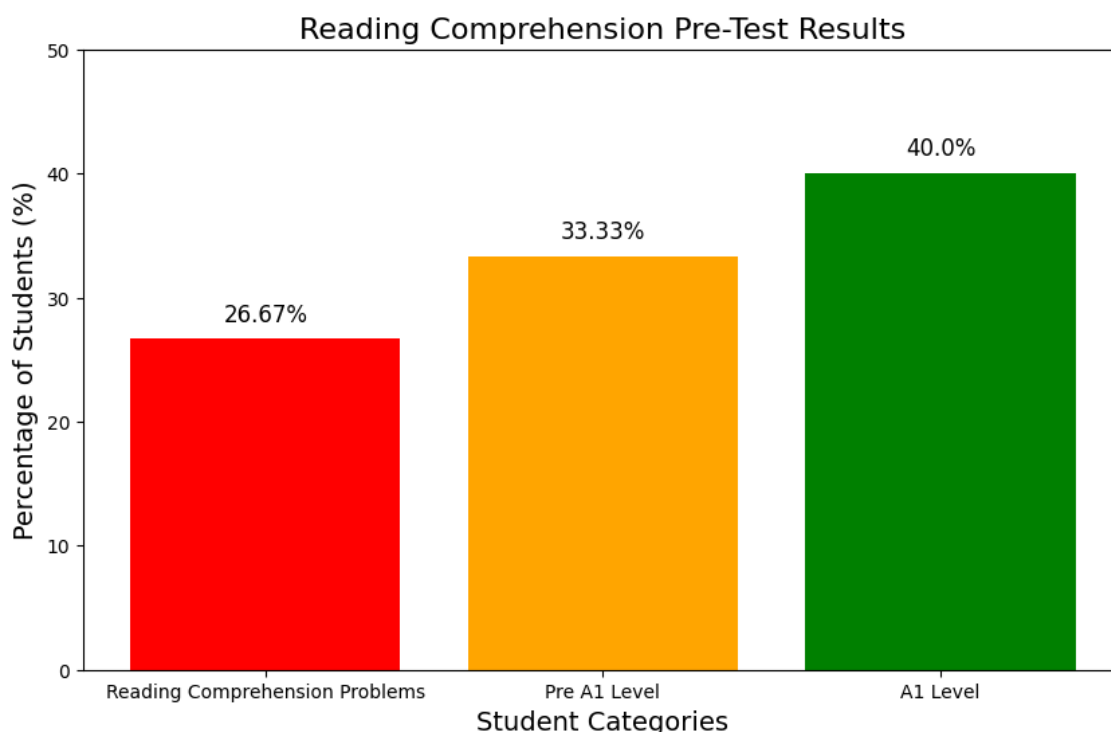
Participants will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. They will be informed that their decision to withdraw will not affect their relationship with the school or the researchers.

There will be no deception in the research process. Participants will be fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and how their data will be used. Finally, transparency will be maintained throughout the research.

### 2.13 Description and Analysis of the Results of the Diagnostic Stage

The initial diagnosis was conducted to inform the elaboration of the methodological proposal involved a comprehensive assessment of the eighth year of basic secondary education students' reading comprehension skills at Unidad Educativa Verbo Divino. This diagnostic phase served as a crucial basis for designing the intervention based on gamified activities and adapting it to the specific needs and abilities of the participants.

**Figure 1.** Reading Comprehension Pre-Test Results



Note: Student's level after diagnostic test. Authored by Guaranga, T. (2024)

The test was applied to 30 students, 8 of them struggled significantly with the tasks outlined in the rubric. They were unable to consistently identify the main ideas, recognize key details, understand basic vocabulary, or make inferences, even with assistance. This group demonstrated substantial difficulties in meeting the A1 level expectations and likely requires additional support and targeted instruction to improve their reading comprehension skills. These students represent 26.7% of the total group. A

notable portion of the students, that is to say 10 students fell below the A1 level, aligning with the Pre-A1 level of the CEFR. These students showed emerging skills in reading comprehension but were not yet able to perform at the A1 level. Their ability to identify main ideas, recognize details, and understand vocabulary was limited, and they frequently required substantial assistance. These students represent 33.3% of the total group. Finally, 12 students successfully met the A1 level criteria, demonstrating proficiency in the basic reading comprehension skills expected at this level. They were able to identify main ideas, recognize key details, understand vocabulary in context, and make simple inferences with minimal or no assistance. This group was fully aligned with the CEFR A1 level and represents 40% of the total group.

### **Chapter III Presentation and Validation of the proposal**

According to Alem (2020), data analysis and interpretation is a fundamental aspect of research, emphasizing its role in transforming raw data into meaningful insights. This chapter presents the results obtained from the study on the effectiveness of gamification in improving reading comprehension for A1 level English Language Learners (ELLs) at *Unidad Educativa Verbo Divino*. The data was analyzed using a mixed-method approach, integrating both quantitative (pre- and post-tests, surveys) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews, classroom observations) techniques. The research question guiding this chapter is:

How effective is integrating gamification into reading instruction for A1 level ELLs with reading comprehension difficulties?

To answer this question, the study triangulates data from multiple sources, ensuring that the findings are validated and contextualized within existing research. The quantitative analysis examines the extent to which students' reading comprehension skills improved after engaging in gamified learning activities, while the qualitative analysis explores students' perceptions, experiences, and behavioral changes resulting from the intervention.

#### **3.1 Validation of the Proposal**

The validation of this research proposal, *The Use of Gamification to Improve Reading Comprehension for A1 Level Students*, was conducted through both theoretical and empirical considerations to ensure its relevance, feasibility, and applicability. The study was structured using a mixed-method approach, integrating quantitative data (pre- and post-tests, surveys) and qualitative data (semi-structured interviews, classroom observations) to comprehensively analyze the impact of gamification on reading comprehension. This methodological rigor strengthens the reliability of the findings and

aligns with established research frameworks in language acquisition and instructional design.

Theoretical validation was achieved by grounding the study in existing literature on gamification and reading comprehension. Foundational theories in cognitive engagement, motivation, and second-language acquisition were analyzed to support the research objectives. Prior studies have demonstrated that gamified learning environments enhance student motivation and engagement, which are critical factors in language learning success. The integration of these theoretical perspectives ensures that the study builds upon established knowledge while addressing a specific gap in research related to A1-level English learners.

Empirical validation was conducted through an extensive review of previous studies that examined the effectiveness of gamification in educational contexts. By synthesizing findings from research on game-based learning, student engagement, and reading comprehension strategies, this study situates itself within a broader academic discourse. The use of triangulated data sources further enhances the credibility of the research, as it allows for cross-verification of results and minimizes potential biases.

Furthermore, the feasibility of the study was carefully evaluated in relation to its implementation at *Unidad Educativa Verbo Divino*. The research design considered practical constraints such as time limitations, resource availability, and student participation, ensuring that the study was achievable within the given academic setting.

Beyond its academic significance, this study offers practical benefits for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers seeking innovative approaches to enhance reading comprehension among A1-level English learners. By demonstrating the effectiveness of gamification as a pedagogical tool, the research provides valuable

insights that can inform future instructional strategies and contribute to improving literacy outcomes in similar educational contexts.

## **3.2 Characteristics of the proposal**

### **3.2.1 Theoretical foundations**

Understanding the theoretical underpinnings of gamification and reading comprehension requires an exploration of three major learning theories: behaviorism, cognitivism, and interactionism. These theories provide valuable insights into how students acquire, process, and retain information in language learning contexts, particularly in the development of reading comprehension skills through gamification.

In this context, Behaviorism, as proposed by Skinner (1957), emphasizes the role of external stimuli and reinforcement in shaping learning behaviors. This theory suggests that learning occurs through conditioned responses, where positive reinforcement (such as rewards and feedback) increases the likelihood of desired behaviors being repeated. In the context of gamification, behaviorism is evident in the use of extrinsic motivators, such as points, badges, and leaderboards, which encourage students to engage with reading activities.

Figueroa (2015), highlights that gamification leverages behaviorist principles by providing immediate rewards for task completion, thereby reinforcing learning behaviors. Similarly, Zainuddin et al. (2020) found that the inclusion of game-like elements in learning environments significantly enhances student motivation, leading to improved reading comprehension. By integrating behaviorist strategies, gamification fosters persistence and engagement among A1-level learners, ensuring sustained participation in reading activities.

Additionally, Cognitivism, rooted in the work of Piaget (1952) and Vygotsky (1978), focuses on the mental processes involved in learning, such as attention, memory,

and problem-solving. This theory asserts that learners actively construct knowledge by processing and organizing information. In the context of reading comprehension, cognitivism emphasizes the importance of scaffolding, where structured support is gradually removed as learners become more proficient.

Gamification aligns with cognitivist principles by incorporating structured challenges, instant feedback, and progressive difficulty levels, all of which facilitate cognitive engagement. According to Kapp (2012), gamification enhances learning by promoting active problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Moreover, Gil-Aciron (2022) argues that gamified reading tasks encourage deeper cognitive processing, as students must analyze, interpret, and extract meaning from texts to progress within a game-based framework.

Furthermore, Interactionism, particularly as developed by Vygotsky (1978), emphasizes the role of social interaction in language acquisition. This theory posits that learning occurs through collaborative activities, where learners construct meaning through communication and shared experiences. Interactionist perspectives are particularly relevant to second-language acquisition, as they highlight the importance of meaningful interaction in developing linguistic skills.

Gamification supports interactionist principles by fostering collaborative learning environments where students engage in peer discussions, group challenges, and cooperative reading tasks. Studies by Uz-Bilgin and Gul (2020) and De-Marcos et al. (2016) indicate that gamified learning fosters group cohesion and enhances social interaction, which are critical components of second-language acquisition. Furthermore, Knutas et al. (2014) found that gamification elements, such as badges and challenges, significantly increase peer collaboration, reinforcing reading comprehension skills through social engagement.

### **3.2.2 Objectives of the proposal.**

The objectives of the current research proposal were clear and well-defined, aiming to address the effectiveness of gamification to improve reading comprehension among A1 level students at Unidad Educativa Verbo Divino. These objectives include:

- To analyze the theoretical foundations of gamification as a tool to improve reading comprehension.
- To validate the effectiveness of gamification in developing students' reading skills
- To explore students' perceptions and experiences regarding gamification as a reading strategy.

### **3.3 Requirements**

Extensive research and careful planning were conducted to ensure the successful execution of the research project, establishing the following requirements.

#### **3.3.1 Methodological Requirements**

The research methodology employed in this study follows a mixed-method approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methods to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of gamification in improving reading comprehension among A1-level students. The methodological framework of this study requires the following elements for data collection, analysis, and interpretation:

1. **Survey and Interviews:** To explore students' perceptions of gamification and its impact on reading comprehension, semi-structured interviews will be conducted. These interviews will provide qualitative insights into students' attitudes, challenges, and experiences with gamified learning activities. Additionally, surveys will be administered to collect broader feedback from participants, ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of their perspectives.

2. **Sampling Method:** The study employs purposive sampling to select a sample of 30 students from Unidad Educativa Verbo Divino, aged 11 to 12 years, who meet the research criteria. This approach ensures that the participants have relevant exposure to gamified reading activities, allowing for a focused analysis of the instructional impact.
3. **Pre- and Post-Tests:** A quantitative assessment of reading comprehension improvement will be conducted using pre- and post-tests. These assessments will measure students' reading comprehension abilities before and after the implementation of gamification strategies. The collected data will be statistically analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the applied instructional approach.
4. **Data Analysis:** Quantitative data will be analyzed using statistical tools to assess changes in reading comprehension performance, ensuring objective evaluation of the impact of gamification. Qualitative data obtained from interviews and surveys will undergo thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and insights related to students' engagement and motivation.

### **3.4 Research question**

How effective is integrating gamification into reading instruction for A1 level ELLs with reading comprehension difficulties?

#### **3.4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis:**

This section presents the quantitative findings derived from the pre-test and post-test assessments and the student perception survey to evaluate the effectiveness of gamification in improving reading comprehension among A1 level students. The analysis utilizes descriptive statistics, including mean, median, and mode, to interpret students' performance before and after the intervention. Additionally, data triangulation is

employed to validate and contextualize the findings within existing theoretical frameworks.

### Pre-Test and Post-Test Results

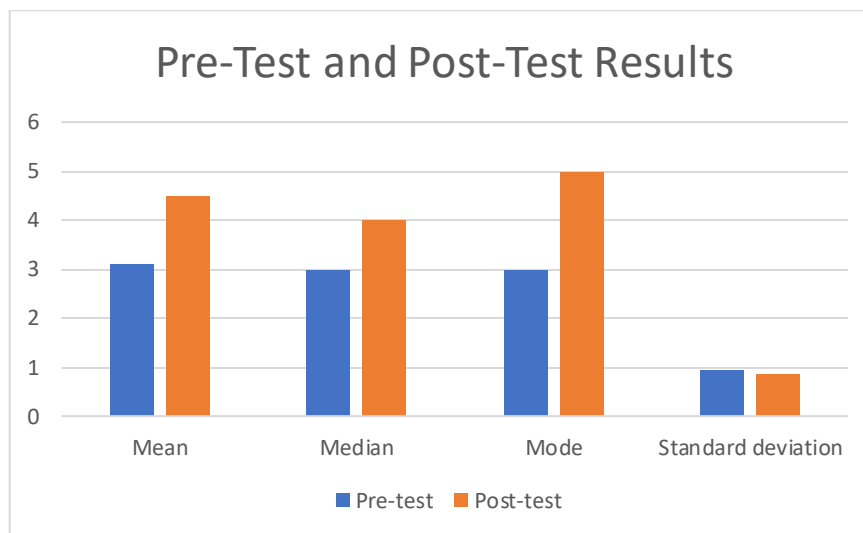
To measure the impact of gamification on reading comprehension, a pre-test was administered before the intervention, followed by a post-test after the completion of gamified reading activities. The results are summarized in Table 1 and figure 1, providing an overview of central tendency measures.

**Table 4.** Pre-Test and Post-Test Results

Test	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation
Pre-Test	3.1	3	3	0.94
Post-Test	4.5	4	5	0.87

**Note:** Descriptive statistics of pre-test and post-test reading comprehension scores.

**Figure 2.** Pre-Test and Post-Test Results



**Note:** This figure illustrates the results of students' pre-test and post-test reading comprehension scores.

The mean score increased from 3.1 in the pre-test to 4.5 in the post-test, indicating a notable improvement in students' reading comprehension abilities. Similarly, the median

increased from 3 to 4, and the mode shifted from 3 to 5, signifying that a majority of students performed at a higher level after engaging in gamified reading instruction. The standard deviation decreased slightly, suggesting that students' scores became more consistent after the intervention.

These findings align with existing literature on gamification's effectiveness in enhancing reading comprehension. Gil-Acirón (2022) emphasizes that gamification fosters engagement and supports the development of reading comprehension skills, particularly among young language learners. The observed improvements in reading scores corroborate Deterding et al. (2011), who argue that the integration of game mechanics such as points, challenges, and leaderboards facilitates greater cognitive engagement, ultimately leading to better comprehension and retention of reading materials.

Furthermore, Kapp (2012) posits that gamification transforms passive learning into an interactive process, thereby enhancing students' motivation and comprehension. The pre-test and post-test results in this study reinforce this notion, as students demonstrated higher levels of accuracy in identifying main ideas, supporting details, and making inferences after participating in the gamified learning environment.

Similarly, Pourhosein Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) emphasize that active participation in reading tasks enhances comprehension by reinforcing cognitive engagement. In the present study, the gamified activities encouraged students to actively interact with the text, leading to greater retention and understanding.

Moreover, Kintsch's (1998) model of reading comprehension suggests that learning is most effective when students actively construct meaning through engagement and interaction with the text. The improvements seen in post-test results align with this theoretical perspective, as gamified learning provided structured, engaging, and

meaningful reading experiences, helping students connect new vocabulary and concepts to prior knowledge. This structured engagement allowed students to process information more deeply, improving their ability to comprehend and analyze texts.

Additionally, Zainuddin et al. (2020) highlight that reward-based learning mechanisms foster intrinsic motivation, leading to greater persistence in reading comprehension tasks. In this study, students who engaged with gamified reading activities exhibited higher levels of perseverance in tackling complex comprehension exercises. The presence of leaderboards, immediate feedback, and rewards created a sense of achievement, which encouraged students to continue practicing reading skills beyond the classroom environment.

Furthermore, Moreillon (2007) argues that collaborative and interactive learning environments contribute to higher levels of reading comprehension, as students engage in peer discussions, knowledge-sharing, and cooperative learning tasks. Observations during this study revealed that students participating in gamified reading tasks often collaborated to discuss reading passages, clarify meanings, and refine their comprehension strategies, further reinforcing the effectiveness of interactive learning experiences.

In summary, the pre-test and post-test results provide strong empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of gamification in enhancing reading comprehension among A1-level students. These results are consistent with theoretical and empirical research, demonstrating that interactive, game-based instruction promotes higher engagement, increased motivation, and improved reading outcomes.

### **Survey Results on Student Perceptions**

To assess students' experiences and perceptions of gamified reading activities, a Likert-scale survey was conducted. The survey aimed to measure students' engagement,

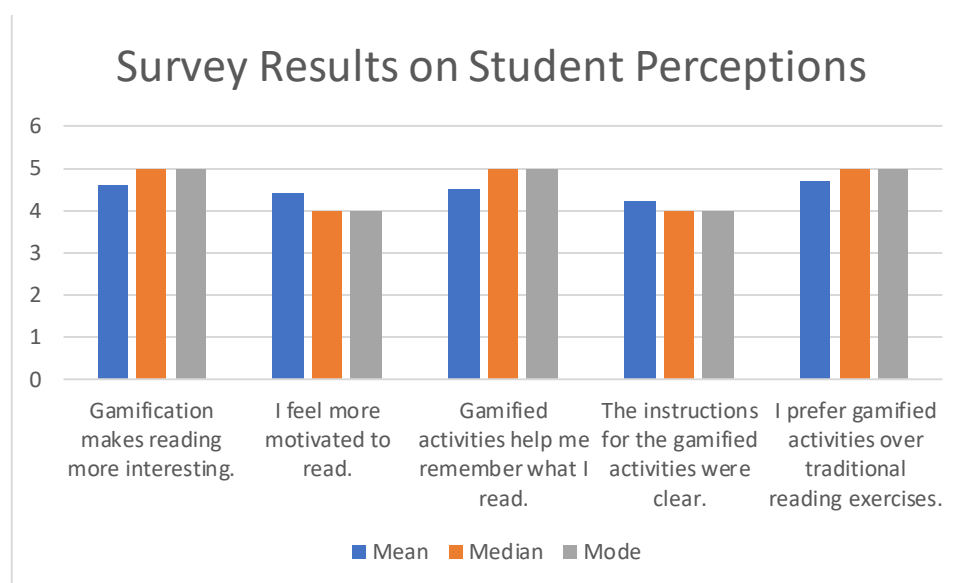
motivation, and comprehension improvement resulting from the intervention. The descriptive statistics of the survey responses are presented in Table 2 and figure 2.

**Table 5.** Survey Results on Student Perceptions

Survey Question	Mean	Median	Mode
Gamification makes reading more interesting.	4.6	5	5
I feel more motivated to read.	4.4	4	4
Gamified activities help me remember what I read.	4.5	5	5
The instructions for the gamified activities were clear.	4.2	4	4
I prefer gamified activities over traditional reading exercises.	4.7	5	5

**Note:** Descriptive statistics of students' perceptions of gamified reading activities.

**Figure 3.** Survey Results on Student Perceptions



**Note:** This figure illustrates the results of students' perceptions of gamified reading activities.

The results indicate strongly positive student perceptions toward gamified learning, with mean scores ranging from 4.2 to 4.7. The highest-rated statement was "I prefer gamified activities over traditional reading exercises" (Mean = 4.7, Mode = 5),

highlighting students' clear preference for game-based instruction. Furthermore, the mean score of 4.5 for "*Gamified activities help me remember what I read*" suggests that students recognized the cognitive benefits of game-based learning in enhancing their retention and comprehension skills.

These findings align with research, particularly Werbach and Hunter (2012), who assert that gamification enhances motivation by increasing interactivity and engagement. The students' strong preference for gamified activities over traditional methods is consistent with Amaya-Díaz and Bajaña-Zajia (2020), who highlight that game-based learning provides an engaging alternative to conventional reading instruction, making language learning more immersive and enjoyable.

Additionally, Figueroa (2015) argues that gamification creates a more dynamic learning environment, which in turn fosters higher levels of student participation. This aligns with the survey results, where students reported increased motivation and willingness to engage in reading tasks. The positive reception of gamified instruction suggests that students respond favorably to interactive, reward-based learning environments, which may help sustain motivation over time.

Additionally, Zainuddin et al. (2020) highlight that reward-based learning mechanisms, such as points, badges, and leaderboards, reinforce positive learning behaviors and increase student persistence in completing reading activities. The present study confirms this assertion, as students demonstrated higher levels of engagement and enthusiasm when participating in game-based reading exercises.

Moreover, Hamari et al. (2014) emphasize that gamification enhances both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by introducing goal-oriented tasks that encourage students to actively participate in the learning process. This aligns with the high survey

scores recorded in the present study, where students consistently expressed enjoyment and engagement when participating in gamified reading instruction.

Similarly, Deterding et al. (2011) argue that gamification increases student autonomy, allowing learners to take control of their learning process through interactive and self-paced activities. This perspective is reflected in the student feedback, where many participants indicated that gamified exercises helped them feel more independent and confident in their reading skills.

In conclusion, the statistical analysis of the pre-test and post-test scores demonstrates a clear improvement in students' reading comprehension abilities after participating in gamified learning activities. Additionally, the survey data confirms students' positive perceptions, reinforcing the claim that gamification enhances motivation, engagement, and comprehension retention.

### **3.4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis:**

This section presents the qualitative findings derived from semi-structured interviews and classroom observations to assess the impact of gamification on reading comprehension among A1-level English Language Learners (ELLs). Thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring patterns in students' experiences, attitudes, and behaviors. Three dominant themes emerged from the data: (1) increased engagement and motivation, (2) improved reading comprehension skills, and (3) a preference for gamified learning over traditional methods. To enhance the validity and reliability of these findings, a triangulation of data was conducted, reinforcing the results within established theoretical frameworks.

#### **Theme 1: Increased Engagement and Motivation**

One of the most prominent findings in the qualitative data was the enhancement of student engagement and motivation following the implementation of gamified reading

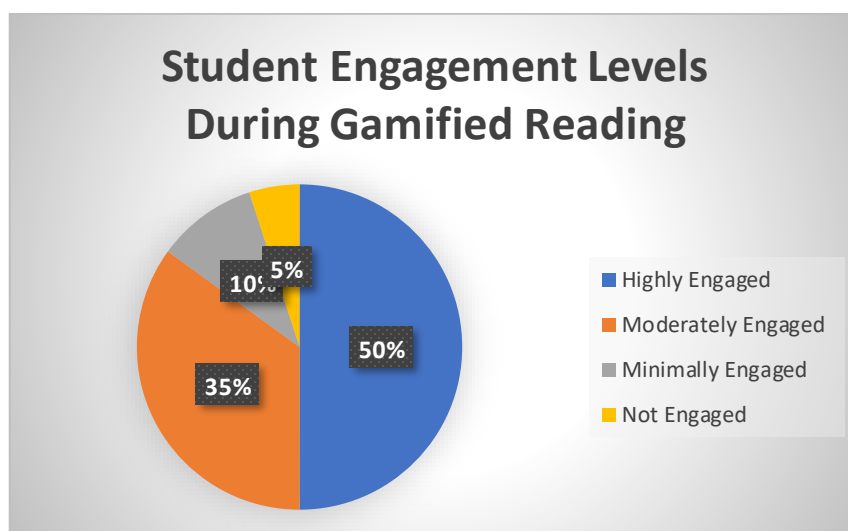
activities. Observational data revealed that students exhibited higher levels of participation, prolonged focus on reading tasks, and greater enthusiasm compared to traditional reading instruction. Students actively competed for points, badges, and leaderboard rankings, which fostered a sense of achievement and engagement.

#### **Student's Perspective:**

Semi-structured interviews corroborated these observations, as students consistently expressed a preference for gamified activities over conventional reading exercises. One student stated, *"I used to get distracted during reading class, but now I feel more excited because I want to win points and complete challenges."* Another participant mentioned, *"The games help me stay focused because they make reading fun instead of boring."*

As illustrated in Figure 1, 50% of students reported high engagement levels, while 35% indicated moderate engagement, reinforcing the notion that gamified activities encourage participation and attentiveness.

**Figure 4.** Student Engagement Levels During Gamified Reading



**Note:** This figure illustrates the distribution of student engagement levels after the implementation of gamification strategies.

These findings align with Werbach and Hunter (2012), who emphasize that gamification enhances student motivation by incorporating game-like elements that trigger engagement and sustained effort. Additionally, Amaya-Díaz and Bajaña-Zajia (2020) assert that gamified learning fosters intrinsic motivation, leading to increased participation and interest in academic tasks. The present study reinforces these claims, as the integration of game mechanics in reading instruction resulted in higher levels of student involvement and enthusiasm.

Moreover, Figueroa (2015) highlights that game-based strategies provide a dynamic learning environment that encourages learners to interact actively with educational content. This theoretical perspective is supported by the observational data, where students demonstrated greater perseverance and commitment to completing reading exercises when embedded in a gamified framework.

Additionally, Gil-Acirón (2022) emphasizes that gamification positively influences motivation and engagement by providing students with frequent feedback and opportunities for social learning. This corresponds with classroom observations in the present study, where students expressed excitement and competitiveness in completing reading activities, motivated by leaderboards and progress tracking mechanisms. The combination of competition and collaboration fostered active participation, demonstrating that well-implemented gamification strategies enhance both individual and group engagement in second-language learning contexts.

Furthermore, research by Hamari et al. (2014) underscores that gamification has a long-term impact on student engagement, particularly when learning activities incorporate clear objectives and meaningful rewards. In the present study, students remained engaged throughout successive reading tasks, showing consistent motivation even in complex comprehension exercises. This suggests that gamification not only

initially captures student interest but also maintains long-term engagement, reinforcing its potential as a sustainable instructional approach for A1-level learners.

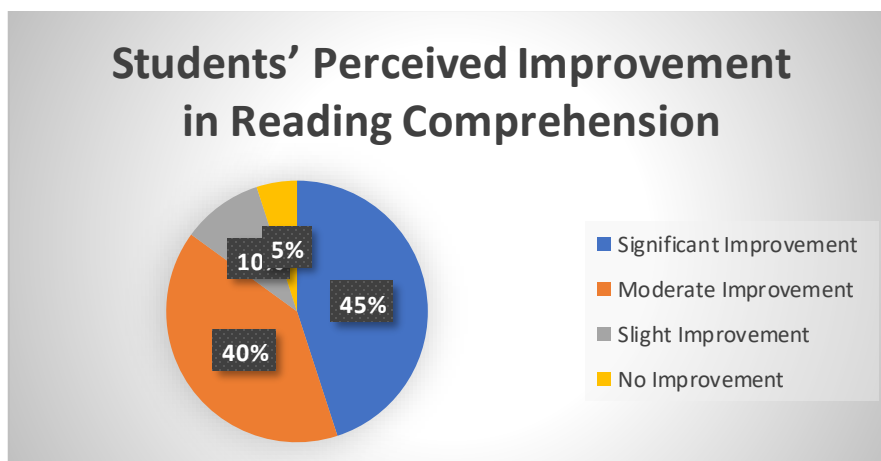
## Theme 2: Improved Reading Comprehension Skills

The second emergent theme was the positive impact of gamification on reading comprehension skills. Observations indicated that students were better able to recall main ideas, identify key details, and make inferences after participating in gamified reading tasks. Teachers also reported that students displayed greater confidence in answering comprehension questions compared to their performance in traditional reading instruction.

### Student Perspective:

Interview responses reinforced these observations. One student commented, *“I feel like I understand the stories better when we play reading games. The challenges make me pay more attention to the details.”* Another participant noted, *“Before, I would forget what I read, but now I remember more because I have to answer questions to win points.”* As shown in Figure 2, 45% of students perceived a significant improvement in their reading comprehension, while 40% reported moderate improvement, supporting the claim that gamification is an effective strategy for fostering comprehension skills in A1-level learners.

**Figure 5.** Students' Perception of Improvement in Reading Comprehension



**Note:** This figure shows the percentage of students who reported significant, moderate, slight, or no improvements in their reading comprehension after the implementation of gamification.

These findings align with Pourhosein Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), who state that active participation in reading tasks enhances comprehension by reinforcing cognitive engagement. The gamified approach employed in this study supports this claim, as students demonstrated greater retention of information and improved comprehension accuracy. This is particularly relevant for A1-level learners, who often struggle with vocabulary acquisition and textual interpretation.

Furthermore, Gil-Acirón (2022) argues that gamification facilitates cognitive processing by integrating interactive elements that stimulate learners' ability to analyze and retain textual information. The current study's findings support this assertion, as students displayed notable improvements in reading comprehension, particularly in the areas of inference-making, vocabulary retention, and main idea identification.

Additionally, Kintsch (1998) posits that reading comprehension is enhanced when learners actively construct meaning through engagement and interaction with the text. The implementation of gamified activities provided an interactive context in which students could engage with reading materials in a structured yet stimulating manner, leading to increased comprehension and retention.

Additionally, research by Moreillon (2007) highlights that collaborative and interactive learning environments enhance reading comprehension by encouraging students to engage deeply with the text. In the current study, gamified tasks often involved peer collaboration and competitive challenges, which allowed students to exchange ideas, clarify doubts, and reinforce their understanding of the material. This supports the notion

that social interaction and cooperative learning strategies contribute to better comprehension outcomes.

Moreover, Zainuddin et al. (2020) emphasize that reward-based learning mechanisms foster intrinsic motivation, leading to greater persistence in reading comprehension tasks. The findings of this study align with this perspective, as students who engaged with gamified reading activities demonstrated higher levels of perseverance and attentiveness when tackling complex texts. The use of leaderboards, progress tracking, and immediate feedback played a crucial role in sustaining students' interest and encouraging deeper textual analysis.

### **Theme 3: Preference for Gamified Learning Over Traditional Methods**

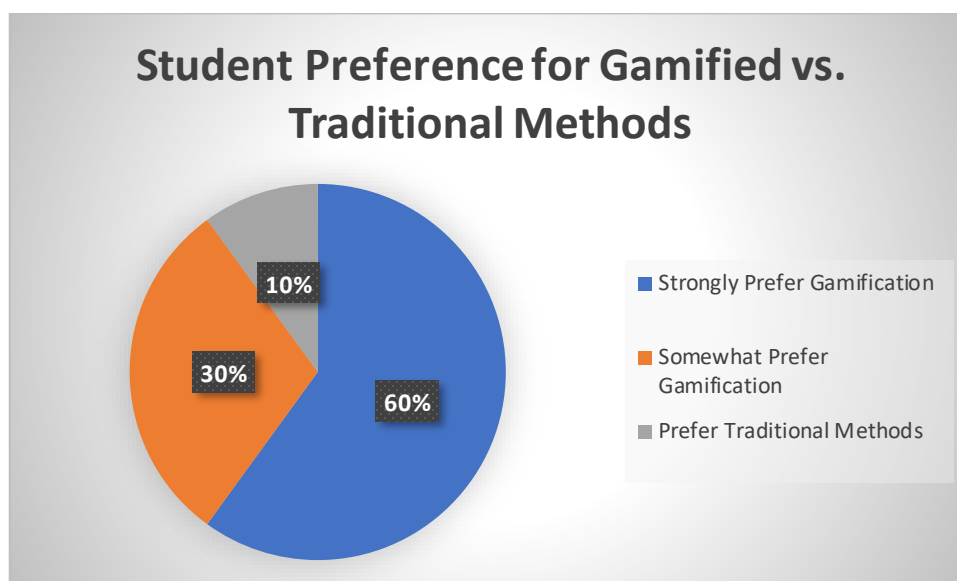
The final theme that emerged was students' overwhelming preference for gamified learning over conventional reading exercises. Observation data revealed that students were more attentive, interactive, and persistent when engaged in gamified reading tasks. Classroom dynamics also improved, with higher levels of peer collaboration and participation.

#### **Student Perspective:**

Interviews further supported this theme, as students explicitly expressed a strong preference for gamified instruction. One student remarked, *"I used to get bored reading paragraphs and answering questions, but now I enjoy it because the games make it feel like an adventure."* Another participant stated, *"I like the challenges because they make learning fun and rewarding."*

As depicted in Figure 3, 60% of students strongly preferred gamified learning, while 30% somewhat preferred it, with only 10% favoring traditional reading methods, reinforcing the argument that gamification is a highly effective strategy for increasing student engagement and motivation.

**Figure 6.** Student Preference for Gamified Learning Compared to Traditional Methods



**Note:** This figure illustrates the distribution of preferences among students regarding gamified instruction in reading comprehension.

These findings align with Deterding et al. (2011), who argue that gamification increases student engagement by transforming passive learning experiences into interactive and enjoyable activities. The strong student preference for gamified learning in this study reinforces the notion that traditional, text-heavy instructional methods may fail to capture students' attention as effectively as interactive learning approaches.

Furthermore, Werbach and Hunter (2012) emphasize that engagement and motivation are maximized when learning experiences incorporate game mechanics that provide structure, goals, and immediate feedback. This perspective is reflected in the students' positive reception of gamified instruction in the present study, where they actively participated in reading exercises due to the reward-based learning environment.

Additionally, Kapp (2012) emphasizes that gamification provides a sense of achievement and motivation through rewards, competition, and progressive challenges, which encourages sustained participation and learning retention. The present study confirms this assertion, as students consistently reported that points, badges, and

leaderboards motivated them to stay engaged with reading tasks. These elements create an immersive learning experience, allowing students to perceive reading activities as engaging rather than obligatory tasks.

Moreover, Gil-Acirón (2022) suggests that gamified instruction aligns with modern learners' digital preferences, making it a more relevant and engaging approach to language learning. The students' enthusiastic reception of gamification in this study supports this perspective, as participants explicitly favored game-based learning over traditional reading instruction.

Furthermore, Hamari et al. (2014) argue that gamification enhances long-term motivation by making learning more engaging and goal-oriented. This aligns with observations from the present study, where students displayed consistent interest in gamified activities across multiple reading tasks. The use of progressive difficulty levels and personalized achievements kept students motivated, reinforcing the sustainability of gamification as a long-term instructional strategy.

In summary, the qualitative analysis reveals three significant themes. Firstly, gamification enhances student engagement and motivation, which reinforces existing literature on the role of game-based learning in promoting active participation. Furthermore, gamified reading activities contribute to the improvement of comprehension skills, as students demonstrate better recall, inference-making, and information retention. Moreover, students overwhelmingly prefer gamified learning over traditional methods, suggesting that game-based instruction may serve as an effective alternative to conventional reading exercises.

### **3.5 Limitations of the Study**

While the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of gamification in enhancing reading comprehension among A1-level English Language

Learners (ELLs), certain limitations must be acknowledged. These limitations primarily relate to time constraints, participant characteristics, sample size, and the students' proficiency level.

### **3.5.1 Time Constraints**

The duration of the intervention was limited to eight weeks, which may not have been sufficient to fully assess the long-term impact of gamification on reading comprehension. A more extended study would allow for a more comprehensive evaluation of whether the observed improvements in engagement and comprehension are sustained over time or merely a short-term effect of the novelty of gamification. Future research should consider longitudinal studies to examine the lasting influence of gamified instruction on language acquisition.

### **3.5.2 Participant Characteristics**

The study focused on students aged 11 to 12 years, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other age groups. The cognitive and motivational responses of younger or older learners may differ significantly, influencing the effectiveness of gamification as a pedagogical tool. Future research should explore the impact of gamified reading instruction across different age groups to determine whether similar benefits are observed in older or younger ELLs.

### **3.5.3 Sample Size**

The research was conducted with a sample of 30 students, which, while providing meaningful insights, may not be fully representative of the broader population of A1-level learners. A larger and more diverse sample size would enhance the statistical reliability of the findings and provide a more robust basis for generalizing the results to different educational settings. Future studies should aim to include a greater number of participants

from varied educational contexts to validate the effectiveness of gamification in reading instruction.

#### **3.5.4 Students' Proficiency Level**

The study targeted A1-level students, meaning that its findings may not be applicable to learners at higher proficiency levels (A2, B1, or beyond). Gamification may yield different outcomes depending on the linguistic competence and cognitive abilities of learners at different stages of language acquisition. Future research should investigate how gamification influences reading comprehension in students at varying proficiency levels to determine whether it remains an effective instructional strategy across different CEFR levels.

Despite these limitations, the study provides strong evidence supporting the integration of gamification into reading instruction for A1-level ELLs. The findings highlight significant improvements in student engagement, motivation, and reading comprehension, reinforcing the potential of game-based learning strategies in English language education. However, future research should address the identified limitations by extending the duration of interventions, increasing sample sizes, and exploring diverse learner profiles to further validate and refine the application of gamification in language learning.

#### **Conclusions**

This chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the findings of the study on the effectiveness of gamification in improving reading comprehension among A1-level English Language Learners (ELLs). Additionally, it provides recommendations for educators, policymakers, and future researchers to enhance the application of gamification in language learning.

The analysis of gamification as an instructional tool reveals that its theoretical foundation is well-supported within the field of language learning, particularly in enhancing reading comprehension among A1-level English Language Learners (ELLs). Various learning theories emphasize the critical role of motivation, engagement, and social interaction in second-language acquisition.

Gamification capitalizes on these principles by integrating game-based elements, such as rewards, challenges, feedback, and interactive tasks, which foster a student-centered learning environment that promotes active participation and intrinsic motivation. Unlike traditional reading instruction, which often relies on passive learning strategies, gamification encourages learners to engage dynamically with texts, thereby reinforcing cognitive processing and retention.

Furthermore, the cognitive foundations of gamification align with constructivist approaches to language learning, which suggest that students construct meaning more effectively when learning experiences are contextualized, interactive, and engaging. The incorporation of game-based mechanics into reading activities provides students with a clear structure for progression, allowing them to develop reading comprehension skills incrementally.

Additionally, elements such as instant feedback and scaffolded challenges support students in monitoring their comprehension, adjusting their strategies, and reinforcing learning outcomes. Research indicates that engagement through gamification contributes to higher levels of concentration, increased persistence in completing tasks, and improved long-term retention of information, all of which are essential for developing proficiency in reading comprehension.

Moreover, gamification enhances the affective domain of learning by reducing reading anxiety and increasing students' confidence in approaching English texts. Many A1-level

learners experience difficulties in comprehending texts due to limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, which can lead to low motivation and frustration. By transforming reading instruction into a reward-driven and enjoyable experience, gamification shifts the learning process from a traditionally rigid structure to an engaging and supportive environment that fosters risk-taking, trial-and-error learning, and active problem-solving.

This approach enhances intrinsic motivation and fosters a deeper connection between learners and content. Thus, the theoretical foundations of gamification strongly support its integration into reading instruction, demonstrating its potential to not only improve comprehension skills but also transform the overall learning experience for A1-level ELLs.

In terms of the effectiveness of gamification in developing reading skills, the empirical findings of this study provide substantial evidence supporting gamification as a pedagogical strategy for improving reading comprehension skills among A1-level English Language Learners (ELLs). The analysis of pre-test and post-test results, participant feedback, and academic performance demonstrates that students who engaged in gamified reading activities exhibited notable improvements in their ability to decode vocabulary, identify main ideas, and infer meanings within texts.

Quantitative data revealed a significant increase in mean reading scores, with students demonstrating greater accuracy and confidence in their comprehension abilities after the implementation of gamification. This improvement reflects the potential of game-based learning to foster sustained engagement and enhance literacy skills through interactive and motivational elements.

Beyond numerical improvements, the qualitative feedback from students further validates gamification's effectiveness in enhancing motivation, engagement, and

confidence in reading tasks. Participants reported feeling more eager to participate in reading activities, noting that gamified challenges, rewards, and interactive elements transformed reading into an enjoyable and rewarding experience. Students expressed that their sense of competence, autonomy, and connection within the classroom environment increased as a result of gamified instruction, contributing positively to their intrinsic motivation.

Traditional reading instruction, often characterized by rote memorization and passive learning, tends to disengage A1-level learners due to its lack of interactive and immediate reinforcement mechanisms. Conversely, gamification introduces real-time feedback, progress tracking, and adaptive challenges, which keep students motivated and invested in their learning progress.

However, while the results strongly indicate positive learning outcomes, certain limitations must be acknowledged. Factors such as sample size, duration of intervention, and individual differences in student engagement may have influenced the overall impact of gamification on reading comprehension development. Furthermore, some students may respond differently to game-based learning, depending on their learning preferences and prior experiences with technology-enhanced instruction.

Future research should explore gamification's long-term effects on reading proficiency and investigate how different gamified elements can be optimized to accommodate diverse learner needs. Nonetheless, this study's findings provide compelling evidence that gamification is an effective instructional approach, capable of enhancing both the cognitive and affective aspects of reading comprehension for A1-level ELLs, ultimately bridging the gap between traditional pedagogy and modern, student-centered learning methodologies.

Regarding students' perceptions and experiences with gamification, the qualitative findings of this study reveal overwhelmingly positive feedback, highlighting its effectiveness as a reading strategy. These results reinforce gamification as a valuable instructional approach for A1-level English Language Learners (ELLs), enhancing both engagement and comprehension.

Thematic analysis of survey responses, classroom observations, and student interviews identified three dominant themes: increased engagement and motivation, improved reading comprehension skills, and a clear preference for gamified learning over traditional methods. Students consistently reported feeling more engaged and motivated when participating in game-based reading activities, noting that the interactive nature of gamification made reading tasks more enjoyable and less intimidating.

Students expressed that they felt greater autonomy, competence, and connection during the gamified reading sessions, which contributed to heightened intrinsic motivation. Unlike traditional instruction, which often fails to sustain student interest, gamified reading activities provided clear goals, immediate feedback, and reward systems that encouraged active participation and perseverance in learning.

In addition to fostering engagement, gamification was perceived as a valuable tool for enhancing reading comprehension skills. Students reported that game-based challenges helped them retain new vocabulary, understand main ideas, and make inferences more effectively. Observational data further confirmed that students demonstrated greater willingness to reattempt tasks and apply critical thinking skills when engaged in gamified activities.

Students also reported that the use of immediate feedback and progress tracking allowed them to monitor their own development, fostering self-regulation and confidence in their reading abilities. Given that many A1-level learners struggle with low confidence

and reading anxiety, gamification served as an empowering mechanism that enabled students to approach texts with greater assurance and enthusiasm.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive responses, some students expressed varying levels of comfort with gamification, particularly in relation to competition-based elements such as leaderboards. While many students found competition motivating, others preferred a collaborative learning experience, suggesting that gamification strategies should be designed to accommodate diverse learning preferences.

Additionally, technology access and familiarity with digital tools may have influenced students' ability to fully engage with gamified learning activities, highlighting the need for adaptable and inclusive gamification approaches. Nevertheless, the overall findings confirm that gamification is not only an effective means of fostering engagement and improving reading skills but also a pedagogical tool that enhances students' emotional connection to learning. By creating a supportive, interactive, and student-centered environment, gamification has the potential to transform reading instruction for A1-level ELLs, making learning both meaningful and sustainable in the long term.

Furthermore, students' perceptions and experiences indicate a strong preference for gamified learning environments over traditional methods, emphasizing the role of interactive and motivational learning experiences in overcoming both cognitive and affective barriers to reading comprehension. Thus, gamification emerges as a promising pedagogical approach that not only improves reading skills but also fosters a more engaging and supportive learning environment for A1-level ELLs.

In summary, the findings of this study confirm the effectiveness of gamification as an instructional strategy for enhancing reading comprehension among A1-level English Language Learners (ELLs). The integration of game-based elements into reading instruction addresses the need to boost student motivation, engagement, and social

interaction—key factors in successful language acquisition. The data obtained from pre- and post-tests, surveys, interviews, and classroom observations provide consistent evidence of the positive impact of gamification on learners' abilities to decode vocabulary, identify main ideas, and make inferences. Ultimately, gamification not only supports the development of essential reading skills but also creates a dynamic, student-centered learning environment that fosters confidence, enjoyment, and sustained academic growth.

**Recommendations:**

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of gamification in language learning.

Firstly, educators are encouraged to integrate gamification into reading instruction by incorporating game-based elements such as points, challenges, leaderboards, and rewards. This approach is likely to promote active student engagement and improve reading comprehension skills. Moreover, it is essential to provide structured gamified learning experiences that align with clear learning objectives to ensure that students not only remain engaged but also develop the necessary skills.

Additionally, while gamification has proven to be effective, it should be balanced with traditional instructional methods. Combining gamified activities with other evidence-based reading strategies may support a more comprehensive approach to language development.

In terms of policy and institutional recommendations, it is advisable for educational institutions to develop training programs for teachers. Professional development workshops could equip educators with the necessary knowledge and skills to implement gamification effectively in the classroom.

Furthermore, schools should consider investing in digital learning tools by integrating platforms such as Kahoot!, Quizizz, and Classcraft to enhance the impact of game-based learning. Policymakers should also explore the incorporation of gamification into curriculum design, recognizing its potential as an effective pedagogical approach within both national and institutional language education curricula.

Regarding future research, it is recommended to expand the scope of studies on gamification by examining its effectiveness across different age groups, proficiency levels, and educational contexts. Such research would provide valuable insights into the broader applicability of gamified learning. Additionally, conducting longitudinal studies could offer a deeper understanding of the long-term effects of gamification on reading comprehension, particularly beyond the eight-week intervention period utilized in the current study.

Moreover, future research should focus on comparing gamification with other interactive learning methods, such as flipped learning, collaborative reading, or adaptive learning technologies, to determine its relative effectiveness and potential advantages in students learning outcomes.

In summary, the findings of this study contribute to the growing body of research supporting the use of gamification in second-language acquisition. The results indicate that gamified reading instruction significantly enhances engagement, motivation, and comprehension among A1-level learners, making it a valuable pedagogical tool in language education.

By leveraging gamification effectively, educators can create dynamic and interactive learning environments that encourage students to actively engage with reading materials, develop critical thinking skills, and improve their overall reading proficiency. However, continued research is essential to refine best practices, explore new

technological advancements, and further validate the long-term impact of game-based learning on language acquisition.

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**Appendix 2:** Investigation planification for the study proposal

**UNIVERSIDAD BOLIVARIANA DEL ECUADOR  
ANEXO II – PRE-PROYECTO**

**“PLAN DE INVESTIGACIÓN PARA LA PROPUESTA, QUE DEBERÁ SER  
REVISADO Y APROBADO POR LA COMISIÓN DE TITULACIÓN DE CADA  
PROGRAMA AL CONCLUIR EL TALLER I”**

**(MINIMUM 2 PAGES MAXIMUM 5 PAGES)**

**RESEARCH TOPIC:** “The use of gamification to improve reading comprehension in A1 level students”.

**AUTHOR:** Guaranga Zapata Tatiana Marisol

1. Brief analysis and description of the situation that justifies the presentation of this proposal.

Within the Ecuadorian educational landscape, there exists a pressing issue concerning the proficiency levels of English Language Learners (ELLs), particularly those at the A1 level. This group faces significant challenges in comprehending written English texts due to limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. Traditional instructional approaches often fall short in effectively addressing these obstacles, resulting in persistently low levels of reading comprehension among A1 ELLs. Recognizing the importance of reading proficiency for academic success, there is a growing need to explore innovative strategies that can engage and motivate these learners while enhancing their reading comprehension skills. Gamification, the integration of game elements into educational contexts, emerges as a promising solution to transform the learning experience and improve outcomes for A1 level ELLs with reading difficulties.

Likewise, the current research project endeavors to explore the intricate intersection between research methodology, instructional design (ID), and the socio-cultural and economic contexts shaping the learning experiences of A1 level English language learners in Ecuador. With a specific focus on leveraging gamification to bolster reading comprehension skills, this study aims to navigate the complex terrain of instructional design while considering both psycho-pedagogical and socio-linguistic dimensions.

Recognizing the paramount importance of understanding the socio-cultural and economic backdrop of learners in instructional design, this project seeks to unravel the myriad factors influencing the learning trajectory of A1 level students in Ecuador. Through a meticulous analysis, the objective is to unearth potential challenges impeding reading comprehension and devise targeted interventions to address these difficulties.

Cultural influences permeate classroom dynamics, giving rise to indirect, context-dependent communication styles that may diverge from conventional instructional methods. Furthermore, familial dynamics exert significant

influence on students' values and learning strategies, underscoring the importance of parental involvement in fostering academic success. Gender roles and societal norms further mold classroom interactions, potentially shaping student participation patterns.

Economic factors also wield considerable sway, with disparities in resource access evident even within the middle class. Parents, typically public employees, exhibit varying degrees of economic stability, influencing the extent of exposure to diverse learning environments. Additionally, urban residency introduces discrepancies in technology access and resource availability, further complicating the educational landscape. Against this backdrop, the research project aims to tackle the core learning problem of reading comprehension difficulties, encompassing challenges in decoding unfamiliar vocabulary and grasping implicit meaning within texts. By elucidating preferred learning strategies such as visual aids, hands-on activities, peer collaboration, and gamification the aim is to circumvent potential barriers arising from limited English exposure outside the classroom and technology access limitations, all while navigating the intricate tapestry of cultural norms impacting participation. With a structured approach, this research project seeks to contribute valuable insights into the efficacy of gamification as a tool to enhance reading comprehension skills among A1 level students, providing evidence-based strategies that can be integrated into instructional design frameworks. By addressing both the cognitive and socio-cultural dimensions of learning, this study aspires to offer practical solutions tailored to the unique challenges faced by Ecuadorian learners. The findings aim to serve as a resource for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers seeking innovative methods to bridge the gap in English language proficiency and empower students to achieve greater academic success.

## 2. Statement of the problem to be investigated.

The research aims to investigate the impact of employing gamification as a reading strategy on 11- to 12-year-old, A1 level English language learners struggling with reading comprehension. This inquiry seeks to address the following question: What is the effectiveness of integrating gamification into reading instruction for A1 level ELLs with reading comprehension difficulties?

## 3. Justification of the research

Reading comprehension difficulties among A1 level ELLs pose significant challenges to their academic advancement and future prospects. Existing literature lacks comprehensive empirical evidence on the efficacy of gamification as a reading intervention for this specific population. By filling this gap, the proposed study seeks to provide valuable insights into the potential of gamification to enhance reading comprehension skills among A1 level ELLs. The findings have the potential to inform the development of targeted interventions and instructional practices tailored to the unique needs of this demographic, thereby fostering improved academic outcomes and bolstering their overall learning experience.

4. Description of the relationship between the proposal and the research lines of the university.

This research proposal aligns closely with the university's general research line of Pedagogy, Didactics, and Management of Education, as it explores the implementation of gamification as an innovative teaching methodology to enhance reading comprehension among A1-level students. By focusing on this approach, the study makes a significant contribution to various specific research lines within the institution.

One key area in which this research is relevant is Pedagogical Innovations, as it introduces gamification as a modern instructional strategy aimed at increasing student engagement. By incorporating interactive and game-based learning elements, the study explores new methods that effectively capture students' interest while enhancing their reading comprehension skills. In doing so, it supports the advancement of contemporary pedagogical approaches that prioritize student motivation and participation in the learning process.

Additionally, the study contributes to the research line of Research, Evaluation, and Application of Educational Models by systematically assessing the effectiveness of gamification in reading instruction. Through an empirical analysis of pre- and post-tests, student feedback, and academic performance, the research provides valuable evidence on the impact of game-based learning on students' reading comprehension. This evaluation not only validates gamification as a teaching strategy but also informs future improvements in instructional practices.

Furthermore, the research examines the integration of gamification in different educational settings, both digital and non-digital, which aligns with the Learning in Different Educational Contexts and Technological Resources research line. By assessing the adaptability and effectiveness of gamified learning tools in diverse educational environments, the study highlights the importance of leveraging technology to enhance educational outcomes. It also underscores the potential of gamification to create engaging, student-centered learning experiences that cater to the specific needs of A1-level English language learners.

5. Object of the research

The research object is the application of gamification in the English teaching-learning process of Reading Comprehension for A1 level students. By exploring this research object, the study seeks to expand current knowledge in the field of language education and offer valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and researchers interested in enhancing language proficiency outcomes for A1 level learners.

6. General objective (one)

The overarching objective of the research is to evaluate the impact of integrating gamification into reading instruction on improving reading comprehension skills among A1 level English language learners with reading difficulties.

## 7. Specific objectives (three)

- To analyze the theoretical support of the gamification as a tool to improve reading comprehension.
- To validate the effectiveness of the use of gamification in developing students' reading skills by conducting pre and post-tests, gathering feedback from the participants and analyzing students' academic performance with reading comprehension.
- To explore the perceptions and experiences of A1 level ELLs regarding the use of gamification as a reading strategy.

## 8. Description of the variables of the study (independent & dependent)

**Independent Variable: The Use of Gamification**

**Definition:** The incorporation of game elements and design principles into non-game contexts to enhance engagement and motivation in learning.

**Dependent Variable: Improving Reading Comprehension in A1 Level Students**

**Definition:** The ability to comprehend written texts, extract meaning, and understand the intended message conveyed within the text.

Regarding the Independent Variable “The Use of Gamification”, It can be said that gamification in education is a tool that encompasses the incorporation of game-like elements, such as points, badges, leaderboards, and challenges, into non-game contexts. These elements aim to enhance engagement, motivation, and interaction, translating the captivating aspects of gaming into educational settings. In this regard, Figueroa states that “the objective for integrating Gamification towards education is to unchain a more attractive and effective learning experience for the student” (Figueroa, 2015).

Gamification is increasingly being used in educational contexts as a way to enhance engagement and motivation by incorporating game-like elements such as points, badges, and leaderboards into learning activities. (Werbach and Hunter, 2012) define gamification as the integration of game design elements into non-game contexts, aiming to make tasks more engaging and interactive. By applying these principles to educational settings, educators can create immersive learning experiences that stimulate student participation and foster motivation (Kapp, 2012). Studies have shown that gamification can be particularly effective in engaging language learners, who often face challenges in maintaining interest in repetitive language acquisition tasks (Deterding et al., 2011).

Gamification, as applied to language learning, incorporates game mechanics such as points, badges, and levels to create an engaging learning environment. (Amaya-Díaz and Bajaan-Zajia, 2020) highlight that integrating these elements helps address a common challenge in language education: sustaining students' motivation over time. They point out that gamified platforms like "Hot Potatoes" allow learners to experience language practice as interactive tasks, thereby shifting from traditional approaches to more stimulating, game-like activities. This interactive approach helps to transform the language classroom

into a more dynamic and participatory environment where students are encouraged to engage deeply with the material.

Gamification in education, particularly in second language acquisition, enhances engagement by applying game design elements to non-game contexts. (Gil-Acirón, 2022) highlights gamification's effectiveness in supporting language learning by embedding elements like points, badges, and challenges to create a dynamic environment that stimulates learning. The author emphasizes gamification's impact on vocabulary and grammar acquisition, language skills development, and learner motivation, observing that these game-like structures offer frequent feedback and opportunities for social learning, both crucial in sustaining student interest in language tasks.

About the dependent Variable “Reading Comprehension”, this is a multifaceted process requiring readers to actively construct meaning through a combination of decoding, understanding context, and applying background knowledge. (Pourhosein Gilakjani and Sabouri, 2016) explain reading comprehension as an interactive task in which readers use various cognitive strategies to extract and construct meaning from the text. This process involves not only interpreting individual words and sentences but also connecting them to broader contexts and prior knowledge to develop a coherent understanding of the content.

Furthermore, comprehension is influenced by multiple factors, including the reader's familiarity with the text and its subject matter, as well as the use of effective reading strategies. As noted by (Kintsch, 1998), comprehension leads to a mental model where readers integrate new information with their prior knowledge. This integration forms a holistic understanding of the text, allowing readers to retain and apply the content effectively. (The RAND Reading Study Group, 2002) adds that comprehension occurs within a social context, where factors such as motivation and engagement also play crucial roles in how successfully a reader can understand and interpret text.

Effective reading strategies, such as summarizing, questioning, and making inferences, further enhance reading comprehension by helping readers organize and recall information. (Anderson and Pearson, 1984) emphasize that activating prior knowledge supports comprehension by providing a foundation on which new information is built, making the text more accessible and meaningful to the reader. As research shows, readers who apply strategic approaches are better equipped to navigate complex texts and deepen their understanding of the material (McNamara and Magliano, 2009).

Likewise, (Baier, 2005) claims that reading comprehension is a multifaceted skill requiring readers to engage actively with text, decode information, and construct meaningful understanding. The author notes that comprehension success relies heavily on the use of structured reading strategies that help students connect ideas, make inferences, and remember information. Strategies like self-questioning play a central role in this process by prompting readers to ask targeted questions while they read, which helps them focus on key details and clarify any confusing parts of the text. This active engagement supports students in developing a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the content, as

it encourages them to interact with the material instead of passively absorbing information.

#### 9. Description of the research approaches, methods, data collection

The research will employ a mixed-method approach, this approach integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods to comprehensively investigate the research question, offering a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study. By employing a mixed-method approach, the study leverages the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research to provide a more robust and nuanced analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The quantitative component focuses on measuring the impact of gamification on students' reading comprehension scores. This involves the administration of pre- and post-tests, which will yield objective, numerical data on students' reading comprehension abilities before and after they engage with gamified learning activities. The pre- and post-tests are crucial as they provide empirical evidence through statistical analysis, highlighting any improvements in reading comprehension attributable to the gamification strategies (Bryman, 2012). This data is essential for validating the effectiveness of gamification as an instructional approach.

In parallel, the qualitative component delves into the students' experiences and perceptions regarding the gamification process. This aspect of the research will be explored through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Semi-structured interviews are designed to elicit detailed, personal insights from students about their attitudes towards gamification, the perceived benefits, challenges faced, and any suggestions for improvement. Classroom observations will supplement this by providing real-time data on student interactions with gamified activities, thus offering a contextual understanding of how these activities influence learning dynamics (Merriam, 2009). The qualitative data is invaluable as it captures the subjective experiences of students, which quantitative data alone cannot fully elucidate.

#### 10. Description of the beneficiaries and their main characteristics.

The research proposal "The use of gamification to improve reading comprehension in A1 level students" has a primary focus on 11-12 years old, A1 level students of the eighth year of secondary basic education, parallel C of Unidad Educativa Verbo Divino as the key beneficiaries. Adopting a mixed-method approach, the study aims to investigate the impact of gamification on enhancing the reading comprehension abilities of this target population.

#### 11. Description of the research context

The study was conducted at Unidad Educativa Verbo Divino. It is a Fiscomisional institution located in the city of Guaranda, on Av. Cándido Rada y Av. General Enrique streets. It is in the urban area of Guaranda. Students who belong to this school come from different social classes and family structures. The participants belong to the eighth year of secondary basic education. Their

ages range between 11 and 12 years old. The different means and resources were provided by the institution. The interaction with the students was a face-to-face class modality because they were receiving mandatory instruction classes.

12. Description of the practical contributions of the proposal.

The research will offer practical recommendations for integrating gamification into reading instruction, thereby assisting educators in designing effective teaching strategies tailored to the needs of A1 level ELLs. Additionally, insights into student engagement and motivation derived from the study will contribute to creating a more dynamic and enriching learning environment.

13. Importance of the proposal from the following perspectives: Professional, methodological, technological, and social need

**Professional Perspective:** The proposed research holds significant implications for professionals in the field of language education. By investigating the effectiveness of gamification as a reading strategy for A1 level English language learners (ELLs) with reading comprehension difficulties, educators can gain valuable insights into innovative teaching methods. These insights can inform instructional practices, curriculum development, and teacher training programs, ultimately improving the quality of language education. Additionally, the research findings can aid educators in addressing the diverse learning needs of ELLs, promoting inclusivity and equity in the classroom.

**Methodological Perspective:** Methodological advancements in language education research are essential for enhancing the validity and reliability of research findings. The proposed study contributes to this advancement by employing a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. This comprehensive methodology allows for a nuanced understanding of the impact of gamification on reading comprehension skills among A1 level ELLs. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, the research can capture both objective measures of reading proficiency and subjective experiences of students and educators. This methodological rigor enhances the credibility of the research findings and provides a robust foundation for future studies in the field.

**Technological Perspective:** In today's digital age, technology plays a crucial role in education, offering new opportunities for learning and engagement. By leveraging gamification as a pedagogical strategy, the proposed research aligns with technological advancements in education. Gamification utilizes elements such as points, badges, and leaderboards to create immersive learning experiences that motivate and engage students. By incorporating ICT tools into gamified reading instruction, educators can harness the power of technology to enhance student learning outcomes. This integration of technology not only makes learning more interactive and enjoyable but also prepares students for the digital literacy skills required in the 21st century.

**Appendix 3:** Communication of the assigned tutor**NOTIFICACION - TUTORIA ASIGNADA**

Se ha asignado la tutoría:

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**Estudiantes:**

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AHORRE PAPEL Y SALVE UN ARBOL / SAVE A PAPER SAVE A TREE

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**Appendix 7: Pre and Post test****Pre-Test**

## Reading Comprehension Pre-Test

Instructions:

Read the following text carefully and answer the questions below. Choose the correct answer for each multiple-choice question.

Text:

## My Pet Cat

I have a pet cat named Whiskers. Whiskers is small and fluffy with white fur and a pink nose. Every morning, Whiskers likes to sit by the window and watch the birds outside. In the afternoon, he plays with his favorite toy, a little red ball. Whiskers also loves to eat fish and sleep on my bed at night.

Questions:

1. What is the name of the cat?

- a) Fluffy
- b) Whiskers
- c) Snowball

2. What color is Whiskers' fur?

- a) Black
- b) White
- c) Brown

3. What does Whiskers like to do in the morning?

- a) Eat fish
- b) Play with a ball
- c) Watch the birds

4. What is Whiskers' favorite toy?

- a) A blue ball
- b) A red ball
- c) A yellow ball

5. Where does Whiskers sleep at night?

- a) In the garden
- b) On the bed
- c) On the sofa

### **Post-Test**

#### Reading Comprehension Post-Test

Instructions:

Read the following text carefully and answer the questions below. Choose the correct answer for each multiple-choice question.

Text:

The Picnic

Last weekend, Sarah and her family went on a picnic. They went to a park near their house. Sarah brought her favorite sandwich, and her brother brought his favorite cookies. They played games and had a lot of fun. In the afternoon, they saw some ducks in the pond. Sarah and her family enjoyed their day at the park very much.

Questions:

1. Where did Sarah and her family go last weekend?

- a) To the beach
- b) To the park
- c) To the zoo

2. What did Sarah bring to the picnic?

- a) Cookies
- b) A sandwich
- c) A cake

3. What did Sarah's brother bring?

- a) A sandwich
- b) Cookies
- c) A fruit salad

4. What did they see in the afternoon?

- a) Ducks
- b) Swans

- c) Fish

5. How did Sarah and her family feel about their day at the park?

- a) They did not enjoy it

- b) They were bored

- c) They enjoyed it very much

**Appendix 8: Survey to students****Survey on Gamified Learning Activities**

Instructions:

Please read each statement carefully and select the option that best describes your experience. For the open-ended questions, write your response in the space provided.

**Part 1: Likert-Scale Questions**

Rate each statement on a scale from 1 to 5, where:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

1. I enjoy the gamified learning activities in my reading class.

- 1 2 3 4 5

2. The gamified activities make reading more interesting.

- 1 2 3 4 5

3. I feel more motivated to read because of the gamified activities.

- 1 2 3 4 5

4. The games help me understand the reading material better.

- 1 2 3 4 5

5. I am more engaged in class when we use gamified activities.

- 1 2 3 4 5

6. I prefer gamified activities over traditional reading exercises.

- 1 2 3 4 5

7. The gamified activities help me remember what I read.

- 1 2 3 4 5

8. I feel a sense of accomplishment when I complete the gamified activities.

- 1 2 3 4 5

9. The instructions for the gamified activities are clear and easy to follow.

- 1 2 3 4 5

10. I would like to have more gamified activities in my reading class.

- 1 2 3 4 5

## **Part 2: Open-Ended Questions**

1. What do you like most about the gamified learning activities?

Response:

2. What do you find challenging or difficult about the gamified activities?

Response:

3. How do you think the gamified activities have helped you improve your reading skills?

Response:

4. What suggestions do you have for improving the gamified learning activities?

Response:

5. Describe any changes you have noticed in your attitude towards reading since starting the gamified activities.

Response:

### Part 3: Demographic Information

1. Age:

Response:

2. Gender:

- Male

- Female

- Prefer not to say

3. How long have you been participating in the gamified learning activities?

- Less than 1 month

- 1-2 months

- More than 2 months

## **Appendix 9: Interview to students**

### **Semi-Structured Interview on Gamified Learning Activities**

#### Instructions:

The interviewer will ask the following questions, encouraging students to elaborate on their answers. Follow-up questions or prompts may be used to gather more detailed responses.

#### Introduction:

Thank you for participating in this interview. We are interested in learning about your experiences with the gamified learning activities in your reading class. There are no right or wrong answers; we just want to hear your honest thoughts and feelings. Your responses will help us understand how these activities affect your reading comprehension and engagement.

#### Questions:

##### 1. General Experience:

- Can you describe your overall experience with the gamified learning activities in your reading class?

- Follow-up: What did you enjoy the most? What did you find challenging?

##### 2. Motivation and Engagement:

- How do the gamified activities affect your motivation to read?

- Follow-up: Can you give an example of a time when you felt particularly motivated?

##### 3. Understanding and Retention:

- Do you feel that the gamified activities help you understand and remember the reading material better? Why or why not?

- Follow-up: Can you describe a specific activity that helped you understand a reading passage?

#### 4. Preference and Comparison:

- How do the gamified activities compare to traditional reading exercises?

- Follow-up: Which do you prefer and why?

#### 5. Accomplishment and Progress:

- Do you feel a sense of accomplishment when you complete the gamified activities?

Can you explain why or why not?

- Follow-up: How do you track your progress in these activities?

#### 6. Suggestions for Improvement:

- What suggestions do you have for improving the gamified learning activities?

- Follow-up: Are there any specific games or activities you would like to see included?

#### 7. Attitude Towards Reading:

- Have you noticed any changes in your attitude towards reading since starting the gamified activities?

- Follow-up: Can you describe how you felt about reading before and after the introduction of these activities?

#### 8. Feedback on Instructions:

- Are the instructions for the gamified activities clear and easy to follow?

- Follow-up: If not, what could be improved?

#### 9. Impact on Reading Skills:

- How do you think the gamified activities have impacted your reading skills?

- Follow-up: Can you provide an example of how your reading has improved?

#### 10. Future Use:

- Would you like to continue using gamified activities in your reading class? Why or why not?

- Follow-up: How do you think these activities could benefit other students?

Closing:

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and experiences with us. Your feedback is very valuable and will help us improve the gamified learning activities for future students.

## **Appendix 10: Classroom observation**

### **Classroom Observation Checklist**

#### **Instructions:**

The observer will use this checklist to record observations during gamified learning sessions. Each item should be rated on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = Not observed, 2 = Rarely observed, 3 = Sometimes observed, 4 = Often observed, 5 = Always observed.

Date of Observation:

Time of Observation:

Class/Grade Level:

Observer:

Observation Items:

#### 1. Student Engagement:

- Students appear focused and attentive during the gamified activities.

- 1 2 3 4 5

- Students actively participate in the gamified activities.

- 1 2 3 4 5

- Students display enthusiasm and interest in the activities.

- 1 2 3 4 5

#### 2. Interaction with Peers:

- Students collaborate effectively with peers during the activities.

- 1 2 3 4 5

- Students communicate clearly and constructively with each other.

- 1 2 3 4 5

- Students help and support each other during the activities.

- 1 2 3 4 5

### 3. Interaction with Teacher:

- The teacher provides clear instructions and guidance for the activities.

- 1 2 3 4 5

- The teacher encourages student participation and engagement.

- 1 2 3 4 5

- The teacher provides feedback and support during the activities.

- 1 2 3 4 5

### 4. Use of Gamified Elements:

- Students effectively use the gamified elements (e.g., points, badges) during the activities.

- 1 2 3 4 5

- The gamified elements motivate students to participate and complete tasks.

- 1 2 3 4 5

- Students understand the rules and objectives of the gamified activities.

- 1 2 3 4 5

### 5. Reading Comprehension Skills:

- Students demonstrate improved understanding of the reading material through the activities.

- 1 2 3 4 5

- Students can recall and discuss key points from the reading material.

- 1 2 3 4 5

- Students complete reading comprehension tasks accurately and efficiently.

- 1 2 3 4 5

#### 6. Behavior and Classroom Dynamics:

- Students display positive behavior during the activities.

- 1 2 3 4 5

- The classroom environment is conducive to learning and engagement.

- 1 2 3 4 5

- The activities run smoothly without major disruptions.

- 1 2 3 4 5

#### Overall Impressions:

- What aspects of the gamified activities seem to be most effective?

Comments:

- What challenges or issues were observed during the gamified activities?

Comments:

- Any additional observations or suggestions for improvement?

### Appendix 11: Reading Comprehension test rubric (pre-test and post-test)

Criteria	5 Points (Excellent)	4 Points (Very Good)	3 Points (Good)	2 Points (Fair)	1 Point (Poor)	0 Points (No Attempt)
Main Idea Identification	Correctly identifies the main idea without any assistance.	Identifies the main idea with minimal assistance (one hint or clue).	Identifies the main idea with some assistance (two hints or clues).	Struggles to identify the main idea even with assistance, but makes a reasonable attempt.	Unable to identify the main idea, even with assistance.	No attempt to identify the main idea.
Detail Recognition	Correctly identifies all key details in the text without any assistance.	Identifies most key details with minimal assistance (one hint or clue).	Identifies some key details with some assistance (two hints or clues).	Struggles to identify key details even with assistance, but makes a reasonable attempt.	Unable to identify key details, even with assistance.	No attempt to identify key details.
Vocabulary Understanding	Correctly understands and explains all vocabulary words in context without assistance.	Understands most vocabulary words in context with minimal assistance (one hint or clue).	Understands some vocabulary words in context with some assistance (two hints or clues).	Struggles to understand vocabulary words even with assistance, but makes a reasonable attempt.	Unable to understand vocabulary words, even with assistance.	No attempt to understand vocabulary words.
Inference Making	Correctly makes inferences based on the text without any assistance.	Makes reasonable inferences with minimal assistance (one hint or clue).	Makes some reasonable inferences with some assistance (two hints or clues).	Struggles to make inferences even with assistance, but makes a reasonable attempt.	Unable to make inferences, even with assistance.	No attempt to make inferences.

Note: Reading comprehension diagnostic test rubric. Authored by Guaranga, T. (2024)