



UNIVERSIDAD DE JAÉN
Centro de Estudios de Postgrado

Master's Dissertation/
Trabajo Fin de Máster

GAMIFICATION AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE MOTIVATION AND PARTICIPATION TOWARDS WRITING SKILLS

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Dpt.: English Philology

November, 2017

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1.INTRODUCTION

Motivating students when teaching writing skills has always been a subject of concern. Writing skills have commonly been a daunting task to be improved on the part of teachers and students. Moreover, writing skills are directly related to the teaching of grammar, since grammatical structures must be learnt in order to use them properly within short compositions or long essays. The main problem is that, in many occasions, students have difficulties in acquiring the competence of writing, especially concerning the use of accurate grammar structures and appropriate vocabulary. Generally, they learn by heart these structures and the vocabulary included in the textbooks, so when they have to put all their thoughts on paper, they do not know where to start. Despite the difficulties, this skill must be acquired and we as teachers must find the way to help students so that they show a more positive attitude when facing writing tasks.

According to the Common European Framework of Reference (2001), the European guideline when teaching foreign languages, English must be taught in relation to some competences which must be achieved by the students so as to become communicative competent users. These competences are integrated by schools in their year syllabus in conjunction with more competences which have been established by the National Education Law here in Spain. As a result, students must attain objectives which are related to the contents of the course, and as a result, they will achieve these competences previously mentioned. Therefore, and due to the role that written production has within these necessary competences, it is crucial for them to master it.

There are multiple strategies that can be used when teaching writing skills, such as to do a brainstorming activity before starting writing, give students the structure to follow so as to cover all the important points in the composition, or the use of ICTs to increase their participation and motivation. Concretely, for this research study, we will use 'gamification' as a basis to enhance students'

motivation when facing writing tasks. Gamification, defined as the use of games in non-game contexts (Deterning, Sicart, Nacke, O'Hara, & Dixon, 2011), such as a classroom, is a new concept which has been implemented in the area of education as a tool to encourage motivation and participation among students when learning a foreign language. A recent study in L2 writing practice (Allen et al, 2014) has shown that a combination of gamification and writing strategy instructions helps students enhance their motivation and participation towards several aspects of the subject, such as writing skills.

In this sense, the main objective of this research study is to examine whether the use of gamification in the EFL class helps to increase students' motivation and participation when dealing with written tasks. This current and motivational technique was used within an EFL class, concretely when students were carrying out composition tasks so as to analyze whether gamification increases their motivation and take away the negative attitude in relation with writing that they had repeatedly expressed in class.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Productive skills seem to be the hardest to develop when learning a foreign language, and writing is one of them. Teaching writing is a complicated task, and trying to motivate students through the creation of a composition is even tougher. When we consider the relation between writing skills in conjunction to games so as to enhance motivation, we find that this topic has not been extensively analyzed by the scientific literature. For this reason, more studies need to be carried out in order to examine if the use of games in class when dealing with writing tasks increases students' attention, participation and motivation towards the writing process, as it is a complex and demanding process that asks for individuals to manage a number of cognitive skills and knowledge sources (Flower & Hayes, 1980; Hayes, 1996; Torrance & Galbraith, 2006).

The aim of this study is not to determine what methodologies are the most efficient for students to develop their writing skills, but to determine whether using games is positive for their level of motivation and participation when acquiring those same skills. As mentioned before, the literature has not extensively analyzed this topic. However, different studies have been carried out to examine how students can feel motivated when writing, such as the one by Buyse (2006), who analyzed different techniques related to multimedia to motivate students to write their compositions. The results of this study show that better results of the writings done by the students were obtained (Buyse, 2006). However, the author also says that further research is needed.

In addition, it is necessary to mention the research carried out by Vengadasamy (2002), who studied the different responses students have when receiving directive and facilitative feedback of a composition. Vengadasamy proposes the idea that a teacher has the power to motivate students in a class by giving them different feedback about their written work, making the difference between directive feedback and facilitative feedback. Vengadasamy (2002)

points out that facilitative comments are better for students in the long run, as students do not receive direct instructions about what was wrong (directive comments), which can be demotivating at some point, but suggestions from teachers about their compositions and how to improve them. As Vengadasamy says (2002, p. 7) 'By being facilitative in our response, we encourage our students to not only engage in writing, but also to enjoy writing.' As a result, at the end of the term, Vengadasamy found out that not only had students improved their writings, but that they had written longer ones as motivation had increased.

Moreover, in the case of students who study EFL, the process of learning a foreign language is even harder. Many students point out that writing is a difficult task even in their own language, so text production in another language is one of the most difficult parts that they have encountered in the learning process of a second language. Due to this problem, many scholars have suggested different writing strategies as a way for students to overcome this difficulty, as they can help reduce the complex demands of the writing process, particularly for students with difficulties in this area (Graham & Perin, 2007; Hillocks, 1984; Rogers & Graham, 2008). These strategies range from simple guidelines where students can find the steps to follow when developing a composition to a glossary of possible vocabulary to write in these compositions, or even from set sentences to educational games, such as brainstorming activities (Graham & Perin, 2007), which can be a great way to activate their creativity before starting to write.

Generally speaking, the writing process is made of several stages that students should follow, such as planning, drafting and, finally, revising (Allen, Crossley, Snow & McNamara, 2014). Following this process has proven to be far more effective than writing freely without instructions. Moreover, in order to develop appropriate compositions, students should practice in a motivating environment. The reason is simple, motivating environments are necessary so as

to avoid boredom and disengagement during the writing process (Allen, Crossley, Snow & McNamara, 2014).

Teaching and learning writing skills is not one of the most motivating components of a foreign language class (Bruyse, 2006). Students are aware that writing is a complex process where other factors such as grammar or vocabulary are involved. Due to the lack of knowledge of the aforementioned factors, students tend to get bored and a shortage of motivation and participation can be detected. In order to overcome this deficiency, several techniques have been put into practice in order to increase motivation among students, such as Writing Pal games (Allen, Crossley, Snow & McNamara, 2014), or video games (Hanus & Fox, 2015). However, as these authors point out, further research is needed on this area of gaming as their findings are just limited to specific mechanics of gamification and not all the gamification system.

For this practical research, I will focus on analyzing whether using gamification in class enhance motivation and participation in class when approaching writing skills. According to Hanus and Fox (2015), when talking about gamification, we refer to the application of game elements to non-game settings as a method to increase student engagement in the classroom. Focusing on our area of study, games can be taken as something beneficial for training L2 writing skills (Jackson & McNamara, 2013; McNamara, Jackson & Graesser, 2010), as they help students not to get bored. Moreover, game-based elements, such as competitions, can be integrated into learning environments to increase students' enjoyment and engagement in a task (McNamara et al., 2010).

Learning through games has been shown to be an effective way of fostering both learning motivation and academic performance (Chang, Wu, Weng, & Sung, 2012; Chun-Hung et al., 2013; Virvou, Katsionis, & Manos, 2005). One of the reasons for this positive influence is that games normally permit

players to start again the game in case of losing, so mistakes are recoverable. Furthermore, as students know they can correct their mistakes, this freedom allows them to try and participate without thinking they are doing it wrong and this increases their motivation and engagement (Lee & Hammer, 2011). The positive side of making mistakes must be taken into consideration, as the Common European Framework of Reference (2001) states that mistakes are highly related to students' learning progress. Another reason is that games offer immediate feedback to students, which is very beneficial for them.

2.1 The use of games for enhancing motivation in class.

First of all, a distinction should be made between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation since they are completely different, and the roles they play in class through the use of games are also diverse. According to Ryan and Deci (2000, p. 56 and 60), "Intrinsic motivation is defined as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence whereas extrinsic motivation is a construct that pertains whenever an activity is done in order to attain some separable outcome." Students should be motivated to do something because they like it and for their own benefit, not due to external awards. Then, intrinsic motivation is desirable, although extrinsic motivation also has benefits for students.

Having made that distinction, one of the biggest challenges for teachers nowadays is how to engage students in class. It is the case of some students who are normally bored, and coming to school is not what they want to do in many cases. Moreover, the diversity of levels that can be found in one class does not make teachers' work easier, as some students could be motivated with what is being done in class at a certain moment, while others can be totally deflated as they do not reach the level the activity required of them and they feel frustrated.

So, is there any common point by which all students can be motivated and engaged? Azriel et al (2005, p. 9) say 'regardless of age or economic, ethnic, or social background, people understand the language of play', games are a way to interact and participate in a relaxed atmosphere. Furthermore, games make students active in the learning process, and as Biggs (2003, p. 79) argues, 'Being active while learning is better than being inactive.' As Kirkland and O'Riordan (2010) point out, children and infants learn through games, which is an effective learning tool. Then, teenagers could learn in the same way if they see learning as a game, not as an obligation. Games can create competitive learning environments where students can participate and interact with each other. As a result, games are a great option for students in their process of improving their communicative skills.

2.2 The use of ICTs to increase motivation and participation

When considering the use of games in class, we must not forget about the use of ICTs. ICTs offer a wide variety of resources which are directly related to gamification, as they are games which can be used to help students to acquire any of the competences when learning a foreign language. Moreover, the use of technology also works among students as a huge motivating enhancer, since nowadays the children that we have in class belong to a technological era, where gadgets are part of their daily life. In this sense, Prensky (2010, p. 9) argues that 'Many of these kids grow up totally surrounded in their homes by these technologies.'

When we talk about ICTs, we think of tablets or iPads, computers or even mobile phones. ICTs are a great tool to motivate students as today's teenagers are very used to using them; as Frydrochov Klimova & Poulova (2014, p. 53) state, 'for them ICT are as natural as breathing.' ICTs are part of our students' daily life as they are surrounded by them at home, school, etc. The use of ICTs

at school has been recently increasing. Teachers are including new technologies in their classrooms as they find their role in class useful and effective. Moreover, the Spanish curriculum has incorporated subjects devoted to new technologies, as they are part of the upcoming future.

ICTs have also a great effect on students' motivation. As Kreutz and Rhodin (2016, p. 3) point out, 'using ICT devices such as computers and tablets in the classroom motivate learners in the English language classroom.' Hence, the use of these gadgets has been introduced in the teaching of English as a foreign language. Thanks to them, dynamic activities, projects or group work can be carried out in class in a motivational atmosphere. Other studies have also shown the positive effects of the use of ICTs in English classes, as for example, on the motivational outcomes (Passey, Rogers, Machell and McHugh, 2004).

So far, we have talked about computers and tablets but, there are more electronical devices which are worth taking into account, such as mobile phones. Mobile phones are also becoming more used among teenagers. In fact, it is becoming usual that students take advantage of the teacher's inattention to use their mobile phones in class. Such is the problem that some schools in Spain, particularly in the autonomous community of Madrid, have forbidden to bring mobile phones to schools. However, instead of focusing on the problematic aspects of students having their cell phones in class, teachers should consider the benefits of incorporating these devices in their students' learning process. As Averiona Irina (2011) says, smartphones, and their connection to the internet, have become powerful mobile learning devices where educational applications can be very effective in the learning process.

2.3 Group work to increase motivation

The next variable to take into account for this practical research is group work, as some activities which were done in this project were carried out in groups. This

was because thanks to collaborative work, students have the opportunity to learn from each other and to teach each other in many cases. Moreover, heterogeneous groups can be created where a student who does not participate too much in class, as he/she is shy, can be motivated to express his/her own ideas with his/her peers. As Elwyn, Greenhalgh and Macfarlane (2004, p. 8) state, 'group member participation leads to a greater commitment and success.' Besides, they also add that this technique of group work is increasing among teachers to ensure an active participation among students in their learning and problem solving (2004, p. 8).

Another benefit from group work is the fact that students work better in small groups rather than big ones, where their participation is not possible. There is a study carried out by Drakeford (2012), who limited the study to two students of secondary education and he found out that those students participated more in small groups, so this technique was effective and the results positive for the research.

Furthermore, Poupore (2016) also carried out another investigation about the relationship between group work dynamic, task motivation and language production. In his research, Poupore (2016, p. 721) points out that 'social context acts as a crucial influence in the learning process'. For the development of this investigation, he took a speaking conversation course as the context for his study of a TESOL programme which took 20 weeks. Students had to participate in speaking groups. He found out that group work was a powerful influence on the learners' motivation.

2.4 The use of games and ICTs to improve writing skills.

According to Passey, Rogers, Machell and McHugh (2004), due to the use of ICTs in class, students are able to make improvements to the quality of their work, in terms of writing. This is mainly due to the elements that some computer programmes have that help pupils improve the organisation of any written work.

Moreover, according to Blake (2016, p. 8), who carried out a research on online writing, 'the Internet facilitates collaborative writing via electronic discussion forums, blogs, wikis, shared documents (e.g., Google docs), and an array of writing tools available within today's LMS platforms—not to mention Twitter or Facebook for shorter text entries.' These tools are at the disposal of any teacher to be used in class or in the computer room.

Another example of the advantages of ICTs for writing skills can be seen in the traditional letter exchanges between schools. Some schools have joined programmes in which they have contacted with another school from another country and students from both schools have to keep in contact. Many years ago, the way to keep in contact was by letter; nowadays, students can send emails and follow each other on social networking sites, which is much more appealing for current students than writing letters with pen and paper.

The process of writing has several stages that students must develop in order to be correct and organised. ICTs do not only lead students through these steps, but also give immediate feedback to them. Moreover, when writing on the computer, students can make mistakes and they can correct them at that moment, since many processing programmes underline mistakes to be corrected before handing a work. In addition, the internet has several webpages which are useful to fine-tune their work.

While gamification is currently being one of the most hotly debated issues in the current theoretical discussion concerning motivational aspects, there is still the necessity of doing research on the practical application of gamification in the area of writing expression in a L2 class. Moreover, despite the many positive reasons about the great effects of the aforementioned methodology, empirical research on the effectiveness of gamification is limited (Hanus & Fox, 2014). As writing skills are pivotal in the language teaching scenario, this MA dissertation

will focus on gamification in order to analyze whether its use enhances students' motivation and participation when facing compositions and different exercises related to writing skills.

3. METHODOLOGY

Having introduced the theoretical framework of this investigation in the section of the literature review, we are going to explain the key features of this practical research. In order to start this section, we will begin by explaining the research design, where an explanation of the research in detail will be given so as to establish the base for the following subheadings.

3.1 Research design

This research could be classified as a practical research, as it was undertaken in a class where it was put into practice. The class was pivotal to this research as students have a central role in it. According to the source of information, this research is an example of primary one, as it is delivered from primary sources, which are mainly the students who participated in this research and who are learning English as a foreign language. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that this research is both, a case study, as it is centred on two groups of students, and a statistical study since for this project, questionnaires were included so as to have more specific results.

In relation to the approach, this study could be classified as analytic since this means that a single factor or a cluster of factors which are constituents of one major system is investigated (Bueno Gonzalez, 2016). So, moving to our practical research, its main aim is to study the influence that games have on the students' learning process of writing skills. This practical research is categorized as heuristic, as its purpose is to derive theories from investigation and documentation of, in this case, the effect that games have on the motivation and participation during the development of writing skills in class.

According to the data, this practical research is a group study and it is meant to be qualitative and quantitative in nature. This last information will be better explained in the data collection section. Moreover, the method of collection is quasi-experimental and longitudinal. Finally, the method analysis in the quantitative part is statistical, as two questionnaires, pre- and post-, were given to students.

3.1.1 Study questions

This practical research follows to answer several questions:

- Does the introduction of gamification have any influence on students in terms of motivation and participation when they face writing tasks in class?
- Are games or applications related to ICTs more motivating than other games when students write compositions?
- Do students prefer to face writing skills through games or by following oral and written instructions?

As mentioned in the previous section, this MA dissertation is going to be both, a qualitative and quantitative research. Therefore, the answers to the aforementioned questions are going to be collected in two different ways and through different instruments of data collection.

3.2 Sample

3.2.1 Participants and tasks

The current MA dissertation is a research carried out in two first-year classes of Secondary Education, with the purpose of studying the effects that gamification has in terms of participation and motivation among students when they have to deal with activities related to writing skills. For the development of this MA dissertation, a High School called IES Humanejos in Parla was chosen; Parla is a town in the autonomous community of Madrid, in Spain. The sample of the

study was a total of 42 students, 18 boys and 24 girls, within an age range from 11 to 13 years old.

This MA dissertation was formed by two groups, an experimental and a control group. The control group has not experienced any changes on the teaching method when developing writing skills; they have been doing the writing activities included in the program of the subject following the book and oral instructions. On the other hand, the experimental group has done the same writing activities as the control group, but using a different methodology on the part of the teacher. Therefore, this group has been experimenting with games when facing writing skills, so as to check if there were any changes related to motivation and participation.

In relation to the students' data, each group, the control group and the experimental group, is made of 21 students and in them, we can find 11 girls and 10 boys in the experimental group and 13 girls and 8 boys in the control group. According to their ages, they range from 11 to 13 years old, as there are students who are retaking 1st year of Secondary Education.

GENDER	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	PERCENTAGE
Male	18	42.86 %
Female	24	57.14 %
Total	42	100%

Table 1: Gender and number of participants

11 years old		12 years old		13 years old		Total
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
3	3	13	21	2	0	42
7.14 %	7.14 %	30.95 %	50 %	4.76 %	0%	100%
14.29 %		80.95 %		4.76 %		100%

Table 2: Gender and age

According to their level of English, these two classes are heterogeneous so we can find different levels. However, the average level is intermediate, B1.1 according to the levels established in the Common European Framework of reference (2001). However, even though this is the predominant level, we can also find students with a very low English level and six students who are above the level, with a higher intermediate English level (B1.2 according to the CEFR).

It must be said that Parla, where the practical research has been carried out, is a city in the south of Madrid, and within its population we can find a high percentage of immigration. This last piece of information is important for us since classes are composed of students from different nationalities:

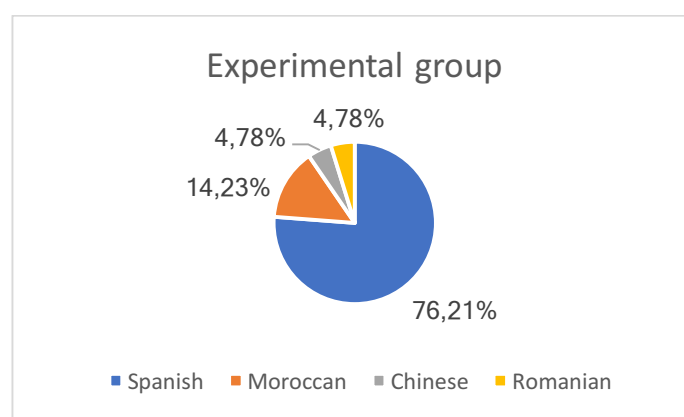


Illustration 1 – Nationalities Experimental Group

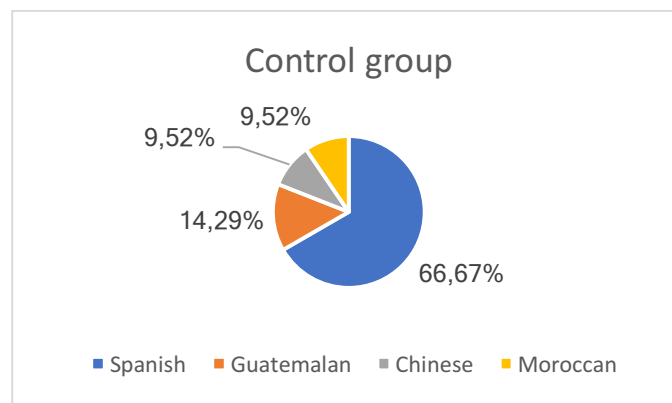


Illustration 2 – Nationalities Control Group

The sample selection was made by voluntary registration of participants through a form. Since students were under age, an authorization had to be given to their parents or legal tutors who had to signed it (see Annex I). This study has laid the necessary legal measures for data protection of minors. Participation in the project has not involved any physical or psychological risk to participants. All information collected has followed the necessary protocols to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of participants. The collected data have been used only for the purposes of this research; the data have also been protected, so that only researchers could access it.

3.3 Variables

As we have said before, the main objective of this practical research is to determine whether gamification increases the learners' motivation and participation when approaching writing tasks. Therefore, the methodologies used (presenting activities for pre-writing through games, applications, ICTs and the creation of a composition in groups and individually) are the independent variables, as they are the fixed components of the investigation. On the other hand, the dependent variables are the students' satisfaction with the activities, their participation and their degree of motivation. The moderator variables in this case are for example gender and their linguistic competence.

3.4 Instruments

The aim of this section is to explain in detail the instruments that have been used to collect the data throughout this practical project, and to flesh out the stages which have been followed in its selection and preparation.

To begin with this section then, it must be said that this research has been both, qualitative and quantitative in nature; however, quantitative data are predominant. This is due to the information that has been gathered. In order to do so, a pre- and a post-questionnaire were designed (see Annex II and III) and handed to the students taking part in the study.

The instruments to collect the qualitative data have been diverse. First of all, classroom observation has been used throughout all the sessions. Therefore, we can say that this study is an 'ethnographic research method which has been used in order to collect what literally has been happening during the sessions' (Bueno González, 2016, p8). The choice of this instrument was quite suitable, since it allowed the researcher to observe different behaviours while the activities were in process, as well as the classroom atmosphere. Moreover, it must be said that two different types of observation have been undertaken. One of them has been the spontaneous observation where, without premeditation, different behaviour took place during the session, like for example spontaneous questions from the students. On the other hand, structured observation has also been present in this practical research; here, the researcher has paid attention to different issues which were pre-determined before carrying out the observation. Thanks to this instrument several behaviours could be observed and notes were written down.

Another instrument used in this practical research were diaries. These diaries were developed in paper format but students were also recorded, so digital format was also available. In words of Bueno González (2016, p10), 'This style is generally taken as an informal one since we are dealing with anecdotes

which, notwithstanding, can be highly relevant to detect details and nuances which otherwise will go unnoticed.’ That is the reason why digital format was chosen. This tool has allowed the researcher not to forget significant details that took place during the sessions.

However, and as we have said before, quantitative information was also collected. This one was gathered in terms of questionnaires. Two questionnaires were handed to the students taking part in the study. The first one was a pre-questionnaire; this questionnaire was given to the students before starting the research so as to know more about their feelings when facing written tasks. The other one was given to them when the intervention was finished, and its purpose was to let the researcher know the students’ ideas and feelings about the procedure of the investigation and the activities carried out in order to develop the compositions. These questionnaires were presented in written format and instructions to answer them were clearly explained. In relation to the answers, these questionnaires were closed-ended questionnaires, as multiple choice answers were given and students just had to choose the answer with which they agreed. On the other hand, these questionnaires were carefully designed and revised by other colleagues before being given to the students.

3.5 Activities

The book that the students have at this level is *Next Move 1* (Pearson), a book for students with a B1 level of English. Besides, this project was undertaken during the 3rd term of the course 2016 – 2017, so the writings that students developed were the ones related to the last units, 8 – 9. Each session of writing skills lasted 50 minutes, and this project was carried out throughout 4 sessions in total, two sessions for each writing composition, one for preparation (pre-writing) and the other to develop the composition in class.

Therefore, for this investigation students had to create two different writings or compositions. One of them was a travel diary and the other one a story. The structure of the proposed written tasks is the following:

1. For the composition of a travel diary, students had to write a diary explaining where they went the last time they travelled, and it had to be done individually. In the case of the experimental group, there were some pre-writing activities in which gamification was introduced, mainly through one game called *Kahoot!* Thanks to this game, which will be explained later, students could revise the vocabulary and grammar structures that they were learning in that unit and that they had to use in this composition. On the other hand, the control group did the exercises proposed in the book as pre-writing ones, they had to do them in their notebooks. Finally, once they had to develop their compositions, dictionaries were handed to them.
2. Conversely, the composition of a story had to be done in groups. For its development and as pre-writing activities, gamification played an important role in the case of the experimental group, as students were given *Story Cubes* in order to develop a more creative composition. As in the case of the previous composition, dictionaries were also given to them. On the other hand, the control group developed this composition as in the first writing, by doing the exercises in the book and with the use of dictionaries.

As far as gamification is concerned, as we mentioned before, *Kahoot!* and *Story Cubes* were used:

- *Kahoot!*: This useful tool makes learning fun, and is especially helpful to revise concepts that have been taught in class. In order to make use of it, the classroom must have internet access, a projector and an interactive whiteboard or any other device where we can project the image. Moreover, students have to bring their mobile phones/i-Pads/laptops to class. *Kahoot!* allows the teacher to design a multiple-choice game or even a jumble game. In the case of a multiple-choice game, the teacher can choose the format to follow and the topic; he can also add videos, images, etc. The teacher can create as many questions as he/she wants. Once the game is created, a code is generated; then, students must go on the webpage and enter the code previously generated; after that, they are automatically connected to the game and they have to choose a nickname (it can be played in groups or individually). Once all this is done, they are

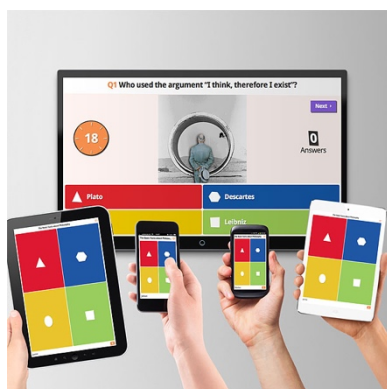


Illustration 3 Kahoot!

ready to play. This is a speed game, the fastest person/group is the winner. The instructions are easy, a question with and the possible answers are projected on the board and since students have the answers on their mobile phones, they have to click on the correct one. Once all students have answered, a record is shown and students can see their position in a ranking.

In the case of this practical research, students played a jumble game, they had to create a composition by choosing sentences given as answers. To start the game, a sentence was given beginning with '*Last summer...*',

then, students had to choose one sentence out of the four given so as to continue the story, one was coherent and the other three were not. Once this was done and students knew the correct sentence, in the following question students had to choose one which linked with that previous sentence. Then, they had to form a coherent story correctly linked through the use of connectors seen in class and the correct vocabulary and grammar structure.

- *Story Cubes*: these cubes allow students to be more creative and invent stories about different topics. To play it, students have to roll the dices (1 – 9 dices) and write a story that links together all the face-up images. The teacher gives instructions like: "You must start with 'Once upon a time...'" or, 'Far, far away...'; then students must go on writing the story by including the images that they got when they rolled the dices.



Illustration 4 Story Cubes

Within this practical research, *story cubes* played an important role on the second writing task, where students had to create a story. In groups, they had to roll the dices and invent a story based on the faces they got from the dices. Many of them did not know what to include in the story, so the cubes gave them interesting and useful ideas.

Finally, it must be said that these two tools that were used during the investigation were also evaluated by the students in the post-questionnaire and they gave their opinion about the one they liked the most and found more productive and helpful to write compositions.

3.6 Data Collection

The data in this study were collected following this work schedule:

<i>Task</i>	April	May	June
Consent by legal tutors	24 th		
Pre-evaluation questionnaire		3 rd	
1 st session (pre-writing activities)		8 th	
2 nd session (composition)		9 th	
3 rd session (pre-writing activities)		29 th	
4 th session (composition)		30 th	
Post-evaluation questionnaire			5 th

Table 3 Investigation Schedule

3.7 Data Analysis and findings.

Within the following section the finding and results obtained throughout the questionnaires and through observation are going to be discussed. It is worth mentioning that both results, from qualitative and quantitative analysis, are going to be further explained.

First of all, a statistical analysis is going to be provided in the form of bars so as to show the results obtained from both groups (control and experimental)

concerning the first questionnaire (see annex II) and the second one (see annex III). Moreover, I am going to extract from the second questionnaire the questions related to the games used during this investigation to see in detail the students' preferences. Below are the results from the first questionnaire of both groups, control and experimental.

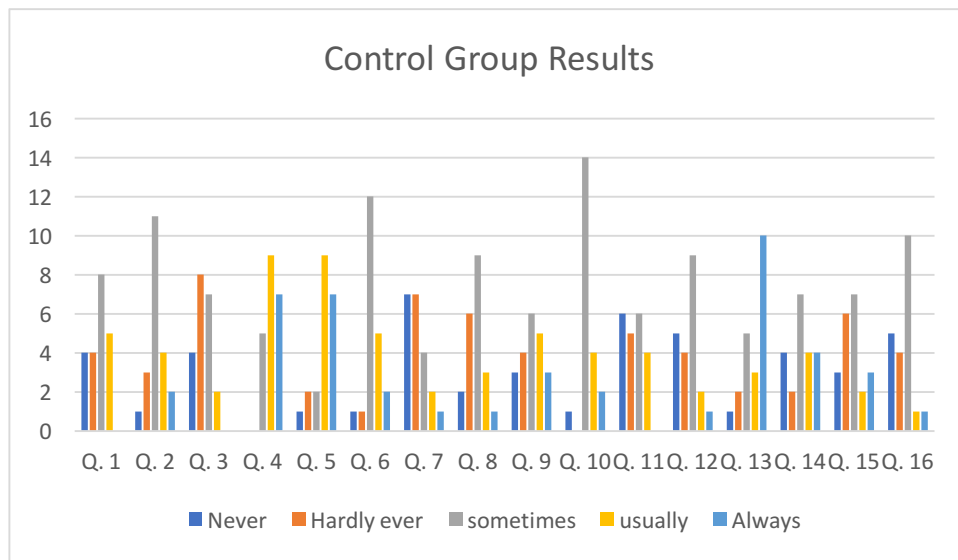


Illustration 5 Control group results pre-questionnaire

According to this graphic, we can see that different answers were given by the students depending on the questions posed (see annex II to check the questions). Positively, we can see that one question, question number 13, was answered highly with 10 over 21 answers with 5 points, which is 47.62%. This question asked whether students double checked their compositions before handing them to the teacher. On the contrary, question number 7 — which asked whether students have many mistakes because they think in their mother tongue — has been highly scored with the lowest marks; 7 students marked it with 1 point and 7 with 2 points, which, in terms of percentages, is 33.3%. Moreover, we must pay attention to question number 10, which asked the students if they liked the topics to write about; in it, most students, 14 in total — 66.6% —, agreed that this question deserved 3 marks.

Focusing on the experimental group, the results obtained from the first questionnaire have been the following ones:

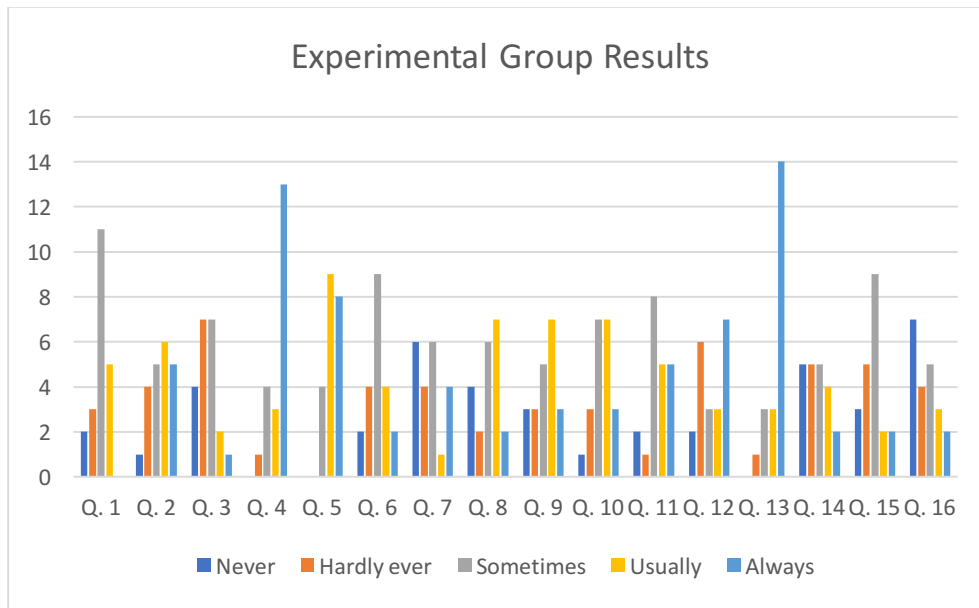


Illustration 6 Experimental group results pre- questionnaire

Having a look at this graphic, we can see noticeable data. Two questions that catch our attention are questions number 4 and 5, where most of students have answered positively. Question 4 asked students whether compositions helped them revise grammatical points; here, 13 students (61.9% overall) answered 'always'. Focusing on question number 13, which is the same question that obtained the highest mark in the control group's questionnaire, 14 students (66.6%) answered with 5 marks. Another significant datum is that there are not remarkable negative answers in this group.

Pulling out the questions related to motivation within this pre-evaluation questionnaire, the results are the following ones:

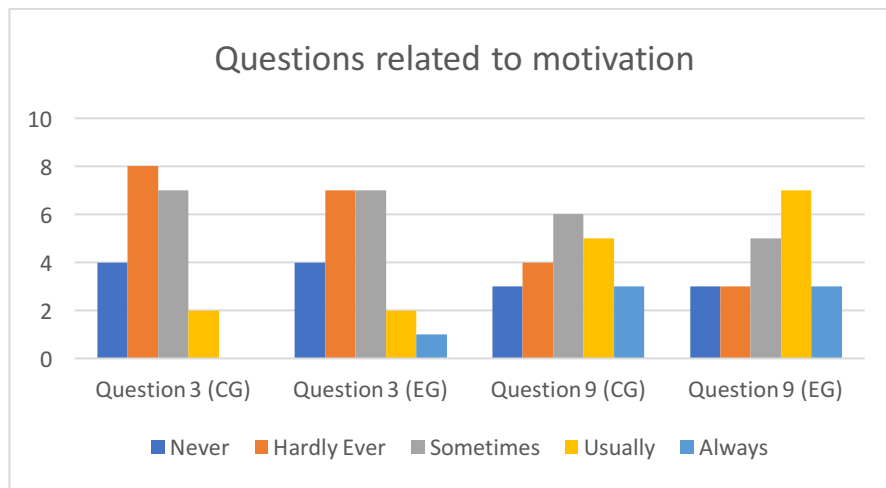


Illustration 7 Questions related to motivation

- Question 3: "My motivation increases when I write compositions in English."
 - This question has obtained the lowest marks in both groups. This leads us to think that writing is a daunting task for our students and teachers must do their best to motivate them and make students think differently when facing compositions.
- Question 9: "I get bored when I think that I have to write a composition in English."
 - Having a look at the results from this question, we can see that students have scored it with the highest marks available.

On the other hand, it is time now to look at the results obtained from the post-evaluation questionnaire (see annex IV), which was handed to the experimental group as this one was the only one in which the intervention was carried out. This questionnaire is a bit shorter but it asked about the key points to get the answers of this practical research:

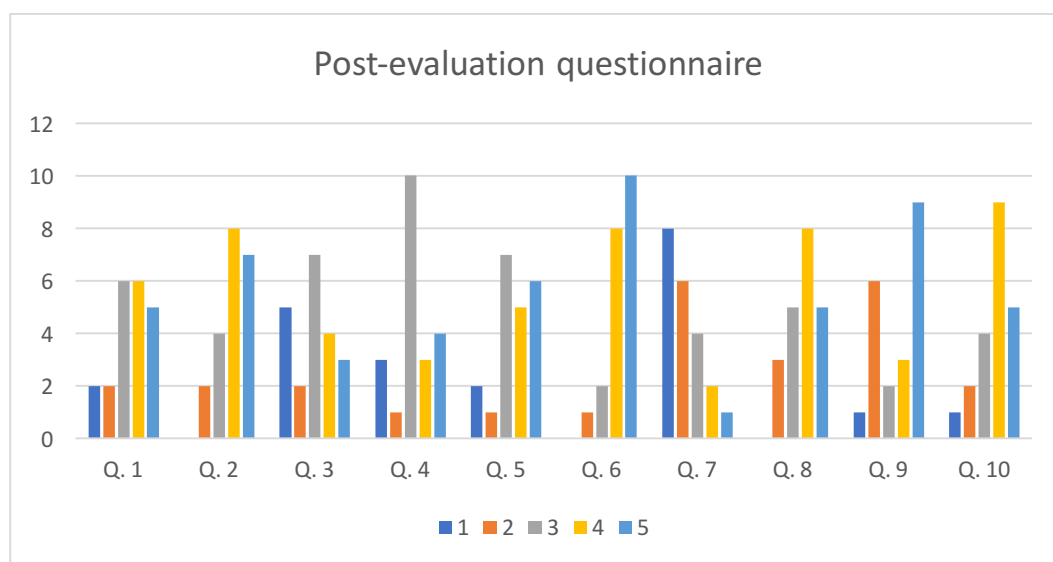


Illustration 8 Results of post-evaluation questionnaire

This last questionnaire was mainly focused on the motivational effects that gamification could have had on students and also to examine the usefulness of the games used in class to approach writing skills. Therefore, there are some worthwhile answers to talk about, as for instance, question 6. This question asked about the usefulness of *Kahoot!* for the revision of grammar and vocabulary before developing a composition. This question is relevant, as 10 students out of 21 scored it with 5 marks, being 8 students who scored it with 4 marks. According to the results, there is no doubt that it was definitely useful and successful among the majority of the students in class since, as we have said before, 47.62% of the students scored it with 5 marks and 38.1% of the class did it with 4 marks. It can be seen in the following diagram:

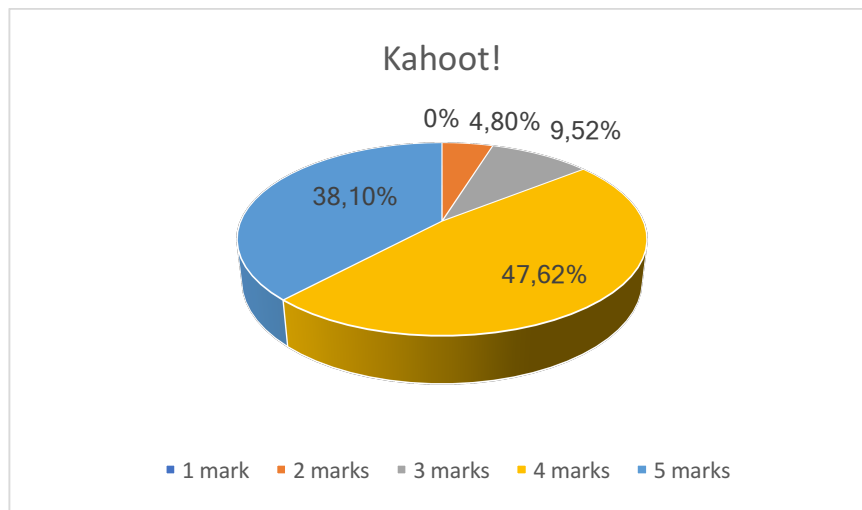


Illustration 9: Results obtained from Kahoot!

Another remarkable question to have a close look at is question number 7. This question asked the students whether they prefer traditional written exercises like gap filling or sentence order, rather than games to develop their compositions. As it can be seen, 8 (38.1%) students out of 21 answered with 1 mark. Also, this question was scored with low marks, 1 and 2 points, by a high number of students.

Question number 5 was related to the use of *Story Cubes* in the second composition. In this case, the results obtained have shown that the majority of the students scored this question with 3 marks, whereas 5 students did it with 4 marks and 6 students with 5 marks. The results in percentages can be seen within the following diagram:

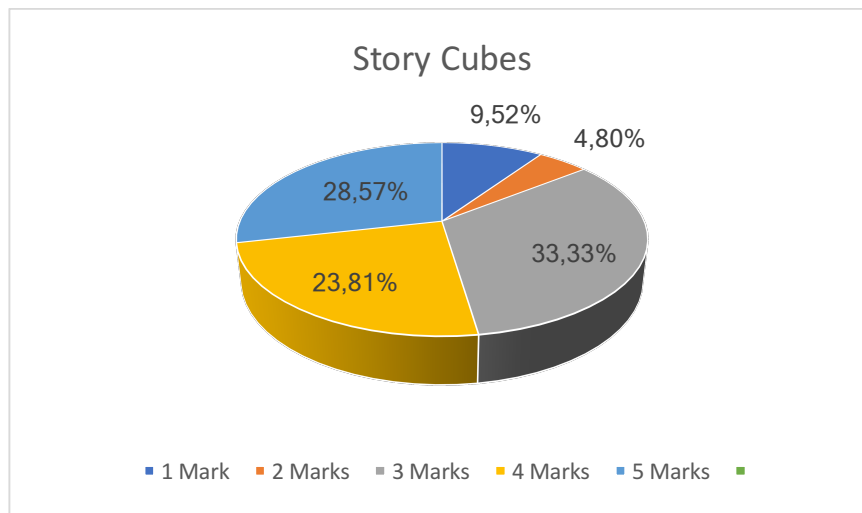


Illustration 10: Results obtained from Story Cubes

As a conclusion about the games used, we could say that the preferred method has definitely been the game called *Kahoot!* This game seems to appeal and motivate students much more than *Story Cubes*.

Apart from the quantitative results, we need to focus on the results obtained throughout the observation in class. These qualitative results must be taken into account to have data about the participation within class which was observed during the investigation.

	NEVER	OCCASIONALLY	SOMETIMES	MOST OF THE TIME	ALWAYS
STORY CUBES					
Students pay attention during the activity.				Most of them	

Students participate actively.					All of them
<i>KAHOOT!</i>					
Students pay attention during the activity.					All of them
Students participate actively.					All of them

Table 4 Observation's results

In the light of these results, we can see that participation and motivation have benefitted from the two games which were selected for the investigation. Students have participated actively in both activities, although we can see that *Kahoot!* appealed more to students than the *Story Cubes*, which confirms the conclusion reached taking into account the quantitative data. This can be due to the fact that this game includes the use of mobile phones in class, and as it was mentioned in the literature review section, students are quite eagerly dependent hooked on the use of these devices.

However, these results are not 100% positive. Some students scored some of the questions in the questionnaires with negative results and their participation and motivation in the investigation was not affected as much as in case of the rest of their classmates. Nevertheless, most of students in class did demonstrate positive feelings about the activities and the investigation.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the results obtained through the questionnaires and the observation in class, we can draw some conclusions from the research carried out in this study. Focusing on the questionnaires, it can be clearly appreciated that students in the experimental group enjoyed the activities based on gamification, as their results were more positive in the post-test than in the pre-test. Moreover, paying attention to the questions in the post-test related to the games used for the development of the pre-writing skills (questions 5 and 6), 38.10% of students in the experimental group had absolute positive opinions about *Kahoot!* and 28.57% marked highly *Story Cubes*. However, it is necessary to point out that students liked one game more than the other; they preferred *Kahoot!* which students found exciting as well as educational and helpful.

On the other hand, having a close look at the data taken from the observation, we can reach two different conclusions, one concerning the experimental group and another one related to the control one. As far as the control group's observation is concerned, the level of motivation and participation of the class is the same during the development of both compositions. On the contrary, as a consequence of the activities based on gamification that were used with the experimental group, an improvement at the level of motivation and participation could be noticed. Students preferred the gamification approach rather than the traditional one, in which no activity based on gamification is used.

Bearing in mind the research questions we had in this study, we can conclude that the introduction of gamification activities has a positive effect on students in terms of motivation and participation when they face writing tasks in class. In addition, when planning what gamification activities to use in class, we need to take into account that students value more positively the activities that are related to the use of ICTs, like *Kahoot!* Finally, when facing the development of their writing skills in class, students prefer to do so through games and not

following oral and/or written instructions. These conclusions should be taken into account by teachers when they plan on what instruments they use when teaching writing skills in their class.

5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND LINES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Regardless of the instruments that have been used to collect the data, this MA dissertation presents some limitations. The first factor to take into account is the time to carry out this practical research. This study was carried out in just four sessions of class, due to the fact that this research was finally developed in the last months of the academic course. This was in part limited to that amount of time because of the timeline of this master's degree. There was little time for its preparation and then, just a few months (three in total) to devote to the field research. From a professional point of view, if more time had been dedicated to this practical research, more data would have been collected and studied.

Concerning the sample, the number of students taking part in the study was not ample. It is true that the number of students for this practical research has allowed us to gather data from two groups, the experimental and the control one. However, if the number had been bigger, this practical research would have obtained more sound results, as more data to examine and to take into account would have been collected.

Moreover, it would have been necessary to introduce more activities based on gamification to see if the results support the conclusion reached in this study about the preference of students for games based on ICTs. In this line, it would be interesting to extend this study to students of different ages to check whether or not age is a variable to be taken into account.

Finally, as far as research instruments are concerned, it would have been helpful to use some other qualitative instruments, such a focus group with some

of the students from the experimental group to see if the additional data obtained support the conclusions reached.

This research will serve as a base for future studies so as to increase the number of findings which could be obtained from the use of gamification in a foreign language class. All in all, more studies with an ampler sample are needed in order to support the conclusions reached in this research study. For future studies in this sense, it would be interesting to see if working individually or in groups in order to complete the tasks proposed shows any influence on student's motivation and participation, as well as their outcomes. Finally, it would be a good idea to study more factors apart from motivation and participation. If more time were available, it should be a good idea to investigate if gamification has any effect on students' academic results too. In this research, we have seen the positive effects that games have on their participation and motivation, but seeing if it is as well effective in relation with their academic performance when writing would give to the study another interesting variable to be studied.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The teaching of foreign languages is evolving as time passes. Teachers must be aware of the different techniques which currently exist so as to avoid boredom or disengagement in classes on the part of students. Most teachers are stuck in the past using traditional methodologies, which seem to be old-fashioned in the era we are living. However, what teachers should do is using new techniques so as to make students active participants in their learning process.

Returning to the questions posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that students prefer the use of games rather than the traditional way they were used to following. Taking into account the results of this study, it can be stated that gamification is a useful and innovative methodology for students and for teachers too. Nowadays, we live in a technological era and our students are members of it. Therefore, gamification allows the inclusion of ICTs

so as to improve the students' learning process. As it has been said at the beginning of this practical research, writing skills are hard and difficult for students of EFL. However, the introduction of gamification activities has a positive effect on students in terms of motivation and participation when they face writing tasks in class, since games help students get engaged and show a positive attitude towards writing compositions.

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ANNEX I

Queridos padres,

Mi nombre es Mercedes Moreno Jiménez, y soy profesora de inglés en el instituto Humanejos. Algunos de vuestros hijos e hijas dan clase conmigo.

Actualmente compagino mi trabajo en el instituto con un máster que estoy realizando a distancia por la universidad de Jaén, llamado *Máster Universitario Online en Estudios Ingleses (OMiES)*. Como algunos de ustedes ya sabrán, siempre al finalizar un máster, se debe realizar un trabajo final y exponerlo ante un tribunal. Este trabajo suele ser un proyecto de investigación. Por esa razón me dirijo a ustedes.

El proyecto de investigación que quiero llevar a cabo es sobre la *Gamificación en el aula y cómo fomentar la motivación y participación cuando desarrollamos en clase la expresión escrita*. No sé si habrán escuchado hablar del término 'gamificación', si no es así, les dejo a continuación una breve definición:

'La gamificación es la aplicación de elementos propios de los juegos en contextos no lúdicos, como una clase, para poder influir en los comportamientos de las personas a partir del estímulo de su motivación'

Mi intención con este proyecto es gamificar el área de la escritura, o lo que es lo mismo, la expresión escrita. La razón que me ha llevado a esta idea ha sido la gran desmotivación que he encontrado en diferentes clases a la hora de hacer redacciones en inglés. Creo que con un cambio de enfoque, se podrían conseguir mejores resultados.

Los objetivos de gamificar la expresión escrita son:

- Incrementar la motivación en esta área.

- Fomentar la participación en clase.
- Aplicar juegos y dinámicas para expandir su creatividad.
- Jugar para aprender.

Las clases serán como siempre, vuestros hijos trabajarán igual que lo estaban haciendo hasta ahora. La diferencia será a la hora de trabajar sobre el área de la expresión escrita, lo enfocaremos de otra forma.

Os comunico mi plan con este proyecto ya que necesito vuestro consentimiento para poder grabar en video tres o cuatro sesiones en clase. Estos videos:

- Son de carácter personal y privado para poder analizar yo en casa aspectos que se me han podido escapar en clase.
- En ningún momento serán mostrados en ninguna red social.
- Nadie tendrá acceso a estos videos, solamente yo.

Tanto el equipo directivo como los tutores de ambos grupos están informados y conformes. Aún así, si necesitan más información, pueden dejarme un mensaje en el teléfono del instituto y les llamaré lo antes posible.

Hasta aquí mi carta informativa, espero haber explicado correctamente de qué tratará el proyecto y espero vuestra entera participación.

Muchísimas gracias de antemano.

Atentamente,

Mercedes Moreno Jiménez.

D. / D^a _____,
padre/madre/tutor/a del/de la alumno/a

autoriza la participación de su hijo/a en el proyecto de investigación para un trabajo fin de máster: '*Gamification as a tool for enhancing writing skills in ESL classes*'.

En _____, a _____ de _____ de 2017.

Fdo.: _____

ANNEX II

Writing compositions

Señala cómo te sientes cuando haces redacciones en inglés.

- 1: nunca
2: casi nunca
3: a veces
4: casi siempre
5: siempre

1.

Me gusta hacer redacciones en inglés.

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2.

Cuando hago redacciones se me ocurren muchas ideas.

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3.

Mi motivación aumenta cuando hago redacciones en inglés.

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4.

Hacer redacciones me ayuda a trabajar la gramática que hemos dado en clase.

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5.

Cuando hago redacciones pongo en práctica el vocabulario que hemos dado en clase.

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. **Utilizo un gran registro de vocabulario cuando hago redacciones en inglés.**
Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. **Tengo muchos errores en las redacciones porque pienso en mi lengua materna.**
Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. **Sigo los pasos previos antes de ponerme a escribir la redacción final (esquemas, borradores, etc).**
Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. **Pensar que tengo que hacer una redacción en inglés me aburre.**
Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

10. **Los temas de los que tenemos que hablar en las redacciones me gustan.**
Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

11. **Hacemos ejercicios divertidos antes de hacer las redacciones.**
Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

12.

Utilizo un diccionario para poder hacer las redacciones en inglés.

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

13.

Repaso mi redacción antes de entregársela a la profesora.

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

14.

Cuando la profesora me devuelve la redacción, miro y apunto siempre mis errores para no cometerlos más.

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

15.

Me gustaría escribir más del límite de palabras que hay para las redacciones.

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

16.

Me resulta difícil alcanzar el mínimo de palabras para una redacción.

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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ANNEX III

Gamificación en las expresión escrita en inglés.

Post-test

1. **Me ha resultado motivadora la gamificación del aula**

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. **Me parecen útiles los juegos previos a la realización de las redacciones**

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. **Prefiero hacer redacciones de manera tradicional (diccionarios, libro...)**

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. **Los juegos han ayudado a mejorar mis notas**

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5. **Los Story Cubes me han ayudado a ser más creativo**

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. **Creo que Kahoot es un buen juego para repasar la gramática y el vocabulario**

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. **Prefiero ejercicios tradicionales a juegos para hacer mis redacciones**

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. **Entiendo mejor los puntos gramaticales a través de juegos**

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. **La gamificación me hace más competitivo/a y aumentan mi participación en el aula.**

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

10. **Mi motivación para realizar una redacción aumenta si se introducen juegos en su elaboración.**

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐