



Enhancing English Language Learning Through Gamified Teaching Approaches: A Critical Review of Literature

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Abstract

This literature review explores the transformative impact of gamified teaching approaches on English language learning, highlighting their potential to reshape traditional classrooms into dynamic, engaging environments. Gamification involves integrating game elements—such as leaderboards, badges, and points—into non-gaming contexts to enhance motivation and foster a competitive yet collaborative learning atmosphere. The review synthesizes literature from 2020 to 2024, examining both the advantages and challenges of gamification in language education. While gamification has demonstrated significant benefits, including increased learner engagement, improved motivation, and enhanced retention, it also poses challenges such as the risk of learner demotivation, technological barriers, and insufficient teacher training. The study emphasizes the importance of addressing these limitations by focusing on teacher preparation, long-term efficacy assessments, and seamless integration with evolving technologies. Ultimately, gamification emerges as a promising tool for transforming English language education, requiring further research and strategic implementation to unlock its full potential.

Keywords: *Gamification, English language learning, educational innovation, learner engagement, motivation, teacher training, technology integration, competitive learning, collaborative learning, memory retention.*



Introduction

Recent times show an incredible increase in exchange of communication and sharing information. For that language skills have been crucial. Being an official language of many countries, English has gained much significance among other languages. English is today's 'lingua franca' (Hilary, 2024) and regarded as difficult to acquire by many learners. Those who are struggling with learning face many challenges that result in creating a communication gap and a barrier in opening up studies and employment opportunities consequently, demotivation, less interest, and low engagement level among learners may be observed. These days the most difficult duty for teachers generally and English instructors particularly is to motivate and develop interest of students in learning process (Van Nguyen and Linguistics 2024)

The integration of technology in language learning is the significant innovative initiative that has crawled in and curled up in the twentieth century. Gamification is one of the important factors. Gamification, contextualized as the involvement of games in non-game settings, has shown huge impact in boosting motivation, interest, engagement, and learning outcomes in numerous disciplines, including language teaching (Wulantari, Rachman et al. 2023) .

The word "Gamification" was used by Nick Pelling in 2002, and get popular in 2010. (Jie, Zakaria et al. 2023) Gamification can also be said to be Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) where educators practice multiple games and activities using mobile applications to attract and engage learners in English as Secondary Language classrooms. (Nathan and Hashim)

Through numerous studies Wulantari encourages the use of gamified techniques to develop more dynamic and productive language learning settings (Wulantari, Rachman et al. 2023).

Literature Review

The advancement of educational methods, particularly the incorporation of cutting-edge pedagogical techniques like gamified learning and technology, presents viable ways to raise student engagement and English proficiency. Examining the effects of gamified learning may help improve students' English language proficiency and address the falling standards (Yaccob, Rahman et al. 2022)

With the help of different research, this paper provides a thorough analysis of the impact of Gamification in English Language learning and teaching. It aims to investigate the



advantages, limitations, and recommendations related to gamification strategies in classroom settings by looking at previous research and studies. It may also offer significant insights to educational professional and curriculum designers.

Digital platforms are used to increase motivation level, interest and students' engagement in a classroom setting; it doesn't mean to challenge old pedagogical methods rather it complements the traditional pedagogical strategies. The objective is to provide an immersive atmosphere that encourages skill development, vigorous learning, team work and problem solving skills.(Wulantari, Rachman et al. 2023).

However, Gamification, on the other hand, has the capacity to create a disturbance in classroom setting. It is advisable for teachers to be vigilant when implementing these activities in classroom to manage the class so that other classes may not be affected.(Van Nguyen and Linguistics 2024)

This paper aims to delve into the best practices for gamification in language for practical guidance offering workable recommendations for policy makers and curriculum developers. These include establishing precise learning objectives, creating engaging game mechanics, customizing the educational process, encouraging social engagement and teamwork, and making use of the right gamification technologies and platforms. And also highlights the limitations of the gamification in language teaching and further work to be done in this field.

Research Method

Literature on the same subject matter has been scoured in order to retrieve information on recent studies and articles with a view to establishing the gamification effect in English Language Teaching. The research targeted papers published from 2020 to 2024, thereby guaranteeing that any very new findings and development were covered. These searches included Google Scholar, a=Academia, Sementic Scholar Databases and relevant studies.

Research studies were selected on the basis of relevance to student motivation, engagement, learning outcomes, and possible issues after gamification in ELT.

We have considered only peer-reviewed articles, empirical studies, and comprehensive reviews in order to assure credibility and reliability of data. The themes were generated through extracting and then grouping the key findings from the studies selected. These themes related to how gamification impacted motivation, engagement, collaboration, and feedback, with all the possible drawbacks and challenges.



In terms of quantitative data, statistical analyses were done for comparison purposes, such as percentages of responses by students and performance measures. Data collected were subjected to a qualitative analysis, seeking out trends and relationships.

The analysis focused on how gamification will impact students' behaviors, academic performance, and interactions within the classroom setting. Particular attention was given to studies that provided head-to-head comparisons between a gamified classroom setting and a traditional one.

The findings were combined to come up with a single coherent storyline regarding the influence of gamification in teaching the English language. A focus was maintained on important research studies and their findings in the form of evidence to help illustrate the main points.

For example, Van's 2024, and Wulantari 2024, were used to illustrate the positive impact on motivation and engagement (Güzel and Learning 2023) and (Yacob, Rahman et al. 2022) were used to discuss the probable challenges.

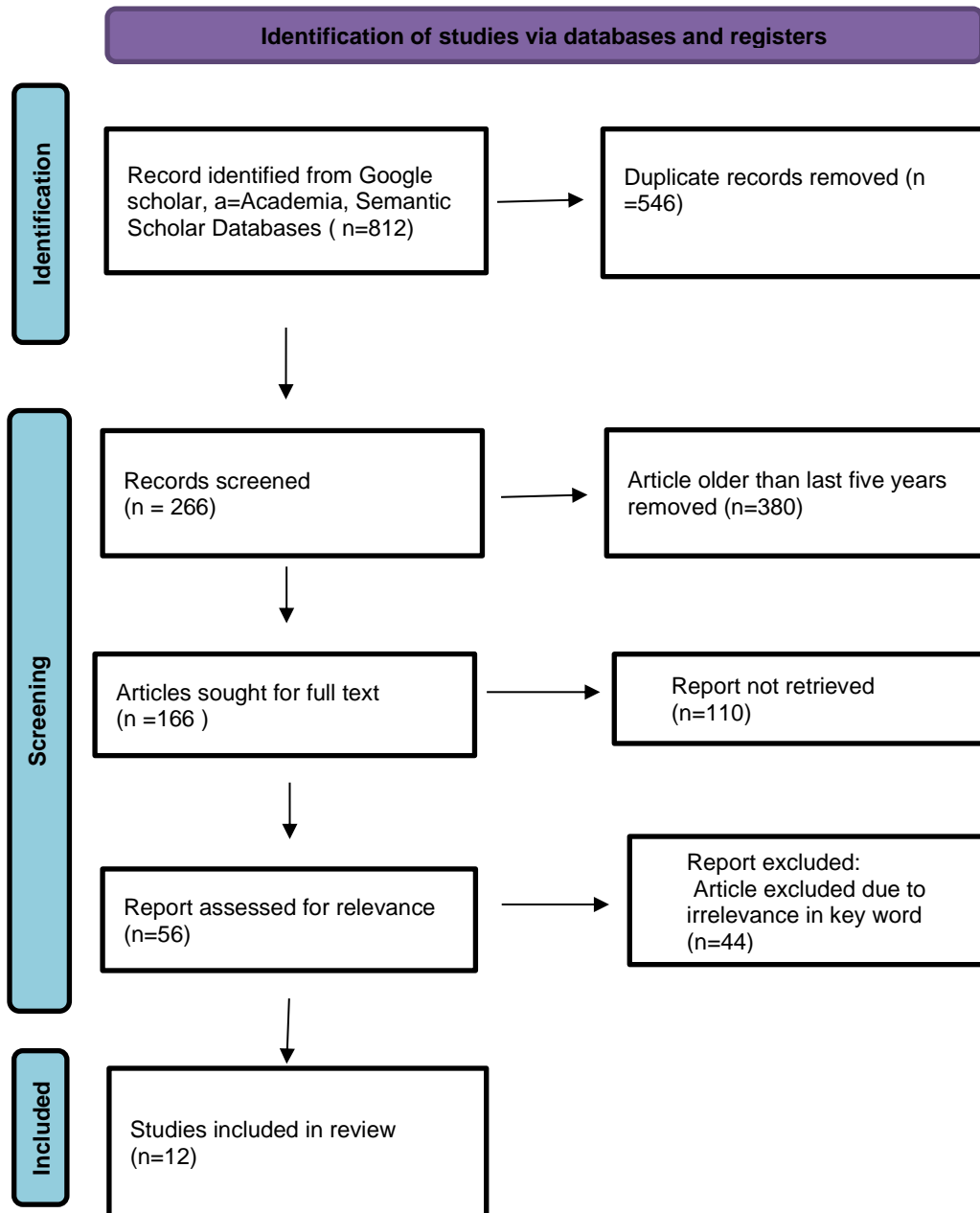
The approach also involved a critical check of the limitations and potential biases of the studies reviewed. In doing so, the sizes of samples, the methods employed by the research, and settings where studies had been conducted were checked. The aim is to provide a view that is balanced in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of gamification in English Language Teaching.

An integrative and critical review of the information helped draw comprehensive conclusions. Such a summary outlined the major findings and recommendations that could be of relevance to future research and practical application in ELT. Proper attribution and credit have been looked at to all sources. The review followed ethical considerations as far as the presentation of results in an unbiased and very clear manner, with no distortion or picking of data.

This approach ensured a comprehensive and balanced assessment of the gamification effect on teaching English and became significant for the teachers, the academics, and the decision-makers.



Figure 1



Result

In the light of recent studies conducted on gamification in English language teaching, it can be said that it has a constructive effect on the learning paradigm, nevertheless, possessed some constraints as well. One of the potential outcomes is enhanced motivation level among learners. A study conducted by Van 2024 exhibits that out of 100, 87 percent students were positive towards gamified learning environments that develop the interest of the students in lessons and 13 percent showed neutral behavior. Moreover, out of 100, 84 percent of students were motivated to seek more knowledge about the lesson. The investigation reveals that 74



percent of the learners wanted to accept challenges and take part in competition. Addition of game mechanics for instance, points, leaderboards, rewards and badges develops competition and sense of achievement that brings determination, enthusiasm and students' involvement (Wulantari, Rachman et al. 2023)

Moreover, the utilization of gamification in English language teaching substantially enhances increasing learners' motivation for the learning process. Students seem more involved and motivated to enthusiastically participate in classroom activities in a learning atmosphere that uses gamified strategy, such as awarding points, levels, and prizes.(Adrefiza 2022) The application of gamification in English language lessons has incessantly proved its effectiveness as a motivational tool, mostly through the implementation of competitive elements.(Yazid, Heriyawati et al. 2024) Furthermore, incorporating contest in teaching reading has also boosted the motivation level of the learners. A study shows including gamification components like gaining points, earning medals, and moving up on leaderboards into reading activities has potential to positively influence motivation and engagement. (Anggrainy, Sharizan et al. 2024) Gamification method causes an internal trigger by changing pupils' perception towards learning (Bua'Hilary, Shah et al.)

Gamification can create a sense of challenge and competition, which can be particularly effective in encouraging students to actively participate in language learning activities.(Figueiredo and García-Peñalvo 2020, Mrissa, Anasse et al. 2023) studies show a clear trend of contrast between the two different groups monitored—the control and the experimental. It reveals that the experimental group, where students were instructed conventionally, but at the end of each class, the teacher reinforced the input with Kahoot, had better performances compared to the students in the control group whose instruction did not involve any sort of gamification.

Secondly, in the landscape of English language learning, gamified learning approach brings a drastic change in student's attitude and engagement as Yazid's findings unveil the positive effect of gamification on the involvement and overall perspective towards English language learning among participants. Through gamification, not only students' knowledge strengthen, but it contributes to provide access for students to be amused in a protected setting(Van Nguyen and Linguistics 2024) Within an enjoyable and immersive setting, active engagement of learners enhances their all skills of language including vocabulary and grammar by providing a gateway to practice(Wulantari, Rachman et al. 2023) in fact, the students expressed higher engagement during gamified learning and were more excited generally and



interested in participating, showcasing that gamification efficiently promotes vigorous participation in speaking lessons.(Jie, Zakaria et al. 2023)

Additionally, the realm of English language learning fosters synergy and collaborative work through gamification. While playing, learners tend to support their peers and build team spirit. Multiple studies explain that within the group, learners are free to show their proficiency in English Language and synergy(Van Nguyen and Linguistics 2024) additionally he states, accomplishing game tasks in group creates collaboration abilities. It works as a remedy for individuals in reducing anxiety while facing issues in isolation and alleviates fear of speaking in class.

One of the most essential features of a customized learning method of gamification is the feedback. Timely constructive inputs from the educators stimulate learners and encourage them to acquire knowledge and rectify errors. It promotes reflection by offering students immediate input on their answers. If they opt incorrect responses, they can take more time to correct them, resulting improved learning outcomes (Van Nguyen and Linguistics 2024)

Even though gamification in English language teaching has gained much popularity, some challenges have also been observed in this regard. Reward system at the end of the task may have some drawbacks, if not implemented carefully. Such as, those with less score might be demotivated, building an impression that they were not accomplishing the given task successfully. Moreover, students need instant inputs in the process or else they might assume that whatever they have achieved in the module has no purpose and make them perplexed about what their product is good or bad for (Güzel and Learning 2023). The leaderboards are the components that can be either constructive or destructive for individually different learners. It is because competition can create anxiety and the need for speed that is part of the enjoyment. (Yacob, Rahman et al. 2022) and sometimes for struggling learners produce the consequences of demotivation.

Due to differences in language and competency level and other factors such as some students are good in technology and game mechanics, students are inclined to have different issues in term of gamified learning.(Yacob, Rahman et al. 2022)

Furthermore, one of the technological constraints could be a limited choice of devices or poor internet connectivity, which may really hamper the implementation of gamification strategies. Pedagogical design and integration are challenging in terms of striking a balance between gameplay and learning objectives so that game activities are oriented toward language



proficiency goals. Furthermore, appropriate methods for assessment and evaluation should be designed in order to find out how much gamification really works for language learning. (Wulantari, Rachman et al. 2023)

Discussion

Through multiple research projects, it can be said the gamified learning approaches in English language teaching has emerged as a catalyst for a learner in the acquisition of language. A strong correlation has been observed between gamification and English Language teaching. Discouragement to learn language, less connection and lack of interest are considered as unavoidable hurdles in language learning. Results of these studies reveal that researchers have shown various connections between gamified learning approaches and improved language learning results. These studies exhibit that gamification has significant potential not just to enhance the learning environment but also to overcome lack of motivation, less engagement and apathy towards learning. The aspect of play, competition, rewards, encouragement convert the learning environment into an engaging and interactive learning space hence motivate students to actively participate in learning.

The foremost edge of gamification in English language teaching is its magnitude to serve as a trigger for motivation. The essential element for acquiring a new language such as motivation, interest and excitement seems to be missing in a conventional classroom. Gamified learning environments tend to deal with this problem via including game elements to engage students and transform learning into a stimulating activity. For instance, earning points, gaining badges, and competing on leaderboards provides spontaneous awards and declarations that arouse the feeling of achievement. Thus, gamification potentially decreases the lack of motivation and lack of interest, leading students to be more prone to commit themselves in the language learning process.

Motivation is the driving force that makes students achieve their goal and stick to it till the end. This means it is the ultimate key to language acquisition. Intrinsic motivation, which refers to a natural tendency of individuals to learn and grow, encourages success in spite of extrinsic motivation. It helps make things clear, giving them purpose through using internal motivation by setting clear targets as well as providing feedback on achieving them. Students might experience tangible progress and victory in completing levels or missions on a language app that utilizes gamification features. This pressure of constant feedback that helps



retain student interest is perceived as a self-esteem building tool which makes students take responsibility for their own learning journey.

Moreover, game-based or gamification has proved to work best in English Language Teaching (ELT) as it increases the participation of students and creates a positive environment for learning. This unique approach integrates game design elements - points, badges, leaderboards and interactive challenges - into the learning experience to make it a bit more fun. This component has instant, and visible results which give them a sense of achievement and advancement by making students feel motivated as well to learn more.

The biggest advantage of gamification is, obviously: the increase in student participation. Traditional methods of language learning can be dull and uninspiring, which will naturally result in no enjoyment or poor participation. Gamification overcomes this problem by introducing various interactive and competitive elements to enrich the learning process. This could range from vocabulary smack downs, grammar quests to virtual story-telling where students cannot just listen and passively absorb but would be required to actively engage and critically think. With competition - be itself or peer induced - comes the rush, the hustle that keeps students occupied with their studying.

Apart from demotivation, the main concern while making the classroom a game is distraction. They are likely drawn away and may fail learning any real substance. The students are more interested in finishing it quickly to get prize and understand nothing at all about what it really means.

Moreover, the inclusion of gamification has also been associated with a more positive attitude towards learning in language. They introduced gamified activities, which are more fun and engaging than traditional Euro-centric methods that easily trigger our fears of failure. This is because in a game-like setting when the focus of learning turns from being right to growing personally and having fun, students are more prone to try things out, fail forward and learn through their failures. It makes students develop a growth mindset in that they start to see challenges as opportunities for growth and doing better, not acting as blocks.

Furthermore, gamification promotes collaboration and interpersonal communication among learners. Playing multiplayer games or participating in team challenges leads to the transmission and exchange of information—very important elements of language learning. The outcome of such shared experiences is not limited only to boosting linguistic capabilities



but also serves as the basis for establishing a friendly and encouraging educational atmosphere in which students are more engaged and connected.

Additionally, gamification incorporates multiplayer games and team challenges, building teamwork through learning processes. Tasks require students to cooperate, communicate, and solve problems as a group towards common goals. Students participating in collaborative activities further develop speaking, listening, and comprehension skills through live interaction. The setup is cooperative, allowing students to improve their language skills and thus unifies and encourages the students. By collaboration in surmounting obstacles and reaching goals, students raise their social skills and build a greater feeling of belonging to the community, which results in a highly interactive and supportive environment for learning.

Feedback in gamification improves the learning of English through immediate and elaborate responses to student actions. This constant feedback loop is what helps learners recognize strengths and things that need improvement on the go, strengthening correct usage and leading them through mistakes. Now, as students' progress through the stages or assignments, the prompt feedback enables them to be more engaged and focused, leading to enhanced retention and comprehension of language concepts. This repetition speeds up the process of skills development and makes learning more involving and individual.

Despite having advantages, gamification does possess some limitations. Gamification competition might lead to a decrease in motivation for those who often have lower marks. Students with this trend in marks get discouraged and often feel less confident, hence developing anxiety that makes them less involved. Too much emphasis on ranking and scoring diverts the attention of the learner from the journey of learning to other things, particularly the points or levels they have reached compared to others rather than their progress. What is needed is to have a fine balance between competitive aspects and collaboration, along with personal achievements, so that all are duly appreciated and motivated.

Moreover, emerging gamified learning content can be time-consuming, requiring detailed planning and major resources—for instance, technology—and equipment-based infrastructure. This can be hard on an organization to keep all of the resources in line and manage gamification effectively.

This may also present a challenge to the gamified language classroom when trainers are untrained, hence requiring comprehensive training of teachers in the technology and usage of



the game element in the classroom. In the absence of training, educators might find it hard to put gamification into effect in the classroom; this will leave both the educators and learners confused and disengaged. Such training programs need to cover both aspects: technicality in gamification and pedagogical methodology.

Conclusion and Suggestion

While gamification has evidenced much potential to innovate ELT practices, given the motivational, engaging, and positive learning environment that it is likely to create, specific challenges arise. The inclusion of typical game design elements, such as points, badges, and leaderboards, might turn a traditional classroom or any learning environment into an engaging, interactive, active situation, involving students in the process of participation in an energetic and continuous manner. However, the issues regarding the impact of competition resulting in a lack of motivation, deviation from the main subject matter, resource requirements, and the time needed for teacher preparation must be dealt with. Gamification is effective only when it is carefully prepared and fairly carried out to ensure that it serves all students and contributes to self-motivation and collaborative learning. Gamification can build linguistic competence and establish an encouraging learning environment if it comes along with feedback and group work. Further research and development in the use of gamification in ELT will be required in order to ensure it retains its significance as an effective methodology.

Further research into memory and recall, integration with emerging technologies, and teacher training or professional development are all necessary to fully optimize the effect of gamification in ELT.

Research into the gamification effect on memory retention and recall in ELT remains thin. Games incorporating spaced repetition, mnemonic devices, and interactive storytelling open up vast possibilities for the long-lasting retention and recall of language concepts. Further research is called for on the effects of different game mechanics on cognitive processes associated with memory. It requires assessment of the efficiency of the traditional methods of teaching against gamified approaches in helping students to easily memorize and apply new vocabulary, grammar rules, and language structures.

New technologies, especially AI, AR, and VR, open new opportunities for gamification in ELT. Artificial intelligence has the ability to make learning experiences tailored by adapting game content to the needs and speed of learning for each particular student. AR and VR offer a more realistic environment to test linguistic skills. Research into successful integration in educational settings by means of game-based learning approaches, coupled with their effects on student engagement and academics, is therefore called for. For successful gamification in ELT, the teacher should have knowledge regarding principles of game design and language pedagogy. Professional development programs are currently not preparing teachers enough to teach effectively with gamification techniques. Future efforts should aim to develop comprehensive training programs that enable teachers to acquire the competencies necessary to implement gamification in their teaching practice. This comprises the acquisition of



knowledge about available technological tools, the development of engaging game-based activities, and appropriate assessment of student progress in a gamified environment. In addition, research is needed to establish whether there are long-term benefits for teaching practice and student outcomes.

By focusing on these aspects, deeper realization of gamification in ELT can be attained and its full potential harnessed toward creation of language learning experiences that are effective, engaging, and personalized. Academic Achievements, Challenges of Adoption.

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