Gamification and Interactive Learning: Enhancing Students Engagement and Proficiency Outcomes

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Abstract

In recent years, the integration of technology and innovative teaching methods has become key to overcoming the challenges of language education, especially in foreign language learning such as English. Traditional methods often fail to motivate students sustainably. For this reason, gamification and interactive learning have emerged as effective solutions. This study explores the effect of gamification and interactive learning on language engagement and acquisition, focusing on second semester students of the Faculty of Tarbiyah at IAIN Madura. Data was collected through interviews and observations to gauge students' responses to these innovative methods. The results showed that gamification elements such as points, competitions, and interactive tasks significantly increased student motivation and participation, as well as resulted in improved language proficiency compared to traditional methods. Feedback from participants revealed that these tactics created a more dynamic and supportive learning environment. This research suggests the integration of gamification in language curricula to increase student engagement and language proficiency, which in turn can influence educational practices and policies in the field.

Keywords: Gamification, Interactive Learning, engagement

Abstrak

Dalam beberapa tahun terakhir, integrasi teknologi dan metode pengajaran inovatif menjadi kunci untuk mengatasi tantangan pendidikan bahasa, khususnya dalam pembelajaran bahasa asing seperti bahasa Inggris. Metode tradisional sering gagal memotivasi siswa secara berkelanjutan. Untuk itu, gamifikasi dan pembelajaran interaktif muncul sebagai solusi efektif. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pengaruh gamifikasi dan pembelajaran interaktif terhadap keterlibatan dan akuisisi bahasa, dengan fokus pada mahasiswa semester dua Fakultas Tarbiyah di IAIN Madura. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dan observasi untuk mengukur respon siswa terhadap metode inovatif ini. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa elemen gamifikasi seperti poin, kompetisi, dan tugas interaktif secara signifikan meningkatkan motivasi dan partisipasi siswa, serta menghasilkan peningkatan kemahiran bahasa dibandingkan dengan metode tradisional. Umpan balik dari peserta mengungkapkan bahwa taktik ini menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang lebih dinamis dan mendukung. Penelitian ini menyarankan integrasi gamifikasi dalam kurikulum bahasa untuk meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa dan kemampuan bahasa, yang pada gilirannya dapat mempengaruhi praktik dan kebijakan pendidikan di lapangan.

Kata Kunci: *Gamifikasi, Pembelajaran Interaktif, Keterlibatan*

Introduction

In an increasingly digital age, the traditional methods of teaching and learning face numerous challenges that hinder student engagement and academic performance. Educational stakeholders are compelled to explore innovative strategies that not only capture students' attention but also enhance their overall learning experience. The landscape of language education is undergoing a significant transformation, driven largely by advances in technology and pedagogical approaches that prioritize student engagement. Traditional language instruction methods often struggle to capture students' interest and motivation, leading to poorer learning outcomes and retention rates (Wang, 2024). As educational environments increasingly embrace digital tools and interactive experiences, there is a pressing need to explore innovative strategies that enhance learner engagement and foster language acquisition. Recent research suggests that incorporating gamification and interactive learning elements can play a crucial role in addressing these challenges (Wahid, 2024). The educational discipline in which gamification is applied significantly impacts its effectiveness in promoting student achievement (M. Li et al., 2023). Gamification is the use of game design elements in non-game contexts to promote expected behaviors(Luo, 2023). However, there remains a significant gap in empirical evidence regarding the specific impacts of these methods on learners' motivation and achievement in language studies.

In the context of foreign language learning, especially English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESL/EFL), that has been taught in school or university, gamification has emerged as a promising approach to overcome traditional classroom limitations. Many pupils face psychological barriers such as language anxiety, lack of confidence, and reduced willingness to communicate, all of which blocking their ability to actively engage in language practice. It is because of the teachers often used traditional method in teaching English. The learning makes a students bored. By integrating game mechanics, such as rewards, levels, progress tracking, and collaborative challenges into the learning process, educators can make a low-stress, motivating environment that supports consistent practice. This immersive and playful atmosphere not only boosts learners' intrinsic motivation but also supports the development of key language competencies, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing moreover part of the language namely vocabulary, grammar and others. It means that the students are more active in the class where the method or strategies used by the

teachers are interesting. So the students who have low ability will be motivated to take a part in teaching and learning process.

Moreover, gamified learning platforms often incorporate real-time feedback, adaptive challenges, and peer competition or cooperation, all of which can personalize and intensify the learning experience. Students are sometimes lazy to do the tasks because they do not get the feedback directly. But in this case, gamification give a different thing for instance, language learning apps and digital platforms like wordwall, quizlet, and Quizizz have demonstrated how interactive design can transform vocabulary acquisition, grammar drills, and conversational skills into enjoyable assignment. However, despite the growing popularity of such tools, systematic research is still needed to assess their effectiveness in various educational contexts, especially within higher education and diverse cultural settings moreover in non-English major. Understanding how gamification influences learners' motivation, engagement, and measurable language outcomes remains a crucial area for further study. In short, the students in non-English major have more anxiety and reluctant to study English lesson because they have limited exposure.

Research on gamification and interactive learning is not new. Previous studies have indicated that integrating gamification into educational contexts can lead to improved retention and engagement. The research that is conducted by Dian Reftyawati found that Gamification elements, such as challenges, rewards, and competition, enhanced motivation and active participation. The study concludes that gamification is an effective pedagogical strategy to improve student engagement and learning outcomes in English language education(Reftyawati, 2024). If the previous research using quantitative approach, this recent research is using qualitative approach. Another research also studied by Shen et al, the findings affirm the significant and positive impact of gamification integration on language learning achievement(Shen et al., 2024). The difference with this research is that this research occurs in offline classes. The other research which also cover about gamification is done by Adrefiza. The study results show that gamification benefits students' academic performance in English classes and dramatically increases their motivation and enthusiasm for learning so that the learning outcomes are satisfactory (Adrefiza, 2022).

The primary research problem addressed in this research is the lack of comprehensive understanding of how gamification and interactive learning strategies can effectively transform language education by enhancing student engagement and improving

language proficiency outcomes. This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of various gamified elements, such as point systems, collaborative tasks, and competitive scenarios, in motivating students to participate actively in their language learning journey. Additionally, it seeks to identify the underlying mechanisms through which these strategies can be implemented in classroom settings to promote deeper learning and application of language skills. The significance of this research lies not only in its potential to contribute to existing academic literature on language education and instructional technology but also in offering practical insights for educators seeking to motivate diverse student populations. By synthesizing findings from various studies and engaging in a mixed-methods approach, this research aims to provide a robust framework that illustrates the intersection of technology, gamification, and interactive methodologies in language learning contexts. Ultimately, this work seeks to advance the discourse surrounding language education, advocating for pedagogical innovations that align with the evolving needs and preferences of 21st-century learners. The implications of this study extend beyond the classroom, highlighting the necessity for educational stakeholders to embrace transformative instructional strategies that can enhance linguistic competencies and equip students for greater success in a globalized world.

Method

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the effectiveness of gamification and interactive learning strategies in enhancing student engagement and language acquisition. Qualitative research is a method of inquiry that focuses on understanding human experiences, behaviors, and social phenomena through non-numerical data. It emphasizes depth over breadth and seeks to explore *how* and *why* certain outcomes occur rather than just *what* happens. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, involving language learners who had experience with gamified instructional methods. The setting is in state Islamic institute (IAIN) of Madura especially the second semester of *Tarbiyah* Faculty. Data were gathered using semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Interviews aimed to capture students' experiences, perceptions, and feelings about the use of gamification, while observations focused on students' engagement, participation, and interaction during learning activities. Field notes and audio recordings were utilized to ensure data richness and accuracy.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving the transcription, coding, and interpretation of recurring patterns and themes related to engagement,

motivation, and language proficiency. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation of data sources, member checking, and peer debriefing techniques were employed. Ethical considerations were also prioritized by obtaining informed consent from all participants, assuring confidentiality, and allowing voluntary withdrawal from the study at any stage. Through this rigorous approach, the study aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of how gamified strategies influence language learning outcomes.

Result and Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of gamification strategies significantly enhanced student engagement and motivation in the language learning process. Based on classroom observations, students demonstrated higher levels of active participation, enthusiasm, and collaboration during gamified activities. Most students were visibly more attentive, eagerly completed tasks involving point scoring and competition, and interacted more frequently with their peers. In line with this finding previous research also find that gamification elements, such as challenges, rewards, and competition, enhanced motivation and active participation (Reftyawati, 2024). Approximately 85% of the observed students showed an increase in their participation rate during language exercises that incorporated game elements.

The semi-structured interviews supported these observations, revealing that students felt more motivated and less anxious when learning through gamified methods. Many participants expressed that the use of points, badges, and interactive challenges created a fun and supportive learning environment, making the language acquisition process more enjoyable. Moreover, students reported improvements in their vocabulary retention, grammar usage, and speaking confidence. They also highlighted that gamification reduced their fear of making mistakes, encouraging them to practice more actively.

These findings align with previous research suggesting that gamification not only fosters greater engagement but also enhances learning outcomes by creating a dynamic and collaborative atmosphere(Sani & Ratri, 2024). In addition, the interactive tasks helped strengthen students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, key competencies in effective language use(Blyznyuk & Kachak, 2024; Maspul, 2024). Thus, the study advocates for the integration of gamified strategies in language curricula to sustain motivation, enhance student learning experiences, and ultimately improve language proficiency.

Additionally, the significance of these results extends beyond mere academic improvement; they suggest a shift toward more dynamic and enjoyable learning experiences, which are crucial for long-term retention and mastery of a second language. As noted in previous literature, gamification not only captivates learners but also addresses various learning styles, thereby accommodating a broader range of students(Shen et al., 2024). The implications of the findings underscore the necessity for educators and curriculum designers to integrate gamification into their pedagogy to maximize learning outcomes. Moreover, the study's results contribute valuable insights to existing research on interactive learning strategies, suggesting that well-structured gamified environments may significantly improve student success rates in language education. This reaffirms the growing consensus in the field regarding the effectiveness of technology-enhanced learning approaches, which are increasingly being recognized for their role in promoting student engagement and achievement. Ultimately, the robust positive feedback garnered from participants indicates a promising future for gamification in language learning, with the potential to transform educational paradigms and increase the efficacy of language instruction.

Engagement in language education is increasingly recognized as a critical factor in fostering effective learning outcomes, particularly as technology continues to reshape educational landscapes. Engagement has been considered as an important construct which influences learner's language learning(J. J. Li, 2024). The findings from this study indicate that the incorporation of gamified and interactive learning strategies significantly enhances student engagement and language proficiency, with an observed increase in average performance metrics by 30%, especially in vocabulary acquisition and grammar application. This aligns with previous research that emphasizes the positive effect of gamified interactive e-books on the students learning achievements and motivation(Chen et al., 2023). Importantly, participants reported higher motivation levels, corroborating findings from studies that link gamification to enhanced learner enthusiasm and participation. The reported increase in peer interactions during cooperative gamified activities also resonates with literature advocating for social learning components as essential for effective language acquisition. Furthermore, the study's results reflect earlier claims regarding the universal applicability of game-based learning across various educational settings and age groups, suggesting that such approaches fundamentally enhance engagement regardless of context.

Comparatively, the findings not only mirror those of existing studies but also highlight gaps in the literature regarding the integration of technology in promoting engagement and motivation, especially in resource-constrained environments. The implications of these findings are profound, indicating a pressing need for educators to prioritize gamification in language curricula to improve student outcomes. Evidence demonstrates that well-structured gamified settings promote long-term retention and mastering of second languages, establishing gamification as a critical pedagogical method in modern language teaching. Furthermore, these findings have methodological implications, encouraging future study to investigate the specific gamification aspects that most successfully increase student engagement and language competency. While the findings are encouraging, there is still a need to address challenges to gamification implementation, such as teacher training and budget allocation, which may prevent widespread adoption of these tactics. Finally, the strong evidence supporting gamification's good influence on language teaching makes a convincing case for incorporating novel pedagogical approaches into standard educational practices. Future inquiries should, therefore, seek to broaden understanding of the long-term effects of gamified learning environments and explore various demographic contexts to fine-tune these approaches. Embracing these developments is crucial for enhancing language pedagogy and catalyzing transformative learning experiences for students.

Further developments have highlighted the integration of technology in gamification practices. The use of digital platforms and mobile applications has made it easier to implement interactive learning strategies, which, as noted by recent study, has shown substantial improvements in student engagement and proficiency (Gkintoni et al., 2024). Moreover, the focus has shifted towards understanding the diverse effects of gamification across different age groups and educational contexts, revealing nuances in how various demographics respond to gamified experiences(Sato et al., 2023) .This chronological review demonstrates the dynamic progression of gamification, underscoring its potential to transform educational practices through enhanced student interaction and achievement. The literature review on gamification and interactive learning reveals a significant shift towards understanding how these methodologies enhance student engagement and proficiency. Various studies underscore the positive correlation between gamification elements, such as rewards and competition, and student motivation. Specifically,Li et al highlight that incorporating game design principles into educational environments fosters a

more immersive learning experience that can transform student attitudes toward learning (Y. Li et al., 2024). This is echoed by other researchers who demonstrate that gamification can effectively increase retention rates and promote deeper cognitive engagement, thereby enhancing overall learning outcomes(Husin & Ismail, 2024; Jiménez-Valverde et al., 2024). In addition to engagement, the role of interactivity within gamified environments is central to the discourse. The interplay between gamification and active participation is examined in depth by Oskarita and Arasy who argue that digital tool enhance student engagement and critical thinking but also promote meaningful peer interactions(Elsa Oskarita & Hadid Nur'afra Arasy, 2024). Aligning with these findings, Soflano et al illustrate how gamified environments can be tailored to accommodate diverse learning styles (Soflano et al., 2015), further facilitating tailored engagement and proficiency.

Conclusion

The examination of gamification and interactive learning strategies within language education reveals significant enhancements in student engagement and language acquisition. Key findings highlight the positive impact of gamified approaches in fostering motivation, collaboration, and linguistic skills, ultimately resulting in a 30% improvement in vocabulary and grammar proficiency among learners .The research problem was effectively addressed through a mixed-methods design that incorporated quantitative metrics and qualitative observations, illustrating the necessity of gamified learning environments for achieving meaningful student outcomes. Furthermore, the implications of these findings are profound both academically and practically; they underscore the importance of integrating innovative pedagogical frameworks into language curricula to align with contemporary educational demands and technological advancements. This positions gamification not only as a motivational tool but also as a critical element in developing future-ready language learners. Practitioners and educational policymakers are encouraged to prioritize the adoption of gamified strategies, as they facilitate more interactive, student-centered learning experiences that can substantially enrich language pedagogy.

Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to further explore the long-term impact of gamification on language learning outcomes and student engagement. Additionally, examining the specific features of gamified applications that most effectively foster critical thinking and problem-solving could yield valuable insights for educators. Evaluating diverse demographic contexts and varying educational settings will deepen the understanding of gamification's effectiveness across different learner populations, thereby

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ensuring that practices are equitable and inclusive. Opportunities for cross-disciplinary research should also be explored to identify synergies between gamification and other educational technologies.

The continuous evolution of digital learning tools necessitates regular updates to pedagogical strategies to ensure alignment with best practices in language education. By establishing clear guidelines for the implementation of gamification in language classrooms, future studies can contribute to developing comprehensive frameworks that encompass theoretical, empirical, and practical dimensions of gamified learning. This research ultimately lays a robust foundation for further inquiry into gamification and its potential to transform language education into a more dynamic and engaging process, fostering lifelong learning skills. As evidenced, this aligns with broader global educational goals of promoting active and meaningful learning experiences that adapt to the needs of diverse learners in a rapidly changing world.

The findings of this research underscore the importance of integrating pedagogical principles with digital innovation to maximize the effectiveness of gamification in language learning. Educators must consider factors such as learner autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and differentiated instruction when designing gamified activities. Furthermore, effective gamification should go beyond surface-level engagement by embedding meaningful learning objectives within the game mechanics, thereby ensuring that learners not only enjoy the process but also achieve measurable linguistic progress.

These positive outcomes suggest that gamification not only fosters a more dynamic classroom environment but also supports the development of essential language skills. As students became more engaged through interactive and competitive tasks, they were observed to practice speaking, listening, and problem-solving more frequently and confidently. Furthermore, the collaborative nature of many gamified activities encouraged peer learning, as students often helped each other to achieve common goals or overcome challenges. This collaborative atmosphere contributed to a sense of community and mutual support within the classroom, which is known to further enhance motivation and reduce language anxiety. Consequently, the integration of gamification strategies appears to make a supportive and stimulating learning environment that benefits both individual and collective language development.

Future research should explore longitudinal studies to assess the sustained impact of gamification on learners' language proficiency and motivation. Additionally, investigations into the cultural and contextual adaptability of gamified tools will be crucial for global implementation. Collaborative efforts among educators, instructional designers, and technologists are necessary to develop inclusive, accessible, and culturally sensitive gamified platforms. Through such initiatives, gamification can evolve from a supplementary tool into a core strategy in language education, driving innovation and supporting equitable learning opportunities across diverse educational settings.

Suggestion

The use of gamification in foreign language learning, particularly in learning English, is essential for enhancing student engagement and motivation. Gamified learning environments transform traditional classroom activities into interactive and enjoyable experiences by incorporating game elements such as points, badges, leaderboards, and challenges. These features make the learning process more dynamic and encourage active participation. Additionally, by engaging in educational games, students experience reduced anxiety, which is often a barrier in language acquisition. Lower anxiety levels create a more relaxed and supportive atmosphere, allowing learners to take risks and practice without fear of making mistakes. This, in turn, positively impacts their proficiency in the four key language skills: speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Games can be tailored to target each of these skills such as role-playing games for speaking, story-based quizzes for reading, writing prompts with time limits for writing, and audio-based tasks for listening. Consequently, gamification not only makes language learning more appealing but also contributes to the comprehensive development of students' English abilities. Moreover, naturally gamification-based learning has taught students to work together to share ideas and even compete to achieve learning goals that have been set before.

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