Play To Learn: Exploring Gamification in an English Language E-Learning Platform

Bermain sambil belajar: Menjelajahi Gamifikasi dalam Platform E-Learning Bahasa Inggris

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how gamification affected students' motivation, participation, teamwork, and learning outcomes in an English-language e-learning platform. Semi-structured interviews and structured observations were used in a qualitative case study. Sixty-two third-semester English education majors from Universitas Sulawesi Barat, Indonesia, participated in the study. They were specifically chosen from two classes that used an e-learning platform with gaming elements. The results showed that gamification components such as incentives, achievements, and challenges considerably enhanced learners' motivation, excitement, and active engagement in English learning activities. Furthermore, gamification fostered positive social interactions, including collaboration, idea-sharing, mutual support, and healthy competition among learners. The observation data corroborated these findings, demonstrating high engagement levels, effective utilization of gamification features, strong focus and persistence, and notable improvements in achieving English learning goals. The study concludes that gamification can produce interesting, fun, and productive learning environments that improve students' motivation, engagement, teamwork, and general success in learning English. It is suggested by the implications that gamification techniques be used to encourage learners' motivation, engagement, and positive social dynamics. Future studies could examine how gamification affects self-regulated learning mechanisms, intrinsic motivation, and language ability over the long run.

Keywords: gamification, e-learning, English language learning

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INTRODUCTION

Lately, there has been a noticeable increase in the adoption of gamification techniques in educational platforms, which presents a viable method for improving student motivation, engagement, and learning experiences in general. Gamification, or the use of game principles and components outside of games, is becoming increasingly popular in various fields, including language acquisition (Isma et al., 2024; Zhang & Hasim, 2023). Previous studies have explored the potential of gamification in improving learners' motivation, engagement, and achievement across different educational settings (Bouchrika et al., 2021; Isma et al., 2022; Kaya & Ercag, 2023; Mohammed et al., 2024; Yu et al., 2020). Researchers have shown the benefits of gamification components like points, badges, leaderboards, and prizes on students' intrinsic motivation and general performance. The benefits of gamification components like points, badges, leaderboards, and prizes on students' intrinsic motivation and general performance have been shown by researchers (Saleem et al., 2022; Xiao & Hew, 2024; Xu et al., 2021). Furthermore, gamification has been discovered to encourage playfulness and enjoyment in the learning process, which raises learner satisfaction and engagement (Alt, 2023; Rivera & Garden, 2021; Saleem et al., 2022).

In the context of English language e-learning platforms, an absence of research thoroughly examines the effects of gamification on encouraging cooperation and pleasant social interactions among learners. While some studies have explored the potential of gamification in promoting peer interactions and cooperative learning (Fonseca et al., 2023; Ho et al., 2022; Redondo-Rodríguez et al., 2023), there is a need for in-depth qualitative investigations that capture the nuances of learners' experiences and perspectives. Although gamification is becoming increasingly popular, little research has explored the complex dynamics of how gamification affects students' motivation, engagement, teamwork, and overall learning experiences in English language e-learning settings. Qualitative investigations that offer a deep understanding of the learners' experiences and views are needed, even while quantitative research has provided light on the effects of gamification on particular learning outcomes, such as test scores or task completion rates.

This research aims to close this gap by performing a qualitative case study investigating how gamification affects learners' motivation, engagement, teamwork, and overall learning experiences on an English-language e-learning platform. Through a qualitative methodology, the researchers want to understand the participants' viewpoints, drives, and interactions in the gamified learning environment. This study contributes to the growing literature on applying gamification in educational contexts, specifically within English language learning. The results of this study may also influence the development and application of gamified e-learning platforms by offering perceptions of how gamification techniques might be applied to improve learner motivation, engagement, teamwork, and general learning experiences.

METHODS

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative case study methodology, and the current study investigated how gamification affects learners' motivation, engagement, teamwork, and overall experience in an English-language e-learning platform. A case study design made sense since it enabled a thorough examination of a current issue in the context of real-world events. (Yin, 2018). Qualitative methods were used to gain a rich understanding of the participants' experiences and perceptions, aligning with the interpretive nature of the research. In this study, the case was the implementation of gamification strategies in an English language e-learning platform at a specific university.

Context and Participants

The research was conducted at the English Language Department of Universitas Sulawesi Barat, Indonesia. The participants were third-semester students enrolled in the department's Intermediate Grammar courses. There were five classes in the third semester, and a purposive sampling method was employed to select classes, Class A and Class B, for the study. The combined number of participants from these two classes was sixty-two students. The gamification strategies were implemented in these two Intermediate Grammar classes using Quizizz, an online gamified learning platform that can be accessed via personal computers and mobile devices. Quizizz incorporates gamification elements like time challenges, leaderboards, memes, and personalized feedback to create an engaging and interactive learning experience (Isma et al., 2022).

Instruments and Measures

The researchers used observations and interviews as their two main instruments for gathering data. Four participants were chosen, and semi-structured interviews were held with them to get their thoughts, experiences, and viewpoints on applying gamification in the English language e-learning platform. The researchers used observations and interviews as their two main instruments for gathering data. Four participants were chosen, and semi-structured interviews were held with them to get their thoughts, experiences, and viewpoints on applying gamification in the English language e-learning platform. The motives, levels of involvement, collaborative experiences, and overall learning experiences of the participants were all thoroughly explored through the interviews.

Additionally, structured observations were conducted during the participants' interactions with the gamified e-learning platform. The observations aimed to capture real-time data on the participants' participation levels, motivation, social interactions, utilization of gamification features, focus and persistence, and achievement levels. The combination of interviews and observations provided a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon from multiple angles.

Procedures

The study was conducted within the context of English language courses at the university, where gamification strategies were implemented in an e-learning platform. The researchers followed these procedures: (1) Introduction to the gamified e-learning platform: Participants were provided with an overview of the platform, its features, and the gamification elements incorporated, such as rewards, achievements, leaderboards, and interactive challenges; (2) Training and familiarization: Participants received training on how to navigate and effectively utilize the gamified e-learning platform. They were given time to familiarize themselves with the platform and its gamification components; (3) Implementation of English language learning activities: The participants engaged in various English language learning activities, such as grammar practices and assignments, through the gamified e-learning platform; (4) Data collection: During the implementation phase, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with four selected participants to gather their perspectives and experiences. Additionally, structured observations were carried out to document the participants' behavior, interactions, and engagement with the platform; (5) Debriefing and follow-up: After the data collection phase, the researchers conducted debriefing sessions with the participants to clarify any remaining questions or concerns.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, a popular qualitative data analysis technique, was utilized to examine the information gathered from observations and interviews. (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Finding, examining, and summarizing patterns or themes in the data constitute the process of thematic analysis. The researchers took a systematic approach as they became acquainted with the data, created preliminary codes, looked for themes, reviewed and improved them, and finally defined and named them. Through this iterative process, a thorough comprehension of the participants' experiences was made possible, and significant themes regarding the effects of gamification on motivation, engagement, teamwork, and general learning experiences emerged. After that, the results were analyzed and debated in light of previous research and theoretical frameworks, using methods including member verification, peer debriefing, and triangulation to guarantee rigor and reliability.

FINDINGS

Interviews Results

Here is a description and explanation of the findings from the interviews:

1. Motivation and enthusiasm

Participants expressed high motivation and enthusiasm when using the gamified e-learning platform to learn English. They felt motivated and energized to learn English due to gamification elements such as rewards and achievements.

"I feel very motivated when using an e-learning platform that uses gamification. Using rewards and recognition makes me more eager to learn English."

"Yes, gamification increases my motivation to learn English. I feel challenged to achieve the targets and earn the rewards offered."

The research revealed that learners exhibited high motivation and enthusiasm when using the gamified e-learning platform. They felt motivated and driven to learn English due to the gamification elements.

2. Engagement and English language skills

Participants demonstrated high levels of engagement in English learning tasks and activities on the gamified e-learning platform. They felt that gamification increased their active participation and involvement. Furthermore, participants believed that gamification enhanced their English language skills more interestingly and interactively.

"With gamification, I am more active and engaged in English learning tasks and activities. I feel more motivated to try new things and develop my English skills."

"Yes, gamification makes learning English more interesting and interactive. I feel more involved in the learning process and feel the improvement of my English skills."

The study found that participants engaged highly in English learning tasks and activities on the gamified e-learning platform. They felt that gamification contributed to their active participation and involvement. Participants also noted that gamification enhanced their English language skills by making learning more interesting and interactive.

3. Collaboration and competition

Participants reported positive social interactions with their classmates using the gamified e-learning platform. They engaged in collaboration, shared ideas, and supported each other. The competitive elements within the gamification framework provided additional motivation for them to compete with their classmates.

"I enjoy interacting with my classmates in using the gamified e-learning platform. We share ideas and support each other to achieve our learning goals."

"The competition element in gamification makes me more motivated to compete with my classmates. We encourage each other and try to achieve the highest achievement in English learning."

Participants demonstrated positive social interactions with their classmates using the gamified e-learning platform. They engaged in collaboration, idea-sharing, and mutual support. The competitive elements within the gamification framework motivated them to compete with their classmates.

4. Learning experience

The participants indicated a preference for using gamification in English language instruction. Because of gamification, they had a more interesting and joyful learning experience. Their motivation and involvement in the English language learning process increased.

"What I like most about using gamification in English learning is the excitement and fun I feel. I feel more enthusiastic and happy in learning."

"Yes, using gamification makes the English learning process more interesting and fun. It motivates me to keep learning and developing my English skills."

Participants responded favorably to the application of gamification in the study of English. Gamification made learning more entertaining and engaging, raising their interest and motivation in learning English.

The results show that learners' motivation, engagement, teamwork, and overall learning experience were all improved by the gamification of the e-learning platform. Applying gamification components, such as competition, prizes, and interactive features, made learning English more pleasurable and successful.

Observations Results

The following is an overview of the research findings that can be observed from the observation instrument:

1. Participation Level: The learners actively participate in using the gamified e-learning platform. They consistently carry out assigned tasks and activities.
2. Motivation Level: The learners display high motivation and enthusiasm when using the gamified e-learning platform. They show great enthusiasm and a strong interest in learning English.
3. Social Interaction: The learners actively collaborate with their peers within the gamified e-learning platform. They assist each other, share ideas, and support one another.
4. Utilization of Gamification Features: The learners effectively utilize the available gamification features and elements within the e-learning platform. They use rewards, achievements, leaderboards, and other gamification elements to enhance their motivation and engagement in English language learning.
5. Focus and Persistence: The learners demonstrate high focus and persistence when using the gamified e-learning platform. They remain engaged in tasks and activities with good concentration.
6. Achievement Level: There is a significant improvement in the learners' achievements in attaining the set learning goals within the gamified e-learning platform. They show improved English language proficiency, better task completion, and successful attainment of the established learning targets.

The observations reveal that the implementation of gamification in the e-learning platform has positively influenced the learners' participation, motivation, social interaction, utilization of gamification features, focus, persistence, and overall achievement in English language learning. The learners actively engage with the platform, demonstrate high motivation levels, collaborate with their peers, effectively utilize gamification elements, remain focused, and progress significantly in their language learning journey.

DISCUSSION

The current study examined how gamification affected students' motivation, engagement, teamwork, and overall learning experience on an English-language e-learning platform. The results showed some advantageous effects linked to the application of gamification techniques. The interview results demonstrated that gamification elements, such as rewards, achievements, and challenges, significantly increased learners' motivation and enthusiasm for English language learning. These elements provided a sense of accomplishment and enjoyment, fueling their desire to continue learning and improving their skills. The opinions, approaches, and difficulties encountered in language instruction might offer insightful information to enhance students' language learning outcomes (Rasmin et al., 2024). One of the strategies in learning is gamification, which can stimulate students' motivation (Isma et al., 2024).

Additionally, gamification increased students' interest in and participation in educational tasks and activities, which helped them grow their English language proficiency in a fun and engaging way. Notably, the competitive aspects of gamification fostered positive social interactions among learners. They collaborated, shared ideas, and supported one another while experiencing healthy competition that motivated them to excel. The observation findings corroborated the interview results, indicating that learners actively participated, displayed high motivation and enthusiasm, effectively utilized gamification features, and demonstrated strong focus and persistence in their learning endeavors. Significantly, learners achieved notable improvements in attaining English language learning goals and enhancing their overall proficiency.

Previous studies have demonstrated that gamification positively affects motivation, engagement, and learning experiences. For example, Sailer & Homner (2020) found that learners' motivation, enthusiasm, and engagement notably increased through rewards, achievements, and challenges. These aspects enhanced learners' desire to continue learning and fostered collaboration, healthy competition, and positive social interactions among learners (Sailer & Homner, 2020). The results of studies on gamification in education are consistent with the high levels of motivation, excitement, and perseverance that learners exhibit, as well as their noticeable gains in English language proficiency (Alahmari et al., 2023; Lim et al., 2023). Studies have demonstrated that gamification enhances students' inner and extrinsic motivation, engagement, and academic success (Lim et al., 2023). Research has also demonstrated the beneficial effects of gamification on students' morale, drive, and academic performance (Alahmari et al., 2023). Furthermore, gamification has been associated with improved higher-order thinking skills and English language learning outcomes (Nathan & Hashim, 2023; Zhang & Hasim, 2023). These findings support that gamification can effectively enhance language learning experiences and outcomes.

It is imperative to recognize the study's limitations despite its valuable insights into the effects of gamification on English language e-learning. Firstly, the study's narrow focus on a specific e-learning platform and small sample size could limit how broadly the results can be applied to different topic areas or educational situations. Secondly, the study did not examine the long-term effects of gamification on learners' motivation, engagement, and language proficiency, as it was conducted within a specific timeframe. The results of this study have some ramifications for how gamified e-learning systems are developed and used, especially when it comes to language acquisition. Educators and instructional designers should consider incorporating gamification elements that promote motivation, engagement, and social interactions among learners. These elements may include rewards, achievements, leaderboards, and opportunities for collaboration and friendly competition. Furthermore, the positive impact of gamification on English language skill development suggests the potential for expanding its application to other language learning contexts or subject areas where interactive and engaging learning experiences can enhance learners' performance and achievement.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative case study explored the impact of gamification on learners' motivation, engagement, collaboration, and overall learning experiences in an e-learning English language e-learning platform. The findings revealed that gamification elements like rewards, achievements, and challenges significantly increased learners' motivation, enthusiasm, and active participation in learning tasks. Additionally, gamification fostered positive social interactions, collaboration, idea-sharing, and healthy competition among learners. The observation data corroborated these findings, showing high levels of participation, effective use of gamification features, strong focus, and notable improvements in achieving English learning goals. These results highlight the potential of gamification in creating engaging, enjoyable, and effective learning experiences that enhance motivation, engagement, collaboration, and overall achievement. While the study has limitations, its findings contribute to the literature on gamification in education, particularly language learning. The implications suggest incorporating gamification strategies that promote motivation, engagement, and social interactions among learners. Future studies should look into the long-term impacts of gamification on language competency, the efficacy of certain gamification components, and how gamification affects learners' intrinsic motivation and self-regulated learning techniques. The research adds to the increasing knowledge about how gamification might improve learning and encourage favorable results in various educational contexts.

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