

Gamification in English as Second Language (ESL) Learning: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Gamification has become an indispensable part of modern education. Modern trends have led to innovative technologies in education, which have consolidated the utilisation of gamification as a mechanism for augmenting language acquisition. Although studies have been conducted on using different gamification platforms in education, more resources need to be specifically focused on gamification in language learning, particularly in the context of English as a Second Language learning. Therefore, based on previous studies, this systematic review investigates the impact of gamification on the acquisition of English as a second or foreign language. A total of 28 articles meeting inclusion criteria were selected from 85 retrieved through searches in three databases: Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), and the Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC), covering the period from 2020 to 2024. The review will critically evaluate the effectiveness of gamification in ESL/EFL education by analysing various studies and their findings in this field. By synthesising existing literature on the topic, the review provides an overview of the impact of gamification on language acquisition, motivation, engagement, and engagement among ESL/EFL learners. The review also discusses the potential challenges and limitations associated with implementing gamification in language learning contexts. Through this comprehensive analysis, the review seeks to offer insights into the best practices for integrating gamification into English language learning curricula and to identify areas for future research in this field.

Keywords: Behaviour, Engagement, English Language Learning, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English as a Second Language (ESL), Gamification, Gamified Learning, Motivation

Introduction

Millions of individuals worldwide learn the English language as a second language. Its primary function is to facilitate communication across cultures and languages other than English (Yacob et al., 2022). Moreover, English is a fundamental subject in schools globally, highlighting its importance in society (Boyinbode, 2018). In analogous settings, such as Malaysia and countries with populations for whom English is not the primary language, English serves as the predominant medium of instruction within educational institutions and professional settings (Rafiq et al., 2019). However, acquiring English as a second language

presents challenges, encompassing mastering grammar rules, linguistic proficiency, and practical application in real-world contexts. Therefore, exploring the methods or approaches available is essential to improving the student's English level of proficiency.

Teaching and acquiring English as a second language has faced new challenges and opportunities in the current technology era. Teachers and educators worldwide have explored innovative methods to captivate students and enhance their language acquisition journey. One particular strategy that has attracted significant attention is gamification. Gamification is a growing trend in language learning, where gaming is a successful teaching technique. Technology has opened up new possibilities for incorporating game elements into language learning environments, making them more engaging and interactive (Zhang & Hasim, 2023). Gamification integrates game elements and design principles into non-gaming contexts, such as education. Primary and secondary schools, higher education institutions, and adult learning programs have all included gamification. The program has enhanced many language proficiencies, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It involves promoting the acquisition of fundamental vocabulary and mastering intricate grammatical patterns to accommodate learners of varying proficiency levels. Educators believe gamification fosters pleasurable and captivating learning experiences and enhances student motivation and learning outcomes.

Transformational teaching methods and practices are highly associated with various factors influencing successful instruction. Technology, automation, digitisation, and entertainment intertwine with pedagogical practices. Furthermore, learning is enhanced through exposure to English-language media, acquiring intercultural and global awareness, and participating in substantive language learning endeavours (Maasum et al., 2015; Anak et al., 2021). This learning enhancement has led to the emergence of gamification as a potential method to engage and motivate learners in English language learning.

The potential applications of gamification in language learning are vast and promising. As educators continue to explore the integration of gamified approaches into language acquisition, it is essential to consider how gamification can empower learners and transform the language learning experience. The intersection of emergent technologies and gamification in language learning opens new avenues for innovation and pedagogical advancement (Purgina et al., 2020).

Literature Review

English as a Second Language Learning

Today, there is a strong focus on acquiring the English language due to its global stature and importance in education, career advancement, and communication. English is taught as a second language at all levels of school in Malaysia, with educators acknowledging its importance as a crucial tool for pupils to thrive in today's demanding global environment. Furthermore, English has emerged as the prevailing language for worldwide communication in the current digital age. The Ministry of Education Malaysia recognised the significance of this matter and implemented English as a compulsory subject in schools to enhance students' linguistic skills. Adapting to meet current and future domestic and international expectations is paramount. Every student must possess knowledge, critical thinking ability, leadership

skills, competency in many languages, ethical and spiritual values, and a strong national identity aligned with the national education philosophy (Wok Zaki & Darmi, 2021).

English is a gateway to worldwide opportunities, enabling individuals to participate in global business, academic partnerships, and cultural interactions. Conversely, having a high level of fluency in the English language is crucial for participating in international activities and pursuing local prospects in Malaysia. Proficiency in English is a prerequisite for career progression in numerous multinational corporations and worldwide institutions. Additionally, within the local context, English proficiency is increasingly important in various industries such as tourism, technology, and education (Sutrisno & Yani, 2019).

Furthermore, English proficiency can also be instrumental in bridging cultural gaps within Malaysia. With a diverse population of various ethnicities and languages, English is a common language that facilitates communication and understanding among different communities (Renganathan, 2021). Proficiency in the English language is crucial for facilitating effective communication, developing understanding, and fostering inclusivity and unity within Malaysia. Proficiency in English enables individuals to overcome language obstacles, promoting unity and togetherness within a nation.

Implementing the Common European Framework Reference, or CEFR, in 2017 highlights the importance of English language acquisition and the requirement for individuals to achieve certain competence levels. As a result, educators are constantly developing teaching and learning methodologies and evaluations for the English language to meet the demands of Malaysian students and ensure their global competitiveness.

Definition of Gamification

Technology in education has become necessary to fortify the instruction and acquisition experience in the contemporary era. Over the years, a significant shift has been toward incorporating computer hardware, software, and internet-based tools into instruction (Flores, 2015). This evolution has transformed the tools at our disposal and revolutionised the educational landscape and the methods employed to engage diverse generations of learners. Most of all, we have experienced dramatic changes in academic interests and the ways to teach different generations. Nowadays, most of the students are digital natives, and they learn and process information differently (Prensky, 2001). The millennial generation actively disseminates online content, partakes in gaming pursuits, and interacts on social media platforms as an integral part of their daily rituals. Technological progress and the evolving characteristics of learners have facilitated the incorporation of gamification into the instruction and acquisition of English as a second language.

Gamification is a new trend in language learning, particularly for those learning English as a second language. Gamification employs game features and mechanisms in non-game situations to augment learning experiences and foster engagement. Researchers have undertaken multiple research to examine the impact of gamification on English language acquisition as a second language. These studies investigate students' opinions regarding the efficacy of gamified applications in areas such as motivation and engagement and gamified learning activities that affect their ability to understand and produce language, including listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Additionally, these studies examine the impact of gamified activities on students' grammar and vocabulary acquisition.

A close relationship exists between gamification and emerging technologies. Gamification is frequently deployed via digital platforms and mobile applications, enabling learners to engage with interactive language learning activities at their convenience (Zhang & Hasim, 2023). The primary aim of gamification is to enhance user participation and motivation by incorporating game elements like points, leaderboards, and instant feedback (Flores, 2015). These gaming features cultivate a sense of challenge and accomplishment, increasing enthusiasm and engagement in language learning, parallel to integrating technological resources into second language acquisition.

Gamification refers to the explicit use of particular elements of games in non-gaming contexts (Deterding et al., 2011). The elements have different purposes and can be adapted to fit specific educational goals and objectives. Table 1 shows a brief definition of each element:

Table 1

Game elements and definition (Flores, 2015; Temel & Cesur, 2024; Alrashed et al., 2023; Ly, Q.C., 2021)

Elements	Purpose
Points	Numeric accumulation based on specific activities
Badges	Visual representation of achievements for the use shown online
Leaderboards	How the players are ranked based on success
Progress bars / Progression	Shows the status of a player.
Performance Graph	It shows the player's performance.
Quests	Some of the tasks players have to fulfil in a game.
Levels	A section or part of the game.
Avatars	Visual representation of a player or alter ego.
Social elements	Relationships with other users through the game.
Rewards/reward system	A system to motivate players to accomplish a quest.

Integrating these gaming components into ESL education provides a variety of advantages that go beyond conventional teaching approaches. Points and badges function as motivating instruments, encouraging students to engage and strive for achievements actively, thus boosting their involvement with the learning content and fostering a sense of accomplishment and advancement. In addition, implementing levels and leaderboards offers

pupils well-defined paths for advancement and encourages a positive spirit of rivalry. As students progress through stages and observe their names on leaderboards, they are incentivized to persist in studying and enhancing their English proficiency.

Quests in gamified ESL education offer learners narrative-driven challenges and interactive tasks, providing immersive and captivating language learning experiences. Framing learning objectives, captivating storylines, and quests provide a more dynamic and relevant approach to language acquisition. This approach encourages students to investigate, engage, and use their language abilities in varied circumstances.

These gaming components augment student interest and engagement and offer a more thorough and practical experience for learning the English language. Through gamification concepts, ESL educators can establish an instructive and engaging learning atmosphere, providing an immersive experience for their pupils.

Gamification and English Language Learning

Currently, gamification is used in education to promote student involvement in several subject areas, such as second language acquisition. Incorporating gamification in education seeks to enhance the appeal and effectiveness of the learning process for students. (Mohandas et al., 2020). Therefore, the introduction of technological innovation in second language teaching, specifically English in this research, dramatically appeals to students and enhances their learning experience. Gamification enables learners to engage and react inside social games, fostering a genuine experience of joy, empathy, and frustration and promoting adherence to social norms such as turn-taking. (Fogg, 2022). Furthermore, gamification offers pupils prompt feedback, enabling them to monitor their advancement and pinpoint areas that want enhancement (Phuong, 2020). English language learning offers notable benefits, as it encourages active engagement, boosts motivation, and allows for individualised learning chances.

Numerous research studies have explored the impact of gamification on language skill acquisition, especially within the context of acquiring English as an additional language. These studies primarily examine students' perceptions of the efficacy of gamified applications in areas such as motivation and participation and gamified learning activities that affect their ability to understand and produce language, including listening, reading, speaking, and writing. They also investigate the impact of gamified activities on learning grammatical content and vocabulary. (Koivisto & Hamari, 2019). The results of these studies suggest that gamification can significantly enhance language learning outcomes. Students view gamification in language learning as a source of motivation and involvement.

Implementing gamification has bolstered students' interest, involvement, and contentment with the educational process. Moreover, studies have demonstrated that gamification fosters dynamic involvement and cooperation among students as they participate in competitive or collaborative tasks inside a simulated gaming atmosphere (Ghazali et al., 2018; Rahmani, 2020). Moreover, studies have demonstrated that incorporating gamified language learning activities can benefit students' ability to understand and produce language, including listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills. It can also enhance their grasp of grammar and vocabulary (Zhang & Hasim, 2023; Yin & Yang, 2020; Dehghanzadeh et al., 2019). Dewi (2021)

suggests that children require increased teacher attention during language learning sessions, mainly when multiple students are in a class. To address this, using games is highly successful since it allows for group activities and enhances students' speaking skills.

Moreover, studies have demonstrated that gamification in ESL teaching improves language acquisition (Zhang & Hasim, 2023). Language acquisition refers to the process of acquiring a foreign or second language in order to build practical communication abilities. Gamification allows learners to engage in real-life situations, exercising and utilising their language abilities, enhancing their proficiency and fluency. Raheem et al. (2020) firmly advocate that "games are highly efficacious instruments for language acquisition." Utilising game features and mechanics in language acquisition enhances interactivity and fosters engagement. It cultivates a feeling of intricacy and accomplishment, resulting in heightened passion and engagement in mastering a new language.

Furthermore, the incorporation of gamification into language learning is strongly linked to emerging technology (Jadhav, 2022). According to Ishaq et al. (2021), digital platforms and mobile applications are widely used for incorporating gamified language learning activities. These platforms and apps allow students to engage with interactive information anytime and anywhere. The ability to easily access and use interactive language learning resources demonstrates how technology is becoming more integrated into language teaching. Due to the extensive availability of digital platforms and mobile applications, students now have increased access to interactive and captivating language learning tools, which promote a dynamic and immersive learning experience. This accessibility aligns with the changing technological integration in language education, enabling students to participate in language learning activities at their leisure.

In addition, gamification incorporates game design approaches and aspects derived from the gaming industry and social media, together with extensive research in human psychology spanning several decades. Gamification's adaptability is demonstrated by its capacity to be applied in several domains of language learning, including vocabulary acquisition, grammar exercises, speaking practice, and reading comprehension activities (Zhang & Hasim, 2023; Gil-Aciron, 2022).

Although extensive research and thorough studies have been conducted on using different gamification platforms in education, more resources specifically focused on gamification in language learning, particularly in English, need to be provided. This is significant considering the importance of gamification in the modern digital era, where technological advancements can significantly enhance the teaching and learning process. This systematic review seeks to offer a thorough comprehension of the utilisation of gamification in the instruction and acquisition of English as a second language. The review examines the current state of research on gamification in ESL education, focusing on learners' learning experiences and outcomes.

Therefore, this systematic review intends to study the effect of gamification in language learning, with two research questions as follows:

RQ1: How does gamification affect English language learning?

RQ2: To what extent is gamification helpful in improving students' motivation, attitude and engagement in learning English?

Methodology

A comprehensive literature review is a meticulous procedure encompassing identifying, assessing, and interpreting all relevant research related to a research question. This analysis was methodically carried out using publications and journals from 2020 to 2024. The articles were sourced from the Scopus, Web of Science, and ERIC databases. The review followed the PRISMA guidelines (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses), a widely recognised evidence-based standard comprising a 27-item checklist and a 4-phase flow diagram. The PRISMA framework provides researchers with directives for establishing inclusion and exclusion criteria. This process includes searching for related publications and studies and evaluating extensive literature review databases within a designated timeframe. The review commenced by gathering data on the efficacy of gamification in English language acquisition using the search engines SCOPUS, Web of Science, and ERIC. The collected data were processed through four stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

Phase 1: Identification

The data collected for this systematic literature review are derived from three primary sources: Scopus, Web of Science, and ERIC. Scopus is a comprehensive repository of peer-reviewed literature from scientific journals, books, and conference proceedings. This website thoroughly and extensively summarises the global research produced across several disciplines. The Web of Science (WoS) is the foremost platform globally for scientific research and citation data. It encompasses various subjects and origins, including scholarly publications, books, patents, and conference proceedings. ERIC, which stands for Education Resources Information Centre, is an internet-based library specialising in education research and information. ERIC is the predominant global index for educational literature. It encompasses various source types, education levels, and audiences.

The keywords or search strings for the literature research included “gamification,” “gamified learning,” “language learning,” and “ESL classrooms.” The keywords or stringing references for each source are described in Table 2:

Table 2

Stringing References

Source	Stringing Reference	No. of Studies
Scopus	Advanced search: TITLE-ABS-KEY (("English for Second Language*" OR "ESL" OR "English for Foreign Language" OR "EFL" OR "Teaching English as Second Language" OR "TESL*") AND ("gamification*" OR "gamified learning*") AND ("language learning*"))	34
Web of Science	Advanced search: TS=((("English for Second Language*" OR "ESL" OR "English for Foreign Language" OR "EFL" OR "Teaching English as Second Language" OR "TESL*") AND ("gamification*" OR "gamified learning*") AND ("language learning*"))	30
ERIC	Gamification, gamified learning, ESL classrooms, language learning	21

The research was subsequently evaluated based on their publication year, language, and literature genre in Table 3.

Table 3

The Eligibility and Exclusion Criteria

Criterion	Eligibility	Exclusion
Publication (Years)	2020 - 2024	< 2020
Language	English	Non-English
Literature type	Journal, research, articles	Non-journals, book chapters, abstracts

Phase 2: Screening

A rigorous screening process was conducted to eliminate identical articles and research papers from the three search engines. The remaining articles were then assessed according to the pre-established criteria. Several manuscripts were excluded because the reviewer needed to be given complete access. Additionally, duplicates were eliminated from the identical papers in the three resources. In the end, a thorough examination was conducted on a broad collection of selected articles.

Phase 3: Eligibility

A set of eligibility and exclusion criteria have been provided to determine whether articles are qualified. The selected papers were published between 2020 and 2024 to ensure their relevance and applicability to gamification in English language learning. Subsequently,

publications published in languages other than the target language were eliminated to avoid potential issues with translation and comprehension. Various genres of literature were evaluated, and sections of books, summaries, and materials not published in academic publications were excluded. The review focused on education and excluded literature on other disciplines, such as engineering, business, medicine, and science.

Phase 4: Inclusion

Only 28 articles that met the criteria were included for review in the final step. The chosen publications encompass a range of research methodologies, including quantitative and qualitative research, mixed-method research, action research, and experimental research. These articles were published between the years 2020 and 2024. The following criteria were considered to generate a systematic review of superior quality. Figure 1 concisely summarizes the data-collecting procedure utilising the PRISMA flow.

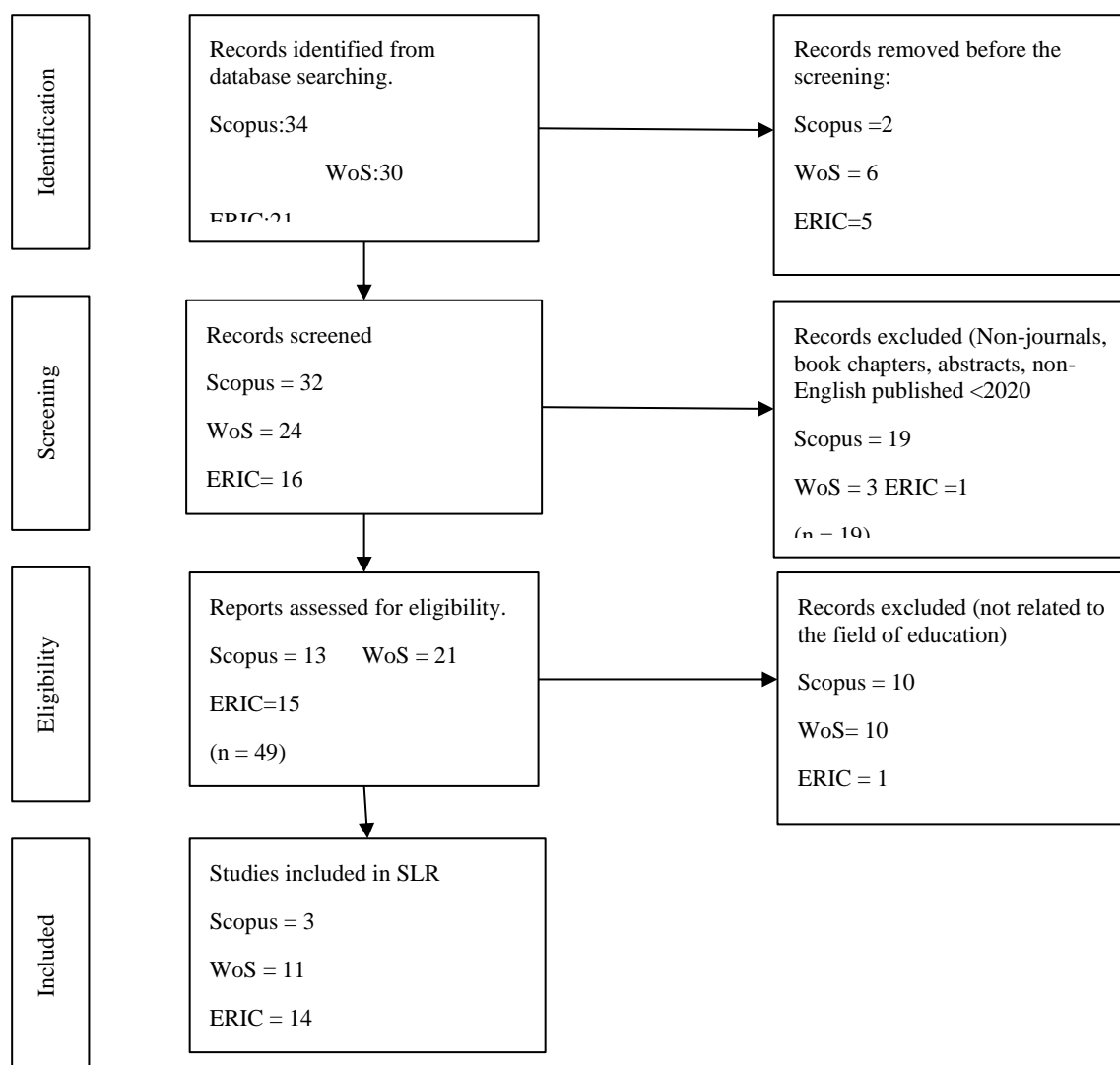


Figure 1. Flow chart of the research article selection process

Findings and Discussion

A total of six systematic literature reviews, two literature reviews, and twenty-one prior related research conducted between 2020 and 2024 were selected, utilising the aforementioned procedures for performing the systematic review. These studies focused on evaluating the usefulness of gamification in English language acquisition. One of the selected research works was published in 2020, while four articles were published in 2021, and the remaining fourteen were published in 2022. The other six articles were published in 2023, and the remaining three were published in 2024.

This section reviews six systematic literature reviews and two past literature reviews related to the effectiveness of gamification in learning. Both reviews indicated that gamification or game design experience positively influenced the attitudes of English language learners towards the subject in various skills, namely listening, reading, writing, speaking, grammar, and vocabulary. Systematic literature reviews, micro literature reviews, and empirical evidence support the usefulness of gamification in English language learning. The summaries of these findings are tabulated in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 4

Summary of Systematic Reviews and Literature Review on the Effectiveness of Gamification in English Language Learning

Year	Article / Study	Authors	Number of studies	Research Design	Results (Effectiveness of gamification)
2020	The Role of Gamification in Language Learning in Higher Education	Tomislav Ivanjko, Krešimir Pavlina and Iva Grubješić	22	Comprehensive Reviews Scopus database	Gamification increases user motivation, long-term engagement, and overall enjoyment in educational contexts.
2021	A Conceptual Model of Analogue Gamification to Enhance Learners' Motivation and Attitude	Rita Wong Mee Mee, Lim Seong Pek, Wong Yee Von, Khatipah Abd Ghani, Tengku Shahrom Tengku Shahdan, Md Rosli Ismail & Yugesheeneey Subba Rao	-	Comparative Analysis The systematic five-step approach proposed by Mohamad, Salam, and Bakar (2017)	They proposed a conceptual model of analogue gamification to enhance primary school learners' motivation and attitude, emphasising the importance of using games in education to improve student engagement and learning outcomes.
2022	Use of Gamification in Primary and Secondary Education: A Systematic Literature Review	Ana Vrcelj, Nataša Hoić-Božić and Martina Holenko Dlab	20	Comprehensive reviews SLR methodology by Okoli & Shabram (2010)	The selected papers highlighted positive outcomes of gamification in education, such as increased motivation, engagement, and successful learning achievements among students.
2022	Gamifying ESL Classrooms through Gamified Teaching and Learning	Nur Syafiqah Yaccob, Siti Fatimah Abd. Rahman, Syamsul Nor Azlan Mohamad, Azwin	-	Past literature reviews	Gamification in ESL classrooms can enhance students' motivation, engagement, and competition and help

		Arif Abdul Rahim, Khadijah Khalihah Abdul Rashid, Abdulmajid Mohammed, Abdulwahab Aldaba, Melor Md Yunus & Harwati Hashim			them learn meaningful English.
2023	Gamification in EFL/ESL Instruction: A Systematic Review of Empirical Research	Songchun Zhang and Zuwati Hasim	40	Comprehensive reviews PRISMA	The benefits of gamification in EFL/ESL instruction include improving English language skills, positively affecting students' attitudes, providing an authentic learning environment, and cultivating comprehensive competence.
2023	The Effectiveness of Gamified Tools for Foreign Language Learning (FLL): A Systematic Review	Zhanni Luo	21	Comprehensive Reviews PRISMA	Gamified foreign language learning tools show mixed effectiveness due to various factors. Identified limitations include methodology issues and biases in experiment settings.
2023	Use of Gamification in English Learning in Higher Education: A Systematic Review	Kevin Mario Laura-De La Cruz, Stefany Juliana Noa-Copaja, Osbaldo Turpo- Gebera, Cecilia Claudia Montesinos- Valencia, Silvia Milagritos Bazan- Velasquez & Gerber Sergio Perez-Postigo	18	Comprehensive Reviews	Gamification positively affects motivation, attention, and autonomy in language learning.
2023	A Systematic Review of Gamification and Its Assessment in EFL Teaching	Jakub Helvich, Lukas Novak & Petr Mikoska	11	Comprehensive Reviews PRISMA Various databases and Google Scholar	EFL teachers generally perceived a positive effect of gamification on pupils' motivation and expressed satisfaction with the

applicability of
gamification
platforms.

Table 5. List of reviewed studies on the effectiveness of gamification in language learning

Year	Author	Method	Skills in Language Learning	Result (Effects of gamification)
2021	Mohsen Jabali & Carol Walker	Quantitative	Vocabulary	Gamification enhances students' motivation and engagement, positively impacting academic performance. There is no significant difference in exam scores between the experimental and control groups.
2021	Maram Almufareh	Quantitative (Structural Equation Modelling)	Overall students' performance	Students in the technology-enhancement group scored higher in reading, grammar, vocabulary, and writing. Positive attitudes towards video gaming directly mediated a positive correlation with student achievement.
2021	Like Raskova Octaberlina & Imam Rofiki	Qualitative	Vocabulary	The use of Internet games improved vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation.
2022	Yang Chen & Shuang Zhao	Quantitative (structural equation modelling)	Vocabulary	Gamification promotes autonomous learning. Autonomous motivation positively affects

				perceived usefulness and ease of use.
2022	Ferdi Celik & Ceylan Yangin Ersanli	Quasi-Experimental	Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)	<p>Augmented reality (AR)-based mobile applications significantly improved language achievement.</p> <p>The use of AR produced better results in the CLIL lesson.</p> <p>The positive attitudes towards AR - satisfying, engaging, and willing to use in the future.</p>
2022	Pawarit Pingmuang & Prakob Koraneekij	Mixed-method (Quantitative and Qualitative)	Writing	<p>English writing skills improved after utilising the Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) application, Task-Based Approach, and Gamification.</p> <p>Rewards and feedback motivated students to improve their writing skills.</p> <p>Technology in learning promotes language acquisition, interaction, motivation, emotion, feedback, and linguistic knowledge.</p>
2022	Mark R. Freiermuth & Michiyo Ito	Qualitative	Reading	<p>In the extensive reading (ER) classroom, a social book reading game called Bibliobattle revitalises reading activities.</p> <p>The activities motivated the students. Games</p>

				stimulate learners' linguistic processes, promote sociocultural knowledge, and enhance metalinguistic awareness.
2022	Muhammet Demirbilek, Tarik Talan & Khadeegha Alzouebi	Qualitative	None	<p>Most teachers use gamification, finding it influential and essential.</p> <p>Teachers prefer interactive, group activities and fun games in courses.</p> <p>Gamification increases intelligence and motivation and makes learning enjoyable.</p>
2022	Nagaletchimee Annamalai, Mohd Elmagzoub Eltahir, Najeh Rajeh Al Salhi, Bilal Zakarneh & Samer H Zyoud	Qualitative	Vocabulary, Listening, Speaking, Reading & Writing	<p>Smartphone language learning applications positively impacted students' English language learning.</p> <p>Language applications provide an entertainment environment.</p> <p>Tasks are gamified to engage and challenge students, and curiosity helps students move forward and enjoy more rewards.</p> <p>(General findings about language applications for learning, not only about gamification).</p>
2022	Nagaletchimee Annamalai, Bialal Zakarneh,	Qualitative (Thematic Analysis)	Various skills	The thematic analysis is based on competence, autonomy, and

	Mohd Elmagzoub Eltahir, Najeh Rajah Al Salhi & Samer H Zyoud			relatedness. Positive feedback on how gamified lessons improved listening, speaking, and writing skills.
2022	Anh Tuan Pham	Quantitative	Grammar	The use of Quizziz significantly enhances English as a Second Language students' grammar achievement. Gamification improves learning behaviour and attitudes.
2022	Fruzsina Szabó, Kálmán Abari, Dániel Balajthy and Tünde Polonyi	Quantitative	None	The program showed improvements in the students' language skills. Using gamification in the program motivates students, leading to increased engagement and potentially better outcomes. Continuous feedback allowed students to monitor their progress and identify areas for improvement, contributing to a more personalised learning experience.
2022	Kriangkrai Vathanalaoha	Mixed-Method (Quantitative and Qualitative)	Various skills	Gamification enhances EFL classes, transforming passive learning into active engagement. The WEP program boosts student participation, attitudes,

				and learning development significantly.
				Gamification addresses English education challenges.
2022	Derryn Jackson	Theoretical, Quasi-Experimental, Quantitative and Qualitative (Cross-sectional study)	None	<p>Students showed motivation to learn with digital gamification.</p> <p>Digital gamification positively impacted students' motivation levels.</p> <p>Students preferred using English using computers over textbooks.</p>
2023	Irene Casanova-Mata	Experimental (use of pre-test and post-test design)	Linguistic comprehension	<p>Use of didactic intervention program - Amonglish Us</p> <p>Gamification positively impacted students' linguistic competence, particularly in writing skills.</p> <p>Gamification positively impacted students' attitudes toward the English subject, resulting in a more positive attitude, increased participation, and reduced negativity.</p>
2023	Gözde KOÇ & Selim Soner SÜTÇÜ	Quasi-experimental	Grammar	<p>There is a significant difference in favour of students who received gamified grammar learning.</p> <p>Incorporating</p>

				gamification into language learning can create an enjoyable environment, boost motivation, and improve students' grammar proficiency, highlighting the potential of gamified approaches in educational settings.
2023	Serhat Güzel	Mixed-Method (Quantitative and Qualitative)	None	<p>The gamified Google Classroom module is enjoyable and innovative.</p> <p>Game elements like badges and leaderboards enhanced gamified content quality.</p> <p>Gamification motivates learners but requires careful design for effectiveness.</p>
2024	Angeliki Voreopoulou, Stylianos Mystakidis & Avgoustos Tsinakos	Mixed-method (Quantitative and Qualitative)	Vocabulary	<p>The game promotes deep and meaningful English language learning, enhances vocabulary retention, and fosters a student-centred, friendly environment.</p> <p>Gamification increased motivation and satisfaction levels with the engaging storyline and scaffolded challenges.</p>
2024	Tatchakrit Matyakhan, Treenuch Chaowanakritsa	Mixed-method (Quantitative & Qualitative)	Reading	Students expressed positive perceptions of gamification in enhancing reading

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engagement and
comprehension in their
classes, highlighting the
benefits of digital tools
for collaborative
learning and task
completion.

2024	Shen Qiao, Susanna Siu-sze Yeung, Xiaoi Shen, Jac Ka Lok Leung, Davy Tsz Kit Ng & Samuel Kai Wah Chu	Quasi-experiment	None	Gamification positively contributed to students' behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement.
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RQ 1: How does gamification affect English language learning?

The Effectiveness of Gamification in English Language Learning

To answer this question, the researcher identified the effectiveness of gamification in English language learning by identifying the effects of gamification on language skills, namely grammar, vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Language learning researchers have focused on studying the influence of gamification on the development of second language skills. Multiple research studies have investigated the impact of gamification on language proficiency and have discovered favourable results. Table 6 lists studies on gamification's effectiveness in language learning. (Note: R for reading, W for writing, S for Speaking, L for listening, G for Grammar and V for Vocabulary)

Table 6

List of Reviewed Studies of the Effectiveness of Gamification in English Language Learning

Method	Authors & Year	R	W	S	L	G	V	Note
Quantitative n=5	Jabali & Walker (2021)						✓	
	Almufareh (2021)	✓	✓			✓	✓	
	Chen & Zhao (2022)						✓	
	Pham (2022)					✓		
	Szabo et al. (2022)							The study showed improvements in the student's language skills but did not mention the specific skill tested.
Qualitative n=4	Octoberlina & Rofiki (2021)						✓	
	Freiermuth & Ito (2022)	✓						
	Annamalai et al. (2022a)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
	Annamalai et al. (2022b)		✓	✓		✓		
Mixed Method n=3	Pingmuang & Kranakeekij (2022)		✓					
	Voreopoulou (2024)						✓	
	Matyakhan et al. (2024)	✓						
Quasi-Experimental n=3	Celik & Ersanli (2022)							The research conducted used Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)
	Casanova-Mata (2023)		✓					
	KOÇ & SÜTÇÜ (2023)					✓		

Annamalai et al. (2022b) conducted a qualitative thematic analysis of game-based English learning methods and concluded that gamification had a positive impact on EFL/ESL learners, enhancing their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. In addition, the implementation of gamification has the potential to significantly enhance students' performance in grammar, as Pham (2023) suggested. The findings indicate that gamification can improve second language proficiency and contribute to the overall development of language skills.

Additional research has demonstrated that the integration of gamification elements, such as points, leaderboards, and immediate feedback, into language learning activities has resulted in heightened student engagement and motivation, leading to improvements in language proficiency and communication skills (Almufareh, 2021; Demirbilek et al., 2022; Voreopoulou et al., 2024). The correlation between a positive attitude toward video gaming and student accomplishment is both direct and mediated, as stated by Almufareh (2021). Gamification enhances interest and motivation, enhancing the learning process's enjoyment (Demirbilek et al., 2022). Moreover, research has demonstrated that the interactive character of gamified learning activities effectively enhances vocabulary acquisition, grammar comprehension, and reading and listening skills development.

The incorporation of gamification in language learning is closely linked to the integration of developing technology. The widespread availability of digital platforms and mobile applications has greatly enhanced students' access to engaging and interactive language learning resources, leading to a more dynamic and immersive learning experience (Zhang & Hasim, 2023). Using gamification learning tools such as Kahoot!, Quizziz, Bibliobattle, Augmented Reality (AR), SpellingCity, gamified Google Classroom, FlipQuiz, Among Us, Duolingo, or Baboozle Game (KOÇ & SÜTÇÜ, 2023; Pham, 2022; Freiermuth, 2022; Voreopoulou, 2022; Celik, 2022; Octoberlina, 2022; Guzel, 2023; Jabali, 2021; Casanova-Mata, 2023; Jackson, 2022) have positively influenced students' learning and motivation levels. This accessibility corresponds to the rising integration of technology in language education, allowing students to engage in language learning activities at their convenience. On the other hand, using technology and online platforms motivates students to increase their engagement and potentially attain better outcomes in their learning. The continuous feedback allowed students to monitor their progress and identify specific areas for improvement, thereby boosting the personalised learning experience.

Gamification employs game design techniques, elements from the gaming industry, and principles of human psychology. This adaptability enables its application in several domains of language acquisition. Applying gamification in language learning involves various tasks, such as acquiring new vocabulary, practising speaking skills, and improving reading comprehension. By incorporating a complete approach, it enriches the educational experience for pupils (Matyakhon et al., 2024; KOÇ & SÜTÇÜ, 2023; Annamalai et al., 2022a).

RQ2: To what extent is gamification helpful in improving students' motivation, attitude, and engagement in learning English?

Gamification Improves Students' Motivation, Attitudes, and Engagement

The implementation of gamification has had a beneficial effect on students' motivation, attitudes, and behaviour concerning language acquisition. Gamified language learning

approaches can motivate students to actively engage in language learning activities by providing prizes, challenges, and a sense of accomplishment. The incentives and difficulties enhanced the drive and optimistic mindset towards acquiring knowledge, enhancing linguistic competence and fluency. Table 7 presents the results of past studies related to gamification improving students' motivation, attitudes, and engagement. The reviewed studies were classified into literature review discussions and empirical research.

Table 7

List of Reviewed Studies of Gamification Improves Students' Motivation, Attitudes, and Engagement

Type of Research	Author & Year	Motivation	Attitude	Engagement
Literature review discussions n=7	Ivanjko et al. (2020)	✓		✓
	Wong et al. (2021)	✓		✓
	Vrcelj et al. (2022)	✓		✓
	Yacob et al. (2022)	✓		✓
	Zhang & Hasim (2023)		✓	
	Laura-de La Cruz et al. (2023)	✓		
	Helvich et al. (2023)	✓		
Empirical research n=14	Jabali & Walker (2021)	✓		✓
	Chen & Zhao (2022)	✓		
	Celik & Ersanli (2022)			✓
	Pingmuang & Koraneekij (2022)	✓		
	Freiermuth & Ito (2022)	✓		
	Demirbilek et al. (2022)	✓		
	Annamalai et al. (2022a)			✓
	Pham (2022)		✓	
	Szabó (2022)			✓
	Jackson (2022)	✓		
	Casanova-Mata (2023)		✓	
	Voreopoulou et al. (2024)	✓		
	Matyakhan (2024)			✓
	Qiao et al. (2024)			✓

Celik (2022) conducted a study that investigated the use of Augmented Reality (AR) in a gamified Content and Language Integrated Lesson (CLIL). The results indicated that the use of augmented reality (AR) had a significant and favourable effect on the language skills of non-native English learners in a gamified Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) session. The learners showed positive attitudes towards augmented reality (AR) because of its enjoyable and compelling characteristics, indicating a willingness to use technology in future situations. Furthermore, using mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) in writing enhances language acquisition, promoting interaction, motivation, emotion, feedback, and linguistic understanding. According to Pingmuang and Koraneekij (2022), rewards and feedback incentivise pupils to improve their writing skills.

Furthermore, gamification's interactive and immersive nature creates a dynamic learning environment that promotes active engagement and dialogue among students. In their earlier research findings, Yacob et al. (2022) asserted that gamification can potentially enhance student engagement by promoting self-directed and independent learning. Through engaging in collaborative gameplay, students can actively participate in language exercises encompassing interactive role-playing scenarios, cooperative problem-solving assignments, and communicative language games. Active participation significantly enhances their speaking and listening abilities. A study conducted by Casanova-Mata (2023) found that an educational intervention programme using the popular game *Among Us* positively impacted students' emotional responses to the English topic. The group that was exposed to gamification showed a good effect. Implementing this gamified method led to a notable improvement in students' overall mindset, heightened participation, and decreased unfavourable emotions. In 2024, Voreopoulou developed the AR Escape Room Game, demonstrating increased motivation and enjoyment due to its engaging storyline and well-designed challenges.

The immediate feedback and progress-tracking capabilities in gamified language learning systems allow students to assess their learning and establish attainable objectives, fostering autonomy and self-regulated learning (Pingmuang & Koraneekij, 2022). Incorporating gamification in education allows students to assume responsibility for their language-learning journey and actively participate in self-evaluation and introspective exercises, essential for enhancing language proficiency (Ivanjko, 2020).

Additional investigation and comprehensive research are required to fully explore and understand the possibilities of gamification in language learning within the field of education (Ivanjko et al., 2020). Establishing a secure environment is crucial for gamified ESL classes (Yacob et al., 2022). Yacob et al. (2022) assert that teachers require assistance in creating and executing effective gamified language classes. Zhang and Hasim (2023) conducted a comprehensive review that identified several downsides of gamification, including technological challenges, short-lived impacts, and competition-related concerns. Gamified learning environments are designed to incorporate the essential elements of a game, including its dynamics, mechanics, and components. Furthermore, as Luo (2023) stated, using gamified learning aids in foreign language acquisition has shown varied results due to various circumstances. Therefore, it is crucial to identify the limits, such as methodological concerns and biases in experimental settings. On the other hand, there are also recommendations for future research investigating the use of gamification in educational procedures.

To summarise, incorporating gamification into ESL education can improve students' motivation, attitudes, and conduct towards language learning, positively affecting their language competency and fluency in several skill areas. The results of incorporating gamification into ESL training go beyond the usual language proficiency measures. Research has shown that including gamified language learning exercises improves students' motivation and engagement, promoting a sense of autonomy and self-directed learning. Gamification promotes active engagement and progress monitoring among ESL students by offering instant feedback, points, and rewards. This approach creates a more independent and empowered learning atmosphere (Yaccob et al., 2022; Zhang & Hasim, 2023; Freiermuth & Ito, 2022).

Conclusion

Gamification has demonstrated a substantial potential for augmenting student engagement and proficiency within the context of English language acquisition. By leveraging digital platforms and emerging technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR), educators can create dynamic and immersive learning environments that cater to diverse learning styles. This study underscores the importance of incorporating gamification into educational practices to boost learner motivation, confidence, and overall language competence. It also fosters a deeper understanding of the language, improves problem-solving skills and cultivates a positive attitude towards learning English. To maximise the benefits of this approach, ongoing professional development and a commitment to innovation are essential to ensure that educators can effectively implement and adapt gamification strategies for their students.

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