Chapter 12
Gamification and Language Learning:
Perspectives From Learners

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents a comprehensive systematic review of gamification in English language classrooms, emphasizing its impact on learner engagement and motivation. By synthesizing findings from 21 empirical studies, the chapter highlights how interactive and competitive elements of gamification can significantly enhance the learning experience. It addresses the importance of aligning gamified elements with pedagogical goals and incorporating learner feedback to optimize educational outcomes. Despite its potential, challenges such as technological barriers, resistance to change, and the necessity for digital literacy among educators are identified as key obstacles to effective implementation. The chapter provides actionable recommendations for educators, designers, and researchers. This work underscores gamification's transformative potential in English language education and advocates for its thoughtful and informed integration into teaching practices.

INTRODUCTION

Digital technology has potential to fundamentally transforms language education by introducing dynamic, interactive, and personalized learning experiences. It shifts the traditional classroom dynamic from a passive reception of information to an engaging participatory culture where students actively contribute to their learning processes. This shift not only helps educators meet evolving educational demands but also equips students with essential communicative and cultural competencies for the digital age. The use of digital tools in English language teaching has significantly enhanced the acquisition of key language skills—speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Moreover, the integration of game elements such as points, badges, and leaderboards into language learning activities leverages both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors to enhance learner engagement (Hamari, Koivisto, & Sarsa, 2014).

In recent years, there has been a marked increase in the integration of gamification—using game elements in non-game contexts with competition as a motivational tool—into language education. This approach is driven by the desire to alleviate the monotony of conventional learning methods and to accommodate various learning styles. Research has shown that gamified learning environments can significantly increase motivation, enhance engagement, and promote language learning autonomy (Baldeón et al., 2016; Chen et al., 2020). These tools facilitate engaging learning experiences that cater to diverse learner needs, effectively supporting the development of language competencies (Dehghanzadeh et al., 2019; Raffone, 2022; Thanyawatpokin & Vollmer, 2022).

Understanding the experiences and perspectives of learners in gamified environments is critical for multiple reasons. Firstly, it allows educators to assess how effectively gamification meets the diverse needs of students. Secondly, insights from learners can help refine these environments to better align with educational objectives and learner preferences. Lastly, such evaluations are vital for understanding the psychological and motivational dynamics that underpin successful language learning in gamified settings (Dehghanzadeh et al., 2019; Helvich et al., 2023; Laura-De La Cruz et al., 2023; Zhang & Hashim, 2023).

Gamification in language education has evolved significantly due to advancements in digital technology, becoming a prominent strategy for enhancing student engagement and language acquisition. This technique involves integrating game-design elements into educational settings to create dynamic, interactive learning experiences (Hamari, Koivisto, & Sarsa, 2014). Research suggests that gamification can improve motivation and engagement, which are vital for effective learning (Bai et al., 2020; Dichev & Dicheva, 2017; Thanyawatpokin & Vollmer, 2022). Applications such as points and badges in language learning contexts not only increase interaction

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