Research Article

Use of Gamification in Teaching English Grammar, Reading, and Writing

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Abstract

One of the transformative education strategies is gamification, which applies game-like elements, such as points, badges, leaderboards, and rewards in non-game contexts. It is essential for language learning since it encourages learners' engagement and motivation while strengthening the retention of skills. This study aimed to investigate the capacity of gamification to be an effective enhancer in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education at Kuwait University, a call to non-Western contexts that seek interactive learning with students. The first motivation behind this study was assessing whether gamification helps improve engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes for EFL students. This performance and level of engagement in two groups were compared with one, which received the traditional approach to instruction, and the other, which received the gamified strategies. Both pre- and post-tests focused on grammar, reading, and writing, with engagement surveys included. Overall, the group that used the gamified strategies had better parameters on all the counts; in other words, the engagement level increased, motivation improved, and skills retention improved. These results confirmed that gamified strategies work effectively in EFL classrooms. Further research should work toward developing gamification tools about diverse cultural contexts so that they become scalable and inclusive for broader applications in language education worldwide.

Introduction

In this changing and developing education strategies environment, gamification has become a very potent strategy to revise and enhance traditional language education. Gamification refers to incorporating game elements into tasks meant for training, improving motivation, engagement, and performance in most learning settings. EFL stands for English as a foreign

language. Gamification provides an engaging way to enhance and retain meaning in the students' end within teaching EFL (C. Li et al., 2024). This research study aims to explore the gamification process undertaken to enhance the engagement and quality of academic performances of Kuwait University students with the help of a quasi-experimental approach with various effectiveness, limitations, and implications for educational practice.Several theoretical lenses describe how game-like features can fulfil specific psychological needs to increase engagement in learning contexts(Panmei & Waluyo, 2023). Features such as leaderboards and rewards resonate with these needs because they establish achievement, advancement, and other relationships (Mudure-Iacob, 2020; Putz et al., 2020). The cognitive engagement theory supports the gamification model by pointing out active learning and underlining how interactive exercises can enhance the understanding and retention of new information (Luo, 2023; Sailer & Homner, 2020). The behavioural theory further points out that rewards for accuracy and instant feedback strengthen commitment and information learned. Such an approach justifies the psychological benefits of gamified learning and its further possible application in pedagogy.

Empirical studies on research have justified the gamification of language learning well. They have proved that gamification enhances positive change in language learning instruction. Yunus and Hua (2021) showed that gamified vocabulary practice exercises increased retention and reading comprehension in EFL because structured rewards and feedback loops motivated autonomous progress. Likewise, Helvich et al. (2023) captured continued growth in grammar and vocabulary in their longitudinal study over a year. They credit the development to the gamified exercises as they enable learner engagement for many hours of instruction. Self-learning and self-regulated characteristics of gamified exercise ensure that EFL learners are focused on them and hence become highly engaged, thereby increasing the chances for retention at the end of the semester (Alfailakawi et al., 2022; Thurairasu, 2022). Further proof comes from Putz et al.

(2020), who claim that gamified quizzes and related competitions consistently increased student retention and comprehension over several semesters. De La Cruz et al. (2023) similarly mentioned that quizzes were used to measure accuracy in grammar.

Meanwhile, Boudadi and Gutiérrez-Colón (2020) observed that the level of anxiety in learning a foreign language was reduced when the perspective changed. The difficulties in learning English have become more of a fun activity, with game-like lessons such as levelling up and scoring. Zainuddin et al. (2020) mentioned that the change in the learners' perceptions brought a commitment to long-term learning, which increased confidence among learners concerning their academia. All in all, using the application of gamification to solve some of the more pressing problems facing the EFL instructor can be feasible to ensure improved participation and retention. However, the presence of gamification in regions outside of the West, particularly within the Middle East, has not been studied considerably. Alharthi (2020) discusses a degree to which the implemented gamified tools can easily be adapted to different contextual cultures, which can embrace diverse students worldwide.
Traditional EFL instruction has failed to keep the students engaged, resulting in disengagement and poor academic results (Alomair & Hammami, 2019). This paper introduces gamification as an alternative procedure for EFL instruction. It hypothesizes that gamified grammar, reading, and writing activities will meaningfully affect engagement and motivation levels, thus improving the learning outcome. Those attributes with badges and leaderboards are sure to make EFL courses interactive and, therefore, most likely to retain the learning of skills (Helvich et al., 2023; Putz et al., 2020). Thus, the research problem would be how to evaluate the productivity of gamification in combating the impediments facing traditional methods of EFL instruction in the Middle East. Therefore, these gamified elements can be personalized according to cultural expectations. There is a tendency toward group learning to maximize the effects of gamification on general academic

performance (Abdeen & Albiladi, 2021; Alharthi, 2020).

The study provides an effective model for educators and policymakers integrating gamification in EFL instruction. Tools with game-like elements can make even the most passive classrooms become interactive spaces designed to encourage student engagement. Verifying the applicability of gamification in a Middle Eastern context will further enhance the innovation of education in the region and increase accessible processes to meet the needs of various students (Zainal, 2023). This research is feasible to conduct because it confines itself to achievable tools of gamification that can be easily applied by the teachers for different levels of proficiency at the classroom level.

This research study aims to assess the impact of gamification on EFL students' engagement, motivation, and performance in non-Western contexts. The paper gives educationalists and administrators practical insight into developing curricula and designing interactive teaching tools. It identifies some gaps in existing research that consider the adaptation of gamification in the context of Middle Eastern classrooms with cultural and technological limitations. This research paper attempts to add a culturally relevant approach to gamification in Education.

Methodology

Study Design:

This study employed a quasi-experiment design to observe the influence of gamification on EFL students. The subjects were split into two groups. The control group received the traditional form of instruction, while the second group received gamified learning activities. This design will allow comparison between both types of instruction and their effect on academic performance. The research was conducted over one semester in three courses with standardized curricula in English. The treatment group received weekly gamified learning strategies. The control group received traditional teaching.

Participants Inclusion Criteria

There were 90 students from the ages of 18 to 22. All participants were native Arabic speakers and had intermediate proficiency in the English language. They were Kuwait University students. The inclusion criteria were being enrolled at present for any of the courses, and minimum intermediate levels in English were to be taken into consideration based on their previous records.

Exclusion Criteria

All other students who were not originally native in Arabic or had insufficient or lesser levels of it were also excluded from the research because they were unable to stay through the semester for activities. This way, a homogeneous sample was developed to evaluate the intervention. However, the sample limitation to only one institution may reduce the generalizability of the findings.

Instruments

A mix of quantitative and qualitative tools was utilized to assess the study's outcome. Pre- and post-tests are conducted to measure the students' grammar, reading, and writing performance in percentages ranging from 1 to 100. The assessments are aligned and standardized so that consistency is maintained and correlated with the course's learning objectives. Surveys were administered on day one and at the end of the intervention. The Likert items provided the evaluation of the perceptions held by the students regarding engagement and motivation in this intervention. Specific to each gamification strategy, these were included in the questionnaires to test the effect of each. In addition, weekly quizzes and assignments were included to test actual progress. Points and badges were used in these tests to measure incremental achievement.

Gamification Strategies

Three different techniques of gamification were used in the activities of the treatment group. The weekly leader boards that show the best-

performing students create a competitive environment. Interactive quizzes with rewards in the form of points and badges given to the students for providing correct answers encouraged active involvement and reassertion of knowledge objectives. The group-based activities consisting of quizzes as well as problem-solving activities to be attempted by groups encouraged collaborative learning and social skills. These were to ensure that the gamified experience would have a holistic approach toward balancing individual and collective achievement.

Data Collection

Various data-gathering methods were utilized in the process to avoid any gamification effects that might have gone unnoticed. Pre- and post-tests given in class were marked through automated systems so as not to provide bias in marking. Quizzes and assignments, being held weekly, permitted constant monitoring of student's performance and provided immediate feedback upon completion of the said assignments. Surveys have been used to get qualitative data regarding the level of engagement and motivation of students. Open-ended responses were used to gain further insight into how they perceive the gamified activities.

Data Analysis

The study adopted t-tests to compare the academic achievement of the control and treatment groups and to identify the level of statistical significance of the difference. Qualitative data from surveys were thematically coded to identify student engagement trends and how specific gamification strategies enhance motivational aspects. These analyses could provide a more nuanced understanding of how gamification influences the learning outcomes and perceptions of students, bringing valuable insights into its role in EFL instruction.

Results

The data analysis results provide a comprehensive view of how the gamification approach to teaching English language skills enhanced the students' engagement, motivation, and performance metrics across all three domains: grammar, reading, and writing. The results show notable differences for all the analyzed metrics between the control and experimental groups, highlighting the advantages of gamified approaches in instruction.

Engagement and Motivation Scores

According to the engagement and motivation results as outlined in Table 1, considerable differences in the outcomes were recorded for the control versus the experimental groups. The average engagement of the gamified experimental group compared to the control group was 30 per cent higher than the latter. Eighty per cent of the gamified experimental group ticked questions on the engagement questionnaire, which were rated by four or five on the Likert 5-point rating scale. Only 50 per cent of the control students marked a higher level of engagement. Similarly, at all times, the gamified elements, including the badges and the leaderboards, will always trigger a higher motivation for the gamified experimental groups. Students commented that instant feedback is a good influencer on the progress of their points and that gamification of rewards is the most powerful motivational force, as psychological gamification of the awards might work towards improving student motivation. Such differences point out that such an approach to a game might powerfully motivate and engage learners, especially in weaker skill domains.

Table 1 *Comparison of Engagement Survey Scores*

Survey Item	Control Group (Mean Score)	Gamified Group (Mean Score)	Percentage Reporting High Engagement (Control Group)	Percentage Reporting High Engagement (Gamified Group)
I enjoyed participating in the lessons.	3.0	4.5	50%	80%
I felt motivated to improve my scores.	3.2	4.7	52%	85%
The activities helped me stay engaged	3.1	4.6	55%	82%
I want to use similar tools again.	3.3	4.8	57%	88%

Note: Scores are based on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree. The percentage of students reporting high engagement reflects those rated 4 or 5 on each item.

Therefore, the study's results confirm the positive effects of gamification as an English teaching methodology. The high levels of engagement among the gamified group suggest the motivational traits identified with interactive gamification strategies, such as points and leaderboards. The competitive environment developed within gamified learning environments motivates learners to engage with an EFL setting. Real-time feedback and rewards also appeal to the intrinsic sense of motivation in students, which forms a critical aspect of language learning. Therefore, qualitative and quantitative findings confirm that earlier researches were intended to study gamification's effectiveness in boosting people's engagement and motivation.

Performance Measures and Rate of Change in Language Skills

This means that the effects of gamification were highly improved, particularly in terms of grammatical competencies and literacy and writing skills in those who used it. Table 2 below compares pre-tests and post-test scores: control and experimental gamified. Regarding the grammatical scores, the gamified group went from 60 to 80, an increase of 33.3 per cent; the control group was up infinitesimally 8.3 per cent, according to Table 3. Such a statistically significant increase signifies that gamified grammar exercises with an orientation toward feedback are practical at improving accuracy based on the use of rules of language, building strength. These exercises demotivate through repetition, but point systems and rewards work as a remedy.

The other two, reading and writing, had impressive improvement among students in the gamified group. Reading scores improved by 25.8 percent from 62 to 78, and writing scores improved by 25.9 percent from 58 to 73. In contrast, reading scores improved only by 9.7 per cent, and writing scores improved only by 6.9 per cent among students in the control group. As an effect of improving the student's reading and writing skills, it displays how the gamified activities improve students' comprehension, retention, and articulation toward new language learning. This is due to the encouragement from the reward and the interactive part of game-based learning that lets them practice language skills every day and build on the most basic rules of their native language.

Table 2 *Pre- and Post-Test Scores in Grammar, Reading, and Writing*

Skill Area	Control Group Pre-Test	Control Group Post-Test	Gamified Group Pre-Test	Gamified Group Post-Test
Grammar	60	65	60	80
Reading	62	68	62	78
Writing	58	62	58	73

Note: Scores reflect average percentages of students in both groups' performance on grammar, reading, and writing assessments.

Table 3 *Percentage Improvement by Skill*

Skill Area	Control Group Improvement	Gamified Group Improvement
Grammar	+8.3%	+33.3%
Reading	+9.7%	+25.8%
Writing	+6.9%	+25.9%

Note: Percentage improvements are calculated based on pre-test and post-test scores for both control and gamified experimental groups, showing increased performance across grammar, reading, and writing skills.

The overall percentage of all three domains – grammar, reading, and writing – improved shows the practical aspect of gamification in teaching the english language to enable easy skills acquisition. The outcome from the gamified group far outperforms that of the control group on every scale. The outcome indicates that quizzes, scores, and leaderboards in defined gameplay promote engagement and mental activity through interaction-based learning. The curvilinear and instant responses result in better retention and ease of mastering skills. Hence, gamification has tremendous opportunities for teaching English in all EFL and ESL arenas. It makes dull repetition interesting in terms of the challenge, and learners will be able to maintain participation and increase their confidence of learners.

Qualitative feedback analysis

The engagement and motivation surveys set some open-ended questions that brought different opinions, perspectives, and student comments. The qualitative response reflected a shift in paradigm regarding attitudes toward learning English while in the gamification group. Although most of the students in the group were passive or reluctant to take courses, game-based activities crossed the motivational barriers. Whatever answers were communicated was that at all times, there is the rise of intrinsic motivation in the very students who enjoyed their fun in having game-like elements of repeating an English exercise. In their answers, most participants loudly hollered over the points and badges that brought to the session their more exciting experience and reduced anxiety levels generated by routine tests.

Furthermore, it is essential to observe that cooperative games also contributed much to the resistance since team-based games removed the competitive environment and instilled cooperative friendships amongst fellow learners. The competitive and cooperative characteristics within the gamified exercises lifted the burden of acquiring the new language, and learning to speak English did not sound as threatening for most of the learners. The overall qualitative response indicates that gamification of learning English successfully overbalances the initial resistance

among learners and encourages commitment to acquiring skills. Thus, it can be concluded with evidence that gamification in learning makes educational tasks goal-oriented and competitive, accompanied by self-reporting of progress. This is because gamification inspires students to improve their progress and excel against their equals within the cohort.

Discussion

The benefits of gamification in this study align with many educational contexts identified in the literature, proving its applicability and ability to impact learning outcomes positively. In the EFL classroom, gamification creates a dynamic, interactive environment that motivates students through game-like elements such as points, badges, and leaderboards(Abdeen & Albiladi, 2021). These tools make learning fun and give a framework for active participation, allowing the learner to dive deeper into the material. Success in gamification depends highly on the cultural and technical nuances of the learners' environment. The effectiveness of gamified learning is one key variable(Kaimara et al., 2021).For societies that tend to place greater emphasis on cooperative learning and away from individualistic competition, gamification strategies are designed with the same thought. The case study reported the anxiety of the student who fears the competition part, which involves leaderboards, among other things. With each leading board intended to encourage achievements and motivation values, the pressure and even a sense of being left behind becomes more common for students compared to their fellows(Koivisto & Hamari, 2019). Therefore, balancing the personal with teamwork awards might mitigate such an effect, allowing a place where people could feel not as exclusive or stressed regarding studying. Gamification orienting towards tasks, group games and shared rewards would stimulate a sense of community and shared achievements in tandem with the cultural worth that values group coordination and harmony(Li et al., 2024). Gamification allows for conquering weaknesses of the traditional instruction delivery mechanism found in areas where the delivery mechanism is teacher-centred. Students are generally treated as passive recipients in regions where such teacher-centric areas dominate the delivery of the learning process. This may lead them to lack critical thinking(Helvich et al., 2023).

Gamification engages students more actively in the learning process. The interactive nature of gamified activities requires students to engage in participating, solving problems, and peer collaboration that engenders a student-centred culture(Liu et al., 2024). Such a change in the case of learning promotes involvement from the learners' end. However, it cultivates teamwork, effective communication, and solving a problem, which are essential requirements for achievement in education and professional environments. In several respects, gamification used in instructions of EFL is full of challenges(Huseinović, 2024).

Cultural dynamics are both facilitators, but sometimes, they also become hindrances to effective gamification. The competitive elements of some gamification cultures fit well with collaborative learning, but in others, it would be considered disruptive and even counterproductive(Luo, 2023).Adapting gamified strategies to accommodate individual and collective achievements leads to a balanced approach suitable for a more significant number of learners. A final major challenge to implementing successful gamification is the technology infrastructure(Hashim et al., 2019). Even though many regions still face a lack of reliable internet connectivity and outdated technological tools, participation is even worse(Mudure-Iacob, 2020). These limitations contribute towards the widening of existing disparities in education. When the students come from a poor background or even rural background, it is impossible to ensure good access to digital tools along with internet connectivity and, eventually, insufficient engagement of a student with gamified interfaces of learning(Demirbilek et al., 2022).

Growing demands for new online and offline ways have to combine two gamification strategies. Through printed leaderboards, offline quizzes, or game-based activities that do not require constant internet connectivity, all students can be involved in the learning process regardless of their access to technology(Nathan & Hashim, 2023). The hybrid gamification approach, combining online and offline methods, is a promising pathway for overcoming these barriers. Educators can create an inclusive environment by providing a mix of digital and non-digital tools to accommodate students with varying levels of access to technology. Offline tools such as physical badges, paper-based quizzes, and classroom-based games can complement digital platforms, ensuring that no student is left behind(Panmei & Waluyo, 2023). This approach addresses not only the immediate problems of technological access but also makes the learning environment more balanced and fair for all the students to enjoy the benefits of gamified instruction. Besides, in addition to cultural and technological considerations, the psychological effects of gamification on the learners are also critical considerations(Dehghanzadeh et al., 2021).

Gamified activities are highly related to better motivation and engagement; however, they may have undesirable effects like increased stress and anxiety based on the pressure associated with good performance and success through competition. This is often very overwhelming for many students, especially in such an environment of high stakes concerning Education(Putz et al., 2020). Educators must design games focusing on inner drives or personal accomplishments instead of external recognition or competition to reduce these impacts. Masterly, self-enforced and collaborative success makes learning fun: with minimal tensions, highly driven and sure, not as stressed as well as becoming optimistic in their thought to learn(Rashed, 2017). The primary benefit is that gamification now opens possibilities for one to fill the lacunas existing between the traditional teaching method and the current imperatives of learning(Rahmani, 2020).

Active, critical engagement method - of this category, rote memory will be the most frequent type observed in most non-Western countries; it can be found by integrating game-like factors into curricula used as teaching aids, hence making the learning process worthwhile while interesting. Thus the cognizable material would be much more explicit to students(Dehganzadeh & Dehganzadeh, 2020). This approach not only improves the results in academics but also prepares students to face the challenges of today's workforce, which will require them to possess more skills in terms of imagination, cooperation, and adaptability(De La Cruz et al., 2023). Further, gamification is the most significant tool that might be a great enabler in satisfying the multiple demands of EFL classroom learning. Learning a language is very complex and multi-dimensional, and it requires the development of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Gamified activities can be applied to specific language skills so that students can make it more challenging and entertaining while practising their improvement(Castillo-Cuesta, 2020).

A gamified activity focused on varied learning styles and preferences of students can be an effective tool for teachers to make a language learning environment more inclusive and helpful(Boudadi & Gutiérrez-Colón, 2020). There is even some benefit to educators since gamified tools and strategies now open up new avenues to let educators connect with their students, making teaching more fun and rewarding. Gamification empowers educators to track student progression in real time, monitor areas where students are performing poorly, and offer necessary support to ensure students will succeed(Bolat & Taş, 2023).This data-driven teaching approach can improve student learning and allows instructors to regularly refine their approaches to instruction and better serve students' evolving needs. Thus, The gamified elements can be incorporated into educational institutions' standardized language courses to design interactive and student-centred teaching and learning methodologies(Alfailakawi et al., 2022). Therefore, there is a significant requirement for the incorporation of gamification in education policy and practice, as well as for the

preparation of educators with training and support to implement gamified approaches effectively. The findings of previous studies point out the vast potential of gamification as a transformative tool for EFL instruction (Al-Dosakee & Ozdamli, 2021). Addressing the cultural, technological, and psychological factors that influence its effectiveness, educators can harness the power of gamification to create engaging and inclusive learning environments that meet the diverse needs of students. With its ability to foster active participation, promote collaboration, and enhance learning outcomes, gamification offers a promising pathway for reimagining traditional educational practices and preparing students for success in the 21st century (Abdel-Ghany Al-Sabbagh, 2023).

Conclusion

This study explores the influence of gamification on learners at Kuwait University in terms of helping improve learning results because it is student-centred. Introducing elements from gamification, such as scoring points, badges, or even leaderboards in regular activities in the class, induces competitiveness and collaborative effort as learning strategies. In other words, it implies that this strategy contributes to their better understanding of the content knowledge itself. As for gamification, this is a powerful change model, particularly in a non-Western context for teaching and learning, as they continually face cultural resistance toward Western pedagogies. Its capacity to inspire intrinsic and extrinsic motivation helps develop an exciting and inclusive learning setting. Reimagining the old conventional EFL instruction, gamification offers new opportunities to educators to build interactive learning experiences and maintain student engagement over time. The findings in this study have made gamification a promising strategy for transforming instructions in the English language, as it can fulfil diverse student needs.

Recommendations

Future studies should explore the long-term effects of gamification and its scalability in various learning environments. Therefore, Researchers are challenged to fine-tune gamified strategies to be specifically tailored to particular cultural and educational needs and, hence, more generally applicable.

Limitations

This study is focused on short-term outcomes, and insights regarding the long-term impact of gamification remain constrained. It is restricted to one institutional context that cannot reflect the variety of educational contexts. More extensive research has to be conducted to generalize these findings.

Conflict of Interest

Author declares no conflict of interest.

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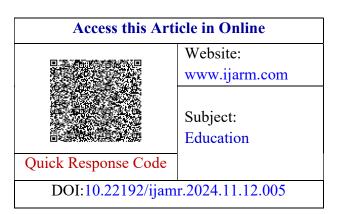
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