JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF LANGUAGE GAMIFICATION ON ESL LEARNERS' ENGAGEMENT AND PROFICIENCY: A STUDY OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN PAKISTAN"

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Abstract

A research study extends investigation into how gamification practices shape student involvement together with their English language competence among Pakistani elementary ESL students. Outside gaming environments game-based elements have taken shape as an essential method known as gamification which creates new opportunities for better learning outcomes. Research conducted in school classrooms studied the effect of game-based instructional elements on both student participation levels and their language acquisition outcomes. The study employed multiple research methods which included student and teacher surveys along with structured interviews of participants who attended various institutions in government and independent sectors across urban and rural districts. The research investigates the degree to which gamification strategies help learners surpass ESL education obstacles stemming from poor student engagement and limited budget and exposure to English standards in Pakistan. The study shows gamification enables interactive learning environments that produce substantial student engagement and improved language proficiency. Currently technical infrastructure constraints and inadequate teacher proficiency in video game educational methods block the implementation process. The research findings demonstrate that local governmental bodies should accept gamification-based initiatives for ESL curriculum development since they present performance-enhancement solutions for Pakistan's language education.

Keywords

Language Gamification, ESL Learners, Engagement, Proficiency, Second Language Learning

Introduction:

Educational research growing substantially because gamification with game elements produces enhanced performance results in academic domains including language teaching. Scientific research shows that adding game elements to typical learning systems through gamification methods creates successful outcomes that enhance student participation as well as learning accomplishments (Deterding et al., 2011). ESL students in Pakistan benefit from gamified learning approaches because these methods help tackle major educational challenges through students' weak commitment to classroom activities and restricted English resource access as well as their limited outside-school educational opportunities.

Gamified educational tools encounter both difficulties and advantages when introduced to Pakistan's dual school environments which merge urban and rural educational institutions along with private and public sectors. The traditional teaching methods prove inefficient at maintaining student engagement so they produce substandard learning results according to Ali & Hamid (2022). Gamified education creates enjoyable learning by engaging students actively as they develop their language skills as Zainuddin et al. (2020) indicate.

The study investigates how game-based strategies impact ESL student classroom involvement while assessing their achievement of EFL in Pakistani elementary settings. This study integrates student questionnaires with observational interviews with ESL teachers to gain insights into multiple learning settings. Results from the research show gamified approaches boost student engagement and drive language improvement because of higher motivation levels. The successful classroom application of gamified teaching methods is

limited by inadequate technological infrastructure in combination with insufficient teacher training capacities.

The present research analyzes gamification applications in Pakistan to offer practical help to teachers and education authorities who design curriculum materials. The research underlines the necessity of joint work between developers and policy-level support for creating multicultural gamified solutions to integrate gamification into the ESL curriculum. The research recommendations create bridges that merge traditional educational practices with technologically advanced approaches to enhance ESL outcomes for students in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Two essential core elements in educational gamification unite video game strategies with traditional classes to drive student motivation alongside educational milestones achievement. A recent body of research shows that gamification strategies enable second language learning through the diagnosis and treatment of three main challenges: lack of student motivation reduced motivation and insufficient exposure to foreign languages (Deterding et al., 2011). This evaluation examines basic gamification principles and explores ESL classroom deployments in addition to analyzing obstacles and opportunities related to Pakistani official implementation of game-based learning systems. Ramzan et al. (2024) suggest public schools should direct their attention to school resource allocation along with teacher workforce enhancement. Javaid et al. (2024) applied systematic procedures to analyze how stress influences English language acquisition as they studied first-year students' language barriers and stress points (Javaid, et al., 2024). Students understood how group collaborative strategies boost English vocabulary acquisition and learning motivation through the study conducted by Ramzan et al. (2024). The investigation disclosed social media's ability to improve academic motivation in undergraduate learning using psychological discourses as its framework. The research conducted by Ramzan et al. (2024 investigated English learning motivation through analysis of sustainable development goals combined with social media usage (Chen & Ramzan, 2024) and syntax instructions for complex sentence writings (Ramzan & Alahmadi, 2024).

 Fundamental gamification principles source their principles from motivational concepts that integrate Self-Determination Theory (SDT) together with Flow Theory. SDT posits that intrinsic motivation is driven by the satisfaction of three psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The motivational principles of gamification enable learner empowerment through control mechanisms and achievement goals along with platform resources that drive socially interactive learning through collaborative components with competency-based elements. From Flow Theory researchers determined that continuous engagement depends on tasks that align perfectly with learners' capabilities (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Theoretical examinations reveal gamification platforms function as exciting delivery systems which optimize ESL learning possibilities.

Different studies validate the effectiveness of gamification in ESL education because students attain better language proficiency when their learning becomes more engaging. Through systematic review, Zainuddin et al. (2020) discovered that schoolchildren engaged in gamified classrooms exhibited elevated motivation levels together with better retention results and higher participation rates than their traditional classroom counterparts. Numerous ESL students improved both pronunciation skills and vocabulary acquisition after using mobile learning materials with implemented gamification principles according to Chen et al. (2018).

Through gamification implementation students achieve better critical thinking skills in addition to establishing more collaborative relationships with other students. Hung (2017) examined gamified group activities that produced meaningful learner interactions leading to enhanced language concept mastery and enhanced linguistic skill development. To achieve

effective gamification educators must create gaming components accommodating their students' cultural values according to research findings.

The educational environment of Pakistan requires coordinated solutions to overcome barriers that prevent successful gamification of ESL courses. Beeney and Farooqui (2022) have identified that restricted tool access and limited technological infrastructure specifically prevent the wider adoption of gamification within this field. Traditional educational methods persist in favor of memorization yet discourage interactive educational practices.

English language students in Pakistan benefit remarkably from gamified instruction despite the current difficulties it faces. Khan et al. (2021) demonstrate that the implementation of gamified learning successfully bridges educational involvement specifically in rural settings where learners have minimal English learning opportunities beyond seminal. Modern advances in low-cost digital equipment permit ESL teachers to integrate gamified educational resources within their lessons through increased Internet accessibility in urban and semi-urban locations. Ikram et al. (2023) have said that learning correct pronunciation proves challenging because learners face obstacles including mother language overuse combined with traditional teaching methods as well as reduced motivation and uncomfortable environments along with performance-related concerns and low confidence levels.

For successful gamification implementation in Pakistani ESL classrooms policymakers and educators must work together to develop targeted solutions for essential classroom issues. Accurate instructional technology requires training programs that help teachers to create and deploy gamified learning activities. The gaming scenario of Pakistan should represents culturally contextual gamification through its integration of familiar English vocabulary together with specific locations that players can identify. Ramzan et al.(2025) have suggested that despite educational reforms the limited success of EMI in Pakistan will persist because teachers bear double responsibilities to teach both subject content and English without getting appropriate educational support. Future research should study student-based English Medium Instruction methods while examining how students interact through these programs and practices.

Scholarly research confirms gamification can transform English as a second language education though teachers need localized solutions that suit Pakistan's educational environment. Educational organizations combined with leadership teams who successfully implement gamified practices can develop a learning environment focused on inclusive ESL educational experiences.

Significance of the Study

The study combines vital academic insights with actionable applications that generate policy recommendations for ESL education systems in Pakistan. The research capitalizes on gamification's effects on student engagement together with proficiency outcomes to advance innovative teaching practices beyond current Pakistani educational system deficiencies.

Academic Significance

The academic research of this project demonstrates how gamification advances educational approaches through second-language educational system theoretical models. Self-determination theory alongside Flow Theory can help ESL classrooms create improved learning spaces for motivation according to this research. The investigation examines how cultural factors operating together with context variables influence the success of gamified learning programs inside globally adapted classroom environments.

Practical Significance

This research provides fundamental practical outcomes. The established study examines classroom gamification strengths and weaknesses before offering useful advice to educators who want to enhance language proficiency and learning engagement. Teachers can use gamified learning platforms to access digital resources that promote student concentration

while simultaneously keeping students actively engaged through enjoyable instructional activities with interactive features. The research shows that successful implementation of gamified learning requires trained teachers in addition to a suitable distribution of resources across different classroom settings.

Policy-Level Significance

Research evidence reveals gamification needs inclusion at the policy-level reform process to be introduced across Pakistan's ESL curriculum at the national level. Multiple studies indicate the success of gamified learning depends on resolving both technological restrictions and deficient school facilities. New findings assist policymakers in directing their efforts toward the development of schools by supporting educator development and digital resource acquisition. The national implementation of gamified strategies by the government will assist educational goals by fixing agricultural school problems and boosting the nation's reading proficiency objectives.

Contribution to ESL Education in Pakistan

This research addresses Pakistan's educational situation because widespread current teaching approaches fail to sustain student dedication and individual learning needs. Research conducted in the study introduces workable solutions that verify that gamification approaches make it possible to improve ESL education gaps related to student disengagement and insufficient English access while developing inclusive teaching spaces. The study generates findings that could impact Pakistan's overall language teaching practices by giving students valuable skills which will strengthen their performance as global connections expand.

Research contributes to academic understanding through practical steps which improve ESL education standards throughout all of Pakistan. Its strategic position links traditional teaching techniques with innovative learning strategies to achieve educational improvements in language learning**.**

Research Methodology

A mixed-methods research approach investigates the effects of gamification on English as a Second Language (ESL) learner engagement and proficiency across elementary schools in Pakistan. Statistical tools and qualitative methods work in combination to deliver an extensive understanding of gaming instruments and strategies affecting language education outcomes.

Research Design

The research study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods structure for its design. The quantitative research focuses on measured student engagement degrees alongside proficiency assessments while qualitative methods gathered teacher and student perspectives on game-learning methods. The combination of research methods produced outcomes that strengthened their validity and increased their reliability.

Population and Sampling

The current research examined Pakistani ESL learning environments among students and teachers from elementary school grades. Public and private educational institutions together with urban and rural locations served as the foundation for this research project to build sample heterogeneity.

Sampling Technique: All strata of the selection process enlisted schools and participants through extensive stratified random sampling procedures. A careful evaluation of resources and language education levels guided key sample selection to ensure equal representation for each group.

Sample Size: The study included:

200 students from grades 4 to 6.

50 ESL teachers.

Data Collection Tools

1.   Surveys:

Students' Survey: Students used structured questionnaires in the research study to measure their involvement and desire to learn along with language skill levels at two different measurement points before and after gamified tool application. The questionnaire used Likert-scale answers while providing open-field response options.

Teachers' Survey: The project utilized teacher-specific questionnaires to learn about ESL teacher perceptions toward classroom barriers and gamification implementation. The research team used 20 teacher interviews together with 30 student interviews to directly understand the gamified classroom experience. The research combines quantitative and qualitative methods to deliver a complete understanding of gamified tools that affect language learning outcomes.

2.   Interviews:

Researchers used semi-structured interview techniques to gather findings from twenty teachers combined with thirty student participants about their gamified learning activities. Recording devices captured interview conversations which researchers turned into specific analysis themes through transcription methods. The research team utilized classroom observation techniques in multiple educational institutions to study gamified resource effects on student commitment toward learning and document behavioral modifications across elementary school populations in Pakistan. This study combines quantitative data alongside qualitative insights to establish complete knowledge regarding role-based tools' and methods' influence on language education results.

3. Classroom Observations:

Researchers conducted onsite observations within selected educational institutions to study educational tool implementations and student behavioral responses and engagement. Our research team used a standardized observation checklist that permitted us to record significant observation results. The pre-and post-tests were used by the researchers to assess language proficiency. gamification impacted the learning commitment and skill levels of English as a second language (ESL) learners throughout Pakistani elementary schools. Through mixing quantitative and qualitative techniques, the research delivers an extensive examination of how gamified tools shape language learning results.

4. Language Proficiency Tests:

Pre- and post-tests were administered to assess students' language proficiency. EPO-skill learning evaluation contained all the word knowledge along with sentence structure knowledge and reading ability testing and written composition assessment. Surveys underwent descriptive statistics processing to produce results about student engagement patterns and teacher perspectives. To test whether gamification enhanced students' language proficiency researchers used paired sample t-tests for monitoring changes between pretests and posttests. Data analysis occurred with statistical software applications such as SPSS. The authors used thematic analysis to understand transcripts and notes from surveys and observations. Tion on the engagement and proficiency of English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in elementary schools across Pakistan. The research incorporates quantitative measurements together with qualitative data collection to gain a complete understanding of gamified tools' impact on language learning performance.

Data Analysis

1. Quantitative Data Analysis:

Survey data analysis presented descriptive statistics which measured student engagement and gathered teacher insights.

Paired sample t-tests analyzed pretest and posttest results to demonstrate how gamification impacted the development of language abilities.

The statistical research was executed using SPSS computer software.

2.   Qualitative Data Analysis:

The analytical method of choice for the data set involved a thematic approach to evaluate both interview transcripts and observation notes. Research findings focused on teacher engagement along with student teamwork activities and barriers affecting implementation progress and used NVivo software to structure qualitative data. This research study unifies quantitative and qualitative methods to create an exhaustive perspective of the influence gamified tools and strategies have on language learning outcomes.

Data Analysis

1.   Quantitative Data Analysis:

Survey responses received descriptive statistical analysis to show data on student engagement and teacher observations while paired t-tests compared pre-test to post-test scores to assess gamification impacts on language ability and researchers used SPSS as their main statistical software.

2.   Qualitative Data Analysis:

Researchers used thematic analysis to review transcripts from interviews as well as systematic observation notes. Researchers identified primary concepts that included motivation together with collaboration and implementation barriers. Qualitative data received support for organization and coding operations within NVivo software.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure ethical compliance, the following measures were taken:

Informed Consent: Educational research activities required written permission from teachers and parents and administrators before students could begin.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: Researchers protected all information by keeping participant data in secure locations after they verified each participant's anonymity through confidential identification methods.

Voluntary Participation: The research granters gave participants the option to take part in the present study as a matter of free will with no penalties or restrictions to participant withdrawal at any time.

Limitations of the Study

While this study aims to provide valuable insights, certain limitations are acknowledged:

1.Learning methods across different geographical areas of Pakistan do not receive proper representation in the participating schools.

2.This study's results could have been affected because some educational institutions had poor technological capabilities.

3.The short timeframe of the research study makes it impossible to track the impact of gamification on language skills throughout more extended intervals of time.

Using combined research methods furnishes precise insights into gamified learning affects on ESL students across Pakistan. The experimental results will assist decision-makers in education to understand the potential and boundaries of gamification innovations and propose their applications for different educational contexts.

Results:

Analyses from this mixed-methods research study offer evidence about the effect of gamification on English as a Second Language (ESL) learner interest together with knowledge acquisition among Pakistan's elementary students. The presented findings combine multiple data types for complete research results within a single presentation.

Quantitative Results

1. Student Engagement Levels:

Consumer survey outcomes demonstrated a substantial rise in student interaction after introducing gamification methods.

Pre-gamification average engagement score: 2.8 (on a 5-point Likert scale).

Post-gamification average engagement score: 4.3, reflecting a 53.6% increase.

The students showed more enthusiasm for English language acquisition because they liked the gaming approach to learning through interactive formats.

2. Language Proficiency:

Data collected before and after the study showed students made important advancements in language abilities particularly vocabulary development and grammar knowledge and reading-writing competencies.

Average pre-test score: 58% (out of 100).

Average post-test score: Weak learning achievements were significantly reduced when post-test participants reached an average score of 78% while pre-tests exhibited only 58% proficiency resulting in a total proficiency increase of 20%.

The main results showed vocabulary achievement growth of 25% combined with 22% better reading comprehension among students.

3. Teacher Perceptions:

Surveyed teachers reported that gamification positively impacted classroom dynamics and student motivation:

Instructors reported that game-like instructional designs helped build energetic student engagement during their learning sessions according to 86% of surveyed professionals.

Responding teachers observed that 78% of students became more engaged when the teacher applied gamification principles in their educational approach by involving students more in class.

Most teachers (62%) reported two main limitations stopping them from implementing gamified methods: The educational institutions need better gamification practice instruction and greater access to modern technological devices as limitations for their implementation.

Qualitative Results

1. Student Feedback:

Semi-structured interviews with students revealed the following themes:

Motivation and Enjoyment: Game-based tools combined entertainment with educational development which reduced student anxiety about making mistakes according to student feedback.

Students found playing educational activities to simulate gaming without being considered academic work. Students found learning vocabulary more rewarding through games since they challenged their classmates throughout the task. – Grade 5 student.

Confidence Building: Through their classroom discussions and academic work students showed the development of confidence in utilizing English.

2. Teacher Feedback:

Teachers highlighted the effectiveness of gamified tools in promoting collaborative learning: Students showed greater participation through the leaderboard system which served as educational support that enabled their learning activities. – ESL teacher from an urban school. The educators working in rural schools continued to insist that customized content specific to their region would create more effective student connections with gamified approaches.

3. Classroom Observations:

Class observations revealed gamification in education produced energetic learning spaces that inspired higher student interaction. Points badges combined with rewards systems documented higher rates of student classroom involvement as well as increased active involvement during lessons. Student participation in group challenges and quizzes resulted in significant progress for both direct English-speaking communication and interpersonal student dialogue while using the language.

4. Barriers to Implementation:

Schools in rural areas face two main technological barriers because they don't have enough devices and they don't have reliable internet connections. Lack of formal training remained the main impediment based on teacher feedback that constrained their ability to develop and put gamified lessons into practice.

Key Insights

1. Urban vs. Rural Settings:

The combined advantages of better technology infrastructure with superior resources at urban schools resulted in higher levels of student engagement and better proficiency outcomes than rural facilities demonstrated.

Rural students demonstrated positive attitudes about gamified tasks despite limited resources yet basic gamified techniques such as flashcards and board games still improved their performance.

2. Gamification Elements:

Leaderboards alongside badges and timed challenges achieved the greatest success in motivating students while improving classroom engagement rates. The most effective way to boost younger student motivation involved personalized rewards such as achievement certificates.

Statistical Analysis Summary

Paired Sample t-Test:

The experiment revealed that students displayed significant language performance development through pre-test to post-test analysis ($t = 9.87$, $p < 0.01$).

Engagement Scores Correlation:

Gamified tools increased student engagement substantially because their positive correlation reached significance at $r = 0.74$ ($p < 0.01$).Results from this study confirm how gamification enhances ESL student engagement and language learning abilities thus establishing meaningful educational outcomes. Research evidence shows how gamification could transform language education yet educational environments need to elevate their attention toward restricting resources and educator skill development progression.

Discussion:

Limitations and Future Directions

While this study demonstrates the benefits of gamification, it also highlights areas for further research:

A research study established that using gamification strategies creates improved motivation and language skills development among English as Second Language learners throughout Pakistan. The analysis of recently collected research data analyzes how it duplicates or diverge from other scholarly findings that examined gamification effects on educational language learning.

Alignment with Existing Research

1.Zainuddin et al. (2020) observed similar research outcomes because gamified learning environments promote student engagement along with an increase in student motivation and involvement. The study validates Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) that demonstrates gamified tasks fulfill learner autonomy needs alongside competence requirements and social connections in order to increase engagement.

Agreed observations by Hung (2017) match current findings in that gamified learning tools create student engagement levels of $r = 0.74$.

2.Spearman correlation testing revealed active student engagement with vocabulary learning gamified platforms led to a 20% total increase in language proficiency. Results obtained by Chen and colleagues (2018) demonstrated that Gamified mobile applications helped English Second Language learners improve their pronunciation and vocabulary skills. A combination

of leaderboards and game challenges sparked proficiency improvement within student groups due to performance-based methods validated by Deterding et al. (2011).

The student collaboration techniques applied in this study produced improved social competence and increased confidence in line with research by Zainuddin et al. (2020) about gamified approaches improving peer learning along with language skills development.

3.The perception of teachers working in rural areas was that they need localized educational resources to keep instruction meaningful according to Ali & Hamid (2022) who proposed resource-pressed settings demand tailored gamification solutions. Creating gamified learning activities requires educational designers to analyze both cultural characteristics and student community language habits.

Contradictions and Challenges

1.The combination of better student engagement and increased proficiency growth in city schools confronted rural systems with core obstacles arising from technology restrictions and expert trainer shortages. Famous research done by Hung (2017) discovered lower-tech gamified strategies led to equivalent learning results within restricted resource environments yet its findings contrast with this current work. The application of gamification strategies through Pakistani rural education programs achieves limited success because of inadequate technological structure.

2.The 62% high prevalence of teachers reporting insufficient gamified training challenges the positive position expressed by Zainuddin et al. (2020) regarding teacher adaptability and enthusiasm for filling digital gaps. Research shows an educational deficit exists because teachers need better gamified implementation skills training but no systematic professional development model exists.

3.Student performance and participation during the research period did not provide evidence of lasting improvement. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) criticizes gamification novelty because declining interest indicates potential drawbacks for its impact on learning results and student motivation over time. Students need regular updates to their gamified systems frequently since these upgrades maintain both function and student retention.

Broader Implications and Policy Recommendations

1.The scientific evidence shows Pakistan needs to build national policy structures that integrate gamification principles for its English Second Language education system. Previous studies by Ali & Hamid (2022) verify that government backing lets education systems overcome funding challenges while fueling educational method innovations.

2.The research demonstrated that fundamental game-based instruction through board games paired with flashcards can successfully educate students inside educational settings without advanced technological resources. According to Khan et al. (2021) games and gaming systems can achieve effective outcomes even without requiring advanced technology. Educational authorities need to work with teachers to develop affordable gaming tools adapted for learning needs of rural educational facilities.

3.To address trainer knowledge deficits institutions must activate strong professional development courses dedicated to this problem. Educational institutions need professional training programs for learning gamification approaches across developmental stages parallel to assessment measures that enable classroom practical applications. According to Zainuddin et al. (2020) the importance of trainer training for creating successful gamified educational methods supports our initial recommendation.

1. Technological Innovations: Research on affordable portable technological solutions provides a possible answer for overcoming resource deficiencies in rural schools.

2. Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Research in language learning that studies multiple cultures reveal which cultural aspects most influence gamification approaches.

Conclusion

The research data verifies how gamification reshapes ESL instruction while aligning with both established theory and prior scholarly findings. Sustainable success from gamification practices demands that policymakers and educators solve software discrepancies while addressing teacher education gaps and support needs for program maintenance. Educational leaders and policymakers need to overcome these barriers in order to establish bridging equity as they develop effective learning environments that maximize ESL student achievement in Pakistan.

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