

Exploring Non-Digital Gamification in English Education: Insights from a Middle School Study

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the use of non-digital games in English language learning, an area less explored compared to digital gamification methods. It examines how non-technological games engage both teachers and students in a middle school context in Pontianak, Indonesia. The case study involved 34 middle school students and their teacher at a private school, with data collected through observation and interviews conducted after two weeks. An inductive thematic analysis was used to examine the data. The findings showed notable improvements in students' English proficiency, alongside increased collaboration. However, challenges such as knowledge gaps were observed. The study concludes that non-digital games, when designed to align with learning goals and engage students' interests, can effectively support language acquisition. The research encourages educators to experiment with non-digital gamification techniques and apply differentiated instruction strategies to enhance classroom outcomes.

Keywords: *Gamification, Non-Digital Games, English Language Teaching, Student Engagement*

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INTRODUCTION

In a typical classroom, students often sit passively, absorbing information without much enthusiasm. This transformation is the promise of gamification in language learning. By integrating elements like points, badges, and challenges, gamification infuses the traditional learning environment with energy and excitement. Hebert (2015) explains that gamification harnesses the motivational power of competition and achievement, turning ordinary lessons into dynamic experiences. The impact of gamification on student engagement is profound. Traditional teaching methods sometimes struggle to captivate students, leading to disinterest and underperformance. But when learning is gamified, students are drawn into the process, eagerly participating and striving to succeed.

Beyond engagement, gamification significantly enhances knowledge retention. Immediate feedback and rewards reinforce what students have learned, making it easier for them to remember and apply new information. Repetition, a key component of many games, is essential for language acquisition. Through repeated practice in a gamified setting, students better retain vocabulary and grammar structures (Figueroa, 2015). Additionally, critical thinking and problem-solving skills are enhanced through gamification. By requiring players to engage in strategic thought and navigate complex challenges, games contribute to the improvement of cognitive abilities. This dynamic interaction with language inspires students to think creatively and utilize their language skills in a variety of contexts (Christopoulos, 2023).

This study investigates the use of non-digital gamified lessons as a strategy to enhance English language proficiency among learners. Many students express that acquiring the

English language poses significant challenges, especially in developing the four essential skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Akbari, 2015; Hwang et al., 2017). Research indicates that rote memorization of vocabulary and grammatical rules is particularly difficult, requiring considerable cognitive, emotional, and physical effort for effective mastery (e.g., Annamalai, 2016; Mahzan et al., 2020; Yunus et al., 2016). Furthermore, factors such as anxiety, motivation, and attitudes significantly hinder language learning, as highlighted by Liu (2017) and Rafek et al. (2014). These challenges were observed in middle school students participating in this study at a private school in Pontianak, Indonesia. The teacher reported that her students struggled with listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English and displayed low motivation for language learning. The English courses provided followed a traditional input-based teaching model focused primarily on covering the syllabus content. This approach was heavily teacher-centered, offering limited opportunities for student participation, as teacher concentrated on delivering the required material in each class.

Non-digital gamification holds immense potential in the realm of language learning, offering a wealth of benefits that can significantly enhance the educational experience. These traditional game-based approaches can be especially advantageous in environments where access to digital resources is limited, yet the desire for innovative and engaging teaching methods remains strong. Collaboration and social interaction are natural byproducts of non-digital gamification. Many traditional games are designed to be played in groups or pairs, encouraging teamwork and communication. This social aspect is invaluable for language learning, as it provides real-life practice in using the language. Students can learn from each other, share knowledge, and build a sense of community within the classroom. This collaborative environment not only improves language skills but also enhances students' social and interpersonal abilities (Zainuddin, 2021). In summary, the potential of non-digital gamification in language learning is vast and multifaceted. By fostering engagement, enhancing knowledge retention, promoting critical thinking, encouraging collaboration, supporting personalized learning, and boosting confidence, traditional game-based approaches can transform the language learning experience into a dynamic, effective, and enjoyable journey. These benefits highlight the value of non-digital gamification as a powerful tool for language educators, particularly in contexts where digital resources may be limited (Balakrishna, 2023).

This study examines the opinions of teachers and students through interviews. According to Landers and colleagues (2015), gamification affects learning through different behaviors and attitudes. The effectiveness of gamified lessons depends on how well they create a supportive learning environment. It's important to identify and address what influences effective teaching and learning in the area of non-digital gamification, which hasn't been explored much. This will provide teachers with the insights they need for successful application. The study aims to enhance understanding of how non-digital gamification works in English language education. The main question focuses on how students perceive their experiences learning English through non-digital gamified lessons.

Literature review

The literature review section provides a comprehensive examination of constructivism as a foundational theory in education, exploring its principles, implications for learning, and the role it plays in shaping effective teaching practices.

Constructivism

Constructivism is a significant educational theory that emphasizes the active role of learners in constructing their own knowledge and understanding. Rather than passively receiving information, learners engage with material through experiences and reflection, which allows them to build new knowledge upon their existing frameworks. As noted by Elliott et al. (2000), "constructivism holds that people actively construct or make their own knowledge and that reality is determined by the experiences of the learner" (p. 256). This

approach encourages students to take an active part in their learning processes, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills essential for deeper understanding.

In the context of education, constructivism posits that learning is inherently social. Interaction with peers and educators plays a crucial role in shaping understanding and facilitating meaningful learning experiences. According to Vygotsky's theory, social interaction is vital for cognitive development, as learners often benefit from collaborating with others who may have slightly more advanced knowledge or skills. This collaborative aspect not only enhances individual understanding but also promotes communication and teamwork among students, making learning a more dynamic and engaging process (Can, 2009).

Moreover, constructivism suggests that knowledge is context-dependent; it is most effectively acquired when learners can relate it to real-world situations. This principle underscores the importance of situating learning within relevant contexts that resonate with students' lives. By integrating real-life applications into the curriculum, educators can help students see the value of what they are learning, thus motivating them to engage more fully in the educational process (Kaufman, 2004). Ultimately, constructivism provides a framework for creating enriching learning environments where students are empowered to take ownership of their education.

Constructivism in Language Learning

Constructivism in language learning focuses on the idea that learners build their linguistic knowledge through meaningful interactions and experiences. This approach encourages learners to engage in authentic communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking activities that promote language acquisition (Kapur, 2018). Constructivist environments often involve collaborative tasks, real-world projects, and opportunities for learners to reflect on their language use and development. By providing a context for learners to use the language in practical and relevant ways, constructivist approaches support the development of both linguistic competence and communicative skills (Kapur, 2018).

Learner Autonomy and Self-Regulation

Constructivist language learning environments prioritize learner autonomy and self-regulation. Learners are encouraged to take control of their own learning, set personal goals, and monitor their progress (Kapur, 2018). This approach helps learners develop important metacognitive skills, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning strategies. By fostering a sense of responsibility and independence, constructivist methods prepare learners to become lifelong learners who can adapt to new challenges and continue to develop their language skills throughout their lives (Kapur, 2018).

Gamification in Language Learning: An Integrative Approach

Gamification in language learning involves the incorporation of game elements, such as points, badges, and leaderboards, into the educational process to enhance motivation and engagement. This approach leverages the intrinsic motivation that games provide, making language learning more enjoyable and interactive. Research has demonstrated that gamified language learning can significantly enhance student engagement, motivation, and knowledge retention. By fostering a fun and competitive learning environment, gamification encourages learners to participate actively and persistently in their language studies. According to Nilubol (2023), gamified activities create a dynamic learning atmosphere that not only captivates students' interest but also promotes sustained participation and engagement.

Additionally, gamification offers personalized learning experiences tailored to meet the individual needs and preferences of each student. By integrating game mechanics, educators can adapt the learning process to reflect the learner's progress and performance. This can involve adaptive learning paths where the complexity and content of tasks are adjusted accordingly. Immediate feedback is another crucial component of gamified learning, enabling learners to quickly identify areas for improvement and modify their learning

strategies. Figueroa Flores (2023) emphasizes that this personalized approach leads to more effective and efficient language learning outcomes, as it caters to each learner's unique pace and style of learning.

Furthermore, gamification fosters a positive and engaging classroom atmosphere by creating a more dynamic and interactive environment. Incorporating game elements captures students' interest and enthusiasm, helping to reduce anxiety and increase motivation. This approach fosters a sense of competition and achievement, encouraging learners to strive for excellence and take pride in their accomplishments. Almusharraf (2023) noted that gamified environments promote a sense of community and mutual support among learners, contributing to a more collaborative and inclusive learning experience. Moreover, gamification helps students develop practical language skills that are applicable beyond the classroom, preparing them for real-world language use.

Non-Digital Gamification in Language Learning

Non-digital gamification in language learning involves incorporating game elements and mechanics into traditional classroom settings without relying on digital technology. This approach is particularly beneficial in environments with limited access to technology or where educators prefer hands-on, interactive methods. Non-digital gamification can include activities such as role-playing, board games, and interactive storytelling, which make the learning process more engaging and enjoyable for students. Research by Mardiah and Desi (2024) has shown that non-digital gamification enhances student engagement and learning outcomes by providing meaningful interaction and practice opportunities.

One example of non-digital gamification is the use of board games to teach vocabulary and grammar. By incorporating game mechanics such as points, levels, and rewards, educators can create a competitive and fun learning environment that motivates students to participate actively. This method not only makes learning enjoyable but also helps students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. According to Balakrishna (2023), non-digital game-based learning activities significantly improve academic performance, classroom engagement, and peer interaction among students.

Another example is the use of role-playing activities, where students take on different roles and act out scenarios in the target language. This method allows learners to practice their language skills in a realistic and immersive way, while also developing their communication and collaboration skills. Role-playing activities can be designed to include elements of competition and achievement, such as awarding points for successful completion of tasks or demonstrating specific language skills. Almusharraf (2023) emphasizes that social interaction and collaboration are key components of effective language learning, as they provide opportunities for authentic communication and practice.

In summary, non-digital gamification in language learning offers a variety of engaging and interactive methods for enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. By incorporating game elements and mechanics into traditional classroom activities, educators can create a fun and motivating learning environment that encourages active participation and collaboration. This approach is particularly valuable in settings where access to technology is limited, and it provides a context for meaningful interaction and practice.

a. Advantages of Non-Digital Gamification in Language Learning

Non-digital gamification in language learning offers significant advantages, particularly in fostering interpersonal communication and collaborative skills. Traditional games such as role-playing activities, board games, or card-based language challenges encourage students to interact directly with their peers, promoting authentic conversations and teamwork. These face-to-face interactions help learners develop their speaking and listening skills while building confidence in using the language in real-world scenarios. Additionally, such games are often more accessible, requiring minimal resources and reducing dependency on technology, making them suitable for various learning environments, including those with limited access to digital tools. Mardiah and Desi (2024)

support the effectiveness of non-digital gamification, noting that students who participated in these activities showed increased interest and motivation in learning English.

Another key benefit of non-digital gamification is its potential to create a more tactile and immersive learning experience. Games that involve physical movement, tangible objects, or visual aids engage multiple senses, enhancing memory retention and making language learning more enjoyable. This hands-on approach often appeals to kinesthetic learners and can break the monotony of traditional classroom activities, keeping students motivated and focused. Furthermore, non-digital games often allow teachers to customize activities based on the learners' proficiency levels, cultural contexts, or specific needs, ensuring the content is both relevant and effective. Research by Balakrishna (2023) has shown that non-digital game-based learning activities significantly improve academic performance and peer interaction among students, highlighting the broad applicability and benefits of this approach in diverse educational settings.

b. Drawbacks of Non-Digital Gamification in Class

Despite its benefits, non-digital gamification in language learning has its drawbacks. Phung (2020) highlights that gamification can sometimes lead to feelings of frustration, stress, and disengagement among students. The competitive nature of gamified activities may overwhelm some learners, negatively impacting their overall learning experience. Additionally, implementing non-digital gamification requires careful planning and resources, which may not always be feasible in every educational setting.

Another challenge is the potential for creating a negative competitive environment. Demirbilek, Talan, and Alzouebi (2022) highlight that gamified activities can sometimes lead to irregularities, objections, and challenges during gameplay. This can result in a noisy and disruptive classroom atmosphere, which may hinder the learning process rather than enhance it. Furthermore, the short-lived positive effects of gamification can diminish over time, requiring continuous innovation and adaptation by educators to maintain student interest and engagement. Moreover, the gap in knowledge between students can lead to unequal participation and feelings of inadequacy among less knowledgeable students, further exacerbating the challenges of implementing non-digital gamification effectively.

METHOD

The study employed a qualitative research method known as a case study approach, which involves an in-depth examination of a subject within its real-life context. This approach is particularly valuable for exploring complex phenomena that are deeply intertwined with their context, allowing researchers to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events. Yin (2018) emphasizes that case study research is well-suited for educational research as it allows for an in-depth exploration of specific teaching and learning dynamics within particular educational settings.

The research involved detailed observations over two weeks and interviews with participants, consistent with the case study method's emphasis on multiple data sources. Observations allowed for the direct examination of classroom interactions and student engagement, while interviews provided in-depth insights into the perspectives and experiences of teachers and students. Stake (1995) highlights that this triangulation of data sources is essential for capturing the complexities of the educational environment and ensuring the robustness of the findings.

A key aspect of case study research is understanding participants' experiences and perspectives, which is central to this study. The research focuses on the engagement of teachers and students with non-technology gamified lessons, aiming to understand how these practices influence language learning. Merriam (1998) underscores that by emphasizing the lived experiences of participants, the study aligns with the participant-centric approach of case study research, capturing the voices and viewpoints of those directly involved.

Respondents

The study took place at a private middle school in Pontianak, Indonesia, involving 34 students who participated in English lessons incorporating non-digital gamification techniques. These lessons aimed to improve language proficiency while fostering collaboration among learners. The study also included one teacher, who facilitated the gamified activities and provided insights into their practical application and the challenges faced during implementation. To delve deeper into the students' experiences, 14 participants were randomly chosen for follow-up interviews. These students, identified as S1, S4, S8, S10, S13, S15, S16, S19, S20, S21, S22, S26, S29, and S33, shared valuable feedback on the lessons' impact on their language development and teamwork skills. The selection process ensured a balanced representation, offering a thorough understanding of the benefits and challenges of gamified instruction in language learning (Palinkas et al., 2015).

To gain a deep understanding of the implementation and effectiveness of non-technology gamified lessons, the principle of data saturation was applied. Data saturation occurs when no new information or themes are observed in the data, indicating that the research has sufficiently covered the topic (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). By selecting 14 students for interviews, the study aimed to achieve data saturation while maintaining a manageable and detailed analysis.

The interviews with the 14 randomly selected students aimed to capture a variety of perspectives regarding their perceptions of the gamified lessons and their progress in learning vocabulary. These interviews were critical in understanding the nuances of student engagement, learning outcomes, and the overall effectiveness of the gamified approach. Merriam (1998) emphasizes the importance of in-depth interviews in qualitative research for gaining detailed and personal accounts from participants.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristic of Respondents

Student	Gender
S1	Female
S2	Female
S3	Male
S4	Female
S5	Female
S6	Male
S7	Male
S8	Male
S9	Female
S10	Female
S11	Male
S12	Female
S13	Male
S14	Female
S15	Female
S16	Female
S17	Female
S18	Female
S19	Male
S20	Male
S21	Female
S22	Male
S23	Male
S24	Female
S25	Female
S26	Female
S27	Male

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S28	Male
S29	Female
S30	Male
S31	Male
S32	Female
S33	Female
S34	Female

The teacher, who has spent the past four years teaching English courses to middle school students, participated in interview about her experiences with gamified lessons that she received during the teacher training. The teacher agreed to experiment with a novel teaching and learning method—gamification—during her English classes, a technique she had not previously employed in her instructional practices. This teacher's willingness to explore this innovative approach provided valuable insights into the potential benefits and challenges of gamification in higher education.

Instruments

Semi-Structured Interview

Researchers organized and executed semi-structured interviews, ensuring that these sessions were recorded for accuracy. Unlike straightforward question-and-answer formats, this method allowed for dynamic discussions, resulting in richer and more nuanced data (Merriam, 1998). Each session spanned approximately 30 to 40 minutes, during which participants were reassured of the confidentiality of their responses to ease any discomfort about being recorded. Conducted in a secure and comfortable environment, these interviews provided a sense of privacy (Neuman, 2004). All recordings were meticulously transcribed, ensuring every detail was captured for subsequent analysis.

Observation

Observation data, according to Merriam (1998), is heavily influenced by the research goals. This study focused on observing students' interactions with gamified English lessons. Following the guidelines of DeWalt, DeWalt, and Wayland (1998), the observations aimed to: (a) pinpoint occurrences and their causes, (b) view events from different perspectives, and (c) identify behaviours aligning with the study's aims. During the study, researcher categorized the observation as O1 and O2 in order to provide key insights into student engagement and behaviour during the gamified sessions.

Procedures

In Week 1, the teacher learned and tested the gamified lessons with other teachers during a teacher training program given by the researcher. The games included a flashcard game and a concentration game. These sessions were designed to familiarize the teachers with the games and to gather preliminary feedback. Each session lasted approximately two hours. After the session finished, researcher and all the teachers in that training program collected feedback from their colleagues regarding the use of the games. This step involved discussing the effectiveness and potential improvements for the games, ensuring they were well-suited for classroom implementation.

After testing the games, one teacher who was interested in applying the games to her class then introduced the refined games to the class. The students participated in these gamified English lessons twice during the week, with each lesson lasting two hours. The goal was to observe how the students interacted with the games and to assess their engagement and learning progress.

To create collaborative learning opportunities, the lessons integrated various interactive activities, including pair work and group work. Planned with specific learning outcomes in mind, these activities aimed to enhance students' speaking skills through participation in conversations and discussions, as well as to improve writing skills by having

students write about diverse topics in English. Emphasizing the principles of the Constructivist Learning Theory, the lessons were designed to foster meaningful interactions and maintain a relaxed atmosphere, which is essential for the comfort of second language learners. By providing a supportive environment, these activities enabled students to interact and express themselves confidently in a more relaxed setting.

In week 2 and 3, the researcher gathered feedback (interview) from the 14 students on their perceptions of the games and their progress in learning vocabulary. These interview sessions were conducted in a comfortable and secure environment, ensuring that students felt at ease while sharing their insights. Each interview session lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes. The observations and feedback collected throughout the four weeks were critical in assessing student engagement and learning outcomes.

Table 2. Gamified lesson

Activity	Gamified lesson	Learning activity	Outcomes	Material
Flashcard Game	Vocabulary Building	Students work in pairs or small groups. Each student takes turns picking a flashcard and describing the word or image to their partner without saying the word directly.	Improved vocabulary, enhanced descriptive skills, and better listening comprehension.	Flashcards with images or vocabulary words, a timer.
Concentration Game	Memory and Matching	Students play a matching game where they take turns flipping two cards at a time to find pairs. The cards can have images, words, or definitions that need to be matched.	Enhanced memory skills, better word recognition, and improved focus and attention to detail.	Pairs of cards with images, words, or definitions, a timer.

Data analysis

Inductive thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), is a qualitative research method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns or themes within data. This approach emphasizes a bottom-up, data-driven process, where themes emerge directly from the data rather than being shaped by pre-existing theoretical frameworks or researcher biases. It is particularly suited to exploring participants' lived experiences, perspectives, and meanings without the constraints of predetermined codes or hypotheses (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke (2006) outlined a six-phase process for conducting thematic analysis, beginning with familiarization with the data by reading and re-reading transcripts or field notes to gain a comprehensive understanding. Next, initial codes are generated by systematically tagging relevant data segments that reflect key aspects of the material. These codes are then organized into broader themes that capture patterns across the dataset. The identified themes are reviewed for coherence and refined to ensure they accurately represent the data. Once refined, each theme is clearly defined and given a meaningful name that conveys its essence. Finally, the analysis culminates in a detailed report that presents the themes, supported by relevant examples and quotes from the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of interview and observation data uncovered two main themes: (i) enhancement of English language learning and (ii) opportunities for collaborative learning. Additionally, challenges were addressed to offer a balanced perspective on these themes. Unlike the students' interviews, which were analyzed for distinct themes, the instructors' responses were combined with the students' themes for a comprehensive understanding through triangulation.

Improving English Language Skills

Throughout the gamified English lessons, students showed noticeable improvement in their language skills, particularly in vocabulary retention and usage. The flashcard and concentration games required students to repeatedly use new words in context, which helped solidify their understanding and recall. This practical application of vocabulary in a fun and engaging setting enhanced their ability to remember and use the words effectively.

The lessons also supported the development of speaking and listening skills. As students engaged in various interactive activities, they practiced articulating their thoughts and comprehending their peers' responses. This consistent use of English in meaningful conversations contributed to a more dynamic learning process, reinforcing both their receptive and productive language abilities.

The relaxed and supportive environment, aligned with Constructivist Learning Theory principles, encouraged students to use English more freely, without the fear of making mistakes. This atmosphere reduced anxiety, making it easier for students to experiment with the language, which in turn improved their overall fluency and confidence.

From the interview, it is found that a significant number of participants are deeply immersed in the gamified lessons, which significantly enhance the excitement and effectiveness of learning English. Gamified lessons are seen by S1, S4, S19, and S21 as "an enjoyable and valuable activity" for expanding vocabulary and aiding their "abilities in reading, listening, and speaking." Real learning experiences, according to S13, S15, S16, S22, and S26, are promoted through gamification, strengthening their English language skills, especially in "grasping instructions" and articulating ideas in both speech and writing.

S8, S20, S29, and S33 recognized that during the tasks, they "engaged in communication solely in English," participating in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which, as S10 noted, "significantly supported my English learning." S33 emphasized that "such lectures are advantageous for all students," greatly improving language learning by requiring them to "utilize a broader range of vocabulary, interact in conversations, and collaborate with others – something they rarely do nowadays."

Participants consistently highlighted how non-digital gamification also significantly enhances their English language skills. S1 and S4 stated that using board games and role-playing scenarios "boosts vocabulary retention," as they must "quickly recall and use new words" in context. S8, S10, S13, S15, and S16 agreed that non-digital games "improve listening, speaking, and grammar usage" through activities that require "constructing and revising sentences on the spot," helping them internalize grammatical structures and respond in real-time during interactions.

S19, S20, S21, S22, and S26 mentioned that team-based and task-oriented games "enhance collaborative communication" and "improve reading comprehension" by involving detailed instructions and rules that must be understood and applied. S29 and S33 observed that such activities "promote writing skills" through components where they "write down responses or keep score," reinforcing sentence structure and creativity.

Additional findings suggest that non-digital gamification improves other critical language skills, such as pronunciation and fluency. For example, S4 and S16 noted that engaging in spoken games helped them "practice pronunciation" by hearing and repeating words accurately. S10 and S26 mentioned that frequent verbal exchanges in these settings

improved their "fluency and confidence in speaking," making them more comfortable with spontaneous communication.

Overall, these findings suggest that non-digital gamification not only makes learning more interactive but also comprehensively targets vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency, leading to a well-rounded improvement in English proficiency.

Fostering Collaborative Learning Opportunities

During the observation the researcher concluded that gamified lessons significantly fostered collaborative learning among students. The group-based nature of the games, such as pair work and team activities, required students to interact and cooperate closely with their peers. This collaboration not only enhanced their ability to work together but also strengthened their communication skills as they discussed strategies and solutions in English.

Students were observed engaging in constant dialogue, negotiating meanings, and providing feedback to one another, which created a rich environment for peer learning. This teamwork aspect of the games helped build a sense of shared responsibility and mutual support, as students relied on each other's strengths to succeed in the tasks.

Moreover, the interactive and cooperative elements of the lessons broke down social barriers, allowing students to interact more freely with classmates they might not usually engage with. This inclusive approach promoted a more cohesive classroom community, where students felt comfortable sharing ideas and learning from one another, further enriching their collaborative learning experience.

From the interview, it is concluded that participants consistently reported that gamified lessons fostered collaborative learning opportunities, enhancing their ability to work together effectively. S1 and S4 expressed that group-based games "encouraged teamwork and communication," as they were required to "coordinate with peers to complete tasks successfully." This collaborative aspect, they noted, "helped build stronger connections" among classmates, which translated into improved group dynamics in other academic activities.

S8 and S10 observed that these lessons "created a supportive environment" where learners could "rely on each other's strengths" to navigate complex challenges. S10 added, "When we worked together in teams, it felt like we were learning from each other as much as from the instructor." This peer-to-peer interaction, they believed, reinforced their understanding of the material and boosted their confidence in using English.

According to S13, S15, and S16, the interactive nature of gamification "promoted active participation," compelling them to "engage more deeply with the content" through collaboration. S16 highlighted, "By discussing strategies and negotiating solutions with my teammates, I developed better communication skills and a greater appreciation for diverse perspectives."

S19 and S20 emphasized that collaborative games "instilled a sense of shared responsibility" for their collective success. S19 mentioned, "Knowing that our team's performance depended on everyone's input motivated me to contribute more actively and improve my language skills." This sense of accountability, they suggested, enhanced their motivation to participate and learn.

S21, S22, S26, S29, and S33 agreed that the gamified lessons "broke down barriers" that often hinder student interaction in traditional settings. S29 stated, "The informal and playful nature of these games made it easier to approach and communicate with classmates I wouldn't normally interact with." S33 concluded, "Collaborating in this context not only improved our teamwork but also enriched our language practice by encouraging constant dialogue and feedback."

Challenging Issues**Gaps in Students' Knowledge**

In this study, one of the significant challenges that emerged was the presence of gaps in students' knowledge, which affected their engagement and progress during the gamified lessons. These gaps, particularly in foundational language skills, created obstacles for some students as they tried to engage with the more complex tasks and activities in the games.

One of the most notable gaps identified was in vocabulary knowledge. While many students showed significant improvement in vocabulary retention, others struggled with recalling and using new words in context. For example, S19 and S21 mentioned that they found it difficult to "quickly recall the vocabulary" required during some of the flashcard and concentration games. This lack of fluency with certain vocabulary hindered their ability to participate fully in group activities, which often required rapid verbal responses. As a result, some students felt less confident, leading to a more passive role in group discussions and collaborative tasks.

Additionally, gaps in grammar knowledge became apparent during sentence-building and real-time interaction tasks. S13 and S15 admitted to facing challenges when constructing grammatically correct sentences during the games, especially when they had to "revise sentences on the spot." These issues were more pronounced in students who had weaker grammar foundations, as they struggled to quickly apply correct grammatical structures, which sometimes impacted the clarity of their communication.

Listening comprehension was another area where gaps were observed. Several students, particularly those with lower proficiency levels, found it difficult to understand the instructions or follow fast-paced activities. S8 and S10 noted that some of their peers struggled to grasp the instructions, especially when the language was more advanced or when they were required to listen to longer explanations in English. This lack of comprehension led to confusion during tasks, hindering participation and engagement in the learning process.

Furthermore, the challenge of bridging these knowledge gaps was compounded by the pace of the games. Some students, particularly those with less experience in English, found it difficult to keep up with the rapid flow of the activities, leading to feelings of frustration. S16 and S26 pointed out that while they enjoyed the games, they sometimes felt overwhelmed by the speed at which the tasks progressed, which made it harder for them to engage meaningfully with the content.

Despite these challenges, the teachers in the study made efforts to address these gaps by providing additional support and clarification during the activities. However, the study revealed that more focused scaffolding and differentiated approaches might be necessary to ensure that all students can fully benefit from gamified learning experiences.

The present study highlights the promising potential of non-digital gamification in enhancing English language learning. By integrating simple yet effective games like flashcards and concentration activities, students demonstrated noticeable improvements in vocabulary retention, speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. This approach not only fostered engagement and excitement but also provided an interactive platform where students could practice their language skills in a stress-free environment. By removing the fear of mistakes, the gamified lessons allowed students to use English more confidently, contributing to a marked increase in fluency and communication abilities.

Moreover, the study shows that gamification can significantly foster collaborative learning opportunities. Through group and pair activities, students were encouraged to engage in meaningful conversations and discussions, which enhanced their ability to work together, communicate clearly, and negotiate meaning. These collaborative experiences helped students improve their speaking and listening skills, while also cultivating essential teamwork and social skills. By promoting an environment of mutual support and shared learning, gamification proved to be a valuable tool in developing both individual language proficiency and collaborative abilities.

However, the study also revealed some challenges related to gaps in students' knowledge, particularly in vocabulary and grammar. Some students struggled with recalling new vocabulary in context, and others faced difficulties in constructing grammatically accurate sentences during real-time tasks. These knowledge gaps affected their overall engagement and participation in the lessons, highlighting the need for more tailored support and scaffolding. Addressing these gaps through differentiated instruction and personalized learning strategies will be essential for ensuring that all students benefit equally from gamified learning experiences.

CONCLUSIONS

Non-digital gamification has shown to be a highly effective method for enhancing English language skills and fostering collaborative learning. Although the study faced limitations, such as the short duration and small sample size, the findings suggest that gamified lessons provide a meaningful and engaging approach to language learning. Future research should focus on exploring the long-term effects of non-digital gamification, and further studies could benefit from assessing specific language skills to better understand the impact of gamification on English language acquisition. With careful planning and adaptation, gamified teaching can become a valuable tool in modern language education, making learning both enjoyable and effective.

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