

Engage, Play, Learn: A Systematic Literature Review on the Impact of Gamification on Young Learners' English Skills

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ABSTRACT

This systematic literature review investigates the impact of gamification on young learners' English language skill acquisition, addressing a research gap in understanding its specific contributions to engagement, motivation, and academic outcomes. By analyzing 22 peer-reviewed articles published between 2020 and 2024, sourced from Crossref, Scopus, and Semantic Scholar, this study categorizes findings into four themes: learner autonomy and motivation, vocabulary mastery, classroom participation and academic achievement, and intrinsic motivation. The results reveal that gamification significantly enhances learner autonomy and intrinsic engagement by integrating game-like elements such as leaderboards and progress trackers. Vocabulary acquisition benefits from contextualized and repetitive gamified activities, which improve retention and recall. Gamification also fosters classroom participation and academic success by creating inclusive and interactive learning environments, often aligned with cognitive frameworks like Bloom's Taxonomy. However, the review identifies challenges such as inconsistent methodologies, technical limitations, and the novelty effect, which can influence the sustainability of gamification's benefits. Despite these limitations, this study underscores gamification's transformative potential in fostering dynamic, learner-centered environments that align with modern educational goals. The findings emphasize the need for thoughtfully designed gamified strategies that address diverse learner needs while promoting intrinsic motivation and sustained engagement. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies, the differential effects of competitive and collaborative gamification, and the integration of emerging technologies like AI and VR to further optimize gamified language education. These insights provide a foundation for innovative curriculum development and policy-making in education.

1. Introduction

As Language proficiency plays a pivotal role in navigating today's globalized society, with English widely regarded as the lingua franca of international communication. Its importance transcends professional, academic, and cultural spheres, making it an indispensable tool for accessing knowledge and facilitating global interactions. Particularly among young learners, English serves as a foundation for educational and personal growth, unlocking access to valuable resources such as books, journals, and digital content predominantly authored in English (Páez, 2009). Consequently, English language learning for

young learners (EYL) has become a significant educational focus, with varied definitions encompassing individuals below 18 years old or those between 5 and 12 years old (Thanh Thuy & Quoc Hung, 2021).

Early childhood is widely recognized as a critical period for language acquisition due to children's innate ability to absorb and process linguistic input. Studies underscore the advantages of introducing English language learning at a young age, highlighting the enhanced proficiency and fluency achieved through early exposure (Garton & Tekin, 2022). This foundational skill equips children with the tools

necessary to thrive in an interconnected world, enabling cross-cultural communication and collaboration (Wulandari et al., 2020). However, sustaining young learners' interest in English amidst evolving educational demands requires innovative teaching methodologies that resonate with their developmental and cognitive capacities.

Gamification, the integration of game-like elements into non-game contexts, has emerged as a transformative approach in education. Its application in English language instruction aims to heighten learner engagement and motivation by incorporating features such as points, badges, and leaderboards (Al-Dosakee & Ozdamli, 2021). Recent studies reveal that gamification not only enhances vocabulary acquisition but also positively impacts overall language development, fostering active participation among young learners (Purnawan et al., 2022). Notably, gamified learning environments create an engaging atmosphere that bridges traditional teaching approaches with the dynamic interests of digital-native learners (Putu Wulantari et al., 2023).

Despite the promising outcomes associated with gamification, challenges persist. One critical gap lies in determining the optimal balance between gamified elements and pedagogical objectives to prevent over-reliance on extrinsic motivators at the expense of intrinsic learning goals (Putu Wulantari et al., 2023). Furthermore, educators often encounter barriers such as limited technological proficiency and resource constraints, impeding the seamless integration of gamification into classroom practices (Fitria, 2022). These challenges underscore the necessity for comprehensive research to explore effective strategies for overcoming these obstacles and maximizing gamification's potential in language education (Balalle, 2024; Firliantama & Rokhayani, 2023).

This study addresses these gaps by systematically reviewing the impact of gamification on young learners' English language acquisition. By synthesizing evidence from 22 studies published between 2020 and 2024, this research identifies key trends, challenges, and implications of gamified approaches in EYL contexts. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on bridging existing methodological inconsistencies and providing a comprehensive evaluation of gamification's efficacy in enhancing linguistic skills such as vocabulary, speaking, and writing.

The primary aim of this research is to evaluate how gamification influences young learners' English language outcomes, emphasizing motivation, engagement, and academic performance. By doing so, this study seeks to inform educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers on the potential benefits and limitations of gamified learning. Additionally, the findings aim to contribute to a growing body of literature advocating for innovative, learner-centered approaches in English language teaching.

By addressing the identified research gaps, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of gamification's transformative potential in language education. Its findings are expected to guide the effective implementation of gamified strategies, fostering engaging and impactful learning environments that meet the needs of young English learners. Moreover, this research highlights the importance of tailored gamification designs to accommodate diverse learner profiles and educational settings, ensuring sustained improvements in language acquisition.

2. Method

2.1 Search Strategy

This study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) method to synthesize evidence on the impact of gamification on English language skill acquisition among young learners. The research question guiding this SLR is: "How does gamification impact English language skill acquisition for young learners?" To address this, an extensive and structured literature search was conducted using three major academic databases: Crossref, Scopus, and Semantic Scholar.

The search strategy incorporated keywords and their synonyms that were closely aligned with the research topic. These terms included "gamification," "gamified," "game element," "online game," "English language learning," "second language," "foreign language," "EYL" (English for Young Learners), and "ELT" (English Language Teaching). The use of synonyms was intended to maximize coverage and ensure the retrieval of all relevant articles. Table 1 provides a detailed list of the keywords and synonyms used.

Table 1. Keywords and Synonyms Used in the Search Process

Keywords	Synonyms
Gamification	"gamification," "gamified," game element," "online game"
Language Teaching	"English language learning," "second language," "foreign language"
Impact	"influence," "effect"
EYL/ELT	"English for Young Learners," "English Language Teaching"

2.2 Study Selection

The study selection process adhered to rigorous inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the quality and relevance of the reviewed articles. Initially, 1,594 articles were retrieved, comprising 1,244 from Crossref, 100 from Scopus, and 250 from Semantic Scholar. The retrieved articles underwent a multi-step filtering process:

- 1) Duplicate Removal: Using Mendeley software, 286 duplicate articles were excluded.
- 2) Screening of Abstracts and Publication Years: Articles without abstracts and those published

before 2020, systematic literature review articles, books, were removed, resulting in the exclusion of 498 articles.

- 3) Relevance to Topic: Articles deemed irrelevant based on their focus were excluded, due to the unavailability of full text accounting for 814 additional removals.

The final selection consisted of 22 articles that met all inclusion criteria. These articles were deemed representative and sufficient for addressing the research objectives.

Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Article Selection

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Articles written in English	Articles not written in English
Peer-reviewed publications from 2017–2024	Articles outside the 2017–2024 timeframe
Full-text availability	Articles without accessible full text
Focus on gamification in English language learning for young learners	Articles unrelated to the research topic

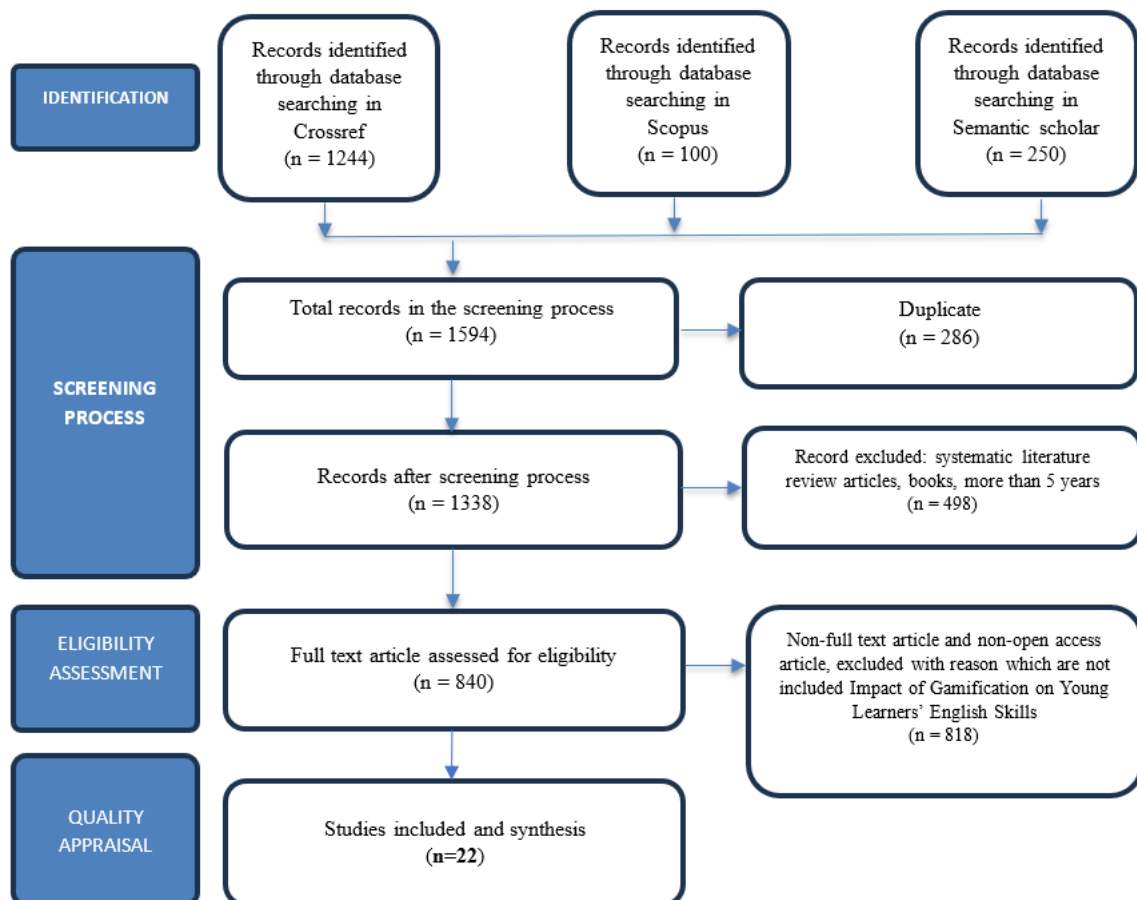


Figure 1. Article's selection procedures flowchart

Table 2 provides a structured framework of inclusion and exclusion criteria used in the study selection process to ensure a focus on relevant, high-quality research. The inclusion criteria prioritize articles written in English, published in peer-reviewed journals between 2017 and 2024, and with full-text accessibility. Additionally, the studies needed to concentrate on the specific topic of gamification in English language learning for young learners. On the other hand, exclusion criteria filtered out articles not written in English, published outside the specified timeframe, or lacking full-text availability. Articles unrelated to the research theme were also excluded. This meticulous process highlights the methodological rigor applied to ensure the reliability and relevance of the reviewed studies.

Complementing Table 2, Figure 1 illustrates the article selection procedures in a systematic flowchart. The process began with the identification of 1,594 articles across Crossref, Scopus, and Semantic Scholar databases. Through a stepwise filtration, including duplicate removal, screening of abstracts and publication years, evaluation of full-text availability, and relevance to the research topic, the final set of 22 studies was identified. This visual representation underscores the systematic approach in narrowing down the initial pool of articles to those meeting the stringent criteria. Together, Table 2 and Figure 1 provide a comprehensive overview of the methodological precision applied in the study selection, ensuring the credibility of the subsequent analysis and findings.

2.3 Data Collection

The data collection process was systematic and thorough, ensuring the extraction of relevant information from the selected studies. Each article was reviewed to gather data on:

- Study objectives and methodologies: Identifying the purpose and research design.
- Key findings: Documenting the effects of gamification on language acquisition skills, including vocabulary, speaking, and motivation.
- Challenges and limitations: Highlighting barriers to gamification in education.
- Implications: Examining broader impacts on curriculum development and policy.

2.4 Data Analysis

The collected data underwent a thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, key findings, and gaps in the literature. The analysis focused on:

- 1) Effectiveness of Gamification: Assessing its impact on learner motivation, engagement, and academic outcomes.
- 2) Technological Integration: Evaluating the role of technology in gamified learning environments.
- 3) Barriers to Implementation: Analyzing challenges such as teacher readiness, resource availability, and content alignment.
- 4) Research Gaps: Highlighting inconsistencies in methodologies and areas needing further exploration.

The analysis ensured a balanced synthesis of qualitative and quantitative findings, providing a comprehensive understanding of gamification's role in young learners' English education. This SLR adheres to established guidelines, ensuring a rigorous and replicable approach to synthesizing existing literature. By employing a systematic data collection and analysis framework, this study provides robust insights into the potential and limitations of gamification in English language education for young learners

3. Result

This section presents the findings of the systematic literature review, aiming to explore the impact of gamification on young learners' English language skill acquisition. The primary objective of this study was to synthesize existing research and evaluate how gamified learning environments influence learners' engagement, motivation, and academic performance. A total of 22 articles published between 2020 and 2024 were selected, representing a diverse range of methodologies and contexts. These studies collectively highlight gamification's potential to enhance vocabulary mastery, foster intrinsic motivation, and improve classroom participation and overall learning outcomes.

To provide a comprehensive overview, Table 3 summarizes the key details of the included studies, followed by thematic results that delve into specific aspects of gamification's effects on English language education. The thematic analysis categorizes findings into four primary themes: learner autonomy and motivation, vocabulary mastery, classroom participation and academic achievement, and encouragement of intrinsic motivation. Each theme is critically examined to present insights into the benefits and challenges of integrating gamification into young learners' English language education.

Table 3. General Description of Included Articles

No.	Author(s)	Title	Journal	Year
1	Tineh, S.	Bitmoji application and young learners' creativity in learning English vocabulary	<i>JELTEC: Journal of English Language Teaching</i>	2023
2	Shortt, M., et al.	Gamification in mobile-assisted language learning: A systematic review of Duolingo	<i>Computer Assisted Language Learning</i>	2020
3	Kazazoglu, S.	Comparative analysis of gamification and storytelling strategies in EFL vocabulary	<i>Journal of Human and Social Sciences</i>	2022
4	Casanova-Mata, I.	Enhancing English acquisition effects of among us game-based gamification	<i>Education Sciences</i>	2023
5	Latkovska, E., & Cine, A.	Gamification elements in English lessons to encourage young learners	<i>Human, Technologies and Quality of Education</i>	2022
6	Kasprowicz, R. E., et al.	Investigating distribution of practice effects for the learning of foreign language verb morphology in the young learner classroom	<i>The Modern Language Journal</i>	2023
7	Laloo, T. A.	Improving young learners' vocabulary by using digital technology	<i>JELTEC: Journal of English Language Teaching</i>	2023
8	J.-Y. L., & M. B.	Effects of gamification on students' English language proficiency: A meta-analysis on research in South Korea	<i>Sustainability</i>	2023
9	Mrissa, B.	Enhancing EFL learning through computer-based gamification: An investigation of impact	<i>International Journal of Language and Literary Studies</i>	2023
10	Yazid, S. R., Heriyawati, D. F., & Mistar, J.	Unveiling student perspectives: Exploring the impact of gamification in English language teaching	<i>English Review: Journal of English Education</i>	2023
11	CabaniLLas HiLario, E.	The impact of interdisciplinary project-based learning on young learners' speaking results	<i>Porta Linguarum</i>	2023
12	Azar, A. S., & Abdul Aziz, N. H.	The application of ICT techs in teaching English for secondary school students in Malaysia during COVID-19 pandemic	<i>Universal Journal of Educational Research</i>	2023
13	Li, H.	The effect of VR on learners' engagement and motivation in K12 English education	<i>Journal of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences</i>	2023
14	Ali, R., & AbdalGane, M.	The impact of gamification "Kahoot app" in teaching English for academic purposes	<i>World Journal of English Language</i>	2023
15	Panmei, B., & Waluyo, B.	The pedagogical use of gamification in English vocabulary training and learning in higher education	<i>Education Sciences</i>	2023
16	Kaur, D., & Abdul Aziz, A.	The use of language game in enhancing students' speaking skills	<i>International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences</i>	2023
17	Vadivel, B., Shaban, A. A., Ahmed, Z. A., & Saravanan, B.	Unlocking English proficiency: Assessing the influence of AI-powered language learning apps on young learners' language acquisition	<i>International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies</i>	2023
18	Li, X., Xia, Q., Chu, S. K. W., & Yang, Y.	Using gamification to facilitate students' self-regulation in e-learning	<i>Sustainability</i>	2022

No.	Author(s)	Title	Journal	Year
29	Firliantama, M. R., & Rokhayani, A.	Young learners' engagement in vocabulary learning taught by games and learning applications	<i>SIMPLE: International Journal of English Education</i>	2023
20	TEBA, C., del Olmo-Muñoz, J., Bueno-Baquero, A., Cózar-Gutiérrez, R., & González-Calero, J. A.	Gamification on the e-learning process	<i>International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology</i>	2023
21	Purnawan, N. A., Padmadewi, N. N., & Budiarta, L. G. R.	The effect of online gamification quiz applications on vocabulary mastery for young English learners	<i>JINOTEP: Jurnal Inovasi dan Teknologi Pembelajaran</i>	2023
22	Xayrullayevna, F. A., & Qizi, A. M. T.	Benefits of applying gamification approach in teaching English to young learners	<i>International Scientific Journal «Modern Science and Research»</i>	2023

The 22 studies summarized in Table 3 provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding how gamification shapes young learners' English language skills within the framework of the systematic literature review, "Engage, Play, Learn: A Systematic Literature Review on the Impact of Gamification on Young Learners' English Skills." These studies highlight gamification's transformative role in engaging students, enhancing their motivation, and facilitating effective learning through playful, interactive approaches.

While Table 3 offers an overview of each study's focus and context, the detailed thematic analysis in Table 4

aligns these findings with the central themes of learner autonomy, vocabulary mastery, classroom participation, and intrinsic motivation. Together, these themes illustrate how gamified learning environments create opportunities for students to not only play but also deeply engage and learn, reinforcing the alignment between gamification and the core objectives of English language education for young learners. The transition to Table 4 emphasizes how these categorized insights advance a deeper understanding of gamification's pedagogical impact, fostering an evidence-based approach to designing engaging and effective learning experiences.

Table 4. Key Studies and Their Contributions

Theme	Key Studies	Key Findings and Contributions
Learner Autonomy	Hanus & Fox (2015), Kapp (2012), Lui (2014), Munday (2016), Kazazoğlu (2022), Castañeda & Cho (2016), Saputra et al. (2021),	Gamified strategies enhance autonomy, confidence, and participation; outperforms traditional methods like storytelling and fosters collaboration.
Vocabulary Mastery	Flores (2015), Butler (2015), Calvo-Ferrer (2017), Wu (2018), Kaur (2023), Tineh (2023), Purnawan et al. (2023), Kazazoğlu, S. (2022), Naderiheshi, A. (2022), Laloan, T. A. (2023), Panmei, B., & Waluyo, B. (2023)	Gamified tools improve retention, recall, and application of new vocabulary through interactive, repetitive exposure.
Classroom Participation & Academic Achievement	Li et al. (2022), Casanova-Mata (2023), Vadivel et al. (2023), Mrissa (2023), Panmei & Waluyo (2023).	Gamified activities foster participation; alignment with Bloom's Taxonomy encourages cognitive depth and collaboration.
Intrinsic Motivation	Rahmani (2020), Munday (2016), Xayrullayevna et al. (2023), Ali & AbdalGane (2023)	Thoughtfully designed gamification promotes intrinsic engagement, self-regulation, and reduces reliance on external rewards.

3.1 Increasing Learner Autonomy

Gamification has consistently demonstrated its ability to enhance learner autonomy and motivation, particularly among young learners. Hanus and Fox (2015) observed that the integration of game-like features such as badges, leaderboards, and progress bars creates a structured environment where learners are encouraged to independently manage their learning goals. Kapp (2012) emphasized the psychological impact of gamification, arguing that its inherent challenge-reward structure promotes sustained engagement and intrinsic motivation.

Kazazoğlu (2022) compared gamification to traditional storytelling in EFL contexts, finding that gamified environments not only improved learners' lexical proficiency but also instilled a sense of responsibility for their learning outcomes. Similarly, Munday (2016) highlighted that digital games enable students to practice autonomously while receiving immediate feedback, which fosters self-confidence and reduces anxiety. Castañeda and Cho (2016) further illustrated how game-based learning provides a safe space for experimentation, enhancing both engagement and linguistic competence.

Saputra et al. (2021) explored the cognitive benefits of gamification for young learners, revealing that well-designed activities align with developmental needs, making the learning process more intuitive and self-directed. Kazazoğlu (2022) expanded on these findings by showing that gamified strategies not only foster autonomy but also enhance collaboration when implemented in group settings.

3.2 Effect on Vocabulary Mastery

Vocabulary mastery emerges as a standout area where gamification has shown remarkable efficacy. Flores (2015) and Butler (2015) demonstrated that gamified tasks that involve repetitive exposure to vocabulary in varied contexts significantly improve recall and comprehension. Calvo-Ferrer (2017) analyzed form-meaning mapping activities in gamified settings and noted their effectiveness in reinforcing new vocabulary, particularly when combined with multimedia elements.

Tineh (2023) investigated creative gamified tools like Bitmoji, concluding that they increase learners' engagement with vocabulary acquisition by providing a visually enriched, interactive learning experience. Wu (2018) and Kaur (2023) both emphasized the role of mini-games in enhancing retention, where learners are required to actively apply newly acquired vocabulary in problem-solving scenarios. Purnawan et al. (2023) found that online quiz applications with gamified elements, such as points and timed challenges, encourage learners to engage more frequently and deeply with vocabulary tasks.

Recent studies by Kazazoğlu (2022), Naderiheshi (2022), Laloan (2023), and Panmei and Waluyo (2023) further expand on these findings, illustrating how gamification improves vocabulary retention and application. Kazazoğlu (2022) highlighted the comparative advantage of gamification over traditional storytelling techniques in enhancing EFL learners' lexical proficiency. Naderiheshi (2022) reviewed the use of games to teach English vocabulary, emphasizing their potential to increase learner interest and effectiveness. Laloan (2023) explored the role of digital technology in vocabulary development, affirming the critical interplay between gamified activities and cognitive engagement. Panmei and Waluyo (2023) focused on higher education settings, demonstrating that gamified vocabulary training fosters sustained learner motivation and retention through interactive tasks.

These findings underscore gamification's significant potential to revolutionize vocabulary acquisition by transforming it into a dynamic and engaging process. By incorporating innovative tools, such as interactive digital applications, multimedia elements, and game-based methodologies, gamification enhances both the effectiveness and the enjoyment of language learning. This approach not only fosters deeper cognitive engagement and sustained learner motivation but also makes the process of vocabulary retention and application more memorable and meaningful. Through these gamified strategies, language learning evolves into an interactive, student-centered experience that aligns with the needs of modern learners, thereby amplifying its overall impact on educational outcomes.

3.3 Influence on Classroom Participation and Academy Achievement

Gamified activities have proven effective in fostering classroom participation and improving academic achievement. Li et al. (2022) highlighted how gamified Student Response Systems (SRS) create a welcoming environment, allowing students to participate more actively without fear of judgment. Casanova-Mata (2023) explored the impact of game-based learning on speaking skills, demonstrating how collaborative challenges boost participation while improving linguistic accuracy and fluency.

Vadivel et al. (2023) investigated AI-powered gamified applications and reported significant improvements in students' writing and reading skills, attributing these to personalized feedback mechanisms inherent in the gamified systems. Panmei & Waluyo (2023) focused on the alignment of gamified learning activities with Bloom's Taxonomy, showing how gamification fosters higher-order thinking skills like analysis and synthesis.

Mrissa (2023) explored the integration of computer-based gamification into classroom practices, finding that such methods enhance engagement and lead to measurable gains in academic performance. These studies collectively underscore gamification's ability to create an inclusive and stimulating classroom environment that supports both cognitive and social development.

3.4 Encouragement of Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation is a critical factor in long-term learning success, and gamification has proven effective in fostering it. Rahmani (2020) argued that well-designed gamification transcends extrinsic rewards by creating meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences. The incorporation of narrative elements and personalized challenges ensures that learners remain engaged and intrinsically motivated.

Munday (2016) highlighted how interactive gamified applications motivate learners to practice language skills independently, fostering a love for learning that extends beyond the classroom. Ali and AbdalGane (2023) explored the use of Kahoot-based gamification, finding that its collaborative and competitive features enhance intrinsic motivation, particularly in group settings.

Xayrullayevna et al. (2023) provided evidence that gamification not only increases engagement but also helps students develop self-regulation skills, as they learn to manage their time and effort effectively within gamified tasks. These findings highlight the importance of thoughtful gamification design in creating experiences that resonate with learners' intrinsic interests.

4. Discussions

This systematic literature review aimed to examine the impact of gamification on young learners' English language skill acquisition by analyzing 22 studies published between 2020 and 2024. These studies collectively reveal gamification's transformative potential in enhancing engagement, motivation, and academic outcomes. By fostering a dynamic and learner-centered environment, gamification addresses significant gaps in traditional teaching methods, including the lack of interactivity and difficulty in sustaining young learners' motivation. However, this discussion also highlights key challenges, gaps in the research, and opportunities for future exploration.

Gamification's effectiveness in increasing learner autonomy and motivation is one of the most consistent findings across the reviewed studies. Hanus and Fox (2015) and Kapp (2012) highlighted how gamified features like badges and leaderboards promote structured independence, while Munday (2016) and Castañeda and Cho (2016) demonstrated gamification's ability to foster self-confidence and reduce anxiety.

The findings of Kazazoğlu (2022) and Saputra et al. (2021) align with these observations, emphasizing gamified learning environments' role in creating responsibility for individual progress.

The impact of gamification on vocabulary mastery is another prominent theme. Flores (2015) and Butler (2015) found that repetitive and contextualized exposure through gamification enhances retention and comprehension. Calvo-Ferrer (2017) and Wu (2018) further illustrated that integrating multimedia and mini-games into learning systems improves vocabulary acquisition. Purnawan et al. (2023) expanded on these findings, showing how online quiz applications foster sustained learner engagement with vocabulary tasks. Additionally, Tineh (2023) demonstrated that creative tools like Bitmoji make vocabulary learning more interactive and engaging.

In terms of classroom participation and academic achievement, studies by Li et al. (2022) and Casanova-Mata (2023) showed that gamified Student Response Systems (SRS) create a welcoming and interactive classroom environment. Vadivel et al. (2023) and Behl et al. (2022) found that aligning gamified activities with Bloom's Taxonomy fosters critical thinking and collaboration. Mrissa (2023) illustrated how computer-based gamification improves learner performance by enhancing engagement and reducing barriers to participation.

Encouraging intrinsic motivation through gamification is a critical area explored in several studies. Rahmani (2020) and Xayrullayevna et al. (2023) found that narrative-based and personalized challenges intrinsically motivate students to engage with educational tasks. Ali and AbdalGane (2023) emphasized how platforms like Kahoot improve group collaboration and intrinsic engagement. These findings underscore the importance of designing gamification strategies that move beyond extrinsic rewards to promote sustainable learning.

Despite its potential, gamification presents challenges that warrant further exploration. Many studies, including those by Al-Dosakee (2023) and Firliantama and Rokhayani (2023), identified technical issues and educators' lack of proficiency in integrating gamification effectively. Fitria (2022) and Balalle (2024) highlighted the difficulty of balancing gamified elements with core pedagogical goals, while Putu Wulantari et al. (2023) noted the risk of over-reliance on rewards, which may detract from intrinsic learning objectives. Another critical gap is the limited exploration of gamification's long-term effects. While studies like Wu (2018) and Hitchens and Tulloch (2018) emphasized short-term engagement benefits, longitudinal research is needed to assess its sustained impact. Additionally, the influence of cultural and individual differences in gamification's effectiveness remains underexplored, as noted by Li et al. (2022) and Yazid et al. (2023).

This review offers a novel contribution by systematically synthesizing evidence on gamification's dual impact on learner engagement and academic outcomes. By categorizing findings into themes of autonomy, vocabulary mastery, classroom participation, and motivation, this study highlights gamification's multifaceted role in young learners' English education. The findings have significant implications for educators and policymakers, emphasizing the need for thoughtfully designed gamified interventions that cater to diverse learning contexts and individual student needs. Gamification's potential to enhance language proficiency, particularly in vocabulary acquisition and speaking skills (e.g., [Kazazoglu, 2022](#); [Cabanillas \(2023\)](#)), underscores its value as a pedagogical tool. By creating engaging, interactive, and student-centered learning environments, gamification aligns with modern educational objectives, making it an essential strategy for curriculum development. Future studies should investigate the long-term effects of gamification on learning outcomes to evaluate the sustainability of its benefits. Research should also explore the differential impacts of gamification across diverse learner populations, considering factors like age, cultural background, and socio-economic status. Studies such as those by [Vadivel et al. \(2023\)](#) and [Ali and AbdalGane \(2023\)](#) highlight the need to compare competitive and collaborative gamification elements to determine their relative effectiveness.

Additionally, exploring the integration of advanced technologies like virtual reality ([Li, 2023](#)) and AI-powered applications ([Vadivel et al., 2023](#)) into gamified learning environments could provide new insights into enhancing educational outcomes. Longitudinal studies and standardized methodologies, as advocated by [Behl et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Rahmani \(2020\)](#), will be essential in establishing robust frameworks for implementing gamification in language education. This systematic literature review underscores gamification's transformative potential in English language education for young learners. Gamification, defined as the integration of game design elements in non-game contexts, has been shown to significantly enhance learner engagement and motivation, particularly in language acquisition settings ([Li & Li, 2022](#)). The systematic review conducted by [Jaramillo-Mediavilla](#) highlights that when gamification is implemented with appropriate methodologies, it can effectively improve educational outcomes, as evidenced by studies focusing on the dynamics, mechanics, and game elements that contribute to successful gamification strategies ([Jaramillo-Mediavilla, 2024](#)).

Moreover, the benefits of gamification extend to the development of reading skills, as explored by [Cano](#), who emphasizes the role of information and communication technologies (ICT) in strengthening these skills through gamified approaches ([Cano, 2023](#)).

This aligns with findings from [Cavus](#), who notes that gamification platforms not only motivate students but also foster active participation in the learning process, thereby enhancing overall academic performance ([Cavus, 2023](#)). Such evidence suggests that gamification serves as an innovative pedagogical strategy that can address existing gaps in traditional language education methods. Future research is essential to optimize the design and application of gamification in diverse educational contexts. For instance, the systematic review by [Hussein et al.](#) indicates that gamification has a positive impact on skill development among special needs students, suggesting that tailored gamified interventions could be beneficial for various learner demographics ([Hussein et al., 2023](#)). Additionally, the work of [Zourmpakis et al., \(2023\)](#) demonstrates that adaptive gamification can significantly enhance students' motivation and engagement, further supporting the need for customized gamified experiences in language learning. In conclusion, this study highlights gamification as an innovative and impactful strategy for English language education. Addressing current challenges and gaps will ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness in fostering language acquisition among young learners.

5. Conclusions

This systematic literature review provides a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of gamification on young learners' English language skill acquisition, highlighting its significant role in enhancing learner autonomy, motivation, and engagement. Key findings demonstrate that gamified approaches improve vocabulary mastery, classroom participation, and intrinsic motivation, creating interactive and learner-centered environments that promote language accuracy and confidence. The study's novelty lies in its thematic categorization of gamification's effects, consolidating empirical evidence while identifying critical research gaps, such as the need for longitudinal studies, standardized methodologies, and deeper exploration of cultural and individual learner differences. These insights have far-reaching implications, advocating for the integration of thoughtfully designed gamified strategies by educators and policymakers to foster engaging and effective learning environments. By aligning gamification with diverse educational contexts and individual learner needs, this approach can transform traditional teaching practices and sustain interest in language learning. Future research should address these gaps by exploring the long-term effects of gamification, the comparative impacts of collaborative versus competitive gamified elements, and the integration of advanced technologies like AI and virtual reality to further enhance learning outcomes. This study provides a foundation for developing innovative, evidence-based gamification strategies that can revolutionize English language education for young learners.

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