Does Gamification Play a Role in Enhancing English Learning for Young Learners?

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Abstract
Proficiency in English is a fundamental prerequisite for accessing significant information within the international context. The present study aims to explore teachers’ and students’ experiences and views on the role of gamification in English learning. Utilizing a qualitative case study method, the data were collected from questionnaires distributed to five English teachers using gamification and twenty-one young learners who have participated in English learning using gamification through Google Forms. The results showed that gamification has a crucial role to play in improving the quality of young learners in English learning, which is adjusted to the implementation of gamification into English learning with effective game strategies used. The use of gamification can benefit students by engaging them and stimulating their creativity in learning English. In addition, teachers used strategies in using gamification during the English learning process including using picture guessing games, broken phone games, English crossword games, answering questions, guessing English words and Indonesian games while singing, Simon Says games, and rolling word games to digital games like cooking games, puzzle games, Pou games, and other enjoyable games. At last, the policy recommendation is outlined in this article based on the research findings.

Keywords: English learning, gamification, implications, young learners
INTRODUCTION

A significant number of international organizations, including the United Nations (UN), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the European Union (EU), utilize English to a considerable extent. Furthermore, according to Wahyuningsih & Fitriani (2022), proficiency in English is a fundamental prerequisite for accessing significant information within the international context. So that, English is a global language used for international communication among nations (Lee McKay, 2010). It has become mandatory for students to be able to speak English. Therefore, they are required to have the ability to do so. English is a fundamental that secondary, primary, and postsecondary educational institutions in the United States require of the 69 million enrolled students (Morrell, 2005). It has the advantage if one day, they visit other countries, they can communicate with foreigners using their skills in English as an international language. English has been applied in various countries as school lessons. Elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, and university are the starting points. Thus, the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) also known as the Standard International English Test, is used to assess a person's comprehension of English, and as a degree requirement at a university (Abboud & Hussein, 2011).

Proficiency in the English language, particularly among the youth, has declined over the past few decades (Othman & Shah, 2013). The Young learners are in the growing and developing process (Moon, 1983). The youths have difficulty understanding English due to a lack of vocabulary in English. This decline was caused by several factors, it can be because the young learners are uninterested in the theoretical without experiment, otherwise theoretical without amusement. It becomes a global challenge for teachers, they discover gamification as a global trend to increase the English of young learners. Gamification is the new technology that integrates game elements into non-game situations (Prince, 2013). As Garris & Driskell (2002) reported the game features that young learners find most appealing and beneficial for their learning, particularly in English were determined by the authors. Young learners will be more interested in learning English by combining games and education because they are in the phase of finding enjoyment and their identity.

In recent years, theoretical knowledge has played an important role especially for young learners. They must be emphasized in the English learning, because English is so prevalent in practically every part of their lives, the students felt that it was important (Kher, 2022). However, most young learners cannot accept only theoretical English lessons their quality of English learning decreases. Through the development of global trends, the education system utilizes technology to meet the challenges of a globalized world and cultivate the necessary competencies in students worldwide. Games are a frequently utilized tool for providing technical and theoretical knowledge in physical education classes through a playful and motivational approach (Camacho-Sánchez et al., 2023). Consequently, several research have been used to personalize gamification in the classroom (Oliveira et al., 2023).

As Torrado Cespón & Díaz Lage, (2022) reported, they have used experimental research in gamified practices. Instead of attempting to measure motivation using certain theories, some research has examined the degrees of motivation among students by concentrating on gamification characteristics (Ratinho & Martins, 2023). As Pardim et al., (2023) advocated, they discovered supportive results from all the formulated hypotheses, which found that competition is an important element of Gamification, which is a point of attention to enhance teaching strategies. As a result, a range of practices have
been implemented in gamification to find out which strategies make progress in English learning for young learners. From the results of case studies of other authors, further research needs to be done on which strategies can make progress in English learning for young learners.

Several previous studies have distinguished the research in using gamification in education to improve their children's skills in English using an application through online games so that the learners are expected to use the technology properly and correctly, this has been applied in different countries. Nevertheless, utilizing the online game simply is not the only thing that impacts students' eye health. Thus, complete monitoring of the online game needs to be offered. As a result, this study focuses on how gamification impacts learning English, particularly with an emphasis on how gamification functions without including online games.

English learning will be carried out successfully if the learners comply with the expectations of teachers. This differs from some previous studies cases in which the subject of English learning is students of senior high school. Therefore, the authors are interested in conducting the study of English learning by applying gamification without online games and focusing on the subject of young learners. Young learners enjoy learning through play. The authors research how the role of gamification is crucial without online games by employing several strategies and the implications in English learning for young learners.

**METHOD**

The present study employed a qualitative case study method. The authors have obtained information and analysis from several teachers and students from different elementary and junior high school backgrounds. The majority of participants reside in the central part of Indonesia, more precisely in the province of Central Java, Demak Regency. The authors collected data on students from a private lesson program that the authors established, where there were several general young students. The authors chose this particular tutoring program because the students participated in various offline games to improve their English proficiency, thereby enhancing their creativity and engagement in English lessons at school.

The authors collaborated with English teachers to explore the teachers' experiences of implementing gamification in English learning, so there are several choices of strategies that can be used to implement gamification in English learning. The data could be collected through Google Forms by answering several questionnaire items, according to the guidelines (Enjang, 2023). Thus, the authors circulate it among the students and teachers who are ready to participate in this research. There were 5 English teachers and 21 students or young learners who participated in this research. The participants had the option to refuse several stages of the study. The authors also included a table of teachers’ data in Table 1 and students’ data in Table 2.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 1. Teachers’ Demography</th>
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<td><strong>Teacher 1</strong></td>
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In terms of collecting data, the authors have collected a lot of empirical data via questionnaires to the participants who were provided an e-link. The authors have separated into 2 questionnaires, which consisted of a questionnaire for students and a questionnaire for teachers.

Regarding the instrument of the study, the researchers used questionnaires distributed to five teachers and twenty-one students. The students’ questionnaires included questions such as their interest in English learning, the reasons for their interest or lack of interest in English learning, their enjoyment of gamification for English learning, the implementation of gamification, and their favourite game strategies. In addition, the teacher questionnaire includes issues such as whether or not they have used gamification teaching methods, the improvement students achieved after using gamification methods, strategies used in gamification, the obstacles or barriers faced in implementing gamification, and the efforts made to overcome these problems. The instrument is validated by the experts in English language teaching before being distributed to students and teacher.
In addition, the researchers utilized the Indonesian language for the e-link questionnaire, thus providing the participants with the option of answering various questions in their local language style, so that the authors get the benefit of having more and deeper data provided by the participants regarding the role of gamification in English language learning. Furthermore, regarding the anonymity of the participants, the researchers implemented a mechanism by maintaining the confidentiality of the personal identity of the participants as described in the journal (Giordano et al., 2007). The participants were given the initials Teacher #1, Teacher 2#, Teacher 3, Teacher 4, and so on as practiced in the journal (Sulistiyo et al., 2020). Participants' data were also obtained by us over three weeks through the e-link that was distributed to the participants. The researchers then processed participants’ data by developing and classifying the data, without altering the original answers. The researchers also classified, sorted, and discarded the data to find the final verifiable conclusion as practiced in the journal guide (Ribeiro et al., 1997).

The questionnaire results revealed several issues about gamification for English learning through finding several themes and patterns to answer the research questionnaire, such as the use of gamification for English learning, game strategies used in gamification, implications obtained from gamification, challenges or obstacles faced in implementing gamification, as well as efforts made in dealing with these challenges and obstacles. After analyzing the data, the researchers identified two main themes regarding the role of gamification for young learners in English learning, i.e., the type of game strategies used in gamification and the implications for students. To analyze the data, the researchers utilized the meaning and code classification strategy, as described in the analysis strategies of the journal (Collis & Montgomery, 2009).

FINDINGS
1. The role of gamification for English education

The authors found a variety of sub-themes within this theme that resulted from the analysis of the e-questionnaire data to describe the role of gamification for English learning, such as (1) the implementation of gamification for English learning, and (2) the effective strategies of gamification.

The implementation of gamification for English Learning

The following data analysis shows how teacher participants have or have not applied gamification to their students' learning.

Teacher vignette 1: Teachers’ opinion on the application of gamification in English language learning.

Teacher #1
as a teacher who has been teaching English in an Islamic primary school based in a private school for 15 years I have and even often use gamification methods in my English learning and it is not so difficult for me. I am happy if the children are also happy with my teaching. (Teacher #1, Questionnaire in Google form, Nov 26, 2023, Translated by Authors)

Teacher #2
I teach at a private school or more precisely as an English tutor. It has only been 3.5 years that I have been teaching at the course and I have indeed used gamification methods in learning English, as a variation in my learning. (Teacher #2, Questionnaire in Google form, Nov 26, 2023, Translated by Authors)
Teacher #3
I have taught English using the Gamification method. I applied it in my English course so they would not get bored with what I taught for 3 years. (Teacher #3, Google Form Questionnaire, Nov 26, 2023, Translated by Authors)

Teacher #4
According to my personal experience, I taught at an Islamic junior high school on a private school basis for 20 years. Previously, I had used this gamification method in teaching English. Since then, this method has existed, but I have only used it for the last 5 years, and even then, it depends on the time and conditions of the children. (Teacher #4, Google Form Questionnaire, Nov 27, 2023, Translated by Authors)

Teacher #5
I have taught English for eight years at an Islamic senior high school on a private basis. I frequently incorporate gamification techniques to gauge my students' engagement during English lessons.

Based on interview data, it appears that English instructors frequently use gamification techniques in English language education.

The effective strategies of gamification
The authors analysed the gamification techniques instructors and students utilize to improve the quality of their English language instruction based on information acquired from their experiences. The aim was to identify a suitable strategy for gamification.

Teacher vignette 2: The effective strategies of gamification
Teacher #1
When integrating gamification into English language instruction, I frequently utilize the "Simon Says" game tactic, such as commanding "Simon says touch your nose" and observing as the students comply. By using this game method, the learners can concentrate more on the lesson and identify which students may not be fully engaged in the English language learning process. (Teacher #1, questionnaire in Google Form, November 26, 2023, translated by authors)

Teacher #2
I often incorporate gamification into my English lessons. I frequently utilize Techno-based game strategies, including crossword, jumbled word, and spelling games, as well as interactive PowerPoint presentations and video-based games. In addition, I also employ Conventional games such as Snakes and Ladders and guessing games. This approach promotes students' engagement and enjoyment, hence increasing their interest in English lessons. This will make students happy, comfortable, and not bored with English lessons so that their interest in English increases. (Teacher #2, Google form questionnaire, Nov 26, 2023, Translated by authors)

Teacher #3
When employing gamification techniques in teaching English, particularly within the English department, I utilize numerous variations of gamification strategies for English learning. For instance, one method involves sequentially memorizing vocabulary alongside other student groups. (Teacher #3, Nov 26, 2023, Questionnaire Translated by Authors)
Teacher #4
The game strategies I frequently employ entail online games like bingo, the clown, snowball throwing, and others. I find this approach more efficient in learning English, especially due to the limited number of relatively small students. (Teacher #4, questionnaire in Google Form, Nov 27, 2023, translated by the authors).

Teacher #5
There are various English learning games that I have implemented. The game strategies include conventional media like cards and digital games such as Snakes and Ladders. I cater to a wide range of students and have successfully employed these methods. (Teacher #5, Questionnaire in Google Form, Nov. 28, 2023, translated by the authors)

The authors concluded from the opinions of all student participants about the game strategies they preferred. These ranged from conventional games like picture guessing games, broken phone games, English crossword games, answering questions, guessing English words and Indonesian games while singing, Simon Says games, and rolling word games to digital games like cooking games, puzzle games, Pou games, and other enjoyable games.

2. The implication of gamification for young learners in English education
The Google Form questionnaire data shared by authors with both teachers and students revealed several subthemes, including the problem factors of English teachers, the solution to problem factors of English teachers, and the impact of gamification on young learners in English education.

The Problem Factors of English Teachers
The authors obtained data on these factors from English teachers by distributing a questionnaire on Google Forms among the participants. Accordingly, this subchapter analyses the theme based on the teaching experience of the participating English teachers.

Teacher Vignette 3: The problem factors of English teachers.
Teacher #1
According to my teaching experience as an English teacher in an Islamic primary school, a little obstacle might be for me to implement the gamification method in English learning. The problem factor that will hinder this is because the student's lack of vocabulary. (Teacher #1, Google form questionnaire, Nov 26, 2023, translated by the authors)

Teacher #2
I have experience in implementing various types of English language games, including both online and traditional formats. However, in my teaching practice, I have encountered obstacles in using these games, particularly in classes with a large number of students. The application of conventional games is not always suitable in these situations, as it can be challenging for the teacher to condition and manage such a significant number of learners. (Teacher #2, Google form questionnaire, Nov 26, 2023, Translated by authors)

Teacher #3
I encountered a small obstacle while implementing gamification in my English learning. Communication errors can hinder the activity, and consequently, cause
students to blame each other if there’s a communication gap between the kids and the teacher. (Teacher #3, Google form questionnaire, Nov 26, 2023, translated by the authors)

During the learning process, several problem factors may trigger the main learning obstacles (Demirbilek et al., 2022; Nikmah, 2020; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2023). Examples of issues that can hinder learning include a deficient English vocab. Examples of issues that can hinder learning include a deficient English vocabulary among students, unsuitable traditional game formats for classes with high-enrolment, and inadequate communication of game mechanics to students.

**The Solution of Problem Factors of English Teachers**

The implementation of the gamification method demands identifying and resolving various problem factors to enable successful English language acquisition. To evaluate the effectiveness of teacher interventions in addressing these obstacles to learning, the authors examined English teachers' solutions to these factors as captured in a Google form sub-chapter on problem-solving.

**Teacher Vignette 4: The Solution of the Problem of English Teachers**

**Teacher #1**

To overcome the issue of students' limitation of English vocabulary, I employ vocabulary drills. This helps students become accustomed to remembering common English words frequently used in daily English learning. (Teacher #1, Nov. 26, 2023, translated by authors)

**Teacher #2**

I make an effort to apply teaching methods that are widely accepted by the majority of students. I discuss with students beforehand to identify the game methods they prefer so that their English learning experience is efficient and seamless. (Teacher #2, Google form questionnaire, Nov. 26, 2023, Translated by authors)

**Teacher #3**

To achieve effective English language learning and minimize communication challenges between students and teachers when using gamification in this process, the systematically approach of the game I plan on teaching will be thoroughly explained to students. This will hopefully lead to a seamless English language learning experience. To achieve effective English language learning and minimize communication challenges between students and teachers when using gamification in this process, the systematically approach of the game I plan on teaching will be thoroughly explained to students. (Teacher #3, Google Form Questionnaire, November 26, 2023, translated by authors)

Based on the data analysis described by authors for each teacher participant, several solutions can be identified to address the problem factors.

**The impact of gamification for young learners in English education.**

The last sub-theme under the second topic has been identified by the authors using the information obtained from the Google form questionnaire, which pertains to examining the impact of Gamification on young learners in English education. This sub-chapter will outline the effects of applying gamification to English language learning.
using insights from both teacher and student participants. The teacher is depicted in the following image, and the percentage of students' English learning using gamification methods is depicted in Table 1, and the percentage of students' English comprehension improvement is depicted in Table 2.

Teacher Vignette 5: The impact of gamification on young learners in English education

**Teacher #1**

After implementing the gamification method in my English lessons, I observed a notable increase in student engagement. By incorporating games, the learning experience became more engaging and students showed greater enthusiasm in learning English. The novelty of the approach eliminated the dullness that could arise through traditional English instruction. (Teacher #1, Google form questionnaire, Nov 26, 2023, Translated by authors)

**Teacher #2**

The gamification method has demonstrated noticeable enhancements to students' learning outcomes. The use of games generates interest among children to learn, thereby creating a favourable learning atmosphere. Moreover, several games incorporate diverse learning abilities of children, making them compatible with learners who grasp concepts visually, auditorily, or through audio-visual means. The motor and sensory applications also strike a balance, which can improve students' concentration during the learning process. (Teacher #2, Google form questionnaire, Nov. 26, 2023, translated by the authors)

**Teacher #3**

There has been an increase in the number of students following my implementation of a gamification method with my mentees. Although the material was not extensive, the students were able to remember it easily. However, at the very least they demonstrated an understanding of the English material. (Teacher #3, Google Form Questionnaire, November 26, 2023, translated by authors)

**Teacher #4**

There have been noticeable improvements in students' performance after implementing the gamification method in my class. The students' enthusiasm has increased, and they can comprehend English material more rapidly. It could be because games make them more at ease and less bored. (Teacher #4, questionnaire in Google form, Nov. 27, 2023, translated by authors)

**Teacher #5**

By implementing this method of gamification, there are many improvements that I get. One of them is that the children get more excited and remember something that we teach in the game. So, I am happy when the children are also happy in my English learning. (Teacher #5, Google form questionnaire, 28 Nov 2023, Translated by authors)

The results of the analysis indicate that applying gamification methods in English education for young learners has several impacts. The impact of gamification was studied by authors, who identified several important points, including with the implementation of gamification methods, the process of learning English becomes more engaging.
Diagram 1 presents the distribution of students who are content or discontent with the application of gamification techniques in learning English. The results indicate a majority of 85.7% of students who are content, represented by a blue area, which is rounded to 86%, meaning that out of the total 21 students that participated, 18 favoured learning with gamification. On the contrary, data indicating student dissatisfaction with the implementation of gamification techniques in learning English is highlighted with orange shading and accounts for a total percentage of 14.3%, rounded up to 14%. Therefore, out of 21 participating students, three students do not favour the adoption of gamification methods in this context. Therefore, it is evident that implementing gamification techniques in English language learning for students is highly advantageous, as several students enjoy learning through gameplay.

Diagram 2. The Percentage of Students' English Comprehension Improvement

**Category 1:** The percentage of students who understand English material with the gamification method

**Category 2:** The percentage of students who do not understand English material with the gamification method
Diagram 2 demonstrates the number of students who have improved their skills after the implementation of the gamification method in English learning. The bar chart depicts two categories, namely Category 1 and Category 2. Category 1 shows the percentage of students who comprehended English material through the application of the gamification method in English learning, while Category 2 indicates the percentage of students who did not comprehend English material through the application of the gamification method in English learning. Category 1 has a percentage of 85.70%, which means that there are 18 students out of 21 student participants whose understanding has increased after the application of gamification methods in English learning, while category 2 has a percentage of 14.30%, which means that there are 3 students out of 21 student participants where they are less familiar with English material following the use of gamification techniques in English language instruction.

Discussion

The research on gamification aims to analyse the strategies and implications of gamification for young learners in English language education. The study addresses three distinct themes that analyse and describe the impact of gamification on young English learners' understanding of lessons and the quality of English instruction. The Researches were identified three themes based on the data from the questionnaires distributed by the authors to the participants through e-link in Google form, which were presented with supporting data: (1) The role of gamification for English education, and (2) The implication of gamification for young learners in English education. The research questions have been comprehensively answered through these themes.

The first theme was identified from the e-questionnaire data as the role of gamification in English learning. Teacher participants have different views on applying offline games to English language teaching, especially for young learners. The use of gamification can benefit students in engaging them and stimulate their creativity in learning English. A study published in the journal by (Fajarisman et al., 2023) highlights how these techniques can promote creativity in the classroom. It is noteworthy that none of the teachers surveyed had previously employed gamification techniques, underscoring the significant role that gamification can play in the acquisition of English for young learners. Undoubtedly, educators employ their methodologies when conveying English content to students (Suarni, 2023). In creating an effective strategy, teachers are required to be creative and inventive in teaching English to enhance the quality of students towards English (Anburaj, 2014). Based on the authors' findings, numerous game strategies can be implemented to facilitate English language learning, including both digital and traditional games. Different from the research (Wang, 2023) the findings indicate that game developers should consider the learning load and information processing capacity of learners when creating instructional games. Rather than incorporating a multitude of gamification elements, developers should focus on optimizing the learning experience for their target audience. The utilization of games can be tailored to suit the number of learners, learning environment, and specific learning goals. If there are numerous students, it is more effective to employ traditional games, including Simon Says, Snakes and Ladders, Guessing Cards, and memorization of vocabulary in sequence with other student groups. Conversely, if there is a lower number of students, it is more beneficial to use digital game tactics, as described by other authors in the journal (Yang & Chen, 2023). These digital games comprise crosswords, jumbled words, spelling, and interactive power point. Additionally, there is a game based on video illustration, bingo, the clown,
snowball throwing, and snakes and ladders. The implementation of these games will enliven the English learning environment and enhance the quality of language acquisition. This enables teachers and students to be mutually active and creative during classes (Shodieva, 2023).

The second theme selected through data analysis of the Google Form equation data is the implications of using gamification for young English learners' education. Implementing the gamification method in English teaching may encounter various problem factors that can impede smooth learning. Based on the analysis results, it can be inferred that some teachers encounter barriers, such as those in implementing gamification for young English learners. It is need to be considered in perspective since they might have a detrimental effect on the time frame, effectiveness, and general quality of the learning process. Consequently, the optimal solution to this problem includes drilling English vocabulary to overcome students' shortcomings, employing learning methods that are acceptable to students through joint discussions, and providing a detailed explanation of the game systematics to prevent miscommunication. Teachers may establish a dynamic and captivating learning environment that is interesting for both students and teachers by utilizing a range of strategies and ideas. This can lead to enhancements in the overall quality of students' English language instruction (Alghamdi & Bitar, 2023). Multiple games are available, which can increase student excitement towards the language. The usage of games can influence children's interest in the learning process, resulting in a positive atmosphere for English learning, and ultimately improving the students' concentration by balancing the motor and sensory applications. Through the utilization of gamification methods, students can more easily retain the material, become more motivated, comprehend English material at a faster pace than usual, and establish a learning environment that is both more innovative and creative. These findings were presented in the journal article (Pham, 2023), which documented the effects of implementing quiz games within the framework of studying English. The outcomes of the authors’ data examination via the Google form questionnaire show that the students appreciated the use of this gamification approach due to its ability to make education enjoyable, exciting, comprehensible, and interesting by using gamification. From the results of the percentage calculation, the students’ understanding of the subject that they have been learning has significantly improved as a result of the introduction of gamification throughout English language instruction.

CONCLUSION

The results of the research and the data discussed indicate that the role of gamification in learning English for young learners in Indonesia can effectively improve their understanding of English materials taught by English teachers. This improvement is clearly seen through two types of English learning activities based on the experiences of students and teachers in using gamification methods. In addition, several digital games, including video illustration, bingo, clown, snowball throwing, and interactive PowerPoint, have been identified as belonging to the category of digital games. This conclusion is supported by the results of a Google form questionnaire, in which student volunteers and teachers participated in practicing English learning using gamification methods. The results demonstrated that students exhibited positive and significant changes after using this gamification method. This is because they prefer varied learning over learning that only listens to theory. Furthermore, students concur that learning English will be more enjoyable and engaging when the game is distinct at each learning
This necessitates that teachers cultivate greater creativity and innovation, ensuring that students are engaged and comprehend English material more readily. Conversely, fostering innovation and creativity in teaching can foster the development of high-quality and intellectually curious learners.

REFERENCES


