**Lectura: Jurnal Pendidikan**
Volume 16, Nomor 2, Agustus 2025, Halaman 588-601
P-ISSN: 2086-4876
E-ISSN: 2549-063X
DOI: https://doi.org/10.31849/3ej46t19
Link: https://journal.unilak.ac.id/index.php/lectura/article/view/27785

# Gamification in English Learning: Building Students' Motivation and Creativity

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Submitted: 23-06-2025 Accepted: 30-06-2025 Published: 10-08-2025

**Abstract**
This study investigates the effectiveness of gamification in English language learning, focusing on its impact on students' motivation and creativity. In the digital age, educators are increasingly integrating game elements into instructional design to foster learner engagement and innovative thinking. This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were collected through pre- and post-tests using the Academic Motivation Scale (Ryan & Deci, 1985), Tests of Creative Thinking by Torrence (2018), and a researcher-developed questionnaire assessing students' understanding of gamification elements such as points, challenges, and badges. The participants were 33 eleventh-grade students from a public high school in Bekasi. The results showed statistically significant improvements in all three measured variables. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews revealed increased engagement, confidence, and imaginative language use during gamified learning activities. Challenges included limited access to digital devices, unstable internet connectivity, and differences in student adaptability based on prior technology exposure and personality traits. These findings suggest that gamification may be an effective and contextually relevant instructional strategy in Indonesian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms. The study highlights the potential of gamified instruction to support both affective and cognitive domains, and recommends further research on long-term impacts and scalable implementation models.

**Keywords:** gamification, English language learning, motivation, creativity, educational technology

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, educational practices have been increasingly influenced by digital innovations, particularly in the field of English language learning. One prominent strategy that has emerged is gamification, which refers to the application of game design elements in non-game contexts to enhance user engagement and motivation (Deterding et al., 2011). In language learning, gamification is used to stimulate participation, sustain attention, and foster creativity through elements such as points, challenges, leaderboards, and storytelling (Gachkova & Somova, 2016; Hamari et al., 2014) The integration of gamified platforms into online English instruction has shown potential in increasing both engagement and achievement among EFL learners (Inayati & Waloyo, 2022).

Research has shown that gamification can positively influence learners' motivation by addressing both intrinsic and extrinsic needs (Ryan & Deci, 1985; Al-Azawi et al., 2016). It also has the potential to nurture creativity, especially when integrated with open-ended and interactive tasks (Torrance, 2018; Reinders & Wattana, 2015). However, the majority of these studies have been conducted in Western or technologically advanced educational settings. Recent studies have shown that mobile gamified apps significantly increase learner engagement in EFL settings, particularly when designed with user interaction and feedback loops (Cheng et al., 2025). In the context of second language acquisition, gamified feedback mechanisms have been shown to enhance both learner motivation and accuracy in language production (Boudadi & Gutiérrez-Colón, 2020).

To address these gaps, the present study adopts an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to examine how gamification influences both motivation and creativity among Indonesian EFL learners. By combining statistical data with qualitative narratives, this study seeks to provide a more nuanced and contextually relevant account of gamification's instructional potential. Unlike previous work, it foregrounds creativity alongside motivation and considers the technological and pedagogical constraints common in public school environments. However, the use of gamified instruction in developing countries like Indonesia remains limited in scope and application (Alifiani, 2023; Fauzi & Rachman, 2024) especially in rural contexts where access to infrastructure and teacher training varies greatly.

In addition to motivational and cognitive frameworks, this research is informed by the heutagogical approach, which emphasizes learner autonomy, self-determined learning, and metacognition. According to (Baah et al., 2023), game-based elements such as choice, reward, and feedback significantly enhance intrinsic motivation when grounded in the principles of self-determination theory. As noted by Febry et al., (2022), heutagogy supports creativity by encouraging self-reflection and agency within flexible learning environments. Gamification also facilitates vocabulary retention and idiomatic knowledge acquisition when implemented with attention to learner attitudes and preferences (Ahmed et al., 2022). In this regard, gamification can serve as a bridge between heutagogical principles and digital pedagogy, offering structured yet student-driven learning experiences. This theoretical integration lays the foundation for a gamified EFL model that not only engages but empowers learners as active participants in their educational journey.

Moreover, existing studies frequently rely on quantitative designs that overlook learners' subjective experiences. This creates a gap in understanding how gamification is perceived and experienced by students and teachers, especially in environments with

limited digital infrastructure or diverse learner profiles (Kholid et al., 2017; Buckley & Doyle, 2016).

Addressing these gaps, the present study applies an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach to explore how gamification affects both motivation and creativity among Indonesian EFL students. By integrating statistical evidence with qualitative insights, this research seeks to contribute a nuanced understanding of gamification's potential as an engaging and contextually adaptable instructional strategy. Unlike prior studies, it emphasizes learner creativity alongside motivation and considers real-world limitations faced by schools in developing regions. Therefore, this study offers both theoretical contributions and practical implications for implementing gamified English learning in similar educational contexts.

In addition to the motivational and cognitive frameworks, this study is also informed by the heutagogical approach, which emphasizes learner autonomy, self-determined learning, and metacognition. As argued by Febry et al. (2022), heutagogy enables students to develop their creativity by exercising self-regulation, self-reflection, and motivation within flexible, student-centered learning environments. In this sense, gamification can serve as a bridge between heutagogical principles and digital pedagogy—where game-based elements provide the structure for learners to take control of their learning process. This alignment supports the theoretical basis for designing gamified EFL instruction that not only engages but empowers students as active agents in their education.

## METHOD

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, where quantitative data collection and analysis were followed by qualitative data to provide further elaboration of the initial results. The rationale for using this approach was to quantitatively measure the effectiveness of gamification in enhancing motivation, creativity, and understanding, while also capturing the participants' lived experiences to explain those numerical outcomes. The qualitative phase was designed to follow up on surprising or particularly strong trends in the quantitative data.

The participants consisted of 33 eleventh-grade students from a public senior high school in West Java, Indonesia. These students were selected through purposive sampling based on their availability and consistent attendance in English classes. All participants were enrolled in the same class to ensure exposure to identical learning environments and materials. The age range of the participants was 16–17 years old, with a balanced gender distribution (17 female, 16 male). Most students had limited prior experience with gamified learning, although they were familiar with general mobile games and social media platforms.

The small, focused sample allowed for deep observation and consistent delivery of the intervention, which is critical in classroom-based research. To maintain ethical standards, informed consent was obtained from all participants and school authorities prior to data collection.

Prior to implementation, all quantitative instruments underwent content validation by two EFL teaching experts and one education technology specialist. The items were evaluated for clarity, relevance to the constructs (motivation, creativity, gamification understanding), and cultural appropriateness. Feedback led to minor modifications in wording and item sequencing. A pilot test was conducted with 25 students from a different class at the same school. This allowed the researcher to assess

the clarity of instructions and estimate the average completion time. Additionally, qualitative questions used in the semi-structured interview guide were reviewed by an English curriculum specialist to ensure alignment with the study objectives and age-appropriateness of the prompts.

The study used three instruments in the quantitative phase: 1). motivation questionnaire, creativity assessment scale, and gamification understanding scale. All instruments were adapted from previous studies and translated into Bahasa Indonesia with expert validation. The motivation questionnaire was adapted from Keller's ARCS model items and consisted of 10 Likert-scale statements, divided into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The creativity scale was drawn from a writing fluency and originality rubric adapted from Torrance's creativity indicators. Lastly, the gamification understanding scale measured students' ability to recognize elements such as goals, feedback loops, and levels, with 10 items. All three instruments underwent reliability testing. The Cronbach's alpha for the motivation scale was .704 (pre-test) and .670 (post-test), indicating acceptable internal consistency. Each scale was piloted with a different class prior to the study, and necessary revisions were made based on feedback for clarity and cultural adaptation.

Semi-structured interviews were used in the qualitative phase. An interview guide was developed based on themes that emerged in the quantitative findings, such as increased engagement, creativity, and challenges with digital tools. The interviews included open-ended questions that allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences. The interviews were conducted in Indonesian to ensure participant comfort and accuracy of expression. They lasted 20–30 minutes each, were audio-recorded with permission, and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Anonymity was maintained throughout, and participant codes were used during transcription and analysis.

The study was carried out over five weeks during regular English class hours. The procedure began with a pre-test session, in which all three scales were administered. This was followed by four weeks of gamified instruction, which involved: a. mission-based tasks integrated with English materials, b. point systems, leaderboards, and level-up mechanics, c. fantasy storytelling challenges and role-playing dialogues. Students earned digital points via ClassDojo and were shown weekly rankings. Tasks such as "Build Your Fantasy World" and "Complete the Quest by Solving Grammar Puzzles" were designed to stimulate engagement and creativity. All materials were aligned with the school's English curriculum and designed in collaboration with an instructional designer to ensure both pedagogical validity and gamified appeal.

The post-test was administered after the intervention ended, using the same instruments. Scores were recorded and analyzed using paired-sample t-tests. For the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with two students selected using maximum variation sampling based on pre-post score differences. The interviews aimed to explore students' subjective experiences, engagement levels, and perceptions of gamified learning. The intervention spanned five weeks, with weekly instructional plans tailored to integrate gamification elements progressively. In Week 1, the researcher introduced the gamified system, rules, and point mechanics using ClassDojo. Students received orientation and completed the pre-test. In Week 2, students participated in an "English Quest" involving group challenges and vocabulary games, where progress was tracked through visual leveling. Week 3 emphasized creative

writing with fantasy characters, incorporating badge rewards for originality and teamwork. In Week 4, learners completed a "Grammar Dungeon" mission that involved puzzle-solving with embedded grammar tasks. The final session in Week 5 included a collaborative storytelling competition, reflection, and the post-test. Throughout the intervention, the researcher maintained consistency by following a pre-designed gamified lesson plan, supported by visual slides, game cards, and digital pointboards.

Quantitative data were analyzed using Jamovi software, applying paired-sample t-tests for each variable to assess significant differences between pre- and post-test scores. Cohen's d was calculated to determine the effect size of the intervention. Prior to this, Shapiro–Wilk tests were conducted to check normality. Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic coding, using Braun and Clarke's (2006)method. Transcripts were read multiple times and coded manually to identify recurring patterns. Themes were then grouped under broader categories that reflected changes in motivation, creativity, and engagement. All ethical considerations were carefully addressed prior to the implementation of this study. Informed consent was obtained from both the participating students and the school authorities. Students were assured that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential. To maintain the integrity of the research process, no grades or evaluations were influenced by the outcomes of the gamified activities.

In addition, the researcher maintained a weekly reflective journal to monitor the fidelity of the intervention and assess the effectiveness of the gamified design throughout the implementation phase. These reflections allowed the researcher to make minor adjustments to the pacing and clarity of instructions, particularly when students expressed confusion or technical difficulties with the digital elements. This reflective process ensured that the intervention remained responsive to the learners' needs and helped capture contextual nuances that quantitative instruments alone could not fully address.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

#### *Quantitative Results*

This study employed quantitative analysis to measure the impact of gamification on students' motivation, creativity, and understanding of gamification. Prior to conducting the inferential analysis, descriptive statistics were obtained. The results showed an increase in the mean scores for all three variables from the pre-test to the post-test phase. For motivation, the mean rose from 38.5 (SD = 4.94) to 45.1 (SD = 3.11); for creativity, from 34.8 (SD = 6.79) to 44.2 (SD = 4.66); and for gamification understanding, from 38.8 (SD = 6.32) to 45.1 (SD = 3.51)

To determine the appropriateness of parametric testing, the Shapiro–Wilk test was conducted to assess normality. The results confirmed that the data for all three constructs were normally distributed, with p-values above the .05 threshold: motivation ($p$ = .273), creativity ($p$ = .487), and gamification understanding ($p$ = .352), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Shapiro–Wilk Normality Test Results

| Variable | Shapiro–Wilk W | p-value |
|---|---|---|
| Motivation | 0.967 | .273 |
| Creativity | 0.977 | .487 |
| Gamification Understanding | 0.971 | .352 |

Note: All p-values are greater than .05, indicating normally distributed data suitable for parametric tests.

An increase was observed in students' motivation scores, with the pre-test mean of 38.5 (SD = 4.94) rising to 45.1 (SD = 3.11) in the post-test. The result of the paired-sample t-test confirmed that this improvement was statistically significant, $t(32) = -6.69$, $p < .001$, and represented a very large effect size ($d = 1.17$), as detailed in Table 2. These findings indicate that the use of gamification strategies helped enhance learners' enthusiasm and willingness to engage in English language learning activities.

Table 2. Paired Sample t-Test Result for Motivation (N = 33)

| Test | Pre-test M (SD) | Post-test M (SD) | t(32) | P | Cohen's d |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Motivation | 38.5 (4.94) | 45.1 (3.11) | -6.69 | < .001 | 1.17 |

Note: Motivation scores improved significantly with a very large effect size.

The analysis of creativity scores showed a similar trend. Students scored higher in the post-test (M = 44.2, SD = 4.66) compared to the pre-test (M = 34.8, SD = 6.79), with $t(32) = -6.38$, $p < .001$. This statistically significant increase is supported by a very large effect size ($d = 1.11$), suggesting that gamified learning environments stimulated more original and fluent expression of ideas in English, as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3. Paired Sample t-Test Result for Creativity (N = 33)

| Test | Pre-test M (SD) | Post-test M (SD) | t(32) | P | Cohen's d |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Creativity | 34.8 (6.79) | 44.2 (4.66) | -6.38 | < .001 | 1.11 |

Note: Creativity scores improved significantly with a very large effect size.

***Qualitative Results***

To enrich the quantitative findings, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with selected students who participated in the gamified learning program. The purpose of this phase was to explore how students perceived gamification in their English classes, and to better understand the internal processes behind the improvements observed in motivation, creativity, and engagement.

Three major themes emerged from the interview transcripts: (1) increased learning motivation through competition and rewards, (2) enhanced creativity via storytelling and visual challenges, and (3) a sense of meaningful progress and ownership.

*Motivation Enhanced by Gamified Elements*

Several students mentioned that elements such as points, badges, and leaderboards encouraged them to participate more actively. One student stated, *"When I saw my name going up on the leaderboard, I felt proud and wanted to keep going."* Another added, *"I*

*usually feel lazy in English class, but this time I was excited because we played like a mission-based game."*

Echoing our findings, Diana et al., (2025) found that embedding reward structures, challenges, and progress indicators in EFL classrooms significantly boosted learner motivation, reinforcing the usefulness of gamification in language education.

*Creativity through Story-Based Tasks*

Students also felt that gamification allowed them to express their ideas more freely. For example, one participant explained, *"I liked the activity where we had to make our own fantasy characters. I could use my imagination, and it didn't feel like a test."* Another described how designing a group story challenged them to think outside the box.

This observation aligns with recent empirical evidence highlighting the significant role of narrative variables in enhancing learners' creative engagement and knowledge retention within gamified settings (Jarrah et al., 2024)

*Ownership and Engagement*

A recurring theme was that students felt more "in control" of their learning. A student noted, *"It's like I'm playing, but I'm learning. I don't feel forced."* Others mentioned that progress bars and levels gave them a clear sense of achievement. These perceptions reflect the increase in intrinsic motivation and help explain why students demonstrated a higher level of classroom involvement. Similar findings were highlighted by (Hong, 2022), who observed that writing-based gamification helped students express themselves more freely and develop personal voice in language learning. The structured freedom within gamified activities appears to foster not only creativity but also linguistic risk-taking and learner agency.

The qualitative findings complement the statistical data and provide deeper insight into why gamification was effective. While the quantitative results confirmed significant improvements across the three variables, the interviews revealed that gamified activities transformed the classroom atmosphere and positively shaped students' learning attitudes and behaviors.

Beyond emotional responses, several students exhibited a surprising level of reflection regarding how the gamified structure influenced their thinking and learning strategies. One student remarked, *"Even though it was like a game, I actually paid more attention to grammar because we had to use it to finish our quests."* This suggests that gamification not only increased engagement but also helped redirect students' focus toward the substance of the task.

Another participant explained, *"When we worked in teams to complete a story, I realized I remembered more vocabulary than usual. Maybe because I had to use it in a fun way."* These reflections indicate that gamification may help activate deeper cognitive processing when students are required to apply language in meaningful, playful contexts. Unlike conventional activities, which are often seen as disconnected drills, the gamified tasks in this study provided scenarios that required decision-making, creativity, and language use under self-imposed goals.

Furthermore, some students demonstrated awareness of their learning behavior over time. One interviewee stated, *"I didn't care much about English before, but now I wait for the class because I want to see what challenge we get next."* This kind of statement reflects a shift in student orientation from passive compliance to active anticipation—an essential trait for sustained motivation and independent learning.

Taken together, these additional insights deepen the understanding of how gamification may cultivate metacognitive awareness, not just immediate excitement. The students' voices reveal that carefully designed gamified instruction does more than entertain—it fosters purpose, reflection, and personal relevance in the learning process.

**Discussion**

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of gamification in English language learning led to statistically significant improvements in students' motivation, creativity, and understanding of gamification. The quantitative results showed large to very large effect sizes across all three constructs. These improvements were further supported by qualitative insights gathered through interviews, offering a more nuanced view of how gamification influenced students' learning behavior and emotional engagement.

The rise in motivation scores suggests that gamification successfully tapped into students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivational drivers. As shown in the interviews, students reported feeling more enthusiastic, goal-driven, and proud of their achievements when game-based elements such as leaderboards, points, and levels were introduced. These experiences align with Deci & Ryan (2000), which emphasizes the role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in sustaining motivation. The gamified structure appeared to meet these psychological needs by providing choice (e.g., missions), feedback (e.g., points), and social comparison (e.g., rankings), which are rarely emphasized in traditional classroom settings.

The statistically significant increase in creativity also corresponds with the design of the gamified learning activities, which encouraged open-ended storytelling, role-playing, and imagination. These activities provided a safe and playful environment for divergent thinking, allowing students to explore multiple possibilities without fear of failure. In interviews, participants mentioned enjoying tasks that involved character creation or fantasy-based problem-solving. These findings are consistent with past research by Su & Cheng, (2015) found that game-based tasks improve students' creative risk-taking and language expression.

These results align with findings from a Kahoot!-based study, which revealed that well-structured gamification not only enhances learner motivation but also positively impacts academic performance in classroom contexts (Fuster-Guilló et al., 2019). This aligns with the findings from Zhang & Hasim (2023), who emphasize that gamification in EFL settings supports active participation and sustained learner motivation.

Additionally, the improvement in gamification understanding indicates that students not only engaged with game mechanics but also developed meta-awareness of how these elements facilitated their learning. In other words, gamification not only improved performance but also enhanced students' learning strategies. This resonates with findings from Domínguez et al. (2013), who emphasized that well-structured gamification fosters metacognitive reflection.

Qualitative data provided valuable context to interpret these statistical results. Thematic analysis revealed three main insights: students were more motivated due to competition and rewards; they felt more creative through exploratory activities; and they experienced a stronger sense of ownership over their learning. These themes triangulate with the quantitative findings and offer concrete examples of how gamification transforms learning experiences at the classroom level.

From a local perspective, these findings have particular relevance for the Indonesian EFL context, where student passivity and teacher-centered instruction are still prevalent in many schools. Gamification provides an alternative that shifts the learning experience to be more student-centered, dynamic, and emotionally engaging. Moreover, given the digital nativity of the current generation, gamification leverages familiar interfaces and mechanics that align with students' everyday digital experiences.

However, this study is not without limitations. First, the sample size was relatively small and restricted to one school, which may affect generalizability. Second, while the gamification model used in this study was effective, it was based on the teacher's custom design and may not be easily replicated without proper training. Third, individual factors such as prior gaming experience, gender differences, and digital access were not fully explored and could influence students' responsiveness to gamification.

Future research could investigate long-term effects of gamified instruction and compare different types of gamification models (e.g., competitive vs. collaborative). Moreover, exploring teacher perspectives and the impact of gamification training for educators would also add valuable insights to the field. Teacher perceptions also play a key role in gamified learning success, as supported by Afifah & Priyana, (2024) , who found that teacher support and confidence significantly influence implementation outcomes.Finally, a cross-school or even cross-cultural comparative study would help validate and expand the applicability of gamification in various learning environments.

In conclusion, this study confirms that gamification has strong potential to enhance students' motivation, creativity, and engagement in English learning, particularly in EFL settings. By combining statistical evidence and students' voices, the findings offer both empirical and practical value for educators aiming to innovate language instruction through game-based approaches.

These findings are consistent with those of Febry et al. (2022), who, through a systematic literature review, concluded that heutagogical learning enhances student creativity by promoting self-directed exploration, digital learning autonomy, and reflective practice. Similar to how gamification in this study encouraged storytelling and mission-based tasks, the heutagogical approach allows learners to creatively navigate their own learning pathways. Both approaches emphasize student empowerment and intrinsic motivation as drivers of creativity, indicating that gamification, when embedded in self-determined frameworks, can facilitate deeper personal and cognitive growth in EFL classrooms. These findings are consistent with recent meta-analyses by Tsai (2024) and Zeng et al. (2024), which highlight that gamification interventions across multiple

educational levels lead to measurable improvements in student performance and creative thinking.

The findings of this study offer several implications for English language teaching, curriculum development, and educational policy, particularly in the Indonesian EFL context. First, from a pedagogical standpoint, the integration of gamification into classroom instruction can significantly enhance student motivation and creativity—two affective factors often overlooked in traditional, exam-oriented teaching environments. English teachers are encouraged to incorporate game-based elements such as points, levels, story-based tasks, and progress tracking into their lesson plans. These elements not only increase student engagement but also support deeper cognitive processing through meaningful interaction with the language.

From a curricular perspective, gamification aligns well with learner-centered and communicative approaches promoted by the national curriculum. Task-based and project-based learning models can be gamified to provide students with clear goals, immediate feedback, and a sense of progression, components that contribute to sustained interest and active participation. As such, policymakers and school administrators should consider supporting gamification initiatives by providing professional development, digital tools, and instructional resources that allow teachers to design and manage gamified lessons effectively.

On a broader level, this study highlights the potential of gamification to foster 21st-century competencies such as creativity, collaboration, and self-directed learning. These skills are increasingly recognized as essential in the globalized world, and gamified instruction offers a promising pathway to cultivate them within language classrooms. However, successful implementation requires thoughtful instructional design that goes beyond superficial game elements. Teachers must ensure that game mechanics are pedagogically grounded and aligned with learning objectives to avoid distractions or disengagement.

Finally, the study encourages further experimentation and reflection among educators. Gamification should not be seen as a fixed method but as a flexible framework that can be adapted to various teaching styles, student needs, and technological contexts. When used strategically, gamification can transform language learning into a more meaningful, dynamic, and learner-driven experience.

While the results of this study demonstrate the potential benefits of gamification, several practical challenges emerged during the implementation that deserve further consideration. One of the main difficulties involved maintaining student focus on learning objectives amid game elements. For example, although students were excited about gaining points and advancing levels, some initially viewed the tasks more as competition than opportunities to learn. This required careful instructional scaffolding and frequent reminders to align their attention with language targets. It highlights the importance of ensuring that game mechanics remain subordinated to pedagogical goals.

Another challenge was the varying levels of student digital literacy. Although most participants were familiar with mobile apps and social media, not all were equally

confident using the gamified platform or understanding the point system. This occasionally slowed classroom flow and required additional teacher support, especially during the first week of implementation. To overcome this, the teacher had to provide visual aids, conduct quick technical tutorials, and pair students strategically to support one another.

Additionally, time management posed a constraint. Designing, implementing, and monitoring gamified activities within a limited class schedule required significant planning and flexibility. Teachers must balance curriculum coverage with the time-intensive nature of gamified instruction. These experiences suggest that while gamification is engaging and potentially transformative, its success depends heavily on thoughtful design, teacher preparedness, and contextual adaptation.

Reflecting on these experiences, it is evident that gamification is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Rather, it is a pedagogical approach that requires careful alignment with learning outcomes, student needs, and classroom realities. Addressing these implementation challenges can pave the way for more sustainable and impactful use of gamification in diverse educational contexts.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study suggest that gamification has the potential to enhance affective and cognitive aspects of language learning when designed with clear pedagogical intent. Students not only demonstrated statistically significant improvements in motivation and creativity but also reported increased engagement, enjoyment, and self-awareness regarding their learning process. These results underscore the value of integrating game elements into instruction to promote learner autonomy and foster a more participatory and meaningful learning environment. Theoretically, the study extends the application of Self-Determination Theory and heutagogical learning by illustrating how gamification can support learner needs for autonomy, competence, and reflection within language classrooms. Practically, the study offers an adaptable framework for EFL educators seeking to redesign traditional instruction into a more interactive and student-centered format, even in settings with limited technological resources. By balancing fantasy-based tasks with real curricular objectives, the gamified design in this study offers an example of how creativity and motivation can be cultivated simultaneously.

Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted with caution due to the study's limited sample size and context-specific setting. The results do not claim universal generalizability but rather offer insights applicable to similar learning environments. Future research could examine long-term effects of gamified learning, its influence on academic achievement or language fluency, and its adaptability across diverse cultural and technological settings. Additionally, teacher perceptions and implementation challenges deserve further exploration to support wider adoption. Overall, gamification holds considerable promise for enriching English language instruction when applied thoughtfully and contextually.

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