

A Systematic Review of Gamification and Its Assessment in EFL Teaching

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine the satisfaction of EFL teachers with gamification platforms as well as to investigate how EFL teachers perceive gamification and its effects on pupils' motivation and learning outcomes. Five major databases (ERIC, Scopus, WoS, EBSCO, ProQuest) and Google Scholar were used to search for relevant studies. The study followed the PRISMA guidelines and the PICO framework. Inter-rater reliability analyses were performed for both study selection and study quality assessment. Eleven relevant quantitative or mixed studies were identified. The findings indicate that EFL teachers perceived a positive effect of gamification on pupils' motivation and are satisfied with the applicability of gamification platforms. The findings revealed that internet and technology issues and a lack of teachers' skills are the most prominent negative factors when implementing gamification. Further experimental research is needed to provide evidence of the EFL teacher-perceived effectiveness of gamification on learning outcomes.

KEYWORDS

Gamification, Learning Outcomes, Motivation, Systematic Review, Teacher's Perspectives, Technology-Enhanced English Teaching

INTRODUCTION

The modernisation of English as a foreign language (EFL) education has been fundamentally intertwined with the rapid technological development of digital content, which has been frequently utilised to enhance the learning process and promote positive learning experiences. One of these technological innovations that could increase the effectiveness of EFL teaching is gamification. Gamification refers to a methodical strategy that facilitates a gameful experience to motivate and engage users (Hamari, 2019). Gamification utilises leaderboards, digital badges, achievements or in-game digital currency to reward users for their efforts and provide valuable feedback (Flores,

DOI: 10.4018/IJCALLT.322394

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2015; Kapp, 2012). Nowadays, gamification elements are often used to amplify the effectiveness of other innovative language learning methods that utilise modern technology, such as mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), computer-assisted language learning (CALL) as well as an assortment of learning management systems facilitating blended learning and flipped classrooms (Chwo et al., 2018; Dicheva et al., 2015; Somova & Gachkova, 2022). Applications such as Duolingo, Kahoot or Quizizz have incorporated gamification into their core designs and found great success in EFL teaching. Moreover, gamification has been implemented not only for learning new materials or revising old ones, but also for providing assessments and obtaining feedback from learners via digital response systems (Tan & Saucerman, 2017).

However, despite all the potential practical uses of gamification in EFL learning that have been investigated over the past decade, still significant knowledge gaps exist in how EFL teachers perceive gamification and gamification platforms. In this regard, Zhang and Hasim's (2023) systematic review highlighted the dire need for further research to explore the perspectives on gamification applications in EFL education. This need is compounded by the absence of studies that would take a comprehensive view on EFL teachers' perspectives across all gamification applications that are implemented in EFL teaching, and by the absence of a systematic review that would provide a more rigorous overview of quantitative and mixed studies examining the effects of gamification from EFL teachers' perspectives, especially at lower secondary and secondary education levels. Additionally, previous systematic reviews often limited their searches either to a small number of databases or used quite a narrow list of search terms.

In this study, the authors' systematic review aimed to address these limitations and fill the critical knowledge gap in gamified EFL teaching. Therefore, the main objectives were:

1. Analysing teachers' satisfaction with gamification platforms in relation to their applicability in EFL teaching.
2. Analysing teachers' perceptions of gamification in relation to learning outcomes in EFL teaching.
3. Analysing teachers' perceptions of gamification in relation to learners' motivation in EFL teaching.

Based on these objectives, the authors formulated the following research questions:

1. How satisfied are teachers with the applicability of gamification platforms in EFL teaching?
2. How do teachers perceive gamification in relation to learning outcomes in EFL teaching?
3. How do teachers perceive gamification in relation to learners' motivation in EFL teaching?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Some studies evidenced that gamification has a positive effect on learners' motivation and engagement (Bicen & Kocakoyun, 2018; Reynolds & Taylor, 2020; Sun & Hsieh, 2018; Yildirim, 2017), fosters learners' autonomy (Zohud, 2019; Zou, 2020), and reduces English learning anxiety (Hung, 2018; Hwang et al., 2017). Other studies also revealed that frequent use of gamification has a positive effect on learning key language skills and overall academic performance (Li & Chu, 2021; Yildirim, 2017; Wu et al., 2014; Wu & Huang, 2017). In this regard, gamified mobile language learning, in particular, was repeatedly found to be effective in learning key language skills (Burston, 2015; Golonka et al., 2014). Gamification was also found to improve learners' perceptions of assessment and reduce anxiety (Hawari et al., 2020; Pitoyo, 2019; Zainuddin et al., 2020). Additionally, other studies revealed that digital gamification is able to provide instant feedback on learners' performance, gain precise overview of learners' progress, and accustom to learners' individual needs more effectively (Moreno-Ger et al., 2008; Palomo-Duarte et al., 2008; Wood et al., 2013).

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