
UTILIZING GAMIFICATION IN ELT CONTEXT: AN EXPLORATION OF STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

This study aims to address the research questions concerning students' perceptions and the challenges they face in using gamification. It also explores how gamified activities are implemented during classroom learning. The research design employed qualitative descriptive with thematic analysis to seek real information based on students' experiences. The samples were chosen purposely based on students' activities in the English department at Pohuwato University. The findings revealed that students perceive gamification as a tool to engage and involve them in the learning activities giving feedback and enjoyment that improve their English skills, motivation and self-confidence. While the challenges they faced were overwhelming in accessing the gamification, over-reliance on technology as well as facing difficulties in internet access and also they need more effort to manage and differentiate both games and lessons. Overall students perceive the gamification in ELT context as the tools that involve them in engagement and they need to prepare more readiness to not fully rely on technology learning and be more thoughtful in following the learning instructions.

Keywords: *Challenges, benefits of gamification, ELT*

Introduction

The integration of technology in ELT learning has been adapted for many years particularly in gamification learning. The collection of gamification provides both a learning environment that encourages students to actively practice the language through games and quizzes, and transforms their perception of learning from a mere academic task into an enjoyable activity (Deterding et al., 2011; Permana et al., 2023). This approach helps learners become more enthusiastic about developing various English skills, making them more motivated and engaged when participating in the gamified quizzes they encounter (Samad & Abbas, 2024). More specifically (Samad et al., 2024) defined gamification as games learning tools that boost enthusiasm and learning progress when adapted to real time processes supported with feedback mechanisms.

The games elements such as Padlet, Kahoot, Quizizz, Duolingo, Quizwhizzer, and Mentimeter become more enjoyable due to the features of points, leaderboards, badges, and narrative into non-game contexts has gained substantial traction as an instructional strategy in English Language Teaching (ELT). Safdar, et al (Uzma Safdar et al., 2025) argue that gamification can increase learner engagement, sustain motivation, and foster active participation, thereby addressing persistent problems in ELT such as low motivation and limited classroom interaction. Empirical studies in ELT demonstrate mostly positive student perceptions and increased engagement when gamification is applied through digital tools (e.g., Kahoot! Quizizz, gamified apps) or blended classroom designs. Several recent studies in higher education and school contexts report that students value gamified activities for enjoyment, classroom atmosphere, and increased willingness to participate outcomes that can translate into improved communicative opportunities in ELT (Makasheva et al., 2025). However, the literature also reveals mixed results: effectiveness often depends on implementation quality, task alignment, and contextual variables such as learner age, digital literacy, and teacher facilitation. Alongside reported benefits, scholars have documented persistent challenges.

Practical obstacles include limited institutional infrastructure, unequal access to devices, and teachers' limited experience designing pedagogically sound gamified tasks. On their review literature found that gamification in learning accepted as entertainment rather than an educational tool, besides, pedagogical issues include potential cognitive overload from poorly integrated game mechanics, superficial focus on extrinsic rewards and difficulty assessing nuanced language gains within competitive formats (Samad & Munir, 2022). These challenges are particularly salient in contexts where educators adopt gamified platforms without adapting them to linguistic learning outcomes.

The limitations of previous findings remain gaps in the in-depth context of students' perceptions and the challenges they encounter when gamification is applied specifically in ELT. Many studies focus on usability or short-term engagement metrics, but fewer explore how learners interpret gamified tasks in relation to language development, classroom activities, and motivation challenges particularly within various games contexts containing material that fix to students' need and curriculum demand. This study addresses that gap by exploring students' perspectives and the practical challenges they face in gamified ELT settings, aiming to provide actionable insights for aligning gamification design. Based on the gap illustration, this research focuses on students' perceptions of the use of gamification in the English Language Teaching (ELT) context and

examines the challenges they encounter when gamification is implemented in ELT learning activities.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The method employed in this research is qualitative research design to explore phenomena in depth through the collection of descriptive data (Aspers & Corte, 2019). This approach allows the researchers to gain deeper insights into students' perceptions, experiences, and perspectives regarding English learning through Mentimeter integrated with gamification tools such as Padlet, Kahoot, Quizizz, Duolingo, Quizwhizzer.

Research Subject

The research participants consisted of 9 fifth-semester students from the English Education Department at Pohuwato University, selected through purposive sampling. This technique was applied because the students were considered to meet criteria relevant to the objectives of the study, allowing the findings to provide focused and in-depth insights. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews to obtain detailed information about students' learning experiences, direct classroom observations to record their engagement during activities, and questionnaires to explore their perceptions of using digital learning tools such as Padlet, Kahoot, Quizizz, Duolingo, Quizwhizzer and Mentimeter.

Instrument and Data Collection Technique

The research procedures included instrument preparation and the selection of appropriate samples to ensure that the implementation of structured interviews and direct observations produced accurate and consistent data. After collecting data through interviews and classroom observations, analysis was conducted using a descriptive qualitative technique consisting of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analytic process began with coding, in which labels or categories were assigned to the data to identify key themes such as responses to gamification integration and students' engagement levels in the learning process (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Sullivan-bolyai & Bova, 2021). The results of the analysis revealed patterns that clarified the effectiveness of gamification and interactive platforms in enhancing student participation and comprehension in English language learning among the fifth-semester students at Pohuwato University.

Results and Discussion

Results

This section of research shows the two sections of result findings based on the research questions that become the objective of this research. The two result sub headings have been divided into different sections considering there are perspectives and challenges created based on the students experiences during the gamification of ELT Context adapted.

Students' Perception on the Use of Gamification in ELT Context

The research result revealed that the use of gamification particularly in Padlet, Kahoot, Quizizz, Duolingo, Quizwhizzer and Mentimeter in ELT context has been demonstrated and confirmed as effective in enhancing students' communication skills, creativity and participation. Mentimeter offers various features such as discussions, polls, Q&A sessions, and word clouds, all of which can stimulate both direct and indirect student interaction. Supported by audio-visual materials from platforms such as YouTube, websites, and other online resources that can be linked through URLs or QR codes in Mentimeter, students are able to engage more actively and gain easy access to learning content. This approach provides a flexible learning space that encourages higher levels of involvement and improves the overall learning experience.

In line to this, Padlet, Kahoot, Quizizz, Duolingo, Quizwhizzer accessed and involved students on positive feedback during the integration of ELT learning such as in incorporating speaking, English learning media and reading subjects as their feedback as well evaluate their competences toward the quiz being answered from the gamification. Several studies involved learners in Kahoot and quizzes found that they were giving response and enjoyment to their learning process (Pham, 2022).

1. Enhancement of English skills through the utilization of gamification

The result findings regarding the interview have shown the importance of gamification which not merely giving the enjoyment to the students, however helping them comprehend their English subject through the task context based on their learning material as well as to thir speaking competences. The result from students 1, 3, 6 and 7 seen they built better speaking performance as follows:

“Learning through Mentimeter has improved my communication in speaking, both directly and indirectly, because each material provided comes with various interesting features.” (Student 1)

“I find it easier to understand the correct use of English grammar, especially the use of subjects, verbs, and objects, which I learned through Mentimeter and the games linked to it, such as Quizwhizzer and Duolingo.” (Student 3)

“With these applications, I hope that teachers in the future can implement learning using these media.” (Student 6)

Mostly the results are focusing on the ELT improvement and English skills achievement which are preferable and important for the learners to adapt and utilize them in their classroom. They were two students experiencing an improvement of speaking and grammar through the access of gamification. It can help them in correcting the grammatical errors as well as differentiate the subject, verb and object from the sentences in Duolingo and Quizwhizzer. Overall students involved in the session not only help them to understand grammar but also expand their speaking as their skills of communication.

2. Increased Learning Motivation and Enthusiasm in Digital Learning Environments

The result shows the enthusiasm during utilizing the gamification. For instance, platforms like Kahoot, Quizizz, and Duolingo have been shown to foster a positive classroom atmosphere, increase motivation, and support the development of language skills through interactive and collaborative challenges. There were 3 participants in this study who revealed the perception regarding motivation and enthusiasm particularly in using Quizizz, Padlet, Kahoot, Duolingo and Quizwhizzer.

“Learning English using the Quizizz, Padlet, Kahoot, Duolingo and Quizwhizzer applications is very useful for me, especially since using subjects correctly in English has always been difficult for me.” (Student 3)

“Padlet is new for me so I am more enthusiasm to join the games for my academic and refresh my learning” (student 7)

“I like Quizwhizzer more than the other games because it is challenging and improve my enthusiasm to kick out my friend who achieved higher score than me” (student 1)

The result of the interview revealed that by integrating the gamification of platform digital, students perceive positive experiences through the activities of utilizing games such as Padlet, Quizizz, Kahoot, Duolingo, and Quizwhizzer through Mentimeter. They contributed positively to students' English learning experiences. Students reported improved enthusiasm and motivation in digital learning.

3. Improving Students' Self-Confidence in ELT Learning Context

Students' self-confidence was seen during the lessons adapting gamification in such presenting what they achieved after giving feedback and many more responses seemed difficult from the beginning but they found it easier during the ELT instructional. The interview results revealed that:

“The use of Padlet, Quizwhizzer and Duolingo through the Mentimeter platform helps me understand English better, and learning English through games like these really boosts my competence and self confidence to improve my English skills even more in the future.” (Student 5)

“ I am capable of giving respond based on what I found from the task and text showing from the quiz” (student 9)

This results regarding the self-confidence improvement created by the way the students in giving respond during the implementation of gamification. The result revealed that they were two students capable of giving their response as well as improving their self-confidence.

Challenges in Utilizing Gamification for ELT Context

Despite its benefits, there are some challenges of the implementation of gamification in English Language Teaching (ELT) in which it can affect students' learning experiences. One major issue is technical limitations, such as unstable internet connections, limited device availability, or difficulty navigating multiple applications at once. Several students who got involved through the gamification after the learning session expressed that switching between Mentimeter, Padlet, Kahoot, Quizzizz, Duolingo, and Quizwhizzer could feel overwhelming, especially when tasks required quick responses. The result responds from the participants described as following theme findings: As several students noted that the internet was not in available mode made her uncomfortable during the test of gamification in padlet, quizzizz, kahoot, duolingo, Quizwhizzer and Mentimeter. She said that:

“Sometimes the internet suddenly slows down and I cannot finish the activity on time, so I feel stressed during the game.” (student 1)

“During the test in digital and lesson in classroom instruction, I can answer all of them, however when facing the internet access, it is inconvenience for me because I must load again and again” (students 5)

“I join the task gamification with my friend if when my internet has been run out” (students 8)

Another challenge involves cognitive overload, where learners feel confused by the fast-paced nature of gamified tasks or by the need to manage different types of instructions. One participant mentioned that:

“There are too many steps before starting the games such as doing the scan barcode, open link, entering names and codes numbers to answer the quiz so I get lost even before the lesson starts.” (student 9)

Additionally, individual differences in learning styles can affect motivation; while some students enjoy competition, others feel anxious about scoring systems or leaderboards. This was reflected in a student's comment that shown from the students 4,8, and 5 where all of them agreed that with following or joining many games in apps learning and platform, they will feel more tired because they need to access them in many times and also consuming more effort and thinking:

“I like learning English, but I don’t like competing. When I see my score is low, I become less motivated so I stop to continue the game.” (student 4)

“My friend always asking question to me everytime I need to focus in answering the essays and multiple choices tasks in quizwhizzer and quizizz. (students 8)

“I mostly like quizwhizzer however there are many features that make me confuse to choose” (student 5)

“Suddenly I couldn’t answer the task if time management for answering only in several seconds” (student 9)

Finally, limited teacher or lecturers’ expertise in managing and integrating multiple digital platforms may lead to inconsistent implementation, which can reduce the smoothness of learning activities. Results of challenges above not merely showing the overreliance of adapting technology specified in gamification, however it mostly challenges students in scoring results after facilitating them to use the games.

Discussion

The discussion session presents the results with the theory or finding to discuss. There were two activities based on the findings mentioned in this research that will be discussed, the first one is regarding the students’ perspective or experiences they have and feel during the activities and the second discussion regarding the students’ challenges in involving and engaging during the gamification utilization conducted.

1. Students’ Perception on the Use of Gamification in ELT Context

The data findings regarding the students’ perception using the gamification revealed the activities were not only involving them in activities that create and improve their skills of English such as grammar correctness but also expand their speaking or communication to each other. As discussed in recent studies, gamification in ELT not only enhances student enjoyment but also deepens their understanding of English by embedding learning tasks within meaningful, context-based activities. Samad et al and Landazuri et al, (Detken Landázuri et al., 2025; Samad et al., 2024) highlighted that when students engage with gamified tasks aligned to their curriculum, they are more likely to participate actively, fully participated in engagement and collaborative collaboration in digital and real-time learning at classroom and retain knowledge more effectively.

For instance, platforms like Kahoot, Quizizz, and Duolingo have been shown to foster a positive classroom atmosphere, increase motivation, and support the development of language skills through interactive and collaborative challenges. Landazuri et al (Detken Landázuri et al., 2025) revealed that by implementing such a quizlet, Kahoot! Duolingo, and Classcraft promote playful, interactive, and student-centered learning when applied with solid pedagogical

foundations. It was found that teachers' digital competence and understanding of gamification directly impact the effectiveness of these strategies. Meanwhile, by utilizing the Padlet, it can engage learners in creative expression by allowing them to write and share ideas that are most closely aligned with the given instructions (Erito, 2022). Padlet's collaborative environment encourages students to share ideas, comment on peers' work, and participate in group discussions. This not only enhances creativity but also ensures that contributions are relevant and closely follow the given instructions (Erito, 2022; Samad & Abbas, 2024).

2. Challenges in Utilizing Gamification for ELT Context

Several findings found from the challenges created through the gamification in ELT context ELT. According to Safdar (Safdar et al., 2025), overreliance on technology is the biggest challenge faced when students adapt gamification in learning. One of the major issues is technical limitations mostly because of the internet factors. It is caused by difficulties of accessing the Internet, such as the difficulty to access the unstable internet, as Oke, et al (2024) mentioned that the limitation of gamification mostly comes from the internet connectivity that needs more support. Furthermore, a limited device that needs more storage to access, or difficulty navigating multiple applications at once sometimes need more readiness to adapt or utilize the gamification (Trinidad et al., 2021). Rahmat, et al (2026) in their review on gamification in EFL teaching found positive effects on students' motivation, emotions, engagement, and anxiety reduction, and also indicated that gamification did not consistently improve language performance or proficiency when not supported by appropriate pedagogical alignment. These findings are relevant to the present study, which identifies challenges in utilizing gamification in the ELT context, particularly the need for meaningful interaction, appropriate task design, effective feedback, and teacher competence in instructional design. Thus, the effectiveness of gamification depends not merely on the use of technological elements such as points, badges, and leaderboards, but on how strategically and pedagogically they are integrated into ELT activities.

The results of challenges above not merely showing the overreliance of adapting technology specified in gamification, however it also mostly challenges students in scoring results after facilitating them to use the games. As discussed in Fan (Fan, 2025) that mostly gamified systems focus on scoring, badges and leaderboards or level of games but these metrics do not always reflect proficiency of language or achieving a deeper learning progress. However, it shows that the student's language skills are sometimes limited while they engage in gamification particularly if the gamified activities are not well-designed with their ELT and material standard.

Conclusion

The first finding regarding students' perception in utilizing gamification that consist of padlet, kahoot, duolingo, quizwhizzer and mentimeter had involved the students in meaningful learning where the experiences mostly showed the students' enthusiasm and the improvement in expanding students' skills of english particularly in grammar and speaking competences. The study also found that students were engaged to be a very good speaker where self-confidence was created to help them express themselves after giving feedback through the activities.

The second finding regarding the students' challenges were classified as overwhelming and difficult and accessing the internet access and there were too many applications of the games that made them inconvenience to answer or give feedback to the gamification. Even though the study found many difficulties faced by the students in accessing the games, most of them learn better to avoid the over reliance to rely only on the games or technology and AI. They can handle it better considering that mostly games involve materials based on their subject of english.

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