

Abstract

This study explores the role of gamification in sustaining motivation among undergraduate English language learners. Guided by Self-Determination Theory (SDT), a descriptive qualitative design supplemented with survey data was employed to investigate students' perceptions and the impact of gamification on learning. A six-week intervention integrated points, badges, leaderboards, and progress tracking into English lessons. Findings indicate that students perceived gamification positively, describing learning activities as fun, interesting, and immersive. Game elements encouraged a sense of flow, transforming repetitive tasks into engaging challenges. While some concerns emerged regarding public comparison in leaderboards, most students valued the balance of competition and collaboration. Gamification also influenced motivation by enhancing both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsically, learners reported greater enjoyment, persistence, and mastery through playful challenges and immediate feedback. Extrinsically, rewards such as badges and progress markers reinforced effort and achievement, particularly when directly linked to language learning objectives. Importantly, motivation was maintained throughout the six-week period, countering the common critique that novelty effects limit gamification's sustainability. These results align with prior meta-analytical evidence showing that gamification is most effective when game mechanics are closely connected to learning objectives. Overall, the study concludes that gamification, when thoughtfully designed, can serve as a sustainable pedagogical strategy to foster long-term motivation and proficiency in English language learning.

Keywords: Gamification; English language learning; Student motivation; Self-Determination Theory