



The Impact of Gamified Digital Platforms on EFL Learners' Writing Motivation and Performance

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Abstract— Gamification in language learning has become a trend to enhance the learner's engagement and motivation. The research paper explores the effect of gamified online learning on the motivation and the performance of EFL learners in writing. Incorporating the game features in writing activities, in the form of points, badges, leaderboards, and instant feedback, helps to empower the learners to engage in the process, take risks, and improve their writing capabilities. The study design was a mixed-methods research study where 60 EFL learners in the intermediate level were divided into experimental and control groups. The writing performance was measured quantitatively, and the qualitative data were considered to examine the motivation, engagement, and perception of gamified learning among the learners. The results refer to the fact that gamified platforms can greatly improve writing performance, promote intrinsic motivation, and encourage regular engagement. The paper provides didactic remarks on how to apply gamification in the teaching of EFL writing to facilitate learning more by making the process engaging.

Keywords— Gamification, EFL writing, motivation, digital platforms, learner engagement.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Writing is a key skill in EFL acquisition, but most of the learners are characterized by low motivation and insufficient involvement in conventional writing tasks (Hyland, 2013). Inattention, fear of negative judgment, and monotonous work also contribute to low participation and poor writing performance. The introduction of gamified digital platforms due to the latest technological developments engages gamification characteristics of learning activities (such as points, badges, levels, and leaderboards).

Gamification utilizes psychology theories to enhance involvement and foster perseverance and mastery (Deterding et al., 2011). Gamified platforms can also offer instant feedback in writing instruction, monitor progress, and develop a competitive but noncompetitive environment, which encourages learners to learn better (Dominguez et al., 2013).

1.2 Significance of the Study

The study discusses the current issue of low motivation in EFL writing classrooms. Gamified platforms are also used to improve the level of engagement besides offering formal incentives, which motivate learners to practice regularly, take risks, and build competence in writing. Research on the efficiency of gamification in writing is useful in the field of applied linguistics, as it connects its motivational principles with effective technological intervention. The results will be useful to teachers in creating interactive, engaging, and effective writing assignments with the help of digital tools.

1.3 Research Aims and Objectives

The primary objective of the research is to investigate how digital platforms, which are gamified, influence the motivation and performance of EFL learners in writing. The specific objectives are:

1. To assess how gamified platforms impact the writing performance of the learners.

2. To examine the effect of gamification on the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of learners in writing activities.
3. To understand the engagement and perception of gamified writing activities among learners.
4. To provide pedagogical prescriptions of gamification application in EFL writing teaching.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions that will guide the study are the following:

1. What is the effect of gamified online platforms on the writing abilities of EFL learners?
2. How does gamification influence motivation among learners to learn writing activities?
3. What is the learners' perception of gamified online platforms as writing practice tools?
4. What are the challenges and advantages of using gamified platforms for learners in EFL writing?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Gamification in Language Learning

Gamification describes the use of game design features in a non-game setting with the purpose of boosting engagement, motivation, and learning (Deterding et al., 2011). Gamification has seen extensive use in language education to enhance speaking, vocabulary, and, more frequently, writing. Such features as points, badges, levels, leaderboards, instant feedback, and challenges are commonly used, and they supply the learner clear objectives and practical rewards.

Gamified platforms can be used in EFL writing education, enabling students to complete a structured writing task, acquire instant feedback, and track their progress, which would help to motivate them both intrinsically and extrinsically. The literature indicates that gamification facilitates risk-taking, persistence, and practice that is essential in the acquisition of writing skills (Domínguez et al., 2013; Suh et al., 2018).

2.2 Theoretical Foundations

2.2.1 Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

The Self-Determination Theory created by Deci and Ryan (2000) is based on the idea that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are the drives behind intrinsic motivation. Gamified systems improve autonomy (learners are free to select tasks and strategies), competence (learners receive instant feedback), and relatedness (learners are encouraged to collaborate on challenges, leaderboards, etc.). This framework assists in answering why gamification could

make learners more motivated to participate in writing assignments.

2.2.2 Flow Theory

According to the Flow Theory proposed by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), the tasks that contain the right amount of difficulty and level of skill result in maximum engagement among the learner. Gamified writing tools can simplify the process of learning, as they can provide activities depending on the degree of the students, provide them with instant feedback, and assist in setting ideas. All these factors work together to keep learners engaged and motivated to improve their writing.

2.2.3 Constructivist Learning Theory

The constructivist theory suggests that learners learn through interactions (Vygotsky, 1978). Gamification can achieve this goal by offering interactive activities, fostering connections among learners, and encouraging profound reflection. Such experiences will help the students to improve their writing skills in a more interesting and significant way.

2.3 Empirical Studies

2.3.1 Gamification and Writing Performance

The research suggests that gamification may be helpful to EFL learners in regard to writing skills. To illustrate, Suh et al. (2018) have found that students who wrote their papers in gamified writing platforms possessed a wider vocabulary, were more organized, and had the correct grammar than their counterparts who employed the conventional method. On the same note, Dominguez et al. (2013) determined that gamification increased the motivation among the students to complete the writing tasks, which in turn contributed to quality work and writing disposition.

2.3.2 Gamification and Motivation

Gamified environments can enhance intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among learners. The extrinsic motivation is facilitated through the use of external stimuli, including badges, points, and leaderboards, and the intrinsic motivation is facilitated through the feeling of personal progress and achievement (Hamari et al., 2014). It has been established that gamification can be used to keep students motivated to work on their writing tasks, to take creative risks, to revise their work, and to perform better (Hanus and Fox, 2015).

2.3.3 Learner Perceptions and Engagement

Overall, learners have shown a positive perception of gamified platforms, as they reported enjoying these platforms, feeling more engaged, and being willing to participate in writing activities. Functionality like

immediate feedback with collaborative challenges and integration of multimedia adds a new dimension to the learning process and makes writing activities more engaging and less frightening (Li et al., 2020).

2.4 Advantages of Gamified Platforms in EFL Writing

1. Increased Motivation: Gamification leads to repetitive practice and taking risks.
2. Better Quality of Writing: Organized practice and evaluation enhance fluency, accuracy, and structure.
3. Greater Interaction: Interactive and competitive aspects help in keeping the focus and encouraging participation.
4. Immediate Feedback: Automated or peer feedback enables the learners to detect and rectify errors in the fastest time possible.
5. Autonomy and Personalization: They give learners the opportunity to control their learning by engaging in tasks that interest them, working at their own pace, and monitoring their progress. This feeling of being in charge contributes to the establishment of a greater sense of ownership and responsibility towards their learning process.

2.5 Challenges and Limitations

Along with obvious benefits, gamification also has a number of challenges. The problem with one of them is the excessive emphasis on extrinsic rewards; a disproportionate emphasis on points or badges may hurt the intrinsic motivation of learners (Deci et al., 1999). Technical issues may arise, such as limited device access, poor connectivity, or lack of knowledge on how to use it. Also, educators should be adequately trained to create effective gamified learning activities and match them with the learning goals. Lastly, it is often complicated to evaluate gamified learning and multidimensional rubrics to measure performance and engagement.

2.6 Summary of Literature

Gamified online platforms have a positive effect on the performance and motivation of EFL learners in writing, according to the literature. The presence of the game elements helps to engage, to have intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and to enhance the writing outcomes. Although obstacles exist, the pedagogical possibilities of gamification in the writing teaching process can be implemented to their full potential by using the right design, scaffolding, and balanced feedback.

Another solid argument that the review makes is the need to conduct an empirical study to investigate the effects of gamified online platforms on the motivation of EFL learners and their performance with regard to writing.

III. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Research Design

This study is qualitative because it used mixed methodology in studying the effects of gamified platforms on EFL writing. On the one hand, we assessed the performance of students in a quantitative manner, offering them some pre- and post-tests. We observed and interviewed learners during the classes, yielding qualitative data on their motivation and perceptions. This combination enabled us to become familiar with the topic in all aspects..

3.1.2 Participants and Sampling

The research involves 60 students who are studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in undergraduate courses. The purposive sampling will be used to select the study participants, who will consist of participants who are moderately digitally literate and have previously participated in writing classroom activities.

The subjects will be further broken into two. The experimental sample of 30 students fill out the written assignments with the assistance of the gamified systems, i.e., Kahoot, Quizlet, and Padlet, which portray the gamifying features. The other group, or the control group (30 students), will be exposed to conventional writing exercises that are not gamified. Using the traditional and gamified writing methods, the split enables the comparison of the performance and engagement of the learners.

3.1.3 Data Collection Instruments

The data collection instruments will be evaluated with a supportive method of obtaining data. The collection of comprehensive data about the writing and participation of students involves some tools that are heterogeneous and that the study employs. The writing will be tested in terms of pre- and post-tests to assess the organization, grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and quality of the writing. By making the participants complete Likert-scaled questionnaires, we identify the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, engagement, and desire to write of the participants.

Moreover, semi-structured interviews are conducted according to which twelve members of the experimental group are interviewed in order to have a better idea about their participation, perceptions, and concerns. In addition to this, classroom observation is performed with orientation on behavioral patterns and task completion and student involvement. The observations would be able to provide a deeper insight into the interaction of the students in both traditional and gamified writing tasks.

3.1.4 Procedure

The intervention period was 10 weeks. The experimental group in this stage was provided with gamified writing exercises, whereby it was possible to earn points, achievement badges, comment on others, and participate involved in the leaderboards as a form of friendly competition. Quite the contrary, the control group performed similar tasks to traditional writing without any gamification. The first week was used to conduct pre-tests to have a baseline, and the tenth week was used to administer the post-tests. After the post-tests, participants were surveyed, and the chosen students participated in the interviews to provide more information about their experiences.

3.1.5 Data Analysis

1. Quantitative data: ANCOVA and paired-samples t-tests were used to compare the scores of pre- and post-test writing performance between groups.
2. Qualitative data: Thematic coding of interview transcripts and observation notes was performed to determine trends in motivation, engagement, and perceptions of the learners.

3.2 Results

3.2.1 Quantitative Findings

1. Writing Performance: The experimental group had an increase in overall writing scores of 28 percent, rather than 9 percent in the control group ($p < .01$).
2. Grammar and Vocabulary: There was a significant improvement in the lexical variety and grammatical correctness among the experimental participants.
3. Motivation: Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in gamified platform learners was significantly greater than that of the control group ($p < .05$).

3.2.2 Qualitative Findings

Interpretation of interviews and classroom observations indicated that there were three themes. First, students felt more interactive and had more fun when they were involved in gamified writing activities. Many participants stated that gamification helped make the assignments more enjoyable and engaging. One student provided an example, stating that he also enjoyed badges as a reward for achieving tasks. It has made him feel like writing more and improving my sentences. This means that the gamified features helped make the writing process more attractive and stimulated active involvement.

The second theme was better motivation and perseverance. The introduction of the points, badges, and leaderboards was observed to encourage learners to finish their tasks and revise their work more conscientiously. One of them

saw his progress on the leaderboard and tried to improve weekly. These kinds of feedback mechanisms appeared to generate a perception of success and ongoing work, which kept the learners interested in the intervention.

Lastly, collaborative learning and peer feedback became one of the significant themes. Gamified tasks motivated students to communicate and provide positive feedback to each other, as well as reflect on their writing. However, when a student commented on the work of fellow students, one of them said that he learned to structure his writing differently. This indicates that gamification did not only facilitate personal learning, but it also facilitated collaborative skills, which in the end improved the overall quality of writing by students.

IV. INTEGRATION OF FINDINGS

The quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that using gamified digital platforms positively impacts the performance of EFL learners and enhances their motivation for writing. The positive developments in grammar, vocabulary, and the overall writing level are supported by the reports of the learners about the higher level of involvement, pleasure, and perseverance. Gamification provides structured rewards that foster active engagement and promote long-term learning.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper has reported that gamified online portals can be used to increase writing proficiency among EFL learners in terms of their organizational, grammatical, and vocabulary skills. They also can increase intrinsic motivation, such as fun and accomplishment, and extrinsic motivation, such as awards, trophies, and rankings. Furthermore, the platforms support active participation and learning through involving peers in discussions and introducing them to different challenges.

These issues include excessive focus on extrinsic rewards, technical problems, and teacher preparation, all of which should be addressed to ensure effective implementation. It is recommended that the educators strike the right balance between the gamified incentives and the pedagogical goals and give clear instructions to maximize the learning processes.

Future research could include examining the effects of gamification over a long duration, variations in proficiency, and a combination of both with other technological solutions to facilitate EFL writing.

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