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Gamifying English Language Learning in Non-Language Majors: A Case Study of Kahoot! In Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

In higher education, English language learning for non-language majors often suffers from low motivation and engagement, particularly among students with analytical academic backgrounds such as Mathematics Education. Gamification has emerged as a promising approach to enhance joyful learning experiences in such contexts. This qualitative case study explores the impact of gamification, using the Kahoot! platform, on the English learning experience of Mathematics Education students at an Indonesian university. Four students were purposively selected from two classes—two high performers and two low performers—to reflect diverse learning experiences. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using iterative coding and thematic interpretation. Findings reveal that game elements such as points, leaderboards, time limits, and answer streaks significantly increased student motivation and active participation. Students reported enhanced cognitive focus, reduced anxiety, and positive emotional responses, including enjoyment and increased confidence. The anonymity feature in Kahoot! contributed to a psychologically safe classroom environment, encouraging risk-taking and collaboration. Additionally, repetitive quiz formats and immediate feedback supported vocabulary acquisition, grammar understanding, and long-term retention. The study concludes that gamification, when applied thoughtfully, can transform English language learning into a more joyful, inclusive, and cognitively enriching experience for students in non-language disciplines. It fosters emotional comfort, strengthens engagement, and improves learning outcomes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of higher education in the modern era demands learning experiences that go beyond academic achievement by prioritizing enjoyment, motivation, and active student involvement. In this context, joyful learning has emerged as a relevant pedagogical approach, emphasizing the creation of a positive learning atmosphere that increases students' motivation, engagement, and emotional involvement in learning (He et al., 2017; Scardicchio, 2014; Cronqvist, 2024). Rather than merely creating a positive mood, joyful learning facilitates curiosity, creativity, and meaningful interactions between students and lecturers, thereby strengthening both emotional and cognitive engagement in the learning process.

In practice, joyful learning is realized through innovative strategies that support collaboration, exploration, and social interaction (Tong et al., 2020). One of the most widely adopted strategies to support joyful learning is gamification, which integrates game elements into non-game contexts to enhance participation and engagement (Aley et al., 2024). Through challenges, immediate feedback, and healthy competition, gamification responds to the contemporary need for more interactive, student-centered learning environments.

Gamification refers to the use of game elements such as points, badges, and leaderboards to encourage engagement and a sense of achievement (Kapp, 2013; Limantara et al., 2019; Limantara et al., 2023). Previous studies consistently report that gamification increases interactivity, intrinsic motivation, and learning focus, while also improving students' perceptions of the learning process and their retention of material (Rey et al., 2022; Kuo & Chuang, 2018).

In higher education, gamification is particularly relevant in subjects that students often perceive as difficult or less connected to their primary field of study. This condition is clearly observed among students in the Mathematics Education Study Program, who tend to prioritize numerical and logical courses over language learning. Mathematics students frequently experience challenges in learning English due to differences in cognitive orientation and linguistic structure, resulting in reduced confidence and participation (Ajayi & Lawani, 2015; Setati, 2005).

This issue was also found among students of the Mathematics Education Program at a state Islamic university, where preliminary observations revealed low motivation, passive classroom behavior, and limited participation in English learning activities. These conditions reflect language anxiety and a monotonous, test-oriented learning pattern that minimizes interaction (Kersaint et al., 2014; Licorish et al., 2018). To address this situation, English learning was then transformed through the use of Kahoot! as a gamification platform, which has been proven to increase motivation, engagement, concentration, and positive classroom dynamics compared to traditional methods (Licorish & Lötter, 2022; Rayan & Watted, 2024; Rotondo & Sánchez, 2024).

Previous studies have confirmed that gamification contributes positively to English language development, particularly in vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension, while also reducing language anxiety and improving classroom dynamics (Lee & Baek, 2023; Qub'a et al., 2024; Rofiah & Waluyo, 2024). However, most existing research focuses on general EFL learners or language majors, and predominantly emphasizes cognitive outcomes, such as test scores and skill improvement.

There is still limited research that specifically examines how students in non-language majors, particularly Mathematics Education students, experience gamified English learning from an emotional and experiential perspective. The way these students perceive joy, motivation, comfort, and engagement during gamified learning remains underexplored. This gap indicates the need for qualitative exploration of students' lived experiences in a gamified learning environment, especially within the context of students whose academic orientation is not language-based.

Therefore, this study focuses on exploring the implementation of gamification through Kahoot! in English learning for Mathematics Education students by examining both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning. Explicitly, this study aims to: (1) analyze the effect of gamification on students' English learning outcomes, (2) examine changes in motivation and engagement, and (3) explore students' emotional experiences and perceptions of joyful learning through gamification. This study is

expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of how joyful learning can be effectively integrated into English instruction for non-language majors in higher education environments.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to deeply understand students' experiences (Ary et al., 2010) in participating in gamification-based English learning through the Kahoot! Platform . Rather than seeking generalizable results, this study prioritizes an in-depth exploration of a unique learning situation in which students from a mathematically oriented academic background are required to engage in English learning through a playful and interactive digital medium. This context offers a distinctive setting for examining how joyful learning emerges in a group of learners who are traditionally more accustomed to logical, structured, and formula-based thinking rather than language-based communication.

The uniqueness of this case lies in the contrast between the students' dominant academic orientation (mathematics and logical reasoning) and the nature of the learning activity (English language learning enhanced through game elements). In conventional situations, students in the Mathematics Education Study Program often perceive English as a secondary subject that is disconnected from their core discipline, resulting in low motivation, anxiety, and passive classroom participation. However, the introduction of Kahoot! as a gamification medium disrupts this conventional pattern by transforming English learning into a competitive, dynamic, and emotionally engaging experience. This shift creates an uncommon learning environment that is rich in cognitive, emotional, and social transformation, making it a particularly valuable case to be investigated qualitatively.

The case study design was therefore selected because this research focuses on one specific and context-bound phenomenon, namely the experience of Mathematics Education students in participating in English learning through gamification. This case is not only unique in terms of subject matter, but also in terms of students' emotional responses, changing perceptions, and evolving engagement during the learning process. By concentrating on a single, bounded group of learners, this study is able to explore in detail how gamification influences their feelings of enjoyment, confidence, motivation, and willingness to participate. In this way, the case study approach provides the most appropriate framework to capture the complexity, depth, and authenticity of the students' lived experiences in a joyful learning environment.

2.2 Population and Participant

This study took two classes in the Mathematics Education study program, focusing on English as the case study unit. These classes were selected purposively because the lecturer consistently implemented a method shift from conventional tests to the use of Kahoot! as a gamification medium in several lecture sessions. The focus of the analysis was directed at how students responded to the change in learning model, how they experienced the new classroom atmosphere, and the extent to which gamification contributed to the creation of joyful learning. Two students were selected from each class, with the criteria of the student with the highest scores and the student with the lowest scores. This sampling strategy was considered sufficient because the study did not aim to achieve statistical representativeness, but rather to obtain a rich, in-depth understanding of diverse student experiences within a bounded and specific context. By selecting students with contrasting academic performance levels, the research was able to capture variations in perception, emotional response, and engagement across different proficiency levels, which strengthened the credibility of the findings.

2.3 Technique of Collecting the Data

Data collection in this qualitative study was conducted through semi-structured interviews involving students in classes receiving gamification-based learning. The semi-structured interview

technique was chosen because it provides a balance between systematic question guidance and the researcher's flexibility to deepen information based on participants' answers. This approach allows students to express their experiences, perceptions, and emotional responses more freely, so that the data obtained is not only descriptive but also reflective and contextual. In the context of educational research, this method is crucial because it provides space for participants to describe their learning experiences from a personal perspective.

During the implementation, the researchers prepared a set of main questions as a guide, but left open the possibility of follow-up (probing questions) to expand on the information provided by students. Interviews were conducted individually to ensure that each student had the opportunity to share their experiences in depth without peer pressure. The interviews focused on three main aspects related to the research objectives: motivation and learning engagement, emotional impact during the learning process, and perceptions of improved understanding and learning outcomes.

The first aspect explored through interviews concerned increased student motivation and engagement after participating in English language learning through a gamification system. Researchers explored students' experiences using Kahoot! to understand whether game elements such as points, levels, challenges, and healthy competition were able to foster their enthusiasm. Questions focused on how students interpreted the experience, whether they felt more motivated to participate actively, and whether gamification could transform passive attitudes into more participatory ones. Through these responses, researchers gained insight into the extent to which the gamification approach was able to stimulate students' intrinsic motivation during the learning process.

The second aspect focused on the emotional impact that emerged during the learning process, particularly related to positive feedback and the creation of a more supportive classroom atmosphere. Researchers asked students to describe how they felt while participating in Kahoot!-assisted learning activities, whether they felt appreciated, more confident, or safer when facing game-based tasks. Furthermore, researchers explored the social dynamics that occurred in the classroom, such as collaboration, mutual support among students, and a fun, competitive atmosphere. This data allowed researchers to assess whether gamification impacted not only academic performance but also students' social relationships and emotional well-being in the classroom.

The third aspect is directed at students' perceptions regarding increasing their learning abilities after participating in gamification-based learning. Researchers asked to what extent students felt they understood the material better, remembered vocabulary or language structures better, and whether the use of Kahoot! help them learn more effectively. Questions such as how the game helped them remember the material or whether the gamification mechanism affected understanding of concepts were used to assess the impact of this approach on retention and comprehension. Through student answers, researchers can assess whether gamification not only provides a fun learning experience, but also supports the achievement of better learning outcomes.

2.4 Technique of Analyzing the Data

The analysis of interview data in this study adheres to the principles of qualitative analysis, which are iterative, dynamic, and occur concurrently with the data collection process, as explained by Ary et al. (2010). Qualitative analysis does not proceed linearly, but rather requires researchers to continuously move back and forth between data, preliminary findings, and interpretations. In this study, the analysis process was carried out through three main stages: (1) familiarizing and organizing, (2) coding and reducing, and (3) interpreting and representing.

The first stage, familiarizing and organizing, serves as the initial foundation for analysis. In this stage, the researcher thoroughly examines all interview data by repeatedly reading transcripts and reviewing audio or video recordings to ensure that every detail, both verbal and non-verbal, is accurately documented. The transcription process is carried out carefully to minimize bias, including noting pauses, laughter, expressions, or other emotional responses that arise during the interview. In addition, the researcher begins making marginal notes or analytic memos, noting initial ideas that

emerge, and organizing the data by participant or topic to facilitate the analysis process in the next stage.

The second stage is coding and reducing, which is the core of qualitative data analysis. Once the researcher understands the overall content of the data, the next step is to code the units of meaning found in the interview transcripts. These codes can be keywords, concepts, initial categories, or recurring issues within the data. This process is then continued by grouping the codes into larger, more abstract categories through a process of constant comparison. At this stage, the data begins to be reduced from its very broad form to a more focused structure, so that only information that is relevant and significant to the research objectives is retained. This reduction stage helps researchers refine key issues and identify patterns that emerge consistently from participants' experiences.

The third stage is interpreting and representing, which is the process of interpreting the meaning of the categories and patterns that have been formed. Researchers then connect these categories to discover relationships, tendencies, and deeper meanings contained in participants' experiences. The interpretation process is carried out inductively, starting from empirical findings to broader theoretical concepts or understandings. Researchers highlight the most important aspects, explain the significance of these findings, and link them to relevant literature to clearly demonstrate the research's contribution. The interpretation results are then presented in the form of main themes, narrative descriptions, direct quotes from participants, or visual representations such as charts or conceptual models that comprehensively illustrate the relationships between themes.

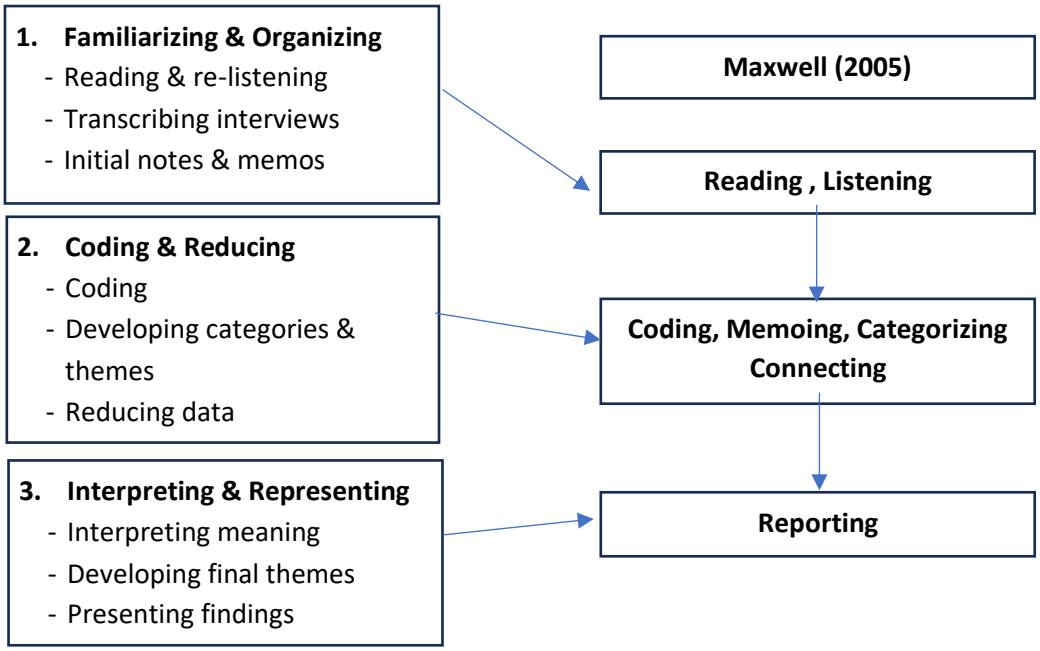

Figure 1. Flowchart of Analyzing the Data consider Maxwell (2005)

2.5 Ethical Consideration

This study received formal approval from the University Ethics Board of Universitas Jambi, as the researcher's home institution, prior to the data collection process. In addition, official permission to conduct the research was also granted by the academic authorities of UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, as the participating university where the research was carried out.

All participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, the research procedures, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection began. To

ensure confidentiality and anonymity, participants' names and personal identities were replaced with pseudonyms, and all data were used solely for academic and research purposes.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 Increasing Students' Motivation

Interview results showed that gamification consistently increased student learning motivation. Game elements such as points, leaderboards, quick answer bonuses, and answer streaks were key motivators that encouraged students to continue their active participation. Students felt a strong drive to achieve the highest scores and maintain their rankings.

"The leaderboard and points make me excited" (P1), "The bonus for quick answers makes me addicted" (P2), "The answer streak makes me even more excited" (P3), and "Going up the ranking feels satisfying" (P4)

This demonstrates that the competitive element fosters both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

This motivation arises because every success is immediately reinforced by increased points and increased position on the leaderboard. Students also feel challenged to improve their performance, encouraging them to continue taking subsequent quizzes. Overall, gamification features significantly increase learning enthusiasm and active participation. This demonstrates that gamification can create a competitive yet enjoyable learning environment, encouraging students to engage more deeply in the learning process.

Table 1. Summary of Students' Motivation

Aspect	Findings	Illustrative Quotes
Main trigger	Points, leaderboard, time bonus, answer streak	"The leaderboard and points make me excited." (P1)
Type of motivation	Intrinsic (enjoyment) & extrinsic (ranking, points)	"The bonus for quick answers makes me addicted." (P2)
Behavioral impact	Increased participation and persistence	"Going up the ranking feels satisfying." (P4)
Overall effect	Higher enthusiasm and sustained engagement	"The answer streak makes me even more excited." (P3)

3.1.2 Increasing Students' Engagement

In addition to boosting motivation, gamification has also been shown to increase students' cognitive, emotional, and physical engagement. Timers and question difficulty levels increase student focus and encourage them to answer quickly and accurately. This is reflected in the statement:

"I focus when the timer is almost up" (P1) and "Difficult questions make me fully focus" (P2).

This challenging element creates a state of productive tension that keeps students alert and engaged throughout the game.

Competition among students also plays a significant role. Several participants expressed their motivation to surpass their friends' scores, as seen in this quote.

"Chasing points with friends" (P3) and "Chasing the leaderboard makes you more motivated" (P4).

In terms of physical involvement, students felt more active because they had to respond quickly through their devices. This was evident in the expressions

"Not just sitting and listening, but directly choosing the answer" (P1) and "There is direct interaction by pressing the answer button" (P4).

These findings show that gamification not only makes learning more enjoyable, but also makes students more active overall in terms of focus, interaction, and physical participation.

Table 2. Summary of Students' Engagement

Aspect	Findings	Illustrative Quotes
Cognitive engagement	Increased focus due to time pressure and question difficulty	"I focus when the timer is almost up." (P1)
Emotional engagement	Excitement and positive tension	"Difficult questions make me fully focus." (P2)
Social engagement	Motivation through competition	"Chasing the leaderboard makes you more motivated." (P4)
Physical engagement	Active participation through devices	"Not just sitting and listening, but directly choosing the answer." (P1)

3.1.3 Positive Emotional Impact

Gamification has a strong positive emotional impact on students. Kahoot's colorful visuals, dynamic animations, and energetic music create a fun learning environment and stimulate curiosity. This is reflected in the statement

"I feel happy and interested because it looks fun" (P1), "I feel happy because the colors are bright and fast" (P2), "I feel interested and more confident" (P3), and "I feel happy and curious" (P4).

These aesthetic elements play a crucial role in fostering psychological comfort and strengthening self-confidence. Students feel more confident in participating because the learning atmosphere is less stressful. A pleasant learning experience also fosters positive emotions, which influence student engagement in answering questions and consistently participating in quizzes.

Table 3. Summary of Positive Emotional Impacts

Aspect	Findings	Illustrative Quotes
Dominant emotions	Happiness and enjoyment	"I feel happy and interested because it looks fun." (P1)
Confidence	Increased self-confidence	"I feel interested and more confident." (P3)
Visual/auditory effect	Stimulating and attractive	"I feel happy because the colors are bright and fast." (P2)

3.1.4 Supportive Classroom Atmosphere

Gamification not only impacts individuals but also creates a more supportive and inclusive classroom atmosphere. The anonymity mechanism in Kahoot makes students feel safe answering questions, even if they're wrong, because their identities aren't publicly displayed. This is evident in the statement

"You don't know who's wrong, so it's comfortable" (P1), "I don't feel embarrassed if I'm wrong" (P2), "No one knows who's wrong" (P3), and "It's more daring to try because it's not announced per student" (P4).

The classroom atmosphere became lively and full of positive energy. Students reported a more relaxed and enjoyable classroom atmosphere, as seen in the following quote.

"The class atmosphere is more lively, laughing together" (P1), "The class is more exciting and lively" (P2), "The class atmosphere is positive and lively" (P3), and "The class feels relaxed and lively" (P4).

This safe and fun atmosphere encourages students to experiment, take risks, and participate more actively without fear of social repercussions. These findings demonstrate that gamification helps build a supportive, relaxed, and inclusive learning community.

Table 4. Summary of Supportive Classroom Atmosphere

Aspect	Findings	Illustrative Quotes
Psychological safety	Reduced fear and embarrassment	"You don't know who's wrong, so it's comfortable." (P1)
Participation	Greater willingness to try	"It's more daring to try because it's not announced per student." (P4)
Class climate	Lively and positive	"The class atmosphere is more lively, laughing together." (P1)
Emotional comfort	Relaxed environment	"The class feels relaxed and lively." (P4)

3.1.5 Improved Understanding

Gamification significantly contributes to improving vocabulary and grammar comprehension. Students felt that the question format in Kahoot encouraged them to understand the material before selecting answers. Many participants stated that visuals such as images and structured answer choices helped them recognize word meanings and grammatical patterns. This is evident in the quote.

"The questions immediately force me to choose the correct meaning of the word or structure" (P1), "Multiple choice questions with pictures help me understand the vocabulary" (P1), "Example sentences help me understand the grammar" (P2), and "Clear answer choices make me understand the grammar" (P3).

Furthermore, the aforementioned true/false question format helps understand language patterns and accelerates concept formation. Students found that the various question types provided contextual support that facilitated their understanding of English grammar rules and vocabulary.

Table 5. Summary of Improved Understanding

Aspect	Findings	Illustrative Quotes
Vocabulary comprehension	Improved meaning recognition	"Multiple choice questions with pictures help me understand the vocabulary." (P1)
Grammar understanding	Better comprehension of structures	"Example sentences help me understand the grammar." (P2)
Cognitive support	Clear structured options	"Clear answer choices make me understand the grammar." (P3)

3.1.6 Improved Recall Ability

Students reported improved recall due to repetition of questions while using Kahoot. Repeated exposure to specific vocabulary, grammatical patterns, or question types helps speed up the recall process.

"There are repeated questions, so I remember quickly" (P1), "Some questions appear with a similar pattern, so I can remember more quickly" (P2), "There are often similar questions so I remember automatically" (P3), and "The same pattern makes it easy for me to remember" (P4)

In the context of gamification, question repetition serves as retrieval practice that strengthens short- and medium-term memory. Consistent question patterns familiarize students with language structures, making it easier for them to recall answers without conscious memorization. These findings suggest that gamification facilitates effective repetitive learning, thus strengthening students' memory and understanding of English material.

3.1.7 Increasing Long-Term Retention

In addition to improving comprehension and short-term memory, gamification also impacts long-term retention. Students found that vocabulary and grammar patterns frequently encountered in quizzes were more easily retained in their memory. This is reflected in the statement:

"Basic grammar and vocabulary that appears frequently are becoming easier for me to remember" (P3), "Vocabulary and grammar that appears frequently are becoming more and more mastered by me" (P4)

Interactive and engaging learning makes the process of storing information in long-term memory more natural and less burdensome. Repetition, visual support, and sentence context strengthen the information encoding process, enabling students to retain the knowledge longer. These findings suggest that gamification not only facilitates immediate comprehension but also serves as an effective reinforcement mechanism for retaining material in long-term memory.

Table 6. Summary of Recall and Long-Term Retention

Aspect	Findings	Illustrative Quotes
Short-term recall	Faster memory through repetition	"There are repeated questions, so I remember quickly." (P1)
Pattern familiarity	Easier recognition of structures	"Some questions appear with a similar pattern, so I can remember more quickly." (P2)
Long-term retention	Stronger memory storage	"Vocabulary and grammar that appears frequently are becoming more mastered by me." (P4)

3.2 Discussion

The qualitative findings in this study provide an in-depth look at how students experience gamification-based learning and how these experiences contribute to a fun and meaningful learning environment. In relation to the research questions, the findings indicate that the use of gamification through Kahoot! increases students' motivation and engagement, generates positive emotional responses, strengthens cognitive processing, and contributes to a more supportive classroom atmosphere. These outcomes confirm that gamification does not only serve as a technical tool, but also plays an important pedagogical role in creating joyful learning experiences, as suggested by (Kapp, 2013) and supported by (Qub'a et al., 2024).

Motivation

Increased motivation emerged as one of the most dominant themes. The presence of points, leaderboards, streaks, and time-based bonuses encouraged students to stay involved and continuously improve their performance. The competitive yet structured nature of the gamification system stimulated both intrinsic enjoyment and extrinsic goal orientation, leading to higher participation levels. This finding is consistent with (Zadeja & Bushati, 2022), who stated that competition can create an immersive learning experience, and also aligns with (Oliveira et al., 2023), who found that

gamification has psychological effects that increase students' willingness to engage in learning activities. These results suggest that appropriately designed gamification mechanics can transform passive learners into active participants.

Cognitive Engagement

This study also demonstrated significant improvements in students' cognitive engagement. The use of time constraints and progressive difficulty levels required students to remain alert and focused throughout the activity. Students were encouraged to process information rapidly, make decisions under pressure, and reflect on their performance through immediate feedback. This is in line with (Mario et al., 2023), who showed that gamification strategies can stimulate deeper cognitive processing through rapid-response demands and tiered challenges. Additionally, the interactive use of personal devices encouraged physical involvement in the learning process, which supports the argument of (Kuo & Chuang, 2018) that active, technology-based participation can significantly enhance attention and focus.

Emotional Safety and Enjoyment

From an emotional perspective, students described the learning environment as more enjoyable and less intimidating than traditional English instruction. The visual and audio features of Kahoot! contributed to a positive emotional atmosphere that increased comfort and self-confidence. These findings are aligned with (Batlle Rodríguez & Vicenta González Argüello, 2023), who emphasized the role of game aesthetics in fostering emotional engagement. Furthermore, the creation of a psychologically safe environment helped reduce language anxiety, which is particularly important in foreign language learning contexts. This finding supports the research of (Tamayo et al., 2023), who found that gamification can promote a more relaxed and error-tolerant learning climate.

Social and Classroom Dynamics

Although gamification introduced competitive elements, it simultaneously strengthened social relations in the classroom. The anonymity feature in Kahoot! allowed students to participate without fear of embarrassment, which encouraged risk-taking and experimentation with the language. As a result, the classroom atmosphere shifted from tense and passive to supportive, relaxed, and collaborative. This aligns with the findings of (Mulyani et al., 2021), who concluded that quiz-based gamification can increase social interaction and generate a more inclusive learning environment even in competitive settings.

Cognitive Gains: Understanding, Recall, and Retention

Another crucial finding relates to students' improved comprehension, recall, and long-term retention of English material. The repetition of language forms and immediate feedback functioned as a reinforcement mechanism that strengthened students' understanding of vocabulary and grammatical patterns. This is consistent with Skinner's behavioral learning theory as discussed by (Kapp, 2012), which highlights the importance of stimulus-response-reinforcement in shaping learning behavior. In addition, (Oliveira et al., 2023) confirmed that repeated exposure and structured feedback in gamified environments can contribute to the development of durable learning habits.

Limitations

This study is limited by its small sample size and its context-specific focus on Mathematics Education students at one institution. Therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to other disciplines or institutions. However, the primary aim of this qualitative case study was not generalization, but rather a deep and contextualized understanding of students' experiences with gamification-based English learning.

Implications

Overall, the qualitative findings of this study indicate that gamification contributes to joyful learning through multiple interconnected pathways: increasing motivation, eliciting positive emotions, deepening cognitive engagement, and strengthening social relationships. These findings also help explain the improvement observed in the quantitative phase of the study. Consistent with (Caponetto et al., 2014) and (Zainuddin et al., 2020), the results of this study reaffirm that effective learning design should address not only cognitive aspects, but also motivational and emotional dimensions in order to create meaningful and sustainable learning experiences.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of gamification through the Kahoot! platform contributed to a more joyful and engaging English learning experience among Mathematics Education students in this specific context. The qualitative findings indicate that game elements such as points, leaderboards, quick-answer bonuses, and answer streaks increased students' motivation and participation, as reflected in their heightened enthusiasm and willingness to engage actively in classroom activities. Students also demonstrated stronger cognitive and physical engagement through time-based challenges, varied levels of difficulty, and direct interaction with digital devices, resulting in more focused and dynamic learning processes. In addition, the visual features, dynamic interface, and anonymity system of Kahoot! created a positive emotional climate that reduced language anxiety and increased students' confidence to participate, thereby fostering a more supportive and inclusive classroom atmosphere. Regarding learning outcomes, repetition, multiple question formats, and immediate feedback were found to support students' understanding of vocabulary and grammatical structures as well as enhance recall and longer-term retention of the material. These findings suggest that, within this setting, gamification can function not only as a motivational tool but also as a meaningful pedagogical strategy that supports emotional comfort, cognitive engagement, and language comprehension. Future studies may consider employing a mixed-methods approach or expanding to multiple institutions to validate these findings.

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