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La gamificación como estrategia didáctica para fortalecer la participación activa de los estudiantes en el aprendizaje del idioma inglés: una revisión sistemática

Gamification as a didactic strategy to enhance students' active participation in english language learning: a systematic review

Autores:

Diego Alejandro Fernández Cando
Unidad Educativa Particular San Francisco Javier
Loja – Ecuador
fcalex1711@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-2425-0169>

Margarita Elizabeth Rocha Chasi
Institución: Unidad Educativa Sigchos
Cotopaxi-Ecuador
elizabeth.rocha@docentes.educacion.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-1543-377X>

Jaime Bienvenido Pincay Moreira
Mineduc
Portoviejo- Ecuador
jaime27pm@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-3843-2041>

Ángel Santiago Poveda Toalombo
Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, Sede Ambato
Tungurahua – Ecuador
aspoveda.english@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-1989-9046>

María Cristina Ortiz Villacís
Instituto Superior Tecnológico Tungurahua
Ambato - Ecuador
mcortizv@alumnipuice.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4225-4549>

Autor de correspondencia: Diego Alejandro Fernández Cando, fcalex1711@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Gamification has emerged as an innovative didactic strategy capable of transforming traditional teaching processes through the incorporation of game-based elements into educational environments. This study aimed to analyze the contribution of gamification to enhancing students' active participation in English language learning. A systematic literature review was conducted following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines through the search of scientific studies in academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis, SAGE Journals, ERIC, SciELO, Redalyc, and Google Scholar. After the identification, screening, and methodological quality assessment processes, 21 studies were included in the final analysis. The findings revealed that gamification promotes students' motivation, engagement, autonomy, and interaction through elements such as challenges, rewards, immediate feedback, and interactive digital platforms. Furthermore, the review identified that recent digital innovations, including artificial intelligence-supported tools, may complement gamified learning environments by promoting personalized learning experiences and the development of English communicative competence. However, its effectiveness depends on appropriate pedagogical planning, teacher guidance, and the balance between game mechanics and educational objectives. It is concluded that gamification represents a complementary strategy with significant potential to promote more dynamic, participatory, and meaningful learning experiences in English language education.

Keywords: gamification; english language learning; student engagement; educational technology; active participation.

RESUMEN

La gamificación se ha consolidado como una estrategia didáctica innovadora capaz de transformar los procesos tradicionales de enseñanza mediante la incorporación de elementos propios del juego en ambientes educativos. El presente estudio tuvo como objetivo analizar el aporte de la gamificación en el fortalecimiento de la participación activa de los estudiantes durante el aprendizaje del idioma inglés. Se desarrolló una revisión sistemática de literatura siguiendo los lineamientos PRISMA 2020, mediante la búsqueda de estudios científicos en bases de datos académicas como Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis, SAGE Journals, ERIC, SciELO, Redalyc y Google Scholar. Después de los procesos de identificación, selección y evaluación de calidad metodológica, se incluyeron 21 estudios para el análisis final. Los resultados evidenciaron que la gamificación favorece la motivación, el compromiso, la autonomía y la interacción de los estudiantes mediante elementos como desafíos, recompensas, retroalimentación inmediata y plataformas digitales interactivas. Asimismo, la revisión identificó que las innovaciones digitales recientes, incluidas las herramientas apoyadas por inteligencia artificial, pueden complementar los entornos de aprendizaje gamificados al favorecer experiencias educativas más personalizadas y el desarrollo de competencias comunicativas en inglés. Sin embargo, su efectividad depende de una adecuada planificación pedagógica, la orientación docente y el equilibrio entre las mecánicas del juego y los objetivos educativos. Se concluye que la gamificación constituye una estrategia complementaria con un potencial significativo para promover experiencias de aprendizaje más dinámicas, participativas y significativas en la enseñanza del idioma inglés.

Palabras clave: gamificación; aprendizaje del idioma inglés; participación estudiantil; tecnología educativa; participación activa.



1. INTRODUCTION

English language learning has become a fundamental component of contemporary education due to the growing importance of international communication, academic mobility, technological development, and global interaction. In recent years, educational environments have experienced significant transformations as digital technologies and innovative pedagogical approaches have modified the way students acquire knowledge and participate in learning processes. Within this scenario, traditional teaching methodologies have increasingly incorporated active learning strategies that promote student engagement, autonomy, collaboration, and meaningful interaction. Among these approaches, gamification has emerged as an innovative educational strategy capable of integrating game elements into non-game contexts to improve motivation and learning experiences (Zainuddin et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2022).

Gamification refers to the application of characteristics commonly found in games, such as challenges, points, rewards, levels, feedback systems, and competition, within educational environments with the purpose of increasing learners' motivation and participation. Unlike conventional teaching approaches that may position students as passive recipients of information, gamified learning environments encourage active involvement by creating dynamic and interactive experiences. In English language education, gamification has gained relevance because language acquisition requires continuous practice, emotional involvement, and opportunities for meaningful communication. Through gamified activities, students can develop vocabulary, grammar knowledge, pronunciation, and communicative abilities while participating in motivating learning scenarios (Kalogiannakis et al., 2021; Sailer & Homner, 2020).

The implementation of gamification in English language learning has demonstrated positive effects on students' active participation and motivation. By incorporating elements such as immediate feedback, achievement recognition, and collaborative challenges, gamified environments can increase learners' willingness to participate and reduce negative emotions commonly associated with foreign language learning, such as anxiety or fear of making mistakes. These characteristics allow students to perceive English as a practical communication tool rather than only an academic requirement. Consequently, gamification



contributes to creating student-centered classrooms where learners assume a more active role in constructing their own knowledge (Bicen & Kocakoyun, 2022; Dicheva & Dichev, 2023). Furthermore, gamification can support the development of essential competencies in English learning by promoting interaction, problem-solving, and continuous practice. Digital platforms and educational applications based on game mechanics provide opportunities for students to engage with authentic language activities, receive immediate responses, and monitor their own progress. From the perspective of second language acquisition, frequent exposure, meaningful interaction, and active participation are essential factors for improving linguistic competence. Therefore, gamified strategies may serve as complementary resources that connect technological innovation with effective language teaching practices (Chen et al., 2022; Yu, 2023).

Despite its educational potential, the incorporation of gamification into English language teaching also presents challenges related to instructional design, technological accessibility, teacher preparation, and the excessive emphasis on external rewards. Although game-based elements can increase motivation, their effectiveness depends on appropriate pedagogical planning and alignment with learning objectives. Poorly designed gamified activities may prioritize competition over learning or reduce students' intrinsic motivation. Therefore, teachers must carefully select gamification strategies that encourage meaningful participation, collaboration, creativity, and long-term engagement with the English language learning process (Toda et al., 2021; Alomari et al., 2022).

In this context, analyzing gamification as a didactic strategy for enhancing students' active participation in English language learning is essential to understanding the role of innovative methodologies in contemporary education. Exploring how gamified activities influence motivation, engagement, interaction, and language development provides valuable information about the opportunities and limitations of integrating game-based approaches into foreign language classrooms. This research aims to analyze the contribution of gamification as a didactic strategy to strengthen students' active participation in the English language learning process, considering its potential to promote motivation, interaction, and meaningful educational experiences.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



Gamification as a didactic strategy in education

Gamification is understood as the incorporation of game-based elements into educational contexts with the purpose of increasing students' motivation, engagement, and active involvement in learning activities. Unlike traditional games, gamification does not seek only entertainment but rather the achievement of educational objectives through mechanisms such as challenges, feedback, rewards, progression systems, and interaction. This approach allows teachers to design more dynamic learning environments where students participate actively and develop greater autonomy during the learning process (Koivisto & Hamari, 2019).

From a pedagogical perspective, gamification is supported by motivational theories that highlight the importance of autonomy, competence, and social interaction in learning. By providing immediate feedback and opportunities for achievement, gamified environments can strengthen students' perception of progress and increase their willingness to participate. According to Sailer and Homner (2020), gamification produces positive effects on cognitive, emotional, and behavioral learning outcomes when game elements are aligned with appropriate instructional strategies.

In language education, gamification represents an innovative approach because foreign language acquisition requires continuous practice, interaction, and meaningful communication. Digital gamified platforms allow learners to practice vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and comprehension through activities that resemble real-life challenges. Consequently, gamification can transform English learning into a more interactive experience where students become active participants rather than passive receivers of information (Yu, 2023).

Game elements and their influence on learning motivation

The effectiveness of gamification depends on the appropriate selection of game mechanics incorporated into educational activities. Elements such as points, badges, rankings, levels, challenges, and rewards influence students' motivation by providing clear goals and visible progress indicators. These components can increase students' interest and persistence, especially when activities are designed according to learners' needs and educational objectives (Toda et al., 2021).

Motivation plays a central role in foreign language learning because students require constant participation and effort to develop communicative competence. Gamified activities



may reduce learning barriers by creating a supportive environment where mistakes are perceived as opportunities for improvement rather than failures. In this sense, gamification contributes to increasing students' confidence and willingness to use English during classroom interactions (Putz et al., 2022).

However, researchers emphasize that gamification should not depend exclusively on external rewards. Excessive competition or reward-based systems may decrease intrinsic motivation if students focus only on obtaining points instead of developing meaningful knowledge. Therefore, successful gamification requires a balance between entertainment, learning objectives, collaboration, and reflection (Bai et al., 2020).

Active participation in English language learning

Active participation refers to the degree to which students become involved cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally in the learning process. In English language education, participation involves activities such as communicating, collaborating, practicing linguistic skills, asking questions, and engaging in classroom tasks. Active participation is considered essential because language development depends on continuous interaction and meaningful use of the target language (Fredricks et al., 2022).

Gamification can enhance active participation by creating interactive environments that encourage students to take responsibility for their learning. Through challenges, collaborative missions, and immediate feedback, learners are encouraged to participate more frequently and maintain attention during instructional activities. According to Kalogiannakis et al. (2021), gamified approaches promote student engagement by combining cognitive effort with emotional involvement.

In addition, gamification facilitates student-centered learning because learners can progress according to their own performance and receive continuous information about their achievements. This characteristic supports autonomous learning and allows students to develop greater involvement in acquiring English skills (Zainuddin et al., 2020).

Gamification and communicative competence in English learning

Communicative competence involves the ability to use a language effectively according to different social and cultural contexts. In English learning, this competence requires not only grammatical knowledge but also the ability to understand, express ideas, and interact with others. Gamified learning environments can contribute to this development by



providing opportunities for communication through interactive activities and authentic language situations.

Digital gamification tools create spaces where students can practice English in meaningful contexts, increasing exposure to vocabulary, expressions, and communicative tasks. Therefore, gamification can function as a complementary strategy that connects technological innovation with communicative language teaching approaches (Chen et al., 2022).

Emerging gamification platforms supported by digital technologies and artificial intelligence

Recent advances in educational technology have expanded gamification beyond traditional reward systems by incorporating artificial intelligence, adaptive learning, and interactive environments. These platforms allow students to experience personalized, dynamic, and engaging learning processes, which are especially relevant in foreign language education. In English language learning, emerging gamified platforms provide opportunities for vocabulary development, pronunciation practice, communication, and autonomous learning through interactive challenges and immediate feedback.

Duolingo Max (Artificial intelligence-based gamification)

Duolingo Max represents an evolution of mobile language learning platforms by integrating artificial intelligence features into a gamified environment. Unlike traditional applications, this version incorporates conversational simulations and personalized feedback through AI, allowing learners to practice English in interactive situations. Its gamified structure, based on experience points, streaks, levels, and daily challenges, encourages continuous engagement and autonomous practice. (Munday, 2024; Kohnke et al., 2024).

Contribution to learning:

- Personalized learning pathways.
- Continuous practice.
- Immediate feedback.
- Development of vocabulary and communicative skills.

Kahoot! AI and Kahoot! EDU

Kahoot! has incorporated artificial intelligence tools that allow teachers to generate interactive questions and adapt learning activities according to students' needs.



This evolution transforms the platform from a simple quiz application into a more flexible gamified assessment environment where students participate through challenges, competition, and collaborative activities (Hwang & Chang, 2023).

Contribution to learning:

- Increases classroom interaction.
- Promotes active participation.
- Provides immediate evaluation feedback.
- Facilitates vocabulary and grammar reinforcement.

Quizlet with AI features

Quizlet has evolved by integrating artificial intelligence tools that generate personalized study materials, adaptive questions, and automated learning activities. Through digital flashcards, games, and practice modes, students can strengthen vocabulary acquisition and language retention (Kohnke et al., 2024).

Contribution to learning:

- Supports autonomous vocabulary learning.
- Provides personalized practice.
- Encourages repetition and memory development.

ClassPoint AI

ClassPoint AI combines interactive presentations with gamification elements, allowing teachers to transform traditional lessons into participatory experiences. Through quizzes, scoring systems, and interactive questions, students become active participants during English lessons.

Contribution to learning:

- Improves classroom engagement.
- Integrates technology into traditional teaching.
- Encourages student participation.

Minecraft Education Edition

Minecraft Education Edition represents a different model of gamification based on immersive learning environments. Through virtual worlds and collaborative missions, students can use English to communicate, solve problems, and complete tasks. This approach promotes experiential learning and authentic language use (Godwin-Jones, 2023).



Contribution to learning:

- Encourages communication.
- Develops collaboration.
- Creates meaningful language contexts.

In this sense, the evolution of gamification towards intelligent and interactive digital environments demonstrates that its educational value goes beyond the incorporation of rewards or competitive elements. Current platforms supported by artificial intelligence provide personalized, collaborative, and communicative learning experiences that may strengthen students' motivation and active participation. Therefore, gamification represents a didactic strategy that connects technological innovation with language learning needs, particularly in the development of English communicative competence.

3. METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted through a systematic literature review aimed at analyzing the existing scientific evidence regarding the role of gamification as a didactic strategy to enhance students' active participation in English language learning. This methodology allowed the identification, evaluation, and synthesis of scientific studies related to gamified learning environments, educational technology, digital platforms, motivation, student engagement, and foreign language acquisition.

A qualitative descriptive-analytical approach was adopted to interpret the findings reported in previous studies and identify relevant patterns, contributions, and research gaps regarding the implementation of gamification strategies in English language education. Systematic literature reviews provide a rigorous methodology for synthesizing previous research through transparent procedures for searching, selecting, and analyzing scientific evidence (Snyder, 2019; Xiao & Watson, 2019; Page et al., 2021).

Information Sources and Search Strategy

The bibliographic search was conducted in internationally recognized academic databases related to education, applied linguistics, educational technology, and computer-assisted language learning. The databases consulted included Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, SAGE Journals, ERIC, SciELO, Redalyc, and Google Scholar. The search strategy combined keywords using Boolean operators (AND and



OR). The main search terms were: ("gamification" OR "gamified learning") AND ("English language learning" OR "foreign language learning") AND ("student engagement" OR "active participation" OR "motivation").

These databases were selected because they provide access to peer-reviewed studies focused on gamification, digital learning environments, mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), artificial intelligence in education, student motivation, engagement, and English language teaching.

The search process was carried out between March 5 and March 18, 2026. During this period, search equations were applied to each database, duplicate records were removed, and titles and abstracts were screened according to the established eligibility criteria. A final verification of selected articles, bibliographic information, and DOI availability was performed in March 2026, ensuring the reliability and traceability of the systematic review process.

Table 1
Records Identified by Database

Database	Records identified
Scopus	18
Web of Science	14
ScienceDirect	15
Taylor & Francis Online	13
SpringerLink	12
SAGE Journals	10
ERIC	12
SciELO	8
Redalyc	7
Google Scholar	16
Total	125



Note. A total of 125 records were identified from the selected databases. After removing 29 duplicate records, 96 studies remained for the screening phase.

The titles and abstracts of the identified studies were reviewed, excluding 58 articles that did not correspond directly to the research objectives. Subsequently, 38 studies were evaluated through full-text analysis, from which 17 studies were excluded because they did not specifically address gamification, English language learning, student participation, motivation, or educational technology.

Finally, 21 scientific studies were included in the systematic review.

Search Strategy

The search strategy was developed using keywords in English combined with Boolean operators AND and OR. The main keywords included:

- “gamification”
- “English language learning”
- “English teaching”
- “students’ engagement”
- “active participation”
- “learning motivation”
- “digital gamification”
- “mobile-assisted language learning”
- “artificial intelligence”
- “educational technology”
- “language acquisition”
- “communicative competence”

The search equations were adapted according to each academic database.

Search Equations

Scopus and Web of Science

("gamification" OR "game-based learning")

AND

("English language learning" OR "foreign language learning")

AND

("student engagement" OR "motivation" OR "active participation")



ScienceDirect and SpringerLink

("digital gamification" OR "educational technology")

AND

("English teaching" OR "language learning")

AND

("student motivation" OR "learning outcomes")

Taylor & Francis and SAGE Journals

("gamification" AND "language learning")

AND

("student engagement" OR "communicative competence")

ERIC, SciELO and Redalyc

"gamification"

AND

"English learning"

AND

"students participation"

Google Scholar

"gamification"

"English language learning"

"student motivation"

"active participation"

Additional searches were conducted using:

“artificial intelligence AND gamification AND language learning”

“digital platforms AND English teaching”

“mobile learning AND foreign language acquisition”

“game elements AND student engagement”

“adaptive learning AND English education”

Eligibility Criteria

The inclusion criteria considered:

Scientific articles published in indexed academic journals.



Peer-reviewed studies.

Research related to gamification, English language learning, educational technology, student engagement, motivation, or instructional design, when these studies provided relevant theoretical or contextual support for understanding gamification in English language education Studies analyzing motivation, engagement, participation, or communicative competence.

Research focused on educational technology, digital platforms, or gamified environments specifically applied to English language learning contexts.

Publications written in English or Spanish.

Studies published between 2015 and 2026.

Articles with DOI or verifiable bibliographic information.

The exclusion criteria included:

Duplicate documents.

Opinion papers without scientific methodology.

Studies unrelated to language education.

Research focused on other academic areas.

Publications without accessible full text.

Documents without reliable bibliographic information.

Study Selection Process

The study selection process followed the recommendations established by the PRISMA 2020 statement proposed by Page et al. (2021). This framework provides a transparent methodology for identifying, screening, evaluating eligibility, and selecting studies included in systematic reviews.

The process consisted of four stages:

1. Identification

A total of 125 records were identified through academic databases related to gamification, educational technology, and English language learning.

2. Screening

After removing 29 duplicate records, 96 studies were screened according to titles and abstracts.

3. Eligibility



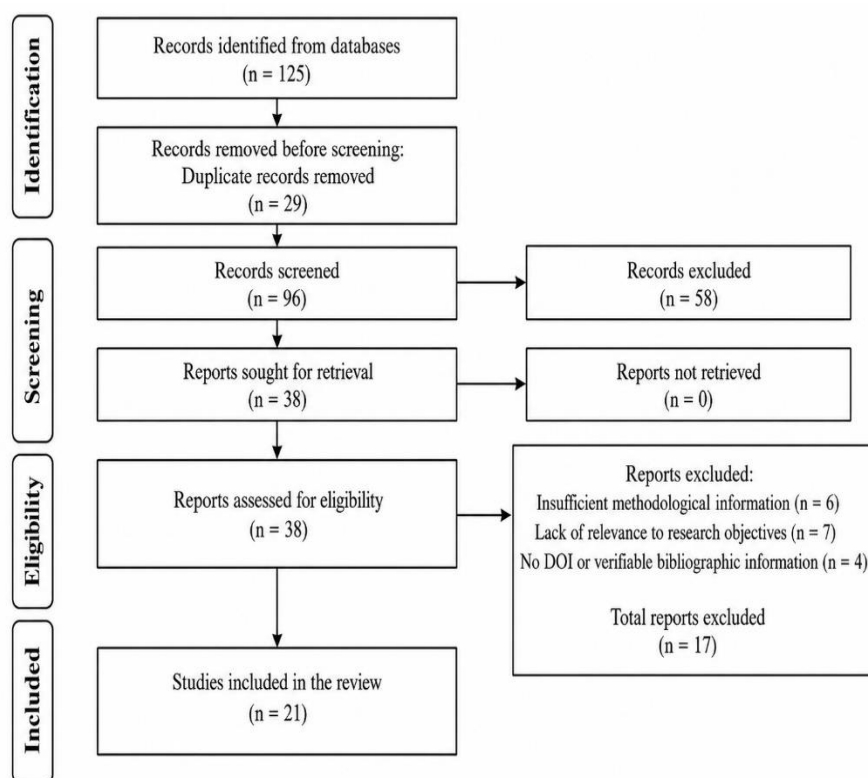
A total of 38 studies were evaluated through full-text analysis according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

4. Inclusion

After applying the eligibility criteria, a final corpus of 21 studies was included in the systematic review. The selected studies were retained because they directly addressed the application of gamification strategies in English language learning contexts and analyzed their influence on students' active participation, motivation, engagement, or language learning outcomes.

Figure 1

PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram



Note. Flow diagram developed according to the PRISMA 2020 guidelines proposed by Page et al. (2021). The systematic search process identified 125 records from scientific databases related to gamification, educational technology, and English language learning. After removing duplicate studies and applying the eligibility criteria, 21 articles were selected for the final systematic review. These studies analyzed the influence of gamification strategies,



digital platforms, and interactive learning environments on students' motivation, engagement, and active participation in English language learning.

4. RESULTS

The analysis of the 21 studies selected through the systematic literature review allowed the identification of the main trends, contributions, and challenges associated with the implementation of gamification as a didactic strategy in English language learning. The selected studies were organized into five thematic categories: gamification as a strategy for increasing student motivation, influence of gamified environments on active participation, application of digital gamification platforms in English learning, development of communicative competence through gamified activities, and challenges associated with the implementation of gamification in educational contexts.

This classification allowed the identification of the main educational contributions of gamification from motivational, technological, and pedagogical perspectives. The reviewed studies highlighted that gamified learning environments can promote student engagement, autonomous learning, collaboration, and continuous interaction with English language activities. Likewise, the analysis identified limitations reported by researchers, including inadequate instructional design, excessive dependence on external rewards, technological accessibility barriers, and the need for teacher training in the effective integration of gamified resources.

Although the primary focus of this review was gamification in English language learning, some complementary studies addressing broader educational contexts were included because they provided relevant theoretical foundations regarding gamification design, student engagement, motivation, and technology-enhanced learning. Therefore, the selected studies were classified into primary evidence and complementary evidence. Primary studies directly examined gamification within English language learning contexts, whereas complementary studies contributed conceptual and contextual perspectives that supported the interpretation of the findings.

To facilitate the interpretation of the findings, Table 1 summarizes the general characteristics of the selected studies, Table 2 presents the methodological quality assessment, and Table 3 synthesizes the main findings identified from the systematic review.



Results of the Methodological Quality Assessment

The methodological quality assessment of the 21 selected studies showed that 14 studies were classified as high quality and 7 studies as moderate quality. No studies were classified as low quality. The studies classified as high quality presented clearly defined research objectives, appropriate theoretical frameworks, transparent methodological procedures, and consistent relationships between their findings and conclusions. These studies provided stronger evidence regarding the influence of gamification on student motivation, engagement, learning outcomes, and participation in English language learning environments.

The studies classified as moderate quality mainly presented limitations related to reduced sample sizes, limited descriptions of intervention procedures, or conceptual approaches with less empirical validation. However, these studies were considered relevant because they contributed theoretical perspectives regarding digital gamification, educational innovation, and technology-enhanced language learning.

The methodological assessment was applied to determine the confidence level assigned to each source and to identify the strength of the evidence supporting the role of gamification in English language education.

The methodological quality assessment was based on eight criteria: clarity of research objectives, adequacy of the methodological design, description of participants or study context, data collection procedures, consistency between objectives and methods, data analysis procedures, clarity of results presentation, and contribution of the study to the research field. Each criterion was scored from 0 to 2 points, obtaining a maximum score of 16 points

Because the included studies comprised different research designs, including empirical studies, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and theoretical papers, the quality assessment criteria were adapted according to the characteristics of each design. For empirical studies, the assessment emphasized aspects such as clarity of objectives, methodological design, sample description, data collection procedures, and consistency between results and conclusions. For systematic reviews and meta-analyses, the criteria focused on the transparency of the search strategy, inclusion criteria, methodological procedures, synthesis process, and interpretation of findings. For theoretical and conceptual studies, the evaluation considered the clarity of the theoretical framework, conceptual contribution,



coherence of arguments, and relevance to the research objectives. The final score was used as an overall indicator of methodological rigor rather than as a direct comparison between different study designs

Table 2

Results of the Methodological Quality Assessment

No.	Author and year	Type of document	Score	Percentage	Quality level
1	Sailer et al. (2017)	Research article	15/16	93.75%	High
2	Toda et al. (2021)	Systematic review	16/16	100%	High
3	Bai et al. (2020)	Meta-analysis	15/16	93.75%	High
4	Kalogiannakis et al. (2021)	Systematic review	14/16	87.50%	High
5	Zainuddin et al. (2020)	Systematic review	15/16	93.75%	High
6	Sailer and Homner (2020)	Meta-analysis	16/16	100%	High
7	Putz et al. (2022)	Systematic review	14/16	87.50%	High
8	Yu (2023)	Systematic review	14/16	87.50%	High
9	Chen et al. (2022)	Empirical study	13/16	81.25%	High
10	Kohnke et al. (2024)	Research article	14/16	87.50%	High
11	Godwin-Jones (2023)	Research article	13/16	81.25%	High
12	Hwang and Chang (2023)	Review article	14/16	87.50%	High
13	Munday (2024)	Research article	13/16	81.25%	High
14	Licorish et al. (2021)	Empirical study	12/16	75%	Moderate
15	Subhash and Cudney (2021)	Systematic review	12/16	75%	Moderate
16	Mora et al. (2017)	Review article	12/16	75%	Moderate
17	Koivisto and Hamari (2019)	Review article	13/16	81.25%	High
18	Alomari et al. (2022)	Research article	11/16	68.75%	Moderate
19	Zhao (2019)	Empirical study	11/16	68.75%	Moderate
20	Fredricks et al. (2022)	Theoretical review	12/16	75%	Moderate
21	Kessler (2018)	Research article	10/16	62.50%	Moderate



Note. The methodological assessment considered eight criteria evaluated from 0 to 2 points, with a maximum possible score of 16 points. Studies were classified as high quality when achieving $\geq 80\%$ and moderate quality between 60% and 79%. No studies were classified as low quality. The evaluation allowed the weighting of methodological strength during the synthesis of evidence regarding gamification and English language learning.

The complete assessment matrix containing the individual scores for each criterion is available as Supplementary Table S1.

Table 3 provides a detailed synthesis of the 21 studies included in the systematic review. The matrix presents the objectives, methodological approaches, educational contexts, gamified strategies, and main findings reported in each study, allowing the verification and traceability of the evidence used in the analysis.

Table 2

Supplementary Table S1

No.	Author and year	Study design	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	Total score	Quality level
1	Sailer et al. (2017)	Research article	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	15/16	High
2	Toda et al. (2021)	Systematic review	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	16/16	High
3	Bai et al. (2020)	Meta-analysis	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	15/16	High
4	Kalogiannakis et al. (2021)	Systematic review	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	14/16	High
5	Zainuddin et al. (2020)	Systematic review	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	15/16	High
6	Sailer and Homner (2020)	Meta-analysis	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	16/16	High
7	Putz et al. (2022)	Systematic review	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	14/16	High
8	Yu (2023)	Systematic review	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	14/16	High
9	Chen et al. (2022)	Empirical study	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	13/16	High
10	Kohnke et al. (2024)	Research article	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	14/16	High



11	Godwin-Jones (2023)	Research article	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	13/16	High
12	Hwang and Chang (2023)	Review article	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	14/16	High
13	Munday (2024)	Research article	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	13/16	High
14	Licorish et al. (2021)	Empirical study	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	12/16	Moderate
15	Subhash and Cudney (2021)	Systematic review	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	12/16	Moderate
16	Mora et al. (2017)	Review article	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	12/16	Moderate
17	Koivisto and Hamari (2019)	Review article	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	13/16	High
18	Alomari et al. (2022)	Research article	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	11/16	Moderate
19	Zhao (2019)	Empirical study	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	11/16	Moderate
20	Fredricks et al. (2022)	Theoretical review	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	12/16	Moderate
21	Kessler (2018)	Research article	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	0	10/16	Moderate

Note: Each criterion (C1–C8) was scored from 0 to 2 points, with a maximum possible score of 16 points. The criteria were adapted according to the methodological characteristics of each study design. Higher scores indicate greater methodological rigor. Studies were classified as high quality when achieving $\geq 80\%$, moderate quality between 60% and 79%, and low quality below 60%.

Table 3
Characteristics and Main Findings of the Selected Studies Included in the Systematic Review

^N o.	Author (s) and year	Study objecti ve	Methodolo gy/design	Sample/pa rticipants	Educa tional context	Gamif ied tool or strateg y	Main findin gs	Evidenc e classific ation
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¹	Toda et al. (2021)	To analyze gamification elements used in educational environments.	Systematic literature review	Not specified in reviewed synthesis	Educational environments	Game elements such as points, badges, challenges, feedback, and progression systems	Gamification elements contribute to motivation and engagement when aligned with educational objectives.	<i>Complementary evidence</i>
²	Bai et al. (2020)	To examine the effect of gamification on learning outcomes.	Meta-analysis	Multiple studies included	Educational contexts	Gamified learning strategies	Gamification produces positive effects on learning outcomes and	<i>Complementary evidence</i>



student
motiva
tion.

³

Kalogi
annakis
et al.
(2021)

To
analyze
educati
onal
applica
tions of
gamific
ation
strategi
es.

Systematic
review

Studies
reviewed
from
educational
contexts

Educat
ional
applica
tions

Digital
gamifi
cation
strategi
es

Gamifi
cation
support
s
motiva
tion,
partici
pation,
and
interact
ive
learnin
g
experie
nces.

Comple
mentary
evidenc
e

⁴

Sailer
et al.
(2017)

To
examin
e the
relation
ship
betwee
n game
elemen
ts and
psychol
ogical
needs.

Experiment
al research
article

Not
specified in
synthesis

Learni
ng
enviro
nments

Specifi
c game
design
elemen
ts

Game
elemen
ts
enhanc
e
motiva
tion
throug
h
satisfac
tion of
psycho

Comple
mentary
evidenc
e



						logical needs.	
⁵	Koivist o and Hamari (2019)	To review the develo pment of gamific ation researc h.	Review article	Literature- based analysis	Educat ional and technol ogical context s	Gamifi cation frame works highlig hts motiva tional mecha nisms.	Comple mentary evidenc e
⁶	Subhas h and Cudney (2021)	To analyze gamifie d learnin g in higher educati on.	Systematic review	Higher education studies	Univer sity educati on	Gamifi ed learnin g enviro nments and innovat ive learnin g experie nces.	Comple mentary evidenc e
⁷	Zainud din et al. (2020)	To analyze the impact of	Systematic review	Reviewed educational studies	Learni ng and instruc tion	Gamifi ed instruc tional engage	Comple mentary evidenc e



		gamific ation on learnin g and instruct ion.			context s	strategi es	ment and learnin g process es.	
⁸	Sailer and Homne r (2020)	To determi ne the effects of gamific ation on learnin g outcom es.	Meta- analysis	Multiple empirical studies	Educat ional setting s	Game mecha nics and motiva tional elemen ts	Gamifi cation influen ces cogniti ve, emotio nal, and behavi oral outcom es.	Comple mentary evidenc e
⁹	Putz et al. (2022)	To examin e gamific ation and student motivati on.	Systematic review	Reviewed scientific studies	Educat ional context s	Gamifi cation techniq ues	Gamifi cation may increas e motiva tion when properl y	Comple mentary evidenc e



						design ed.	
¹⁰	Chen et al. (2022)	To analyze gamified learning environments and achieve ment.	Empirical study	Not specified in synthesis	Digital learning environments	Gamified learning environments	Primary evidence
						Gamification positively influences motivation and learning outcomes.	
¹¹	Yu (2023)	To analyze the effect of gamification on student engagement.	Systematic review	Reviewed studies on engagement	Educational contexts	Gamified activities	Primary evidence
						Gamification increases engagement and active participation.	
¹²	Godwin-Jones (2023)	To examine emergi	Research article	Not specified in synthesis	Language learning	Digital technologies and	Primary evidence
						Emerging technologies	



		ng technol ogies and langua ge learnin g.		enviro nments	AI- suppor ted learnin g	comple ment langua ge learnin g.		
¹³	Hwang and Chang (2023)	To analyze AI applica tions in educati on.	Review article	Literature- based analysis	Educat ional technol ogy	AI- suppor ted learnin g	AI tools enhanc e person alized and interact ive learnin g.	Comple mentary evidenc e
¹⁴	Kohnk e et al. (2024)	To analyze AI and gamific ation in langua ge educati on.	Research article	Not specified in synthesis	Langu age educati on	AI- suppor ted gamifi cation	AI and gamifi cation provid e person alized learnin g opport unities.	Primary evidenc e



¹⁵	Munday (2024)	To analyze AI-based mobile language learning g.	Research article	Not specified in synthesis	Mobile - assisted language learning g	AI-based mobile gamification support continuous practice.	Mobile gamified environments support continuous practice.	Primary evidence
¹⁶	Licorish et al. (2021)	To analyze Kahoot and classroom participation.	Empirical study	Not specified in synthesis	Classroom environments	Kahoot	Interactive platform promote participation.	Complementary evidence
¹⁷	Mora et al. (2017)	To analyze gamification design frameworks.	Review article	Literature-based analysis	Gamification design	Gamification frameworks	Effective gamification require appropriate design.	Complementary evidence
¹⁸	Alomari et al. (2022)	To analyze gamific	Research article	Not specified in synthesis	Learning	Gamification	Strategies contrib	Complementary



		ation			enviro	techniq	ute to	evidenc
		techniq			nments	ues	motiva	e
		ues and					tion	
		engage					and	
		ment.					engage	
							ment.	
¹⁹	Zhao (2019)	To analyze Quizizz use in learnin g environ ments.	Empirical study	Not specified in synthesis	Classr oom enviro nment	Quiziz z	Quiz- based gamifi cation increas es interact ion.	Comple mentary evidenc e
²⁰	Fredric ks et al. (2022)	To analyze student engage ment dimens ions.	Theoretical review	Conceptual analysis	Educat ional context s	Studen t engage ment frame work	Engage ment include s behavi oral, emotio nal, and cogniti ve dimens ions.	Comple mentary evidenc e
²¹	Kessler (2018)	To analyze technol	Research article	Not specified in synthesis	Langu age	Educat ional	Techno logy integra	Comple mentary



ogy	educati	technol	tion	evidenc
integrat	on	ogies	support	e
ion in			s	
langua			innovat	
ge			ion in	
educati			learnin	
on.			g.	

Note. Primary evidence refers to studies that directly examined gamification in English language learning contexts. Complementary evidence includes studies addressing broader educational contexts that contributed theoretical and contextual perspectives related to gamification, student engagement, motivation, and educational technology.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this systematic review indicate that gamification represents a promising didactic strategy capable of enhancing students’ active participation in English language learning through interactive, motivating, and student-centred educational experiences. The reviewed studies demonstrate that the incorporation of game elements such as challenges, feedback, rewards, progression systems, and collaborative activities can transform traditional learning environments into more dynamic spaces where students actively engage with language activities.

Regarding educational innovation, the evidence suggests that gamification contributes to the transformation of English teaching by integrating digital platforms, interactive environments, and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence. Gamified tools allow students to experience personalized learning processes through immediate feedback, adaptive activities, and continuous practice opportunities. These characteristics support the development of more flexible learning environments where technology functions as a complement to pedagogical strategies rather than as a replacement for teachers.

Motivation was identified as one of the main contributions of gamification in English language learning. The reviewed studies indicate that game-based elements increase students’ interest, persistence, and willingness to participate in learning activities. Points, achievements, levels, and challenges provide learners with visible indicators of progress,



which may strengthen their sense of competence and autonomy. However, the analysis also shows that motivation is not produced automatically by the presence of game elements; it depends on appropriate instructional design, alignment with learning objectives, and the teacher's ability to create meaningful activities.

The results also demonstrate that gamification positively influences students' active participation by encouraging interaction, collaboration, and continuous involvement in classroom activities. Through gamified challenges and cooperative tasks, students are more likely to communicate, practice vocabulary, develop pronunciation, and participate in problem-solving activities using English. Therefore, gamification supports communicative language learning approaches by creating opportunities for meaningful language use instead of focusing exclusively on memorization.

Furthermore, the reviewed studies highlight the potential of digital gamification platforms such as Duolingo, Kahoot!, Quizlet, and immersive learning environments to strengthen autonomous learning and communicative competence. These platforms provide interactive experiences that allow students to practice English beyond traditional classroom boundaries. The incorporation of artificial intelligence into some educational platforms represents a new direction in gamification by enabling personalized feedback and adaptive learning experiences according to individual student performance.

Despite these benefits, several challenges were identified regarding the implementation of gamification in educational contexts. The literature highlights possible limitations related to excessive competition, dependence on external rewards, technological accessibility, inadequate teacher preparation, and the risk of prioritizing entertainment over learning objectives. Therefore, gamification should be implemented strategically, ensuring that game elements support meaningful learning processes rather than becoming isolated activities without pedagogical purpose.

Overall, the findings suggest that gamification can enrich English language learning when integrated intentionally with appropriate teaching strategies. Its effectiveness depends on the relationship between technological innovation, instructional design, teacher guidance, and students' active involvement in the learning process.

6. CONCLUSIONS



This systematic review demonstrated that gamification represents a valuable didactic strategy for enhancing students' active participation in English language learning. The evidence analyzed indicates that gamified learning environments can increase motivation, engagement, autonomy, and interaction by incorporating elements such as challenges, feedback, rewards, and collaborative activities.

The reviewed studies show that gamification contributes to the development of English language skills by creating opportunities for vocabulary practice, communication, pronunciation improvement, and meaningful interaction. Additionally, digital platforms supported by gamification and artificial intelligence provide innovative possibilities for personalized learning experiences and continuous student engagement.

However, the educational effectiveness of gamification depends on its appropriate implementation. The findings highlight that game elements alone do not guarantee successful learning outcomes; instead, they require pedagogical planning, clear learning objectives, teacher mediation, and consideration of students' technological and educational contexts.

In conclusion, gamification should be considered a complementary strategy that strengthens traditional English teaching approaches by promoting active participation and meaningful learning experiences. When applied appropriately, it can connect technological innovation with communicative language teaching, allowing students to become more motivated, autonomous, and engaged participants in the English learning process.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Diego Alejandro Fernández Cando, Margarita Elizabeth Rocha Chasi.

Data curation: Diego Alejandro Fernández Cando, Jaime Bienvenido Pincay Moreira.

Formal analysis: Margarita Elizabeth Rocha Chasi, Tula Anaya Bellido.

Investigation: Diego Alejandro Fernández Cando, Margarita Elizabeth Rocha Chasi, Jaime Bienvenido Pincay Moreira, Tula Anaya Bellido, María Cristina Ortiz Villacís.

Methodology: Diego Alejandro Fernández Cando, Tula Anaya Bellido, María Cristina Ortiz Villacís.

Project administration: Diego Alejandro Fernández Cando.

Supervision: Tula Anaya Bellido, María Cristina Ortiz Villacís.

Validation: Margarita Elizabeth Rocha Chasi, Tula Anaya Bellido, María Cristina Ortiz Villacís.

Visualization: Jaime Bienvenido Pincay Moreira, María Cristina Ortiz Villacís.

Writing – original draft: Diego Alejandro Fernández Cando, Margarita Elizabeth Rocha Chasi, Jaime Bienvenido Pincay Moreira.

Writing – review and editing: Tula Anaya Bellido, María Cristina Ortiz Villacís.

