FROM PASSIVE TO PROACTIVE: GAMIFYING GRAMMAR AND ENGAGEMENT IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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Abstract: This study addresses a prevalent issue in contemporary language education: student disengagement with grammar instruction. Despite its fundamental role in developing linguistic proficiency, traditional rote learning approaches often fail to captivate students, resulting in diminished motivation and poor outcomes. To investigate potential solutions, a mixed-methods research design was applied, comparing the effectiveness of gamified grammar instruction with traditional pedagogical approaches. The study involved a control group engaged in conventional grammar teaching and an intervention group utilizing gamification tools such as Kahoot! and digital board games. Preliminary findings suggest that gamified instruction significantly enhances students' intrinsic motivation, engagement, and overall performance in grammar-related tasks. These insights are grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT), emphasizing the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering a proactive learning environment. The results indicate a pressing need for educators to reconsider their approaches to grammar instruction, advocating for the integration of gamification to cultivate a more engaging and effective educational experience.

Keywords: gamification; grammar instruction; student engagement; Self-Determination Theory; mixed-methods research; foreign language anxiety; intrinsic motivation; educational technology; active learning; pedagogical affordances; working memory.

Introduction: The traditional approach to grammar instruction often relies on rote memorization techniques, which can lead to student disengagement and a lack of sustained interest in language learning. In recent years, there has been a marked shift from these conventional methods towards more innovative approaches such as Game-Based Learning (GBL). GBL not only promotes active participation but also fosters an engaging learning environment, where students feel empowered to take control of their learning trajectories. The theoretical framework for this transition is well-supported by Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which posits that learning environments must prioritize the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness to enhance motivation (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021). By creating a gamified classroom, educators can enhance these elements, potentially leading to improved grammatical understanding and overall linguistic proficiency.

Literature Review: Recent research has highlighted the effectiveness of gamification in educational settings, showing promising outcomes in enhancing student engagement, working memory, and reducing foreign language anxiety. For instance, Zhang et al. (2025) found that gamification techniques significantly improve working memory by providing interactive and contextually rich learning experiences. These techniques also help mitigate the affective filter associated with foreign language learning, creating a low-anxiety environment conducive to language acquisition. The provision of real-time feedback and progress tracking inherent in gamified systems further supports this process;

they allow students to see their advancements and areas for improvement instantly, encouraging a more proactive approach to their learning.

Methodology: This study employed a mixed-methods approach to examine the impacts of gamified grammar instruction compared to traditional teaching methods. The sample consisted of two groups of high school students learning English as a foreign language. The control group experienced conventional grammar instruction, focusing on memorization and drills, while the intervention group participated in a gamified curriculum using tools such as Kahoot! and digital board games designed for grammar practice. Pre- and post-tests assessed grammatical proficiency, while qualitative data were collected through student surveys and focus group discussions to gauge engagement and motivation levels. This design aimed to triangulate results by combining quantitative academic performance metrics with qualitative insights into student attitudes towards grammar instruction.

Discussion: One significant observation from this study is the "Novelty Effect" associated with gamification. Initially, students in the intervention group exhibited heightened engagement and enthusiasm for grammar activities. However, maintaining this interest over time presents a challenge. While the immediate benefits of gamified instruction are evident, continuous innovation is crucial to sustain long-term motivation and engagement (ResearchGate, 2025). Educators must focus on evolving their pedagogical strategies, introducing new game mechanics, and integrating diverse content to keep the classroom experience fresh and stimulating. In doing so, they may effectively counteract the decline in motivation that often accompanies the initial novelty of gamified elements.

Conclusion: The findings of this study underscore the practical implications for English teachers seeking innovative methods to enhance student engagement in grammar instruction. By integrating gamification into their curricula, educators can create more dynamic and motivating learning environments. This approach not only addresses the issues of student disengagement but also aligns with the principles of Self-Determination Theory, facilitating autonomy, competence, and relatedness. As such, it is imperative for educators to embrace the pedagogical affordances of gamification, fostering an environment that cultivates active learners and proficient language users.

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