Reevaluating the Glorification of Gamification for Unexpected Outcomes in English Language Teaching

Evaluasi Ulang terhadap Pengagungan Penerapan Gamifikasi yang Membuahkan Hasil Tidak Terduga dalam Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris

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Abstrak

Abstract
This conceptual paper aimed to reevaluate the glorification of gamification where it leads to misleading and misconception using gamification in English language teaching. This narrative applied the implementation of the gamification strategy driving to unexpected outcomes. This condition should be addressed and reevaluated. To do that, several arguments were supported by relevant written and spoken resources provided in this article. The findings have proven that the readiness of educational actors to the gamified strategy is the biggest problem faced by them and the demand of society and social construction in seeing gamification also creates a stigma where they must implement gamification learning strategy. It could be inferred that the glorification of gamification created problems where the teachers, students, parents/society, and policymakers are forced to adapt to the gamification strategy even if they are not ready yet to implement it. Therefore, the educational actors need to be wise and reevaluate the implementation of a gamification strategy in English language teaching.
1. Introduction

Nowadays, the rise of gamification in every aspect of life is getting intense (Mazarakis, 2021). Many people use and integrate gamification in order to develop the quality of activities or create meaningful activities. Gamification refers to activities equipped with playing games’ components such as rules, players, competition, scores, punishments, etc. (Antonopoulou et al., 2022). For example, they use a gamification strategy for learning the language in Duolingo or poll quizzes in business (Dowling-Hetherington et al., 2020; Shortt et al., 2023). This integration aims to enhance the system, concept, and activity to create the same situation and conditions while playing games (Mullins & Sabherwal, 2020). Knowing this, many people claim that this has the potential to be developed and should be integrated with all bases of life, including in the education sector.

Furthermore, this strategy promotes fun and exciting student activities (Baptista & Oliveira, 2019). Some people believe that employ a gamification strategy can give a better understanding of students regarding the materials taught at school (Panis et al., 2020). This strategy develops students’ engagement and understanding of the materials (Hicks et al., 2019). Consequently, that claim creates a narrative to the people that gamification can be an indicator of success in the teaching and learning process, even if the success of gamification implementation is not easy in education. Many factors influence gamification implementation’s success, such as sufficient technology, facility, knowledge, and support from all-educational stakeholders (Mee Mee et al., 2020). Those factors might affect gamification’s outcomes and should be acknowledged by the people, especially the educational actors.

Many educational professionals need to be more informed and understand the gamification concept (Dicheva et al., 2019). They tend to over-glory it by saying the quality of teaching and learning processes depends on utilizing gamification. They believe that it always brings positive outcomes. The failure in conducting teaching and learning processes is because of the need for gamification or the teachers cannot implement gamification in their teaching process, and vice versa (An et al., 2021). Meanwhile, educators still need to be ready to use gamification strategy in the classroom or other reasons from different perspectives from educational actors who are directly or indirectly involved and feel the unexpected outcomes of gamification (Phuong, 2020). However, there are still many people glorifying this concept.

Glorifying gamification also happens to English Language Teaching. Many schools and educational institutions require teachers and students to learn English through a gamification system, especially teachers and students (Azar & Tan, 2020). The English materials related to language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills should be taught through gamification. For example, the use of Kahoot to enhance reading (Korkmaz & Öz, 2021) or the use of Quizlet to expand vocabulary (Montaner-Villalba, 2019), or others. Not only that, many studies are addressing the implementation of gamification in English language teaching, according to a survey about using gamification to increase students’ speaking ability. This study indicates that gamification tends to make students use English contextually and are most likely to practice their English during the teaching and learning process through gamification mode (Safitri & Tari, 2022). In addition, the use of gamification can increase students’ motivation in learning proves that the gamification strategy can help students to improve their self-motivation for learning English (Chans & Portuguez Castro, 2021).
However, The limited studies have discussed the unexpected outcomes of gamification in English language teaching. The studies only focus on the positive impacts of gamification. It is rare to find a study about the implications of gamification glorification and how it can lead to adverse effects. Therefore, it is vital to reevaluate the worship of gamification in English language teaching from unexpected outcomes.

This article is a conceptual paper or position paper which is a type of academic writing that focuses on drawing argumentation from various concepts, literature streams, and theories (Jaakkola, 2020). This paper applied theory adaptation to revise, problematize, expand, and identify other dimensions of current understanding about certain concepts in this case gamification concept (Jaakkola, 2020). It employed the literature review method where the analysis applied written and spoken references from physical and electronic resources to corroborate the author’s arguments. In drawing argumentation, the author applied two approaches which are stakeholder and actual condition analysis. All the claims from the author are based on the previous and relevant studies related to the gamification in current situation. Furthermore, several significant points will be explained starting with the fundamentals of gamification in ELT, the current trend of gamification in ELT, reviewing the previous studies of gamification in ELT, and reevaluating gamification glorification for unexpected outcomes in ELT. At the end of this paper, the readers expected to understand better the unforeseen outcomes of gamification glorification on English language teaching and how to use the gamification strategy wisely.

2. The Fundamental of Gamification in ELT

Rapid change leads to innovations that sometimes bring positive outcomes, including the integration of gamification in education. Gamification refers to the use of game systems and components for ordinary situations. This method aims to cultivate fun, enjoyable, and exciting activities for the people involved with this strategy (Baptista & Oliveira, 2019). The intention of using gamification is to increase human motivation since it offers the experience of playing games (Lam & Chiu, 2018). Gamification is different from severe competition, and this approach promotes communication skills, creativity, socialization, sensing, and expressing of manner and emotion (Veljković Michos, 2017). Furthermore, gamification also refers to instructional techniques where the activities are conducted through the gamified system (Inayati & Waloyo, 2022). From an educational point of view, this strategy penetration of the games system into the pedagogical process to enhance the teaching and learning quality (Tan et al., 2018). The use of this concept is to accelerate and avoid destruction in the teaching and learning process (Kayimbaşioğlu et al., 2016).

In this study, gamification is a method of implementing the elements of games such as scores, punishments, rules, players, levels, etc. in the context of the non-game situation. This aims to enhance motivation, curiosity, and tendency to learn. Not only that, using it can avoid destruction and promote independent activities. Similarly, education trigs students’ interest in learning by using fun, exciting, and enjoyable teaching and learning activities through gamification learning. However, gamification also leads to adverse outcomes, especially for students and teachers where the teaching and learning process is blurred, which is fundamental to the educational process and other negative outcomes of its implementation.
Furthermore, the concept of gamification refers to the use of a gamified process which is a way of thinking mechanically based on the gaming process (Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011). The use of it intends to raise motivation and engagement. The concept of play in gamification creates a chance for the users to express, improvise, and recombine their behaviors by following the game’s rules (Kim et al., 2018). Furthermore, gamification is like the other types of games, where the aim is to compete and win. In implementing gamified teaching and learning processes, they most likely integrate several concepts which are concepts of choice, control, difficulty, and failure (Cho & Castañeda, 2019).

The concept of gamification is always about using gamified characteristics in traditional activities. The gamification strategy intends to bring the playing game experience which is mutually exclusive in playing games to the users. Not only that, but gamification also promotes self-motivation and self-regulated learning. The learners might avoid the learning destruction and tend to be more interested in learning something new. The concept of gamification might help teachers and learners transfer knowledge in interactive ways. However, this concept might lead to unnecessary tendencies from students who will only focus on winning and competing with others which is not the primary objective of the teaching and learning process.

Many studies claim the components of gamification. Each of the studies has similarities and differences in the components of gamification, especially in implementation in the teaching and learning process. Enhance, the elements of games consist of the most common and uncommon elements (Dehghanzadeh et al., 2021). The most common aspects that can be found in most games are leaderboard, level, point, achievement, challenge, and feedback. On the other hand, the most distinctive elements are a medal, avatar, signal, purchase session, etc. Similarly, according to other research, gamification features are feedback (score, network, comment, etc.) and game-play, objective, etc. (Hamari & Koivisto, 2015). In education, the elements of a game consist of leaderboards, medals, scores, awards, levels, feedback, achievements, etc. (Zhihao & Zhonggen, 2022). Furthermore, games have two significant elements: game mechanics and dynamics. The elements of game mechanics are story, score, level, challenge, gift, badge, etc. (Bunchball, 2010). The elements of game dynamics are stimulation, drive, emotion, etc. Similarly, the features of gamification consist of mechanics elements (trading, gambling, drawing, competing, etc.), dynamics elements (status, attention, social, etc.), and aesthetics elements (fantasy, challenge, sensation, narrative, etc.) (Manzano-León et al., 2021).

The use of games’ elements in the gamified teaching and learning processes or other activities is based on the needs of the games or materials. Some activities might use complete gamification aspects and some might use only certain elements. Moreover, the parts of gamification are scores, levels, rules, challenges, leaderboards, etc. These elements are essential to construct the non-game activities to be gamified activities. Therefore, the utilization of gamification in teaching and learning processes should consider and adjust some aspects of its implementation that somehow, educators forget about this concept.

Noticing the information from the previous explanation, it can be inferred that the elements of games in gamified activities are based on the users’ needs. Therefore, the steps or process for the implementation of gamification in the teaching and learning process might be different. The gamification steps are based on the purposes of the games and the audiences’ needs (Al-Dosakee & Ozdamli, 2021). Furthermore, there are five procedures for implementing gamification in education: understanding
the concept of gamification and students, determining the learning goals, constructing the learning experiences, measuring the learning resources, and then implementing the elements of gamification (Dicheva et al., 2019).

In conclusion, the processes of gamification implementation in education rely on the learning objectives and suitability of materials. The steps of each teaching and learning process might be different. That is why the user needs to understand the characteristics and nature of the resources and conditions for applying gamification. Furthermore, the teachers and students should understand the concept of gamification, determine learning objectives, construct experiences, identify resources, and use gamification in teaching and learning processes. Therefore, gamification might be dynamic and bring unexpected outcomes according to its intention in education.

3. The Current Trend of Gamification in ELT

Currently, gamification has become a trend center in English language teaching. As mentioned in the previous explanation, gamification refers to using game elements for non-game activities (Aini et al., 2019). In teaching and learning, gamification increases learners' motivation and engagement (Lam & Chiu, 2018). Meanwhile, the gamification trend in ELT is getting unhealthy and leading to incorrect result where the educational actors try to over-glorify it. According to Oxford Learners Dictionaries, (2023), glorification refers to the process of making something seem to be more important and better than how it is supposed to be. Similarly, according to Reverso Dictionary, (2023), glorification means enhancing or exaggerating the value of something. Glorification leads to the superiority and impeccability that makes people seeing something with biases and injustice (Leidner et al., 2010). It is also related to people's contribution directly to crisis issues (Naughton et al., 2021). The use of glorification may also connect to admiring something that does not deserve admiration (Nissim-Sabat, 2016).

According to the above explanation, it can be inferred that gamification glorification is the process of using a gamified strategy in the teaching and learning process but in the manner of over-glorifying by claiming that the best way to teach is using the gamification technique. Every teaching and learning activity that does not use a gamification strategy might be identified as left behind or old-fashioned teaching and learning style. The narrative is harmful because it leads to the perspectives where gamification is the only best way to teach and the other teaching strategies value less meaning. The gamification glorification makes the people who use it over-proud and they tend to be closed to the alternative ways of teaching and learning processes.

The problem will exist when there is a feeling of superiority over something. This situation makes others seem less important and weak. It happens with the use of gamification in educational settings, where many educators claim that the gamified technique is a perfect strategy for the teaching and learning process. Moreover, this claim tells society and the education sector that gamification in the teaching and learning process indicates the best strategy to implement. This narrative stigmatizes all teachers from various backgrounds to adopt this strategy. It is identified as a must strategy to be used even if they still need more facility, pedagogical skill, knowledge, time, readiness, etc. Gamification affects ethical aspects where many learners only use gamified learning for unsupportive competition with an overly competitive effect.

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(Mazarakis, 2021). The educational actors tend to invest much time in running it. Not only that, gamification tends to be more exploitative than its first objective. They use it only for pleasure instead of understanding the lesson based on the process (Gerber, 2014). The gamification technique may be unnecessary and there are better options for the best outcome of the teaching and learning process since familiarity plays a significant role for teachers and students (Mee Mee et al., 2020). Teachers also tend to use gamification strategies to hinder their student assessment responsibilities. They use gamification and let students learn by themselves but are less likely to investigate the score for the leaderboard (Aini et al., 2019). This situation is getting worse because of the glorification of gamification in society and they tend to overuse it without analyzing the suitability of gamification strategy for their teaching materials.

To sum up, glorifying gamification is problematic when some actors in educational settings do not use it wisely and adequately. They follow the trend without knowing the fundamental concept and the reason behind using gamified strategies in their teaching and learning process. Despite the positive impact of gamification in the teaching and learning process, the glorification of it makes it less meaningful. There is an absolute standard of teaching strategy that should be done through gamification strategy. The teaching techniques or strategies should be used based on the needs and materials of the class (Shirani Bidabadi et al., 2016). Therefore, there are a few best teaching and learning techniques in education. That is why glorifying gamification in educational settings is problematic and leads to unexpected outcomes.

4. Reviewing The Previous Studies of Gamification in ELT

Broadly speaking, regarding previous studies on reevaluating gamification glorification in English Language Technology (ELT), previous studies have not yet discussed reevaluating gamification glorification in the ELT context. Furthermore, only some studies discuss the negative impact of gamified learning and the reevaluating worship of gamification in education but in the general context. Some studies explain the harmful impacts of gamification and how the use of gamification is only sometimes applicable in some circumstances. There will always be a probability of opposing sides of gamified learning such as addiction, unaccustomed learning, less focus on materials, too focused on scores, readiness, and forcing using gamification. Therefore, this conceptual paper will reevaluate the glorification of gamification in English language teaching. Here are several studies related to reevaluating gamification glorification in ELT.

The Vermont State Senate KLAR Orange Country article was published on December 22, 2021. This article discusses the dangerous impact of gamification in general education (J, 2021). It addresses the students’ problem in following gamification where they are not fully understood using gamification since the teachers focus on using gamification without knowing the needs of students in the teaching and learning processes. They only tend to use gamification because they are following the trend. Therefore, this situation negatively impacts students with different abilities and needs in the learning process.

Furthermore, gamification in teaching and learning processes creates controversy about whether it can transfer knowledge (Gerber, 2014). This claim arises because gamification sometimes leads to a learning environment where students focus on the scores and points instead of the nuance of the meaning teaching and learning process. This condition makes students using gamification for pleasure.
It gets worse when many educational stakeholders try to glorify the implementation of gamification. Therefore, this also suggests that the implementation of gamification leads to a problem.

In summary, there still needs to be more studies discussing the reevaluation of the adverse outcomes of glorifying gamification in teaching and learning processes. Many studies are most likely discussing the positive impact of gamification and even there are rare studies about the harmful effects of gamification. Therefore, the studies about reevaluating gamification glorification in English language teaching still need to be improved, especially since the glorification of gamification leads to unexpected adverse outcomes.

5. The Unexpected Outcomes of Gamification Glorification in ELT

The educational actors should consider gamification implementation, especially for its positive and negative implications. Many studies discuss gamification's advantages and disadvantages in educational settings. The study about them keeps growing. Gamification can construct participation, engagement, cognitive load, internal motivation, academic achievement, and scientific competencies (Ahmad et al., 2020; Aini et al., 2019; Ebrahimzadeh, 2017; Hanus & Fox, 2015; Manzano-León et al., 2021). Also, gamified learning can modify mood and increase learners' happiness in following teaching and learning processes (Veljković Michos, 2017). It also helps learners focus better and develop self-efficacy during learning (Cho & Castañeda, 2019; Sun & Hsieh, 2018; Veljković Michos, 2017).

On the other hand, gamification also brings some unexpected outcomes, especially in educational settings. Gamification creates problems such as inconsistent regulation and objectives, an unhealthy competitive environment, and time-consuming and unnecessary noise or activity (Demirbilek et al., 2022). Regarding media or technology needs for conducting gamified learning, it requires specific technology that only some schools and teachers have yet to facilitate. The use of gamification can create addiction in users. Using gamification can create problems regarding internet connection and improper technology (Sun & Hsieh, 2018; Ward & Peoples, 2019). It also decreases communicative tasks since the learners are most likely too focused on their activities in the game (Loewen, 2018) and it leads to a lack of effect, worsened performance, motivational issues, lack of understanding, and irrelevance (Almeida et al., 2023). Similarly, from the first explanation of this paragraph, gamification also makes the teaching and learning processes take much time and makes it hard to customize the learning process (Mee Mee et al., 2020). A gamification strategy tends to make the learners too focused on the points and scores instead of the process of cultivating values of the learning process and morality (Gerber, 2014).

Furthermore, from the teachers' point of view, the glorification of gamification in teaching and learning processes significantly affects the teachers since the teachers oversee using and implementation of that teaching strategy (Tondeur et al., 2019). The glorification of gamification sends a narrative to them about the superiority of gamification and the use of gamification can be classified as mandatory for them (Leidner et al., 2010). Teachers who do not apply it can be seen as left behind. This condition is getting worse daily and affects the teachers a lot.

Noticing the various background of teachers and the places where they teach create different abilities and capabilities to adapt or implement new teaching
strategies (Mailizar et al., 2020). Using a gamification strategy might be further for them and does not apply to their educational institutions (Phuong, 2020). Therefore, glorifying this technique creates a destructive impact on the teachers where they need to follow the trend without understanding it. The method may not be applicable because of several factors such as the learning objectives, facilities supporting learning, etc. That is why teachers must reevaluate, analyze, and assess whether gamification can be done through their educational condition.

The glorification of gamification also affects the students. They need to adapt to the gamified learning process. Since they are from various backgrounds, they must follow all the gamified activities outside their learning interest or learning style (Arrosagaray et al., 2019). This situation might create uncomfortable conditions for them, especially for students who need extra time to catch up with other students. For example, some students need more English vocabulary or confidence in communicating in English. This condition can make a great barrier between them and other students since each student prefers to receive materials through the teaching process (Lam & Chiu, 2018). It will create a stigma to them about having slow learning. Since they will be left behind, especially in gamified learning, the situation is most likely contextual and the knowledge being used is also more advanced (Baptista & Oliveira, 2019). Therefore, they feel uncomfortable and they will lose the sense of belonging to the class.

Besides, gamification learning also creates unhealthy competitiveness where students focus on scores, points, and victories (Demirbilek et al., 2022). They need to remember the foundation of learning where they need to understand something which can make them wiser (Hanus & Fox, 2015). This situation can worsen when they use many incorrect ways to compete with other students, leading to harmful actions such as cheating, lying, sabotaging, etc. (Mcgunnigle & Press, n.d.). Furthermore, students’ readiness is also a significant concern in implementing gamification. Some students might have different background knowledge and familiarity with the technology used in gamification learning (Fedorenko et al., 2021). This condition can lead to an unconscious situation and understanding of the main goal of the teaching and learning process.

It can be inferred that the use of gamification in teaching and learning processes especially its glorification creates unexpected outcomes for students since gamified teaching and learning process cannot be adjusted or customized to the needs of students (Mee Mee et al., 2020). It is most likely making them unable to adapt and survive. Not only that, this condition also makes them uncomfortable. There will be a notion in the classroom that the teachers are not neutral and only focus on the progress of privileged students who are intelligent, rich, knowledgeable, etc. Therefore, it is crucial to implement gamification well in educational settings, especially for students.

In the context of parents and society, glorifying gamification techniques in teaching and learning processes might lead to a situation where there will be a cultural narrative about the importance of gamification strategy. The gamification strategy can be seen as a crucial factor regarding the quality of teachers and schools. They will see teachers or schools with no gamification strategy in the teaching and learning process as a minus point, making them reluctant to send their children to those schools because of that stigma.

This condition also misleads where the standards of a good school or teacher are only determined through gamification being used meanwhile a good school or

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education in general is based on school readiness, having prior knowledge, perseverance, etc. (Learning Portal IIEP UNESCO, 2023). This is not good since the parents and society will only support certain teachers or schools as learning places for their children. In the worst-case scenario, they will label certain teachers and schools as incapable and it kills their occupancies and schools. Therefore, glorifying gamification is ‘toxic’ and parents and society should be more aware that gamified techniques are not successful in teaching and learning processes.

The glorification of gamification also affects policymakers. They will face challenges to provide suitable facilities and human resources that can be taught the materials with gamification techniques (Eli, 2021; Pitoyo et al., 2020). This situation will burden them since they need to provide many things and create many programs to meet the expectations of society. If the policymakers cannot fulfill it, they will get labeled as incompetent to fulfill society’s desires regarding the educational aspect which uses the gamification strategy. Therefore, policymakers will face hard conditions in dealing with those conditions.

The trend of gamification also creates unimportant policies being produced and released by the policymakers since they get oppressed by society regarding the use of teaching and learning methods (del Olmo-Muñoz et al., 2023). They will force teachers and schools to apply gamification of teaching and learning processes. In addition, they will also spend more funding to facilitate the use of gamification in education. There are still many things that need to be fixed in the educational aspects such as infrastructure, human resources, etc. That is why gamification glorification creates unexpected outcomes where the policymakers tend to make unimportant policies and are less focused on the tangible problems in the educational settings.

6. Reevaluating the Glorification of Gamification in ELT

Noticing the problems created by gamification glorification to all stakeholders in education, it can be claimed that it is crucial to reevaluate the implementation of gamification in English language teaching. Policymakers and teachers should revise how to use gamification in teaching and learning processes. It is also essential to educate and prepare educators before applying gamified learning to their classes (Panis et al., 2020). Gamification should be implemented well and wisely (Krishnan et al., 2021). Human resources, facilities, and time are essential for effective teaching and learning.

Furthermore, educators should also understand the concept of gamification to avoid adverse outcomes such as students tending to focus on scores/points, teachers using gamified learning unwisely, the learning environment becoming less meaningful, etc. (Pitoyo et al., 2020). Not only that, the educators should be wise in responding and sharing their opinion about the use of gamification in teaching and learning processes, where it can trigger other educators to imitate and implement that strategy in their schools just because it seems implemented successfully in the other schools. They should understand that the success of the learning strategy is also supported by the facilities, time, money, and other external factors (Barrett & Treves, 2019). Therefore, it is essential for them to not over-glorify the use of gamification in English language teaching, which can lead to misleading which makes some educational institutions force themselves to use gamification strategies even if they are not eligible.
The reevaluation of gamification implementation also helps educators who cannot do teaching and learning with gamified learning. There will be notions in their surroundings about even if they cannot do gamified techniques and they only can do traditional or usual methods that they do. That is fine because they can feel that they get appreciation from others and there is nothing wrong with their preferences on teaching strategy. This situation will not weaken them but strengthen the narrative that there is no best teaching technique. Still, each teaching technique is good depending on the intention and the needs of educational actors (Tomas et al., 2019).

To sum up, the reevaluation of gamification is very crucial to overcome other possible problems. According to the previous discussion, the glorification of gamification affects many actors whether they get involved directly or indirectly. That is why policymakers and educators need to reevaluate gamification implementation comprehensively to avoid and minimize the impact of gamification on educational actors. Lastly, educators especially teachers should be wise in pointing out their opinion about specific teaching techniques to prevent over-glorify which can lead to misleading and misconception.

7. Conclusion

According to the previous discussions, it can be inferred that the application of gamification techniques in teaching and learning processes has changed significantly in the educational sector. The fundamental of this technique aims to apply the elements of the game to non-game activities. It is expected to be a way to increase student’s engagement and motivation. However, the implementation of gamification might be dynamic and bring unexpected outcomes according to its intention in education. Although many previous studies has proved the positive impact of gamification, it might also lead to negative impacts, especially if it is over-glorified. In fact, society including educational actors glorifies gamification as the best way to teach and learn something new. Many people believe that the use of gamification can be an indicator of success and vice versa. This situation forces the educational actors to use a gamification strategy as mandatory, even if there are still many problems related to the foundation of teaching and learning processes such as curriculum, facilities, infrastructure, human resources, etc. According to the explanation of unexpected outcomes from the over-glorifying gamification. It creates problems where the teachers, students, parents/society, and policymakers are forced to adapt to the gamification strategy even if they are not ready yet to implement it. This condition makes them to create unimportant regulations and actions in incorporating gamification in education. Therefore, educational actors and policymakers must reevaluate the glorification of gamification and use it wisely.
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