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The Role of Gamification in Enhancing Language Acquisition

Case study: Algerian Middle schools : Oran and Saida

A thesis submitted as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of *Master* in Didactics.

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Declaration of Originality:

I hereby declare that this submission is my work and that, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material that has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution.

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Abstract:

Gamification in education represents an innovative and engaging strategy to motivate students in fostering their learning achievements. The present study explores the role of gamification in enhancing language acquisition within Algerian middle schools. Grounded in modern educational theory and the evolving needs of 21st-century learners, the research investigates how gamified strategies—such as point systems, digital platforms, and classroom competitions—impact student motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes. A mixed methods approach is put into action, combining quantitative data from a semi-structured questionnaire The questionnaire targets two groups of teachers; currently teaching and those who are retired or no longer in service, with qualitative insights gathered through open-ended responses and classroom observations. Findings reveal that gamification is generally viewed positively by educators for its ability to foster participation, reduce anxiety, and support vocabulary retention. However, challenges related to limited infrastructure, insufficient training, and classroom management remain significant barriers to consistent implementation. The study concludes with a set of actionable recommendations aimed at improving access to digital tools, teacher training, and curricular integration. These findings underscore the need for systemic support to fully harness gamification's potential in language education across Algerian middle schools.

Keywords: Algerian Middle Schools, Educational Technology, Gamification, Language Acquisition, Motivation.

الملخص

تستكشف هذه الأطروحة دور التلعيب في تعزيز اكتساب اللغة في المدارس الإعدادية الجزائرية. انطلاقًا من النظريات التربوية الحديثة والاحتياجات المتطورة لمتعلمي القرن الحادي والعشرين، يبحث البحث في كيفية تأثير استراتيجيات التلعيب - مثل أنظمة النقاط، والمنصات الرقمية، والمسابقات الصفية - على دافعية الطلاب ومشاركتهم ونتائج تعلمهم. يعتمد البحث على نهج مختلط الأساليب، يجمع بين البيانات الكمية من استبيان شبه منظم. يستهدف الاستبيان فئتين من المعلمين؛ أي المعلمين الحاليين والمتقاعدين أو الذين لم يعودوا في الخدمة، مع رؤى نوعية جُمعت من خلال إجابات مفتوحة وملاحظات صفية. تكشف النتائج أن المعلمين ينظرون إلى التلعيب بشكل عام بإيجابية لقدرته على تعزيز المشاركة، وتقليل القلق، ودعم حفظ المفردات. ومع ذلك، لا تزال التحديات المتعلقة بمحدودية البنية التحتية، ونقص التدريب، وإدارة الصف، تشكل عوائق كبيرة أمام التطبيق المستمر. وتختتم الدراسة بمجموعة من التوصيات العملية التي تهدف إلى تحسين الوصول إلى الأدوات الرقمية، وتدريب المعلمين، وتكامل المناهج الدراسية. تؤكد هذه النتائج على الحاجة إلى دعم منهجي لتسخير إمكانات الألعاب التعليمية على أكمل وجه في تعليم اللغات في مدارس المتوسطة الجزائرية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المدارس المتوسطة الجزائرية، تكنولوجيا التعليم، الألعاب التعليمية، اكتساب اللغة، التحفيز.

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List of Acronyms

AI : Artificial Intelligence

EFL : English as a Foreign Language

ICT : Information and Communication Technology

SDT : Self-Determination Theory

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General Introduction:

In an era characterized by rapid technological advancements and evolving educational paradigms, educators are continuously exploring innovative strategies to enhance student engagement and achievement. Among these strategies, gamification has emerged as a compelling approach to revitalize traditional classrooms and make learning more interactive, student-centred, and effective. Gamification refers to the integration of game-like elements such as points, badges, competition, and narratives—into non-game contexts, particularly in education, with the aim of stimulating motivation, enhancing participation, and improving learning outcomes.

In the context of language acquisition, gamification holds particular promise. Language learning is inherently interactive, requiring consistent practice, immediate feedback, and meaningful communication. Gamified instruction addresses these needs by offering engaging environments that reduce anxiety, reinforce vocabulary, and promote fluency through playful yet goal-oriented tasks. Its increasing popularity among language educators and its proven psychological foundations such as self-determination, flow, and self-efficacy have drawn scholarly attention worldwide.

Despite the global momentum, the application of gamification in Algerian middle schools remains relatively underexplored. Teachers across regions face diverse challenges, ranging from limited access to digital infrastructure to a lack of training in modern pedagogical tools. While some educators have successfully implemented gamified practices using platforms like Kahoot or Duolingo, others remain skeptical or unaware of its potential. This discrepancy invites further investigation into how gamification is perceived, practiced, and received within the Algerian educational context.

The present study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the attitudes of Algerian middle school EFL teachers from Oran and Saida, along with retired educators, toward the incorporation of gamification in language teaching. To fulfill the objectives of this research, the following questions have been raised:

1. What are middle school EFL teachers' attitudes towards adopting gamification strategies in their classrooms?
2. How can teachers effectively promote the use of gamification among EFL middle school learners?

To provide answers to these questions, the following research hypotheses are formulated:

H1: Algerian middle school EFL teachers demonstrate positive attitudes toward the use of gamification in English language teaching, as shown in their questionnaire responses

H2: To boost English language Acquisition-in students, teachers might need comprehensive training in both the educational application and technical use of digital gamification tools, alongside effective classroom management strategies**.**

The researcher collected data using a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative data from a semi-structured questionnaire with qualitative insights from open-ended responses and classroom observations. This methodology allows for a comprehensive understanding of both measurable trends and nuanced, context-specific experiences.

The thesis is organized into three main chapters. Chapter One presents the literature review, defining gamification, tracing its theoretical foundations, and discussing its role in language education. Chapter Two outlines the methodological framework, including research design, data collection tools, and ethical considerations. Chapter Three delivers a detailed analysis of the data, integrating both statistical findings and key narratives to form evidence-based recommendations.

By situating gamification within the realities of Algerian middle school education, this research contributes to the broader discourse on innovative pedagogy and provides actionable insights for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers committed to enhancing language learning in the 21st century.

1.1 Introduction:

This chapter provides the theoretical and conceptual foundation for the study by reviewing key literature on gamification in education. It begins with an overview of gamification, including its definitions and historical roots. It then explores relevant theories of motivation that support the use of gamified strategies, such as Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Behaviorism. The chapter also highlights how gamification is used in educational settings, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Finally, it discusses the components of effective gamified instruction and how such practices enhance language acquisition.

Following this foundational overview, the chapter delves into the application of gamification in educational contexts, with a specific focus on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. It examines how teachers have utilized gamified strategies to improve linguistic competence across all four skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing while simultaneously cultivating a more engaging and less intimidating classroom atmosphere. Case studies and scholarly research are referenced to illustrate both successful implementations and common challenges encountered in gamified language teaching.

1.2. A Brief Overview of Gamification:

The idea of gamification in education is not as recent as it may seem. In fact, the use of games to achieve tasks or engage in activities within competitive and playful contexts dates back to the early 1900s with the Scouts. Groups of Boy Scouts were given challenging missions and obstacles to tackle, and those who succeeded received rewards such as badges and trophies to encourage specific behaviors (Koutropoulos & porter, 2017). However, it wasn’t until the introduction of the first computer game in 1978 that gamification truly began to be implemented the digital realm. (Teaching Methods)

Before exploring the contemporary concept of gamification, it's essential to understand the term "GAME," which is universally associated with play and entertainment. However, it differs from mere play. According to Huber and Hilty (2015), a game engages participants in a problem-solving activity conducted in a playful manner, governed by systematic formal

rules that yield measurable outcomes. Similarly, Deterding et al. (2011) explain that within game studies, the distinction between games and play is often traced back to Caillois' concepts of paidia and ludus, which represent two opposing forms of play. Paidia refers to spontaneous, expressive, and improvisational activities, while ludus involves structured play governed by rules and directed toward specific goals. From this perspective, games are typically seen as formal systems involving competition and defined outcomes, in contrast to the more open-ended nature of toys and unstructured play.

Furthermore, when game components are effectively integrated, they all function to elicit an emotional response to the circumstance (Kapp, 2012). Consequently, a game is a systematic and intentional procedure that piques the player's curiosity and immediately connects his or her actions to the result, encouraging engagement and choosing constructive outcomes in a fun yet demanding environment.

According to Marczewski (2013), the British game designer Nick Pelling first used the term "gamification" in 2002. In order to enhance the learning process and boost participant motivation and engagement, he developed this phrase to expressly refer to the application of game components and tactics outside of a gaming context. Lee (2011) defines gamification as the process of using game mechanics, dynamics, and frameworks to encourage a desired behavior. 2008 saw its compilation in documents, and 2010 saw the popularization of its design (Deterding et al., 2011). Gamification has been used in a variety of domains, including marketing, trade advertising, and education, to train employees, educate students, solve issues, and generate new thoughts and ideas.

1.3. Understanding Gamification:

It proved challenging to come up with a specific definition of gamification because different scholars have established distinct interpretations of the concept that underlie different facets. The use of game components and tactics in a non-gaming setting is a more expansive yet encompassing definition that was first presented by Nick Pelling, the father of gamification, as previously mentioned. Similarly, "gamification" is defined as "the use of game design elements in non-game contexts" by (Deterding et al ., 2011, p.10).

Similarly, in the preface to their book Gamification by Design, Zicherman (2011) define gamification as "the process of game-thinking and game mechanics to engage users and solve problems." Additionally, gamification is defined as "using game-based mechanics, aesthetics, and game thinking to engage people, motivate action, promote learning, and solve problems" by (Kapp , 2012, p.10). To provide a clearer and more detailed explanation of the idea of gamification, he divided his definition into the following components:

Game-based: An interesting system where players encounter an abstract task controlled by detailed instructions, feedback, and interaction that elicits an emotional response and produces measurable results.

Mechanics: Using applications or platforms, points, badges, and leader boards serve as essential and beneficial pillars to turn routine tasks into a game-like experience.

Aesthetics: Since playing a game first requires the participants' consent, it is very important in drawing their attention and inspiring motivation. A well-designed game is therefore more successful and effective.

Game thinking is the most important component of gamification, according to Kapp. It stands for the notion of relating the game to actual circumstances and daily life. It encourages the spirit of storytelling, exploration, teamwork, and competition.

Engage: Gamification specifically aims to capture participants' attention and successfully integrate them into the game through the engagement process.

People: These are categorized by field and could be clients, employees, or students. They stand in for the people who will act in the game.
Encourage action: To improve their behavior and activity, participants need to be both internally and externally motivated. To motivate them to take action, the games' procedure should live up to their expectations. This is one of the main components of gamification.

Encourage learning: Since a number of gamification tactics are grounded in educational psychology and have been used for years by professors, instructors, and instructional designers, gamification can be used to foster learning. Several educators have established

standards for things like assigning grades for assignments, providing helpful feedback, and promoting collaboration on projects. The difference is that gamification provides a new way to mix those elements into an engaging gaming environment that educates and motivates pupils, as well as an extra layer of mystery.

Gamification has significant potential for addressing issues. Cooperative game features can assist a group of users concentrate on a single subject. Games' competitive nature encourages players to use all of their energy in the hopes of winning.

According to Fulton (2019), gamification is "the bringing of game elements, into non-gaming environments to capture the motivational factors found in games." This definition highlights the importance of motivation. To summarize all of the aforementioned definitions, gamification is the artistic design of a game that incorporates game mechanics and elements into a nongaming context in order to elicit a desired behavior and establish a controlled environment where players are encouraged to collaborate and interact in order to generate constructive criticism that causes an emotional response that has measurable outcomes.

Gamification involves giving players activities to do in order to earn points and badges. Teachers can create leader boards and tracking tools to monitor players' progress. Creating incentives for the team or player that performs well, for example, might be done on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. As a result, it is a system created in a methodical, entertaining, and disciplined manner to encourage positive behavior and interest in quickly reaching favorable learning results.

1.4. Shaping Education with Gamified Tools:

The digitalization of education brought about by technological advancements has made the gamification of education possible. The year 2010 witnessed the development and design of brand-new educational games, which aimed to cater to the evolving needs and preferences of “Digital Natives” a generation of learners whose expectations differ significantly from those of previous generations.

In response to this shift, researchers and educators have proposed various frameworks to guide the effective implementation of gamification in learning environments. One such model is the

five-step approach introduced by Huang (2013), which outlines key stages for incorporating gamified elements in educational settings in a systematic and learner-centered manner.

Complementing Huang's (2013) implementation model, Chou's (2015) Octalysis Framework provides a motivational lens through which gamified experiences can be designed. It identifies eight core drives including epic meaning, accomplishment, and social influence that influence human engagement.

By leveraging these motivational drives, educators can craft gamified learning environments that address both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, thereby enhancing student participation and achievement.

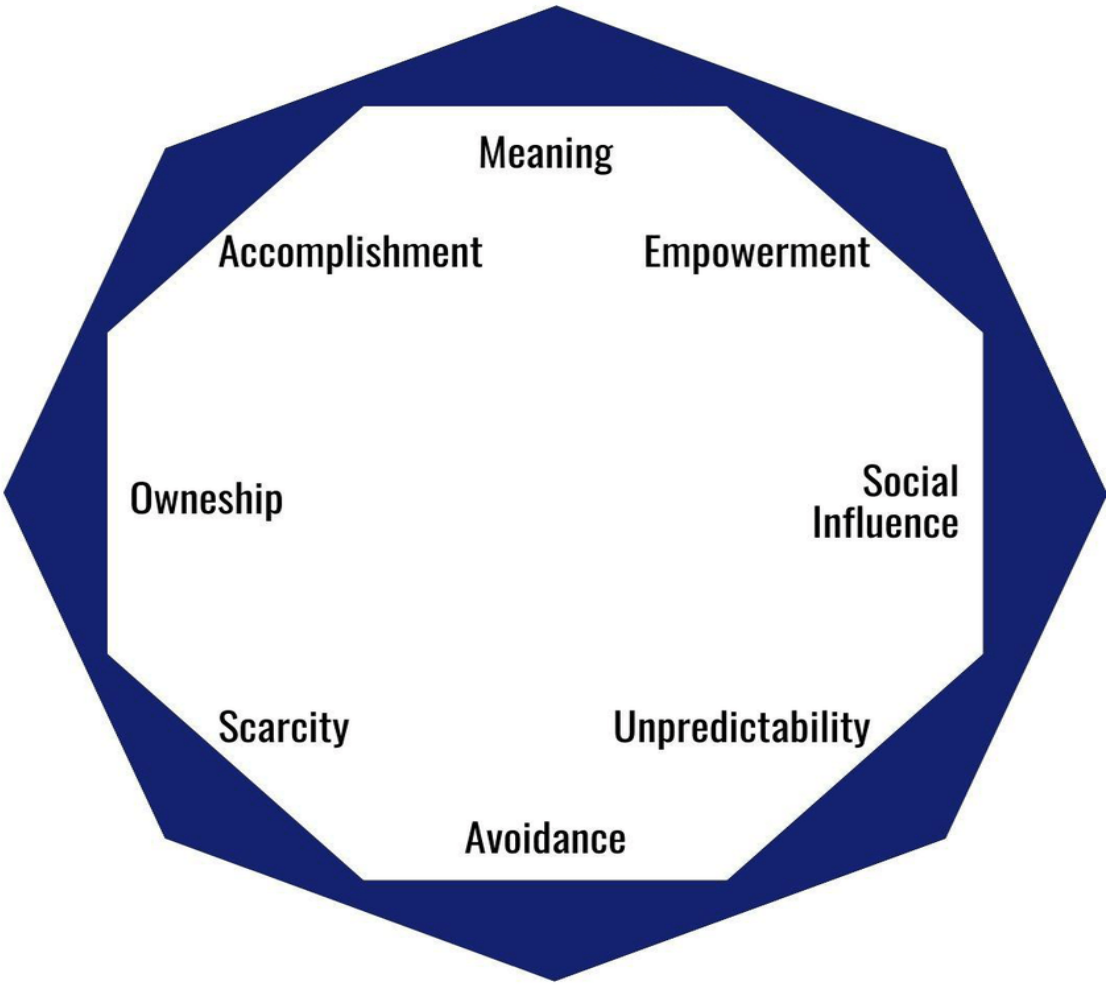

Figure 01 :The Octalysis Framework-Eight Core Drives of Gamification. Adapted from (Chou 2015, p. 45).

The figure above outlines Yu-kai Chou's Octalysis System (2015), a motivational plan demonstrate that distinguishes eight center drives affecting human behavior in gamified situations. In differentiate to direct usage models, the Octalysis System emphasizes an all encompassing approach to inspiration, advertising teachers a energetic structure for planning locks in learning encounters (Chou, 2015).

The primary center drive, Epic Meaning and Calling, energizes instructors to deliver learners a sense of reason by interfacing the substance to bigger objectives or accounts. The drive for Achievement recommends that clear learning goals and quantifiable advance (such as leveling up or gaining identifications) are fundamental to persuading understudies. Essentially, Strengthening of Imagination and Input underpins planning assignments that permit learners to test, problem-solve, and get quick input. The system too highlights Proprietorship and Ownership, which can be actualized through individual accomplishments or rewards frameworks, and Social Impact and Relatedness, which is especially important in collaborative settings that utilize leaderboards, group challenges, and peer acknowledgment (Chou, 2015).

Besides, Shortage and Restlessness can be utilized to start interest by making certain substance or rewards accessible as it were beneath particular conditions. Eccentrics and Interest tap into students' want to investigate, whereas Misfortune and Shirking can energize learners to remain locked in arrange to maintain a strategic distance from lost out on focuses or advance. By deliberately consolidating these drives, teachers can move past shallow amusement components and plan gamified learning situations that really advance engagement, inborn inspiration, and significant instructive results.

Moreover, as famous by Lee (2011), Dichev (2017), and Fulton (2019), propelling and incentivizing learners has continuously been a principal concern in instruction. With the fast progression of innovation and the far-reaching request of advanced recreations over age bunches, gamification has risen as a promising procedure to improve understudy inspiration and engagement. In this setting Octalysis System offers an organized approach to understanding the motivational powers that drive learners.

The system highlights that consolidating diversion elements such as objectives, input, movement, competition, and social interaction can actuate both natural and outward

inspiration. Since numerous understudies nowadays spend impressive time playing computerized recreations on their gadgets, their consideration is frequently coordinated toward completing challenges and gaining rewards. By leveraging these behavioral designs through carefully planned gamified encounters, teachers can channel students' common slants toward accomplishing instructive results whereas moreover cultivating basic 21st-century aptitudes like basic considering, collaboration, and advanced education (Chou, 2015).

1.4.1. Motivational Foundations of Gamification in Educational Contexts:

Gamification has emerged as a powerful strategy in educational settings, aiming to increase learner motivation through the integration of game elements in non-game environments. In a study on the effectiveness of gamification tools, Henares (2021) defines gamification as the use of game mechanics, elements, and design to engage and motivate learners. This approach emphasizes motivation not through traditional academic incentives, but by leveraging the intrinsic appeal of game play.

Kim (2015) further highlights the motivational power of games in educational contexts, stating that when effectively implemented in teaching practices, gamification captures students' attention and promotes their engagement. It can rapidly influence learners' behavior by fostering interest and participation. A key element in this process is aesthetics—the visual and emotional appeal of game-based environments. As noted by Kapp (2012), and emphasized again by Kim (2015), aesthetics play a significant role in triggering positive emotions such as joy and amusement. These emotions help to reduce anxiety, alleviate stress, and break the monotony often associated with traditional learning methods.

Additionally, the use of progressive challenges and novel experiences in gamified learning can stimulate students' curiosity and a sense of discovery, which in turn builds self-confidence. This shift in focus from fear of failure to a desire to complete the task encourages learners to immerse themselves in the activity and pursue the learning goals embedded within the game structure.

Fluton (2019) underscores the importance of gamification tools for modern educators, noting that they are essential for adapting to rapid technological changes that significantly influence students' lives. He asserts that effective gamification involves thoughtful use of digital tools and game design principles, grounded in established motivational psychology.

Specifically, he claims: “At its core, gamification is built on researched areas of psychology of selfdetermination theory, flow theory, and self-efficacy” (p. 7). These psychological theories form the foundational basis for understanding how and why gamification can enhance motivation in educational settings. Each offers a distinct perspective on the internal and external factors that drive student engagement, which will be explored in the following subsections.

1.4.1.1. Self-Determination Theory:

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan in 1985, is a well-established motivational theory that explores the factors underlying human motivation and behavior. According to Fluton (2019),SDT posits that positive growth and intrinsic motivation arise when three innate psychological needs are satisfied: autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

- Autonomy refers to the sense of control over one’s actions and decisions. In the context of learning, it emphasizes the importance of giving students meaningful choices and fostering a learner-centered environment.
- Competence is the feeling of effectiveness and mastery in learning experiences. When students perceive themselves as capable and successful, their motivation to engage in further learning increases.
- Relatedness involves feeling connected with others such as peers, teachers, and educational resources. It supports collaborative learning and the emotional bonds that enhance knowledge sharing and group participation.

SDT is particularly relevant in gamified learning, as gamification often offers autonomy through personalized learning paths, fosters competence via progressive challenges and feedback, and promotes relatedness through teamwork and social elements.

1.4.1.2. Flow Theory:

The concept of the flow state was introduced by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in 1975 as part of his research on motivation and optimal experience. Flow Theory suggests that learners are most engaged when they are fully immersed in an activity that balances challenge and skill.

According to Fluton (2019), this state occurs when individuals are deeply focused, intrinsically motivated, and feel a sense of control over the learning process.

In educational contexts, achieving flow can lead to heightened attention, increased enjoyment, and greater persistence in completing tasks. Gamified activities are particularly effective at inducing flow because they often include well-designed levels or tasks that match the learner's ability while gradually increasing in complexity. This dynamic encourages sustained focus and a sense of achievement, which are crucial for deep learning.

1.4.1.3. Self-Efficacy Theory:

Self-Efficacy Theory, introduced by Bandura (1986), emphasizes the role of learners' beliefs in their capacity to succeed in specific tasks. It is a key component of motivation because individuals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to exert effort, persist through difficulties, and achieve desired outcomes.

Fluton (2019) and Cabalsa (n.d.) explain that self-efficacy shapes how learners respond to challenges, with strong self-belief often leading to greater academic resilience. Bandura (as cited in Cabalsa, n.d.) defines self-efficacy as "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (p. 5). In gamified learning environments, self-efficacy is nurtured through feedback systems, incremental progress, and reward structures that reinforce success. These mechanisms help learners visualize their improvement, reinforcing the belief that they are capable of overcoming future challenges.

1.4.2. Dimensions of Gamification in Learning:

To effectively integrate gamification into educational settings, it is important to understand its impact across multiple domains. Lee identify three key areas where gamification techniques exert influence: cognitive, emotional, and social.

a- Cognitive Dimension

The cognitive benefits of gamification lie in how game-based tasks engage students in active learning and experimentation. Games stimulate curiosity and encourage learners to reach new goals, supporting gradual mastery and sustained engagement even when facing difficult tasks.

To achieve these outcomes, the design of game levels must be carefully aligned with learners' skills, interests, and values. The progression of difficulty should match the learner's development to ensure continued motivation and appropriate challenge.

Furthermore, gamified environments promote learner autonomy by allowing students to choose sub-goals within a task. This element of choice grants them greater control over their learning journey, enhancing motivation and ownership. According to Bandura (1986), Locke and Latham (1990), providing specific, attainable goals leads to positive learning outcomes, while instant feedback reinforces progress more effectively than delayed or uncertain rewards. Ultimately, learners develop a clearer understanding of their learning process, resulting in improved attitudes and commitment to educational goals (as cited in Lee & Hammer, 2011).

b- Emotional Dimension

Games also play a crucial role in shaping learners' emotional experiences. They evoke emotions such as joy, curiosity, enthusiasm, and even frustration—emotions that are fundamental to learning. Importantly, gamification helps reframe failure as a normal, constructive part of the learning process. Through repeated trials and experimentation, learners shift from fearing failure to embracing challenges. This transition builds self-confidence, resilience, and a more optimistic approach to learning.

As Pope (2003) emphasize, one of gamification's core emotional benefits is its capacity to transform negative experiences into positive ones by creating a safe environment for exploration and growth (as cited in Lee & Hammer, 2011). When learners feel emotionally supported, they are more likely to take initiative, assess their abilities, and stay engaged in meaningful learning tasks.

c- Social Dimension

Gamification supports both collaborative and individual learning experiences. In collaborative settings, gamified tasks often require teamwork, role division, and shared

responsibility toward achieving a common goal. This social interaction encourages peer learning and ensures the active involvement of all participants.

Individually, gamification enables students to explore new roles and identities, particularly through customizable avatars or character representations. This is especially impactful for introverted learners who may struggle with direct social interaction. As Lee and Hammer (2011) note, these design features empower learners to explore their potential in a less intimidating, more creative space.

Gamification, therefore, creates inclusive environments where all learners—regardless of personality or learning style—can engage, interact, and thrive. By encouraging participation, role experimentation, and collaborative problem-solving, it enriches the social fabric of the learning experience and fosters deeper motivation.

1.5. Key Elements of Gamification in Education:

Gamification elements are essential in the design of learning experiences that use game-based principles to engage students. However, as Kapp (2012) explains, while these elements are important, they do not represent the entire purpose of a game. Rather, their role is to provide structure and support for the learning process. For example, assigning avatars can personalize learning and promote identity in the virtual learning environment. Ranking students based on their scores or achievements can introduce healthy competition, while badges and trophies serve as extrinsic motivators.

Lee and Hammer (2011) argue that the traditional educational system is already gamified in many ways. Grades function similarly to points; school projects can represent quests or challenges; and term-end rewards mirror game achievements. These elements also referred to as components are widely found in both digital and non-digital gamified learning environments. Common examples include points, badges, leaderboards, and progress tracking, all of which can be adapted to fit different classroom settings to enhance motivation and engagement (Ngoc, 2022).

Ngoc (2022) describes several core gamification elements:

- Points and Levels: Learners progress through levels by completing tasks or challenges. When successful, they earn points—one of the primary motivators that connect game mechanics to learning outcomes. These points provide a sense of achievement and reinforce engagement.
- Leaderboards: These are ranking systems that allow learners to compare their performance with peers. Leaderboards foster competition, which can boost motivation, and also create a sense of belonging as students see themselves as part of a learning community.
- Badges: Badges are symbolic representations of achievement awarded when learners complete specific tasks. They break learning goals into smaller, attainable milestones. Examples include digital medals (gold, silver, bronze), which serve as visual rewards and help sustain motivation.
- Progress Tracking: This component provides feedback by showing learners their strengths, areas for improvement, and how far they've come. It also helps them set goals for upcoming tasks and reinforces a sense of ownership over their learning journey.

1.6. Gamified Approaches in EFL Teaching Context:

The integration of gamification and advanced diversions into English as a Outside Dialect (EFL) instructing has earned critical consideration over the past two decades. Different ponders have investigated the effect of gamification on upgrading EFL instructing, boosting understudy engagement, and expanding inspiration. Moreover, investigate has highlighted the positive impacts of gamification on making strides dialect aptitudes such as talking, perusing, lexicon procurement, and linguistic use comprehension. Be that as it may, constrained inquire about has centered on analyzing the demeanors and discernments of both instructors and learners with respect to the utilize of gamified approaches in EFL classrooms (Belda-Medina & Clavo-Ferrer, 2022; Szabo & Kopinska, 2023; Redjeki & Muhajir, 2021; Luo, 2024; Cherghi & Omranpoor, 2022; Plamquist, 2021).

These studies pointed that effective integration of gamification in EFL classrooms requires get to reliable innovative apparatuses such as computers, tablets, or smartphones. These gadgets ought to be in great working condition, with adequate memory and solid web network. Moreover, advanced education plays a vital part in guaranteeing the successful

utilize of gamification apparatuses. Similarly imperative is the plan of the amusement itself; it must be custom fitted to suit the instructive setting, reflecting learners' interface and advancing smooth amusement stream. Instructors who need the capacity to form their possess gamification applications ought to be given with well-designed apps or stages that consolidate key gamification components, counting rules, challenges, input, and advance following (Boudour, 2023). These apparatuses empower instructors to screen students' scholastic advance and give opportune input.

Prevalent gamification apparatuses, such as Kahoot and Duolingo, have been broadly examined within the setting of EFL learning. These platforms are among the foremost as often as possible utilized in classrooms (Redjeki & Muhajir, 2021; Belda-Medina & Clavo-Ferrer, 2022). Henares (2021) conducted a consider examining the viability of gamification apparatuses in instructing EFL to Spanish auxiliary school understudies. The comes about appeared that understudies delighted in learning English through diversions, which expanded their engagement and inspiration. The consider moreover highlighted those diversions given understudies with dynamic cooperation openings, changing the learning prepare from a hypothetical approach to an experiential one. This move gave students more independence and cultivated their imagination within the classroom.

Additionally, Tirasin (2023) explored the recognitions of instructors in Norwegian upper auxiliary schools with respect to the utilize of gamification in EFL instructing. The consider uncovered that about 95% of respondents communicated positive demeanors toward the utilize of advanced diversions within the classroom, recognizing their potential to meet educational modules and academic benchmarks. Be that as it may, Luo (2024) contended that the effective usage of gamification in EFL classrooms depends not as it were on the apparatuses themselves but too on other variables, such as classroom administration and making a secure, conducive environment for joining innovation. Subsequently, understanding the broader suggestions of innovation in instruction is basic for progressing engagement and scholastic results over the long term.

In another study, Thuy and Hung (2021) explored teachers' perceptions of using gamification applications to teach speaking skills to EFL young learners. Approximately 89.8% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that gamification tools could capture learners' attention, keeping them focused and engaged during speaking lessons. Teachers also

recognized the positive impact of gamification on teaching vocabulary and grammar, as it provided an enjoyable way for students to learn new words and understand grammar structures.

A recent study by Boudour (2023) explored middle school teachers' perspectives on gamification in EFL teaching in Mostaganem, Algeria. To align with this research, a similar investigation was conducted in Oran, focusing on the integration of digital gamification in EFL classrooms. The study employed qualitative methods, utilizing semi-structured interviews with 11 EFL teachers from various middle schools in Oran. Participants were selected based on their use of digital technology and game-based teaching methods. Data analysis revealed that while teachers frequently incorporate ICT-based and game-based lessons, they often lack the necessary expertise to effectively implement comprehensive gamification strategies. The findings highlight a general openness among teachers to adopt modern teaching methods, emphasizing the need for targeted training programs to enhance their capabilities in gamified lesson design.

1.7 Conclusion:

This chapter has presented a comprehensive review of the theoretical and conceptual foundations related to gamification in education. It began by defining gamification and tracing its historical development and significance in modern learning environments. The chapter also explored key motivational theories—Self-Determination Theory, Flow Theory, and Self-Efficacy Theory—that support the use of gamified strategies in classrooms.

Additionally, the cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions of gamified learning were outlined, along with the core elements of gamification such as points, badges, leaderboards, and feedback systems. The chapter also highlighted how gamification has been implemented in EFL teaching, especially in enhancing learner motivation, engagement, and vocabulary retention.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology adopted to examine the role of gamification in enhancing language acquisition in Algerian middle schools. It presents the research design, data collection instruments, sampling strategy, and population involved in the study. Given the complexity of classroom dynamics and educational environments, a mixed methods approach was employed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data.

The chapter begins by explaining the rationale behind choosing a mixed methods design. It then describes the two primary instruments used: a semi-structured questionnaire and classroom observation. The chapter also details the target population—middle school EFL teachers—and explains the purposive sampling strategy used to ensure rich and relevant data. Finally, it addresses the data collection procedure, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

2.2 Rationale for Mixed Methods

The rationale behind adopting a mixed methods approach lies in its ability to bridge the gap between objectivity and context. Quantitative data provides measurable and generalizable results, while qualitative data offers detailed insights and depth of understanding. For instance, understanding how frequently teachers employ gamification can be captured through a Likertscale response. However, understanding why a teacher might avoid gamification, or what obstacles face, requires open-ended, narrative input. Only by integrating these approaches can the study capture both the "what" and the "why" behind the practices observed.

Moreover, this approach enables data triangulation, which significantly enhances the credibility, reliability, and validity of research findings. Triangulation involves corroborating evidence from different sources or methods to confirm patterns and interpretations. In this study, for example, a pattern in questionnaire data (e.g., high reported use of point systems) can be validated by classroom observations showing the same strategy in practice.

3. Data Collection Instruments:

A fundamental aspect of any empirical research lies in the instruments chosen to collect data. For a study grounded in mixed methods, to design tools that not only gather quantifiable metrics but also capture the rich, qualitative narratives that provide meaning and depth to those numbers. This research utilized two primary tools of data collection: a semi structured questionnaire and classroom observation, each of which played a pivotal role in addressing the research questions and triangulating findings. These tools were carefully crafted, tested, and implemented in a manner that ensured reliability, validity, and relevance to the Algerian middle school context.

2.2.1 Semi-Structured Questionnaire

The semi-structured questionnaire served as the core data-gathering tool in this study and was specifically designed for language teachers working in Algerian middle schools, as well as a carefully selected group of retired educators. The development of the questionnaire followed a multi-phase process, beginning with an extensive review of literature related to gamification, language pedagogy, educational technology integration, and classroom innovation. Based on insights from these sources, a draft was prepared and subsequently reviewed by academic advisors and local teaching professionals to ensure clarity, cultural appropriateness, and alignment with the study's objectives.

This tool aimed to provide a dual function: to collect standardized, comparable data that could be statistically analyzed, and to provide space for participants to elaborate on their experiences and opinions in narrative form. The combination of fixed-choice and open-ended questions made this tool ideally suited for mixed methods research, offering the best of both quantitative and qualitative worlds.

The questionnaire was structured into four core sections, each addressing a key thematic focus:

- Section One: Background Information — This section was designed to collect demographic and professional data essential for contextualizing the participants' responses.

- Section Two: Gamification Practices — This section sought to determine the practical application of gamification strategies in the classroom. Respondents were prompted to identify the gamified tools they had used (e.g., Kahoot, Duolingo, flashcard competitions, point systems, quizzes), how often these tools were used (never, rarely, occasionally, frequently, always), and with which age groups they were most effective. Participants were also encouraged to describe how students reacted to these methods. This section shed light on the diversity and frequency of gamification practices in Algerian middle schools.
- Section Three: Perceptions and Attitudes — This section used Likert-scale items to capture teacher perceptions of gamification. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements, such as whether gamification increased student motivation, helped with vocabulary retention, reduced classroom anxiety, or posed challenges in planning and delivery. This quantitative data made it possible to compute percentages and averages, thereby uncovering overall trends in teacher beliefs and attitudes across the sample.
- Section Four: Open-Ended Reflections — Perhaps the most revealing section, this part allowed teachers to speak freely about their personal experiences with gamification. Questions encouraged them to share a successful use of gamification, explain any obstacles or limitations they encountered, and offer suggestions for better integration of gamified learning in Algerian schools. The open format enabled rich, qualitative input, capturing nuance, emotion, and critical insight beyond what could be obtained from predefined choices.

The semi-structured format thus proved highly effective, providing both breadth and depth in data collection. On the one hand, the fixed-choice items enabled the researcher to establish general patterns and trends. On the other hand, the open-ended items allowed for the emergence of themes and insights that may not have been anticipated during the design phase.

To ensure wide accessibility, the questionnaire was distributed in two formats:

- Digital Format: A Google Forms version was created and shared via email and WhatsApp groups dedicated to Algerian educators. This version proved particularly effective in reaching retired teachers and those working in urban schools with regular internet access.

- Paper Format: Physical copies were hand-delivered to selected middle schools in Oran and Saida. This ensured inclusion of teachers in schools with limited digital infrastructure, thereby improving the representativeness of the sample.

All responses were collected anonymously, and a code was assigned to each response to facilitate organized analysis without compromising participant identity. The data were later exported into Microsoft Excel for statistical summarization and thematic coding.

2.2.2 Classroom Observation:

In addition to the questionnaire, the study employes classroom observation as a complementary method of data collection. Observation provides a unique lens through which to view the lived reality of teaching and learning. Unlike self-reported data, which can be affected by perception bias or selective memory, observational data reflects what actually occurs in the classroom environment in real time.

For this study, overt observation. This means that teachers were fully informed of the researcher's presence and the purpose of the observation. This choice aligns with ethical research principles and fosters trust between the observer and the observed. While covert observation may provide more natural behavior, it raises significant ethical concerns and appropriate for this study involving educational institutions and minors.

Classroom observations were conducted in various types of schools. The goal was (No) to capture a broad cross-section of gamification practices across diverse educational settings. Observations focused on language lessons where gamification was being used either as a core instructional strategy or as a supplementary tool.

2.3. Study Population and Sampling Decisions:

A robust and well-defined population and sampling strategy is essential to the credibility and scope of any empirical investigation. In this study, which seeks to understand the role of gamification in enhancing language acquisition, careful consideration was given to selecting a diverse, insightful, and accessible group of participants. The population selected spans geographical, generational, and professional boundaries to provide a comprehensive view of teaching practices and perceptions across Algerian middle schools.

2.4. Target Population:

This study focused primarily on current EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers working in middle schools in Saida, Algeria. These participants were selected due to their direct involvement in classroom teaching and their relevance to the study's objective of examining how gamification is implemented and perceived in real-world educational settings.

To enrich the investigation with a broader pedagogical perspective, a second group was included: retired language teachers from various cities across Algeria. Their inclusion aimed to provide historical and reflective insight into the evolution of teaching methods and how the emergence of gamification is viewed from an experienced, longitudinal perspective. While the core of the study remains centered on Saida's current EFL teaching context, the contributions of retired teachers offer valuable contextual depth to the analysis.

2.4.1. Sampling Strategy :

To select the most appropriate participants for this study, a purposive sampling technique was employed. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method that involves deliberately selecting individuals based on their ability to provide relevant and meaningful data aligned with the research objectives. In qualitative and mixed methods research, purposive sampling is particularly effective for case study designs, where the emphasis lies on depth rather than breadth of inquiry.

The sample comprised 30 participants, evenly distributed across the three defined groups:

- 10 current language teachers from Oran
- 10 current language teachers from Saida + Their Learners.
- 10 retired language teachers from various Algerian cities

This sample, while not statistically representative of the national teaching workforce, is intentionally tailored to achieve maximum variation in experience, context, and outlook. Such variation is invaluable in a case study design, where the aim is to explore complexity and generate insights that are context-rich rather than universally generalizable.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure:

The process of data collection is one of the most critical phases in any empirical study, as it directly influences the quality, depth, and reliability of the results. In this study, the data collection phase was meticulously designed and executed over a period of four consecutive weeks, ensuring both breadth and depth in the information gathered. Given the mixed methods nature of the research and the geographically dispersed nature of the target population, this phase required careful logistical planning, flexibility, and ethical vigilance.

2.5 Limitations of the Study:

Despite careful planning, this study faced several limitations. First, the sample size was relatively small, involving only ten EFL teachers from Saida. While this allowed for in-depth analysis, it limits the generalizability of the findings to other regions in Algeria.

Second, the geographical scope was restricted to a single city. Educational conditions, resources, and teacher training may vary significantly in other areas, which were not represented in this study.

Third, overt observation may have influenced teacher behavior. Knowing they were being observed, participants might have adjusted their teaching strategies to reflect more positive classroom practices, possibly affecting the authenticity of the observed data.

Lastly, time constraints limited the number of classroom visits and follow-up interviews. A longer data collection period may have revealed deeper patterns in gamification usage.

2.6 Conclusion:

This chapter presented the methodological framework used to investigate the role of gamification in enhancing language acquisition in Algerian middle schools, with a focus on EFL teachers in Saida. It justified the use of a mixed methods approach, combining a semi-structured questionnaire and classroom observation to gather both quantitative trends and qualitative insights.

The chapter detailed the research design, explained the sampling strategy, and outlined the tools and procedures used for data collection. It also acknowledged the study's limitations related to sample size, location, observation bias, and time constraints.

Together, these methods laid the foundation for a reliable and comprehensive analysis of how gamification is understood and applied in local EFL classrooms. The next chapter will present and interpret the findings, highlighting key patterns, challenges, and recommendations drawn from the data.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyzes the data collected through the semi-structured questionnaire and classroom observations. The purpose is to evaluate how gamification is perceived and practiced by middle school EFL teachers in Saida and to determine its impact on language acquisition.The analysis is divided into two main sections: quantitative data, which reveals trends in gamification use and teacher attitudes; and qualitative data, which captures personal reflections and observed classroom behaviors. Each section includes tables, figures, and interpretive commentary based on the research questions.The findings are discussed in relation to existing literature and the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter One. This analysis will provide a solid foundation for the final chapter's recommendations on integrating gamification into Algerian EFL classrooms.

3.2. Analysis of the Questionnaire:

This section presents a descriptive analysis of the closed-ended data collected through the semi-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to a total of 30 participants, including 10 current EFL teachers from Saida, 10 from Oran, and 10 retired language teachers from various cities in Algeria. The aim of this section is to report the data clearly and systematically using tables and figures, without interpretation or critical inference. The analysis focuses on frequencies, percentages, and response patterns related to teaching experience, the use of gamification, tools used, learner responsiveness, and teacher perceptions. Each question is followed by an explicit analysis and a concise interpretation, in line with the research objectives.

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The results are organized thematically and supported by tables and figures to enhance clarity. Each item is followed by a straightforward description of the responses, accompanied by basic numerical interpretation such as frequencies and percentages. This descriptive analysis forms the basis for the interpretive discussion that follows in later sections of this chapter.

3.2.1 Years of Teaching Experience :

What is your total number of years of teaching experience?

Participants reported a range of teaching experience:

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	LOCATION BREAKDOWN
Less than 1 year	1	Saida
1-3 years	2	Oran
4-6 years	5	3 from Saida, 2 from Oran
7-10 years	5	3 from Oran, 2 from Saida
More than 10 yers	15	2 from Saida, 3 from Oran, 10 retired

Table 01: represents Distribution of Participants by Years of Teaching Experience

Analysis :

The majority of participants (36.7%) reported over 21 years of teaching experience. Notably, all 10 retired teachers fell into the higher experience categories (11+ years), while the active teachers from Oran and Saida were more evenly distributed across experience levels.

Interpretation:

The sample is well balanced, combining insights from early-career teachers (13.3%) with a significant portion of highly experienced educators. This provides depth and diversity in understanding how gamification is perceived across different teaching generations and regions.

3.2.2 Previous Use of Gamified Activities:

Have you ever used gamification or game-based methods in your teaching?

Response	Number of Participants	Location Breakdown
Yes	21	7 Saida, 8 Oran, 6 Retired
No	6	2 Saida, 1 Oran, 3 Retired
Not Sure	2	1 Saida, 1 Retired

Table 02 represents Teachers' use of Game-Based Methods

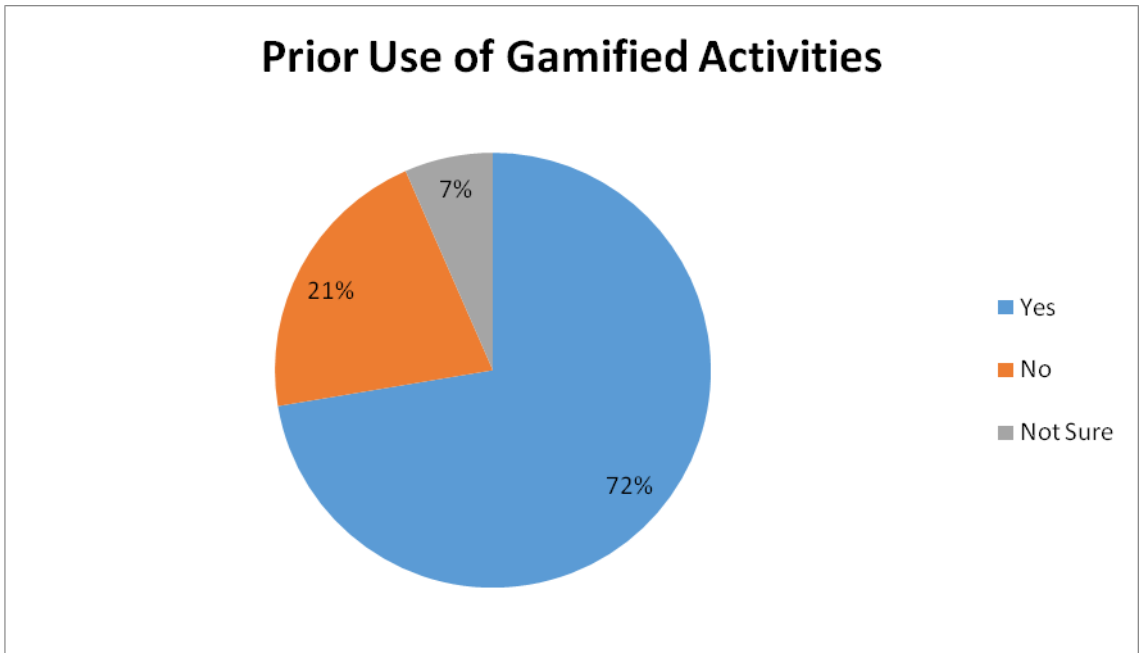

Figure 02 shows Teachers' use of Game-Based Methods

Analysis:

Out of 30 participants, 17 teachers (56.7%) reported having used gamified activities in their teaching. Gamification was more commonly used by teachers from Oran (70%) and Saida (60%), compared to the retired group (40%). Meanwhile, 10 respondents (33.3%) indicated they had never used gamification, and 3 (10%) were unsure.

Interpretation:

The data indicate that gamification is gaining traction among current teachers, particularly in urban areas like Oran where digital access is more widespread. The lower percentage among retired teachers may reflect their limited exposure to digital tools during their teaching careers. These results suggest that active teaching environments and resource availability influence the adoption of gamification.

3.2.3 Gamified Tools and Resources Used:

Which of the following tools or activities have you used in class?

Participants indicated the following gamified tools they had employed:

Gamified Tool	Number of Responses
Kahoot	12
Duolingo	7
Point Systems /Leaderboards	15
Flashcard Competitions	10
Puzzle or Quiz Games	9

Table 03 represents Previous Use of Gamified Activities

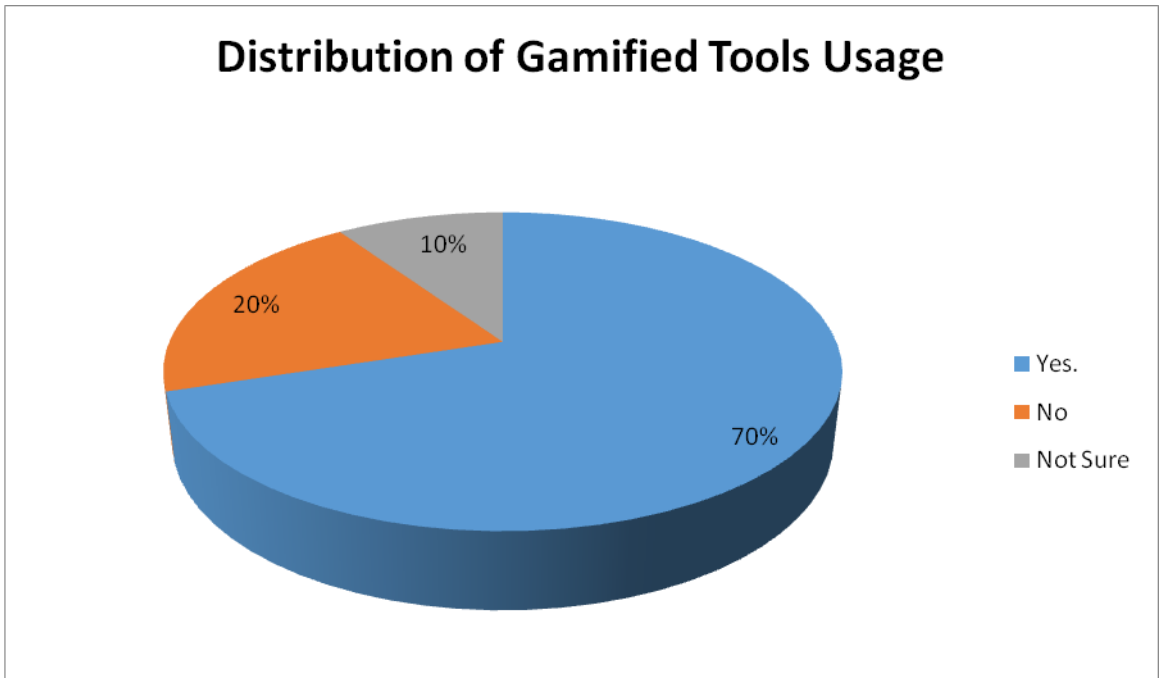

Figure 03 shows Distribution of Gamified Tools Usage

Analysis:

The most frequently reported gamified elements were Flashcard Competitions and Point Systems/Leaderboards (each mentioned by 13 participants). Kahoot was also popular, especially among Oran teachers (6 mentions). Retired teachers tended to favor traditional games (flashcards, puzzles) more than digital platforms like Quizizz or Duolingo.

Interpretation:

Current teachers appear to blend digital and low-tech gamified tools, depending on school infrastructure and comfort with technology. The high use of traditional strategies like flashcards by both active and retired teachers reflects the accessibility and adaptability of non-digital gamification. This suggests that even in resource-limited environments, gamification can be implemented effectively through low-tech means**.**

3.2.4 Frequency of Gamification Use:

How often do you incorporate game-based strategies into your teaching?

Responses regarding the frequency of gamification usage were distributed as follows:

Frequency of Use	Number of Responses	Location Breakdown
Never	1	Retired
Rarely	8	3 Saida, 2 Oran, 3 Retired
Occasionally	11	5 Saida, 3 Oran

Table 04 represents Frequency of Gamification Use by Participants

Analysis:

The majority of participants reported only occasional or rare use of gamification (53.3% combined). 7 teachers (23.3%) reported never using it at all, primarily among retired participants. Only 2 teachers (6.7%)—both currently active—stated that they use gamification always, while 5 reported using it frequently.

Interpretation:

Gamification remains an irregular practice in most classrooms. Its infrequent use appears to be shaped by factors such as resource availability, teacher training, and teaching priorities. The minimal “always” usage highlights that while gamification is recognized, it has not yet become a consistent instructional method for most educators

3.2.5 Age Groups Most Responsive to Gamification:

Which student age group responds most positively to game-based activities?

Teachers identified the following student age groups as most responsive to gamified activities:

Age Group	Number of Responses
11-12 years	12
13–14 years	15
15 years and above	2
Not Sure	1

Table 05 represents Age Groups Most Responsive to Gamification

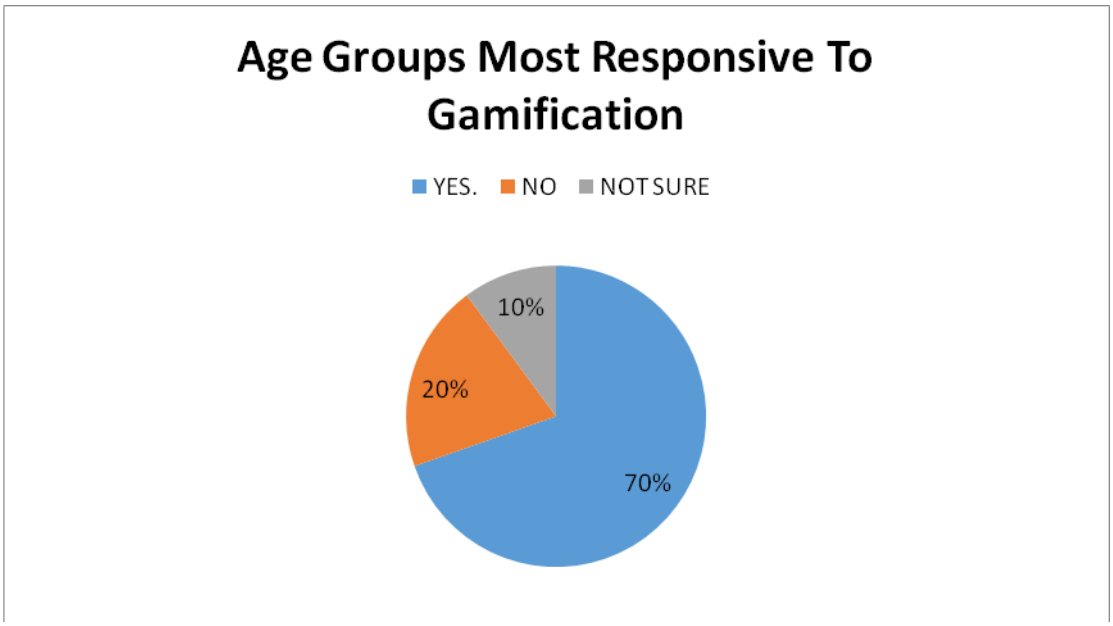

Figure 04 shows Age Groups Most Responsive to Gamification

Analysis:

A majority of participants (46.7%) identified 13–14-year-olds as the age group most responsive to gamified learning, followed by 11–12-year-olds (23.3%). Only 16.7% believed older learners (15+) responded best, and 13.3% were unsure.

Interpretation:

Middle school learners aged 13–14 appear to be the most receptive to gamification, likely due to their developmental stage, social competitiveness, and familiarity with game-like experiences. Teachers perceive that gamified activities resonate most with early teens, possibly because they are still open to playful, engaging learning formats while developing more serious academic habits.

3.2.6 Teacher Perceptions of Gamification:

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about gamification in teaching?

Responses to a series of Likert-scale statements concerning gamification yielded the following counts:

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	StronglyDisagree	NotSure
Increases student motivation	**12**	**10**	**5**	**2**	**0**	**1**
Improves vocabulary retention	**10**	**11**	**6**	**2**	**0**	**1**
Reduces student anxiety	**8**	**9**	**7**	**5**	**0**	**1**
Makes lesson planning more difficult	**2**	**6**	**8**	**10**	**2**	**2**
Suppresses learning barriers	**9**	**10**	**7**	**3**	**1**	**0**
Makes better teachers and learners	**11**	**9**	**6**	**3**	**1**	**0**

Table 06 represents Teachers' Perceptions about Gamification

.

Analysis:

The majority of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that gamification increases student motivation (76.7%), improves vocabulary retention (70%), and makes teaching and learning more effective (73.3%). Fewer teachers believed gamification reduces anxiety (56.7%), and opinions on whether it complicates lesson planning were mixed: 17 teachers (56.7%) disagreed, while a smaller group (5 teachers) agreed. A high agreement was seen on gamification's ability to overcome learning barriers (70%).

Interpretation:

Overall, participants expressed positive attitudes toward gamification, especially regarding motivation and vocabulary enhancement. Some uncertainty remains around its impact on anxiety and its practical integration into lesson planning. These mixed responses suggest that while teachers recognize the pedagogical value of gamification, consistent training and planning support are needed for effective, stress-free implementation.

This observational data supports and complements the qualitative responses shared in the questionnaire, offering a more dynamic view of gamification in action. It also highlights common practices and logistical patterns that emerged across different teaching environments.

3.3 Analysis of Quantitative Data

3.3.1 Teaching Experience and Gamification Adoption

Regarding teaching experience, 20% of participants had between 0 and 5 years of experience, 23.3% had between 6 and 10 years, none had between 11 and 15 years, and 50% had more than 15 years of teaching experience.

3.3.2 Frequency of Gamification Use

The quantitative data collected from participants revealed a wide spectrum in the frequency of gamification use within Algerian middle school language classrooms. Respondents reported usage ranging from “never” to “always,” highlighting significant variability in how often gamified techniques are integrated into daily instruction.

Specifically, the data indicated that:

- A small number of teachers 3.3% reported never using gamification, suggesting either unfamiliarity with the concept or barriers preventing its adoption.

- A noticeable portion 26.7% indicated they rarely incorporate gamified activities, reflecting sporadic or limited engagement with this pedagogical approach.
- The majority 36.7% reported using gamification occasionally, suggesting a moderate but inconsistent presence of game-based learning elements in their teaching practices.
- Fewer participants, 20% and 13.3% indicated frequent or always, identifying them as early adopters or enthusiasts who systematically embed gamified techniques into their lessons.

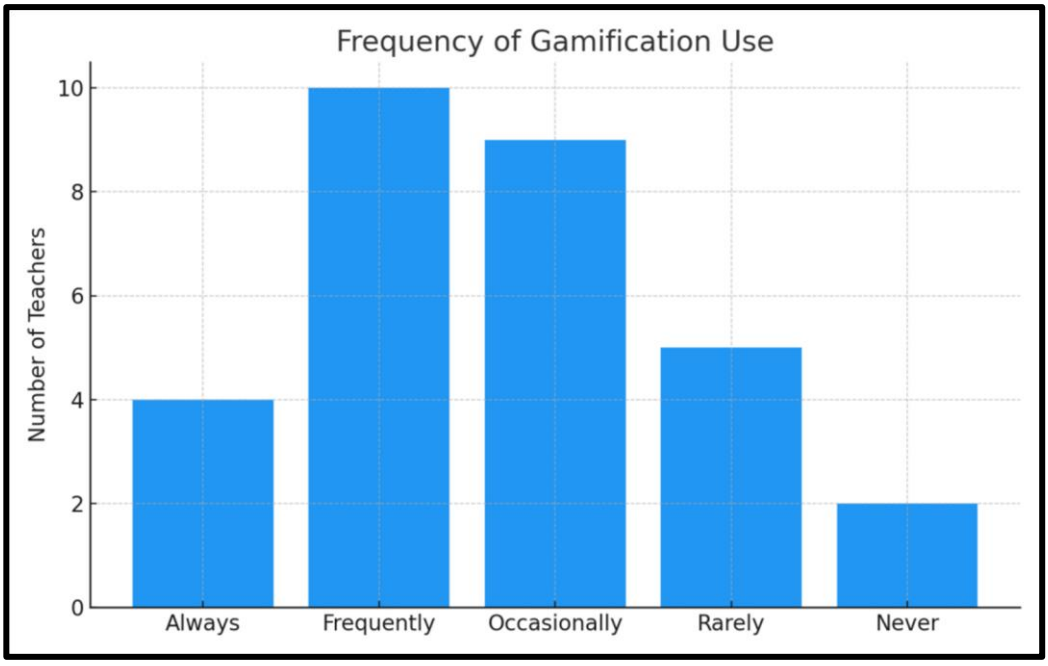

Figure 05 shows The Frequency of Gamification Usage

3.3.2.1 Discussion:

This uneven distribution of gamification frequency points to a complex set of influencing factors shaping its integration within Algerian middle schools.

Firstly, resource constraints represent a primary challenge. Many schools, especially in less urbanized regions, face infrastructural limitations including insufficient access to computers, tablets, reliable internet connectivity, or even basic classroom technologies such as projectors. Without these foundational tools, the deployment of digital gamification platforms like Kahoot or Quizizz becomes impractical or impossible. Even for non-digital gamification

methods, such as physical games or point systems, resource limitations such as classroom space and time can hinder regular use.

Secondly, time pressures and curriculum demand play a significant role. Language teachers often operate within tightly packed curricula and limited class periods, which restrict their ability to experiment extensively with gamified activities. Planning, preparing, and executing gamified lessons typically require additional time investment beyond traditional instruction. For teachers managing multiple classes or other responsibilities, this extra effort can be a deterrent, leading to less frequent usage.

Thirdly, the lack of sufficient training and professional development in gamification techniques diminishes teacher confidence and capability. As indicated by some participants, while awareness of gamification exists, the skills to design, implement, and adapt gamified activities effectively are uneven. Without structured training opportunities, many educators may opt for cautious or occasional use rather than fully integrating gamification into their pedagogy.

Moreover, institutional support and school culture influence the frequency of gamification use. Schools that encourage innovation, provide access to resources, and recognize the pedagogical value of gamification tend to foster higher adoption rates. Conversely, in environments where traditional teaching methods prevail and administrative support is limited, gamification may be marginalized.

The data thus reflects a scenario common in many educational contexts transitioning toward technology-enhanced learning: enthusiasm and acknowledgment of gamification's benefits coexist with pragmatic challenges that temper widespread, consistent adoption.

3.3.3 Age Groups Most Responsive to Gamification

The quantitative data collected from teachers highlighted a clear pattern in student responsiveness to gamified learning activities, with students aged 13 to 14 years identified by 50% of respondents identified students aged 13–14 years as the most positively engaged by gamification strategies. Specifically, a majority of teachers 40% indicated that students within this early adolescent age range 11 to 12 years responded best to interactive, competitive, and game-based learning activities, while noticeably fewer teachers 6.7% reported strong

responsiveness among students aged 15 years and older. Additionally, 3.3% of participants were unsure about which age group was most responsive.

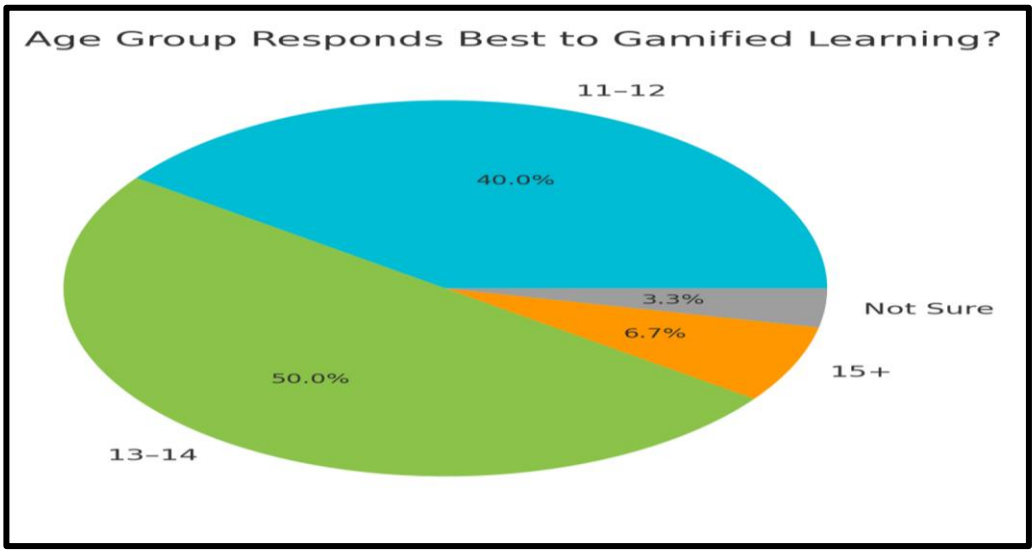

Figure 06 shows Responses to Gamification

3.3.4.1 Discussion:

This pattern resonates with well-established developmental and educational theories that describe early adolescence as a critical period for cognitive, social, and emotional growth. During the ages of 11 to 14, students exhibit a heightened interest in peer interaction, social competition, and experiential learning-elements that gamification naturally capitalizes on.

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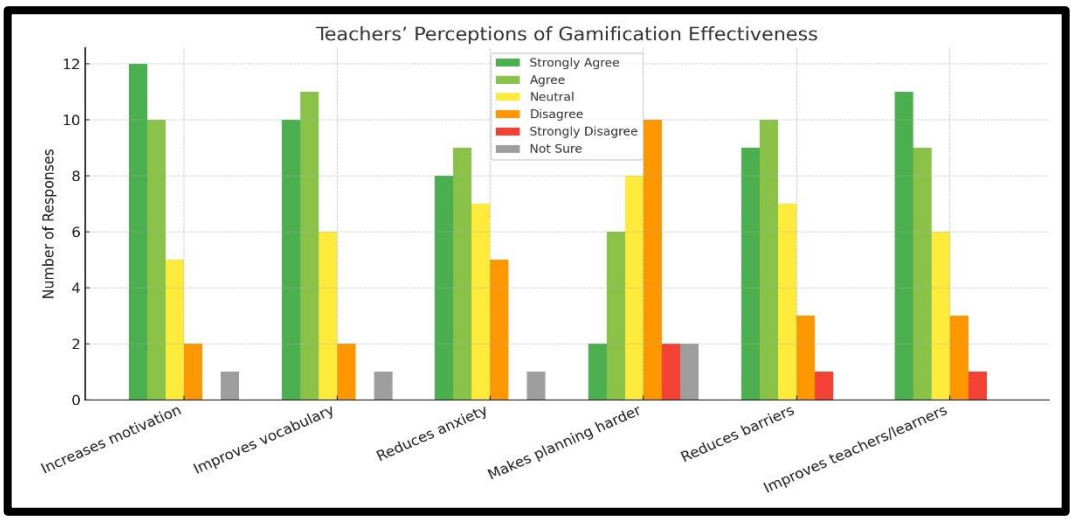

Figure 07 shows Teachers' Perceptions of Gamification Effectiveness

Discussion:

These contrasting views highlight the dual nature of gamification as perceived by educators, encompassing both significant benefits and practical challenges.

Benefits: Engagement and Learning Enhancement

The positive consensus on motivation aligns with educational theories emphasizing the power of interactive and game-based learning to boost learner interest and participation. Gamification taps into students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by introducing elements such as rewards, competition, and immediate feedback, which collectively enhance focus and persistence. This motivational boost is critical in language learning, where repetitive practice and active usage are necessary for vocabulary retention and fluency.

Teachers' acknowledgment of improved vocabulary retention supports cognitive theories of learning through repetition and meaningful interaction, where gamified activities provide engaging contexts for repeated exposure and retrieval practice. By transforming potentially monotonous drills into dynamic games, gamification helps students consolidate language knowledge more effectively.

Challenges: Increased Planning and Workload

Conversely, the concern about increased lesson planning complexity is a recurring theme in research on educational innovation. Designing and implementing gamified activities often demands additional preparation time, including sourcing or creating game materials, learning to operate digital platforms, and aligning games with curriculum objectives. This workload can strain already busy teachers, particularly in contexts where institutional support and professional development are limited.

Moreover, teachers may face a learning curve with new gamification tools, requiring training to build confidence in their use. Without adequate training, the perceived difficulty of integrating games can deter regular or creative application, leading to sporadic use or superficial engagement with gamified methods.

3.4.1 Reflections on Gamified Experiences

Many teachers expressed rich and detailed reflections about their practical experiences using various gamification platforms and strategies within their classrooms. Popular tools such as Kahoot and Duolingo, as well as traditional classroom competitions like flashcard races, quiz bowls, and point-based team challenges, were frequently mentioned as integral to their teaching approach. These narratives illustrate how gamification has influenced classroom dynamics and student learning behaviors.

A common thread across many responses was the observation of significantly increased student engagement during gamified activities. Teachers noted that students, especially those who were previously shy, passive, or reluctant to participate, showed heightened enthusiasm and willingness to join in when lessons incorporated game elements. The competitive and interactive format of these games appeared to spark curiosity and motivation, making learning experiences more appealing and enjoyable for students.

Moreover, teachers frequently reported that gamification led to enhanced retention of vocabulary. Instead of perceiving vocabulary learning as monotonous or repetitive, students responded well to the playful repetition embedded in gamified tasks. The format allowed students to encounter and recall new words repeatedly within a fun and stimulating context.

This approach made it easier for students to internalize language concepts, moving beyond rote memorization to more meaningful engagement with vocabulary.

Another significant insight from teachers was the reduction of anxiety among students, particularly during speaking or oral practice activities. Gamified methods appeared to create a low-pressure and supportive environment where students felt more comfortable taking risks and making mistakes. This positive emotional climate encouraged participation, which is especially important for language learners who often struggle with the fear of speaking in front of peers or instructors.

Several teachers emphasized that this reduction in anxiety was a crucial factor in enabling students to practice oral skills more freely and effectively, thereby accelerating their language development. For example, one teacher noted that students who typically remained silent during conventional drills became vocal and engaged during gamified activities, demonstrating a newfound confidence.

3.4.1.1 Discussion:

Teachers' testimonies serve as powerful evidence that gamification often acts as a catalyst for transforming traditional lessons into more interactive, student-centered experiences. The observed increase in student engagement aligns closely with educational theories that prioritize active learning and learner motivation as key drivers of effective language acquisition. By incorporating gamification, teachers shift the focus from passive content delivery to dynamic participation, which is essential for language practice and fluency.

The reported reduction in anxiety connects well with language acquisition theories, particularly the affective filter hypothesis, which posits that learners acquire language more effectively when emotional barriers like fear and stress are minimized. Gamification, by creating a fun and supportive context, lowers this affective filter, thereby facilitating more frequent and confident language use.

Furthermore, these positive reflections suggest that gamification contributes to improving classroom atmosphere and social interaction, helping students build relationships and

collaborate in teams. This social dimension not only enhances motivation but also provides authentic contexts for language use, mirroring communicative language teaching principles.

Overall, the reflections indicate that when implemented thoughtfully, gamification can be a powerful pedagogical tool, enhancing both cognitive and affective dimensions of language learning.

3.4.2 Reported Challenges

Despite the overall enthusiasm for gamification expressed by many teachers, a number of key challenges were consistently identified that impede the effective and widespread implementation of gamified learning activities within Algerian middle school language classrooms.

- Limited Resources and Technology:

A significant barrier reported by participants is the lack of adequate technological infrastructure and resources. Many schools, particularly those located in less urbanized or rural areas, face shortages of critical equipment such as computers, tablets, and interactive projectors. Additionally, unstable or absent internet connectivity severely limits the ability to utilize popular digital gamification platforms like Kahoot, Quizizz, or Duolingo. Teachers shared that even basic technological support is often unreliable or insufficient, restricting their capacity to incorporate gamified digital tools consistently.

- Lack of Training or Familiarity:

Another major concern highlighted by participants was their own limited familiarity and confidence with designing, implementing, and managing gamified learning activities. Several teachers reported never having received formal professional development or training specifically focused on gamification methodologies or digital tools. This gap in preparation contributes to uncertainty and sometimes reluctance to adopt gamification beyond superficial or occasional use. The challenge is not only technical but pedagogical; teachers need support to align gamified activities effectively with curriculum goals and learning outcomes.

- Classroom Management Difficulties:

Teachers who regularly use gamification also noted classroom management challenges, especially during competitive game sessions. The excitement and energy generated by games can lead to increased noise levels, off-task behavior, and difficulty maintaining order, particularly in larger classes or classrooms with diverse student behaviors. Managing enthusiasm without allowing disruption requires skillful facilitation, clear rules, and effective time management, which some teachers found challenging to maintain consistently.

One participant succinctly expressed this difficulty:

"It's hard to control very active students during game time."

3.4.2.2 Discussion:

These reported challenges underscore systemic barriers that hinder the full realization of gamification's potential in Algerian middle schools. The infrastructural limitations highlight a persistent urban-rural divide in access to educational technology—a gap that affects not only gamification but also broader efforts to modernize pedagogy.

The lack of targeted professional development signals a critical area for intervention. Without adequate training that blends both technical skills and pedagogical frameworks, teachers' confidence and competence in using gamification will remain limited. This situation aligns with educational research emphasizing the necessity of continuous, context-sensitive professional learning to ensure effective technology integration (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010).

Classroom management difficulties reveal that gamification is not merely a technological innovation but a complex pedagogical practice requiring teachers to cultivate new skills in engagement and discipline. These findings suggest that professional development should also address classroom facilitation strategies specific to game-based learning environments.

3.4.3 Suggested Support

In response to the challenges identified, teachers articulated clear and specific needs for enhanced institutional and professional support to overcome obstacles and improve gamification integration.

- Workshops on Gamification:

Teachers expressed a strong desire for practical, hands-on training workshops tailored to their specific teaching contexts. These workshops would ideally cover the design and implementation of gamified lessons, effective use of popular digital tools, strategies for classroom management during game activities, and methods to align gamification with curriculum objectives.

- Access to Digital Tools and Reliable Internet:

There was unanimous agreement on the necessity of equipping schools with appropriate hardware and stable internet connectivity. Participants emphasized that no amount of training would be fully effective without ensuring the basic technological infrastructure to support gamified learning.

- Collaborative Communities of Practice:

Teachers advocated for the establishment of formal or informal collaborative networks where educators could share successful gamification strategies, lesson plans, troubleshoot challenges, and support one another. Such communities—whether online forums, local teacher groups, or institutional networks—could foster a culture of continuous learning and innovation.

One teacher remarked:

“Workshops on digital tools would help me design better gamified lessons.” over time.

3.4.4 Observational Insights

Classroom observations conducted alongside the questionnaire data collection provided valuable, real-time insights into the dynamics of gamification in action.

- Increased Student Participation:

Observations revealed that when teachers incorporated gamified activities, there was a noticeable rise in student participation. More students volunteered answers, engaged in group work, and demonstrated enthusiasm throughout the lessons.

- Reinforcement of Vocabulary and Grammar:

Gamified tasks commonly served as review exercises to reinforce vocabulary and grammar. Teachers used flashcard games, quizzes, and competitive team challenges effectively to consolidate language skills.

- Technical and Management Challenges:

Observers noted occasional technical difficulties, such as connectivity issues or equipment malfunctions, which interrupted the flow of lessons. Additionally, managing student behavior and time effectively during games was a recurrent challenge.

- Positive Student Reactions:

Students were often seen smiling, cheering, and encouraging peers during gamified segments, indicating enjoyment and engagement. Some students explicitly requested that gamified lessons be repeated.

- Varied Teacher Facilitation Styles:

Teachers demonstrated diverse approaches to integrating gamification, from structured game hosts carefully tracking scores to more casual uses of games as warm-up or review activities.

3.5 Recommendations

Based on the comprehensive findings of this study, several key recommendations are proposed to enhance the effective integration of gamification in Algerian middle school language education. These recommendations address the core areas of training, infrastructure, policy, evaluation, and community support, aiming to create a sustainable and supportive environment for gamified language teaching.

- 1. Incorporate Gamification into Teacher Training Programs

Pre-service and in-service training should include modules on gamified instructional strategies. Teachers must be equipped with both the theoretical understanding and practical tools to apply gamification effectively.

- 2. Improve Access to Digital Infrastructure

Educational institutions, particularly in underserved areas, need greater investment in basic digital infrastructure—such as internet access, computers, and projectors—to support game-based learning.

- 3. Encourage Low-Tech and No-Tech Gamification

In contexts where digital tools are limited, teachers can adopt traditional gamified strategies (e.g., flashcard competitions, point systems, peer challenges) that still promote engagement and motivation.

- 4. Integrate Gamification into the Curriculum

Gamification should not be treated as an optional or extra activity. Curriculum designers and school administrators should formally integrate gamified elements into lesson plans and assessments.

- 5. Promote a Collaborative Teaching Culture

Teachers should be encouraged to share their gamified lesson plans and activities through workshops, teaching communities, or online platforms. Collaboration can help overcome individual challenges and spread effective practices.

- 6. Raise Awareness at the Policy Level

Educational policymakers should recognize gamification as a legitimate and impactful instructional approach. Policy-level support can lead to more structured implementation across schools and regions.

3.6 Conclusion:

This chapter presented a detailed analysis of the data collected through the semi-structured questionnaire and classroom observations. The quantitative results revealed that most teachers have a positive perception of gamification, particularly regarding its role in enhancing student motivation, vocabulary retention, and engagement. However, challenges such as inconsistent use, lack of training, and infrastructure limitations were also highlighted.

The qualitative findings, drawn from open-ended responses and real classroom observations, supported the questionnaire data. Teachers shared both enthusiasm and concerns, and observed classrooms showed increased learner participation when gamified elements were used effectively.

Together, these results confirm that gamification holds practical value in Algerian middle school EFL classrooms when implemented with thoughtful planning. The next chapter will synthesize these findings and offer pedagogical recommendations for integrating gamification more consistently and effectively across the educational system.

General conclusion

This study set out to examine the role of gamification in enhancing language acquisition among Algerian middle school learners. The research focused on how gamified strategies are perceived, applied, and experienced by teachers in Saida and Oran, as well as by retired educators reflecting on pedagogical evolution. Using a mixed methods approach, the study combined quantitative data from semi-structured questionnaires with qualitative insights from open-ended responses and classroom observations.

The findings confirmed the first hypothesis, which proposed that Algerian middle school EFL teachers hold positive attitudes toward the use of gamification. The majority of participants agreed that game-based methods increase student motivation, engagement, and vocabulary retention. Classroom observations supported this by showing more active learner participation during gamified lessons.

The second hypothesis, which predicted that gamification contributes to improved language acquisition, was also confirmed. Both quantitative results and qualitative evidence revealed that gamification can reduce anxiety, foster classroom interaction, and make learning more accessible. However, limitations such as lack of training, inadequate infrastructure, and inconsistent implementation were also highlighted.

By integrating both statistical trends and real classroom voices, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of gamification as a pedagogical tool in the Algerian context. It moves beyond theory to show how teachers experience, interpret, and adapt game-based learning strategies in their day-to-day teaching.

In conclusion, the study provides strong evidence that gamification is not merely a trend, but a valid and adaptable approach to modern language instruction. When supported by training and institutional resources, gamified methods can help transform English language education in Algerian middle schools by making it more engaging, inclusive, and effective.

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Appendix A

Teachers' Questionnaire

Teacher's Questionnaire

Topic: The Role of Gamification in Enhancing Language Acquisition – Case Study: Middle Schools

Target Group: Middle School Language Teachers

Age: _____
Gender: _____
Date: _____

Section 1: Background Information

1. How many years have you been teaching language subjects?

Less than 1 year ☐

1–3 years ☐

4–6 years ☐

7–10 years ☐

More than 10 years ☐

2. What language(s) do you teach?

_____

3. Have you ever used gamified activities in your language lessons?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Not Sure ☐

Section 3: Perceptions of Gamification's Effectiveness

Please rate the following statements:

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure
Gamification increases student motivation						
Gamified methods improve vocabulary retention						
Using games in class helps reduce student anxiety						
Gamification makes lesson planning more difficult						
Gamification suppresses learning barriers						
Gamification makes better teachers and learners						

Section 4: Reflective and Open-Ended Questions

1. Describe a successful experience you had using gamification in a language lesson.

_____
_____

_____
_____

_____
_____

2. What are the main challenges you face when applying gamification in your teaching?

_____
_____

_____
_____

_____
_____

3. What support or training would help you use gamification more effectively?

_____
_____

_____
_____

_____
_____

Appendix B

Gamified Worksheet Classroom Observation