

Perceptions of Vocabulary Learning and Gamification among Fifth- and Sixth-Grade Students and English Teachers La Araucania Region, Chile

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Abstract

Gamification in English language teaching, particularly in vocabulary learning, has garnered increasing interest. By incorporating elements such as points, challenges, and competitions, gamification seeks to enhance motivation and engagement, thereby supporting memory and active words use more effectively than traditional methods alone. This study explored its impact among fifth- and sixth-grade EFL students in La Araucanía Region of Chile using a mixed-methods approach. Data were collected through two standardized questionnaires, the Vocabulary Learning Questionnaire (VLQ) and the Games in Learning English Vocabulary Questionnaire (GLEVQ), administered to 200 students, along with semi-structured interviews conducted with six English teachers. The quantitative results revealed a moderate positive correlation between gamification and vocabulary learning strategies such as encoding and rehearsal, suggesting that game-based activities can encourage learners to process and retain new words more effectively. Students who engaged more frequently in gamified learning tended to use memory-based strategies that support long-term retention. Qualitative findings indicated that teachers view gamification as an effective way to increase participation and motivation; however, they also emphasized that excessive use may reduce students' intrinsic interest or create dependency on rewards. Overall, both students and teachers recognized that gamification is most effective when balanced with traditional methods, allowing for meaningful learning experiences that combine enjoyment, reflection, and sustained vocabulary development.

Introduction

Vocabulary knowledge is fundamental for communication and comprehension in a second language (Nation, 2001). In the Chilean EFL context, this importance is reflected explicitly in the national curriculum (MINEDUC), which positions vocabulary development as essential for meeting communicative objectives in reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Despite its relevance, many Chilean learners struggle to acquire and retain vocabulary, often due to traditional instructional practices, such as memorization or isolated drills, that fail to sustain engagement and do not align with the communicative, student-centered approach promoted by the curriculum.

To address these challenges, educators worldwide have increasingly turned to innovative methodologies such as gamification, which involves applying game-like elements, points, challenges, rewards, and competition, in non-game settings (Deterding et al., 2011). In the language classroom, gamification can boost motivation, increase participation, and create more meaningful learning experiences. These benefits are particularly important in EFL environments like Chile, where limited exposure to English outside the classroom creates a need for highly engaging and pedagogically purposeful activities. Gamified approaches have also been shown to support the development of the four communicative skills as well as essential language components, including vocabulary (Bendo & Erbas, 2019).

Among these components, vocabulary learning through gamification has gained noticeable attention due to its potential to improve retention and promote active word use. Prior research suggests that interactive, game-based tasks can enhance motivation and engagement, which in turn may support vocabulary development (Hashemi, 2021). However, in the Chilean EFL context, research on gamification—especially in relation to vocabulary learning and classroom perceptions—remains relatively scarce compared to other international settings. Most existing studies originate from countries such as Iran, Turkey, and Vietnam (Saputra et al., 2021), whose findings cannot be directly extrapolated to the Chilean context due to differences in curricular priorities, available resources, and sociocultural conditions.

This study seeks to address this gap by examining students' and teachers' perceptions of vocabulary learning strategies and the use of gamification in English lessons among fifth- and sixth-grade students in the Araucanía region. By analyzing how learners perceive vocabulary strategies, how they view gamification as part of their learning experience, and how teachers

interpret its benefits and challenges, the study aims to understand the relationship between gamification and vocabulary acquisition in a local Chilean EFL context. Using a mixed-methods design, it also investigates potential gender differences and identifies correlations between gamification and key vocabulary learning strategies.

Ultimately, this research provides insight into how gamification aligns with the communicative goals set by MINEDUC and how it might contribute to more effective, engaging, and contextually relevant vocabulary instruction in Chilean English classrooms.

Research questions

This study was guided by one central research question: What is the perception of English teachers regarding the use of gamification in the classroom to teach vocabulary? To address this, several specific questions were formulated. These included examining teachers' perceptions of vocabulary learning in general, their views on integrating gamification in the English classroom, the obstacles they face when using games to teach vocabulary, and the factors that may facilitate the effective implementation of gamified practices. Together, these questions shaped the direction of the investigation and provided a framework for analyzing both the benefits and challenges associated with gamification in vocabulary instruction.

Literature review

Vocabulary Learning in Second Language

Vocabulary learning has long been acknowledged as a foundation of language competence. Nation (2001) emphasized that without a sufficient lexicon, learners struggle to express themselves and comprehend others. Schmitt (2008) argued that vocabulary knowledge is multidimensional, encompassing both breadth (the number of words known) and depth (the quality of word knowledge). Effective strategies for vocabulary acquisition include context-based learning, repetition, and learner autonomy (Oxford, 1990). Research has also indicated that learners benefit from combining strategies, such as inferring meaning from context, using word cards, or engaging in collaborative tasks, because they provide varied opportunities to encounter and process new vocabulary (Gu & Johnson, 1996).

Additionally, learner perceptions and preferences play a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of strategies. If students do not view a technique as useful or engaging, they are

less likely to apply it consistently. This highlights the importance of exploring learners' perspectives as part of vocabulary research.

Gamification and Vocabulary Learning

Gamification is generally defined as the use of game elements such as rewards, feedback, and competition to promote learning and engagement (Lee & Hammer, 2011). In education, it has been applied to create motivating experiences where learners complete structured tasks, gain points, and achieve goals (León & Vega, 2022). When tied to clear pedagogical objectives, gamification can foster active participation and help students strengthen their skills through both cognitive and interactive engagement (Ávila & Fonseca, 2021).

Its successful implementation depends largely on teacher expertise, preparation, and access to resources, as well as students' willingness to participate (Li & Liu, 2022). However, challenges such as limited technology, overcrowded classrooms, or mismatched content can hinder its effectiveness (Demirbilek et al., 2022; Gozcu & Caganaga, 2016). To be effective, activities must therefore be adapted to learners' needs, context, and interests.

Research on gamification commonly uses surveys, classroom observations, and Likert-scale questionnaires to understand how students and teachers experience game-based activities. Surveys gather learners' self-reported perceptions of motivation and usefulness (Taspinar et al., 2016), while classroom observations provide direct evidence of participation, collaboration, and engagement during gamified tasks. Likert-scale questionnaires offer structured, quantifiable data on changes in motivation or learning outcomes (Gris & Bengtson, 2021). Together, these methods create a more complete picture of how gamification influences both motivation and classroom learning processes.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods design that integrated both qualitative and quantitative approaches to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. On the quantitative side, a non-experimental correlational study was conducted (Salkind, 1999), allowing the examination of the relationship between students' vocabulary learning and their use of interactive games without altering classroom conditions. Data were collected from fifth- and sixth-grade EFL students in the Araucanía region of Chile to identify patterns in their reported perceptions.

In parallel, a qualitative component was developed following the framework of basic qualitative inquiry (Merriam, 2009). This strand focused on capturing the *emic* perspective of English teachers, offering deeper insights into how they understood and applied interactive games in vocabulary instruction. Integrating teacher perspectives enriched the quantitative findings by highlighting classroom realities and contextual factors.

Both methodological strands were combined through a convergent parallel design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In this approach, qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed simultaneously, with equal weight assigned to both. The two datasets were then compared and merged during interpretation, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of how gamification intersects with vocabulary learning in the EFL classroom.

Ethical procedures were strictly followed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and all data was handled confidentially and stored securely to protect participants' identities. Because the student participants were minors, written authorization was obtained from parents or legal guardians prior to data collection. Schools also received formal notice of the study's purpose, and students were informed that they could withdraw at any time without consequence. These measures ensured compliance with ethical standards for educational research involving minors.

The study involved two distinct groups of participants, aligned with the quantitative and qualitative components of the research. For the quantitative phase, the sample consisted of 200 fifth- and sixth-grade students from six schools in Temuco, Padre Las Casas, Quepe, and Melipeuco in the Araucanía Region. These students were selected because the research questions focus on their perceptions of vocabulary learning strategies and the impact of gamification on their learning processes. A non-probabilistic sampling technique was used due to direct institutional access and the feasibility of reaching this population.

In contrast, the qualitative phase required a different type of participant to address its specific purpose. Six English teachers were interviewed to provide expert and experiential perspectives on vocabulary instruction and the use of gamification in the classroom. Teachers were included because they are responsible for designing, implementing, and evaluating gamified activities, giving them insight into the opportunities and challenges that cannot be captured through student questionnaires alone. Their perspectives were essential for complementing and

contextualizing the quantitative findings, helping to explain why certain patterns emerged in the student data and how classroom conditions influence the effectiveness of gamification.

The demographic characteristics of this student sample are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Students' demographic characteristics

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	93	46.5
Male	107	53.5
Grade		
5th grade	101	50.5
6th grade	99	49.5
Type of school		
Municipal school	54	27.0
Subsidized private school	146	73.0
Total	200	100

In the qualitative part of the study, six English teachers participated. All of them had a minimum of two years of experience in the Chilean educational system. They represented a range of teaching styles, including those who incorporated gamification strategies and those who relied primarily on more traditional methods. Their inclusion was intended to incorporate diverse perspectives on vocabulary teaching practices in the English language. Table 2 presents a profile of these participants, along with their relevant professional attributes and professional characteristics, and is presented in Table 2.

Table 2*Teachers demographic characteristics*

	Gender	Years of experience	Level
Teacher 1	Male	2	Pre-K through 8th grade and adults.
Teacher 2	Male	10	4th, 6th and 7th grade.
Teacher 3	Female	32	From 5 th grade to 4 th grade high.
Teacher 4	Female	28	From 1 st to 3rd grade.
Teacher 5	Female	18	From 5 th grade to 8 th grade and 1 st year university students.
Teacher 6	Female	10	From 7 th grade to 4 th grade high school.

Instruments

Given that this research followed a mixed-methods design, both quantitative and qualitative instruments were used. In the quantitative dimension, a sociodemographic questionnaire collected background information such as gender, school level, and ethnicity, alongside two standardized instruments. The first was the Vocabulary Learning Questionnaire (VLQ) by Gu and Johnson (1996), which measures students' use of strategies like beliefs, metacognition, dictionary use, rehearsal, and encoding. Widely applied in second language research, the VLQ has shown consistent validity and reliability. The second instrument was the Games in Learning English Vocabulary Questionnaire (GLEVQ) by Abu-Rmeileh (2019), which assesses perceptions of gamification through 20 Likert-scale items on skills development and motivation. Two reverse-coded items were slightly adjusted and reviewed by academic experts, including a linguistics specialist, to ensure validity.

For the qualitative dimension of the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six English teachers. The interviews addressed three themes: vocabulary learning, experiences with gamification, and factors influencing its use in the classroom. The 20-question instrument underwent a validation process through expert judgment, in which specialists in educational

evaluation, psychology, and linguistics reviewed the interview protocol to ensure its content validity.

Procedure

Participants were recruited voluntarily through coordination with school authorities, who granted permission for the study to be conducted on their premises. Before participating, all individuals were invited and informed about the background, objectives, and scope of the research. For the qualitative data, student questionnaires were administered on-site during either English class or “class council” periods to minimize disruption to the school schedule. Each session lasted around 40 minutes. Once completed, the quantitative data was entered into Microsoft Excel and later exported to SPSS for statistical analysis.

For the qualitative dimension of the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers. These focused on research questions regarding their perceptions of gamification in vocabulary learning, including their general approach to teaching English vocabulary, the extent of gamification in their practice, the challenges they faced, and the factors that might facilitate its use. The interviews were recorded as audio files, transcribed verbatim, and systematically analyzed with ATLAS.ti software to identify key patterns and themes.

Data analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, following a structured set of steps. The dataset was first reviewed to ensure accuracy, and demographic information, including nationality, sex, age, city of origin, ethnicity, and type of school, was summarized through frequency analysis. Reverse-coded items from the Vocabulary Learning Questionnaire (VLQ) were re-coded as separate variables to maintain consistency. These items included: 15. “I would not learn what my English teacher does not tell me to learn,” 16. “I only focus on things that are directly related to the tests,” and 17. “I don’t care much about vocabulary items that my teacher doesn’t explain in class.” Internal consistency for each scale and subscale was evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha (Cronbach, 1951). Factor-specific variables were then created by averaging the relevant items, which were later used in normality tests, independent-sample t-tests, and Pearson correlation analyses.

For the qualitative data, ATLAS.ti software was used to conduct a content analysis approach, as proposed by Mayring (2003), outlined in Cáceres (2003). This analysis involved identifying

meaningful text segments and organizing them into categories aligned with the research questions, enabling a systematic interpretation of participants' responses.

Results

Descriptive Analysis

Students' perceptions of vocabulary learning strategies are summarized in Table 3.1. Responses were measured on a 7-point scale, where 1 = "Strongly Disagree" and 7 = "Strongly Agree." For Beliefs About Vocabulary Learning, the average score suggests that students generally hold positive beliefs and use multiple strategies to learn vocabulary. *Metacognitive Strategies* showed that students generally use self-regulated approaches when learning new vocabulary, demonstrating awareness of their learning process. Using the Dictionary results indicated that students frequently consult dictionaries, although their level of engagement with this strategy varies across individuals. Rehearsal showed only a slight tendency to rely on repetition techniques, suggesting that students may not consistently practice new words enough for long-term retention. Encoding reflected moderate agreement with using techniques such as grouping or associating words with prior knowledge.

Together, these results suggest that while students recognize the importance of several vocabulary learning strategies, they may not be applying them consistently or effectively. This highlights the need for explicit instruction, more guided practice, and classroom activities that strengthen strategic vocabulary learning. For the study, these findings indicate that gamification could play a complementary role by reinforcing rehearsal and encoding strategies in a more engaging and structured way, helping students develop stronger and more consistent vocabulary learning habits.

Table 3

Measurement of study factors corresponding to the Vocabulary learning variable.

Factors	N	M	SD
BAVL	200	4.85	1.16
MS	200	4.98	1.31
UD	200	4.85	1.34
RH	200	4.17	1.36
EN	200	4.44	1.29

Notes: BAVL= Beliefs about vocabulary learning; MS= Metacognitive strategies; UD= Using dictionary; RH= Rehearsal; EN= Encoding.

Regarding the specific objective of describing students' perceptions of gamification in the English classroom, the results are presented in Table 3.2. Overall, students generally agreed that games can help develop skills helpful in learning English vocabulary. They also tended to feel slightly positive about the idea that gamification can enhance their motivation to learn vocabulary.

Table 4

Measurement of study factors corresponding to the Gamification variable.

Factors	N	M	SD
STCBOFG	200	3.74	0.88
MT	200	3.96	0.78

Notes: STCBOFG= Skills that can be obtained from games; MT= Motivation.

Group differences

Before analyzing differences between groups, the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were examined for all variables. Skewness and kurtosis values were assessed, and all fell within the acceptable range of -1.0 to +1.0 (Muthén & Kaplan, 1985), indicating that the data were approximately normally distributed.

Vocabulary Learning Questionnaire (VLQ)

The findings indicate that students, regardless of gender, share similar perceptions about vocabulary learning and the strategies used to support it. Both male and female students equally value the importance of vocabulary learning in the English language and reported comparable attitudes toward metacognitive strategies, recognizing the role of self-regulation and awareness in the process. Likewise, dictionaries were consistently perceived as valuable tools for vocabulary learning, with no significant differences between genders.

Additionally, students of both genders exhibited similar perceptions of rehearsal and encoding strategies. While slight variations were observed in the use of rehearsal, these differences were not statistically significant, since the mean scores for male and female students were close and fell within the same response range, suggesting that both groups generally recognize the importance of repeated practice. Similarly, encoding strategies were valued equally by both groups, highlighting that learners across genders view these techniques as essential for vocabulary retention

Games in Learning English Vocabulary Questionnaire (GLEVQ)

Students of both genders reported similar perceptions regarding the benefits of gamified learning, both in terms of the skills they can develop and the motivation it provides. No significant gender differences were found, indicating that games are widely viewed as supportive of vocabulary development in the English language and equally motivating for male and female learners.

Table 5

Comparison of independent samples according to sex and factors of the variables in the study.

Factors	Female			Male			Leverne Test		T Student Test	
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	F	t	gl	P
BAVL	93	4.85	1.00	107	4.85	1.29	6.66	-.016	198	.98
MS	93	5.00	1.11	107	4.97	1.46	10.2	-.185	198	.85
UD	93	4.83	1.30	107	4.87	1.39	.341	-.198	198	.84
RH	93	4.31	1.30	107	4.05	1.41	.365	1.34	198	.18
EN	93	4.42	1.30	107	4.47	1.28	.103	-.274	198	.78
STCBOFG	93	3.73	.88	107	3.76	.88	.040	-.256	198	.79
MT	93	3.92	.81	107	4.00	.76	.592	-.788	198	.43

Notes: BAVL= Beliefs about vocabulary learning; MS= Metacognitive strategies; UD= Using dictionary; RH= Rehearsal; EN= Encoding; STCBOFG= Skills that can be obtained from games; MT= Motivation.

Correlations

Table 6 shows the correlations between the variables “Vocabulary Learning” and “Gamification”. The strongest relationship was found between the Encoding factor and Skills Obtained from Games, suggesting that students are likely to apply encoding strategies as a result of skills developed through gamified activities. In contrast, the weakest relationship was observed between Metacognitive Strategies and Skills Obtained from Games, indicating that students may not naturally connect gamified activities with metacognitive strategies during vocabulary learning in the English language. Within the Vocabulary Learning Questionnaire, Encoding and Rehearsal were strongly correlated, implying that students tend to use these two strategies together when learning lexical items.

Table 6

Pearson correlations between the variables Vocabulary learning and gamification.

	BAVL	MS	UD	RH	EN	STCBOFG	MT
1 Beliefs about vocabulary learning	-						
2 Metacognitive strategies	0.73**	-					
3 Using dictionary	0.62**	0.66**	-				
4 Rehearsal	0.50**	0.51**	0.64**	-			
5 Encoding	0.62**	0.61**	0.69**	0.78**	-		
6 Skills that can be obtained from games.	0.39**	0.30**	0.40**	0.42**	0.48**	-	
7 Motivation	0.42**	0.37**	0.40**	0.33**	0.42**	0.77**	-

Qualitative results

The qualitative findings revealed four main themes regarding teachers' perceptions of vocabulary instruction and gamification. Teachers described using both traditional techniques and interactive activities, emphasizing that students learn better when vocabulary is linked to real contexts, as one teacher noted: "Students remember better when the words come from real situations." Their understanding of gamification was largely associated with competition, rewards, and digital platforms, with several teachers acknowledging that "anything presented as a game increases participation." They identified motivation and engagement as the main benefits, explaining that "students are more willing to try when it feels like a game," while also highlighting challenges such as large classes, limited resources, and insufficient training, stating that "we don't always have the time or tools to use gamification properly." Finally, teachers pointed out that students' natural curiosity supports gamified learning, though technology can be distracting if not managed carefully, and emphasized that institutional flexibility helps them adapt methods to their classroom needs.

Discussion

This study examined primary school students' perceptions of vocabulary learning strategies and the role of gamification in English language classrooms, while incorporating teachers' perspectives to better understand how these practices are implemented in real settings. It explored how students report using vocabulary strategies, how they perceive the impact of gamification, whether gender shapes these perceptions, and how gamified practices relate to vocabulary acquisition. Teachers' experiences provided essential context, revealing both opportunities and barriers in applying gamification in the EFL classroom.

The findings contribute to the limited body of research on gamification in Chilean English education. Although both students and teachers expressed generally positive perceptions toward gamification and vocabulary learning strategies, the results revealed important inconsistencies. Gamification was not used systematically, and its success depended heavily on teacher preparation, available resources, and the dynamics of each classroom. This indicates that motivation alone is not enough; structural and pedagogical conditions must support gamified learning for it to have a sustained impact.

Regarding vocabulary strategies, students showed positive perceptions of varied techniques, yet their actual use, particularly in rehearsal and encoding, remained only moderate. This gap between perceived usefulness and consistent application suggests that students may lack explicit instruction on how and when to use these strategies effectively. The variation observed in dictionary use also indicates that students may not have been taught how to integrate this tool into their independent learning. These findings echo Gu and Johnson (1996) and support Nation's (2001) argument that vocabulary instruction must intentionally combine reflective guidance with concrete, frequent practice. A critical implication is that teachers cannot assume strategy awareness that leads to strategy use; systematic, guided instruction is necessary to help students internalize and apply vocabulary techniques autonomously.

The results also show that students perceive gamification as motivating and helpful for vocabulary learning. They described games as enjoyable, engaging, and useful for retention, findings consistent with previous research (Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2017; Surendeleg et al., 2014). However, teacher perceptions reveal an important critique: many equated gamifications exclusively with technology, reflecting a limited conceptualization of the approach. This narrow view may restrict the range of activities teachers use and may also discourage implementation in schools with limited technological resources. A more comprehensive

understanding of gamification, including low-tech or no-tech strategies such as competitions, role-play, or classroom challenges, is needed for its effective integration across diverse school contexts.

No significant gender differences emerged in perceptions of vocabulary strategies or gamification, suggesting that gamified tasks may be equally appealing and effective for male and female learners. While this aligns with findings from Mellado-Silva et al. (2024), it contradicts earlier studies (Huang & Soman, 2013) that reported stronger male responses to competitive elements. This discrepancy may reflect cultural differences or the specific design of activities used in Chilean classrooms. A critical conclusion is that gamification should not rely solely on competition; diverse game elements (collaboration, storytelling, progression) may ensure broader engagement across genders.

Correlational findings revealed that gamification is positively associated with several vocabulary learning strategies, particularly encoding. This suggests that students who view gamified activities positively also tend to value memory-enhancing techniques, indicating that gamification may help students engage in deeper, more meaningful processing of vocabulary. Moderate correlations with rehearsal, metacognitive strategies, and dictionary use suggest that gamification can support multiple dimensions of vocabulary learning. However, the weakest correlation was with metacognitive strategies, supporting Soman's (2013) and Lee and Hammer's (2011) view that gamification primarily drives behavioral engagement rather than reflective thinking. A critical implication is that gamification alone is insufficient for developing higher-order learning skills; teachers must explicitly integrate metacognitive guidance to help students reflect on their learning process.

Teachers also perceived several practices as essential for vocabulary instruction, including repetition, meaningful use, and positive reinforcement. Their views align with Webb (2007), who emphasizes that repeated exposure, often more than ten encounters, is necessary for vocabulary mastery. Gamification can support repeated use, but teachers noted significant challenges: overcrowded classrooms, resource limitations, lack of training, and difficulties maintaining discipline. These structural issues, also noted by Li and Liu (2022) and Basantes et al. (2024), critically limit the scalability of gamification. Teachers highlighted the importance of aligning gamified tasks with curricular goals to ensure coherence and avoid reducing gamification to isolated games lacking pedagogical depth.

Taken together, these findings suggest that gamification can enhance vocabulary learning when integrated thoughtfully with traditional instructional methods. However, its effectiveness depends on well-designed activities, adequate preparation, and institutional support. Without these conditions, gamification risks remain superficial, motivational but not transformative. A critical challenge emerging from this study is the practicality of implementing meaningful gamification in school contexts where teachers face high workloads, limited time, and insufficient resources. For gamification to be sustainable, schools must provide structured training, collaborative planning spaces, and access to adaptable materials.

In summary, gamification appears to be a promising complement to traditional vocabulary instruction in Chilean EFL classrooms. Its potential lies in increasing engagement, diversifying learning experiences, and strengthening retention when combined with strategy instruction. Yet its success depends on overcoming structural constraints and broadening teachers' understanding of gamification beyond technology. With appropriate training and institutional support, gamification can contribute to creating more motivating, inclusive, and effective learning environments.

Conclusion

This study confirms that gamification can serve as a powerful tool for vocabulary learning in English classrooms. The quantitative analysis revealed positive correlations between gamification and strategies like rehearsal and encoding, indicating that game-based activities facilitate deeper engagement with new words. Importantly, no significant gender differences were found, suggesting that gamification can be equally effective for diverse groups of learners.

From a qualitative perspective, teachers deemed gamification's potential but often associated it mainly with digital platforms. While technology-based tools are helpful, this narrow interpretation overlooks non-digital possibilities such as board games, competitions, or role-play. Teachers also raised concerns about overuse, cautioning that excessive reliance on gamification might lead to a decline in long-term interest or create a dependence on external rewards. These insights underscore the importance of integrating gamification in a way that fosters sustained learning rather than short-term motivation.

The findings point to the need for balance. Gamification is most effective when combined with traditional strategies. In this way, students benefit from both the engagement of gamified activities and the discipline of more conventional approaches. For teachers, this means carefully selecting activities that match learning objectives, student needs, and classroom

realities. For institutions, this requires greater support in the form of training and resources, ensuring that gamification is applied effectively and creatively.

Overall, the study highlights that gamification is not a substitute for established methods, but rather a complement to them. When applied strategically and in moderation, it can enhance student motivation, encourage participation, and promote vocabulary retention. By broadening the understanding of gamification beyond digital tools and situating it within thoughtful pedagogy, educators can create more engaging and sustainable learning experiences that balance innovation with tradition.

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