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ISTANBUL SABAHATTIN ZAIM UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE EDUCATION INSTITUTE

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

INCREASING PARTICIPATION AND LANGUAGE PERFORMANCE IN ONLINE ENGLISH LEARNING CLASSES WITH GAMIFIED OBJECTIVE PARTICIPATION SCORES

MA THESIS

Süha Derviş TAŞCIOĞLU

Istanbul

December-2025

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Istanbul

December -2025

This study has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the MA Degree in English Language Teaching.

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DECLARATION OF SCIENTIFIC ETHICS AND ORIGINALITY

This is to certify that this MA thesis titled “Increasing participation and language performance in online English learning classes with gamified objective participation scores**”** is my own work, and I have acted according to scientific ethics and academic rules while producing it. I have collected and used all information and data according to scientific ethics and guidelines on thesis writing of Sabahattin Zaim University. I have fully referenced, in both the text and bibliography, all direct and indirect quotations and all sources I have used in this work.

Süha Derviş TAŞCIOĞLU

İstanbul, Aralık

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Süha Derviş TAŞCIOĞLU

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ABSTRACT

INCREASING PARTICIPATION AND LANGUAGE PERFORMANCE IN ONLINE ENGLISH LEARNING CLASSES WITH GAMIFIED OBJECTIVE PARTICIPATION SCORES

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Motivation to participate is primarily an internal construct. Creating a way to motivate students by using micro-rewards might be an optimal strategy to foster self-motivation. Therefore, participation scores can be used as these micro-rewards that students can collect and motivate themselves to participate and learn in every lesson.

The participants were second-year students who were studying different programs in a foundation university where the study was conducted. The study was a quasi-experimental study with one control and one experimental group consisting of 112 students, 55 in the control, 57 in the experimental group, in total. The data was collected through multiple-choice end-of-term tests with writing parts and speaking exams, interviews, and analysis of lesson recordings.

This study implemented and evaluated a system where participation was rewarded with objective and tangible participation points. There was a different passcode for each student in the experimental group, which contained eight characters for only the second term. One character for each class that students attended in a semester. Students told their passcodes to their teacher, and for every correct character, they got 1 point added to their speaking exam score. The data was analyzed via SPSS v27 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Qualitative data were analyzed using conventional content analysis. Since the data was not normally distributed, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to calculate the p-value. Findings showed that this method significantly improved the students' participation in online classes and increased their motivation as well as their test scores.

Key terms: Online language learning, Participation, Gamification

ÖZET

OYUNLAŞTIRILMIŞ OBJEKTİF KATILIM PUANLARI ILE ÇEVRİMİÇİ İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRENME DERSLERİNE KATILIMI VE DİL PERFORMANSINI ARTIRMA

Süha Derviş TAŞCIOĞLU

Yüksek Lisans, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi

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Katılım motivasyonu öncelikle içsel bir yapıdır. Öğrencileri motive etmenin en iyi yolu, mikro ödüller kullanarak onların kendilerini motive etmelerini sağlamak olabilir. Derse katılım puanları, öğrencilerin derse katılmalarını ve kendilerini motive etmelerini sağlayan, toplayabilecekleri mikro ödüller kullanılabilir.

Katılımcılar, araştırmanın yapıldığı bir vakıf üniversitesinde farklı programlarda okuyan ikinci sınıf öğrencileriydi. Araştırma, bir kontrol grubu ve bir deney grubundan oluşan, toplam 112 öğrencinin katıldığı yarı deneysel bir çalışmaydı. Kontrol grubunda 55, deney grubunda ise 57 öğrenci yer aldı. Veriler, yazma ve konuşma bölümleri içeren çoktan seçmeli dönem sonu sınavları, mülakatlar ve ders kayıtlarının analizi yoluyla toplandı.

Bu çalışmada, katılımın objektif ve somut katılım puanları ile ödüllendirildiği bir sistem uygulandı ve değerlendirildi. Deney grubundaki her öğrenci için sadece ikinci dönem sekiz karakterden oluşan farklı bir şifre oluşturuldu. Öğrenciler katılım sağladıkları her ders için bir karakter kazandılar. Öğrencilerin, öğretmenlerine söyledikleri her doğru karakter için konuşma sınavı puanlarına 1 puan eklendi. Veriler SPSS v27 (Sosyal Bilimler için İstatistik Paketi) ile analiz edildi. Nitel veriler, geleneksel içerik analizi yöntemiyle analiz edildi. Veriler normal dağılım göstermediğinden, p değerini hesaplamak için Mann-Whitney U testi kullanıldı. Bulgular, bu yöntemin öğrencilerin çevrimiçi derslere katılımını önemli ölçüde artırdığını ve motivasyonlarını ve sınav puanlarını yükselttiğini gösterdi.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Online Dil Öğrenimi, Derse katılım, Oyunlaştırma

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL : English as a Foreign Language

FMRI : Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging

GOPS : gamified objective participation scores

MOOC : Massive Open Online Course

OMR : Optical Mark Recognition

PET : Positron Emission Tomography

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A continuous challenge in language teaching is working with diverse classes while fostering student engagement and participation. Teachers use different strategies to increase involvement, but ultimately, research indicates that a sizable number of students respond to a common denominator; they prioritize assessment outcomes. Students care about point systems and place far more emphasis on extrinsic motivators than on the learning itself. This is why this research seeks to create a system to effectively quantify engagement and participation by converting it to a tangible item, a unique passcode which students can earn and redeem for a participation grade at the end of the course.

1.1. Background

One of the primary motivations for this study is the discrepancies noted in a B1 language preparatory class regarding the relationship between engagement, or lack thereof, in the class and subsequent academic underachievement. One notable instance was that of a "model" student, i.e., a student who, throughout the term, submitted all assignments, received the highest scores on all quizzes in each unit, and was an active participant in the class. This case revealed one of the many weaknesses regarding the traditional grading practices.

The main reason behind the students' lack of active class participation was when the student realized that there was no incentive for participation, i.e., there was no reward, in this case, a grade that the student would receive as a positive outcome. This student's lack of participation reflected the perceived inequity in a system that gave the same grade whether or not the student participated. The student's anecdotal case highlighted the lack of tangible evidence and, in some instances, the complete absence of a system in highly motivated student engagement in a relatively systemless environment where there was no system in place to tie active class engagement and participation to achievement of outcomes, scores, and grades.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Even though intrinsic motivation is ideal, it is not enough to sustain engagement for many learners. Students may disengage or lose focus if they think they are not benefiting directly from classroom interaction. The core issue explored in the study is not student lethargy; it is student pragmatism. A generous portion of learners function rationally; they will put in effort if they think the return yields a commensurate return on investment. With no criteria or policy for external rewards for participation, these pragmatist learners do not perceive the value of participating, prompting disengagement from the entire class.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

This study sets as its goal the implementation and evaluation of a strategy to stimulate student engagement and the analysis of the effectiveness of a gamified setting that provides real-time feedback through a personalized passcode. The present study aims to determine the extent to which students engage passively and act through the integration of a feedback passcode mechanism that translates student participation into a real-time, accumulating score. The study further seeks to clarify the relationship between gamified participation scores and students' self-regulation and motivation, resulting from the alignment of the participation mechanism with students' practical needs.

1.4. Research Questions

The study will seek answers to the following questions:

1. Do gamified objective participation scores (GOPS) increase language performance?
2. Does GOPS increase homework performance?
3. Does GOPS increase participation?
4. Does GOPS increase emotional motivation?
5. Does GOPS increase autonomy?

1.5. Research Hypotheses

The study suggests the following:

1. GOPS will increase language performance.
2. GOPS will increase homework performance.
3. GOPS will increase participation.
4. GOPS will increase emotional motivation.
5. GOPS will increase autonomy.

1.6. Procedure

The first part of the research involved explaining the quasi-experimental protocol to the students. During the intervention, students received one character of their individualized passcode at the end of each class, as determined by the teacher based on their engagement.

The intervention lasted eight weeks. The passcode portions earned after the first four weeks were added to students' midterm exam scores, and the remaining portions were applied to their final grades. After the grades were posted, the midterm and final scores were compared in order to answer the third research question. Afterward, to obtain qualitative evidence for the first and second research questions, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Ten students from the experimental group were drawn via simple random sampling, and the course instructor was also interviewed.

1.7. Scope and Limitations of the Study

The research was conducted at only one Foundation University in Istanbul, Türkiye. In this case, the study sample consisted of 112 students who acted as control students in the first semester, and approximately half were assigned to the experimental group in the second semester. Therefore, due to the peculiarities of the demographic and the institution, the results are not directly applicable to other populations, educational scopes, or contexts. To increase the generalizability of the results, the sample should be larger and more varied in further research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

Online language learning has increased in recent years, offering convenience and access but posing issues of less interaction and motivation, and inconsistent participation (Kuama, 2016; Sun & Mu, 2023). Student engagement in these environments is closely linked to emotional motivation, persistence, and learning (Hanif, 2021; Hagenauer et al., 2023), as well as to students' autonomy over their learning and their taking up responsibility (Anthonysamy & Singh, 2023; Avazmatova, 2022).

Gamification has been studied as a possible remedy for these shortcomings, and systems that integrate elements such as points, badges, and rewards into learning have been shown to increase motivation, participation, and learning performance (Yunus & Hua, 2021; Meng et al., 2024). In particular, objectified and tangible participation scores may offer the sort of immediate, fair, and motivating feedback that keeps learners coming back to the virtual classroom (Aithal, 2022).

This chapter will present existing research on five strands: Online language learning, emotional motivation, autonomy, gamification and participation, the threads that form the tapestry this study draws on to assess whether GOPS improve participation and language performance in online English classes.

2.2. Online Language Learning

2.2.1. Introduction to Online Language Learning

Studies have shown how and why online language learning has become so prevalent. Research on the phenomenon focuses on topics such as the challenges and benefits of learning a language online, the use of technology to support language learning, and effective ways to create online language learning courses. (Wang et al., 2023)

Online research, in particular, has shown that online language learning provides many benefits over traditional learning. One of which is the flexibility and freedom integrated into online courses. It allows learners to study at their own convenience,

accommodating external commitments. This advantage is especially beneficial for professionals and students with busy schedules. In contrast, traditional in-person classes are more restrictive and take up more time. Another advantage is that online platforms can use diverse interactive multimedia elements, such as videos, games, and quizzes, to motivate learners more. (Naseer & Perveen, 2023)

However, there are still challenges in researching online language learning. Self-discipline, motivation, and limited or no in-person interaction with teachers or learners are among these challenges. Some studies show online learners have little focus and are often unmotivated to study (Kuama, 2016; Naseer & Perveen, 2023)

To summarize, exploring online language learning demonstrates that scholarly work informs the development and delivery of online language courses. Knowing both the pros and cons of e-learning will empower teachers to devise ways to boost student participation and learning in online language courses (Sun & Mu, 2023; Kuama, 2016)

2.2.2. Key Findings on Language Acquisition in Online Environments

Research on language learning in digital settings illustrates the correlation between success and learner independence. Taking charge of learning through self-directed goal setting and self-assessment has proven effective for language acquisition. With online language-learning options, learners can create a personalized study plan, select resources/analyze content based on their interests, and self-manage their learning schedule. (Alhamami, 2019) When learners can self-manage their learning with online tools, they can greatly improve their language proficiency.

Another important result of the research is the value of interaction for language learning online. While some believe that online education is unsocial, research demonstrates that for learning and acquiring a new language, interaction with an instructor and with other students is indispensable. With online education, interaction is possible through virtual classrooms, chats, message boards, video conferencing, and shared assignments. Meaningful interaction in a target language is a practical way to use the language, and, for motivational purposes, it is important for learners to feel a sense of social presence. (Lanvers et al., 2021; Chakowa, 2019)

Moreover, the use of multimedia in second-language learning has received considerable attention in the research literature. Learners can use multiple sensory channels to learn a language more meaningfully through videos, audio, podcasts, games, and virtual reality (Sun & Mu, 2023; Naseer & Perveen, 2023).

Furthermore, these significant studies articulate the nature of language acquisition and learning as personal interaction and automation. The use of multimedia caters to personal responsiveness and learner agency. This is the research basis for online language learning.

2.2.3. Benefits of Distance Learning in Language Education

There are multiple educational advantages that students will benefit from during Distance Learning Language Education. Chief among these advantages is the flexibility of online classes, which encourages learners to move at their own pace. This is paramount for individuals who are busy or do not have access to in-person language classes. (Naseer & Perveen 2023)

Moreover, students will gain more independence in their language education through distance learning. Online Learning will allow learners to take control of their education, set learning goals, and monitor their progress, which is often restricted in the traditional classroom. (Elbanna 2023)

Finally, another important benefit of distance learning is that learners will have access to vast educational materials. Online Learning will offer learners a range of resources, including educational games, videos, and simulations, to complement students' varying learning styles. This will improve students' engagement in language learning through interactive and participatory lessons. (Naseer & Perveen 2023)

Also, international students can bond and collaborate due to online education. For instance, students from different countries can share interests in language acquisition and participate in online courses to collaborate. Such an environment presents cultural exchanges, coordinated assistance, and peer collaboration. (Taskiran, 2020)

In conclusion, flexible and accessible distance learning in language education offers a wide range of advantages. By accommodating students and promoting intercultural exchanges during online classes, students' experience is enhanced.

2.2.4. Effectiveness of Online Language Learning Assessments

The value of online language testing is evident, as it offers flexibility in analyzing and evaluating online learners' language competencies and skills. The variety of answer formats – multiple-choice questions, fill-in-the-blank, and writing – helps educators determine whether learners can comprehend the material and present it in diverse formats. (Gokturk-Saglam & Sevgi-Sole, 2023)

Online language learning tests provide students with immediate feedback, which is one of their outstanding features. Online students receive real feedback almost as soon as they submit their tests. Students receive reports that help them identify the problems they had (perhaps) and are guided by the instrument to the right learning paths, providing students with multiple opportunities to master the desired learning goal. (Batham-Hendrei, 2023)

Moreover, online language learning assessments are designed to be adaptive, meaning they can present new items and adjust difficulty levels based on learners' responses. This guarantees that every learner is working at a sufficiently challenging level and can move at their own pace. Also, adaptive assessments show instructors the exact skills a learner is struggling with, enabling additional help and more focused instructional interventions. (Muhaimin et al., 2023)

As for what technology can bring, research indicates that online language learning assessments, at the very least, are valid and reliable estimations of learners' language skills and offer important evidence of learners' advancement within a given timeframe. Therefore, with the inclusion of these assessments, instructors can monitor students' engagement more effectively in online language learning classes and tailor their instruction more efficiently (or appropriately) to learners' specific needs, thereby improving the otherwise less-than-optimal learning experience within the course. (Blake & Delforge, 2006; Hossein Arefian, 2023)

2.2.5. Key Findings from Existing Studies on the Challenges of Online Language Learning Classes

The challenges of online language-learning classes have been documented in contemporary research, which illustrates the realities and predicaments of both teachers and students in this type of education. (Herrera, 2020) The literature shows the greatest of challenges to be the absence of in-person contact in online language learning classes. Without physical presence, students experience communication and feedback barriers and lack the social interaction necessary for group work. This also increases isolation and feelings of disconnection. Previous research shows that this lack of interpersonal contact is detrimental to progress and motivation in the language being learned. (Djiwandono, 2024)

One of the main challenges reported by research to date is technological problems. Online language learning classes use many technologies, like video conferencing, learning management systems, and the internet. Technological problems, such as low audio or video quality, poor internet connections, or difficulty working on the site, can frustrate the learning process. These problems can be negative for both teachers and students. (Zhai et al., 2021)

Moreover, self-regulated learning in online language courses has also been documented. Students taking these courses must often manage their time, set their own goals, and sustain motivation, all without instructor oversight. Some learners do, in fact, struggle with self-discipline, time management, and motivation in online learning environments. (Taylor, 2020; Gupta, 2022)

The available literature indicates the absence of face-to-face interaction; the presence of Technology and self-regulated learning difficulties are important barriers to effective online language learning. It will be important for educators and educational institutions to overcome these barriers to improve the value of online language courses and help learners succeed in online classrooms.

2.2.6. Strategies for Overcoming Challenges in Online Language Learning Classes

One of the primary concerns students face in the online language-learning classroom is the absence of face-to-face interaction with their peers and teachers. This absence of personal contact can result in challenges, including feelings of disconnection and disengagement, which might be detrimental to the practice of speaking and listening skills. To address this concern, teachers could incorporate synchronous activities into their classes. For example, online discussions, live classes, and language exchange collaborations with native speakers. (Muñoz-Basols et al. 2023) Such synchronous activities would help students engage in real-life language use discussions and receive feedback on their language performance.

Another concern that also permeates language-learning classes in an online format is the lack of opportunities to practice or use the language in an immersive environment. In the absence of a physical trip or a study abroad program in the learning environment, students would find it difficult to acquire fluency and cultural competencies. To mitigate this, teachers should incorporate a variety of real-life or authentic materials into their classes, including, but not limited to, podcasts, videos, social media content, news articles, and even social media. These expose students to language use in authentic contexts and help students acquire the ability to use the language (fluency) and also help students develop intercultural competencies. (Ramirez 2024)

Moreover, learners must manage their time effectively, as they must fit their classes around their jobs, families, and other responsibilities. Instructors can assist students with time management by offering course outlines, due dates, and detailed expectations. They can also provide advice on constructive study habits, such as goal-setting, breaking assignments into smaller pieces, establishing a study schedule, minimizing interruptions, and asking for assistance. (Akpen et al., 2024)

If teachers apply these strategies to address problems in online language-learning courses, they can establish a more interactive and positive environment where students can succeed.

2.2.7. How Do Objectified and Tangible Participation Scores Affect Online language learning?

The Objectified and Tangible Participation Scores system keeps students engaged in class by rewarding their hard work and dedication at the end of each class. This reward at the end of each class fosters continuous participation and interest in the online language-learning classes.

2.3. Emotional Motivation

2.3.1. Introduction to Emotional Motivation in Learning

Students' motivation and engagement in learning are certain to be influenced by their emotions and the learning process. One of the most crucial factors to study from an emotional and psychological perspective is the impact of one's emotions on various learning outcomes. The drive to learn emotionally, in relation to one's cognitive processes and academic achievement, is correlated with the positive and negative emotions one encounters and experiences. This study analyses the multi-dimensional aspects of learning and emotions, and the means by which students' emotions can either augment or slow the pace of educational development and advancement. (Sun & Wang, 2022; Lupeanu, 2021)

Theories of emotional motivation and studies on it can assist educators in crafting classrooms that foster positive emotional climates, which, in turn, are likely to increase and enhance students' participation and academic achievements. (Hagenauer et al., 2023)

2.3.2. The Impact of Emotional Motivation on Academic Performance

Students' classroom performance is influenced by emotional motivation. It has been shown that emotionally motivated students engage more with their schoolwork, stick with their studies longer, and learn better than students who are not emotionally motivated. Motivating students emotionally positively, such as by encouraging enthusiasm and curiosity, can channel their positive motivation toward learning, helping them remember the schoolwork better. Students' learning can be negatively impacted by emotions such as anxiety and boredom. These negative emotions do impede learning as they lessen focus and the ability to remember information. (Hanif, 2021; MacMahon et al., 2022)

Motivation also has emotional impacts on the goals students set for themselves and the self-regulation they use for learning. Being emotionally motivated can support self-regulation, a vital part of learning. This should be utilized by those who teach students to design positive emotion interventions to create the best learning conditions for the students. (Zamroni, 2022)

2.3.3. Factors Influencing Emotional Motivation in Learning

Understanding what triggers emotional motivation in learning will greatly improve the learning process. An important consideration is the subjective value of the task. Self-efficacy is of foremost importance because the emotionally activated and engaged will be the ones who proceed to learn. The extensive research by emotional theorists shows that active emotional expression will occur when the atmosphere is facilitative. The phenomenon of emotional motivation will activate the learners and emotionally empower them to overcome learning obstacles. (Hanif, 2021)

Emotional motivation is greatly influenced when the task is personally relevant and goal-congruent. To maintain emotional motivation, constructive feedback must be given on one's progress and gaps in necessary skills. (Park, 2018; Wilson, 2023; Groom, 2023)

2.3.4. Environmental Influences on Emotional Motivation: A Review of Contextual Factors

Recent academic research has enhanced understanding of the role contextual features play in the motivation of emotions. The surroundings, regardless of the state of the facilities and the social settings, influence people's motivational levels through the emotions and actions they elicit. One of the most influential surroundings is the social one. Supportive and negative relationships within the community, family, and workplace can significantly control emotional motivation. (Krauter, 2023)

For example, the presence of emotionally supportive people, those who perceive others empathetically, and those who acknowledge others, enhances intrinsic motivation, thereby strengthening focus and attention on tasks and perpetuating and sustaining it. On the other hand, conflict and neglect take motivation away and lead to disengagement, which ultimately results in withdrawal. (Tenney, 2024)

The global context is extremely important, as it shapes the norms and values that inform global emotional responses. Global emotional response systems can be shaped through positive motivational systems and cultural narratives. Autonomous individualistic cultures tend to have positive motivational systems, while collective interdependent cultures develop motivational systems to promote social harmony and cooperative goals (Lim, 2016).

Additionally, the emotional responses to motivational systems arise from the emotional response systems of the built (architectural) and natural environments (places) in urban, rural, and residential stability (ecosystems). Positive emotional responses and motivational responses promote productivity and positive motivation. Conversely, motivational systems detract positive emotional responses through stressing the ecosystems of built (architectural) environments (Krauter, 2023).

Also, emotional drive is heavily shaped by socioeconomic factors, including resource accessibility, income stability, and others. Being able to secure these attributes will enable individuals, but being denied will lead to frustration and drive decay. Motivational drive relating to the environment lacks focus in many studies and makes the need for acceptance of environmental factors for motivational drive enhancement even more critical. These factors will help create and maintain fluid, resilient, motivational environments. (Wang et al., 2023).

2.3.5. Emotional Motivation: Insights from Neuroscience

The new developments in Neuroscience, particularly in the field of neural circuits of the brain, have enabled the study of the complex nature of emotions and the behavior of the human being driven by them. The importance of the studies lies in the emotion-driven behavior of humans, as the brain is composed of the amygdala (responsible for emotional salience), the prefrontal cortex, and the ventral striatum, which are involved in para- or superhuman behaviors and the regulation of emotions. The amygdala, fear, and pleasure. The amygdala is known for fear and pleasure and is now recognized as a central modulator of emotional responses. Also acts as a center that determines the status of emotional stimuli and serves as a hub for a motivational center, enabling people to do or make. (Cromwell et al., 2020).

The influence of emotions on decision-making and goal-directed behavior is controlled in the prefrontal cortex. It is a governing element that allows a person to

consider the emotional disruptors as they work towards a distant goal. This role assists the prefrontal cortex in addressing the emotional anomalies of the system, leveraging the brain's more sophisticated functions. In addition, the nucleus accumbens, a vital component of the brain's reward system, is of great significance for understanding the motivational phenomena associated with the pleasurable emotions that accompany reinforcement learning. The habit and preference formation that result from the pursuit of something emotionally positive explain the reward. (Tyng et al., 2017)

Technologies such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and positron emission tomography (PET) enable real-time visualization and recording of neural activity, expanding our understanding of emotional motivation and neural synchrony and connectivity, and integrating emotional stimuli and motivational outcomes. (Tyng et al., 2017)

Because of these neural pathways, students can motivate themselves and learn. Understanding these neural pathways makes it possible for us to understand more human behavior than ever before and opens the door to the development of therapy for the dysregulation of emotional motivation present in depression and anxiety disorders.

2.3.6. Strategies for Cultivating Emotional Motivation in The Classroom

Doing these actions can lead to greater emotional engagement and motivation among students to have open discussions and express their feelings towards their work. Also, students have an open partnership and work with their own peers. Also promotes an open classroom environment for student peace. Other actions can lead to greater appraisal and constructive guidance towards offers as a means of motivating completion of work. Also, to work towards their own specific individual targets with inner motivation to achieve their goal. (Djoub, 2023a; Seifer & Sutton, 2019; Reyes, 2023)

2.3.7. Conclusion: Harnessing Emotional Motivation for Effective Learning

Despite broad research on emotional motivation, these studies show that it is pivotal to students' educational experiences. The intertwining of emotions and motivation in education is vital because motivation and positive emotions of curiosity, interest, and enjoyment drive students to be more invested in their education and to be resilient towards their studies. On the contrary, anxiety and boredom negatively affect

motivation towards education and the outcomes of the education received. (Valiente et al., 2011; Cooks-Campbell, 2023)

If emotional motivation is to be embraced, then educators need to be concerned about their setting and work on their positive emotional support. Educators engage in emotional motivation to positively support students' learning, and motivational and emotional outcomes should be supported in the environment. (Weissberg 2016)

2.3.8. How Do Objectified and Tangible Participation Scores Affect Emotional Motivation?

The Objectified and Tangible Participation Scores system assumes that tangible achievement is better than intangible achievement. And continuous, tangible, positive feedback for participation is undoubtedly better than "verbal praise," which will hopefully be reflected in results.

2.4. Autonomy

2.4.1. Introduction to Autonomy in Education: Understanding the Significance

Scholars who study pedagogy have examined the importance of autonomy in educational achievement. Autonomy refers to learners' ability to control their learning and make choices. A number of educational studies have examined the role of autonomy in learning. One of the findings is that there is a correlation between the degree of autonomy learners experience and their motivation and engagement in their learning. This has been evidenced in studies where learners have the opportunity to select their learning activities and set their own learning goals. (Anthonysamy & Singh, 2023; Nascimento, 2021)

Increased engagement translates into greater ownership and responsibility in one's own learning, which results in higher effort, increased motivation, and perseverance. This responsibility also enhances the learner's higher-order thinking skills. It requires learners to reflect on their learning and the learning goals, then use those reflections to inform learning strategies, steps, and decisions to implement a self-directed learning strategy. (Avazmatova, 2022).

Besides, academic studies on self-directed learners are more innovative and creative. People are more likely to engage in creative thinking and produce original ideas when

given the opportunity to explore multiple pathways and concepts. Therefore, academic studies unequivocally assert that autonomy is fundamental to learning (Kettani, 2020; Arnold, 2006; Şakrak-Ekin & Balçıkanlı, 2019).

2.4.2. Benefits of Autonomy in Learning: Findings from Recent Research

Recent studies show that learners' independent control over their studying has many advantages. One is that autonomous learners show greater motivation and engagement. Learners who can choose what they learn, when, and how they learn are more likely to feel a sense of ownership and responsibility. Moreover, autonomy has been argued to enhance self-confidence and self-efficacy. (Ochoa, 2023; Djoub 2023b)

When learners are given opportunities to make decisions about their learning, a belief that they can influence the outcome of their learning grows. The impact of this enhanced confidence is observable in academic work and extends to other areas of life. Furthermore, enhanced critical thinking is another added value of autonomy in learning. Learners think of ideas, analyze information, and synthesize critical independent thinking. (Tajmirriahi & Rezvani, 2021; Portianyi, 2023)

They tend to participate more in complex tasks that develop problem-solving and creative thinking skills. Furthermore, autonomy fosters skills that lead to continual learning. Students' participation in decision-making related to their education helps them learn time management, goal-setting, and self-monitoring. Such skills are useful life skills that are needed outside of school. (Portianyi, 2023; Aldosari & Alsager, 2023)

2.4.3. Psychological Basis for Self-Regulation and Independent Learning

Several complex theories work together to create a foundation from which a learner can manage their learning processes. This is where self-regulation begins. One example is the theory of metacognition, which involves one's ability to self-regulate their awareness as they go through different processes and become aware of their thoughts. This awareness gives self-regulating learners the ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their engaged learning strategies, enabling them to make better adjustments. Adjustments made using metacognition techniques help set the goals that self-regulating learners want to achieve and select the strategies to accomplish those goals. Then, self-regulating learners can almost autonomously reflect on their learning to achieve greater depth in independent learning. (An et al., 2023; Ghosh, 2024)

Self-determination theory has been noted as influential concerning the phenomenon of self-regulation in education. Competence, autonomy, and relatedness constitute essential psychological needs that influence motivational engagement. When these needs are satisfied, learners are more likely to experience developed intrinsic motivation, which is fundamental to the autonomy necessary for self-directed learning. Learning, especially autonomous learning, is enhanced by a sense of ownership, responsibility, and control learners have over the learning experience. (Makhno et al., 2022; Ellikkal & Rajamohan, 2024)

In addition, self-efficacy, a component of Bandura's social cognitive theory, is a psychological phenomenon that indicates a belief in one's ability to organize and execute the necessary actions to cope. Self-efficacy suggests that learners who approach a task positively and proactively exhibit greater self-regulation. To self-regulate, learners are more likely to achieve a goal when they believe they can attain it. They persist, demonstrate motivation, and use appropriate strategies to learn. (Bai & Gu, 2022; Xu et al., 2022)

Lastly, there is the aspect of emotional control, which is also an aspect of emotional self-regulation. Being able to control emotions, particularly when facing challenges, allows the learner to stay motivated and learn in an adaptive and autonomous way. All of these psychological elements combine to provide an overall understanding of the self-regulation and independent study capacities that self-learners acquire, and the necessity of cultivating these qualities in learners in schools.

2.4.4. Strategies for Promoting Autonomy in Learning: Lessons from Academic Studies

A great deal of scholarly work has sought to understand and examine ways to promote learners' autonomy. Supporting and empowering learners to chart their own educational paths is most important. Providing choice and flexibility in learning activities is one of the most effective ways. Students are also more likely to be motivated and, consequently, more engaged in the learning process if they can choose from activities that are more closely aligned with their interests and/or strengths. (Lynch, 2023; York & Sardo, 2021)

In addition to self-assessment and reflection, which allow learners to take control of their own learning, scaffolding is also effective. It is the process of providing decreasing support as learners gain more skills to perform the tasks required. It allows learners to build their own confidence and take more control of the learning process. The use of Cooperative Learning is also reported to support the development of autonomy. (Solea, 2022; Nakata, 2014; Ochoa, 2023)

According to Ismail et al. (2023) and Aithal (2022), students become more autonomous learners through group collaboration and participation in project-based activities, learning from one another while actively engaging in decision-making. The students learn critical thinking skills and self-direct their learning. Additionally, the students' autonomy is further enhanced by a positive relationship with the teacher, where trust and respect are reciprocated.

2.4.5. Case Studies: Successful Implementation of Autonomous Learning Models

Recently, schools around the world have adopted self-directed learning models in the hope of nurturing independent learners. One example of this practice is a case study of a high school in Finland that examines its positive results. The school developed a student-directed learning curriculum that allowed learners to choose their projects and the pace of their learning. Teachers participated as guides and facilitators of learning rather than adopting the traditional role of 'teaching'. (Gupta & Gupta, 2023)

This method allowed the students to choose their own learning pathways, resulting in even greater learning engagement and motivation. The success of the practice is measured by academic results, problem-solving abilities, and learners' self-efficacy. (Kerimbayev et al., 2023)

An example is from an educational institution in Singapore, which applied self-directed learning in its engineering faculty. This case was about solving problems and innovating globally. Students were formed into teams and assigned projects focused on engineering challenges. Students were given time with industry mentors and were encouraged to complete the projects with laboratory and digital resources. Students reported elevated levels of satisfaction and creative improvements in collaboration and innovative use of tools. (Zhu et al., 2024) Additionally, the industry mentors were

connected with students and often led to jobs after graduation, thus demonstrating the sustained value of this approach.

Instructional settings have had more than one adaptation of the autonomous learning framework. In one study, the use of the learning management system's technology enabled students to self-define the objectives of the platform to optimize their learning in the language of their choice. Adaptive learning systems were implemented to ensure students were not either under-challenged or over-challenged to sustain their interest. The results of the study indicated that learners' proficiency levels and fluency in spoken language systems were significantly enhanced compared to traditional language study programs. (Lee, 2016).

The study of case studies has proven encouraging and shown the potential of autonomous learning to foster self-learning and self-determination, enabling flexible, independent insurance models. This has demonstrated self-learning and independent regulatory skills. The self-determination of learners has shown itself to be innovative.

2.4.6. Challenges and Barriers to Implementing Autonomy in Schools

Challenges and barriers to integrating autonomy into the school system are an ongoing conundrum for educators worldwide. One of these barriers is certainly the conventional educational model. A sizable portion of the traditional educational model focuses on standardized testing and a strict, predetermined curriculum, providing little support for the development of self-directed learning. The traditional educational model also includes a “one size fits all” approach, which does not allow for differentiated instruction, making it even more difficult for educators to implement supportive instruction for autonomy development. (Mansooji et al., 2022)

Another barrier is simply the lack of a teacher's unhindered autonomy development attitude. Many educators simply do not possess the professional training needed to implement and support the management of self-directed learning environments. Educators lacking the appropriate training to develop autonomy-supportive processes may struggle to strike the balance between supportive structure and necessary freedom, leading to disengagement, chronic learning gaps, and classroom management challenges. Additionally, the educational system may put barriers in place to prevent teachers from implementing self-directed learning, as these educators prefer to hold on to the old educational praxis. (Thigpen, 2023)

The impact of parental expectations on autonomy may also manifest as a lack of understanding of the autonomy of the learning process itself, especially when educators are fully trusted to implement the pedagogical approach of their choosing. In this, they push back against schools and demand a more traditional approach to teaching, one that comes with more familiar and understandable methods of learning and assessing students through foundational learning, designed curricula with predetermined measurable outcomes, and a clear set of success criteria, learning outcomes, and assessment marks/test scores.

The autonomy of students in academic environments may also be limited by the constraints schools face. The development of state-of-the-art facilities and education for independent learners requires time, funding, and a smaller teacher-pupil ratio, which is one of the main problems when schools are over budget. They restrict teachers from fully utilizing and implementing strategies that might promote autonomy in the classroom (Brown, 2022)

Lastly, we take into account learners' particular social and emotional challenges and strengths. By dissociating learning stages from the learning environment, to be effective, learning activities must be within the self-management capabilities of learners, but this is not the case, as every student walks into the school with different skills and strengths. Variables such as low self-efficacy, lack of motivation, and/or instability in the home support system will prevent the student from engaging in self-governance and will require educators to provide significant scaffolding and support. In the case of flexible learning arrangements, it is critical to understand the differences among learners and attempt to work to the edge of these differences to provide the support that invisible handholds the learners on the way to self-governance. (Stanton et al., 2021)

2.4.7. Future Directions and Emerging Trends in Educational Autonomy

Considering the transformation currently evident in educational systems, the future directions and trends in educational self-governance point to personalization in learning, increased use of technology, and more distributed governance. The trend most pronounced is the shift to differentiated learning, where self-governance gives learners the autonomy to learn at their own pace and to choose the pathways that correspond to their interests and skills. (Yasin et al., 2024)

This has been made possible by innovations in AI and data analytics that enable the design of customized learning experiences and provide learners and educators with instantaneous feedback. Thus, technology is not simply an instrument. It is the core driver of enhanced autonomy and self-directed learning. (An et al., 2023)

In addition, education is moving towards competency-based education, with the focus shifting from standardized tests to mastery of skills and knowledge application. This takes on more autonomy, as students can learn topics of their choosing in greater depth and at a quicker pace for those they have already mastered. Meanwhile, educational institutions are adopting curricular flexibility, recognizing that educational autonomy is also about inclusiveness and equity in learning environments. (Aldosari & Alsager, 2023)

In educational architecture, there is also a shift to decentralization of educational systems. This is about local schools and communities having greater autonomy over their curricula and teaching approaches. It also emphasizes the role of community involvement in education. Moreover, there is expected to be a shift in partnerships between schools and local industries to provide students with autonomy and real-world educational opportunities that support their educational and professional pathways. (Chung, 2023)

The research and predictions suggest that there will be more research and policy development in the areas of maintaining independence and balance, equitable access to personalized learning tools, and addressing the challenges of educational autonomy. However, there is a stronger indication that educational flexibility will be more inclusive in tackling societal challenges. (Yasin et al., 2024)

2.4.8. How Do Objectified and Tangible Participation Scores Affect Autonomy?

The Objectified and Tangible Participation Scores system creates an environment where optimal participation is desired, and laziness is not. Therefore, any student who is struggling will realize that their subpar involvement in lessons is undesirable for their academic achievement, leading to a drive for self-improvement.

2.5. Gamification in Online Classes

2.5.1. Introduction to Online Language Learning and Gamification

The increasing number of technological developments has made it possible for people to access technology the same way they access the internet. The rise in technology has enabled many people to learn a new language from the comfort of their homes. Due to these technological advancements in language teaching, many people can learn a new language and communicate with people from all over the world. (Inayati & Waloyo, 2022)

The increase in internet use has led significant developers to create innovative ways to learn new languages. One new innovation in language learning is gamification. Gamification is the use of game elements in real-life activities to increase people's motivation. Gamification can be used to enhance users' learning experiences across many fields, and it can do the same with the innovative ways people are learning new languages. The work of educators has been made easier through modern technologies and gamification in language learning. (Meng et al., 2024)

Gamification is one of the most interesting trends in online education as it turns the learning activity into an enjoyable game. The challenge of learning a new language is that it is a long, tedious process. As a result, people lose motivation in most language-learning processes. Integration of game learning processes into language learning and unlearning activities, as well as game elements and activities, can increase motivation and engagement. (Al-Dosakee & Ozdamli, 2021; Mohzana, 2023)

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of gamification on language learning online, based on current research in the field. By reviewing studies on gamification and current trends in the field, we intend to identify the best way to incorporate gamification into online language learning. (Rahmani, 2020)

2.5.2. Analyzing the Effectiveness of Gamified Activities in Online Language Learning

One aspect of interest to researchers examining the impact of gamification on online language learning has been the effectiveness of gamified activities. Activities that have been gamified include points, badges, leaderboards, and challenges to captivate learners' attention. The purpose of which is to facilitate the motivation of the learners and increase their engagement in the learning of the language. (Inayati & Waloyo, 2022; Thurairasu, 2022).

In the domain of online language learning, several studies have reported positive effects of gamified activities. For example, there is a body of research that has noted (and documented, too) that gamified activities enhance and even foster motivation and engagement of learners by creating a fun, interactive learning experience, thus enhancing a sense of achievement and providing immediate feedback. The use of gamification has been observed to improve learners' language skills, as it encourages extensive, even more frequent practice. (Bevins & Howard, 2018; Lussier, 2024; Garland, 2015).

Also, it has been noticed that, given the preferences and unique styles of each learner, and to make language learning more enjoyable and personalized, language learning can be gamified. Language learning tasks can be gamified and enriched with competition, collaboration, exploration, and storytelling to create a dynamic, motivating, and immersive learning experience for learners (Lussier, 2024).

In the end, motivation and engagement retention, as well as learners' proficiency, are enhanced through gamified activities. Online language learning has been studied to be positively influenced by. This is why it has been recommended that gamification should be involved in the online language learning courses of educators to improve the experience that learning occurs in and make it more effortless for the learners (Yunus & Hua, 2021).

2.5.3. Understanding the Benefits of Gamification in Language Acquisition

Gamification has effectively changed online language studies for the better, benefiting from the numerous advantages of language acquisition as learners engage in more effective learning journeys through fluently designed, motivating, and fun language-learning platforms (Koeltzsch & Stadler-Heer, 2021).

The motivation and engagement of language learners at the peak of competency and appreciation of the language are perhaps the most remarkable outcomes of gamification in language acquisition. The level of motivation has a direct correlation with increased interaction in language application, persistence in language practice, and motivation. The feedback from the language practice model on motivation has a direct correlation with the degree of improvement in language proficiency; the greatest change was observed on gamified language platforms (Yavuz et al., 2020).

The use of learning tools to learn something new and to support gamification also improves the learning experience, immersion, and the tools learners interact with. By having fun and learning a new language, learners can use skills in fun, active, practical, and real-life scenarios, while the language is embedded in the games. This way not only helps reinforce the learning of a new language but also the critical and creative use (Wen, 2023).

In addition, the advancement of gamification primarily focuses on developing a sense of achievement and accomplishment among learners as they progress through the various levels of achievement or receive rewards for completing tasks/company objectives. Such feelings of accomplishment greatly enhance learners' positive feelings of accomplishment and self-worth, as well as their positive feelings toward gaining command over a language, socially and practically (Shen et al., 2024).

Also, this understanding of the positive aspects of the gamification of the language acquisition process. Stresses the ability to significantly alter the process of individualized online language-learning programs to become more sophisticated, interactive, and ultimately more useful for teaching learners the desired language.

2.5.4. Strategies for Implementing Gamification in Language Learning Platforms

For the incorporation of gamification regarding educational programs, data from October 2023 must be used as proof. Implementing gamification requires incorporating motivational theories related to educational design. The simple addition of gamification features such as points, levels, badges, and leaderboards can motivate the students. The gamification elements are motivational within the educational sphere as they provide feedback and foster competition (Hadi Mogavi et al., 2022).

Within the framework of educational gamification, the development of game-based activities is particularly important. The development of these activities must be aligned with the course's objectives. In language acquisition, activities can focus on vocabulary and grammar, as well as on incorporating role games and language puzzles (Hadi Mogavi et al., 2022).

Also, the learners must have chosen their own adventure routes in their gamified experiences. The pathway customization should allow learners to choose their learning route, set goals, and view their own custom outcome displays for the chosen learning pathway. Progression through the levels of gamification should be reflected in increasingly vivid gaming aesthetics, with graphics updated and new themes introduced to the gamified learning journey. The games should be tunable in both content and level of difficulty, so the educator can tailor the gamified content to learners' needs (Li et al., 2023).

On the other hand, the social aspect of gamification is also evident in language-learning games. If students team up to complete levels and win rewards together, they can enhance the gamified community aspect. Social-level dynamics can enable competition, allowing learners to form their own teams and set themselves to unlock levels and win prizes to complete other levels faster. A supportive peer feedback structure can gamify the social community, fostering the development of supportive communication skills (Hadi Mogavi et al., 2022).

In conclusion, designing effective gamification is a complex process, or rather, implementing gamification in educational software. A strategic approach is needed in designing games and learning objectives; personalization and social features of gamification must retain educational focus. If these elements are achieved, learning

experiences can be greatly enhanced through educational gaming in language learning (Mohzana, 2023).

2.5.5. Common Challenges Faced When Implementing Gamification Strategies

One of the most prominent difficulties in implementing gamification strategies in online language learning classes is resistance from students unaccustomed to such pedagogical approaches. Some learners think that using games is not an effective teaching strategy and prefer other non-gaming teaching styles instead. Convincing these learners that gamification increases engagement and motivation and helps in retaining the taught information is difficult (Hildebrandt, 2020; Al-Dosakee & Ozdamli, 2021).

Another challenge is finding the position of balance between educational value and fun. Gamified learning and teaching activities should be fun, interactive, and not deviate from the course learning objectives. Balancing both takes design, planning, and creativity (Hildebrandt, 2020; Al-Dosakee & Ozdamli, 2021).

Another challenge is the difficulty of integrating gamification into online language learning classes, where teachers spend considerable time creating and adapting game-based activities to fit their curriculum. This could involve training on the best use of gamification and how to anchor it into learning to make it better, not worse (Hildebrandt, 2020; Al-Dosakee & Ozdamli, 2021).

2.5.6. Overcoming Resistance and Engagement Issues in Online Language Learning

A small number of students engage in online language learning under gamified conditions because of initial hesitation regarding pseudo-gaming in the core of the learning process, coupled with the perception of gaming as unworthy of serious language learning (Inayati & Waloyo, 2022; Huseinović, 2023; Alsawaier, 2018). Also, there might be resistance to gamification among students unfamiliar with its use in pedagogy compared to the regular flow of lessons.

Educational gamification to enhance language learning, its learning outcomes, and the educational process practiced in many learning institutions, for which students' course outcomes were highlighted in the lesson, could, to some degree, minimize the resistance and disengagement situation (Huseinović, 2023).

The response to the foregoing concerns can be greater educational empowerment and incorporation of learners' suggestions in the design of educational games since studies in the same area have shown, augmented gamified activities of greater educational value, and offered learners opportunities to engage in the learning process and overcome the resistance and motivation problem to participate in the lessons offered (Saleem et al., 2021).

2.5.7. Strategies for Successfully Integrating Gamification into Online Language Learning Classes

Educators should customize game mechanics to the learning objectives to incorporate gamification into an online language class. It is also controversial to suggest that one design games to aid in the practice of target language skills before the student needs to master them. Relaxed practice needs to come first before high-stakes practice is attempted. It is also essential to use the game framework to help learners understand their learning pathway and set personal goals. This will enable learners to acquire specific skills and knowledge, helping them gain mastery and confidence (Hildebrandt, 2020; Al-Dosakee & Ozdamli, 2021).

As learners progress, use the games to help them obtain target language skills and share them with their classmates. Gamification will help learners master the language. Create a framework game where students can collaborate to achieve language milestones. Competition should also be built into the games. This will increase the use of the language and help learners master it. Set clear practice objectives and provide feedback to help them manage their learning (Hildebrandt, 2020; Al-Dosakee & Ozdamli, 2021).

In summary, continuous assessment and effective communication reflect thought-out planning and will facilitate the integration of gamification into online language learning. Language learning outcomes can be improved through gamification when the educator clearly sets language and learning objectives.

2.5.8 How Do Objectified and Tangible Participation Scores Affect Gamification in Online Classes

This approach matches flawlessly with the principles of gamification. The participation points form a progressive reward system that students can collect and advance in. Motivating them to participate in each class leads to greater participation and performance.

2.6. Participation in Online Classes

2.6.1. The Importance of Participation in Online Language Learning Classes

All students are encouraged to actively engage in class discussions. Students improve their communication and language proficiency as they practice and receive feedback from peers and teachers. Active students learn more effectively in lessons because they can receive instruction in a feedback loop. Overall, active engagement provides students with opportunities to improve their proficiency levels without the teacher leading, creating a more hands-off and adaptive learning environment (Wu, 2023; Lama, 2022).

Students can connect with their peers and teachers across multiple platforms. Ease of interactivity improves overall engagement in the class and develops a sense of community within the learning environment. Students can provide peer-to-peer instructional support, which motivates the other active learners to learn and promotes their active engagement with the material (Du et al., 2022).

Additionally, learner autonomy and self-regulation are enhanced when learners participate in distance education language courses. When learners participate through discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and/or idea or resource sharing, they tend to become more involved in the learning. This, in turn, is more likely to motivate learners to independent language acquisition outside classroom activities and to develop better individualized and successful learning techniques (Olaya & Mora, 2022; Peng, 2021).

Participation in the classroom context also enhances the classroom outcomes. While learners collaborate in the classroom, they are likely to notice improved achievement. These outcomes are also used to support teachers' longitudinal pedagogical improvements (Peralta, 2023).

2.6.2. Motivation and Engagement: Key Factors in Student Participation

Motivation and engagement directly impact the extent to which students participate in online language learning classes. Evidence indicates that students, in the learning process, are motivated and engaged, so they participate in and complete tasks, and learn better (L. Arcipe & Balones, 2023).

Motivation is foremost among the factors that determine students' willingness to engage with the course material and to communicate with each other. Motivation in online language learning classes may be intrinsic (rooted in personal interest or enjoyment of the content) or extrinsic (driven by grades or other external rewards). Those students who are motivated intrinsically are more likely to engage in discussions, complete assignments on time, and participate in self-directed learning (Argudo-Serrano et al., 2023).

Attention can be defined positively, in terms of the student's cognitive engagement in the educational process, i.e., effort and persistence. Attention will be translated into students' participation in class, interaction and exchange within the group/cooperative engagement, and the application of self-directed learning. Highly self-directed students will be more motivated, excel in asynchronous online classes, and eventually be more self-directed in managing their time, defining objectives, and focusing on their accomplishments (Singh et al., 2022).

In summary, motivation to learn and student engagement (i.e., time on tasks) will affect student participation, while a nurturing learning atmosphere will increase motivation to learn. This is what educators, more particularly online educators, must aim for. Focusing on motivation and student engagement will most likely increase participation and improve learning outcomes from the online language courses (Argudo-Serrano et al., 2023; Sun & Mu, 2023).

2.6.3. The Advantages of Participating in Online Language Classes

With the growing trend of online education, research has begun to uncover the benefits of taking online classes in different languages. Several studies have examined atypical features of online language instruction, including learners' satisfaction, academic outcomes, and the level of second-language acquisition (Yilmaz, 2021).

The flexibility of online language classes is one of the most studied advantages (research). Students can access the materials and participate in classes and lessons at any time, and they can learn the course from anywhere in the world as long as they have an internet connection. This helps accommodate language learning into their already tight schedules, and for working adults and other busy individuals, it becomes more accessible (Berdina, 2023).

Higher levels of student engagement have been observed in online language classes compared to in-person classes. The motivation of learners to participate in collaborative, multimedia-enhanced activities can be structured in most online courses (Cong-Lem 2018; Berdina 2023; Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006). The self–regulation and autonomy of online language learners are found to be higher than those of their counterparts in face-to-face classes.

Additionally, several studies show that students enrolled in online language courses achieve results equal to or better than those of students taught in a brick-and-mortar classroom. Students in online courses receive personalized feedback on their performance and assignments; these factors may explain their superior performance in the class. (Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006)

To sum up the above information, academic studies on online language classes demonstrate that the courses are beneficial for students who want to improve their language skills in a flexible, engaging, and useful way (Schaffner & Stefanutti, 2022).

2.6.4. Benefits of Participating in Online Language Classes: Insights from Scholarly Research

Numerous studies demonstrate the benefits of online language classes. One of the major benefits is the flexibility that online classes provide. Studies show that learners enjoy the capacity to study when they want and the freedom to do so with a level of autonomy. This is especially advantageous for learners with other time-consuming commitments, as they do not have to adapt to a fixed language class schedule (Batham-Hendrei, 2023).

Moreover, online language classes offer far greater opportunities for individualized instruction than conventional classes. Online studies of learners in classes show that they have more access to individualized instruction and greater super instructional

contact than is commonly found in traditional language classes. Additionally, they enjoy the availability of educational affordances (such as educational chatbots, multimodal instruction, and sophisticated interactive worksheets). This is more likely to produce meaningful learning, as teachers can fine-tune instruction to learners (Pikhart et al., 2023; Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006).

Improved communication skills are another advantage of joining virtual language courses. Research indicates that in online courses, students communicate more with fellow learners and instructors than in conventional face-to-face classes. This is due to peer-to-peer communication on discussion boards, in group assignments, and through virtual breakout rooms. Consequently, students in virtual courses can improve their communicative skills and writing in the target language and gain other important skills that facilitate communication across cultures. (Mozafaripour, 2024)

In general, there is much evidence suggesting that joining online language classes offers flexible, customized learning and results in better communication skills. By harnessing these skills, learners can improve their proficiency in the language and achieve their desired objectives at a much higher rate than in a traditional classroom environment.

2.6.5. Academic Insights on Promoting Engagement in Virtual Classrooms for Language Acquisition

For learners to actively participate in virtual classrooms and facilitate language acquisition, diverse types of academic insights are required. One is developing a community and a sense of belonging as learners in a virtual space. Studies have shown that online learners engage with course content and participate in discussions to a greater extent when they form community and connections with their peers and instructors (Ameen & Najeeb, 2023). The presence of virtual learning classrooms fosters this sense of community by implementing collaborative learning activities, group projects, and online discussions.

The third element is to have learners capture learners' attention and make the content engaging. As with other online language courses, virtual classrooms are expected to offer a variety of multimedia resources, including videos, podcasts, and interactive exercises, to sustain learning motivation. Along with these, for students to enjoy and gain satisfaction from the experience, the use of gamification, such as quizzes, badges,

or leaderboards, is encouraged to encourage active participation and make the learning experience more valuable (Praheto et al., 2020).

In addition, online language-learning engagement depends on how quickly feedback is provided. Academic research shows that instructors need to provide feedback on evaluated reflective writings to help students understand their academic progression and improvement. Moreover, students are more likely to engage with course content when feedback is provided personally (Ramadan Elbaioumi Shaddad & Jember, 2024).

In their online classrooms, instructors can fully engage and accommodate learners from diverse backgrounds and learning interests by implementing the above-mentioned academic research findings. A continuing community, updated course content, and feedback allow educators and learners to capitalize on their efforts and provide a more engaging learning experience in online foreign language courses (Phuc, 2022).

2.6.6. Strategies for Overcoming Hurdles and Enhancing Engagement in Online Language Learning from Academic Studies

Academic research has identified ways to break down barriers to participation in online language learning. The first is introducing collaborative activities. If teachers design a participatory learning space that incorporates group work, forums, virtual language exchanges, or students' multimedia artefacts, they will likely sustain higher levels of engagement (Anane, 2024).

Finally, students' participation in online language is more likely to be sustained through ongoing support, in the form of timely feedback, so that students can complete activities (or learning modules) at their own pace. This can be done through online technology, with, for example, quizzes, forums, or even video conferencing (Derakhshan & Fathi, 2023; Brame, 2016)

Also, establishing community-support strategies within the online classroom demonstrates that engagement is paramount to boosting its overall appeal. There is overwhelming evidence that when students have connected community support, their overall motivation is achieved. Within the online classroom community, community support and engagement can be achieved by implementing Community prompts, community engagement through community support and participation on discussion

boards, participation in virtual study groups, and participation in community collaborative projects (Hildebrandt, 2020; Tang et al., 2023)

In addition, implementing curriculum-integrated community Support technology in the classroom shows that issues such as facilitation ease and simplified access to online community support and community-supported language studies can be simplified or entirely resolved. The enhanced use of community-supported technology education tools, including mobile app support, virtual community simulations, and social media platforms, increases the overall accessibility of community-supported education for students. (Childs et al., 2021)

In summary, the adoption of these community support strategies and community engagement within the online community supporting language studies can be enhanced in large part by adopting these strategies and by the community's support for academic insights. These community support strategies empower instructors to overcome challenges in engaging community support. (Derakhshan & Fathi, 2023)

2.6.7. Adapting Teaching Strategies for Enhanced Participation in Online Settings

For educators aiming to shift the focus to student engagement in the virtual classroom, modifying effective strategies to increase engagement in online classrooms is a multilayered and challenging endeavor. Many educational research studies have documented effective ways to stimulate students and encourage their various forms of participation, even at a distance. One means is facilitating real-time participation through various virtual platforms. For example, the use of virtual discussion forums, live polling, and breakout room tools can replicate in-person uber group and class activities and immerse students in a more authentic classroom experience. (Sriharan, 2020)

Research indicates that student participation is enhanced when educators incorporate supportive, collaborative forms of learning into their educational techniques. Peer-to-peer teaching and group learning promote a greater sense of community and a comparative mastery of the material. They raise awareness of the educator community's social accountability for a given task and enhance student participation. Hence, social presence forms a supportive foundation of online teaching. (Wu, 2023)

Also, online personalized feedback has been recognized and researched. Personalized engagement feedback on online platforms is an essential pillar of online education. It will help the students improve motivation and stay on task by recognizing their work. Teachers can adopt different digital platforms, such as personalized feedback via videos, customized comments on documents, and emails, to increase feedback frequency and quality (Spector, 2024).

On the other hand, sustaining online education engagement through the integration of videos, podcasts, and gamified interactive scenarios has transformed education. Students' education has transformed students and shaped engagement. The use of varied educational tools helps teachers support students in different learning styles. Sustaining online education engagement through the integration of videos, podcasts, and gamified interactive scenarios has transformed education. (Dyer & Dyer 2024).

2.6.8. How Do Objectified and Tangible Participation Scores Affect Participation in Online Classes

These objectified and Tangible Participation scores act as a rewarding step for each lesson. Students taking these steps feel increasingly motivated to reach for the next one, creating a positive feedback loop that encourages them to participate more and more.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This investigation conducted both quantitative and qualitative methodologies within a sequential exploratory mixed-methods framework to address the complexity of the research questions. The rationale for adopting a mixed-methods approach lies in its capacity to provide comprehensive insights: quantitative data offer measurable evidence of intervention effects, while qualitative data contextualize and explain participants' experiences and attitudes. The convenience sampling method was used to select a population of 112 university students. Data-gathering methods included semi-structured interviews, online homework, and final examinations, with qualitative data analyzed through conventional content analysis and quantitative data analyzed using relevant statistical methods. The following subsections provide additional detail regarding the research design and methodological procedures.

3.2. Research Design

This study used a mixed-method design. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) state that qualitative research focuses on the social construction of reality, with the intricate connection between the researcher and the participant, while in quantitative research, the connection is relatively distant and causal relationships between variables are the focus. Qualitative and quantitative research, in the view of Newman et al. (1998), should not be seen as distinct, isolated entities with no connection, but rather as opposite sides of a continuum. According to Creswell (2014), mixed methods are placed at the center of the continuum as they incorporate elements of both.

This study used a quasi-experimental non-equivalent groups design, with one experimental group and one control group. Here, the control group serves as a baseline for the experimental group. The control group has not received the particular intervention (GOPS), while the experimental group has. The outcomes of the two groups are compared after the intervention to assess the intervention's effects.

3.3. Research Population, Setting, and Sampling

The data was collected in a foundation university in Istanbul, Türkiye. Participants were second-year students from the academic programs such as dietetics, psychology, speech therapy, midwifery, occupational therapy, nursing, and computer engineering, and whose primary language of instruction in their programs is Turkish.

The sample consisted of 112 students, who were split into four classes. In each of the experimental classes, students were divided into groups of 29 and 28, and in each of the control classes into groups of 27 and 26. To analyze the data, classes were merged into an experimental group of 57 students and a control group of 55 students.

Participants were selected using convenience sampling. In Lacroix (2009), convenience sampling remains the most common type of non-probability sampling in L2 research due to its ease of organization and location. Participants' gender was not equally represented since 83 were female and 29 were male, alongside their ages being mostly in the range of 20 to 25 years. While the primary study population was established through convenience sampling, the qualitative subsample (n=10) was selected using simple random sampling. The students were given details indicating that their participation was voluntary and that there would be incentives for participation, while there were no penalties for not participating. The control classes were assigned to other teachers, while the experimental classes were taught by the researcher.

3.3.1. Justification of Sample Size for Qualitative Phase

For the quantitative part of the study, the researcher chose a sample of 112 students to achieve adequate power. However, for the qualitative part, the study focused on a subsample of 10 students. Such sample sizes are suggested by explanatory sequential mixed-methods designs, as the qualitative part is meant to explain and add depth to the quantitative part (Creswell, 2014).

In addition, considering the homogeneity of the members of the experimental group in age, proficiency, and educational background, saturation, that is, the point at which the interviews do not yield new codes or themes, was also achieved in these ten interviews. This also resonates with Guest et al. (2006), suggesting that, for research with high homogeneity, saturation can occur in the first 12 interviews. Hence, the number of students interviewed was sufficient to address the research question while avoiding data redundancy.

3.4. Data Collection and Instruments

3.4.1. Final Exams

All students took standardized departmental exams. In Term 1, students took exams coded IC5_*L2*_T1to8A and IC5_*L2*_T1to8B. IC5_*L2*_T1to8A/B and IC5_*L2*_T9to16A/B were given in Term 2. The Term 2 exams were particularly focused on the latter content (T9to16). The exams were each worth 50 points: 25 from the writing section and 25 from the speaking section. Students had 50 minutes for the writing section of the exam.

3.4.2. Online Homework

Cambridge One was used to set homework for students in this class. Books were assigned to students so they could log in to their accounts, and practice activities were assigned for each unit to practice various skills, such as vocabulary and grammar.

3.4.3. Scoring Tests and Homework

The OMR (Optical Mark Recognition) system was used to score the multiple-choice sections of the exams. The course instructor assessed the writing and the speaking sections. The writing section was graded using a 5-item rubric, where each item was scored out of 5 (25 points total). The same was done for the speaking section, where a different rubric out of 25 points was used. Rubrics are in Appendix E and Appendix F. Homework was automatically scored by the Cambridge University Press platform. The researcher compared the scores to identify any discrepancies and found none.

3.4.4. The Interviews

The interviews were conducted within the same week, in the same foundation university, after the study was conducted in 2022. Participants were selected with a simple random sampling method. The researcher used a random number generator to select 10 students from the experimental group. The interviews were conducted in Turkish, the students' native language, to help them express themselves fully. And then they were translated into English by the researcher for the study.

The questions were:

1. Did you feel like you learned more in classes?

2. Did you enjoy the classes more?

3. Did you start enjoying learning English more?

4. Did you start engaging with the English language more on your own?

5. Did you do your homework assignments?

6. Why didn't you do your homework assignments?

The interviews took approximately ten minutes each. After the students' detailed answers, they were asked to summarize each answer into 3 sentences. The researcher noted it for later analysis using conventional content analysis.

3.5. Implementation of the Study

The study spanned two academic terms. For two hours a week, both the experimental and the control groups used the Interchange Level 2 (5th Edition) textbook and attended a General English course. While the researcher instructed the experimental group, the control group was supervised by a colleague with the same level of experience.

The lessons were all conducted through Microsoft Teams. No treatment was given to either group in the first term (8 weeks) to establish a baseline. In the second term (8 weeks), the experimental group received the experimental treatment (GOPS), and the control group remained treatment-free.

During the second semester, each student in the experimental group was assigned a confidential, individualized, and tangible passcode, which the researcher kept private. These passcodes were generated using the LastPass password generator. The password generator's settings were configured to produce easy-to-read codes, so the codes contained lowercase letters, uppercase letters, and numbers, while excluding symbols for user friendliness. Students were observed during both the instruction and practice phases of the lessons, and if a student participated in a given week, they were given one character (a letter or number) of their passcode. In the speaking exam, students could show their passcodes, which they had completed, or show part of their codes to receive up to 8 points, which were added to their final score.

3.6. Data Analysis Procedure

The process of exploring, filtering, transforming, and visualizing data to glean insights is known as data analysis. It is essential to every scientific endeavor. Quantitative data were analyzed through IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27). Conventional content analysis was used for the lesson records, and students' interview answers were used for the Qualitative analysis.

3.6.1. Quantitative Analysis

The research hypotheses were subjected to quantitative testing through a value- and resource-efficient approach to data collection and analysis. To ensure the research results were reliable and minimize the risk of erroneous results, the researcher meticulously constructed the data set. This consisted of checking the data set for erroneous entries through data cleaning, checking for missing values through data re-coding, and checking variable compositions to ensure variables were set up correctly to derive variables that would aid in analyzing the specific relationships of interest.

When building the data set for the statistical analysis in SPSS, the Mann-Whitney U test was chosen. This test is a nonparametric test useful for testing the hypothesis of a difference in means between two independent groups. This is typically the case when the variable of interest is either Ordinal or Continuous, but the values do not follow a normal distribution. In this case, because of the relatively small sizes of the sample and the distribution of the scores, which did not satisfy the stringent normal distribution assumptions, the Mann-Whitney U test was considered the most suitable alternative for comparing the control and the experimental group's post-test scores (Pallant, 2020).

3.6.2. Qualitative Analysis

The interviews were analyzed using conventional Content Analysis. Following the guidance provided by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), the analysis did not employ predetermined categories and instead offered an inductive approach to the data, allowing key themes to surface. Environmental factors were also considered to provide greater context for the themes.

To examine the study's analytical rigor, the counts for each theme were analyzed. This activity brought to the forefront the different-sized voices within the data. By counting

instances of different codes, this study highlighted the opinions held by the majority of respondents and those that were less popular.

The analysis was documented in a standard format, which included the following:

1. Data Immersion: All the interviews were transcribed and, for the purpose of immersion in the data, the researcher re-read the transcripts several times to gain an overall feel for the data.

2. Coding: Without using a priori categories, codes were constructed inductively from the data. Words and phrases illuminating participants' motivations and autonomous concerns were identified and coded from the data.

3. Categorization: The codes were sorted into groups reflecting the same constituents and the relationships among the constituents.

4. Theme Development: The categories were integrated to create the themes, which were included in the results section of the study, e.g., "Passcodes as a motivator" and "Integration of English into daily life."

5. Quantification: Finally, the researcher counted the themes in order to show the extent to which a particular opinion was held by a substantial number of students in the population sample.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

The results section of this thesis presents the findings of the study on increasing participation and language performance in online English learning classes with GOPS. The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather and analyze a data set from a sample of 112 students/participants. The study's conclusions have implications for comprehending the mechanisms underlying these correlations and may guide treatments meant to enhance EFL outcomes. The researcher will provide a detailed presentation of the study's findings in the sections that follow.

1. Do gamified objective participation scores (GOPS) increase language performance?
2. Does GOPS increase homework performance?
3. Does GOPS increase participation?
4. Does GOPS increase emotional motivation?
5. Does GOPS increase autonomy?

4.2. Quantitative Results

4.2.1 Tests of Normality

First, normality tests were conducted to check the data, which indicated non-normality; therefore, instead of an independent t-test, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to assess significance. Here are the normality tests with histograms:

Table 4.1. Tests of Normality for the Control Group

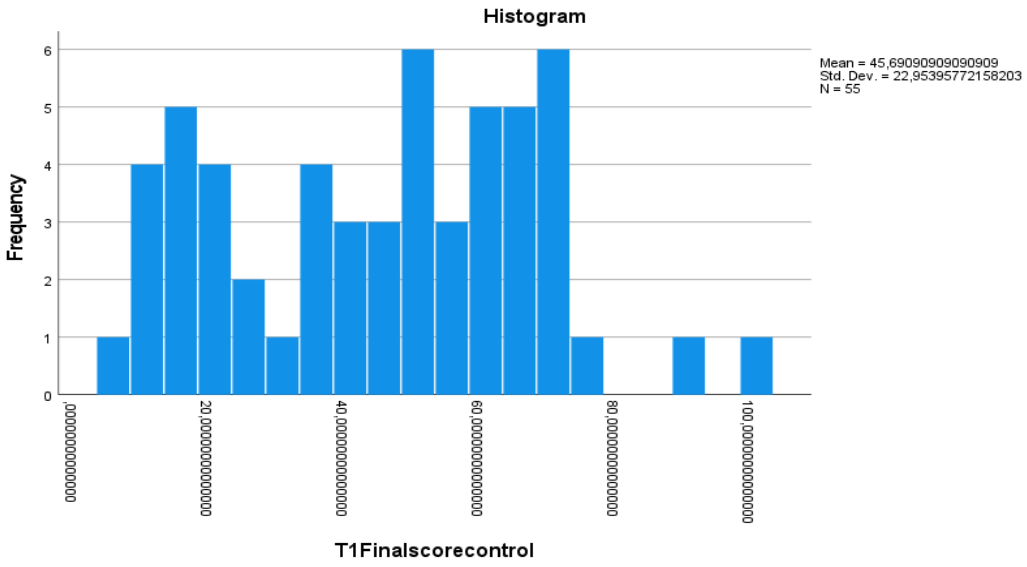
Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistics	df	Sig.	Statistics	df	Sig.
T1Finalscorecontrol	.119	55	.052	.956	55	.043
T2Finalscorecontrol	.210	55	.000	.873	55	.001
T1Homewokcontrol	.141	55	.008	.920	55	.001
T2Homewokcontrol	.105	55	.195	.933	55	.004
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

Source: SPSS v27 output

Table 4.2. Tests of Normality for the Experimental Group

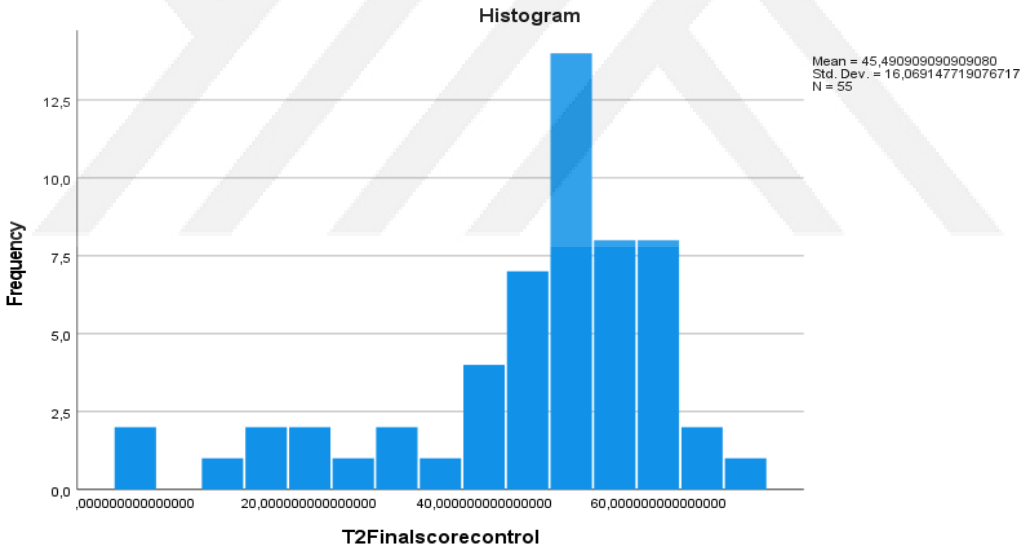
Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistics	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
T1Finalscoreexp	.167	57	.000	.921	57	.001
T2Finalscoreexp	.238	57	.000	.898	57	.001
T1Homewokexp	.160	57	.001	.922	57	.001
T2Homeworkexp	.196	57	.000	.838	57	.001
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

Source: SPSS v27 output



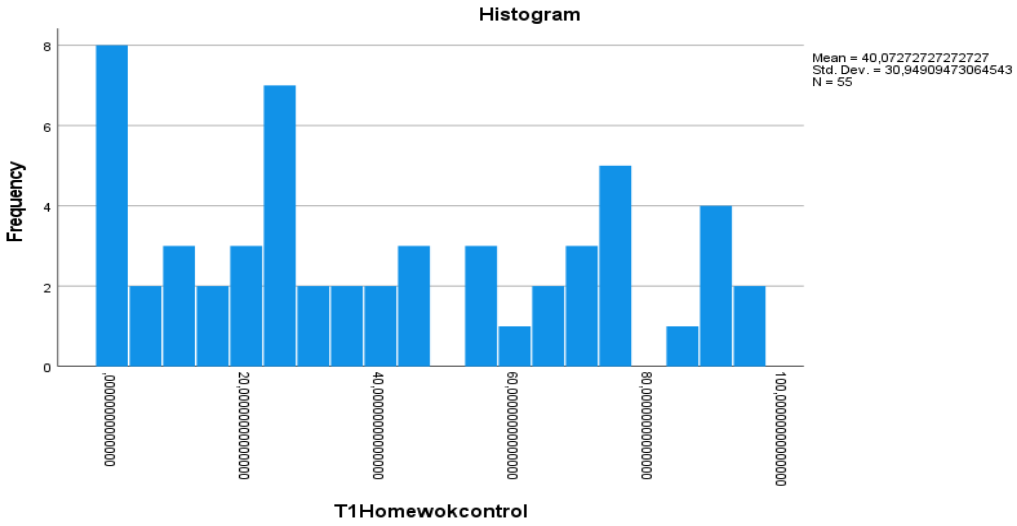
Graph 4.1. Histogram of Normality for Term 1 Final Score: The Control Group

Source: SPSS v27 output



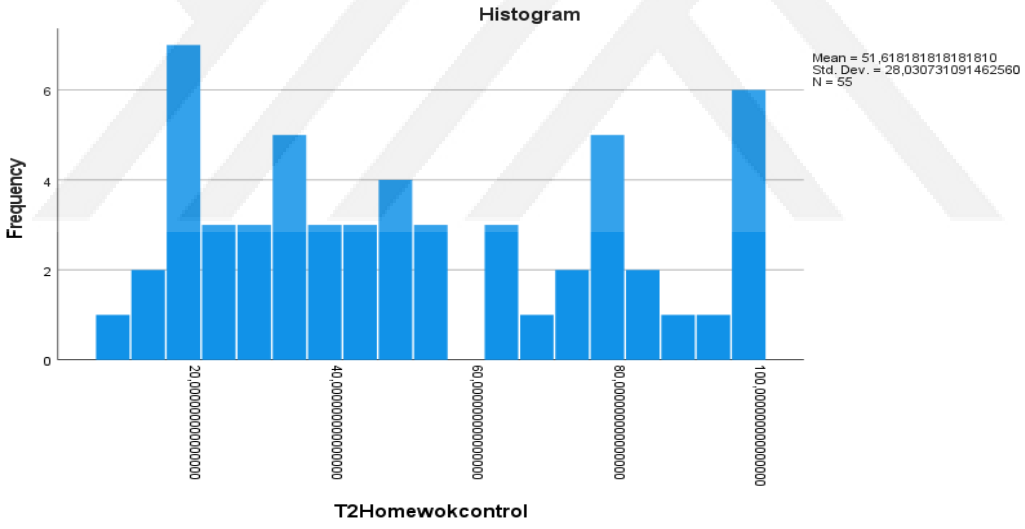
Graph 4.2. Histogram of Normality for Term 2 Final Score: The Control Group

Source: SPSS v27 output



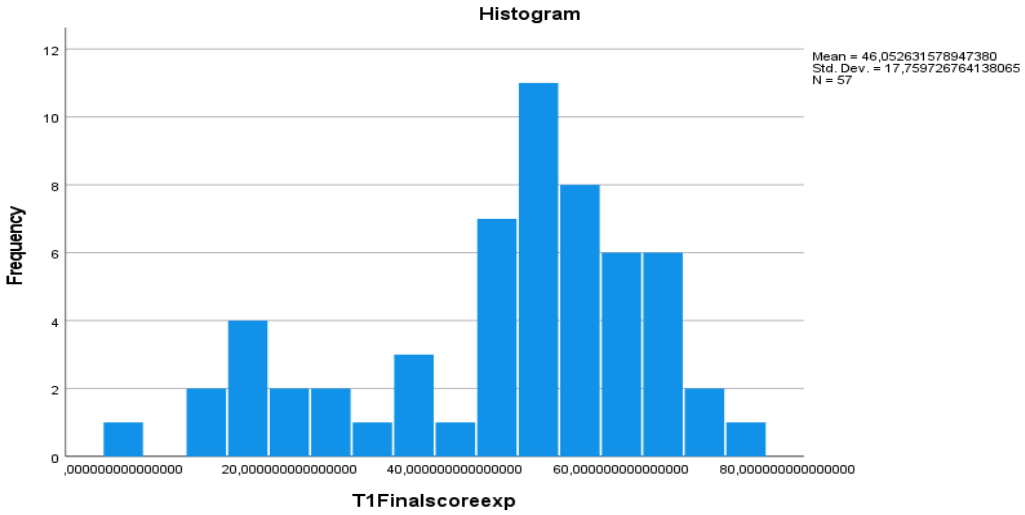
Graph 4.3. Histogram of Normality for Term 1 Homework Score: The Control Group

Source: SPSS v27 output



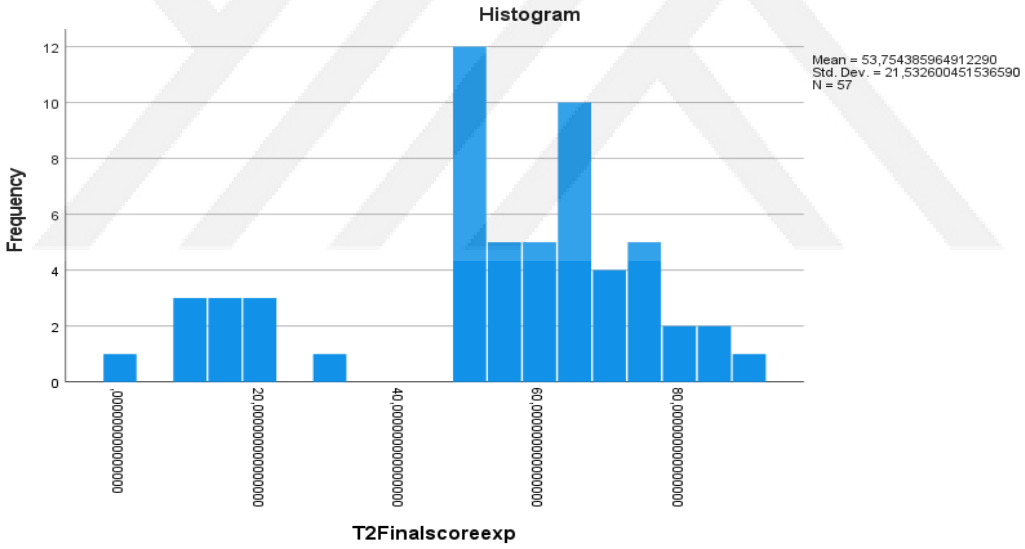
Graph 4.4. Histogram of Normality for Term 2 Homework Score: The Control Group

Source: SPSS v27 output



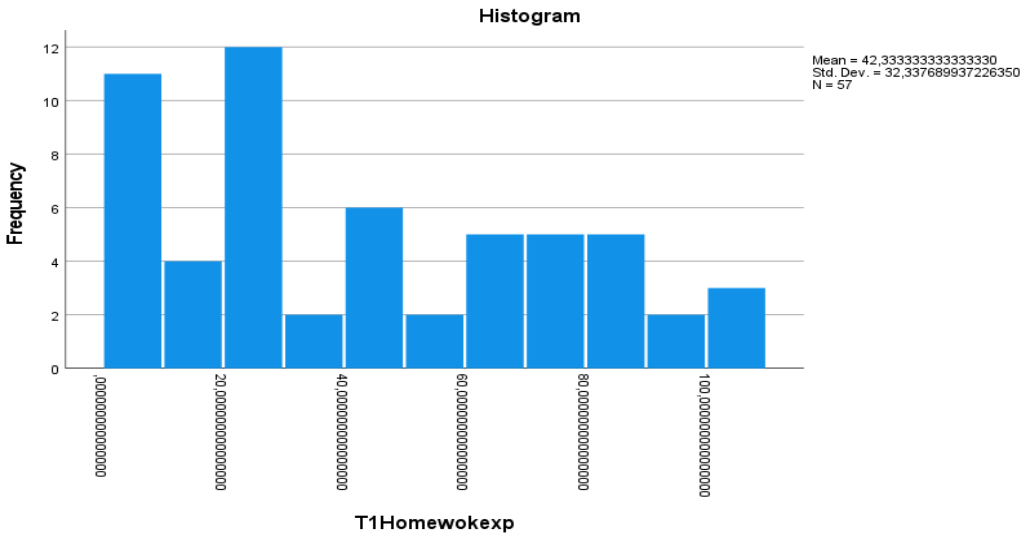
Graph 4.5. Histogram of Normality for Term 1 Final Score: The Experimental Group

Source: SPSS v27 output



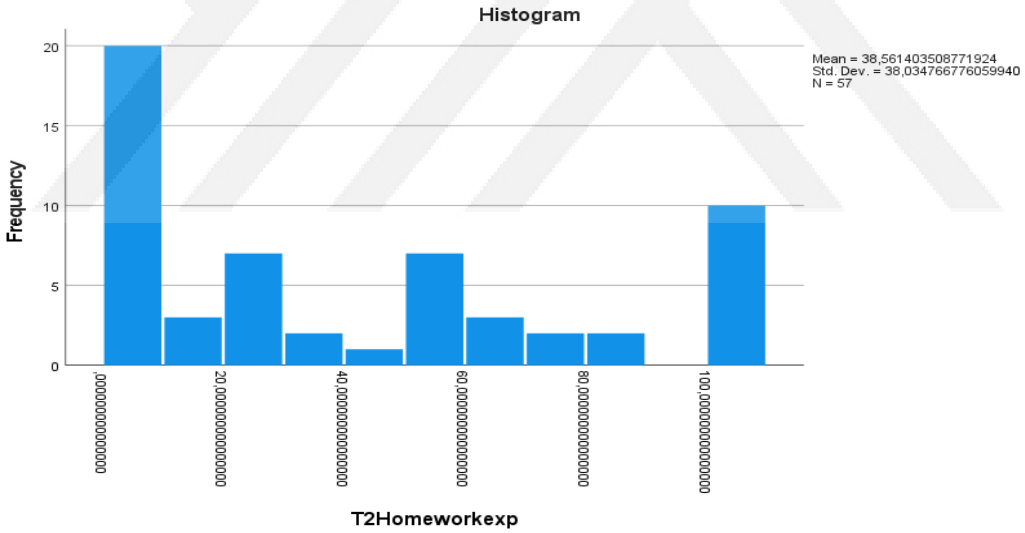
Graph 4.6. Histogram of Normality for Term 2 Final Score: The Experimental Group

Source: SPSS v27 output



Graph 4.7. Histogram of Normality for Term 1 Homework Score: The Experimental Group

Source: SPSS v27 output



Graph 4.8. Histogram of Normality for Term 1 Homework Score: The Experimental Group

Source: SPSS v27 output

As shown by the Shapiro-Wilk significance scores ($p < .05$), the results are not normally distributed. These results justify the use of non-parametric tests to achieve a more robust result.

4.2.2. Quantitative results for research question 1

The research question was "Do gamified objective participation scores (GOPS) increase language performance?" The results indicate a positive correlation. The data regarding the question is as follows:

After completion of the normality tests, a Mann-Whitney U test was performed to compare the final T1 score ranks of the control group (n = 55) and the experimental group (n = 57).

Term 1 Results: $U = 1549.00$, $Z = -0.10$, $p = .914$ (two-tailed). There was no statistically significant difference between the final score ranks of T1 in the two groups. This shows that, at the beginning, the groups had the same level of achievement.

Term 2 Results: A different test was used to determine the final score ranks for T2. $U = 1225.50$, $Z = -1.99$, $p = .046$ (two-tailed). This was a statistically significant difference. That is, students in the experimental group had higher final T2 scores than students in the control group.

Table 4.3 presents the descriptive statistics for the control and experimental data for the two terms. In term 1, baseline data showed that the two groups had nearly identical language ability scores, with the experimental group averaging 46.05 (SD = 17.75) and the control group averaging 45.69 (SD = 22.95). The difference in the average scores of the two groups (0.36) suggests that they had the same level of language ability at the start of the study. However, term 2 scores show the two groups have now begun to move in different directions. While control group scores had no notable change, with an average of 45.49 (SD = 16.06), the experimental group mean score increased dramatically to 58.01 (SD = 22.16). The experimental group advanced an average of almost 12 points while the control group continued to stagnate. The differences in scores between the experimental and control groups visually support the Mann-Whitney U test and the p value of .046, which substantiates the change in scores as significant.

Table 4.3 Descriptive Statistics of Term 1 and Term 2 Final Scores

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
T1Finalscore Experimental	57	46.05	17.75	0	100
T1Finalscore Control	55	45.69	22.95	0	100
T2Finalscore Experimental	57	58.01	22.16	0	100
T2Finalscore Control	55	45.49	16.06	0	100

Source: SPSS v27 output

Table 4.4 Descriptive Statistics of Term 1 and Term 2 Final Scores Together

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
T1Finalscore	112	45.82	20.49	0	100
T2Finalscore	112	51.86	20.32	0	100
Group	112	1.51	.502	1	2

Source: SPSS v27 output

Table 4.5 Mann-Whitney Test of Term 1 and Term 2 Final Scores

Ranks				
	Group	**N**	**Mean Rank**	**Sum of Ranks**
T1Finalscore	Control	55	56.84	3126
	Experimental	57	56.18	3202
	Total	112		
T2Finalscore	Control	55	50.28	2765.5
	Experimental	57	62.50	3562.5
	Total	112		

Source: SPSS v27 output

Table 4.6 Test Statistics of Term 1 and Term 2 Final Scores

Test Statistics[a]		
	T1Finalscore	T2Finalscore
Mann-Whitney U	1549	1225.5
Wilcoxon W	3202	2765.5
Z	-.108	-1.99
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.914	.046
a. Grouping Variable: Group		

Source: SPSS v27 output

Increased student participation, driven by gamification, in improving language performance is consistent with Lampropoulos and Sidiropoulos (2024), who conducted a longitudinal study over three years with more than 1,000 students in higher education, focusing on online, traditional, and gamified learning. They found gamification learning had higher success rates of 39%, more students at the excellence grade became 130% higher, and overall grade retention increased by 42%, as well as higher overall retention of the students at an average grade retention increase of 24%, all of which improved success rates were observed in both online and traditional learning of students. The researchers explained that this is due to improved student retention enabled by gamification.

An extensive meta-analysis (Zeng et al., 2024) synthesized 22 experimental studies between 2008 and 2023 and found that gamification had a moderately large positive effect on academic performance (Hedges' $g = 0.782$, $p < 0.05$). This work demonstrates that the use of point systems, badges, and narratives in games increases participation rates by mediating improvements in academic performance.

A common mechanism across these studies centers around gamification's ability to promote autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Feedback loops via points and badges satisfy competence, while leaderboards satisfy the related function. The autonomy, derived from the ability to make choices from the narrative and challenges, promotes sustained engagement and deeper processing of the language activity.

4.2.3. Quantitative Results for Research Question 2

The research question was "Does GOPS increase homework performance?" The results indicate a negative correlation. In fact, it decreased, while the control class increased. The data regarding the question is as follows:

Term 1 Results: There were no differences in homework scores during Term 1, as shown by the computed statistics, $U = 1517.0$, $p = 0.768$.

Term 2 Results: There was a positive, statistically significant effect on the control group, as indicated by $U = 1201.50$ and $p = 0.032$; the control group also ranked higher (mean rank = 63.15) than the experimental group (mean rank = 50.08).

Table 4.7 describes the homework submission rates for each group that participated in both terms of the study. In the first term, the groups exhibited comparable homework

submission behavior, with the Experimental group having a mean of 42.33 (SD = 32.33) and the Control group having a mean of 40.07 (SD = 30.94). The large SDs in both groups show a bimodal distribution, with a subset of students completing the majority of assignments while their peers completed few. In contrast, the Term 2 results show a notable change that shifted the balance in the Control group's favor. In the Experimental group, the means of homework submissions continued to show a decrease to 38.56, while the Control group's mean increased to 51.61. This phenomenon suggests that the gamified collaborative strategy did increase students' engagement in class activities (Table 4.3) but did not encourage — and may even have unintentionally disincentivized — students' engagement in non-collaborative independent activities, particularly homework. Such a trend may have contributed to the statistically significant result obtained with the Mann-Whitney U test ($p = .032$) and reinforced the finding that the Control group was more active in completing conventional homework.

Table 4.7 Descriptive Statistics of Term 1 and Term 2 Homework Scores

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
T1Homework Experimental	57	42.33	32.33	0	100
T1Homework Control	55	40.07	30.94	0	100
T2Homework Experimental	57	38.56	38.03	0	100
T2Homework Control	55	51.61	28.03	0	100

Source: SPSS v27 output

Table 4.8 Descriptive Statistics of Term 1 and Term 2 Homework Scores Together

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Minimum**	**Maximum**
T1Homework	112	41.22	31.54	0	100
T2Homework	112	44.96	34.13	0	100
Group	112	1.51	.502	1	2

Source: SPSS v27 output

Table 4.9 Mann-Whitney Test of Term 1 and Term 2 Homework Scores

Ranks				
	Group	**N**	**Mean Rank**	**Sum of Ranks**
T1Homework	Control	55	55.58	3057
	Experimental	57	57.39	3271
	Total	112		
T2Homework	Control	55	63.15	3473.5
	Experimental	57	50.08	2854.5
	Total	112		

Source: SPSS v27 output

Table 4.10 Test Statistics of Term 1 and Term 2 Homework Scores

Test Statistics[a]		
	T1Homework	T2Homework
Mann-Whitney U	1517	1201.5
Wilcoxon W	3057	2854.5
Z	-.295	-2.139
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.768	.032
a. Grouping Variable: Group		

Source: SPSS v27 output

Another study that reached a similar conclusion was Hanus and Fox (2015), which conducted a semester-long experiment in an undergraduate computer science course, comparing a gamified section (badges, leaderboards) with a control group. Although quiz scores rose modestly in the gamified group, self-reported homework completion fell by approximately 10%.

In another study by Hakulinen, Auvinen, and Korhonen (2015), researchers implemented badges and progress bars in an online MOOC (massive open online course). Forum participation climbed by 20%, yet assignment submission rates dipped by 5%, suggesting that while gamification can spark social interaction, it may inadvertently divert focus from core learning tasks like homework.

The increase in the control group's homework completion, unaccompanied by their final scores, can be explained by students outsourcing homework solely to accumulate the necessary grade points. Consequently, increases or decreases in homework completion cannot be directly linked to student effort.

4.3. Qualitative Results for Research Questions 3,4, and 5

Research questions were:

Does GOPS increase participation?

Does GOPS increase emotional motivation?

Does GOPS increase autonomy?

The data indicate that gamification of participation scores increases participation, emotional motivation, and autonomy.

Q1 - Did you feel like you learned more in classes?

Main themes:

Improved comprehension and retention - 70% of the students reported understanding topics faster and remembering them longer (e.g., “I understood topics much faster,” “I didn’t forget as quickly”).

Increased confidence - 40% of the students mentioned being able to explain concepts to friends or answer more questions correctly. (e.g., “I could answer more questions correctly.” “I could explain concepts to friends.”)

Positive effect of activities and games - 30% of the students linked their improvement to interactive activities that made learning easier. (e.g., “The activities helped me remember.” “The games made me focus.”)

Mixed experiences - 10% of the students noted they didn’t feel significant improvement, often citing pacing issues. (e.g., “Sometimes the pace was too fast for me.”)

Q2 - Did you enjoy the class more? (You can earn a passcode for engagement this term.)

Main themes:

Passcodes as a motivator for active participation - All students recognized the passcode as a motivator to mindfully participate. Many students talked about how this increased their engagement and enjoyment of the class (I've earned it. It pushed me to join. I wanted to make sure I got it).

Greater focus and engagement - Some students said the passcode system made them more active listeners and less passive participants in class. (I: It kept me from just sitting there quietly. It made me focus and listen more.")

Gamification - Several students experienced the passcode as a reward and thus increased movement and interactivity in the lesson. (I: Yes, because it earned the passcode as a small win. I didn't want to leave class without it.)

Q3 - Did you begin to appreciate learning English more?

Central themes:

Change in perspective towards English - 80% of the students expressed a change in attitude regarding English and a sentiment wherein learning it felt more enjoyable, rather than a chore. (e.g., It didn't feel like a chore to me any longer. "I was more positive towards English.")

Assurance and less fear of making mistakes - 30% of the students explained that they felt more at ease when it came to engaging in conversation and trying out the language. (e.g., I didn't fear mistakes that much. "I was freer in my expressions.")

Ongoing issues - 10% of students continued to experience challenges in some particular skills, regarding writing in particular, despite the fact that they had started to like English more. (e.g., ``I had a greater appreciation for English, but I found writing to be a challenge still.")

Q4 - Did you start engaging with the English language more on your own?

Main themes:

Integration of English into daily life - 70% of the students described listening to music, watching shows, playing games, or browsing online in English. (e.g., "I started listening to English songs." "I began watching series without subtitles")

Self-directed practice - 40% of the students' activities included chatting online, listening to podcasts, and watching movies in English. (e.g., "I started chatting in English with friends online." "I listened to English podcasts while walking")

Limited extra engagement - 10% of the students felt classroom learning was sufficient and did not pursue additional practice outside. (e.g., "I didn't do much outside class. I felt the lessons were enough.")

Q5 - Did you do your homework assignments?

Main themes:

Low homework completion - 80% of the students admitted they rarely or inconsistently completed assignments, often citing satisfaction with in-class learning. (e.g., “Honestly, not often.” “No, I skipped most.”)

Perception of homework as repetitive or boring - 30% of the students preferred interactive class activities over written tasks. (e.g., “Some assignments were too repetitive.” “The games in class were more fun. Homework felt boring.”)

Selective engagement - 20% of the students completed only the assignments they found interesting or relevant. (e.g., “Sometimes I did, sometimes not. It depended on my mood. I learned enough in class.” “Yes, but only the ones I liked. I skipped the rest. I focused on topics I enjoyed.”)

Q6 - Why didn’t you do your homework assignments?

Main themes:

Feeling that class activities were enough - 60% of students had the feeling that they had learned enough. (e.g., “I learned everything in class, so homework seemed pointless.” ‘The in-class activities were sufficiently practiced.’)

No motivation and variety - 30% of students described homework as unvaried, unengaging, or simply repeating. (e.g., “The tasks were boring compared to class activities. They didn’t have the same fun. I lost interest.” “I got bored. There was no variety. It was the same every week.”)

Time issues and priorities - 30% of students were using tiredness after school and other responsibilities as a contributing factor. (e.g., “I felt tired after school”. “I only did short ones”)

We work better collaboratively - 10% of students, without peer or teacher support, found it more difficult to complete homework alone. (e.g., “I didn’t like doing it alone. I had help in class.” ‘It felt more difficult.’)

The participation of the students during the classes was also analyzed to document the records of the classes. There was a decrease in the proportion of the instructor’s

questions that were not answered from about 80% to 20%. This demonstrates an improvement in participation to a considerable degree.

4.3.1. Summary of Key Findings

The present study shows how embedding gamified points for participation within language classes resulted in statistically significant improvement in three areas:

1. Overall participation in class discussions increased, with instructors' questions being answered 80% of the time.

2. Emotionally, students reported being more motivated, confident, and happy with lesson instruction.

3. Increased self-direction was also observed in the classroom and in the voluntary use of English outside of class.

Yet, gamification did not translate to more homework completion; 80% of students submitted work rarely or inconsistently.

4.3.2. Explaining Low Homework Completion

Despite in-class gains, homework completion suffered. Main reasons included:

1. Perception that class activities alone were sufficient (60%).
2. Homework is viewed as repetitive or unengaging (30%).
3. Time constraints and competing priorities after school (30%).
4. Discomfort completing tasks without peer support (10%).

These patterns mirror findings by Hanus and Fox (2015) and Mekler et al. (2013), who observed that extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic drive, especially for optional or solitary tasks. When game mechanics signal completion rather than mastery, learners may devalue written assignments and focus solely on in-class "wins."

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This research addresses a critical gap in online language education by examining how the gamification of objective participation scores influences key dimensions such as student engagement, motivation, autonomy, homework habits, and language performance in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classes. Despite the increasing prevalence of online learning environments, a chronic challenge lies in reversing the common trend of declining student participation over time. By investigating the impact of an easily accessible, personalized passcode system for awarding participation points, this study seeks to determine whether such a mechanism can meaningfully mitigate participation decline and enhance overall academic outcomes. The significance of this research rests in its potential to provide evidence-based strategies for sustaining active learning and motivation among online EFL students.

5.2. Conclusion

Using a nonparametric test (Mann-Whitney U), the quantitative analysis showed that at baseline, there was no statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups. However, at the post-test, there were statistically significant differences, and the experimental group achieved higher levels of achievement as indicated by their exam results. Thus, it is shown that incorporating gamified participation points increases learners' academic success, particularly on exams.

Qualitative results also contributed to the findings, which indicated that students feel the gamified participation system is fair and fosters positive motivation. The findings strengthen the case for the literature on gamification: students are likely to immerse themselves fully in the activity when instant feedback is provided as they progress through the learning activity. The study put a measurable metric on participation, which is an improvement over the current, vague system, and this contributed to higher student engagement.

A notable paradox emerged in the study: despite observable increases in student engagement during class and higher exam scores, overall homework completion rates did not improve and remained low. This finding suggests that while gamification

effectively enhances active participation and achievement within the synchronous learning environment, it does not necessarily translate to increased effort or motivation for asynchronous tasks like homework. One possible interpretation is that the gamified system provides immediate, in-class rewards, thus reinforcing behaviors directly tied to real-time participation, whereas responsibility for engaging in activities outside of class, which lack the same gamified incentives, is placed entirely on the students. This divergence highlights a limitation in the scope of gamification as implemented in this study, indicating that the motivational benefits may be context-dependent and may not extend to independent, out-of-class learning activities.

Overall, this dissertation offers an original contribution by empirically examining the specific impact of gamified objective participation scores (GOPS) within online English language learning classes. By evaluating a novel passcode-based participation system and analyzing its effects on student engagement, motivation, and language performance, this work extends current knowledge beyond conceptual discussions of gamification. The findings underscore that gamification, when implemented as an evidence-based and structured strategy, serves as a substantive pedagogical tool capable of enhancing multiple dimensions of online learning rather than being merely a superficial or entertainment-driven addition.

5.3. Recommendations

Considering the information and analysis provided by the study, the following points are suggested for teachers, managers, and upcoming researchers:

5.3.1. Gamify Participation Systems

Educators are encouraged to design and implement participation systems that utilize badges, points, or passcodes, with the goal of providing students with immediate and objective feedback on their engagement. For effective application, instructors should clearly define the criteria for earning these rewards, communicate the system to students at the outset of the course, and consistently monitor and adjust participation metrics based on learner feedback or challenges encountered in the online environment. Additionally, integrating these systems within a digital learning platform can streamline the awarding of badges or points, ensuring transparency and promoting sustained motivation across various online learning contexts.

5.3.2. Prioritize Professional Development

Educators need to participate in tailored training sessions focused on gamified pedagogy. Professional development training should focus on equipping teachers to design and optimize instructional materials that balance enjoyment and serious learning.

5.3.3. Pursue Inter-Institutional and Longitudinal Research

There is a gap in the available evidence concerning the impact of gamified participation systems over time. Future research should use available databases to consolidate evidence on the wide-ranging impacts of gamification across different grades, thereby strengthening evidence that is typically limited to a single semester.

5.3.4. Provide Institutional Software Support

To minimize their administrative burden, staff need access to automated systems for monitoring participation. These data could be leveraged to enhance digital formats to be more engagement-friendly, like webinars, granting educators the ability to balance their workload and minimize the risk of burnout.

5.3.5. Increase Diversity and Interactivity of Assignments and Peer Collaboration

Improving the recently documented high rate of unfinished recorded homework requires educators to abandon static, single-format worksheets. Assignments should integrate both individual and group work and allow for the same variety and dynamism of gamified lessons and may include video responses and various multimedia. Also, moderated systems of virtual “buddy pairs” should be provided to ease the single work isolation of individual assignments and allow for collaborative tasks.

5.4. Final Thoughts

It is possible to promote engagement in the classroom through gamified pedagogy which is in accordance with the concepts of competence and autonomy. However, transforming active classroom engagement into sustained independent practice requires a fundamental shift in the work assigned. Homework needs to assume a fluid character by allowing students to make choices. Future innovations, including gamified adaptive systems that personalize quests to learner profiles, or blended reality systems that reward students with online missions for in-class

accomplishments, could close the gap between active classroom engagement and independent learning.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX-A. MIDTERM AND FINAL TESTS

These tests cannot be shared because of copyright reasons. The tests can be reached by contacting https://www.cambridge.org/

APPENDIX-B. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

No	Question
Q1	Did you feel like you learned more in classes?
Q2	Did you enjoy the classes more?
Q3	Did you start enjoying learning English more?
Q4	Did you start engaging with the English language more on your own?
Q5	Did you do your homework assignments?
Q6	Why didn't you do your homework assignments?

Source: Research materials by the author, 2025

APPENDIX-C. SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Participating Student: S-04 Date: 12.06.2022 Location: Foundation University campus, Class 112. Duration: 10:18 minutes Language: Turkish (Translated to English by Researcher)

Interviewer (R): Thank you, Student 4, for attending the interview. You know that I will be recording our interview. Today, I will ask you six questions about the Term. Once you answer one question in detail, I will ask you to give the essence of your response in three sentences so that I can be more accurate in my recording. Are you prepared?

Student (S): Yes, I'm ready.

R: Question 1, Do you think you learned more this term in class than you usually did in other terms?

S: Out of all the terms, this one was definitely the most rewarding. In most grammar classes, I found I tended to zone out after 10 minutes because it was just rules. This time was different because with the GOPS system, I was forced to stay focused to earn points, meaning I paid better attention to win the games and consequently, the grammar rules stuck in my head better. As a result, I felt like I didn't even have to study that hard for the exam because I learned the material at the time of class.

R: In three sentences or less, could you summarize that answer?

S: I was kept focused and alert by the games. I learned and understood the topics significantly faster than the average pace. Because I learned the in-class material, I did not feel the need for extra study.

R: Question 2. Did you enjoy the classes more?

S: Absolutely. The passcode thing was really fun. It felt like a competition. Sitting in a class, you usually just stare at the clock, but here I was trying to answer questions. It made the environment livelier. Even my friends who usually sleep in class were raising their hands. Definitely not boring.

R: Please summarize that in three sentences.

S: The passcode system was a great motivator. It made the class feel like a competition and not just a lecture. I enjoyed the lively atmosphere.

R: Question 3: 'Did you start enjoying learning English more in general?'

S: When I was younger, English was something I thought to myself as just another subject. Another thing I had to get done; I would say, I was scared in classes. Now in the games, everyone makes mistakes, and we just laugh and keep going. I feel like English is now a skill that I can actually use in the games. But now, I feel a bit more relaxed. There is less pressure, and I feel like it's better with less pressure. And I feel less scared of my mistakes. So, the pressure is gone. Everything is so much less pressuring. I would say yes, so, yes, my perspective changed a bit.

R: Please summarize that in three sentences.

S: English now feels less like a boring chore. I feel less scared about my mistakes now. I also started enjoying learning the language more.

R: Question 4: Was there any voluntary use of English language by you apart from classroom activities?

S: Actually, yes. Because we were doing interesting activities in class, I began to listen to English playlists on Spotify more. I even made an attempt to watch an episode of a Netflix series without subtitles for a while to test my understanding, and I was able to comprehend a fair portion of it. I wouldn't have made such an attempt previously.

R: Please summarize this into three sentences.

S: I started listening to English songs. I tried to watch movies without subtitles. I started to use English in my hobbies.

R: Question 5, Did you do your homework assignments?

S: [chuckles] Well, to be honest? Not really. I mean, I did a few of them if they looked short or interesting, but I skipped most of the written assignments. I am not really a fan of filling out worksheets at home.

R: Please summarize that in three sentences.

S: I completed the homework assignments very rarely. I only did assignments that seemed interesting or short. I skipped most of the written worksheets.

R: Question 6. Why didn’t you complete your homework assignments?

S: Actually, I can think of two reasons. The first reason is simply that I'm usually very tired after school and just want to rest. The biggest reason, however, is that I felt that we did so much practice in class with the games that I didn't need to practice at home. The homework felt so repetitive. Like, writing sentences for an hour is pointless after I already used those sentences in the game and won.

R: Summarize that in three brief sentences.

S: I felt that the in-class activities were sufficient for learning. The homework assignments felt repetitive and boring in comparison to class. I was also too tired after school to complete them.

R: That concludes the interview. Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX-D. WRITING EXAM RUBRIC

Criteria	5 - Excellent	4 - Good	3 - Satisfactory	2 - Needs Improvement	1 - Poor
1. Content & Ideas	Fully on topic; original and clear ideas.	Clear and relevant ideas.	Partly on topic; some unclear ideas.	Off-topic at times; underdeveloped.	Mostly off-topic; no clear focus.
2. Organization	Strong intro/body/conclusion; smooth flow.	Clear structure; minor flow issues.	Basic structure; weak links.	Poor organization; weak paragraphs.	No structure; scattered ideas.
3. Grammar & Sentences	Almost error-free; varied sentences.	Few errors; some variety.	Noticeable errors; limited variety.	Frequent errors; awkward patterns.	Many errors; hard to understand.
4. Vocabulary	Rich, precise, topic-appropriate.	Good range; occasional misuse.	Adequate; some repetition.	Limited; frequent misuse.	Very basic; many wrong words.
5. Mechanics	Almost no spelling/punctuation errors.	Few minor errors.	Some errors affecting clarity.	Frequent distracting errors.	Persistent errors; hard to read.

APPENDIX-E. SPEAKING EXAM RUBRIC

Criteria	5 - Excellent	4 - Good	3 - Satisfactory	2 - Needs Improvement	1 - Poor
1. Fluency	Speaks smoothly with no pauses.	Minor pauses; mostly smooth.	Some hesitation; uneven flow.	Frequent pauses; halting delivery.	Very hesitant; hard to follow.
2. Pronunciation	Clear, accurate; easily understood.	Mostly clear; few errors.	Understandable with some mistakes.	Frequent errors; sometimes unclear.	Hard to understand most of the time.
3. Vocabulary	Wide range; precise word choice.	Good range; minor repetition.	Adequate range; some repetition.	Limited; frequent misuse.	Very basic; often incorrect.
4. Grammar	Almost error-free; complex structures.	Few errors; some variety.	Noticeable errors; basic structures.	Frequent errors; limited structures.	Many errors; meaning often unclear.
5. Interaction	Engages naturally; responds well.	Good interaction; minor lapses.	Adequate; sometimes slow to respond.	Weak interaction; limited responses.	Minimal or no interaction.

APPENDIX-F. SAMPLE CODEBOOK

Coder: Süha Derviş Taşcıoğlu Participant: S-04 Data Source: Summarized Interview Notes

Question No.	Question Topic	Student's Summarized Response (Raw Data)	Code / Label	Theme / Category
Q1	**Learning Perception**	"The games kept me focused and alert."	*Focus & Alertness*	**Improved Comprehension**
		"I understood the topics much faster than usual."	*Faster Comprehension*	**Improved Comprehension**
		"I didn't feel the need to study extra because I learned in class."	*In-Class Retention*	**Improved Comprehension**
Q2	**Class Enjoyment**	"The passcode system was a great motivator."	*Passcode Incentive*	**Passcodes as Motivator**
		"It made the class feel like a competition rather than a lecture."	*Competitive Fun*	**Gamification / Enjoyment**
		"I enjoyed the lively atmosphere."	*Lively Atmosphere*	**Gamification / Enjoyment**

Question No.	Question Topic	Student's Summarized Response (Raw Data)	Code / Label	Theme / Category
Q3	**Appreciation of English**	"I stopped seeing English as a boring chore."	*Shift from Chore*	**Change in Perspective**
		"I feel less fear about making mistakes now."	*Fear Reduction*	**Assurance / Less Fear**
		"Learning the language feels more enjoyable and natural."	*Natural Enjoyment*	**Change in Perspective**
Q4	**Autonomy / Engagement**	"I started listening to English music in my free time."	*Passive Exposure*	**Integration into Daily Life**
		"I attempted to watch series without subtitles."	*Active Challenge*	**Integration into Daily Life**
		"I integrated English into my daily entertainment."	*Entertainment Usage*	**Integration into Daily Life**

Question No.	Question Topic	Student's Summarized Response (Raw Data)	Code / Label	Theme / Category
Q5	**Homework Completion**	"I rarely completed the homework assignments."	*Rare Completion*	**Low Homework Completion**
		"I only did the ones that seemed interesting or short."	*Selective Effort*	**Selective Engagement**
		"I mostly skipped the written worksheets."	*Avoidance of Writing*	**Low Homework Completion**
Q6	**Reason for No Homework**	"I felt that the in-class activities were sufficient for learning."	*Perception of Sufficiency*	**Class Activities Enough**
		"The homework assignments felt repetitive and boring compared to class."	*Repetitiveness*	**Boring/Repetitive Tasks**
		"I was also too tired after school to do them."	*Fatigue*	**Time Issues & Priorities**

CV

Süha Derviş TAŞCIOĞLU

His work experience is as follows; after completing his elementary and secondary education in Istanbul, he graduated from the Department of English Language Teaching at Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University in 2021. He had been teaching at Amerikan Kültür, a language school in Istanbul, since he started university. After graduation, he worked at Atlas University for one year as a lecturer in the English preparatory school. He taught at Güngören İstanbul Ticaret Odası Kız Anadolu İmam Hatip Lisesi for three months during one summer. He then worked as an English preparatory school lecturer at Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University for two years. Most recently, he worked at Bilfen Maslak Primary and Secondary School for one year and is currently working at Lider Şişli Primary and Secondary School.