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(IJMOE)[www.ijmoe.com](http://www.ijmoe.com)TESL PRACTICUM TEACHERS' VIEWS ON THE ROLE OF  
GAMIFICATION IN ENHANCING STUDENT ENGAGEMENTIzznur Hajar Hamzah<sup>1</sup>, Sangeeth Ramalingam<sup>1\*</sup><sup>1</sup> Faculty of Education, Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Poly-Tech MalaysiaEmail: [izznurhajar@gmail.com](mailto:izznurhajar@gmail.com); [sangeeth@uptm.edu.my](mailto:sangeeth@uptm.edu.my)

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## Abstract:

Gamification is increasingly recognized as a powerful tool in education for enhancing student engagement. While many studies explore its effects on learning, few focus on the perspectives of TESL practicum teachers in Malaysian secondary ESL classrooms. As novice educators begin integrating gamification, there is a limited understanding of their perceptions, implementation strategies, and the challenges they face. This study investigates the effectiveness of gamification in improving ESL student engagement and explores TESL practicum teachers' views using a qualitative approach, involving two respondents who actively integrate gamification as a teaching tool in their classrooms. Guided by Behaviourism, Cognitive Load Theory, and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the findings offer insights into how gamification can be effectively used in ESL teaching. The study addresses a key gap in the literature by highlighting practicum teachers' real-world experiences and guides when and how to implement gamification in language classrooms. It also underscores the need for teacher training programs to better prepare future educators with practical, research-based gamification strategies. Future research should explore gamification's long-term effects, its role in specific language skills, and how it can be sustained in ESL pedagogy.

## Keywords:

Gamification, Practicum Teachers, Role, Student Engagement, TESL

## Introduction

Education is one of the foundations of world development, particularly in the times of high globalisation, when meaningfully communication, having critical thinking, and being innovative are essential. Malaysia has proposed several national education reforms in favor of

the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), including the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025), the Roadmap to English Language Education (2015-2025), and the Strategic Education Plan (2024-2030), all of which focus on enhancing English language proficiency and the adoption of digital pedagogies. UNESCO (2022) illustrates that SDG 4 facilitates inclusivity and equity in quality education in developing prospective ability on how to manage global challenges in terms of communication and critical thinking skills of learners. Gamification has become a prospective way of learning. It conforms to these policies by converting the traditional ESL classrooms to more interactive and student-centred classrooms. There are recent studies that indicate that gamification is finding its recognition in terms of being able to make a passive classroom a fully active learning experience (Vrcelj et al., 2023). Further reinforced by other educational initiatives, acts such as the Digital Education Policy (2021-2030) now recognise the potential of gamification to serve in increasing levels of learner motivation and involvement, especially in ESL speaking classes. Nevertheless, there are still a number of issues, in particular, as far as infrastructure, teacher preparedness, and curriculum integration are concerned, it is necessary to investigate how gamification is viewed and acted upon by teachers in a practical classroom environment. Although it has potential, the adoption of gamification has been hampered by both infrastructure and teacher preparation issues, especially in rural schools (Wahyuningsih, 2024).

The issue of student involvement in ESL classes is a big concern, and in the Malaysian secondary school in particular. Vrcelj et al. (2023) also found that teachers are mostly using explicit teaching methods, which include rote memory in the teaching of vocabulary. Such approaches may reduce the possibility of participation and critical thinking of active students. Lack of interaction can bring about academic failure and a lack of confidence to use English in future communication or workplaces. This would not be in line with the objective of the Roadmap to English Language Education (2015-2025), which hopes to deliver English-speaking graduates ready to assume positions in the global arena.

Thus, it is necessary to change the approach toward more interactive and student-centred learning activities, including gamification, to reach the objectives stated in the Roadmap of the English Language Education (2015- 2025). Despite the positive aspects of interactive teaching tools like gamification, little research has been done regarding teacher application and student development in learning languages (Minalla, 2023). Proficient researchers have given less consideration to the experiences of TESL practicum teachers who practice gamification in their classes, as they are done by teachers and learners jointly. The pre-service teachers have to reach a point of theory and practice in their practicum, which is consistent with the concept of reflective practice introduced by Schoen (1983). Nonetheless, the questions to be answered are what the challenges are, and the perception of these teachers as they employ gamified techniques in their classes.

This research is relevant in that it bridges a knowledge gap in the literature concerning the use of gamification by teachers in TESL practicum courses to promote student engagement during the ESL classes. Although gamification is considered a valuable strategy used to promote motivation and productive learning (Sailer et al., 2021), less studies have paid specific attention to the perceptions of the TESL practicum teachers and their practices. Since schools shift towards imparting such skills as the ability to think critically, work in teams, be creative, and autonomous, gamification is required to oppose these new aims (Voogt et al., 2021). However, teachers of English as a Second Language in Malaysia have several frequent issues of

overcrowded classrooms, insufficient resources and access to professional development (Minalla, 2023; Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2020). Consequently, gamified teaching, which is student-centred, is not well and regularly implemented in a consistent manner. Focusing on TESL practicum teachers, this study also provides insights into the initial experiences and attitudes of the teachers in the early years of their teacher practice, as it is a critical period of life that determines future teaching practices (Nguyen and Wang, 2022). Consequently, this study will be able to inform teacher education design, facilitate policy reform, and promote graffiti material development that would resonate with the Malaysian ESL environment.

Based on these implications for teacher education and instructional design, the research problem to be addressed in this research is the exploration of learner engagement using gamification as recorded by TESL practicum teachers in Malaysian high schools. The goal of the study is to explore the use of gamification by future teachers in their practicum and its effectiveness in encouraging students to be involved in the lesson. This study aims to offer practical advice to current and upcoming teachers, especially those who are preparing to undertake practicum placements, by recording the voices and experiences of TESL practicum teachers. Finally, the research also seeks to inform more dynamic and participatory ESL pedagogies that are in resonance with the objective and expected national education and 21st-century learning.

### Literature Review

The Malaysian education system comprises a primary, secondary, and tertiary level of education, and the Ministry of Education (MOE) controls policies and curriculum. Primary school begins when one is seven years old, up to the age of twelve, after which secondary education begins and lasts five years up to the age of seventeen, when one takes the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) exam. The efforts by the MOE, as expressed in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013- 2025), are oriented towards inclusivity and preparing students to meet the 21st-century demands to enable equal access to quality education irrespective of background and location. English is an important subject given that it is a world-relevant subject, which is a compulsory subject for study, and given the moderate level of proficiency in English in Malaysia, more effective teaching methods and materials are required.

Even with the centrality of the English language, there are a number of challenges that are encountered in Malaysian ESL (English as a Second Language) classrooms. Students in a lot of cases (especially in rural regions) do not have even the opportunity of practising English in any other place, which makes them not fluent or even confident (Surendran & Puspowardhani, 2020). These issues are further complicated by the fact that there are resource differences between the urban schools and rural schools, where, in most cases, the rural schools have few facilities and equipment. Heterogeneous classes and still heavy reliance on teacher-centred approaches are also hindering the effective attainment of language skills and student motivation; hence, the interest in more interesting and student-centred approaches (Tahir et al., 2025).

As a reaction to these obstacles, an increasing focus on the application of technology and innovation to the learning of ESL has been observed. Such initiatives as Frog VLE or DELIMA are meant to reform the application of ICT in schools and provide the teachers with a digital platform and a professional development opportunity. Interactive, individualized and flexible

learning is upheld by technology integration that initiates students to authentic language resources using multimedia, real-life content and conducting learning through online collaborative software. The methods not only improve language acquisition but also increase student engagement, motivation and proficiency (Low & Nasri, 2024).

The introduction of technology in ESL classes is not an easy task, though. The technological problems that teachers may encounter include technical problems, a lack of wherewithal for numerous devices, time constraints, and technical support. Attitude of students towards technology and the difference in technological competence of teachers are other barriers. To overcome such problems, specific training sessions, equal distribution of resources, and harmonious convergence of outdated and high-tech teaching methods should be adopted to develop a favorable and efficient learning process (Teo et al., 2023).

Gamification is one of the technology-based strategies that has received great potential in ESL learning. It uses aspects like points, badges and leaderboards to make conventional lessons engaging game-like experiences. Gamification helps inculcate non-aggressive competition, cooperation, and engagement among TESL practicum students and makes the process of language learning non-stressful and active at the same time. Studies by Deterding et al., (2011); Cheong et al., (2013) cited in Ahmed et al., (2023) have shown that gamification not only enhances engagement, but it also develops essential competencies such as creativity, decision making, as well as collaboration, which are all critical not only to the learning process but also future teaching profession.

Behaviorism, Cognitive Load Theory and Self-Determination Theory are the theoretical underpinnings of this study. Behaviorism introduces the concept of using reinforcement and rewards to affect the behavior of learners, which interacts with gamification in the aspect of encouraging and motivating students by reinforcing positive elements, such as points and support (Baah et al., 2024). The Cognitive Load Theory is a theory that pays attention to the mental effort required of the learners in the course of learning, and therefore, gamification helps to divide the learning processes into smaller and interactive processes, thereby reducing the cognitive overload as a way of keeping the attention. In the meantime, Self-Determination Theory emphasizes the significance of intrinsic motivation and autonomy as well as competence. According to Crawley and Mekler (2024), gamification meets such psychological needs because it enables the learners to make decisions, collaborate, and also enhance the sense of achievement, which will eventually lead to long-term engagement.

The potential of gamification has not been fully studied in the course of Malaysian secondary ESL classroom, especially in terms of its effect on various types of student engagement and teacher perception. Available literature has considered the development of language skills rather than engagement or motivation. For instance, gamified speaking lessons significantly increased student participation and confidence (Yong et al., 2023). Meanwhile, research by Idris et al. (2024) demonstrated that using Kahoot! to teach grammar (present tense) not only improved mastery but also reduced anxiety. On the motivation front, Dauda and Jusoh (2025) observed that Kahoot! boosted motivation and engagement among diploma-level ESL learners. Further, research by Sivakami and Gunasekaran (2025) integrating gamified writing modules showed that students' writing proficiency improved alongside their engagement and creativity. In order to fill these gaps, additional studies are necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of gamification in increasing student engagement, motivation, and performance, and to learn the

experiences and perceptions of the TESL practicum teachers engaging in such strategies. In this way, the education system will be able to utilize the advantages of gamification to achieve more well-known results in creating a culture of lifelong learning and language proficiency.

## **Methodology**

### ***Research Design***

The qualitative research design has been embraced in this study in an attempt to find out more details of the perceptions of the in-depth practicum TESL teachers regarding the use of gamification to enhance the engagement of ESL students. Through qualitative research, an investigation of lived experiences, beliefs, and interpretations of participants is conducted in the situations of their natural teaching, hence giving an in-depth insight that cannot be determined by the use of numerical data alone. According to Redalyc (2021), qualitative studies allow the investigator to explore how and why behind human experiences and discover the meaning behind actions and decisions. Based on this, the qualitative nature of the present research can provide obscure and profound insight into the practice of gamification and its effects on the engagement of students in an ESL classroom as it is practised by teachers.

### ***Sampling Design***

In this research, there was the use of purposive sampling was used. This technique was appropriate as it allowed selecting the participants whose experience in the introduction of gamification in the course of the practicum was rich and relevant. The researcher targeted TESL practicum teachers who had first-hand experience using gamification in their classroom teaching, implementing gamified strategies at least two times per week during an eight-hour teaching week. The researcher made sure that only meaningful and in-depth data were collected by targeting the teachers who had indeed implemented some gamified aspects in their ESL classrooms. Purposive sampling will be a prevalent sampling method in qualitative research because it will help them to identify information-rich cases (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

### ***Instruments***

In this research, a qualitative method was used. The semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data and the selection of respondents, as this technique will offer more detailed information and perceptions, experiences and challenges that may be faced by the participants in the implementation of gamification in ESL classes. Interviews are especially helpful when dealing with delicate issues that need the opinions of the teachers and their experiences in life, because researchers could better understand the participants, their thoughts, motivations, and ideas through these interviews (Johnson, 2021).

### ***Research Procedures***

In this research, the researcher followed a systematic procedure to collect data from respondents regarding their views on gamification. An interview protocol was created, consisting of semi-structured questions aimed at exploring the participants' experiences, perceptions, and challenges in implementing gamified strategies by the researcher to ensure clarity and relevance based on the research objectives. An interview consent form was prepared, outlining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality measures, and the participants' right to withdraw at any time. Before conducting the interviews, the researcher obtained written consent from all participants, ensuring that they fully understood their involvement and agreed to participate. Only after receiving consent were



the interviews scheduled and conducted at times convenient for the participants. This procedure ensured that the data collected were ethical, meaningful, and reliable.

Purposive sampling was employed in the study to find respondents who actively used the elements of gamification in their ESL classrooms to follow up with semi-structured interviews. The interviews were carried out to ensure enhanced understanding of the perception, experience, and struggles that the participants have in the process of applying gamification in their teaching methods. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim so that they would be accurate during the analysis of the data. A total of 2 TESL practicum teachers were interviewed, providing rich and meaningful data for analysis. The analysis employed in this particular study was the interview data collected in the fourth phase, which aimed to identify the general themes and relationships between the practice of gamification and how the teachers perceived it. The results of this study are presented in the findings section.

### ***Data Analysis Technique***

Thematic analysis was used to analyze and transcribe semi-structured interviews. This analysis involves identification, arrangement and interpretation of patterns/themes that were created out of the answers provided by participants (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Despite the fact that the framework created by Braun and Clarke is foundational, the recent studies provide pointers to this view, indicating that thematic analysis is very effective in retrieving the richness of the experiences of the participants and guaranteeing the credibility of qualitative research outcomes (Castleberry and Nolen, 2022). This method was the most appropriate one to examine the difficulties and the motivation of teachers towards gamifying ESL classrooms, as it allows illuminating the vision of opinions that could not be adequately captured by quantitative methods. (Nowell and Albrecht, 2021).

## **Findings**

***Research Question: What Are TESL Practicum Teachers' Perceptions Of Using Gamification To Enhance Student Engagement In ESL Classrooms?***

### ***Theme 1: Technology-Enhanced Interactivity***

The TESL practicum teachers shared their positive perspectives on the use of gamification in ESL classrooms, highlighting how it increased student interest, accessibility, and interactivity. The participants observed that gamified elements, such as animations, colourful visuals, videos, and interactive platforms that captured students' attention and made lessons more enjoyable. This aligns well with Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1998), where game-based learning platforms can be one of the reasons to enhance the learner's ability to process and retain new information and reduce mental overload. They noted that students were more enthusiastic and actively involved when learning through digital games compared to traditional methods like worksheets or homework. Elements like instant feedback, drag-and-drop activities, and interactive quizzes kept students mentally engaged, which helps to address common issues of short attention span. This echoes Behavioural Theory (Skinner, 1967), where rewards, points, and feedback reinforce participation.

Moreover, the use of technology in gamification was found to be relevant and accessible for today's learners who are digital natives, which resonates with Prensky's (2001) assertion that modern students think and learn differently due to constant exposure to digital environments. The participants shared that their students are more confident and willing to engage when lessons integrate game-based platforms, videos, or gadget-supported tasks. Features such as

video-based instructions, clickable hints, and interactive dashboards allowed students to navigate lessons at their own pace, making learning more inclusive for both advanced and struggling learners. Studies show adaptive gamified assessments significantly enhanced motivation and performance in blended learning contexts (Zhang & Huang, 2024), while gamification design tailored to diverse learners has been shown to promote inclusive participation (Rosero & Inga, 2025).

Overall, rather than being a distraction, technology was viewed by the participants as a meaningful and necessary component of modern teaching that should be integrated to support learning outcomes. Through these features, gamification improved comprehension, supported collaboration, and enhanced participation, reinforcing its value as a crucial component of effective ESL instruction.

“I can set up the game to be interactive, with many cartoon characters and colourful elements to attract my students’ attention.” (Respondent 2)

“From what I have observed, students enjoy gamification much more than traditional methods like worksheets or homework.” (Respondent 1)

“Since students are digital natives, they engage better with interactive platforms involving gadgets.” (Respondent 1)

“I add videos so they can watch anytime, anywhere, making learning more accessible.” (Respondent 2)

“Gamification makes learning feel less like a task and more like an enjoyable activity.” (Respondent 1)

“Game-based exercises after teaching help students refresh and engage with me and one another.” (Respondent 2)

“Students are already immersed in digital lifestyles, so instead of seeing smartphones as distractions, we should integrate them into learning.” (Respondent 1)

“With so many online resources available, teachers should take advantage of them to make learning fun and effective.” (Respondent 2)

### ***Theme II: Student-Centred Motivation***

TESL practicum teachers expressed that gamification is an effective approach to engage and motivate students in ESL classrooms. They described how a variety of game-based strategies, both digital and interactive, created a student-centred environment that promoted enthusiasm, collaboration, and better comprehension of English language content. This reflects the core of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), where student autonomy, competence, and relatedness contribute to intrinsic motivation.

Both Respondent 1 and Respondent 2 shared the range of gamification tools they used, including platforms like Kahoot, Wheel of Spin, Quizizz, and classroom-based activities such as treasure hunts, leaderboards, and role-play that boosted students’ autonomy behaviour. These tools were found to enhance students’ motivation through elements of competition and

reward. For example, Respondent 1 mentioned that the students were more likely to prepare ahead of lessons when they knew a game-based test was coming, indicating a shift toward active learning. Respondent 2 also noticed that students became highly motivated to complete tasks without needing to be pushed by the teacher, driven by the competitive aspect of seeing their progress on a leaderboard.

“Kahoot makes students eager to strive for the best. They prepare beforehand by studying the chapter that will be tested in the game.” (Respondent 1)

“Treasure hunts and Kahoot make students more spirited and motivated to complete tasks without much pushing.” (Respondent 2)

“Students become competitive and more eager to participate when they see their names on the leaderboard.” (Respondent 2)

Furthermore, the motivational impact of competition observed by the respondents aligns with Behaviourist Theory (Skinner, 1967), where rewards, recognition, and positive reinforcement shape student behaviour. Leaderboards, points, and badges create a structured reward system that encourages students to participate actively and improve performance. Leaderboards, points, and badges create a structured reward system that encourages students to participate actively and improve performance. In Malaysian classroom culture, where competition is often used to motivate achievement, these gamified elements naturally align with students' behavioural tendencies and cultural expectations.

Moreover, both respondents reported that gamification enhanced students' comprehension and focus. Interactive games and visually rich digital tools helped address students' shorter attention spans, a common characteristic of today's digital-native learners (Prensky, 2001). Respondent 2 highlighted that colourful and interactive features helped maintain students' concentration, making lessons not only more enjoyable but also more effective for learning.

“Gamification helps students understand and grasp English better by increasing engagement.” (Respondent 1)

“Children now have shorter attention spans, so using colorful and interactive games helps them focus and complete tasks.” (Respondent 2)

These insights demonstrate that gamification has a significant impact on student engagement and learning. By integrating reward systems, interactive challenges, and student-driven activities, gamification strengthens both individual autonomy and collaborative engagement. It transforms traditional ESL classrooms into interactive and motivating spaces that support both individual and collaborative learning, while also enhancing students' language acquisition.

### ***Theme 3: Gamification as a Catalyst for Collaboration***

Gamification also fostered collaboration and active engagement. The teachers observed that group-based games such as treasure hunts and paired Kahoot activities encouraged teamwork and interaction among students. These activities created a more dynamic classroom atmosphere where students supported one another and engaged more deeply with the lesson content. Sujarwo et al. (2023) demonstrated that 11th-grade students using a gamified mobile-learning media showed significantly better collaboration than peers in traditional



settings. By working together, students not only shared knowledge but also developed communication and problem-solving skills. Moreover, collaborative gamified activities helped quieter or less confident students participate actively, contributing to a more inclusive learning environment.

“Group-based activities like treasure hunts require teamwork, making students more engaged.” (Respondent 2)

“Sometimes, I set the Kahoot game to be played in pairs to foster teamwork and enhance collaboration.” (Respondent 1)

The collaborative structure of gamified activities aligns with Vygotsky’s social constructivism, which posits that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and guided participation. By collaborating, students co-construct understanding, negotiate meaning, and develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills collectively. Additionally, gamification provides a safe and motivating environment for quieter or less confident students to participate, ensuring inclusivity and equitable contribution in group tasks.

These findings indicate that gamification not only engages students individually but also strengthens peer interaction and mutual learning, as students learn to communicate effectively, divide responsibilities, and reflect on collective outcomes. For digital-native students (Prensky, 2001), these collaborative gamified experiences feel natural and engaging, further promoting active participation and social learning in ways that traditional teaching methods may not.

## Discussion

In this paper, the researcher discovered that gamification has a great positive influence on the engagement, motivation and participation of students in ESL classrooms. Competition can motivate students to work hard, and there is more motivation to prepare before they play a game such as Kahoot or compete in a leaderboard game. This is in line with the Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 2000), which emphasizes the importance of autonomy and competence when motivating learners. The presence of points, badges, and rewards also reflects Behaviourist principles (Skinner, 1967), reinforcing desired behaviours and sustaining participation. Additionally, the increased confidence students demonstrated during group-based activities corresponds with Social Constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), suggesting that collaboration and peer interaction help learners construct meaning more effectively. Participants’ positive responses to interactive and visually rich platforms further support Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988), as multimedia elements reduce cognitive strain and suit the needs of digital-native learners.

These findings are consistent with prior studies that highlight gamification’s role in fostering motivation, self-directed learning, and collaboration (Huang & Soman, 2022; Vrcelj et al., 2023; Slamet & Chen, 2025). Nonetheless, in the Malaysian education system, which is largely exam-oriented, students may already be motivated, so gamification mainly adds to existing study practices rather than creating new motivation. These findings are consistent with prior studies that highlight gamification’s role in fostering motivation, self-directed learning, and collaboration (Huang & Soman, 2022; Vrcelj et al., 2023; Slamet & Chen, 2025). However, while some Western studies emphasise individual performance, the participants in this study reported stronger engagement during collaborative gamified tasks, which may reflect Malaysia’s collectivistic cultural orientation. Within the Malaysian ESL context, although the

education system remains exam-oriented, gamification appears to complement existing study practices by making learning more interactive without compromising academic goals. At the same time, participants acknowledged several challenges, including inconsistent access to devices, technical issues, and varying levels of teacher digital readiness, factors influenced by the urban–rural digital divide. Collectively, the findings suggest that gamification is no longer a superficial add-on but a meaningful component of how modern students expect to learn. Its successful implementation, however, requires sustained technological support and professional development to ensure equitable, effective adoption across Malaysian secondary schools.

### Conclusion

The paper discussed the use of gamification to enhance the engagement of the learner in the ESL classroom setting at the high school level in Malaysia in particularly for TESL practicum teaching professors. The findings demonstrate that gamification can be effectively implemented with the help of the leaderboard, treasure hunts, and game-based learning platforms that present themselves as good motivational tools that promote active learning and self-directed learning. These benefits are, however, very dependent on the extent to which they are adopted and whether the teachers are willing to take advantage of the technology and their accessibility. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by showing how gamification can innovate the teaching of English as a second language in Malaysia and highlighting its potential to support 21st-century learning, enhance student engagement, and bridge participation gaps.

In a nutshell, gamification is an excellent channel through which the teaching of English as a second language in Malaysia can be innovated. With appropriate support through training, digital infrastructure, and articulated pedagogical structure are capable of enhancing student engagement, and helping in 21st-century learning as well as bridging participation gaps. Gamification must not be regarded as a fad due to Malaysia moving towards a more digitalized education system, but rather as a long-term strategy of defining the future of language learning.

### Implication

Based on these results, the paper will provide some of the practical recommendations to ESL pedagogues and learning in Malaysia. First, gamification aligns with the aims of the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2015-2025), which aims at technology-intensive and student-centred learning. The integration of gamified-based applications, such as Kahoot!, Quizizz, and Duolingo, can transform traditional classrooms, making them more interactive and encouraging communication, cooperation, and creativity as the key skills of the 21st century. Regarding ESL teachers, gamified techniques, which improve the interaction processes in the classroom, motivation, and intentional use of language, should be used particularly among those students who might be living in a rural environment where exposure to English is low. The training based on gamification must also be considered in the teacher training programs to provide pre-service teachers with digital and pedagogical skills to plan a goal-driven lesson that is engaging. At the policy level, the findings indicate that institutional and governmental means are in the form of digital resource funding, workshops, and ESL gamification platforms through curriculum development, which need to be augmented. By considering these points, gamification can be successfully incorporated into the ESL curriculum of Malaysia, as it can enhance the teaching process and outcomes of the students.

### Recommendations for Future Research

Future research could examine the effects of post-pandemic digital literacy on students' engagement with gamified learning, as students' technology skills may influence how they respond to gamification. Studies could also investigate the long-term impact of gamification on language learning outcomes to determine whether the benefits are sustained over time. Additionally, comparative studies between rural and urban schools could provide insights into how access to technology affects gamified learning, while research on differences among students with varying proficiency levels could help tailor gamification strategies to meet diverse learning needs.

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