

AN INVESTIGATION INTO TEACHERS' MOTIVATION TO IMPLEMENT GAMIFICATION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated English teachers' motivation in implementing gamification in language classrooms through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT). It aimed to explore how different types of motivation influenced teachers' use of gamification and to identify the internal and external factors shaping these motivational patterns. A qualitative research design was adopted, involving asynchronous interviews with eight English teachers working at private language centers. The data were analyzed using a thematic analysis tool named QDA Miner Lite. The findings indicated that teachers' motivation was largely shaped by external regulation, particularly institutional expectations, time constraints, and classroom conditions. Although intrinsic motivation was present, it tended to be reactive and dependent on students' engagement. Identified regulation emerged as the dominant driver, suggesting that gamification was mainly used as a pedagogical tool to support learning rather than as an intrinsically valued practice. However, the limited presence of integrated regulation showed that gamification had not been fully internalized into teachers' professional beliefs. In addition, a lack of competence, including limited technological skills and insufficient training, contributed to amotivation. Results were discussed, and implications for enhancing teachers' motivation in implementing gamification, along with recommendations for future research, were presented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gamification has been widely recognized as an effective approach to increasing learners' motivation and engagement by integrating game elements into educational contexts (Chiriboga et al., 2025; Zainuddin et al., 2020). It is designed to encourage desired learning behaviors and improve learning outcomes. Motivation is closely related to gamification and has been widely discussed in educational psychology. According to Ushioda and Dörnyei (2021), teacher motivation is reflected in both the decision to enter the profession and the willingness to remain in it. They identified four major influences on teacher motivation, including intrinsic interest in teaching, social and contextual factors, long-term professional commitment, and demotivating experiences. Despite its educational benefits, gamification also presents challenges for teachers. Previous studies indicate that designing gamified activities requires considerable time and effort, which may reduce teachers' intrinsic motivation and increase workload (Piteira et al., 2018). Other research also suggests that repeated content adjustments and scheduling constraints can further contribute to teacher demotivation (Huang & Soman, n.d.). Most existing studies have applied Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to explain how gamification enhances students' intrinsic motivation through autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Tsay et al., 2018; Gini et al., 2025). However, limited attention has been paid to teachers' motivation. Therefore, the current study addresses this gap by applying SDT to investigate the factors contributing to teachers' lack of motivation when implementing gamification in the classroom.

OBJECTIVES

Gamification has been widely promoted as an innovative teaching approach to enhance student engagement and motivation in English language classrooms. However, despite its recognized benefits, many teachers remain reluctant to adopt gamification in practice. Existing studies have mainly focused on learners' motivation, while teachers' motivational experiences have received limited attention. This study therefore investigates the factors contributing to teachers' lack of motivation in implementing gamification through the lens of Self-Determination Theory. Specifically, it aims to examine (1) the internal factors affecting teachers' autonomy, competence, and relatedness, (2) the external factors influencing these psychological need

METHODOLOGIES

Research Design: A qualitative phenomenological approach was adopted to explore teachers' experiences with implementing gamification. The study was guided by Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to examine factors influencing teachers' motivation.

Participants: The study involved 12 English teachers from The Book Garden English Center. Participants were selected through purposive sampling and had at least one year of teaching experience.

Data Collection: Data were collected through asynchronous interviews adapted from previous studies. All interviews were written-recorded with participants' consent and verified through member checking.

Data Analysis: Interview data were analyzed thematically and categorized based on the Self-Determination Continuum (using QDA Miner Lite tool). The profiles were then interpreted through the three basic needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) to identify factors affecting teachers' motivation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

	Count	% Codes	Cases	% Cases
Identified Regulation				
• Boost motivation	6	4,2%	5	62,5%
• Learning outcome	4	2,8%	3	37,5%
• Strengthen relationship	9	6,3%	7	87,5%
• Management	1	0,7%	1	12,5%
Intrinsic Motivation				
• Enjoyment	12	8,3%	6	75,0%
• Emotion	7	4,9%	4	50,0%
• Relation	1	0,7%	1	12,5%
External Regulation				
• Lack of autonomy	1	0,7%	1	12,5%
• Institution requirements	23	16,0%	7	87,5%
• Time constraint and Class size	13	9,0%	7	87,5%
• Depend on structure	6	4,2%	4	50,0%
• Student engagement				
Integrated Regulation				
• Professional belief	7	4,9%	4	50,0%
• Learning goals				
• Collaboration	7	4,9%	6	75,0%
• Personal belief	5	3,5%	4	50,0%
Amotivation				
• Student responses	1	0,7%	1	12,5%
• Student feeling	1	0,7%	1	12,5%
• Competence-based	8	5,6%	5	62,5%
• Social support	1	0,7%	1	12,5%
Introjected Regulation				
• Internal pressure	13	9,0%	5	62,5%

Based on the Self-Determination Continuum, teachers' motivation to implement gamification ranged from intrinsic motivation to amotivation.

- Intrinsic motivation was characterized by teachers' enjoyment (12 references) and positive emotions (7). Teachers also demonstrated integrated and identified regulation, as gamification aligned with their professional beliefs (7), collaboration (7), teacher-student relationships (9), and its ability to boost student motivation (6) and improve learning outcomes (4).
- Extrinsic motivation was mainly influenced by institutional requirements (23), time constraints and class size (13), and internal pressure (13). Other external factors included dependence on teaching structure, student engagement, and limited autonomy.
- Amotivation was primarily associated with competence-based challenges (8), together with limited social support, negative student responses, and student feelings.

These motivational profiles were further interpreted through the three basic psychological needs of Self-Determination Theory. Autonomy was reflected in teachers' perceived freedom to adapt gamification despite institutional requirements and teaching constraints. Competence was associated with teachers' confidence in designing and implementing gamified activities, whereas competence-related challenges contributed to amotivation. Relatedness was evident in teachers' interactions with students and colleagues, as supportive relationships strengthened motivation while limited support reduced their willingness to use gamification.

Overall, teachers' motivation was largely driven by the perceived educational value of gamification rather than enjoyment alone. However, institutional demands and competence-related barriers limited the full internalization of gamification into teachers' professional practice.

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