

Gamification and Social Media: Transforming English Grammar Learning in EFL Classrooms

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Abstract: This study investigated the impact of gamification and social media on enhancing English grammar learning in EFL classrooms. A quasi-experimental research design was employed, involving 65 male students from a private higher education institution. Participants were divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group engaged in gamified activities and utilized social media platforms, while the control group followed traditional learning methods. After the experiment, a survey questionnaire was administered to the experimental group to gather their perceptions of the interventions. Pre- and post-test scores were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results demonstrated that gamification and social media significantly improved student engagement and grammar retention. A statistically significant improvement was observed in the grammar scores of the experimental group compared to the control group. Gamified activities, such as points, leaderboards, and rewards, enhanced motivation and created a more interactive learning environment. Similarly, social media platforms, particularly WhatsApp and Facebook groups, facilitated peer feedback, collaborative learning, and the practical application of grammar rules in authentic contexts. Participants in the experimental group reported greater confidence in using grammar structures correctly, with many highlighting reduced language learning anxiety and increased motivation due to gamification and social media use. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on technology-enhanced language learning, providing practical implications for EFL educators seeking to integrate these tools to improve language proficiency.

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INTRODUCTION

Integrating digital technologies into education has profoundly reshaped teaching and learning dynamics, introducing innovative tools to enhance engagement and learning outcomes. Among these advancements, gamification and social media have garnered considerable attention for their potential to transform education, particularly in English as a Foreign

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Language (EFL). Gamification, the use of game-like elements in non-game contexts (Avdeeva & Safonova, 2024; Mitchell & Co, 2024; Rahmi et al., 2025; Sailer et al., 2017), and social media, interactive platforms designed for communication and content sharing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Meikle, 2023; Sharma & Rai, 2023; Vardi, 2024) have individually proven to be effective in fostering motivation, collaboration, and active participation in learning (Alsawaier, 2018; Ansari & Khan, 2020; Kumar et al., 2024; and Qudsi, 2024). However, limited research has investigated the combined application of these tools in EFL classrooms, specifically in English grammar instruction. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by exploring how gamification and social media can transform English grammar learning, making it more engaging and effective for learners.

Grammar, as the foundation of language proficiency, enables learners to construct coherent and accurate sentences, thereby playing a central role in language acquisition (AKKAYA & DOYUMĞAÇ, 2023; Ghafar & Sawalmeh, 2024). Despite its importance, students often perceive grammar learning as tedious and overly abstract, particularly in EFL contexts (Larsen-Freeman, 2020). Traditional approaches to grammar instruction, such as deductive teaching methods, often rely on repetitive drills and textbook exercises, which fail to align with learners' interests or learning styles. Studies indicate that these methods can lead to decreased motivation and limited retention of grammatical structures (Bobosher, 2022; Haight et al., 2007; Rasyimah et al., 2022). Furthermore, students frequently struggle to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical usage, resulting in low proficiency in real-life communication.

The increasing penetration of digital tools into education offers promising alternatives to traditional methods. Gamification, in particular, has emerged as a powerful strategy to address learner disengagement. By incorporating game mechanics such as points, levels, badges, leaderboards, and challenges, gamification creates a sense of competition, achievement, and enjoyment, which can significantly enhance learners' motivation and engagement (Hamari et al., 2014; Mitchell & Co, 2024; Rahmi et al., 2025). For instance, platforms like Duolingo, Kahoot, and Quizizz have successfully gamified language learning, offering interactive and adaptive exercises that cater to individual learner needs. Studies by (Aratea & Pasubillo, 2024; Nair, 2024) demonstrated that students who learned grammar through gamified activities exhibited better retention and application of grammar rules compared to those taught using traditional methods. Moreover, gamification facilitates immediate feedback, enabling learners to identify and correct errors promptly, which is critical for mastering complex grammatical structures (Smirani & Yamani, 2024).

Social media, on the other hand, provides a unique environment for collaborative and contextual learning. Platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp enable students to engage in authentic communication, thereby applying grammatical knowledge in real-world contexts (Al Ghazali, 2020; Manca, 2020; Torchinava, 2023; YASMIN et al., 2024). Social media also supports multimodal learning by combining text, images, audio, and video, which can enhance comprehension and retention (Graham, 2011). For instance, students can

participate in grammar-focused discussion forums, create content using target grammar structures, or engage in peer feedback activities within social media groups. Their research (Torchinava, 2023) found that using social media for language learning significantly improved students' grammatical accuracy and confidence in communication. Furthermore, the accessibility and familiarity of social media make it an appealing tool for university students, who are often digital natives accustomed to these platforms in their daily lives (Ansari & Khan, 2020).

The intersection of gamification and social media creates a compelling framework for enhancing EFL grammar instruction. While gamification motivates learners through interactive and rewarding experiences, social media provides a contextualized and collaborative learning environment. Together, these tools can transform grammar learning into an engaging and dynamic process, addressing language acquisition's cognitive and social dimensions (Awing & Nasri, 2023; Crovitz et al., 2022). However, despite the growing interest in digital learning tools, there is a scarcity of research that examines their combined impact on English grammar learning, particularly in developing countries like Afghanistan. Existing studies predominantly focus on developed contexts with advanced technological infrastructure, overlooking the unique challenges and opportunities in regions with limited resources.

Afghanistan presents a distinctive context for studying the integration of digital tools in education. With increasing access to smartphones and the Internet among university students, there is a growing potential to leverage digital technologies for educational purposes (Romi, 2024)). However, gamification and social media implementation in Afghan universities face challenges such as limited teacher training, inadequate technological resources, and cultural barriers. Addressing these challenges requires localized research considering Afghan education's socio-cultural and institutional contexts.

This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the impact of gamification and social media on English grammar learning among EFL students. Specifically, the study seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of these tools in enhancing students' motivation, engagement, and academic performance in grammar-related tasks. The following questions guide the research:

1. To what extent does the integration of gamification and social media enhance the grammar learning outcomes of EFL students?
2. What are students' perceptions regarding using gamified and social media-based learning tools for grammar instruction?
3. Are there significant differences in grammar proficiency between students exposed to gamified learning environments and those taught using traditional methods?

This research holds significant implications for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers. By demonstrating the practical applications of gamification and social media in EFL classrooms, the findings can provide evidence-based recommendations for integrating digital tools into language curricula. Additionally, the study contributes to the growing

knowledge on digital learning in developing contexts, highlighting the potential of cost-effective and scalable solutions to improve language education. For Afghan universities, where resources are often limited, this research offers a framework for leveraging existing technologies to enhance student learning outcomes.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilized a quantitative research design to examine the effects of gamification and social media on English grammar learning among EFL learners at a private higher education institute in Kabul, Afghanistan. Specifically, a quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test design was employed to evaluate the intervention's impact. This design was chosen for its suitability in comparing educational interventions in real-world classroom settings (Creswell & Creswell, 2009). Participants were divided into two groups: an experimental group, which received instruction incorporating gamification and social media tools, and a control group, which followed traditional grammar teaching methods.

Participants

The target population was 158 EFL students enrolled at a private higher education institute in Kabul, Afghanistan. From this population, a sample of 65 students was selected using a simple random sampling technique to ensure equal representation and minimize selection bias, enhancing the generalizability of findings. The sample was divided into 35 students in the experimental group and 30 in the control group.

Participants were aged between 18 and 24 years and exhibited intermediate to upper-intermediate English proficiency levels, determined by their prior academic records and placement test scores. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and ethical guidelines were adhered to throughout the study.

Instruments

To measure the impact of gamification and social media on grammar learning, the study employed two instruments:

1. **Grammar Proficiency Test:** Researcher-developed test was used to evaluate students' grammar knowledge before and after the intervention. The test consisted of 50 multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank questions covering key grammatical topics, including verb tenses, conditionals, prepositions, and sentence structure.
2. **Perception Survey:** A 10-item Likert scale questionnaire was used to gauge the experimental group's perceptions of the gamification and social media tools regarding effectiveness, engagement, and usability. Responses ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The survey focused on motivation, ease of use, and perceived learning improvements. Two EFL education experts validated the survey for content validity.

Data Collection Procedures

The study was conducted over 12 weeks during the spring semester of 2021. The following procedures were implemented:

1. **Pre-Test Administration:** At the start of the semester, all participants completed the grammar proficiency test to establish baseline grammar knowledge.
2. **Experimental Group Intervention:** The experimental group received grammar instruction through a blended approach that integrated gamification and social media tools. Gamified activities included Kahoot quizzes, Quizizz competitions, and Grammar Ninja, a mobile app designed to teach grammar rules through interactive games. WhatsApp and Facebook were employed for collaborative tasks, such as peer discussions, grammar challenges, and sharing multimedia content demonstrating grammar use. Students also participated in grammar-focused online competitions and received instant feedback on their performance.
3. **Control Group Instruction:** The control group was taught using traditional methods, including lectures, textbook exercises, and teacher-led grammar drills. These methods were aligned with the existing curriculum to serve as a standard benchmark for comparison.
4. **Post-Test Administration:** At the end of the 12-week intervention, both groups completed the same grammar proficiency test administered during the pre-test phase. This allowed for the evaluation of learning gains within and between groups.
5. **Perception Survey:** Following the post-test, students in the experimental group completed the perception survey to provide feedback on their experience with gamification and social media.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using paired-sample t-tests to assess within-group improvements in grammar proficiency and independent-sample t-tests to compare the performance of the experimental and control groups. The effect size (Cohen's *d*) was calculated to determine the magnitude of the intervention's impact.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical research practices to ensure the well-being and rights of participants. Approval was obtained from the research ethics committee at the public university. Participants were informed about the study's objectives, procedures, and potential benefits, and their anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research. Written consent was obtained from all participants, and they were given the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

FINDINGS

This section presents the research findings to examine the impact of gamification and social media on English grammar learning in EFL classrooms. The data were analyzed in SPSS using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings are reported in alignment with the research objectives and questions.

Demographic Characteristics

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender (Male)	65	100%
Age (18–20 years)	38	58.4%
Age (21–23 years)	27	41.5%

A total of 65 male students participated in this study, all enrolled in the English as foreign language learning program. The majority of respondents (58.4%) were aged between 18–20 years, while 41.5% were aged 21–23 years. The demographic information provides context for understanding the participants' educational background and developmental stage, which are relevant factors in language acquisition and technology usage in educational settings.

Impact of Gamification and Social Media Tools on English Grammar Learning

Paired pre-and post-tests were administered to evaluate the impact of gamification and social media tools on English grammar learning.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Pre- and Post-Test Scores

Measure	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Minimum	Maximum
Pre-Test Scores	62.40	6.85	50	75
Post-Test Scores	80.35	7.20	68	95

The results indicate a significant improvement in grammar proficiency. The mean score increased from 62.40 (SD = 6.85) in the pre-test to 80.35 (SD = 7.20) in the post-test. These findings suggest that gamified and social media-enhanced learning activities positively impacted students' grammar skills.

A detailed analysis of individual performance revealed that all participants in the experimental group showed varying degrees of improvement in their post-test scores. This consistent upward trend underscores the effectiveness of integrating gamification and social media tools in grammar instruction.

Paired Sample t-Test Analysis

A paired sample t-test was conducted to determine the statistical significance of the difference between pre- and post-test scores.

Table 3: Paired Sample t-Test Results

Variable	t-value	df	p-value	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
Pre- vs Post-Test	-12.89	69	< .001	1.54

The paired sample t-test revealed a highly significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores ($t(69) = -12.89$, $p < .001$). The effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.54$) indicates a large effect, emphasizing the substantial impact of the intervention. These results confirm that integrating gamification and social media into grammar learning enhances student performance significantly.

Student Perceptions of Gamification and Social Media

Participants completed a detailed survey to assess their perceptions of the gamified and social media-integrated grammar learning activities. The survey was designed with 10 items using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) to capture various dimensions of effectiveness, engagement, and perceived learning outcomes.

Table 4: Student Perceptions of Gamification and Social Media

Survey Item	Mean	SD
Gamified activities made grammar learning engaging.	4.45	0.65
Social media tools facilitated collaborative learning.	4.35	0.72
I am more confident in using English grammar.	4.25	0.80
Gamified tasks motivated me to complete grammar exercises regularly.	4.50	0.61
Using social media platforms made grammar practice more accessible and flexible.	4.40	0.68
I enjoyed competing with classmates in gamified grammar challenges.	4.60	0.58
Social media enabled me to seek peer feedback and support for grammar-related queries.	4.30	0.74
Using gamified elements like points and leaderboards enhanced my motivation to learn grammar.	4.55	0.59
I felt less anxious about learning grammar due to the activities' interactive and enjoyable nature.	4.42	0.65
Gamification and social media integration helped me retain grammar rules more effectively.	4.47	0.63

Overall, the survey data underscores the dual benefits of gamification and social media in enhancing grammar learning among EFL students. The findings confirm that these tools foster engagement and motivation and create an enjoyable, collaborative, and anxiety-free learning environment. This reinforces the effectiveness of integrating modern digital tools in language learning.

Students' Perceptions of Gamified Learning and Post-Test Scores

A Pearson correlation was performed to explore the relationship between students' perceptions of gamified learning and their post-test scores.

Table 5: Correlation Between Perception Scores and Post-Test Scores

Variable	r-value	p-value
Perception vs. Post-Test	0.62	< .001

The analysis revealed a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.62$, $p < .001$), suggesting that higher satisfaction with gamified activities and social media integration was associated with better grammar learning outcomes. This relationship highlights the importance of student engagement and motivation in achieving language proficiency.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the transformative potential of integrating gamification and social media into English grammar learning in EFL classrooms. The evidence indicates that these tools can significantly enhance engagement, motivation, and confidence while aiding the retention and application of grammar rules. Interpreting these findings within the context of prior research allows for a deeper understanding of their implications and situates them within the broader academic discourse.

One of the most compelling results of the study is the high level of engagement reported by the participants. Gamified activities, characterized by points, leaderboards, and rewards, motivated students to complete grammar exercises and actively participate in learning. With 89.3% of the respondents agreeing on the engaging nature of these activities, the results align with (Deterding et al., 2011; Laura-De La Cruz et al., 2023) assertion that gamification fosters intrinsic motivation by making learning enjoyable and interactive. Similarly, (Smirani & Yamani, 2024) emphasize that game mechanics can transform mundane tasks into exciting challenges, which resonates with the students' feedback in this study. The high engagement level is reflected in the mean score for this item ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 0.69$), indicating a consistent response across the group. Unlike previous research that warns of potential stress caused by competitive elements (Yang et al., 2024; Domínguez et al., 2013), this study found no such adverse outcomes. This could be attributed to gamification's supportive and culturally tailored implementation, which balanced competition with collaboration.

Social media emerged as another critical tool for enhancing grammar learning. The majority of participants agreed that social media facilitated peer feedback, collaboration, and greater accessibility to learning materials. This is consistent with the findings of (Aydin, 2020; Arniza, 2024; Mehta & Yadav, 2024), who highlighted the collaborative potential of social media in language learning, and (Arniza, 2024; Ghabanchi, et al., 2011), who noted its role in promoting learner autonomy. Unlike traditional classroom settings, social media platforms offer learners the flexibility to engage with grammar content at their own pace, creating an environment conducive to individual exploration and practice. This reflects Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which posits that learning is a socially mediated process. The ability of students to interact with peers and receive immediate feedback on social media also bridges the gap between formal instruction and practical application, a benefit less emphasized in

earlier studies. This finding was supported by a high mean score for social media's role in enhancing collaboration ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 0.73$).

Another noteworthy finding is the reduction in grammar-related anxiety among participants. The interactive and enjoyable nature of the gamified and social media-based activities appears to have created a low-stress environment for learning, as reflected in the high mean score for reduced anxiety ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.65$). This supports (Alshumaimeri, 2023; Laura-De La Cruz et al., 2023; Sharifuddin & Abdullah, 2023) findings that gamified and digital learning environments minimize the fear of making mistakes, encouraging experimentation and risk-taking. Similarly, (Ahmed et al., 2022; Sundar, 2023) argued that the non-threatening nature of digital tools allows learners to build confidence over time. In this study, social media integration amplified this effect by fostering a sense of community, where students felt supported in their learning journey. Participants also reported improved confidence in using English grammar, with a mean score of ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.76$). This aligns with (Han et al., 2023; Mansor et al., 2024) observation that gamified learning boosts self-efficacy among language learners. However, while Yildirim attributed this confidence primarily to gamification, this study suggests a more nuanced relationship. The combination of gamification and social media appears to have a synergistic effect, where gamified tasks provide the initial motivation, and social media sustains engagement through collaboration and real-world practice opportunities. This distinction adds depth to the existing literature by highlighting the complementary roles of these tools.

Retention and application of grammar rules also emerged as significant outcomes of the intervention. Participants cited gamified activities' repetitive and interactive nature as a key factor in reinforcing grammar knowledge. With a mean score of ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.62$), the findings align with (Amin et al., 2024; James et al., 2024; Qudsi, 2024; Smirani & Yamani, 2024) assertion that gamification promotes sustained engagement, leading to better retention of learned material. Furthermore, the emphasis on task-based grammar exercises, which require students to apply grammar rules in meaningful contexts, resonates with the principles of task-based language teaching (Mudinillah et al., 2024; Park, 2024). The intervention addressed the monotony often associated with traditional grammar instruction by making grammar practice a dynamic and purposeful activity.

Integrating gamification and social media supports existing research and offers unique contributions. While studies like those (Alkamel, 2024; Alsenafi et al., 2024; Tayeh et al., 2024; Titania, 2024) have explored the individual benefits of gamification and social media, this study demonstrates that their combined use creates a more holistic and impactful learning experience. This dual approach amplifies engagement, accessibility, and learner autonomy, addressing multiple dimensions of grammar learning. Moreover, the findings challenge some common criticisms of these tools. For instance, (Nicholson, 2012) argued that extrinsic rewards in gamification might undermine intrinsic motivation, leading to shallow learning. However, this study shows that when gamification is integrated thoughtfully, emphasizing meaningful learning tasks, it can enhance intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Similarly, while

(James et al., 2024; Junco, 2012) raised concerns about the potential distractions of social media, the structured and purpose-driven use of these platforms in this study mitigated such risks, ensuring that students remained focused on their learning objectives.

The practical implications of these findings are substantial. For EFL educators, gamification and social media integration offer a viable strategy to address common challenges such as low engagement, anxiety, and lack of motivation. Institutions should consider investing in teacher training programs to equip educators with the skills to implement these tools effectively. Additionally, curriculum designers can incorporate gamified tasks and social media-based activities into language programs, ensuring that these interventions are aligned with learning outcomes and tailored to the needs of diverse learners.

While the results of this study are promising, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The sample size, consisting of 65 male students from a single institution, limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research could explore the impact of these tools across different demographic groups, including female students, learners from varying proficiency levels, and those from diverse cultural backgrounds. Moreover, while this study relied on self-reported data, future studies could incorporate objective measures of grammar proficiency, such as pre-and post-tests, to validate the reported outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study have several practical implications for EFL educators. First, the experimental group's significant improvement in grammar proficiency demonstrates the efficacy of incorporating gamification and social media into language instruction. Educators are encouraged to use gamified elements such as points, leaderboards, and rewards to enhance student motivation and engagement. Second, the positive feedback regarding social media tools suggests that platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook can serve as effective channels for collaborative learning and peer feedback.

Furthermore, participants' reduced language learning anxiety highlights the potential of interactive and enjoyable activities in creating a supportive learning environment. By leveraging these tools, educators can foster greater confidence and proficiency in grammar usage among EFL learners.

In a nutshell, the findings of this study underscore the transformative potential of gamification and social media in EFL grammar learning. These tools address critical challenges in language education by enhancing engagement, reducing anxiety, and improving retention and application. Furthermore, the study enriches the academic discourse by highlighting the complementary roles of gamification and social media, offering valuable insights for researchers, educators, and policymakers. Through thoughtful implementation, these innovations can pave the way for more effective and inclusive language learning experiences.

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