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**Exploring the Effect of Gamified Learning on the Acquisition
of Vocabulary among EFL Learners: Case of Fourth Year
Pupils at El Mujahid Kadoun Mohamed Primary School-Ain
Temouchent.**

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Master's Degree in Didactics and Applied Languages*

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Dedications

First of all, I dedicate this work to myself for believing in me and my capacities and for every single effort I made.

I dedicate this work to

*My wonderful **mother** who has always reminded me that I can make it ;who helped me with her prayers and gave me strength while doing my research.*

*My beloved **father** who show me support in all forms*

*To my sisters **HADJER** and **AHLEM** for thier encouragement along my study. And being there when I needed them.*

*To my brother **MOHAMMED***

To everyone who helped achieve this research work.

To all those who love me

Miss Gadra Hayat

Dedictions

First and foremost At this emotional moment, with tears of pride in my eyes, I choose to thank myself for never giving up on me.

I believed in my ability to succeed, and today I did.

Despite the obstacles and challenges life placed in my path, I kept fighting, sacrificing, and holding on to the hope that I would one day achieve my dream.

And I did.

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Abstract

In learning any language, vocabulary is both one of the most important and most difficult skills to master. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to adopt effective strategies that support students, specifically primary school pupils, to overcome difficulties and enhance their understanding of “FL” vocabulary. One promising approach is gamification, which applies game like elements to create engaging learning experiences. The objective of the current study revolves around investigating the effect of gamified learning on the acquisition of vocabulary. To achieve this, the research utilized a mixed-methods approach. The researchers opted for semi-structured interview with one English teacher, classroom observations and a questionnaire for pupils. The study was carried out at El Mujahid Kadoun Mohamed Primary School. The findings revealed that gamified learning significantly boosts student motivation and engagement, leading to improved vocabulary retention and a more enriching overall learning experience. In addition to that, both pupils and teachers expressed positive attitudes toward the integration of gamification into vocabulary instruction, citing increased enjoyment and participation. Despite minor challenges, the study highlights the educational value of gamified learning and recommends its strategic use in primary school classrooms to support more effective vocabulary acquisition.

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List of Acronyms

SDT: Self-Determination Theory

CLT: Cognitive Load Theory

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

FL: Foreign Language

TL: Target Language

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In the modern educational landscape, capturing students' attention is one of the most challenging aspects of teaching. This challenge is particularly pronounced in foreign language learning, where traditional teaching methods, particularly in “FLL”, often struggle to maintain learners' motivation and engagement. Research indicates that students are more likely to disengage when lessons lack interactivity and relevance to their interests, leading to decreased academic performance and a lack of enthusiasm for learning. Teaching English as a Foreign Language “EFL” to young learners presents additional difficulties due to their limited exposure to the language outside the classroom. This necessitates the adoption of innovative and interactive teaching methods to enhance their learning experience.

Vocabulary acquisition is a fundamental component of language learning, as it lays the foundation for communication skills. However, conventional vocabulary instruction methods, such as rote memorization and translation, may not always be effective in ensuring long-term retention and active use of new words.

In response to these challenges, gamified learning has emerged as an innovative approach that integrates game-based elements into the learning process to enhance students' motivation, engagement, and overall learning outcomes. Gamification applies game mechanics such as points, rewards, competition, and interactive challenges to educational settings, making the learning experience more dynamic and enjoyable. Recent studies suggest that gamification can significantly improve vocabulary retention by creating an immersive and stimulating environment where students actively participate in their learning journey.

Despite the growing emphasis on communicative and interactive teaching strategies in EFL classrooms, many students continue to struggle with vocabulary acquisition. In traditional classrooms, vocabulary instruction often relies on repetitive exercises and memorization techniques that fail to engage students meaningfully. As a result, learners may find it difficult to retain new words and apply them in real-life contexts. Moreover, motivation remains a key

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concern, as students may lose interest in vocabulary learning when it lacks an element of fun and interactivity.

Observations in primary school classrooms reveal that young learners respond positively to interactive and playful learning methods. However, there is a noticeable gap in research exploring the specific impact of gamified learning on vocabulary acquisition at the primary level. This study is motivated by the need to investigate this research gap by examining whether gamification can address these challenges by fostering a more engaging and effective vocabulary learning experience.

Accordingly This study aims to explore the impact of gamified learning on vocabulary acquisition among 4th-year primary school pupils. Specifically, it seeks to determine whether gamified activities enhance vocabulary retention, engagement, and motivation compared to traditional teaching methods. Additionally, the research investigates teachers' and students' perceptions of gamification in vocabulary instruction, as well as the specific game-based elements that contribute most effectively to vocabulary learning.

To achieve these objectives, the research attempts to answer the following key questions:

- To what extent does gamified learning enhance vocabulary acquisition and retention among 4th-year primary school pupils?
- How does gamification influence student motivation and engagement in vocabulary learning?
- What are the perceptions and attitudes of teachers and students regarding the effectiveness and suitability of gamified activities for vocabulary instruction?

Based on these research questions, the study formulates the following hypotheses:

- Gamified learning improves vocabulary acquisition by increasing student engagement and retention.
- The incorporation of game-based elements enhances motivation and active participation in vocabulary learning.

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- Teachers and students perceive gamification as an effective and suitable approach to vocabulary instruction, demonstrating positive attitudes towards its use in the classroom.

This research adopts a mixed-methods approach to gather comprehensive data on the effectiveness of gamified learning. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires administered to 4th-year primary school pupils, measuring their motivation, engagement, and perceived vocabulary improvement. Qualitative data were obtained through interviews with one “EFL” teacher, exploring its perspective on the benefits and challenges of gamified vocabulary instruction. Additionally, classroom observations were conducted in a 4th-grade classroom at El Mujahid Kadoun Mohamed Primary School to compare traditional and gamified teaching methods. These observations focused on evaluating student engagement, motivation, and the overall impact of each method on vocabulary acquisition in a real classroom setting. By combining these methods, the study aims to provide a well-rounded understanding of how gamification influences vocabulary learning outcomes.

The dissertation is structured into three main chapters:

The first chapter explores key concepts and theoretical foundations related to vocabulary acquisition and gamified learning. It provides definitions, examines traditional vocabulary instruction methods, introduces the principles and components of gamification, and reviews relevant theoretical frameworks and prior studies. The chapter lays the groundwork for the study by highlighting the benefits of gamified learning and identifying gaps in existing research.

The second chapter details the research methodology adopted in the study. It includes a description of the mixed-methods approach, participant demographics, and the instruments used for data collection namely, teacher interviews, student questionnaires, and classroom observations. The chapter also outlines the step-by-step data collection process and the methods used for analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data.

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The final chapter presents the findings derived from the collected data. It includes a thorough analysis and interpretation of both qualitative and quantitative results, focusing on the impact of gamified learning on vocabulary acquisition, student engagement, and motivation. The chapter concludes with recommendations for educators, suggestions for future research, and reflections on the limitations of the study.

Chapter One: Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

This literature review aims to explore the existing body of research on vocabulary acquisition, traditional instructional methods, and the emerging field of gamified learning. It will begin by defining vocabulary acquisition, discussing its significance in language development. The review will then examine the limitations of traditional vocabulary instruction and the need for innovative approaches. Following this, the concept of gamified learning will be introduced, along with its theoretical underpinnings and potential benefits for vocabulary acquisition. By synthesizing existing research and identifying key themes, this literature review will provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding the role of gamified learning in vocabulary instruction. It will also inform the research design and methodology of the current study, ultimately contributing to the ongoing discourse on effective teaching practices in primary education. In our view, including critical commentary on the strengths and limitations of these approaches is crucial to establish the relevance of gamified learning to our specific context.

Having outlined the broader context of our investigation into vocabulary instruction methods, let us now turn our attention to the fundamental concepts of vocabulary acquisition itself. Understanding these basics will help us better evaluate both traditional and innovative approaches.

1.2 Review to Vocabulary Acquisition

Building upon the introduction, this section delves into the concept of vocabulary acquisition, offering a foundation for understanding the processes involved in learning new words. This theoretical background sets the stage for evaluating how instructional approaches can either support or hinder vocabulary growth.

Vocabulary acquisition is a critical component of language development. It refers to the process through which learners acquire, retain, and utilize words and their meanings, which is an essential element for effective communication and academic success as noted by Beck et al

(2013), "Vocabulary knowledge is a strong predictor of reading comprehension and overall academic achievement" (p. 5).

The stages of vocabulary development typically begin in early childhood, where children rapidly expand their vocabulary through exposure to language in various contexts, according to National Reading Panel (2000): "Children learn new words through direct instruction, reading, and conversations" (p. 4). However, many primary school pupils face challenges in vocabulary acquisition, including limited exposure to rich language environments and ineffective instructional methods.

Traditional approaches, such as rote memorization, often fail to engage students, leading to difficulties in retention and application of vocabulary (Nation, 2001). As a result, there is a pressing need for innovative strategies, such as gamified learning, to enhance vocabulary acquisition and make the learning process more engaging and effective for young learners.

Before analyzing instructional methods, we should clarify precisely what we mean by vocabulary acquisition. Different scholars offer subtle variations in their definitions.

1.2.1 Definition of Vocabulary Acquisition

Vocabulary acquisition refers to the process through which individuals learn and internalize new words and their meanings, enabling effective communication and comprehension. According to Schmitt (2000), "Vocabulary acquisition is the process of learning words and their meanings, which involves both the recognition of words and the ability to use them in context" (p. 4), this process encompasses both receptive vocabulary (words understood) and productive vocabulary (words used in speaking and writing). Effective vocabulary acquisition is essential for language proficiency, as it directly impacts reading comprehension and overall academic success (Beck et al 2013).

The following figure defines and provides an overview of the distinction between productive and receptive vocabulary, illustrating how different components of language skills are categorized. Starting with "Receptive vocabulary" it includes the words understood through

listening and reading, forming the basis of comprehension. These skills are passive in nature, as they involve comprehension but may not necessarily use in their speech or writing. In contrast, “productive vocabulary” involves words used in speaking and writing, reflecting active language use. As in The diagram it shows how oral vocabulary connects listening “receptive” and speaking “productive”, while writing vocabulary links reading “receptive” and writing “productive”. This highlights the progression from understanding words to actively using them in communication. This differentiation is essential in language learning, as learners often recognize more words than they can produce. Understanding this relationship helps educators develop effective teaching strategies that gradually transition words from passive recognition to active usage.

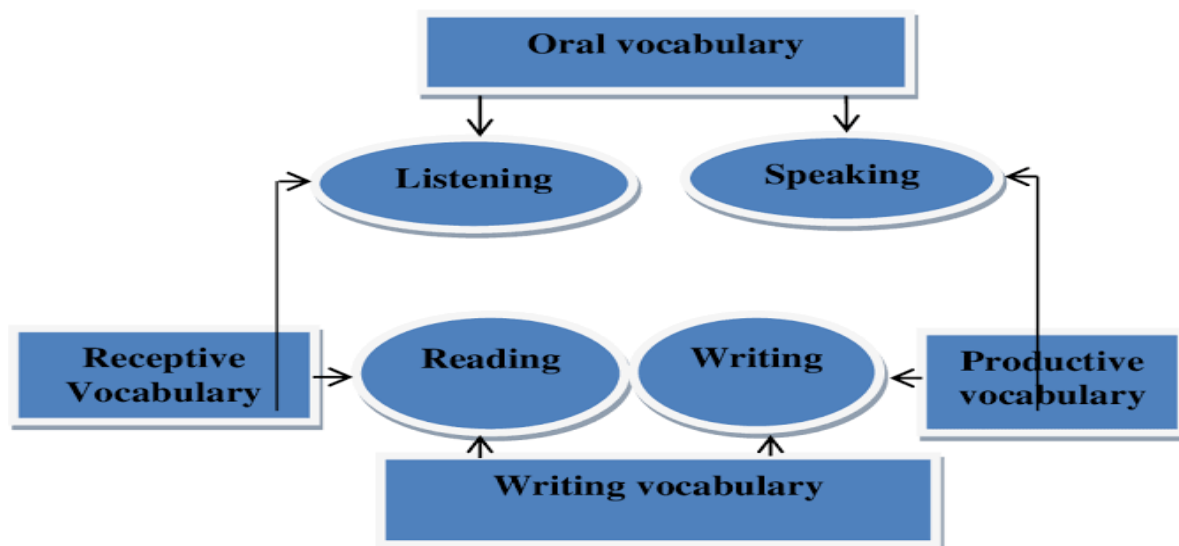


Figure 1.1: Overview Of Productive and Receptive Vocabulary.

But why does vocabulary acquisition merit such focused attention? The answer becomes clear when we examine its impact on language development and academic achievement.

1.2.2 Importance of Vocabulary in Language Development

Vocabulary is a fundamental aspect of language development, playing an essential role in communication, reading comprehension, and academic achievement as noted by Nagy and Herman (1987), "A rich vocabulary is essential for understanding and producing language

effectively" (p. 20). Vocabulary knowledge not only facilitates effective communication but also enhances cognitive processes involved in the learning process.

Research indicates that vocabulary is a strong predictor of reading success; as for students with a larger vocabulary tend to perform better academically (Stanovich, 1986). Besides that, vocabulary acquisition supports critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as it allows learners to articulate their thoughts and engage in discussions more effectively (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013). Thus, fostering vocabulary development is essential for ensuring students' overall language proficiency and academic success.

Given this crucial role vocabulary plays, it's worth considering how word learning unfolds naturally in children's development. Researchers have identified distinct phases that reveal fascinating patterns in language acquisition.

1.2.3 Stages of Vocabulary Development in Children

Vocabulary development in children unfolds through distinct stages, each stage is marked by increasing complexity and depth of word knowledge. Understanding these stages is pivotal for educators and parents alike, as it allows them to adjust vocabulary instruction to meet the developmental needs of young learners. The following table, adapted from Bloom (2000), presents the various stages of vocabulary development, featuring key characteristics and milestones associated with each stage :

Stage	Age Range	Key Characteristics
Early Vocabulary Development	0-2 years	- Recognition of sounds and association of words with objects/actions- Acquisition of around 200-300 words, mostly nouns and simple verbs- Strong influence from the immediate environment and word exposure
Rapid Growth Stage	2-5 years	- Vocabulary explosion with several new words learned daily- Formation of more complex sentences and basic grammar understanding- Increased engagement in

		conversations and questioning
School Age Stage	5-12 years	- Significant vocabulary expansion through formal education, reading, and social interactions- Development of academic vocabulary- Enhancement of comprehension, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills
Adolescence and Beyond	12+ years	- Acquisition of specialized vocabulary related to interests, academics, and professions- Refinement of vocabulary through exposure to diverse texts and experiences- Crucial for effective communication in various contexts

Table 1.1: *Stages of vocabulary development in children (Adapted from Bloom, 2000).*

Recognizing these stages allows educators to implement age-appropriate strategies that raise vocabulary growth. By aligning instructional methods with the developmental characteristics of each stage, teachers can create a more effective learning environment. With this developmental framework in mind, we can now assess how different instructional approaches align with or diverge from these natural language acquisition patterns. The next section will explore the various factors influencing vocabulary acquisition, providing insights into how these elements can be leveraged to enhance language learning outcomes.

1.2.4 Factors Influencing Vocabulary Acquisition

Vocabulary acquisition is a complex process influenced by multiple factors. According to Schmitt (2000), vocabulary learning depends on both internal and external variables that shape how learners acquire, retain, and use new words effectively. These factors can be categorized into learner-related variables, instructional methods, and contextual influences.

1.2.4.1 Learner-Related Variables

The first area, learner-related variables, encompasses individual characteristics that affect vocabulary acquisition. These include motivation and attitude, learning strategies, and cognitive and psychological factors.

- **Motivation and Attitude**

Motivation plays a crucial role in vocabulary learning, as it determines the effort learners put into acquiring new words. Gardner (1985) emphasizes that motivation provides the necessary drive to initiate and sustain second language learning, making it a key determinant of success. Highly motivated learners are more likely to actively engage with new vocabulary and apply effective learning strategies. As well, learners' attitudes toward the "TL" and its culture influence their willingness to expand their vocabulary. A positive attitude promotes curiosity and enthusiasm, leading to better retention and application of new words.

- **Learning Strategies**

The use of vocabulary learning strategies substantially affects how learners acquire and retain words. Nation (2001) categorizes these strategies into discovery strategies (e.g., guessing from context, using dictionaries) and consolidation strategies (e.g., repetition, mnemonic techniques). Effective learners often employ a combination of these strategies to reinforce their vocabulary knowledge. Schmitt (1997) further argues that students who actively engage in word-learning strategies, such as word association and context-based learning, tend to develop a more extensive vocabulary. This suggests that learners who consciously apply strategic techniques are better equipped to remember and use newly acquired words in different contexts.

- **Cognitive and Psychological Factors**

Cognitive abilities, such as memory and processing speed, play a vital role in vocabulary retention. Baddeley (1990) draws attention to the role of working memory in language learning, noting that learners with a stronger working memory capacity are better able to retain and recall new vocabulary items. This means that individuals who can efficiently process and store linguistic information tend to have an advantage in vocabulary acquisition.

Likewise, psychological factors such as anxiety and self-confidence influence vocabulary learning. Horwitz, and Cope (1986) found that high levels of foreign language anxiety negatively affect learners' ability to recall and use vocabulary in communication. Learners who experience anxiety may hesitate to use new words for fear of making mistakes, which can hinder their language development. In contrast, those with high self-confidence are more willing to experiment with vocabulary and engage in conversations, leading to improved language proficiency.

1.2.4.2 Instructional Methods

After identifying key learner-related variables, we turn our attention to the instructional strategies that shape vocabulary learning outcomes. This transition is essential as it connects the internal capabilities of learners to the external methods employed by educators, providing a full picture of the vocabulary acquisition process. Teaching Approaches and Gamification Having examined traditional methods and their limitations, we now introduce gamification as a modern, engaging alternative. This shift highlights the evolving nature of language instruction and frames gamification as a response to the shortcomings previously discussed.

In our opinion, these modern strategies hold particular promise for Algerian EFL contexts, where learner disengagement with traditional methods is common. While traditional methods provide structure, we believe gamified approaches offer more dynamic and learner-centered experiences that better suit the developmental needs of primary pupils.

The second area, instructional methods, refers to the teaching approaches employed to facilitate vocabulary learning. The way vocabulary is taught significantly influences how well learners acquire and retain words.

- **Teaching Approaches and Gamification**

The way vocabulary is taught significantly influences how well learners acquire and retain words. Traditional methods such as rote memorization can be effective for short-term retention but often fail to ensure long-term word recall and meaningful use. Interactive and context-rich instructional approaches, such as communicative language teaching and task-based learning, have

been found to enhance vocabulary retention by providing learners with meaningful exposure and opportunities for active use.

One modern instructional method that has gained popularity is gamification. Gamification involves integrating game-like elements into educational activities to enhance engagement and motivation. As Deterding et al. (2011) argue that gamification elements, such as rewards, competition, and interactivity, develop a sense of enjoyment and motivation, making vocabulary learning more effective. This suggests that when learners associate vocabulary learning with fun and challenge, they are more likely to invest effort and retain new words. Research by Hung (2017) supports this claim, showing that game-based learning provides repeated exposure to vocabulary in entertaining and contextually rich environments, which aids both retention and retrieval.

1.2.4.3 Contextual Influences

The third area, contextual influences, highlights the importance of the environment in which vocabulary learning occurs.

- **Exposure to Language Input**

Frequent exposure to rich linguistic input enhances vocabulary acquisition. Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis suggests that learners acquire language when they are exposed to comprehensible input slightly above their current proficiency level. This means that students who engage with authentic materials such as books, songs, and games, are more likely to acquire vocabulary naturally.

Webb and Nation (2017) emphasize the importance of extensive reading, stating that incidental vocabulary learning occurs when learners encounter words repeatedly in meaningful contexts. This implies that students who engage in regular reading activities, particularly those that match their interests and proficiency level, develop a more extensive vocabulary over time. Moreover, exposure to spoken language through conversations, audiovisual media, and interactive activities further supports vocabulary retention by reinforcing word meanings in different contexts

1.2.5 Challenges in Vocabulary Acquisition

Vocabulary acquisition is essential for language development and academic success, yet many primary school pupils encounter considerable challenges that reduce their ability to learn and retain new words. Understanding these challenges is crucial for educators and parents to implement effective strategies that support vocabulary growth. The following are some of the key challenges faced by primary school pupils in vocabulary acquisition:

- **Limited Exposure to Language**

Many children, particularly those from low income families, may not be exposed to a rich linguistic environment at home. Hart and Risley (1995) found that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are subject to limited linguistic exposure, which can lead to vocabulary deficits when they enter school.

- **Ineffective Instructional Methods**

Traditional methods, such as rote memorization and repetitive drills, often fail to engage students and promote meaningful learning. Nation (2001) argues that "rote learning does not lead to deep understanding or long-term retention of vocabulary" (p. 27). This lack of engagement can result in poor vocabulary retention.

- **Language Barriers**

English language learners face unique challenges in vocabulary acquisition due to differences in language structure and cultural context, Cummins (2000) states that "bilingual children often encounter additional obstacles in acquiring academic vocabulary" (p. 12). Such barriers can decrease their ability to fully participate in classroom activities.

- **Lack of Motivation**

Students who do not find vocabulary learning relevant or engaging may struggle to invest effort in acquiring new words. Research by Ryan and Deci (2000) emphasizes that intrinsic motivation is crucial for effective learning; without it, students may disengage from vocabulary activities, leading to limited vocabulary growth.

- **Diverse Learning Styles**

Children have varied learning preferences, and a uniform approach to vocabulary instruction may not meet the needs of all students. Educators must adapt their strategies to accommodate different learning styles to enhance vocabulary acquisition effectively. A one-size-fits-all approach can leave some students behind.

- **Cognitive Overload**

Introducing too many new words at once can overwhelm students, making it difficult for them to retain information. Effective vocabulary instruction should consider cognitive load theory, ensuring that new vocabulary is introduced in manageable amounts to facilitate better understanding and retention.

To sum up, primary school pupils face several challenges in vocabulary acquisition, including limited exposure to language, ineffective instructional methods, language barriers, lack of motivation, diverse learning styles, and cognitive overload. By recognizing and addressing these challenges, educators and parents can create supportive learning environments that foster vocabulary development and enhance overall language proficiency.

1.3 Traditional Methods of Vocabulary Instruction

Traditional methods of vocabulary instruction have long been employed in educational settings to enhance students' word knowledge and language skills. These methods, while foundational, often focus on direct instruction and memorization and repetition techniques. Below are some of the key traditional approaches to vocabulary instruction:

- **Rote Memorization**

Rote memorization involves the repetition of words and their meanings until they are committed to memory. This method is straightforward but often lacks depth, as it does not encourage students to understand the context or usage of words. As Nation (2001) notes, "Rote learning does not lead to deep understanding or long-term retention of vocabulary" (p. 27).

- **Word Lists**

Teachers often provide students with lists of vocabulary words to learn for tests or quizzes. This approach typically involves defining words and using them in sentences. While word lists can help students recognize new vocabulary, they may not promote meaningful engagement with the words or their applications in real-life contexts (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002).

- **Flashcards**

Flashcards are a common tool used for vocabulary instruction. Students write a word on one side and its definition or an example sentence on the other. This method allows for self-testing and repetition, but it may not foster a deeper understanding of how words function in different contexts

(Schmitt, 2008).

- **Contextual Learning**

Some traditional methods incorporate vocabulary instruction within the context of reading. Teachers may highlight new words in texts and discuss their meanings and usage. While this approach can enhance understanding, it often relies on the teacher's ability to select appropriate texts and effectively guide discussions (Graves, 2006; Beck et al., 2002).

- **Drills and Worksheets**

Worksheets and drills are frequently used to reinforce vocabulary learning. These may include fill-in-the-blank exercises, matching definitions to words, or multiple-choice questions. While these activities can provide practice, they may not engage students in meaningful ways or encourage them to use vocabulary in authentic contexts (Stahl, 1999).

- **Direct Instruction**

Direct instruction involves explicit teaching of vocabulary through definitions, examples, and practice. Teachers may introduce new words, explain their meanings, and provide opportunities for students to use them in sentences. This method can be effective but may lack engagement if not paired with interactive activities (Beck et al., 2002; Graves, 2006).

While traditional methods of vocabulary instruction have their merits, they often fall short in promoting deep understanding and retention of vocabulary. As educational practices evolve, there is a growing recognition of the need for more interactive and engaging approaches to vocabulary instruction that foster meaningful learning experiences.

1.3.1 Overview of Conventional Approaches

Conventional approaches to vocabulary instruction have historically emphasized structured, teacher-centered techniques such as rote memorization, dictionary use, and explicit vocabulary instruction through word lists. Rote memorization involves repetitive learning of words without necessarily engaging with their meaning in context (Nation, 2001), often leading to short-term retention rather than deep learning. Similarly, the grammar-translation method relies on word-for-word translation between the “TL” and the learner’s native language (Richards & Rodgers, 2014), providing clear meanings but lacking communicative engagement. Direct vocabulary instruction and reading-based learning are also commonly used, where students infer meanings from texts, yet these methods often fail to address issues of engagement, motivation, and retention. From a theoretical perspective, Constructivist Learning Theory “CLT” (Piaget, 1950) suggests that learners construct knowledge actively, yet traditional methods rarely encourage such active engagement. As for Self-Determination Theory “SDT” (Deci & Ryan, 1985) emphasizes autonomy, competence, and relatedness as key motivators, but rigid, teacher-centered instruction can diminish student motivation. Another educational theory named Flow Theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) emphasizes the importance of immersive, enjoyable experiences in learning, something that repetitive drills often fail to provide. Additionally, Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) stresses the role of interaction in knowledge acquisition; yet conventional vocabulary instruction tends to focus on individual memorization rather than collaborative activities. Lastly, Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988) explains how excessive cognitive demands hinder learning, making extensive memorization without meaningful context ineffective. These theoretical perspectives sheds the light to the limitations of traditional vocabulary

instruction to which have led to increased interest in more engaging and interactive methods, such as gamified learning, to enhance vocabulary acquisition .

1.3.2 Limitations of Traditional Methods

This section follows logically from the discussion on instructional approaches, critically assessing the drawbacks of conventional vocabulary teaching using the traditional methods. It reinforces the need for alternatives that covers up the students needs like gamified learning by underscoring the challenges learners face with outdated methods.

Traditional vocabulary instruction methods, while common, have several limitations that hinder effective vocabulary acquisition:

- **Lack of Contextual Understanding:** Traditional methods often rely on rote memorization and isolated word lists, which fail to provide context for real-life usage. As Nation (2001) states, "learning vocabulary in isolation does not prepare learners for using words in context" (p. 45).
- **Limited Engagement:** Conventional approaches like drills can be monotonous, leading to disengagement. Beck et al. (2013) note that "when vocabulary instruction lacks interactivity and relevance, students may become disinterested" (p. 78).
- **Superficial Learning:** Heavy reliance on memorization can result in superficial learning, where students remember words temporarily but do not retain them long-term. Nagy and Herman (1987) assert that "rote learning does not promote deep understanding" (p. 20).
- **One-Size-Fits-All Approach:** Traditional methods often use a uniform approach that may not address diverse learning styles. Snow (2010) warns that "a one-size-fits-all approach can leave some students behind" (p. 451).
- **Neglect of Word Relationships:** These methods typically focus on individual words without exploring their relationships, which are crucial for vocabulary development.

Beck et al. (2013) emphasize that "understanding word relationships is crucial for developing a richer vocabulary" (p. 92).

- **Inadequate Practice Opportunities:** Traditional approaches may lack sufficient opportunities for meaningful practice. Nation (2001) suggests that "authentic practice is essential for integrating new words" (p. 67).

- **Overemphasis on Assessment:** Many traditional methods prioritize quizzes, which can pressure students to memorize for short-term success rather than fostering genuine understanding. Ryan and Deci (2000) argue that "this focus on assessment can detract from intrinsic motivation" (p. 56).

In summary, while traditional vocabulary instruction has its merits, its limitations highlight the need for more dynamic and engaging approaches to enhance understanding, retention, and application of vocabulary. Based on the researches done on current educational context, we find that an overreliance on memorization leads to shallow learning outcomes. Therefore, incorporating interactive and gamified elements may provide a more effective alternative.

1.3.3 Effectiveness of Traditional Vocabulary Instruction

Traditional vocabulary instruction methods have been widely utilized in educational settings and can be effective in certain contexts, despite their limitations. One of the primary advantages of these methods is that they provide a structured learning environment, which can benefit students who thrive in organized settings. By presenting vocabulary systematically through word lists and explicit definitions, students can build a foundational understanding of new words (Nation, 2001). Not only that, traditional methods often offer immediate feedback through drills and quizzes, allowing learners to assess their understanding and retention of vocabulary, which is essential for reinforcing learning (Beck et al, 2013). Besides, these methods familiarize students with assessment formats, reducing anxiety and improving performance on standardized tests (Snow, 2010). Traditional instruction is particularly effective in teaching basic vocabulary essential for

academic success, as a strong foundation in high-frequency words supports reading and comprehension skills (Nagy & Herman, 1987). What's more is the ease of implementation of traditional methods, such as worksheets and flashcards, makes them accessible for teachers, especially in classrooms with limited resources. While traditional methods may not be sufficient on their own, they can serve as a valuable supplement to more interactive and engaging vocabulary instruction approaches, creating a comprehensive vocabulary program that addresses diverse learning needs.

1.3.4 Contextual Factors Influencing Traditional Vocabulary Instruction

Traditional methods of vocabulary instruction have long formed the foundation of language teaching across educational systems. These methods such as rote memorization, direct vocabulary presentation, translation-based exercises, and textbook drills are still widely used in Algerian primary schools. These approaches focus on repetition, individual word recognition, and form-meaning mapping, often at the expense of communicative or contextualized language use. Although these techniques offer structure and simplicity, their effectiveness in fostering long-term retention and engagement is limited.

One reason for their continued use is the exam-oriented nature of the Algerian educational system, which emphasizes vocabulary recall in written tests rather than active vocabulary use. As Benadla (2012) points out, the Algerian EFL curriculum prioritizes structural competence over communicative competence, which leads teachers to rely on methods that prepare learners for grammar-translation-style assessments. In primary classrooms, vocabulary is frequently taught in isolation from speaking and listening tasks, reinforcing the memorization of word lists without meaningful application.

Another important factor is the lack of professional development in alternative teaching strategies. Many Algerian teachers report limited training in communicative approaches or gamification. According to Bouzid (2015), teacher training programs in Algeria often emphasize theoretical knowledge over practical classroom strategies, leaving teachers underprepared to implement interactive vocabulary instruction. Consequently, educators rely on what they are familiar with traditional, teacher-centered methods.

Resource constraints further contribute to this reliance. In many Algerian public schools, especially in rural areas, classrooms lack the technological tools or teaching materials needed for more dynamic methods like gamification or project-based learning. Teachers often work with outdated textbooks and overcrowded classrooms, making it difficult to incorporate individualized or playful learning experiences. As reported by Bensalem (2018), material shortages and large class sizes are among the most frequently cited obstacles to implementing communicative and engaging EFL practices in Algerian primary schools.

Also there is a cultural perception that discipline and academic seriousness are best maintained through traditional instruction. Playful methods may be misunderstood by some educators or school leaders as lacking rigor or wasting instructional time. This perception, although challenged by modern pedagogical research, still influences how vocabulary instruction is approached. Many parents and school officials equate rote learning with educational effectiveness.

Still it is important to note that traditional methods are not entirely ineffective. When used selectively and combined with contextualized learning, they can support vocabulary exposure and initial word recognition. However, their overuse can lead to disengagement and shallow learning. Algerian researchers like Guemide and Benachaiba (2012) advocate for a blended approach, combining conventional methods with interactive tools, to accommodate both systemic limitations and pedagogical innovation.

In brief, the continued use of traditional vocabulary instruction in Algerian primary schools is shaped by curriculum constraints, assessment practices, limited teacher training, and classroom realities. While these methods serve practical needs, they should be complemented with more engaging, student-centered strategies such as gamified learning to foster better vocabulary retention and communicative competence.

1.3.5 Teacher Perspectives on Traditional Methods

Teachers play a crucial role in the implementation of vocabulary instruction, and their perspectives on traditional methods can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness and limitations of these approaches. Many educators recognize the structured nature of traditional methods, which can offer a clear framework for teaching vocabulary. As one teacher noted, "The use of word lists and explicit definitions helps students build a foundational vocabulary that is essential for their academic success" (Smith, 2018, p. 34). This sentiment reflects a common belief among educators that traditional methods can effectively introduce students to essential vocabulary.

But teachers also express concerns about the limitations of these conventional approaches. Many educators feel that traditional methods often fail to engage students in meaningful ways. As Johnson (2019) points out, "Rote memorization and repetitive drills can lead to disengagement, especially among students who thrive on interactive and hands-on learning experiences" (p. 45). This perspective highlights the need for instructional strategies that not only teach vocabulary but also foster student engagement and motivation.

Besides that teachers acknowledge the diverse learning needs of their students, which traditional methods may not adequately address. According to Thompson (2020), "A one-size-fits-all approach to vocabulary instruction can leave some students behind, particularly those who require more personalized and adaptive strategies" (p. 22). This recognition underscores the importance of incorporating innovative approaches that cater to different learning styles and promote deeper understanding.

In addition, many educators emphasize the importance of contextual learning in vocabulary acquisition. As Brown (2018) states, "Students need to see how words are used in context to truly understand their meanings and applications" (p. 67). This perspective aligns with the growing body of research advocating for more interactive and context-rich vocabulary instruction.

Eventually, teacher perspectives on traditional methods of vocabulary instruction reveal a complex landscape. While many educators appreciate the structured approach these methods provide, they also recognize the need for more engaging, personalized, and contextually relevant strategies. By understanding and addressing these perspectives, educators can enhance vocabulary instruction and better support students' language development.

1.4 Introduction to Gamified Learning

Gamified learning is an innovative educational approach that incorporates game design elements and principles into the learning process to enhance student engagement, motivation, and

retention of knowledge. By integrating aspects such as competition, rewards, and interactive challenges, gamified learning transforms traditional educational experiences into dynamic and enjoyable activities. This method leverages the natural human inclination toward play and competition, making learning more appealing and effective.

As we transition from traditional methods to gamified learning, it is essential to recognize how this innovative approach addresses the limitations of conventional instruction. By incorporating game-like elements, educators are able to create a more motivating engaging and interactive learning environment that gains deeper understanding and retention of vocabulary.

The concept of gamification in education is rooted in the understanding that students are more likely to engage with content when it is presented in an interactive and enjoyable manner. According to Deterding et al. (2011), gamification involves "the use of game design elements in non-game contexts" (p. 10), which can include points, badges, leaderboards, and challenges. These elements not only motivate students to participate actively in their learning but also build a sense of achievement and progress.

One of the key benefits of gamified learning is its ability to create a safe environment for experimentation and failure. In a gamified setting, students can take risks and learn from their mistakes without the fear of negative consequences, which encourages a growth mindset, as Kapp (2012) notes, "games provide a safe space for learners to explore, experiment, and learn from their failures" (p. 45). This aspect of gamification is particularly valuable in vocabulary instruction, where students can practice new words in context through interactive games and activities.

Besides that gamified learning promotes collaboration and social interaction among students. But many gamified activities encourage teamwork and communication, allowing students to work together to solve problems and achieve common goals. This collaborative aspect not only enhances learning outcomes but also helps build important social skills.

Overall, gamified learning represents a powerful approach to education that harnesses the motivational aspects of games to enhance student engagement and learning. By incorporating

game design elements into the learning process, educators can create more interactive, enjoyable, and effective educational experiences that foster deeper understanding and retention of knowledge.

1.4.1 Definition of Gamified Learning

Gamified learning is the application of game design elements in educational settings to enhance student engagement and motivation. Deterding et al. (2011) define gamification as “the use of game design elements in non-game contexts” (p. 10). This approach integrates features such as points, badges, leaderboards, challenges, and rewards into learning activities, making them more interactive and enjoyable.

Kapp (2012) further explains that gamified learning “uses game-based mechanics, aesthetics, and game thinking to engage people, motivate action, promote learning, and solve problems” (p. 125). This means that beyond simply adding game-like elements, gamified learning focuses on nurturing a mindset of problem-solving, creativity, and perseverance in students.

Werbach and Hunter (2012) describe gamification as a method of “enhancing engagement by applying gaming principles such as competition, collaboration, and goal-setting to non-game activities” (p. 45). In an educational setting, this means students are more likely to stay motivated and invested in their learning journey when game-based elements are incorporated.

By creating a competitive and playful atmosphere, gamified learning encourages students to participate actively, collaborate with peers, and develop critical skills, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes. The use of these game mechanics not only increases student motivation but also developing deeper cognitive engagement, helping learners retain information more effectively.



Figure 1.2: *Gamification Elements (adapted by Deterding, et al., 2011).*

Figure 1.2 illustrates the conceptual framework of gamification elements as adapted from Deterding et al. (2011). It is structured along two intersecting axes: the vertical axis ranges from Play to Game, representing the continuum from unstructured, spontaneous play to rule-based, goal-oriented gameplay. The horizontal axis extends from Whole to Elements, distinguishing between the use of entire games and the application of individual game elements. Within this framework, Serious Games occupy the quadrant where complete games are used for non-entertainment purposes, such as education or training. Gamification, on the other hand, is situated where specific game elements like points, badges, and leaderboards are applied to non-game contexts to boost motivation and engagement. The Playful Interaction quadrant represents free, open-ended play without formal rules or educational objectives, while the Toy lies centrally, reflecting objects of play that are neither structured games nor purely gamified systems. This diagram clarifies that gamification is a strategic use of game components rather than the implementation of full games, supporting its application in educational settings to enhance learning outcomes.

Having established what gamified learning entails, it is valuable to delve deeper into the historical context of this approach. Understanding how gamification has evolved over time and its

growing significance in educational settings. By exploring the key milestones and developments that have shaped its implementation, we can better appreciate the impact of gamified learning on student engagement and motivation in contemporary classrooms.

1.4.2 Historical Context of Gamification in Education

The historical context of gamification in education reveals a rich evolution of ideas and practices that have shaped how educators engage students through game-like elements. While the term "gamification" gained traction in the early 2000s, the use of game mechanics in educational settings has roots that extend back several decades.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the advent of computer-based educational games marked a significant turning point in how learning could be approached. Early examples, such as "Oregon Trail," which taught students about American history and pioneer life, and "Math Blaster," which focused on mathematics skills, demonstrated the potential of interactive experiences to enhance learning. These games provided immediate feedback and rewards, key components of what would later be recognized as gamification. They engaged students in a way that traditional methods often could not, allowing for exploration and problem-solving in a risk-free environment.

As technology advanced, the late 1990s and early 2000s saw the rise of the internet, which opened new avenues for gamified learning. Online platforms began to incorporate elements such as points, badges, and leaderboards to motivate users. This shift was influenced by a growing understanding of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as highlighted by researchers like Deci and Ryan (2000). Their work emphasized the importance of engaging learners through meaningful experiences, suggesting that when students feel a sense of autonomy and competence, they are more likely to be motivated and engaged in their learning.

The term "gamification" itself emerged in the early 2010s, gaining widespread recognition in both educational and corporate contexts. Educators began to adopt gamified strategies to enhance student engagement and improve learning outcomes, Kapp (2012) notes that "gamification is not just about adding points and badges; it's about creating a learning environment that motivates and

engages learners" (p. 5). This period marked a significant shift in educational practices, as teachers sought to leverage the motivational aspects of games to foster a more interactive and enjoyable learning experience.

As gamification gained popularity, various educational frameworks and models began to emerge, emphasizing the importance of aligning game elements with learning objectives. For instance, the use of game mechanics such as storytelling, challenges, and collaboration became integral to creating immersive learning experiences. Educators recognized that gamification could not only enhance engagement but also promote critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork among students.

In recent years, advancements in technology, such as mobile applications and virtual reality, have further expanded the possibilities for gamified learning. These tools allow for more personalized and adaptive learning experiences, catering to the diverse needs of students. The integration of gamified elements into educational practices reflects a broader trend toward student-centered learning, where engagement and motivation are prioritized to enhance educational outcomes.

Today, gamification continues to evolve, with ongoing research and development aimed at understanding its impact on learning. Educators are increasingly exploring how to effectively implement gamified strategies in their classrooms, seeking to balance the fun and competitive aspects of games with the rigor and depth of academic content. As the educational landscape changes, gamification remains a powerful tool for fostering engagement, motivation, and meaningful learning experiences.

1.4.3 Key Components of Gamified Learning

Gamified learning incorporates several key components that work together to create an engaging and effective educational experience. These elements are designed to motivate students, enhance participation, and facilitate deeper learning. The following are some of the most important components of gamified learning According to Kapp (2012), gamification elements

such as points, badges, and leaderboards provide immediate feedback and motivation, enhancing student engagement. Hamari et al. (2014) emphasize that gamified elements foster a sense of recognition and accomplishment, while Deterding et al. (2011) highlight their role in encouraging social interaction and competition. Hattie and Timperley (2007) also stress the importance of feedback in learning, stating that timely and constructive feedback significantly impacts student achievement.

Likewise, Johnson et al. (2014) argue that collaboration and social interaction within gamified environments improve learning outcomes

- **Points and Scoring Systems**

Points are a fundamental element of gamification, serving as a tangible measure of progress and achievement. Students earn points for completing tasks, participating in activities, or demonstrating mastery of concepts. This scoring system encourages competition and motivates students to engage more deeply with the material. As Kapp (2012) notes, "points provide immediate feedback and a sense of accomplishment" (p. 67).

- **Badges and Achievements**

Badges are visual representations of accomplishments that students can earn for reaching specific milestones or completing challenges. These digital rewards serve to recognize and celebrate student achievements, fostering a sense of pride and motivation. According to Hamari et al. (2014), "badges can enhance intrinsic motivation by providing learners with a sense of recognition and accomplishment" (p. 302).

- **Leaderboards**

Leaderboards display the rankings of students based on their points or achievements, creating a competitive environment that can drive engagement. While competition can motivate some students, it is essential to ensure that leaderboards are used in a way that promotes healthy competition and collaboration rather than discouraging those who may struggle. As Deterding et al.

(2011) suggest, "leaderboards can foster a sense of community and encourage social interaction among learners" (p. 12).

- **Challenges and Quests**

Incorporating challenges or quests into the learning process allows students to engage in problem-solving and critical thinking. These tasks can be designed to align with learning objectives and encourage students to apply their knowledge in meaningful ways Kapp (2012) emphasizes that "well-designed challenges can stimulate curiosity and promote deeper learning" (p. 89).

- **Feedback Mechanisms**

Timely and constructive feedback is crucial in gamified learning environments. Feedback helps students understand their progress, identify areas for improvement, and stay motivated. Gamified systems often provide instant feedback, allowing students to adjust their strategies and continue learning without delay As Hattie and Timperley (2007) state, "feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement" (p. 81).

- **Storytelling and Narrative**

Integrating storytelling elements into gamified learning can enhance engagement by providing context and meaning to the tasks at hand. A compelling narrative can draw students into the learning experience, making it more relatable and enjoyable According to Gee (2003), "storytelling in games can create immersive experiences that enhance learning" (p. 45).

- **Collaboration and Social Interaction**

Gamified learning often encourages collaboration among students, promoting teamwork and communication skills. Group challenges or cooperative tasks can help build a sense of community and support among learners As Johnson et al. (2014) note, "collaborative learning environments can enhance motivation and improve learning outcomes" (p. 23).

The key components of gamified learning points, badges, leaderboards, challenges, feedback mechanisms, storytelling, and collaboration work together to create an engaging and motivating

educational experience. By incorporating these elements, educators can foster a more interactive and effective learning environment that encourages students to take an active role in their education.

As we delve into the role of technology in gamified learning, it is important to recognize how advancements in digital tools and platforms have transformed the way educators implement gamification strategies. Technology not only facilitates the integration of game elements into learning but also enhances the overall educational experience by providing innovative ways to engage students.

1.4.4 The Role of Technology in Gamified Learning

Technology plays a pivotal role in the implementation and effectiveness of gamified learning, providing essential tools and platforms that create engaging and interactive educational experiences. Interactive platforms, such as learning management systems (LMS) and specialized gamification software, enable educators to design gamified activities, track student progress, and provide real-time feedback (Kapp, 2012). The accessibility of online gamified learning experiences allows students to engage with materials anytime and anywhere, promoting flexibility in their learning schedules (Johnson et al., 2016).

Technology offers powerful data analytics tools that help educators monitor student performance and engagement levels, allowing for tailored instruction based on individual needs (Hamari et al., 2014). The integration of multimedia elements such as videos, animations, and interactive simulations enhances the learning experience by making it more engaging and visually appealing (Gee, 2003).

Not to mention that technology facilitates social interaction and collaboration among students through online forums and collaborative tools, fostering a sense of community and enhancing motivation (Johnson et al., 2014). Finally, advanced game mechanics and design elements can be easily incorporated into gamified learning platforms, creating more engaging and effective learning experiences (Deterding et al., 2011).

Eventually, technology is integral to the success of gamified learning, enhancing student engagement, facilitating collaboration, and largely leading to improved educational outcomes.

While technology provides the infrastructure for gamified learning, we should examine why this approach resonates so powerfully with its primary audience - young learners. The appeal becomes clear when we consider children's natural inclinations and developmental needs.

1.4.5 The Appeal of Gamification for Young Learners

Gamification holds significant appeal for young learners, primarily due to its ability to transform traditional educational experiences into engaging and interactive activities. One of the key attractions of gamification is its incorporation of game elements, such as points, badges, and challenges, which resonate with children's natural inclination toward play and competition. As Kapp (2012) notes, "gamification taps into the intrinsic motivation of learners by making learning fun and rewarding" (p. 23). This playful approach not only captures students' attention but also encourages them to participate actively in their learning.

gamification provides immediate feedback, allowing young learners to see the results of their efforts in real time. This instant gratification can enhance motivation and reinforce positive behaviors, as students are more likely to engage with tasks that offer quick rewards (Hamari et al., 2014). The use of storytelling and immersive narratives in gamified learning further captivates young learners, making educational content relatable and enjoyable (Gee, 2003).

Also it grows a sense of achievement and progress, which is particularly important for young learners who thrive on recognition and validation. Earning badges or leveling up can boost their self-esteem and encourage a growth mindset, as they see their efforts leading to tangible accomplishments (Deterding et al., 2011).

Finally, the collaborative aspects of gamified learning, such as team challenges and social interactions, promote teamwork and communication skills among peers. This social dimension not only enhances the learning experience but also helps young learners develop important interpersonal skills (Johnson et al., 2014).

Yet, the appeal of gamification for young learners lies in its ability to make learning enjoyable, provide immediate feedback, foster a sense of achievement, and encourage collaboration. By leveraging these elements, educators can create a more engaging and effective learning environment that resonates with the interests and motivations of young students.

Understanding this student perspective leads us to an important question: What theoretical foundations explain why gamification impacts young learners so effectively? Multiple psychological and educational theories converge to validate this approach.

1.5 Theoretical Frameworks Supporting Gamified Learning

To further justify the inclusion of gamification in vocabulary instruction, we now shift to theoretical frameworks that support its effectiveness. This transition from practical limitations to academic justification strengthens the foundation for using game-based learning in our study. Gamified learning is grounded in several theoretical frameworks that explain how game-based elements enhance motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes. Constructivist Learning Theory, proposed by Piaget (1976) and expanded by Vygotsky (1978), emphasizes active learning, where students construct knowledge through interaction and problem-solving, aligning well with gamified activities that encourage exploration and collaboration. Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) highlights three key psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness that drive intrinsic motivation, which gamification fosters by providing choice, challenges, and social engagement. Flow Theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) describes an optimal state of deep focus and enjoyment when tasks balance challenge and skill, a key characteristic of well-designed gamified learning experiences. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) underscores the role of observation and imitation in learning, suggesting that game-based activities can enhance engagement through peer modeling and collaborative learning. Finally, Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988) emphasizes the need for instructional design to optimize cognitive processing, a principle applied in gamification by breaking down complex tasks, minimizing distractions, and

providing meaningful challenges. Together, these theories offer a strong foundation for integrating gamified elements into education to improve motivation, engagement, and learning effectiveness.

Together, these theories offer a strong foundation for integrating gamified elements into education to improve motivation, engagement, and learning effectiveness. From our perspective, Self-Determination Theory and Flow Theory are particularly relevant, as they directly align with the observed behaviors of young learners in our classrooms who respond positively to autonomy and immersive challenges. These frameworks justify the choice of gamification as a guiding principle in our intervention.

By grounding our discussion in these theoretical insights, we can now shift our focus to the tangible benefits these principles produce in actual vocabulary learning scenarios, the real-world applications of gamification in vocabulary learning. This exploration will reveal how these principles translate into concrete benefits, enhancing various aspects of language acquisition and providing a more dynamic and effective learning environment for students.

1.6 Benefits of Gamified Learning for Vocabulary Acquisition

After delving into the theoretical justification, we now turn to the practical benefits of gamification in vocabulary learning. This transition from theory to application underscores the real-world value of our proposed approach. Gamified learning has emerged as a powerful approach to enhance vocabulary acquisition among learners. By integrating game elements into the educational process, this method transforms traditional vocabulary instruction into an engaging and interactive experience. The use of gamification not only captures students' attention but also fosters a more dynamic learning environment. As a result, learners are more motivated to participate, practice, and ultimately master new vocabulary. This section will explore the various benefits that gamified learning offers for vocabulary acquisition, highlighting its effectiveness in promoting engagement, retention, and overall language development.

At the heart of gamification's effectiveness is its ability to transform engagement levels. Unlike traditional methods that often struggle to maintain student attention, gamified vocabulary learning creates remarkable motivational shifts that ripple through the entire learning process.

1.6.1 Increased Engagement and Motivation

Increased engagement and motivation in the context of gamified learning refer to the enhanced interest and active participation of students in their educational activities. By integrating game elements such as points, levels, and rewards, vocabulary acquisition becomes a more lively and enjoyable experience. This gamification approach attains intrinsic motivation, as learners are encouraged to take ownership of their learning and strive for achievement. As Deci and Ryan (2000) state, "the more that people experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness, the more they will be motivated" (p. 229). This heightened engagement leads to greater persistence in vocabulary tasks and improved language learning outcomes.

This sustained engagement naturally leads us to consider retention - because what good is initial enthusiasm if the words don't stick? Gamification's secret weapon lies in how it embeds vocabulary into memorable, multi-sensory experiences that cement learning.

1.6.2 Enhanced Retention and Application of Vocabulary

Enhanced retention and application of vocabulary refer to the improved ability of learners to remember and effectively use new words in various contexts. Gamified learning promotes this enhancement by providing repeated exposure to vocabulary through engaging activities and challenges. The interactive nature of gamification encourages active participation, which has been shown to facilitate deeper processing of information. As Sweller (1988) explains, "the amount of information that can be processed simultaneously is limited," and gamified approaches help manage cognitive load by breaking down vocabulary into manageable parts (p. 257).

The contextualized learning experiences often found in gamified settings allow students to see how vocabulary is used in real-life situations, further solidifying their understanding and ability to apply new words. This combination of repetition, engagement, and contextualization

leads to better retention and more effective application of vocabulary in both written and spoken language.

When students consistently retain and apply new vocabulary, something profound happens: their entire attitude toward language learning transforms. This psychological shift represents one of gamification's most valuable yet often overlooked benefits.

1.6.3 Positive Attitudes Towards Learning Vocabulary

Positive attitudes towards learning vocabulary encompass the favorable perceptions and feelings that students develop about acquiring new words. Gamified learning significantly contributes to these attitudes by transforming vocabulary practice into an enjoyable and engaging experience. Through game-like activities, students often find themselves immersed in fun and excitement, shifting their view of vocabulary learning from a monotonous task to an exciting challenge.

Research shows that enjoyable educational experiences lead to more favorable attitudes towards the subject matter (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This transformation not only boosts motivation but also encourages students to actively engage in their learning process. Consequently, learners become more inclined to explore and practice new vocabulary, ultimately resulting in greater success in language acquisition.

Beyond attitude changes, gamification cultivates something even more fundamental - cognitive skills that serve learners across all subjects. The same game mechanics that teach vocabulary simultaneously train young minds in critical thinking patterns.

1.6.4 Development of Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills

The development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills is a significant benefit of gamified learning in vocabulary acquisition. Engaging in game-based activities often requires students to analyze information, make decisions, and solve challenges related to vocabulary use. This interactive approach encourages learners to think critically about language, exploring the nuances of word meanings and their applications in different contexts.

Gamified learning environments frequently present scenarios that require students to apply their vocabulary knowledge creatively and strategically. As they navigate these challenges, learners enhance their ability to evaluate options, draw connections, and develop solutions. Research indicates that such active engagement fosters higher-order thinking skills, which are essential for effective problem-solving (Gee, 2003).

By integrating critical thinking and problem-solving into vocabulary learning, gamification not only enriches the educational experience but also equips students with valuable skills that extend beyond language acquisition, preparing them for real-world challenges.

While cognitive benefits are crucial, we mustn't overlook the social dimension. Gamification uniquely addresses both individual skill development and collaborative learning - two aspects that traditional vocabulary instruction often treats separately.

1.6.5 Social Interaction and Collaboration Among Students

Social interaction and collaboration among students are vital components of gamified learning that enhance vocabulary acquisition. By incorporating game elements that require teamwork and communication, learners engage with their peers in meaningful ways. This collaborative environment fosters a sense of community, encouraging students to share ideas, strategies, and insights related to vocabulary use.

Working together in gamified activities allows students to practice vocabulary in context, facilitating deeper understanding and retention. Research shows that collaborative learning experiences can lead to improved academic outcomes, as students benefit from diverse perspectives and collective problem-solving (Johnson & Johnson, 2014).

Also, the social aspect of gamification helps to reduce anxiety associated with language learning, as students feel supported by their peers. This positive interaction not only enhances motivation but also builds essential communication skills that are crucial for effective language use. Ultimately, the emphasis on social interaction and collaboration in gamified learning creates a

richer vocabulary acquisition experience, promoting both language development and interpersonal skills.

Having examined these multifaceted benefits from engagement to cognition to social learning we're now positioned to consolidate our understanding of how gamification addresses core challenges in vocabulary instruction.

1.7 Conclusion

Chapter One provided an overview of the study, including its background, significance, aims, research questions, and methodological framework. It shed the light on the importance of vocabulary acquisition in EFL contexts and introduced the potential of gamified learning as a strategy to enhance student engagement and retention. As well, the chapter outlined the scope and limitations of the research and clarified essential terms to guide the reader. With the foundational aspects of the research established, the following chapter will review the relevant literature, offering theoretical and empirical insights into gamification, vocabulary learning, and their intersection in EFL education

Chapter Two: Field Investigation & Data Collection Procedures

2.1 Introduction

After providing the compelling information about the topic being studied, which is exploring the effect of gamified learning on EFL vocabulary acquisition among 4th-grade primary school pupils in the first theoretical chapter. This chapter is methodological and generally devoted to accounting for the research design and describing some components used in this research work. Firstly, it starts by outlining the research design, highlighting the mixed-methods approach adopted for data collection. It also provides details on the participants and the rationale behind selecting 4th-grade learners for the study. Furthermore, the chapter describes the research instruments used, including a questionnaires for pupils, classroom observations and interviews with teachers, along with the procedures followed in data collection. As a final point, it concludes with an overview of the data analysis methods employed to interpret the gathered information.

2.2 Research Design

The present study is an empirical investigation that adopts a mixed-methods approach to explore the effectiveness of gamified learning in enhancing EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition. This approach combines both quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

The study focused on 30 4th-grade primary school pupils as the target population, along with their English teacher. Data collection was carried out through questionnaires for pupils to assess their engagement, motivation, and vocabulary retention, along with a classroom observation testing both gamified and traditional method, the teacher was interviewed to gain insights into her perceptions of gamified learning.

To ensure ethical research practices, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their responses were used exclusively for academic research. The collected data was carefully examined, analyzed, and interpreted to derive meaningful results regarding the impact of gamified learning on vocabulary acquisition

2.3 Research Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research methods to ensure a comprehensive investigation of the impact of gamified learning on vocabulary acquisition. According to Johnson and Creswell (2003), as cited in Onwuegbuzie (2004), mixed-methods research utilizes various data collection techniques either simultaneously or sequentially to provide a clearer understanding of the research problem. This methodological approach enhances the transparency, reliability, and validity of the study's findings.

The qualitative method in this study consisted of semi-structured interview with the teacher, which allows for an in-depth exploration of her experiences, perceptions, and attitudes regarding gamified learning. Open-ended questions enabled the teacher to share detailed insights on the effectiveness, challenges, and observed outcomes of using gamification in vocabulary instruction.

The quantitative method included questionnaires for pupils, designed to systematically gather data on their engagement, motivation, and perceived vocabulary improvement through gamified learning activities. Using structured questions and rating scales ensures objective data collection, reducing bias and increasing the reliability of the study's results.

2.4 Sample Of Population

In this study, a purposive sampling technique was employed, which involved selecting participants based on specific characteristics aligned with the research objectives. This non-random method was suitable for identifying a group of learners who could best provide relevant data regarding the impact of gamified strategies on vocabulary acquisition. The target population for this study consisted of 30 4th-grade primary school pupils and their English teacher in El Mujahid Kadoun Mohamed School in Ain Temouchent. The selection of this grade level was intentional, as 4th-grade pupils are at a crucial stage of vocabulary development and are actively building their English language skills. Their syllabus includes essential vocabulary learning components, making them suitable participants for this research on gamified learning. also the teacher of English at this level was included in the study to provide valuable insights into the implementation of gamified activities and their effectiveness in vocabulary instruction.

2.5 Data Collection Procedures

Our study employed both qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments to ensure a reliable and comprehensive investigation of the impact of gamified learning on vocabulary acquisition. Using multiple tools allowed for a well-rounded understanding of both student engagement and teacher perceptions while ensuring that participants “both pupils and teachers” feel comfortable in sharing their responses in order to make this study credible.

2.5.1 Qualitative Data Collection

The qualitative aspect of the study involved semi-structured interview with one English teacher at El Mujahid Kadoun Mohamed School in Ain Temouchent. This interview aimed to explore the teachers' viewpoint on the effectiveness of gamification in vocabulary instruction, its advantages, challenges, and observed impact on student learning. The teachers' insights provided valuable qualitative data that contributed to the overall understanding of gamified learning in an “EFL” classroom.

2.5.1.1 The Interview

To gather qualitative data for this research, a semi-structured interview was conducted with their English teacher. According to Jacobs and Sorensen (2006), interviews are used to collect data from individuals regarding their thoughts, opinions, and emotions about a particular topic in their own words (p. 438). Essentially, an interview is a conversation-based research tool where the interviewer seeks to obtain in-depth information from participants on specific aspects of the study.

For this research, interview was chosen as an appropriate instrument because it allowed the teacher to share her insights, experiences, and attitudes toward the use of gamified learning in vocabulary instruction. As MacDonald & Headlan (2008) suggest, interviews are particularly useful when a study aims to explore individual opinions and perspectives on a given subject (p. 42). By using this method, the study gains a deeper understanding of teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness, benefits, and challenges of gamified learning in the EFL classroom.

2.5.1.1.1 Description Of Teachers' Interview

The purpose of conducting interviews in this study was to gather qualitative data on the Impact of gamified learning on EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition. The interview questions (Appendix 1) were specifically designed for the English teacher at El Mujahid Kadoun in Ain Temouchent, targeting her experiences, opinions, and perceptions regarding the integration of gamification in vocabulary instruction.

A total of one English teacher participated in the interview, which was conducted during the second semester of the 2024–2025 school year. The teacher was interviewed individually to ensure that her responses remained unbiased and independent. The interview consisted of fifteen structured questions, prepared in advance, to guide the discussion while allowing flexibility for additional insights.

The primary objectives of the interview were:

- To determine whether the teacher incorporates gamification in their vocabulary instruction.
- To explore the teacher's attitudes and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of gamified learning.
- To identify the challenges and benefits that have been experienced when implementing gamified activities.

The teachers insights was crucial in achieving the objectives of this academic research, as it provided valuable perspectives on how game-based learning strategies can enhance students' vocabulary acquisition. By understanding their experiences, the study aims to gain a deeper comprehension of how gamification can be effectively integrated into EFL classrooms to support vocabulary development.

Question one: How long have you been teaching, and how long have you been teaching 4th grade?

This question served a dual purpose: firstly, it determined the teacher's overall teaching experience, and secondly, it identifying her specific experience with 4th-grade learners..

Question Two: How important is vocabulary in learning, and how do you incorporate it into your classes?

The purpose of this question was to gauge the teacher's understanding of the role vocabulary plays in language acquisition.

Question Three: How do you incorporate vocabulary instruction into your lessons?

This question aimed to uncover the specific strategies the teacher employs to enhance vocabulary learning.

Question Four: Have you received any training on how to implement gamified learning in your teaching?

This question sought to understand the teacher's background in gamified learning.

Question Five: What is your understanding of gamified learning?

The aim of this question was to assess the teacher's conceptual grasp of gamified learning.

Question Six: Have you implemented gamified learning activities in your classroom? If so, can you describe some of these activities?

This question explored the practical application of gamified learning in the teacher's classroom.

Question Seven: What motivated you to use gamified learning in your teaching?

The purpose of this question was to uncover the teacher's motivations for adopting gamified learning strategies.

Question Eight: In your opinion, how has gamified learning affected your students' vocabulary acquisition?

This question aimed to evaluate the perceived impact of gamified learning on vocabulary acquisition.

Question Nine: Have you noticed any changes in student engagement and motivation when using gamified activities compared to traditional methods?

The intent here was to assess the comparative effectiveness of gamified versus traditional teaching methods.

Question Ten: Can you provide specific examples of how students have improved their vocabulary skills through gamified learning?

This question sought concrete evidence of the benefits of gamified learning.

Question Eleven: How do you assess the effectiveness of gamified learning in improving vocabulary acquisition?

The purpose of this question was to understand the teacher's evaluation methods for gamified learning.

Question Twelve: What challenges have you faced in implementing gamified learning activities?

This question aimed to identify potential obstacles in the teacher's practice.

Question Thirteen: What support or resources do you think are necessary for teachers to effectively implement gamified learning?

This question sought for the teacher's perspective on necessary support for successful gamification.

Question Fourteen: What recommendations would you give to other teachers who are considering using gamified learning in their classrooms?

This question aimed to gather practical advice for educators interested in gamification.

Question Fifteen: How do you see the future of gamified learning in vocabulary instruction evolving?

The purpose of this question was to explore the teacher's vision for the future of gamified learning.

2.5.1.2 The Observation

The observation was conducted at El Mujahid Kadoun Mohamed primary school 4th-grade classroom to compare the effectiveness of traditional teaching methods with gamified learning

activities on vocabulary acquisition. According to Kumar (2022), observation is a crucial technique for data collection, enabling researchers to notice and narrate the actions of subjects in their natural environment. The primary goal of this observation was to assess student engagement, motivation, and the overall effectiveness of both teaching strategies in enhancing vocabulary skills.

The observation took place over two sessions, each lasting 60 minutes. The first session involved traditional teaching methods, while the second session incorporated gamified learning activities. This design allowed for a direct comparison of the two approaches. As noted by Sproul (1988) (as cited in Kumar, 2022), a trained observer systematically watches a situation and records data about the features of the occurrence. This method provided valuable insights into how different teaching strategies influenced student behavior and learning outcomes.

Bell (2005) emphasizes that observation can be instrumental in determining whether individuals behave as they claim or act in accordance with their stated intentions. Thus, this observation aimed to capture authentic behaviors and interactions of students during both traditional and gamified activities, allowing for a nuanced understanding of how these strategies impacted vocabulary acquisition.

2.5.1.2.1 Description of the Classroom Observation

This observation was conducted with the fourth grade primary schoolpupils ,The observation sessions were scheduled as follows:

Session Number	Class	Date	Time
Session 1	4th A	15/04/2025	10:45 - 11:45
Session 2	4th B	17/04/2025	14:00 - 15:00

Table 2.1: Observation Session Schedule.

Each observation session lasted 60 minutes, focusing specifically on vocabulary acquisition activities within the English language classroom, providing a balanced context for observing both teaching approaches under similar time constraints.

Classroom observation took place on April 15th and 17th, 2025 during the second trimester as mentioned in table 01. During the classroom observation, the researchers assumed the role of a participant observer, actively engaging in the classroom environment while simultaneously noting the instructional approaches and student reactions. This method allowed for a deeper and more authentic understanding of the classroom dynamics, students' behaviors, and overall engagement with both traditional and gamified activities.

The two sessions were organized to evaluate and compare students' responses to both traditional teaching methods and gamified learning strategies through a series of structured tasks. The following tasks were implemented to evaluate the effectiveness of both teaching methods:

A) Traditional Method Session

In this session, traditional methods of vocabulary instruction were employed to teach new vocabulary related to the topic "My Family." The focus was on direct instruction and structured practice, utilizing resources from the official 4th-grade English textbook. The session consisted of two main tasks designed specifically to introduce and reinforce vocabulary acquisition among pupils.

Task One: Direct Vocabulary Instruction

The first task involved a direct instruction approach where the teacher introduced a list of new vocabulary words taken from the official 4th-grade English textbook (Appendix 03), related to the topic "My Family" (e.g., father, mother, sister, brother, grandmother, grandfather). The teacher pronounced each word clearly and asked pupils to repeat after her several times. Flashcards from the textbook were used to support understanding, showing pictures next to the new terms. After introducing the vocabulary, the teacher wrote short example sentences on the

board such as "This is my mother," and explained their meaning. Pupils were instructed to listen carefully and take notes in their copybooks.

Task Two: Vocabulary Worksheet Completion

Following the oral instruction, pupils were given individual worksheets (Appendix 04) taken from the textbook's practice section. The worksheets required them to match each vocabulary word to the corresponding picture and to fill in blanks in simple sentences (e.g., "This is my ..."). Pupils worked individually without collaboration.

B) Gamified Learning Session

In this session, gamified learning strategies was implemented by the researchers to enhance vocabulary acquisition through interactive and engaging activities. The focus was on fostering collaboration, creativity, and enthusiasm among students while learning new vocabulary. The session comprised four distinct tasks designed to make vocabulary learning enjoyable and effective.

Task One: Vocabulary Flashcards

In the first gamified activity, students were divided into five groups and presented with flashcards displaying images alongside vocabulary words (Appendix 05). The objective was for each group to correctly match images with the corresponding vocabulary item. From the outset, students were highly enthusiastic, actively discussing options and debating choices within their groups.

Task Two: Vocabulary Bingo

The second task introduced the classic game of Vocabulary Bingo (Appendix 06). The teacher read out definitions aloud, and students had to identify and mark the correct vocabulary word on their bingo cards. This task heightened the excitement, with many students eagerly participating and responding enthusiastically.

Task Three: Word Relay Race

For the third gamified activity, a Word Relay Race was organized (Appendix 07). Groups of students competed to quickly write vocabulary words on the board based on the teacher's clues.

Task Four: Vocabulary Pictionary

The final task was a game of Vocabulary Pictionary (Appendix 08), where students had to draw representations of vocabulary words for their teammates to guess. This activity tapped into the students' creativity and promoted non-verbal communication skills.

2.5.2 Quantitative Data Collection

The quantitative data was collected using questionnaires administered to 30 4th-grade pupils at El Mujahid Kadoun Mohamed primary school. The questionnaire aimed to measure pupils' engagement, motivation, and vocabulary retention when exposed to gamified learning activities. Pupils responded to structured questions designed to assess their experiences and preferences regarding game-based vocabulary learning.

2.5.2.1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed as a structured quantitative instrument aimed at investigating students' engagement, motivation, perceived vocabulary improvement, and attitudes towards gamified learning. It was carefully designed and tailored to match the cognitive and linguistic abilities of fourth-grade primary school pupils.

According to Dörnyei (2003), "questionnaires are particularly useful for obtaining a large amount of information in a relatively short time, and they are especially valuable when researching attitudes and opinions" (p. 9). Therefore, the use of a questionnaire was deemed appropriate for collecting standardized responses from a sample of young learners.

The instrument was structured into five main sections:

Section 1: Demographic Information, collecting basic personal data such as age and gender.

Section 2: Engagement and Motivation, exploring students' enjoyment of English lessons and their enthusiasm towards gamified activities.

Section 3: Perceived Vocabulary Improvement, assessing students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of gamified learning on their vocabulary acquisition.

Section 4: Attitudes Towards Gamified Learning, identifying students' preferences, perceived challenges, and opinions on integrating gamified methods.

Section 5: Open-Ended Questions, allowing for a richer qualitative insight into pupils' personal experiences and suggestions for improvement.

The questionnaire included multiple-choice questions, Likert-scale ratings, and open-ended items, combining both closed and open formats. This mixed structure was intended to balance the advantages of easy quantification with the opportunity for respondents to elaborate on their thoughts (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

Simple and clear wording was prioritized, following Cohen et al.'s (2018) recommendation that "questionnaires for young learners must be constructed with language that matches their level of comprehension" (p. 473). Visual aids, such as checkboxes and rating scales with numbers, were incorporated to facilitate understanding and encourage genuine responses among the young participants.

The primary objective of the questionnaire was to gather reliable and valid data that could shed light on the influence of gamified learning strategies on vocabulary acquisition in a primary school EFL context.

2.5.2.1.1 Administration of the Questionnaire:

The questionnaire was administered to a purposive sample of 30 fourth-grade students at El Mujahid Kadoun Mohamed primary school in Ain Temouchent. To facilitate data collection, the questionnaire was translated into Arabic (Appendix 02) to ensure the students could understand the content. As suggested by McKay (2006), “when working with young learners, researchers must ensure that instruments are administered in a way that supports understanding and reduces anxiety” (p. 47). Therefore, the researchers assisted each student individually by reading the questions aloud, providing clarifications when needed, and manually recording the students’ verbal responses into the form.

Students completed the Arabic version of the questionnaire, and then the researchers manually transferred their responses into a pre-filled Google Form in English for analysis.

The researchers assisted each student individually by reading the questions aloud, providing clarifications when needed during the process, offering clarifications and guidance as needed. Open-ended responses were translated from Arabic to English afterward, to maintain the integrity and meaning of the students' answers. Responses to multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions were recorded directly in the English Google Form.

The administration took place during regular English classes, in collaboration with the classroom teacher, to ensure minimal disruption. Students answered the questionnaire individually to avoid peer influence, and ample time was provided for completing it comfortably. Ethical considerations were strictly followed, with students assured that their participation was voluntary, anonymous, and confidential.

The responses were compiled electronically through the Google Form platform, ensuring systematic organization for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The data collected provided

valuable insights into the impact of gamified learning strategies on vocabulary acquisition among primary school EFL learners.

2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter provided the roadmap for organizing and implementing the research. It outlined the research design, approach, participants, data collection tools, and the procedures used to ensure the credibility and validity of the findings. The combination of qualitative and quantitative tools offered a broad and detailed view of the phenomenon under investigation. By highlighting the rationale behind the selected methods and how they were analyzed, this chapter ensures the reliability and validity of the research outcomes. More than just a methodological explanation, this chapter also represents a key phase in the investigation, allowing the researchers to approach the data with both structure and flexibility, leading to a deeper understanding of gamified learning's impact on vocabulary acquisition.

Chapter Three: *Data Analysis, Interpretation & Suggestions*

3.1 Introduction

After the detailing of the adopted methodology to the study and the aggregation of the different types of data through the exploited three research instruments, including an interview, a questionnaire, and an observation, the raw data is to be given meaning in this chapter. The present chapter is to analyse the data, interpret the results, and discuss the findings with relevance to the use of gamification to enhance the vocabulary acquisition and retention in the EFL context of the 4th grade primary school pupils. The analysis will be conducted following the two principal types of data, both the qualitative and the quantitative and the discussion will follow accordingly.

3.2 Analysis of the Qualitative Data

The present section analyzed the qualitative data gathered from the open-ended questions in both research tools, the teacher interview and the student questionnaire, and classroom observation. Accordingly, the analysis took the qualitative form to gauge the views of participants on the importance of adopting gamification as a methodological strategy with significant potential to enhance the acquisition of vocabulary at the primary school level. As such, the data analysis and the results interpretation are as follows:

A) Teacher Interview

In a total of fifteen (15) open-ended questions that were distributed over five (05) sections, the aggregated qualitative data were analyzed quantitatively bellow.

Section one: Background Information

In two composing parts, the first question explores the respondents' teaching duration of the English subject in general and the teaching duration of the target sample of the study, which is the 4th grade primary school pupils. The respondent explained that the cumulative duration of her teaching experience is of one (01) year and three (03) months in total which was in its entirety with the 4th year grade primary school pupils. This limited experience, especially at the 4th-grade level, may influence their instructional strategies and familiarity with age-specific

learning needs. It also suggests that their perspectives may be shaped by recent training or early-career enthusiasm, which could be relevant when analyzing their views on gamified learning or vocabulary acquisition.

The second question explored the importance of both learning and teaching vocabulary at the primary school level. In so doing, the respondent expressed that, “Vocabulary is very important in teaching English language, and for learners especially in the primary school”. Accordingly, the instructor is well aware that the learning and the teaching of vocabulary is foundational for the pupils’ language acquisition especially for listening and reading comprehension at this beginner level.

With relevance to vocabulary instruction, the third question explored the strategies employed by the teacher to deliver their lessons. The teacher reported that she consistently introduce new vocabulary in each lesson, both orally and in written form, she responded by saying: “I insist to incorporate vocabulary in each lesson by giving the learners new vocabularies either orally or written.” This indicates that the instruction focuses on providing new vocabulary each session through the use of both written and oral techniques. This approach indicates a commitment to integrating vocabulary instruction into various aspects of their teaching, which is essential for reinforcing language acquisition.

Because teacher training is primordial for teaching at any level, the fourth question investigated if or not the teachers received any training with regard to the implementation of gamified learning into their teaching. The respondent answered that, “No, I didn’t receive any training yet”. Consequently, any classroom practices adopted by the teacher would be self-explored and selected, lacking principle behind the selection and the implementation. This lack of training may suggest a potential gap in their professional development, which could impact their ability to effectively implement gamified strategies in the classroom. Though this fact might reflect negatively on teacher’s practices, it still is not a significant barrier to delivering effective gamified learning experiences to the pupils in the classroom.

Section 2: Experience with Gamified Learning

The first question examined the respondent's understanding of gamified learning. The teacher described gamified learning as an effective strategy for foreign language acquisition, indicating a positive perception of its potential benefits. She expressed: "I think that gamified learning is a very effective strategy for learning a foreign language. Learning English language through games can be considered as an important tool". Thus, the respondent showed awareness of the usefulness of gamified learning as an effective strategy for foreign language learning through the use of games as an instructional tool. The answer reflected a general understanding of gamified learning as a strategy without informed details, affirming once again the lack of implementation training of the teacher of gamified learning. This understanding is crucial for the successful integration of gamification into their teaching practices.

In two parts, the second question explored if or not the respondents utilize gamified learning activities in their classrooms, to which the respondent responded positively and confirmed once again the importance of gamified learning, saying "Yes, of course. Presenting a lesson through games is an essential part in the primary school program. For example: there is a session entitled "I learn through a game," where the teacher is supposed to create a funny atmosphere while presenting the lesson". According to that, the teacher is aware of the benefits of gamified learning in creating an engaging atmosphere within the classroom. The second part of the question explored the type of activities utilized, to which the respondent gave examples that included "Team work - Speech reading race - Board race - Use of music". The mentioned activities are game-designed elements that are known in educational contexts to promote engagement, interaction, and motivation in students. This demonstrates an active engagement with gamification and a willingness to create a dynamic learning environment.

The third question explored the motivation behind the use of gamified learning in the respondents teaching practices, to which the respondent answered "I believe that gamification facilitates the learning process, encourages learners to be engaged in the discussion (through

games). The respondent added that, “In short, it motivates much more to be creative and to focus on this learning strategy while teaching”. Therefore, the teacher is conscious of the playfulness characteristic of the pupils at this young age. This fact prompted benefiting from such characteristic to use teaching strategies that align best with that, achieve the best results possible, and reach the predetermined teaching objectives. The respondent believes that the more engaging the classroom atmosphere is the more focused and creative the pupils can, which affirms the benefits of exploiting gamified learning as mentioned in the existing literature.

Section Three: Impact on Vocabulary Acquisition

Because gamified learning is believed to be beneficial in providing a positive and lightweight learning environment that promotes the acquisition of the different language aspects, especially at the primary school level, this first question explored its effectiveness on vocabulary acquisition. The teacher respondent explained that, “For me, gamified learning highly affects my pupils' vocabulary acquisition, because at this age, it's immediately. They always look for a funny way to study, and using games is the appropriate method”. Following that, gamified learning proved to be effective in facilitating students' vocabulary acquisition because at this age and level, the pupils show more engagement with game-related strategies and demonstrate more motivation to participate and learn the target vocabulary. This insight underscores the effectiveness of gamification in promoting language skills.

Because gamified learning is methodologically different from traditional methods that proved to be monotonous, demotivating, and un-engaging, the second question explored its motivational and engaging aspects in comparison with traditional methods. The teacher observed that gamified activities lead to increased motivation and self-confidence among students. As a response, the teacher stated that, “Of course, it helps them to be more motivated, encouraged, and self-confident while practicing their activities in a relaxed, funny mood”. Hence, gamified activities have the ability to enhance students' engagement and motivation as

it creates a relaxed, more enjoyable classroom environment in which pupils feel more comfortable and self-confident suggesting that these methods create a more conducive learning atmosphere.

Question three was designed to explore deeper the positive impact of gamified learning on the improvement of vocabulary acquisition through specific examples, to which the respondent answered that “I have noticed that pupils are willing to engage in the lesson. They seem to be excited to participate, to propose and stand at the board (reducing their shyness and fear of making mistakes). The gamified learning demonstrated the ability to lower students’ affective factors, which raises by default their motivation and engagement to partake in the teaching/learning process.

Section Four: Challenges and Considerations

To provide solid argumentation for the effectiveness of gamified learning in improving vocabulary acquisition, question three explored the assessment techniques adopted by the respondents. The teacher respondent stated that, “I think that gamified learning is highly effective as a strategy in improving vocabulary acquisition”. The response constituted a general answer to the effectiveness of gamified learning in enhancing vocabulary acquisition without providing specific assessment techniques. This concise generalized answer can be due to the lack of teacher training on the subject of gamified learning implementation in the classroom. Nonetheless, the teacher believes that gamified learning is highly effective, which suggests a strong confidence in this approach as a means of enhancing vocabulary acquisition

The second question explored the kinds of challenges faced by teachers when utilizing the gamified learning activities in the classroom. The teacher respondent specified that “the next focal challenge is making noise and getting too much active, and this may affect the protection of the lesson”. Because most, if not all, methodologies face challenges when implemented, gamified learning as a technique also has its own set of challenges and obstacles, which comprehension can facilitate delivering the appropriate solutions. Accordingly, gamified

learning presented challenges at the level of classroom organization, as the pupils demonstrated a certain level of disorganization and classroom noise which can be disruptive to the learning environment, consequently disrupting the lesson deliverance. Recognizing these challenges is essential for developing strategies to manage classroom dynamics effectively.

Question three reviewed the possible resources and support that are believed to be necessary for effective implementation of gamified learning. The teacher respondent argued that, “I recommend teachers to be more patient, to have high self-esteem, and to focus on the discipline of the classroom. Accordingly, to avoid any disruptive, disorganized behaviour, which is the primary challenge for effective gamified learning implementation, teachers are to employ any possible resources to guarantee organized behaviour throughout the game-based sessions. To do so, teachers are to be as organized as possible and to be patient and resourceful in order to carry out the gamified activities and reach the outlined objectives while keeping the students engaged and interested in their interactions. At this point, teacher training would contribute significantly to the needed support and resources. These recommendations emphasize the need for teachers to cultivate a positive and structured learning environment to maximize the benefits of gamified learning.

Section Five: Future Directions

As an effective strategy for vocabulary acquisition, the second question investigated the evolving future vision of gamified learning in vocabulary instruction. The teacher expressed optimism, suggesting that gamified learning will continue to evolve, particularly in primary education. As a response, the respondent stated that, “Gamified learning might be highly evolved in the future, especially in the primary school”. In other words, gamified learning in the promotion of vocabulary instruction is expected to gain more focus and sophistication in the future, especially with more technology integration and access. The integration of technology would enhance the instructional process as a whole and facilitate it for both the teacher and the student in terms of lesson delivery and design of activities, among other benefits. This forward-looking

perspective indicates a belief in the potential for innovation and adaptation in teaching methodologies.

B) Classroom Observation

This observation was implemented in a 4th-grade classroom at El Mujahid Kadoun Mohamed primary school, its aim is to compare the effectiveness of traditional teaching methods with gamified method learning activities in vocabulary acquisition. The observation focused on investigating key factors including student engagement, motivation, task completion, and the overall effectiveness of the two distinct teaching strategies traditional oral and written instruction versus interactive gamified activities. In a total of six tasks, the qualitative data gathered from the observation were analysed by task. It focused mainly on the performance and completion time of the tasks designed in the two forms, traditional and gamified. The results were analysed, summarised and interpreted as follows:

Task One: Direct Vocabulary Instruction

This first traditional task involved direct oral instruction, where the teacher introduced new vocabulary words related to the familiar topic in the curriculum "My Family"(Appendix 3), using clear pronunciation and supporting flashcards. In the beginning, learners demonstrated a high level of engagement by repeating words aloud, indicating attention and willingness to participate. The teacher supplemented the learning by writing example sentences on the board and providing explanations to deepen pupils understanding. As the task progressed, a marked decline in attentiveness was observed after roughly ten minutes. Some pupils became distracted, engaging in off-task behaviors such as fiddling with their pens or talking with classmates. Attempts to maintain engagement through frequent questioning pointed out a critical shortcoming: participation was predominantly limited to a few confident pupils while many remained passive. This suggests that the teacher-centered approach, though structured, may be insufficient to maintain learner interest and active cognitive involvement over time in this context.

This task underline a challenge in traditional vocabulary instruction, while effective in introducing new terms and achieving some initial uptake, it risks diminishing student motivation and reducing active participation as the session extends. The passive environment also raises concerns about whether all learners effectively internalize vocabulary or whether attention lapses hinder retention for quieter or less confident students.

Task Two: Vocabulary Worksheet Completion.

Pupils worked individually to complete worksheets (Appendix 4) designed specifically to reinforce their understanding of the newly introduced vocabulary. This task mainly contained matching words to pictures and filling in blanks with simple sentences, which are familiar exercises in traditional language teaching classroom strategies. While some pupils completed the worksheet accurately and quickly, which indicates good retention, many pupils displayed hesitation. This was especially clear when students were unsure about spelling or word meanings. Despite being encouraged to seek help, most learners chose silence, potentially due to fear of making mistakes or lack of confidence.

The teacher actively circulated among students and provided them with her assistance, but overall, the atmosphere remained subdued and characterized by passivity. The prominent reliance on the teacher's intervention suggests an absence of autonomous problem-solving motivation among many pupils during this task. This may reflect both affective factors, such as anxiety or shyness, and the limitations of solitary, worksheet-based exercises in fostering independent cognitive engagement.

This task exposes how traditional methods could be effective for practice, while it may not sufficiently encourage learner agency or peer interaction, key components for cognitive elaboration and long-term vocabulary retention.

Task One: Vocabulary Flashcards.

The second session shifted to gamified learning method, the researchers started with a vocabulary flashcards task created by them to suit 4-th grade acquisition level. Pupils were

organized into five groups and were given a set of flashcards challenging them to match images with vocabulary words describing what is in the pictures. From the outset, students displayed heightened enthusiasm and engagement compared to the traditional session. Vigorous group discussions and debates characterized the activity, creating a lively classroom atmosphere. This marked increase in interaction encouraged deeper cognitive processing of vocabulary items as learners negotiated and reinforced meanings among peers.

The teacher's role shifted from knowledge transmitter to facilitator, by moving between the five groups to provide hints and encouragement without dominating interactions. Most groups completed the task within 15 minutes, substantially more efficient than traditional methods. This gamified activity's social and interactive nature not only sustained motivation through peer collaboration but also seemed to support quicker completion and possibly better vocabulary consolidation. Notably stimulated critical thinking and decision making while maintaining active student involvement a contrast to the more passive reception observed in traditional instruction.

Task Two: Vocabulary Bingo.

Building on this momentum, the Vocabulary Bingo game further intensified engagement. As the teacher read definitions aloud, students listened carefully and marked corresponding words on their bingo cards. The competitive element injected excitement and urgency, driving sustained attention and accelerated vocabulary recall. Many students were visibly eager to participate and responded promptly, demonstrating an increased willingness to actively engage with the material.

task leveraged the motivational benefits of game mechanics competition, immediate feedback, and goal orientation which appeared to facilitate vocabulary retention beyond rote memorization. The auditory input combined with social competition encouraged both attentiveness and rapid retrieval, highlighting how gamification can enhance multi-modal learning.

The success of Vocabulary Bingo underscores gamified learning's ability to transform vocabulary practice from a repetitive task into an enjoyable, participatory experience that highlights the intrinsic rewards of learning.

Task Three: Word Relay Race.

The third task contained Word Relay Race which innovatively merged physical activity with cognitive processing, introducing movement as an additional engagement factor. The groups competed to write vocabulary words on the board based on the teacher clues, which required both listening comprehension and spelling skills. The physical component specifically increased students' energy and excitement, leading to notable gains in participation levels.

This active, collaborative task created a spirited but supportive competitive environment. Where learners had to communicate efficiently and motivate each other, reinforcing social bonds and teamwork. The teacher's immediate feedback during and after the task provided correction and affirmation, critical for reinforcing accurate vocabulary usage.

Word relay race task demonstrated the advantages of integrating kinesthetic learning styles into vocabulary acquisition, breaking the monotony of seated classroom activities and tapping into bodily-based learning to enhance memory and engagement.

Task Four: Vocabulary Pictionary.

The final gamified activity, Vocabulary Pictionary, drew on the creativity and non-verbal communication. In this task the students illustrated vocabulary words for their teammates to identify their classmates drawings using interpretative and expressive skills. This task notably engaged some students who were typically shy or hesitant during traditional tasks, evidencing the potential of gamified learning to lower affective barriers such as anxiety and reluctance to participate.

Strong teamwork was evident as groups negotiated meaning through drawings and guesses, further cementing vocabulary comprehension through peer interaction. The activity promoted a relaxed, inclusive atmosphere where learners felt safer to contribute and experiment with language.

This task emphasized that gamification can support diverse learner needs by creating emotionally supportive contexts that enhance participation and language practice in unconventional yet effective ways.

C) Student Questionnaire

In a total of two (02) items, the qualitative data gathered from the student questionnaire are analyzed qualitatively as follows:

Question sixteen: In your opinion, how has gamified learning changed the way you learn vocabulary?

After affirmation of the effectiveness of gamified learning as a strategy for vocabulary acquisition, question sixteen explored the specific ways in which it changed the students' learning of vocabulary. The respondents expressed a number of changes in terms of their vocabulary learning, starting with increased motivation and engagement. Many students express that gamified learning makes vocabulary learning more fun, motivating, and rewarding. They mention enjoying challenges, competition with classmates, rewards like stars and gifts, and team play, which boost their enthusiasm and participation. Improved acquisition and retention is another observable change. Students report that gamified activities help them memorize words and sentences more quickly and make it easier to read and write. In addition to that is the preference for interactive experiences. In this regard, the students advanced a number of suggestions, including adding sounds, music, colorful pictures, characters, and outdoor or tablet-based play, indicate a preference for more immersive learning environments.

Question seventeen: What suggestions do you have for making gamified learning activities even better?

To enhance the gamified learning experience, question seventeen explored possible student suggestions to better the gamified learning activities. The respondents suggested rewards as a motivational addition. The suggested reward ranged from stars, gifts, prizes, and rewards for good performance to marks or extra credit in exams for winning gamified activities. Another suggestion included adding multimedia to enhance engagement. The suggested multimedia elements are sounds, music, colourful pictures, and interesting characters to make games more exciting and visually appealing. Additionally, they suggested adding more collaborative elements to increase

the social interaction. The elements might include team games, outdoor games even virtual games to vary the gamification environment. Also, the respondents suggested more frequent and varied gamified activities. In terms of frequency, they suggested weekly new games and in terms of variety, varying the game types and content to keep the experience fresh and stimulating. A few respondents indicated having no suggestions, which implies satisfaction with the current gamified learning approach.

3.2 Analysis of the Quantitative Results

This section is dedicated to the analysis of the quantitative data gathered from the closed-ended questions of the pupils' questionnaire. The analysis was performed quantitatively to probe the views of the 4th grade primary school pupils on the impact of gamified learning on their vocabulary acquisition. The data analysis and the results interpretation are as follows:

A) The Student questionnaire

From the total of seventeen (17) items, the fifteen (15) items that gathered quantitative data were analyzed quantitatively as follows:

Question one: Specify your age?

The deduced results show that the majority of the pupils are of 10 years old with (60) percent of the sample total, then 11 years old with (37) percent, and 12 years old with (01) percent. Since the majority of the sample participants are at the same age or close, the overall observation is a homogeneous sample that is at the same level, or significantly close, of cognitive development to deliver representative observations of the investigated topic, which is the effectiveness of gamified learning in vocabulary acquisition.

Question two: Specify your gender?

The results demonstrated the age distribution of the sample that the majority of the pupils are females, with (57) percent and the rest are males, with (43) percent. The fact of female dominance in the sample is a common observation in the majority of educational levels and contexts. Therefore, understanding this distribution is important for tailoring educational strategies,

resources, and support to meet the needs of the predominant group while ensuring inclusivity for all students.

Question three: Do you like learning English?

Figure 3.1: Students' Belief in English Importance.

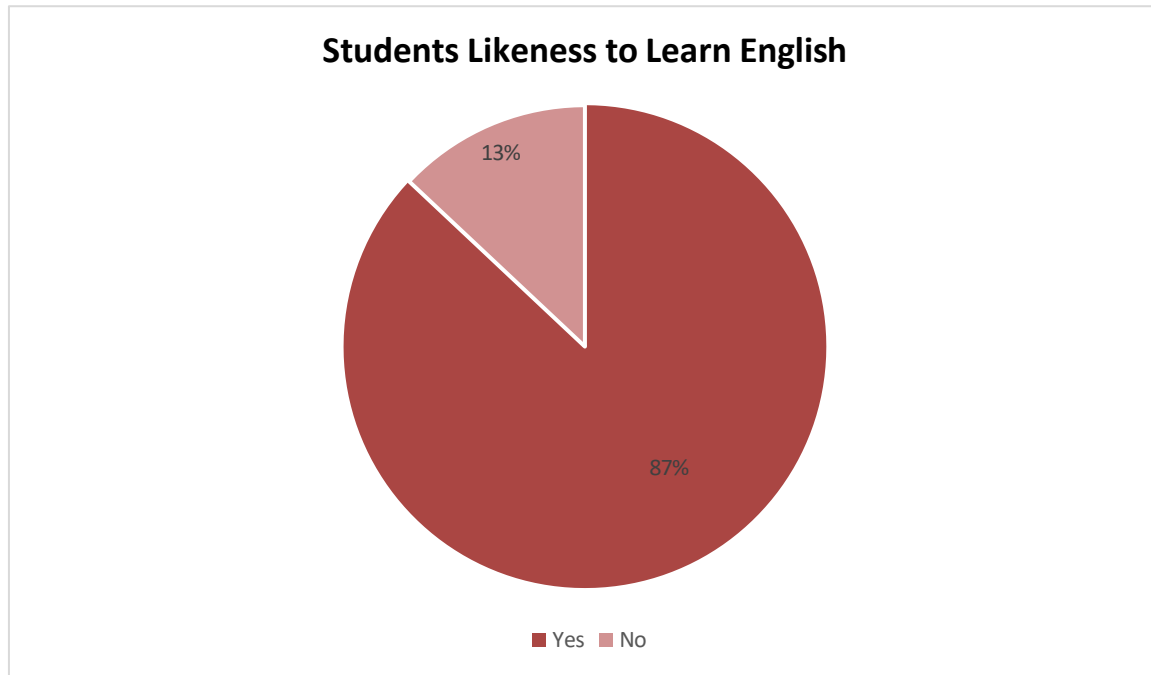


Figure 3.1 illustrates the sample's attitude towards the learning of English. As can be seen from the results, the majority have a positive attitude towards the learning of English, with (87) percent of the sample total, while the rest have a negative attitude towards it, with (13) percent. The negative attitude can be attributed to the English module being newly introduced to the 4th grade curriculum, when the pupils are accustomed to the Arabic modules. The difficulty of a new language can be the direct explanation of the negative attitude. On the other hand, the significant difference in favour of the positive attitude towards the learning of English would signify curiosity and willingness to explore the new language and openness towards the learning of English with all its aspects, including vocabulary.

Question four: Do you think English is important?

Figure 3.2: Students' Belief in English Importance.

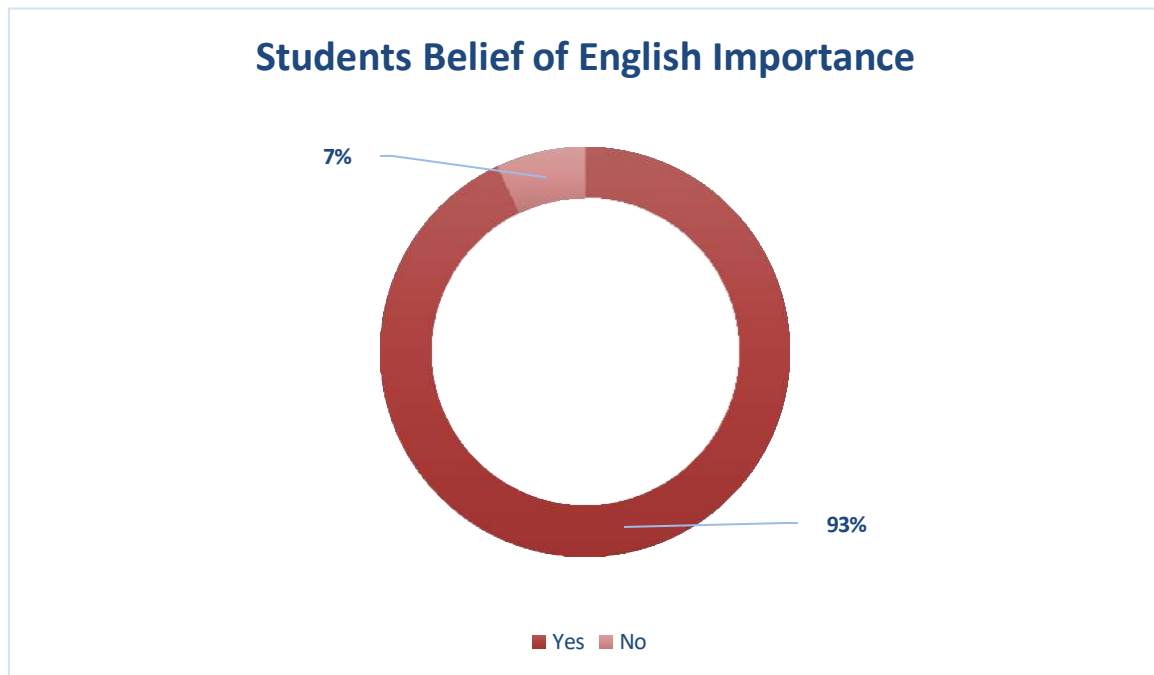


Figure 3.2 represents the sample's belief of the importance of learning English. As illustrated, the majority of the pupils believe that the learning of English is important, with (93) percent and the rest do not, with (07) percent. This fact means that the pupils are well aware of the importance of learning languages other than their mother tongue despite their young age. Being aware of this, also means that they would be motivated to put in the necessary effort to learn English and the comprising aspects, vocabulary included.

Question five: Do you like studying through games?

Figure 3.3: Students' Likeness to Study Through Games.

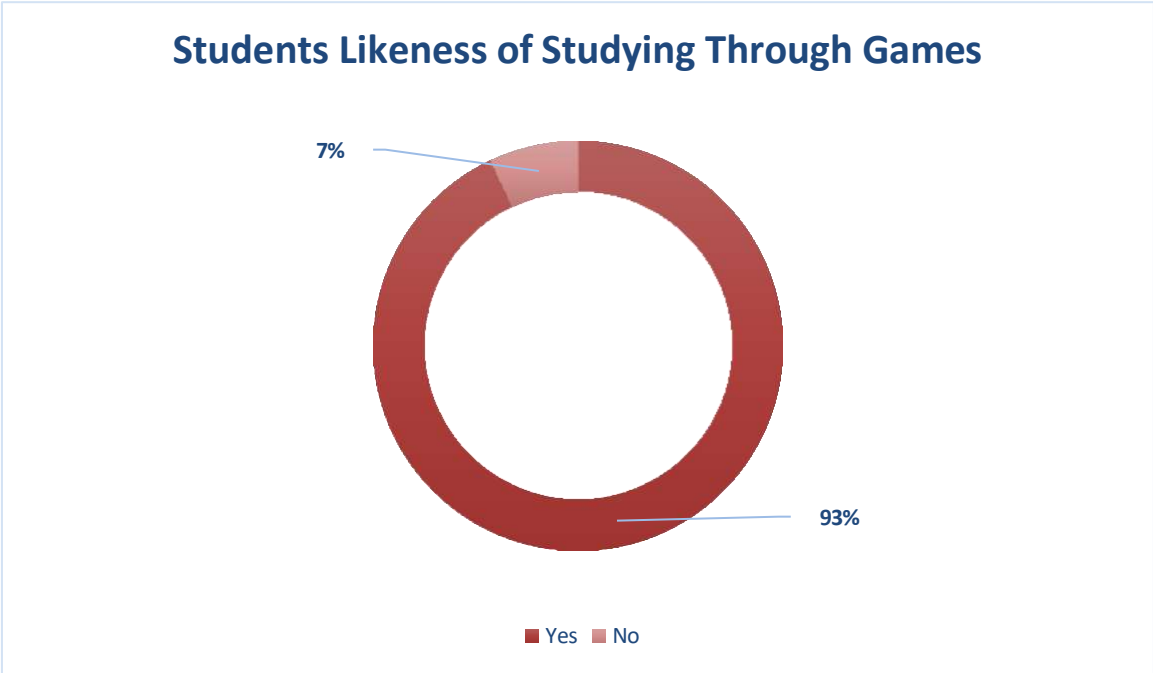


Figure 3.3 demonstrates the pupils’ likeness to learn through games. As illustrated by the graph, the majority of the pupils prefer to learn through games, with all answering yes (93) percent with the exception of seven pupils (07) percent. This fact reflects the playful nature of the students at this young age, which makes the sample prone to give representative observation on the present study topic on the effectiveness of gamified learning in promoting vocabulary acquisition.

Question six: How often does your teacher provide gamified learning activities in your English class?

Figure 3.4: Frequency of Gamified Learning Activities.

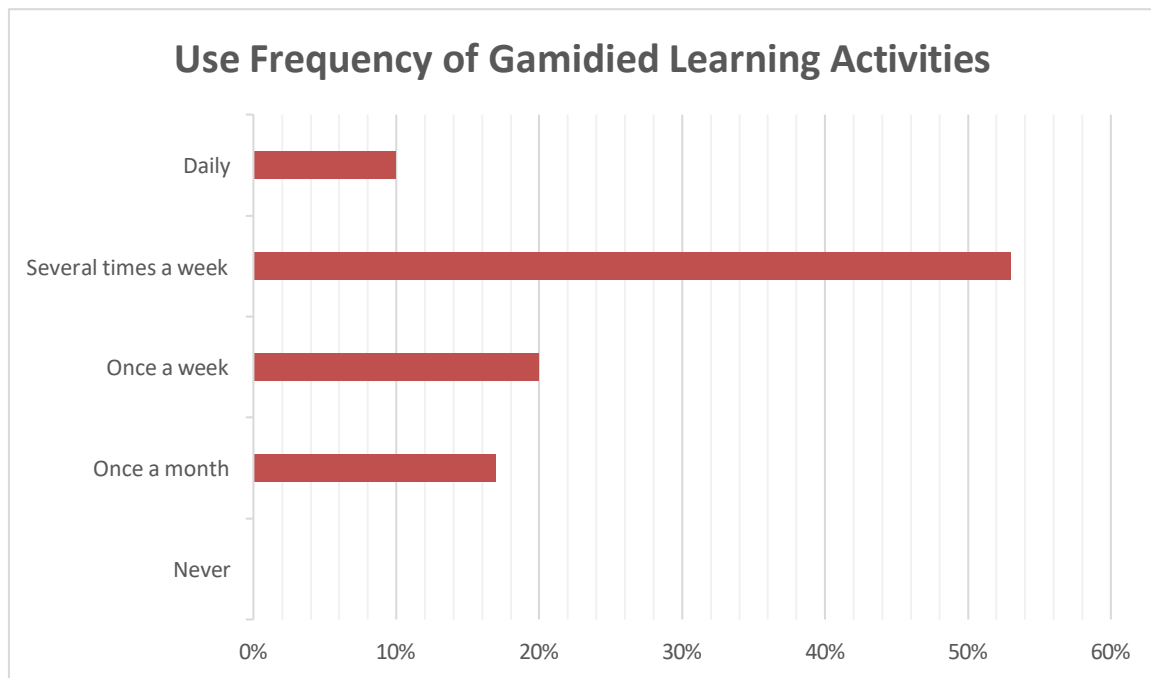


Figure 3.4 represent the frequency of teachers' use of gamified learning in their classes. According to the results, the teachers' majority resort to gamified learning several times a week (53) percent, followed by once a week 20 percent , then once a month 10 percent while only (10) percent uses gamified leaning daily. The results show that the teachers are aware of the importance of regular and frequent exposure to gamified learning for effective implementation and results. This awareness is due to the fact that teachers are conscious of the young age stage at which their students are and their inclinations towards games-based or game-related learning. With reference to the previous studies in the current literature, the recommended use frequency ranged between either daily or at least several times a week (Edvinsson. Johansson & Haghshenas, 2024), which can also be seen in the present studied case.

Question seven: Rate your enjoyment of gamified learning activities on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Not enjoyable, 5 = Very enjoyable)

Figure 3.5: Students' Enjoyment Rating of Gamified Learning Activities.

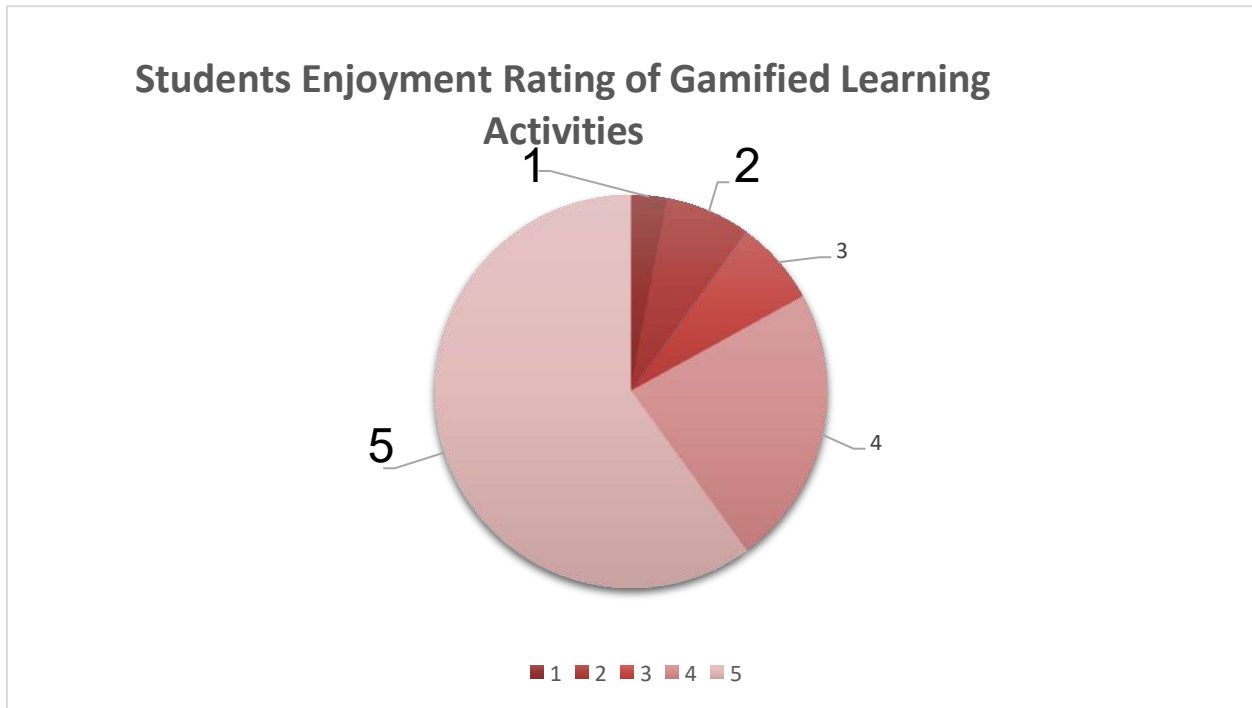


Figure 3.5 illustrates the sample's enjoyment rating of gamified learning activities. As illustrated by the results, the majority (60) percent rated gamified learning activities as very enjoyable, with very few (03) percent rating them on the opposite end of the scale as not enjoyable. The scale results reflect the pupils' young age and their playful nature that leans towards games-related learning activities more than the traditional teaching methods. Enjoying a certain teaching strategy is more likely to raise the students' motivation and thus engagement with the lessons and produce more favourable results in terms of teaching objectives. This would prompt teachers to capitalize on this fact by adopting a more frequent use of gamified learning activities to teach the different aspects of the language.

Question eight: How motivated do you feel to learn vocabulary when using gamified activities?

Figure 3.6: Students' Motivation Level Learning Vocabulary Through Gamified Activities.

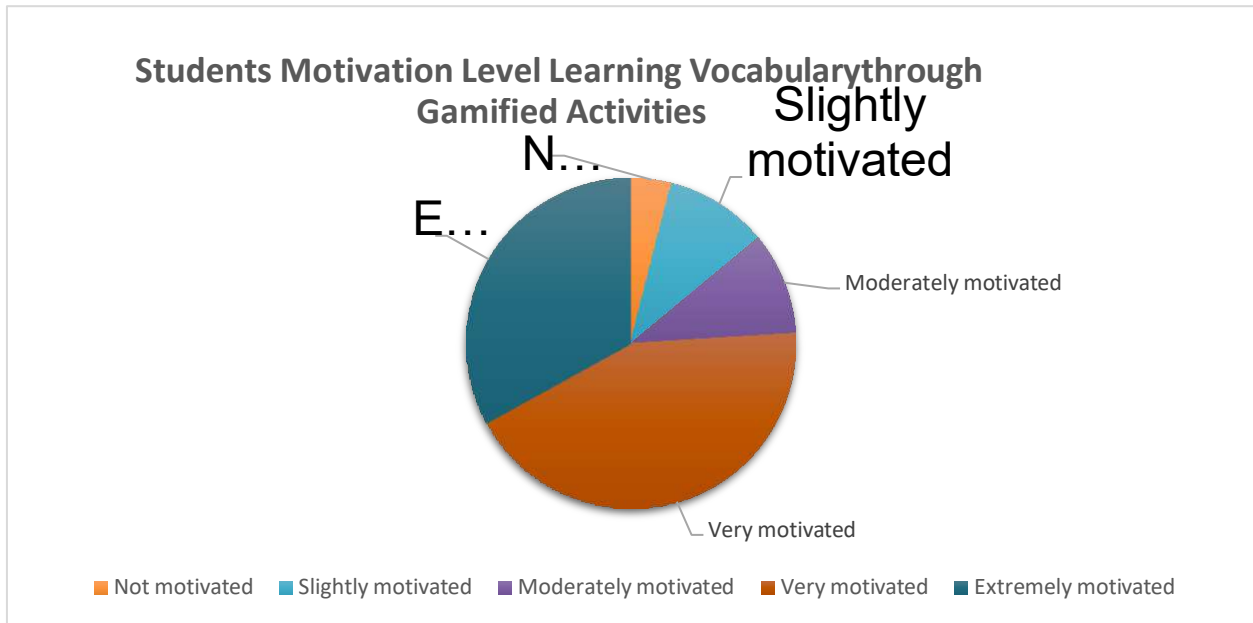


Figure 3.6 demonstrate the pupils’ motivation levels while learning vocabulary through gamified activities. The results display high motivation levels between very motivated (43) percent and extremely motivated (33) percent, followed by relative motivation levels between moderately motivated and slightly motivated (10) percent. The rest of the pupils expressed not being motivated (04) percent while engaged in vocabulary learning through gamified activities.

Question nine: Which of the following gamified activities do you find most engaging?

Figure 3.7: Students’ Choice of Most Engaging Gamified Activities.

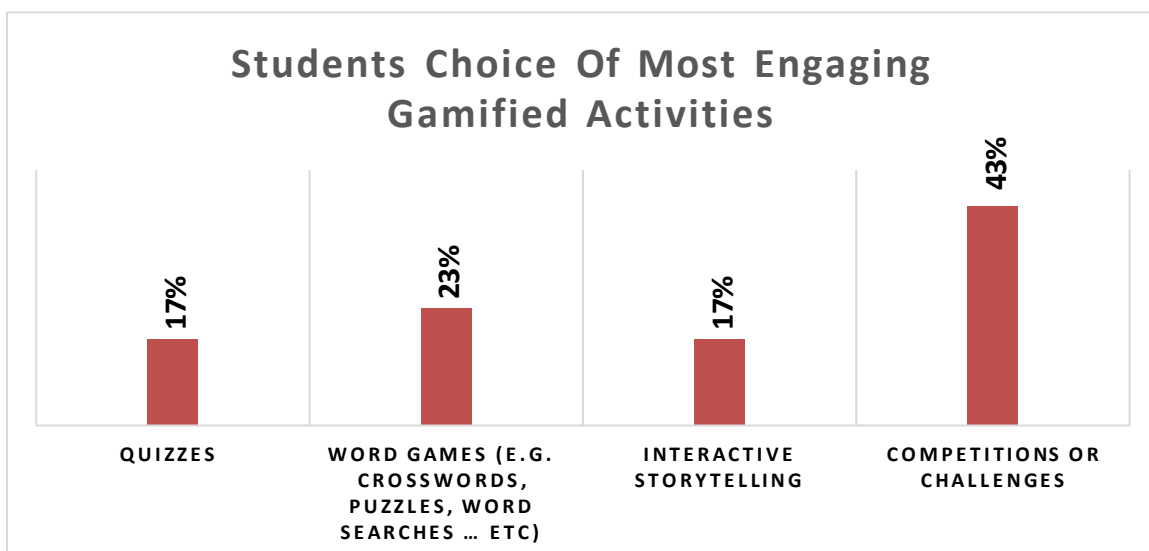


Figure 3.7 show the students' choice of the most engaging gamified activities. The results show that the majority of the pupils find themselves engaged more with activities that involve competitions and challenges (43) percent, followed by word games (23) percent, and the least engaging are both quizzes and interactive storytelling (10) percent for each. The possible reason behind the latter being considered less engaging is that pupils at the primary school level have limited vocabulary repertoire, which makes the understanding of stories somewhat challenging. Quizzes in general require a certain cognitive development to be able to solve them, which explains partially why pupils find them less engaging.

On the other hand, word games are essentially built around singular words, which aligns with the developing repertoire of the pupils. Additionally, the competitions and challenges align more with the playful and interactive nature of pupils at such an age stage, explaining the considerable engagement choice. The results may prompt the teachers to consider, in their gamified activities selection or design, the type and complexity of the activities that align best with their students' age, cognitive development, and learning styles.

Question ten: How much has your vocabulary improved with gamified learning?

Figure 3.8: Students' Vocabulary Improvement with Gamified Learning.

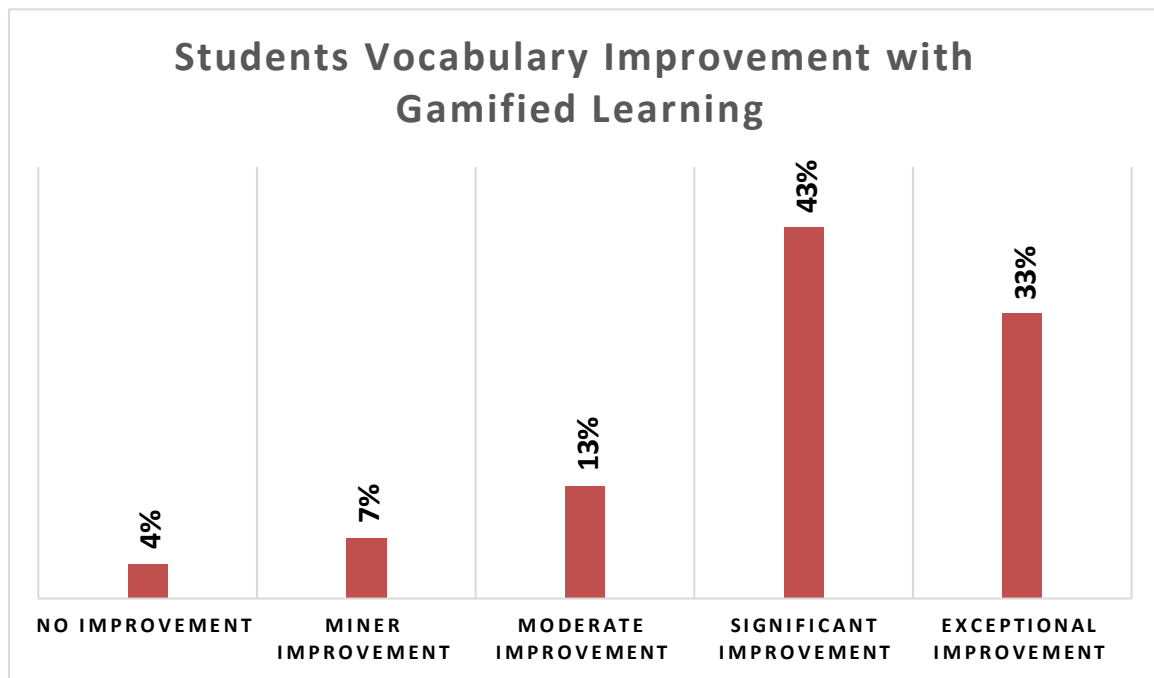


Figure 3.8 demonstrates the students' vocabulary improvement with gamified learning. The deduced results display that the majority experienced either significant improvement (43) percent or exceptional improvement (33) percent. The rest expressed that they either experienced moderate (13) percent or minor improvement (07) percent, while the minority expressed no improvement at all (04) percent.

Question eleven: How often do you use new vocabulary is speaking or writing?

Figure 3.9: Students' Frequency of Using New Vocabulary.

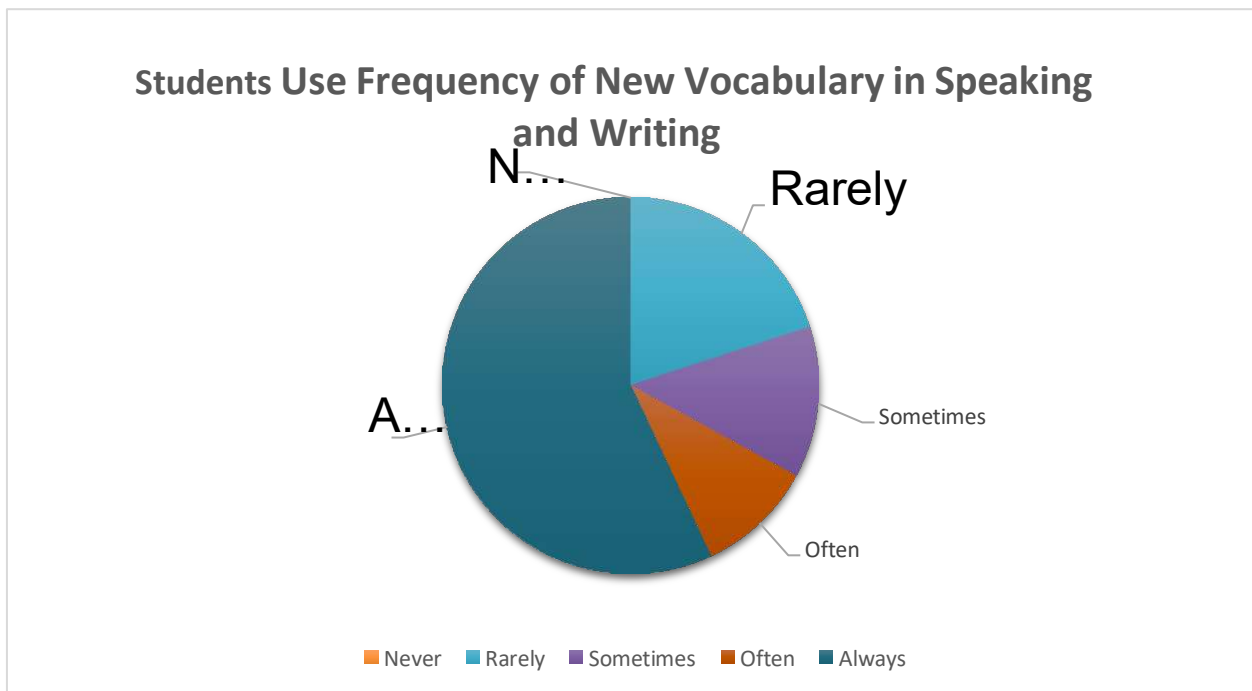


Figure 3.9 shows the students' use frequency of the newly acquired vocabulary in both speaking and writing. As shown, the combined majority expressed using the new vocabulary either always (57) percent or often (10) percent. The rest expressed using the vocabulary either rarely (20) percent or sometimes (13) percent. The results suggest that most students actively incorporate the new vocabulary into their language use, which indicates effective vocabulary acquisition and integration. However, the remaining minority who use the vocabulary less consistently could point to other affective factors that prevent application of the newly acquired vocabulary.

Question twelve: Do you feel gamified learning helps you remember vocabulary better than traditional methods?

Figure 3.10: Students' Perception of Gamified Learning Usefulness.

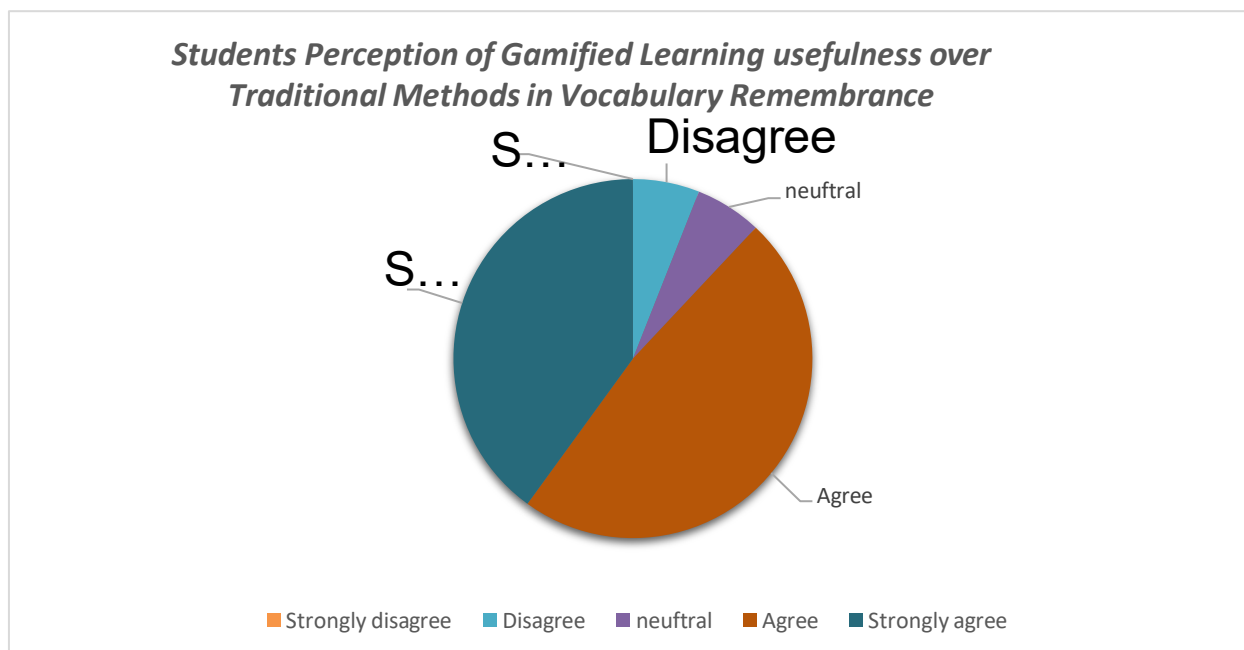


Figure 3.10 represents the students' perception of gamified learning usefulness over traditional methods in vocabulary remembrance. According to the results, the pupil majority either agree (40) percent or strongly agree (48) percent, with the usefulness of gamified learning as a strategy for vocabulary remembrance over the traditional methods. Only a few sample members disagree with this fact (06) percent while the rest were neutral (06) percent. The indications of the results are an overall positive perception suggesting a wide acceptance and favouring of gamified learning among students over the traditional methods. This fact supports the idea that gamified learning can be an effective and preferred strategy for vocabulary retention, prompting teachers to consider the integration of more gamified learning elements into their vocabulary teaching practices.

Question thirteen: What do you enjoy most about gamified learning activities?

Figure 3.11: Students' Most Enjoyed Aspects of Gamified Learning.

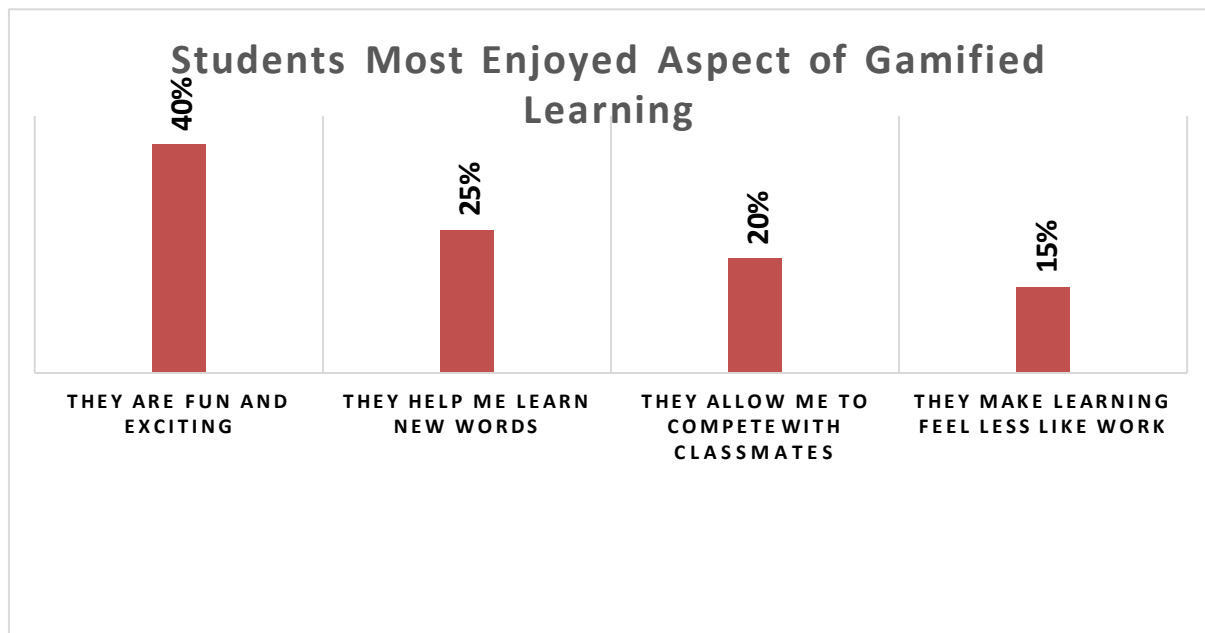


Figure 3.11 demonstrates the students' most enjoyed aspect of gamified learning. As demonstrated, the results show that the majority enjoy the fun and excitement (40) percent of gamified learning. (25) percent of the sample enjoy the fact that gamified learning helps them learn new words. (20) percent enjoy the competing aspect, and (15) percent enjoy the fact that learning feels less like work. The overall interpretations of the results can be that gamified learning raises student engagement due to the two facts of fun and excitement, which suggests that gamification should emphasize enjoyable elements to maintain the student's interest. The learning effectiveness is another indication that gamification can be a powerful educational tool. The competitive factor serves as a motivational element to raise participation in the classrooms. Another aspect is the positive attitude towards gamified learning, as it helps make the learning experience more comfortable and less formal. As a result, these insights can guide teachers to focus on these aspects when selecting or creating gamified educational experiences.

Question fourteen: What challenges do you face with gamified learning activities?

Figure 3.12: Challenges Students Faced with Gamified Learning.

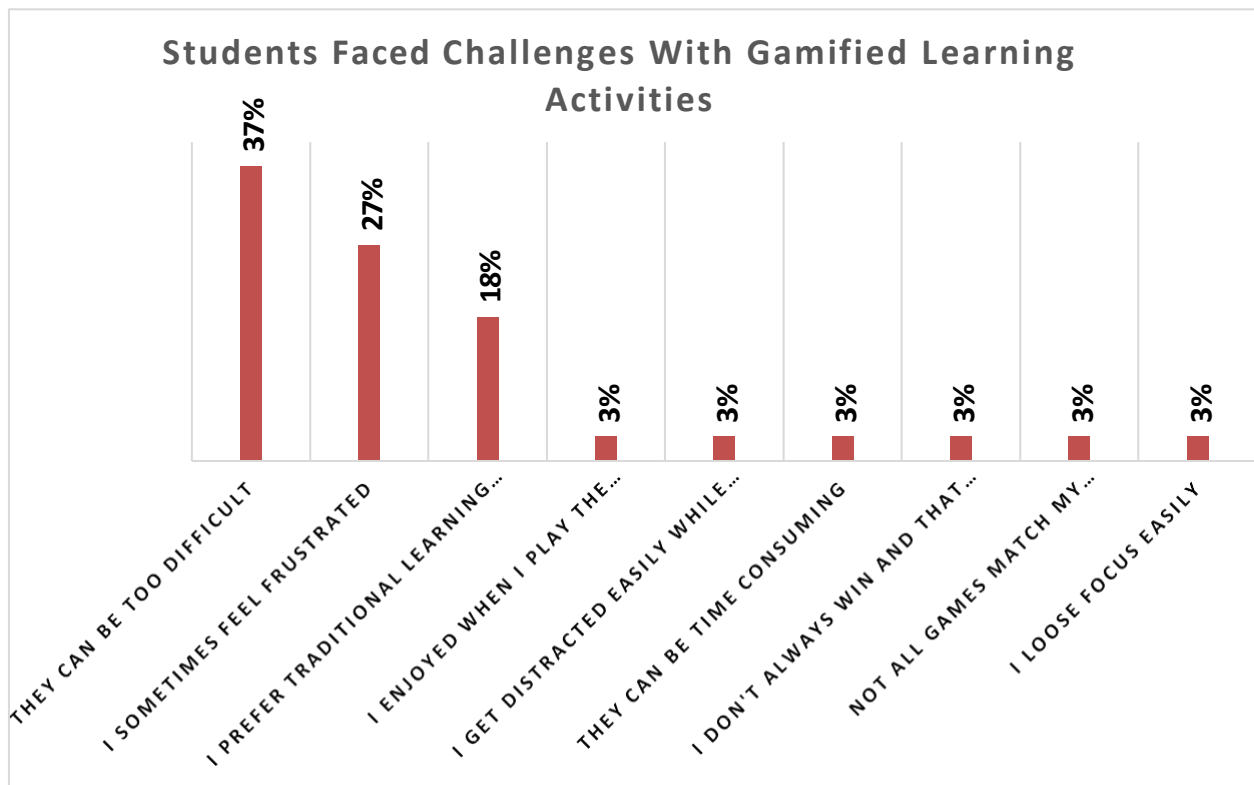


Figure 3.12 demonstrates the challenges faced by students with gamified learning activities. The results show that the highest percentages were on the difficulty level (37) percent, on the frustration level (27) percent, and on the preference of traditional learning methods (18) percent. The rest ranked with the same percentage of (03) that are distraction while playing, playing being time-consuming, sad feelings when loosing, game types not matching learning styles, and lastly, loosing focus easily. While gamification can enhance both motivation and engagement, they are not without downsides that should be taken into consideration while planning any gamified learning experience.

Question fifteen: Would you recommend more gamified learning activities to your teacher?

Figure 3.13: Students' Recommendation of More Gamified Activities to Teachers.

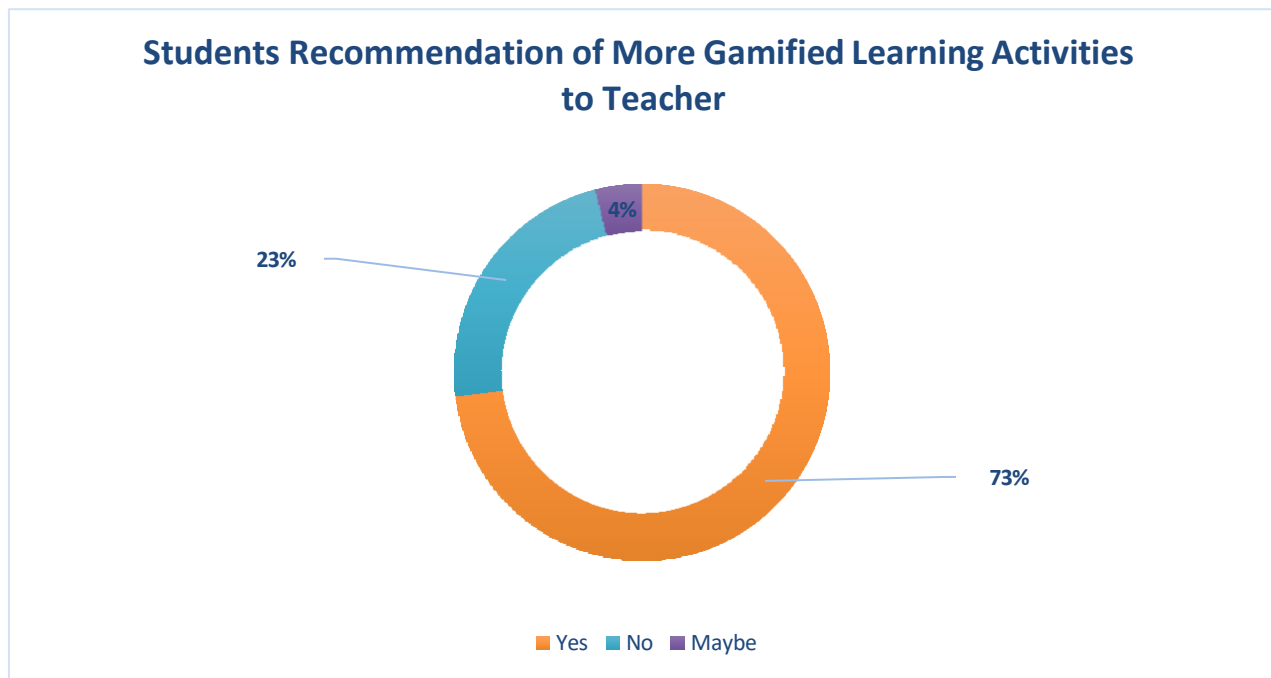


Figure 3.13 demonstrate students' recommendation of more gamified learning activities to teachers. The results show that the majority (73) percent recommend more gamified learning activities to teachers, and the minority do not recommend more, while a small minority (04) percent are indecisive on the matter. Since the majority recommend more gamified learning activities, the results strongly indicate that gamified learning is generally well-received among students. Teachers might consider this feedback as an argument for the integration of more gamified elements to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes, while also taking into consideration the needs of the minority who are less open to the idea of more gamified learning activities in the classrooms.

3.3 Interpretation of the main results

The qualitative data collected from the teacher interview, pupils feedback, and classroom observations align closely with the quantitative results obtained from the questionnaire, reinforcing the study's hypotheses.

- **Gamified Learning and Vocabulary Acquisition.** The first hypothesis posits that gamified learning improves vocabulary acquisition by increasing pupils engagement and

retention. Qualitative observations revealed that pupils exhibited heightened enthusiasm and active participation during gamified activities, such as Vocabulary Bingo and Pictionary. This engagement was further supported by quantitative data, indicating that a significant majority of pupils found gamified learning enjoyable and motivating. As the interactive nature of these activities enhanced deeper cognitive processing of vocabulary and promoting a collaborative learning environment where pupils could negotiate meanings and reinforce their understanding through peer interactions.

- **Influence of Gamification on Motivation and Engagement.** The second hypothesis suggests that the incorporation of game-based elements enhances motivation and active participation in vocabulary learning. Results indicate that pupils reported feeling very or extremely motivated when participating in gamified activities, which directly influenced their engagement levels. Qualitative data spotlighted that pupils showed reduced shyness and increased self-confidence during gamified sessions, helping to lower affective barriers to language learning. This aligns with quantitative findings, where the majority of pupils expressed a preference for game-based learning activities, indicating that gamification effectively taps into their natural playfulness and curiosity.

- **Perceptions and Attitudes Towards Gamified Learning.** The third hypothesis states that the teacher and pupils perceive gamification as an effective and suitable approach to vocabulary instruction. Qualitative data from the interview with the teacher revealed a general understanding of gamified learning as a beneficial strategy for nurturing an engaging classroom atmosphere. The teacher recognized the potential of gamified activities to enhance student interaction, motivation, and creativity, despite lacking formal training in this area. Similarly, quantitative results showed that students perceived gamified learning as more useful than traditional methods for remembering vocabulary, suggesting that it can create a more supportive and stimulating environment for vocabulary acquisition.

The main results found from the three instruments used to investigate supports the research hypotheses, as it is demonstrating that gamified learning notably enhances vocabulary acquisition, boosts pupils motivation and engagement, and is perceived positively by both the teacher and pupils. The findings suggest that integrating gamified learning strategies into vocabulary instruction can lead to more effective and enjoyable learning experiences for primary school pupils, eventually nurturing a deeper understanding and retention of vocabulary. The findings from this study provides the compelling evidence supporting the effectiveness of gamified learning in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and retention among 4th-grade primary school pupils.

3.4 Suggestions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed below to guide and improve both pedagogical practices and future research. This study aimed to show an alternative technique that can be used in teaching in general, and in teaching EFL in particular:

- It is encouraged that educators blend gamified learning method gradually with the current traditional instructional strategies to create a balanced teaching approach.
- Educational institutions should offer targeted professional development sessions for teachers that cover selecting appropriate game mechanics, aligning games with curricular goals, classroom management during gamified tasks, and integrating technology effectively.
- Teachers are advised to collaborate with students and use thier feedback in planning and evaluating gamified activities.
- Whenever possible, gamified tasks should include digital tools and sensory elements such as visuals, sound effects, and interactive platforms .
- Gamified group activities should emphasize communication and teamwork to build both language and social skills.
- Gamified instruction must be inclusive, making sure that all students regardless of proficiency level feel encouraged to participate.

- It is proposed to explore the integration of innovative vocabulary instruction methods in diverse educational settings.
- It is recommended to create a repository of gamified vocabulary activities that educators can easily access and implement in their classrooms.
- Develop a guide for educators that outlines best practices for implementing various types of gamified activities in vocabulary instruction.
- Research the principles of game design that can be effectively applied to educational contexts, particularly in vocabulary instruction.
- It is advisable to implement pilot programs that test new gamified learning designs and gather data on their effectiveness in educational settings.
- It is essential to assess student feedback mechanisms to continuously improve gamified vocabulary instruction.
- It is essential to develop a mentorship program where experienced educators can support their peers in integrating gamification into vocabulary instruction.
- It is important to organize regular professional development sessions focused on gamification strategies, nurturing a community of practice among educators.

According to the findings of this research, the following suggestions aim to support the effective integration of gamification into language instruction while addressing classroom realities and learners' diverse needs. These studies might be proposed to be investigated in the future:

- Educational association's should address strategies for handling practical challenges such as noise or off-task behavior.
- Using questionnaires, reflection logs, or informal discussions can help tailor game types and mechanics to learner interests.

- Tasks should be appropriately scaffolded to match students' skill levels, starting with simple games and gradually progressing to more complex challenges.
- While this study focused on vocabulary acquisition, future research should investigate the effects of gamification on other language skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
- Future research should include longitudinal designs to assess the sustained impact of gamified learning on vocabulary retention and overall language development over time.
- Analyze the impact of gamified learning activities on vocabulary retention across different age groups and educational contexts.
- Conduct comparative studies on traditional vocabulary instruction versus gamified approaches to assess differences in student engagement and learning outcomes.
- Encourage collaboration among educators to share successful gamified activities and adapt them for different learning environments.
- Explore the role of student feedback in the iterative design process of gamified learning experiences.
- It is beneficial to provide professional development opportunities for educators on effective assessment strategies for gamified learning.
- It is suggested to investigate the impact of teacher involvement on the success of gamified learning activities in vocabulary instruction.
- It is beneficial to explore strategies for enhancing teacher engagement and enthusiasm in implementing gamified learning experiences.

3.5 Limitations of the Study

While the study highlights the numerous benefits of gamified learning, This research was conducted within a limited timeframe, which slightly restricted the scope of data collection,

particularly in terms of the limited number of participants in the interview, which might have added variety of perspectives and suggestions to be obtained. A broader range of teachers' input with a long educational experience might have enriched the findings regarding the implementation and perception of gamified learning in vocabulary instruction within the current curriculum. Some of the pupils reported difficulties with the level of challenge experienced during gamified activities and showed a higher preference for traditional learning methods, indicating variability in effectiveness depending on individual learning styles. Qualitative observations noted issues such as classroom noise and disorganization during gamified sessions, which could disrupt lesson flow. These challenges underscore the need for careful implementation of gamified activities, ensuring they are well designed and balanced with other teaching methods. Another limitation is that the study focused on a single primary school with a specific group of 4th-grade pupils. This narrow sampling limits the generalizability of the findings to other schools or educational contexts. Nevertheless, the results still offer valuable insights into the potential of gamified learning in similar primary EFL settings.

3.6 Conclusion

This final chapter undertook the analysis of the data provided by the three research instruments that targeted the two key categories of participants within the present study that included both teachers and pupils at the primary school level. Through the results interpretation, the discussion of the findings was performed and enabled the highlighting of the significance of adopting gamification as a methodological strategy to enhance both the acquisition and retention of vocabulary at this beginner level.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

Gamification has gained increasing recognition as an innovative instructional strategy within language education. Its application in the classroom has been shown to enhance student motivation, promoting engagement, and support learning outcomes particularly in vocabulary acquisition. The integration of gamified elements such as rewards, competition, storytelling, and collaborative tasks helps to create a lively and enjoyable learning environment, especially for young learners.

This study aimed to explore the impact of gamification on vocabulary acquisition among fourth-grade primary school pupils learning English as a Foreign Language. It specifically focused on how gamification influences vocabulary retention, learner motivation, and engagement during vocabulary-related activities. To address these objectives, a mixed-methods approach was adopted, employing three data collection instruments: teacher interviews, classroom observations, and student questionnaires. This combination provided both depth and breadth in understanding the learners' experiences and the teachers' perspectives.

The findings confirmed several research hypotheses. First, both teachers and learners expressed positive views about the integration of gamification in vocabulary lessons. Second, the incorporation of game-based elements was found to substantially increase learners' motivation and classroom participation. Third, the results demonstrated that gamified learning enhances vocabulary retention and supports active language use among young EFL learners.

The study faced a few limitations. The first was related to sample size in the qualitative strand only a limited number of English teachers were available for interviews. Including more participants across multiple schools would have improved the reliability of the findings. The second limitation concerned the quality of some interview responses, which lacked depth due to participants skipping or inadequately answering certain questions. Lastly, while the student

questionnaire provided rich insights, the translation and oral administration process required extra care to ensure consistency and accuracy.

In sum, this research stressed the potential of gamified learning in vocabulary instruction and supports its integration into EFL classrooms. Further research is encouraged to expand on these findings, test the approach in different contexts, and refine gamified strategies to cater to diverse learners' needs.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Teachers Interview:

Introduction: Thank you for participating in this interview. The purpose of this study is to explore the effects of gamified learning on vocabulary acquisition among 4th-grade primary school pupils. Your insights will be valuable in understanding how gamified learning strategies are implemented in the classroom and their impact on students' vocabulary development. We assure that your responses will be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes.

Section 1: Background Information

How long have you been teaching, and how long have you been teaching 4th grade?

How important is vocabulary in learning, and how do you incorporate it into your classes?

How do you incorporate vocabulary instruction into your lessons?

Have you received any training on how to implement gamified learning in your teaching?

Section 2: Experience with Gamified Learning

What is your understanding of gamified learning?

Have you implemented gamified learning activities in your classroom? If so, can you describe some of these activities?

What motivated you to use gamified learning in your teaching?

Section 3: Impact on Vocabulary Acquisition

In your opinion, how has gamified learning affected your students' vocabulary acquisition?

Have you noticed any changes in student engagement and motivation when using

gamified activities compared to traditional methods?

Can you provide specific examples of how students have improved their vocabulary skills through gamified learning?

Section 4: Challenges and Considerations

How do you assess the effectiveness of gamified learning in improving vocabulary acquisition?

What challenges have you faced in implementing gamified learning activities?

What support or resources do you think are necessary for teachers to effectively implement gamified learning?

Section 5: Future Directions

What recommendations would you give to other teachers who are considering using gamified learning in their classrooms?

How do you see the future of gamified learning in vocabulary instruction evolving?

Conclusion: Thank you for your time and insights. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding gamified learning and vocabulary acquisition feel free to share it with us.

Appendix 2

Questionnaire on Gamified Learning and Vocabulary Acquisition

Below is a sample questionnaire designed by Gadra Hayat & Geubli Amel ,Master 2 students in Didactics & Applied Languages at Belhadj Bouchaib University, to assess the impact of gamified learning on vocabulary acquisition among 4th-grade primary school pupils. The questionnaire includes sections on engagement, motivation, perceived vocabulary improvement, and attitudes towards gamified learning.

Instructions: Please answer the following questions honestly. Your responses will help us understand how gamified learning affects vocabulary acquisition. There are no right or wrong answers.Ensure that your responses will be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes

Section 1: Demographic Information

1) Age: _____

2) Gender:

Male

Female

Section 2: Engagement and Motivation

1) do you like learning English?

2) Do you think English is important?

3) Do you like studying through games?

1) How often Does your teacher provide gamified learning activities in your English class?

Never

Once a month

Once a week

Several times a week

Daily

2) Rate your enjoyment of gamified learning activities on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Not enjoyable, 5 = Very enjoyable)

1

2

3

4

5

3) How motivated do you feel to learn vocabulary when using gamified activities?

Not motivated

Slightly motivated

Moderately motivated

Very motivated

Extremely motivated

4) Which of the following gamified activities do you find most engaging? (Select all that apply)

Quizzes

Word games (e.g., crossword puzzles, word searches)

Interactive storytelling

Competitions or challenges

Other: _____

Section 3: Perceived Vocabulary Improvement

1) How much do you think your vocabulary has improved since you started participating in gamified learning activities?

No improvement

A little improvement

Moderate improvement

Significant improvement

Exceptional improvement

2) How often do you use new vocabulary learned from gamified activities in your speaking or writing?

Never

- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

3) Do you feel that gamified learning helps you remember vocabulary better than traditional methods?

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Section 4: Attitudes Towards Gamified Learning

1) What do you enjoy most about gamified learning activities? (Select all that apply)

- They are fun and exciting
- They help me learn new words
- They allow me to compete with classmates
- They make learning feel less like work
- Other: _____

2) What challenges do you face with gamified learning activities? (Select all that apply)

- They can be too difficult
- I sometimes feel frustrated
- I prefer traditional learning methods
- Other: _____

3) Would you recommend more gamified learning activities to your teacher?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Section 5: Open-Ended Questions

1) In your opinion, how has gamified learning changed the way you learn vocabulary?

.....
.....

2) What suggestions do you have for making gamified learning activities even better?

.....
.....

Pupils questionnaire Translated To Arabic

إستبيان حول الألعاب التحفيزية واكتساب المفردات

تم تصميم هذا الاستبيان من قبل قادرة حياة و قبلي آمال، طالبنا ماستر 2 في التعليمية واللغات التطبيقية بجامعة

بلحاج بوشعيب، لتقييم تأثير الألعاب التحفيزية على اكتساب المفردات بين تلاميذ السنة الرابعة ابتدائي. يتضمن الاستبيان أسئلة حول الانخراط، والتحفيز، وإدراك تحسن المفردات، والمواقف تجاه الألعاب التحفيزية.

تعليمات: يرجى الإجابة على الأسئلة التالية بصدق. ستساعدنا إجاباتك في فهم كيف تؤثر الألعاب التحفيزية على اكتساب المفردات. لا توجد إجابات صحيحة أو خاطئة. تأكد من أن إجاباتك سبقي سرية وستستخدم فقط لأغراض البحث.

القسم 1: المعلومات الديموغرافية

العمر: _____

الجنس:

ذكر

أنثى

القسم 2: الانخراط والتحفيز

1. هل تحب تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية؟

نعم

لا

2. هل تعتقد أن اللغة الإنجليزية مهمة؟

نعم

لا

3. هل تحب الدراسة من خلال الألعاب التحفيزية؟

نعم

لا

4. كم مرة يقدم معلمك أنشطة الألعاب التحفيزية في فصل اللغة الإنجليزية؟

أبداً

مرة واحدة في الشهر

مرة واحدة في الأسبوع

عدة مرات في الأسبوع

يوميًا

5. قِيم مدى استمتاعك بالألعاب التحفيزية على مقياس من 1 إلى 5 (1 = غير ممتع، 5 = ممتع للغاية):

1

2

3

4

5

6. ما مدى شعورك بالتحفيز لتعلم المفردات عند استخدام الألعاب التحفيزية؟

غير متحفز

متحفز قليلاً

متحفز بشكل معتدل

متحفز جداً

متحفز للغاية

7. أي من الألعاب التحفيزية التالية تجدها الأكثر جاذبية؟ (اختر كل ما ينطبق)

الاختبارات القصيرة

ألعاب الكلمات (مثل، الكلمات المتقاطعة، البحث عن الكلمات)

سرد القصص التفاعلي

المسابقات أو التحديات

أخرى: _____

القسم 3: إدراك تحسن المفردات

8. ما مقدار التحسن الذي تعتقد أن مفرداتك قد تحسنت منذ أن بدأت المشاركة في الألعاب التحفيزية؟

لا يوجد تحسن

تحسن قليل

تحسن معتدل

تحسن كبير

تحسن استثنائي

9. كم مرة تستخدم المفردات الجديدة التي تعلمتها من الألعاب التحفيزية في التحدث أو الكتابة؟

أبداً

نادراً

أحياناً

غالباً

دائماً

10. هل تشعر أن الألعاب التحفيزية تساعدك على تذكر المفردات بشكل أفضل من الطرق التقليدية؟

أوافق بشدة

أوافق

محايد

أعارض

أعارض بشدة

القسم 4: المواقف تجاه الألعاب التحفيزية

11. ما الذي تستمتع به أكثر في الألعاب التحفيزية؟ (اختر كل ما ينطبق)

إنها ممتعة ومثيرة

تساعدني على تعلم كلمات جديدة

تسمح لي بالتنافس مع زملائي في الفصل

تجعل التعلم يبدو أقل كعمل

أخرى: _____

12. ما هي التحديات التي تواجهها مع الألعاب التحفيزية؟ (اختر كل ما ينطبق)

يمكن أن تكون صعبة للغاية

أشعر بالإحباط في بعض الأحيان

أفضل طرق التعلم التقليدية

أخرى: _____

13. هل توصي معلمك بالمزيد من الألعاب التحفيزية؟

نعم

لا

ربما

القسم 5: أسئلة مفتوحة

14. في رأيك، كيف غيّرت الألعاب التحفيزية الطريقة التي تتعلم بها المفردات؟

.....

.....

15. ما هي الاقتراحات التي لديك لجعل الألعاب التحفيزية أفضل؟

.....

.....

Appendix 3

Traditional Method Session Task One Unit One: "My Family"

Family and Friends

Unit One

I play roles

- Play the roles with your friends.

14

Family and Friends

I sing and have fun

"Finger Family"

Brother finger, brother finger.
Where are you?
Here I am, here I am.
How do you do?

Sister finger, sister finger.
Where are you?
Here I am, here I am.
How do you do?

Baby finger, baby finger.
Where are you?
Here I am, here I am.
How do you do?

I listen and repeat

15

Appendix 4

Task Two: Vocabulary Workshee

MY FAMILY

Look at the picture and fill in the blanks.



This is me.



This is my

.....



This is my

.....



This is my

.....



This is my

.....



This is my

.....

Completion:

Appendix 5

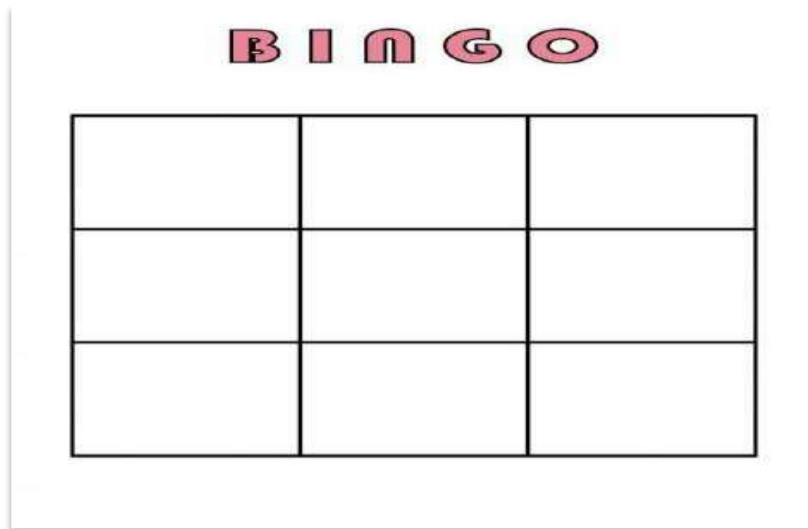
Gamified Learning Session Task One: Vocabulary Flashcards:

Chef	Policeman	Ruler	Bird
-------------	------------------	--------------	-------------

Orange	Birthday	Backpack	Doctor
---------------	-----------------	-----------------	---------------



Task Two: Vocabulary Bingo:



1) Apple : A round or green fruit that is sweet and crunchy.

2) Book : Something you read that has pages and stories or information.

3) Chair : A piece of furniture you sit on.

4) Dog : An animal that barks and can be a pet.

5) School : A place where children go to learn.

6) Teacher : A person who helps students learn.

7) Table : A piece of furniture you use to eat or work on.

8) Ball : A round object used in games and sports.

9) Pencil : A tool you use to write or draw with.

Task Three: Word Relay Race:

1) Window : “You look outside through this. It’s made of glass.”
2) Bag : “You carry your books and pencils in this.”
3) Clock : “It tells you the time.”
4) Eraser : “You use this when you make a mistake with your pencil.”
5) Notebook : “You write your class notes in this.”
6) Door : “You open this to go in or out of the classroom.”
7) Ruler : “You use this to draw straight lines.”
8) Crayon : “You use this to color pictures.”
9) Board : “The teacher writes on this at the front of the class.”
10) Scissors : “You use these to cut paper.”

Task Four: Vocabulary Pictionary:

Cat	Facebook	Scissors
Tooth	Balloons	Tablet
Football	Candy	Copybook

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف تأثير استخدام التعلم القائم على الألعاب التحفيزية في اكتساب المفردات لدى تلاميذ السنة الرابعة ابتدائي في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. اعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج المختلط (النوعي والكمي)، حيث تم استخدام المقابلات مع أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية، والاستبيانات الموجهة للتلاميذ، بالإضافة إلى الملاحظة الصفية خلال الحصص الدراسية في إحدى المدارس الابتدائية بولاية عين تموشنت. أظهرت نتائج البحث أن دمج الألعاب التعليمية في دروس المفردات يُعزز من دافعية المتعلمين ويزيد من تفاعلهم داخل القسم، مما يساهم في تحسين عملية اكتساب المفردات. كما عبّر الأستاذ والتلاميذ المشاركون عن مواقف إيجابية تجاه هذا النمط من التعليم. توصي الدراسة بتعميم هذا الأسلوب واستكشاف المزيد من الآليات لتحسينه وتكييفه في بيئات تعليمية مختلفة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المفردات، التحفيز، التعلم القائم على اللعب، اكتساب اللغة، المتعلمون الصغار، الملاحظة

الصفحة.

Résumé

Cette recherche vise à explorer l'effet de l'apprentissage gamifié sur l'acquisition du vocabulaire chez des élèves de 4ème année primaire apprenant l'anglais comme langue étrangère. Pour cela, une approche mixte (qualitative et quantitative) a été adoptée. Les données ont été recueillies à l'aide d'entretiens avec l'enseignant d'anglais, de questionnaires adressés aux élèves, ainsi que d'observations en classe effectuées lors des séances d'anglais dans une école primaire à Ain Temouchent. Les résultats ont révélé que l'intégration des jeux éducatifs dans l'enseignement du vocabulaire stimule la motivation et l'engagement des élèves, ce qui améliore leur apprentissage. Les enseignants et les élèves ont exprimé des attitudes positives envers cette approche. Il est recommandé d'adopter cette stratégie dans d'autres contextes éducatifs et de mener davantage de recherches pour en évaluer l'impact à long terme.

Mots clés : gamification, vocabulaire, motivation, apprentissage par le jeu, acquisition, jeunes apprenants, observation en classe.

Summary

This study explores the impact of gamified learning on vocabulary acquisition among fourth-grade primary school EFL learners. A mixed-methods approach (qualitative and quantitative) was

employed, using teacher interviews, student questionnaires, and classroom observations conducted during English sessions in a public primary school in Ain Temouchent. Findings revealed that integrating educational games into vocabulary lessons significantly boosts learner motivation and engagement, leading to improved vocabulary retention. Both the teacher and students showed positive attitudes toward gamified learning. The study recommends broader implementation of this strategy and further investigation into its adaptability in various classroom settings.

Keywords: gamification, vocabulary, motivation, game-based learning, language acquisition, young learners, classroom observation.