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The effects of gamification in Business English classes on the motivation and engagement of Management study program students

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of gamification on the motivation and engagement of first-semester Management students enrolled in a Business English course. A total of 71 undergraduate students at the University of Merdeka Malang participated in gamified learning activities, including digital quizzes and role-play simulations. Data were collected using pre- and post-intervention surveys based on Keller's ARCS model, as well as classroom observations and activity records. Results revealed significant improvements ($p < 0.05$) across all four ARCS dimensions Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction, following the implementation of the gamification intervention. Qualitative findings supported these results, showing increased participation, enthusiasm, and focus among students. The study concludes that gamification can enhance Business English instruction by fostering a more engaging, interactive, and relevant learning experience. Educators are encouraged to integrate gamified strategies to complement traditional teaching methods and support improved learning outcomes in higher education.



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1. Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of higher education, the demand for English language proficiency, particularly in specialized fields such as Business English, continues to grow significantly. For students enrolled in Management study programs, mastering Business English is not merely a linguistic exercise but a foundational skill that enhances both their academic performance and their readiness for professional communication in increasingly globalized business environments (Basturkmen,

2010). Additionally, Companies are often reluctant to invest in fresh graduates who, upon finishing their degrees, are expected to be immediately prepared to compete in the job market and transition directly into the workforce (Farani & Yustisia, 2021).

The ability to effectively communicate in English within business contexts is essential for participating in international negotiations, presentations, and collaborations, which are critical components of modern management careers (Gillet, 2012). However, despite the acknowledged importance of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), many students—especially those in their early university semesters—struggle with motivation and engagement. This challenge is often attributed to a lack of confidence, insufficient exposure to authentic business scenarios, and the perceived irrelevance of traditional language learning methods to real-world applications (Dörnyei, 2001).

Such difficulties have been particularly observed among first-semester management students at the University of Merdeka Malang (UNMER), especially in K and L classes during the academic year 2024/2025. These students frequently exhibit low confidence, diminished interest, and limited practical engagement with business communication contexts, which negatively impact their learning outcomes and overall language acquisition.

In recent years, the integration of gamification into educational settings has emerged as a promising strategy to address these challenges. Gamification refers to the application of game design elements in non-game contexts, such as education, with the intention of enhancing user engagement, motivation, and participation (Deterding et al., 2011). It also employs principles of motivation and engagement to create a learning environment that replicates the internal motivation commonly found in games (Tursunbayevich, 2024). In language learning, gamification has been demonstrated to create a more interactive and enjoyable environment, promote active learning, and enhance student motivation (Hamari et al., 2014). Educational technologies such as Kahoot!, Quizizz, and Wordwall have become increasingly popular tools to support gamified learning experiences, particularly in English language classrooms. Nevertheless, while numerous studies have explored gamification in general ESL or EFL classrooms, fewer have explicitly focused on Business English classes within the context of the Management study program for undergraduate students, especially in Indonesian higher education institutions.

Previous research by Suriawati and Pratama (2021) indicated that gamification significantly improved engagement among vocational high school students in English classes. Similarly, a study by Wijaya (2022) highlighted the potential of digital game-based tools to enhance vocabulary acquisition and class participation in general EFL contexts. However, these studies either targeted secondary education or did not address Business English as a specific domain. In contrast, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of literature by examining the impact of gamification on motivation and engagement, specifically among management students learning Business English in their first semester. Compared to prior studies, this research focuses on learners at the tertiary level with an academic-business orientation, offering insights that are both contextually and pedagogically relevant.

The primary problem investigated in this study is the low level of student motivation and engagement in Business English classes among first-semester students in the Management study program. Despite the structured curriculum and academic support, traditional teaching approaches of-

ten fall short in stimulating student interest and involvement, particularly for learners who are still adjusting to university life and its academic demands. Therefore, the central question guiding this research is: How does gamification affect the motivation and engagement of first-semester students in the Management study program's Business English classes?

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of gamification strategies on students' motivation and engagement during Business English class. The research was conducted from September to October 2024 at UNMER Malang, involving first-semester students of the Management Program, specifically classes K and L. Each class met once a week for 100 minutes (2 credit hours), with gamification tools integrated into the teaching process throughout the study period. By observing the students' responses and collecting data on their participation and motivation levels, the study aims to determine whether gamification can serve as an effective pedagogical intervention.

The significance of this study lies in its practical and theoretical contributions. Practically, the findings may offer English lecturers and curriculum developers at UNMER and similar institutions valuable insights into how gamification can be effectively implemented to enhance classroom engagement and improve learning outcomes. Theoretically, this research contributes to the discourse on learner motivation in ESP settings, specifically Business English, by applying gamification as a motivational framework. This study employs the ARCS model of motivational design developed by Keller (1987), which focuses on four key components of motivation in learning: Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction. These components provide a structured lens through which the effectiveness of gamification in increasing student motivation can be evaluated.

To summarise, this study aims to investigate the implementation of gamification in Business English instruction for undergraduate management students and its impact on their learning motivation and classroom engagement. The paper discusses the theoretical underpinnings of gamification, analyzes empirical data collected during the research period, and offers pedagogical recommendations based on the findings. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of how digital learning strategies can be aligned with student-centered education in Business English courses at the university level.

2. Method

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the impact of gamification on student motivation and engagement in the Business English class. The research was conducted over a period of six weeks, from September to October 2024, at the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Merdeka Malang (UNMER), during the first semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. The course involved was Business English I, taught by the researcher in two different classes: K and L classes.

2.1 Participants

The participants of this study consisted of first-semester undergraduate students majoring in Management. A total of 71 students were involved, comprising 34 students from K class and 37

students from L class. The K class consisted of 12 male students and 22 female students, while the L class included 22 male students and 15 female students. The selection of participants was based on their enrollment in the course. No additional sampling criteria were applied, as the study included the full population of students enrolled in the two classes taught by the researcher. All participants attended the course once in a week on with each session lasting for 100 minutes or equivalent to 2 credit hours.

2.2 Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through a combination of pre- and post-intervention surveys, classroom observations, and attendance or activity records. The surveys, which included closed ended questions, were designed to measure students' levels of motivation and engagement before and after the implementation of gamification techniques. The questionnaires were adapted from previously validated instruments based on Keller's ARCS model (1987), which assesses four key dimensions of motivation: Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction.

Table 1. The Keller's ARCS items

ARCS Component	Typical Number of Items
Attention	5 items
Relevance	5 items
Confidence	5 items
Satisfaction	5 items
Total	20 items

In addition to surveys, field notes and classroom observations were utilized to capture qualitative data regarding student participation, enthusiasm, and responsiveness during the lessons. Observational data were systematically recorded during each class session throughout the study period. The observations were conducted by the lecturer as a researcher, who documented student behavior and engagement using a structured observation approach. To reduce potential observer bias, a peer review process was conducted in which a fellow educator reviewed selected field notes and thematic interpretations. This process ensured that emerging patterns were not solely based on the researcher's subjective perspective. Furthermore, triangulation was employed by cross-analyzing the observational findings with survey results and activity records to strengthen the credibility of the data. Thematic analysis of the qualitative data revealed recurring themes related to increased student participation, heightened enthusiasm, sustained attention during activities, and more active classroom involvement, all of which aligned with the four dimensions of Keller's ARCS model: Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction.

2.3 Instructional Intervention

The intervention involved incorporating gamified elements into the regular Business English curriculum. These elements included the use of digital platforms such as Kahoot!, Quizizz, and Wordwall

to deliver vocabulary quizzes, role-play games for practicing business scenarios (including negotiations and meetings), and point-based group competitions. These activities were designed to create a more dynamic and interactive learning environment, while still aligning with the course's learning objectives.

Table 2. Gamification Implementation Schedule – Class K and Class L

Week	Date	Activity Description
Week 1	Sept 6, 2024	Introduction to course & research, pre-test (motivation & engagement), conventional lesson
Week 2	Sept 13, 2024	Gamification begins: Quizizz for vocabulary review
Week 3	Sept 20, 2024	Group challenge using Wordwall & short quiz game
Week 4	Sept 27, 2024	Business scenario role-play with point-based feedback
Week 5	Oct 4, 2024	Gamified project: team competition & mini-presentation
Week 6	Oct 11, 2024	Post-test (motivation & engagement), student reflection, final scoring, closing session

Each class session followed a structured plan that integrated gamified tasks with conventional instructional methods, including lectures, discussions, and textbook-based exercises. The gamification activities were introduced progressively, beginning in the second week of the study, and were implemented consistently across both classes.

2.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from pre- and post-intervention surveys were analyzed using paired sample t-tests in SPSS to compare the differences in motivation and engagement levels among students. The significance level was set at $\pm = 0.05$. The four dimensions of motivation were measured based on Keller's ARCS model: Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction. Qualitative data obtained from classroom observations and student feedback were thematically analyzed to support and elaborate on the quantitative findings, particularly in identifying behavioral changes and attitudes toward gamified learning.

Through this mixed-methods approach, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effects of gamification on student motivation and engagement in the context of Business English class for students of the Management study program at the undergraduate level.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Quantitative Results

The findings of this study indicate that integrating gamification into Business English instruction had a positive effect on both motivation and engagement among first-semester students in the Management study program at the University of Merdeka Malang. Data collected through pre- and post-intervention surveys showed a significant increase in students' motivation scores across all four dimensions of Keller's ARCS model, Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction. The results of the Paired sample t-test in Table 3 demonstrate this.

Table 3. Result of paired sample t-test

Dimension	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	t(df=69)	p-value
Attention	3.05 (0.40)	3.85 (0.42)	8.75	< 0.001
Relevance	3.10 (0.45)	3.90 (0.40)	7.92	< 0.001
Confidence	2.95 (0.50)	3.80 (0.44)	9.10	< 0.001
Satisfaction	3.00 (0.48)	3.88 (0.41)	8.33	< 0.001

As shown in Table 3, the paired sample t-test revealed statistically significant increases in students' motivation scores across all four dimensions of Keller's ARCS model. The average score for Attention significantly increased from 3.05 before the intervention to 3.85 after the intervention ($t(69) = 8.75, p < 0.001$). This indicates that gamification successfully enhanced students' focus and interest in the learning material. The Relevance dimension, which measures how meaningful and applicable the students perceive the learning content, also showed a significant increase from a mean of 3.10 to 3.90 ($t(69) = 7.92, p < 0.001$). This suggests that gamification made the learning feel more relevant and contextual to the students' needs. Students' Confidence scores significantly increased from 2.95 to 3.80 ($t(69) = 9.10, p < 0.001$). This means that gamification helped students feel more confident and capable of handling tasks or challenges in the Business English class. The Satisfaction dimension also showed a significant increase from 3.00 to 3.88 ($t(69) = 8.33, p < 0.001$). Students reported feeling more satisfied and enjoying the learning process that incorporated gamification.

3.2 Discussion of Motivation

The results indicate that the use of gamification in Business English class significantly improved students' motivation across all four key ARCS dimensions. The increase in Attention implies that game-based elements successfully captured and sustained students' interest. This may be attributed to the novelty, interactivity, and variety that gamified tasks brought into the classroom.

The rise in Relevance indicates that students found the learning materials more meaningful and connected to real-world business contexts—an essential factor for Management students who often question the practicality of language learning. This finding supports Keller's (1987) view that contextualized learning improves motivation.

The marked improvement in Confidence suggests that gamified activities helped students feel more capable and competent. Elements such as achievable challenges, regular feedback, and incremental success may have contributed to building learners' self-efficacy. Similarly, higher Satisfaction scores reflect increased enjoyment and fulfilment, likely fueled by rewards, recognition (e.g., leaderboards), and a sense of achievement.

These findings are consistent with prior studies (e.g., Hamari et al., 2014), which demonstrated that gamification enhances learners' motivation through greater enjoyment, feedback, and challenge. The current study extends this understanding to the context of Business English instruction in higher education.

3.3 Engagement Observations

In addition to the quantitative improvements observed in motivation, qualitative data obtained from classroom observations and student feedback provided deeper insights into changes in student engagement during the gamified learning intervention.

Prior to the intervention, many students appeared reluctant to participate voluntarily, often adopting passive roles during class activities. This passivity is a common challenge in language learning classrooms, especially at the tertiary level, where students may feel anxious or lack intrinsic motivation (Dörnyei, 2001). However, following the introduction of gamified tasks, a noticeable shift in the approach occurred. Students became more actively involved, showing greater willingness to answer questions, participate in group discussions, and complete tasks within the allotted time. This behavioural change suggests that gamification can effectively reduce learner reluctance and foster active participation, consistent with previous findings by Wang and Tahir (2020), who reported increased student engagement in gamified learning environments.

Key gamification elements such as point accumulation, leaderboards, and competitive challenges contributed significantly to this energized classroom atmosphere. These features appeared to stimulate not only motivation but also a sense of achievement and social relatedness among students. This aligns with Hamari et al. (2014), who emphasized that gamification increases learner engagement by enhancing enjoyment and feelings of accomplishment. Similarly, Suriawati and Pratama (2021) found that gamification had a positive impact on participation rates among Indonesian vocational students learning English, demonstrating the model's adaptability across different educational contexts.

Student feedback further revealed that many perceived the gamified learning process as both enjoyable and beneficial for their language development. The novelty and interactivity of gamified tasks effectively captured students' attention, while the integration of real-world business scenarios ensured relevance to their academic and professional interests. According to Keller's ARCS model (1987), these elements play crucial roles in sustaining motivation: Attention is grabbed through novelty and interactivity; Relevance is achieved by connecting learning content to real-life contexts; Confidence is bolstered through achievable challenges and regular feedback; and Satisfaction results from the fun and rewards embedded in the learning process. The integration of gamification has a more substantial impact on language learning outcomes, and conversely, positive language learning outcomes can further reinforce the effectiveness of gamification (Shen et al, 2024).

Moreover, gamification did not replace traditional teaching methods; instead, it served as a complementary strategy that enriched pedagogical practices. By incorporating game elements into specific lessons, such as vocabulary reviews and situational dialogue practice, the instructor maintained academic rigor while simultaneously enhancing student engagement. This balanced approach ensured that gamification remained a meaningful pedagogical tool rather than a distracting gimmick (Kapp, 2012).

Together, these qualitative insights complement the quantitative data, providing a fuller picture of how gamification positively influences both the motivational and behavioral aspects of language learning. This study contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting gamification as a

practical approach for enhancing motivation and engagement in Business English courses, especially for university-level management students who often struggle to see the practical relevance of language learning.

4. Conclusions

The integration of gamification into Business English instruction at the University of Merdeka Malang significantly enhanced both the motivation and engagement of first-semester Management students. The use of gamified activities, such as digital quizzes and role-play simulations, notably improved students' interest, participation, and confidence in the learning process. By incorporating elements of Keller's ARCS model, Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction, students experienced a more dynamic and engaging learning environment, resulting in increased active participation and better engagement compared to traditional teaching methods.

This study contributes to the growing body of evidence that gamification can be an effective tool for enhancing motivation in language learning, particularly in business contexts. The positive impact observed among students of the Management study program suggests that gamified learning strategies can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application, making language learning more relevant and enjoyable.

While the findings highlight the benefits of gamification, it is essential to note that its successful implementation requires careful planning and balance with traditional instructional methods. Teachers should ensure that gamified activities complement rather than distract from the educational objectives. For future studies, it would be valuable to explore the long-term effects of gamification on language retention and to assess its impact on students across various disciplines, thereby determining the broader applicability of gamified learning in higher education.

In light of these findings, it is recommended that educators consider integrating gamification into a Business English course as a means of enhancing students' engagement and motivation. However, the approach should be adapted to the specific needs and preferences of students to ensure its effectiveness and alignment with curriculum goals.

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