



Students' Perception of Gamification Utilization in the GO Expert App for English Learning as a Foreign Language

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-01-21 Revised: 2026-05-24 Accepted: 2026-06-25 Keywords: gamification, GO Expert app, students' perception DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i1.9406 Corresponding Author: Nurul Husnul Awaliyah husnulawaliyah61@gmail.com English Education Department, Graduate Program, Universitas Negeri Makassar	<i>This study analyzes the use of gamification in the GO Expert App for learning English as a foreign language, focusing on students' perceptions and the factors that support and inhibit its use. A qualitative approach was employed, using thematic analysis. The participants in this study were five twelfth-grade students from Ganesha Operation, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, and then analyzed using the six steps of thematic analysis. The results of this study indicate that students hold a positive perception of gamification in the GO Expert App. Elements such as leaderboards, points, stars, and timed quizzes are considered capable of increasing motivation to learn, fostering a competitive spirit, and encouraging students to be more active in English learning activities. Additionally, students rated learning through this App more engaging and less monotonous than conventional methods at their school. Practice questions with immediate feedback help students understand English material independently and continuously. The study also identified supporting factors such as peer support, teacher guidance, attractive features, ease of use of the App, and immediate feedback, which contribute to behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in learning. However, there are inhibiting factors, including technical issues, unclear features, cognitive load from long texts, and distractions from other applications on students' mobile devices. Overall, this study concludes that gamification in the GO Expert App plays an important role in enhancing students' motivation, engagement, and understanding in learning English as a foreign language. However, improvements in technical aspects and design are needed to optimize its use.</i>

1. Introduction

The integration of digital technology into education has transformed how students engage with learning, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Technology-enhanced learning environments offer flexibility, immediate feedback, and opportunities for autonomous learning, which are essential for improving students' motivation and engagement (Reinders & White, 2016). However, despite widespread adoption of digital tools, many EFL learners still experience low motivation and disengagement, especially when instruction is delivered through conventional, monotonous methods (Hew & Cheung, 2014).

One technological innovation that has gained increasing attention in educational settings is gamification. Gamification refers to the use of game design elements such as points, leaderboards, rewards, and challenges in non-game contexts to enhance user motivation and engagement (Deterding et al., 2011). In language learning, gamification has been shown to foster active participation, enjoyment, and sustained interest in learning (Kapp, 2012). From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), gamified learning environments can satisfy learners' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thereby enhancing intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In addition, Learning Engagement Theory emphasizes that students' emotional, behavioral, and cognitive engagement plays a crucial role in successful learning outcomes (Fredricks et al., 2004).

In Indonesia, non-formal education institutions such as tutoring centres have increasingly adopted technology-based learning platforms to complement formal schooling. One prominent example is Ganesha Operation, which has developed the GO Expert application as a digital learning platform integrating gamification features such as leaderboards, practice questions, progress tracking, and immediate feedback. GO Expert is widely used by high school students to support exam preparation and subject mastery, including English. Although previous studies have explored gamification in EFL learning using platforms such as Kahoot, Quizizz, and Duolingo, empirical research on locally developed gamified applications in non-formal education contexts remains limited.

Furthermore, students' perceptions play a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of educational technology, as perception influences how learners accept, use, and benefit from digital learning tools (Stockwell, 2013). However, little is known about how students perceive the utilization of gamification in the GO Expert application. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring students' perceptions of gamification in the GO Expert application in learning English as a foreign language.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to gain an in-depth understanding of students' perceptions and experiences of gamification in the GO Expert application. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it allows for a detailed exploration of participants' subjective experiences within a specific learning context (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

The participants consisted of five twelfth-grade high school students enrolled at Ganesha Operation Makassar. The participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their consistent use of the GO Expert application since the tenth grade or for over 2 years. This criterion ensured that the participants had sufficient familiarity with the application and its gamification features.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations. The interview questions were designed based on the Technology Acceptance Model, Self-Determination Theory, and Learning Engagement Theory. Observations were conducted to examine students' engagement and interaction with the application during learning activities. Interviews were conducted to obtain a more profound understanding of students' perceptions of the application.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six steps proposed by Creswell & Creswell (2023): organizing and preparing data, reading the data, coding, developing themes, interpreting themes, and presenting the findings. To ensure trustworthiness, data triangulation was applied by comparing findings from observation and interviews.

3. Result

Perceived Usefulness (PU)

Students find the gamification features in the GO Expert app useful for supporting their English language learning, as elements such as points, stars, quizzes, challenges, feedback, and leaderboards help them better understand the material and evaluate their progress.

Students stated that the availability of practice questions with varying levels of difficulty encouraged them to practice more actively. The star system allows students to recognize the difficulty level of a task before attempting a question, which helps them adjust their learning strategies according to their abilities. In addition, quizzes and practice activities are considered effective tools for improving comprehension, especially in reading assignments. This is evidenced by what one student said

"When I do the exercises, I understand the text better than when I just study from the book."

In addition, students found the feedback and explanations provided after completing quizzes to be very useful. These features allow them to identify mistakes and learn from them directly, making the learning process more reflective and meaningful. The leaderboard is also seen not only as a competitive feature but as an indicator of learning achievement that motivates students to continue practising and improving their performance.

Practices Perceived of Ease of Use (PEOU)

Regarding perceived ease of use, students generally find the GO Expert app easy to use, especially when using its main learning features. Most participants stated that the app's interface is clear and well-organized, with separate menus for learning materials and exercises. This structure makes it easy for students to navigate the app without significant difficulty.

Students highlighted that the interface's simplicity and clear feature placement allow them to quickly find materials and exercises. The presence of difficulty indicators in the form of stars was also considered helpful, as it reduced confusion when choosing tasks and made the learning process more efficient. As one participant mentioned:

"This app is easy to use because the menus are separate. If I want to study the material or do exercises, I just select the feature."

In addition, several participants reported some confusion in the early stages of using the application, which decreased over time as they became more familiar with the system. This is evidenced by the results of an interview with one of the students, who stated that

"It was a bit confusing at first, but after using it for a while, I got used to it."

It can be concluded that although GO Expert is generally considered easy to use for main learning activities, students may need some time to adapt. However, in general, the application's ease of use remains positive, especially in terms of access to materials and exercises.

Perceived of Engagement

The third theme shows that students consider the gamification features in the GO Expert app to be effective in increasing their engagement in learning English. The interview results indicate that students feel more enthusiastic, motivated, and actively involved when using the app compared to conventional learning methods in the classroom.

"When my ranking drops, I become motivated to study again so I can improve it."

Gamification elements such as leaderboards, quizzes, challenges, and ranking systems were identified as key factors that attracted students' attention and reduced boredom. These features encouraged students to participate more frequently in learning activities and motivated them to monitor their learning progress.

Students also emphasized that the interactive nature of quizzes and the opportunity to practice immediately helped them maintain focus while learning. Instead of passively receiving explanations, students were actively involved in completing tasks, which contributed to sustained engagement. As one student said,

"I don't get bored easily because there are quizzes and exercises that I can do right away."

This means that student engagement is not only emotional but also behavioral, as reflected in their willingness to repeatedly access the application and participate in exercise activities. Compared to traditional learning methods that tend to be monotonous, gamification in the GO Expert application creates a more interactive and engaging learning environment.

4. Discussion

Perceived of Usefulness (PU)

Students consider the gamification features in the GO Expert app to be useful tools for supporting their English language learning. Features such as quizzes, challenges, points, feedback, and leaderboards are not only considered game elements but also functional components that help students understand learning materials, evaluate their progress, and improve learning outcomes.

These findings align with the concept of perceived usefulness in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which posits that users are more likely to adopt and use technology when they believe it can improve their learning performance (Davis, 1989). In this study, students reported that practice questions with increasing levels of difficulty helped them understand the material more effectively, especially in reading tasks. The presence of instant feedback and explanations of answers also supports reflective learning, allowing students to identify mistakes and improve their understanding.

In addition, leaderboards and point systems help students become aware of their learning achievements. These elements serve as performance indicators that encourage continuous practice. This supports previous studies suggesting that gamification can improve learning effectiveness by providing clear goals, measurable progress, and continuous feedback (Deterding et al., 2011; Hamari et al., 2014).

Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)

Regarding perceived ease of use, the results of the study show that students generally consider the GO Expert application easy to use, especially in accessing core learning features such as materials and practice exercises. The clear separation of menus and a

simple interface reduces students' cognitive effort in navigating the application, allowing them to focus more on learning activities.

These findings are consistent with Technology Acceptance Theory (TAM), which emphasizes that perceived ease of use influences users' acceptance of technology by minimizing the effort required to operate the system (Davis, 1989). When students can access learning content without technical difficulties, they are more likely to use the application continuously as part of their learning routine.

However, this study also found that some supporting features were not fully understood and required an initial adaptation period. This suggests that perceptions of ease of use are not static but can evolve through repeated interactions with the system. This finding is supported by previous research suggesting that user familiarity and experience play an important role in shaping technology acceptance over time (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000).

Despite these minor challenges, students still expressed a positive overall perception of ease of use. This suggests that the simplicity of core features is more influential than the complexity of additional menus. Therefore, the GO Expert application demonstrates a positive level of ease of use, although clearer guidance and feature explanations could further enhance the user experience.

Perceived of Engagement

Students reported increased motivation, enthusiasm, and active participation when using the GO Expert application compared to conventional classroom learning methods. This result supports Learning Engagement Theory, which emphasises that engagement consists of behavioural, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. In this study, behavioural engagement was reflected in students' frequent practice activities, emotional engagement emerged through increased enthusiasm and reduced boredom, and cognitive engagement appeared through sustained effort to improve performance.

Additionally, the motivational impact of gamification aligns with Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Gamification elements, such as challenges and feedback, supported students' sense of competence, while leaderboards and rankings stimulated motivation through goal achievement and performance comparisons. These factors encouraged students to remain involved in the learning process.

The findings are also consistent with Hamari et al. (2014) and Zainuddin et al. (2020) which indicate that gamification can create a more interactive learning environment, increase learners' attention, and promote sustained engagement in language learning. By transforming learning activities into interactive experiences, gamification helps reduce monotony often associated with traditional learning approaches.

5. Conclusion

The findings indicate that students perceive the use of gamification in the GO Expert application positively in the context of English as a foreign language learning. Gamification features such as quizzes, challenges, feedback, and leaderboards are seen as supportive elements that help students understand learning materials and monitor their learning progress.

The application is also perceived as relatively easy to use, particularly in accessing core learning features. Although some difficulties were experienced at the early stage of use, students gradually became more familiar with the system through repeated interaction.

Furthermore, gamification enhances students' learning engagement by increasing motivation, sustaining interest, and encouraging active participation in learning activities. The application's interactive nature helps reduce the boredom commonly found in conventional learning environments.

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