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# VOCABULARY ACQUISITION THROUGH GAMIFICATION STRATEGY: ELEMENTARY TEACHERS NARRATIVES

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## ABSTRACT

*This study explored gamification strategies in teaching vocabulary to elementary learners. Language learning was essential because it supports reading comprehension, communication, and academic performance. A qualitative research design was employed to understand teachers' experiences in applying gamified approaches. The informants consisted of 10 elementary teachers from Kinilidan Elementary School, Sta. Maria East, Davao Occidental, were selected based on at least three years of teaching experience and English instruction. When the required number of informants was not met, teachers from nearby schools such as San Pedro, Malaygan, Leonila Limburan, Nardo, Buca Integrated, and Fred Maligon were included. The study aimed to identify gamification strategies used by teachers, their experiences in implementation, and their perceived effects on learners' vocabulary acquisition. Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, which were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. Thematic analysis was used to organize data, identify patterns, and develop themes. Findings revealed that gamification strategies such as point systems, group activities, and game-based tasks increased learners' engagement, motivation, and vocabulary retention. The study highlights the importance of teaching strategies in improving vocabulary learning in elementary education skills development.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Vocabulary acquisition, gamification strategy, elementary education, teachers' narratives, elementary learners*

## INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary acquisition can be a significant challenge for elementary students, often hindered by monotonous or dull lessons that cause stress and reduce motivation. Teachers seek innovative strategies to make learning more engaging and enjoyable while ensuring effective vocabulary development. Gamification is a promising approach that transforms traditional lessons into interactive experiences, motivating students to learn new words through playful activities. However, implementing gamification also presents challenges, such as designing age-appropriate activities and balancing entertainment with educational objectives.

Further, countless learners worldwide dedicate considerable time and energy to mastering English (Haryadi & Aminuddin, 2023). Nevertheless, the journey toward effective language learning can be difficult, partly because conventional teaching methods may fail to sustain motivation and encourage active participation. Vocabulary plays a vital role in EFL education, as it helps learners understand, express themselves, and communicate meaningfully (Robiya et al., 2024).

Studies by Zhou and Wei (2024) and Salimi and Zangeneh (2022) show that gamification strategies, including educational games and digital platforms like Duolingo, improve vocabulary learning among elementary learners. Ningrum et al. (2024) found that board games and gamified activities also help students develop language skills, critical thinking, and social interaction. Gamification makes learning English vocabulary more engaging and effective for young learners.

In the Philippines (Amponin et al., 2025), Gamification has also proven useful in improving vocabulary acquisition. Gamified teaching strategies increase word retention and student engagement. Studies also report that game-based strategies, such as the Vocabulary Wheel or "Travel around the words," improve students' vocabulary knowledge, associations, and interest in learning (Remo & Velasco, 2023; Ling & Aziz, 2022). These approaches make English lessons more interactive and enjoyable.

Moreover, Lozarito and Segumpan (2022) indicate that using games as a teaching tool can significantly enhance students' vocabulary skills, and learners generally have a positive attitude towards acquiring vocabulary through digital vocabulary games. According to Zou et al. (2021), effective communication among scholars is rooted in developing a rich vocabulary rather than simply mastering grammatical rules.

In the Davao Region, elementary students face significant challenges with reading comprehension and writing, which negatively affect their academic performance and self-confidence. To combat these issues, local schools have incorporated gamification as an innovative teaching approach. The Department of Education (DepEd) emphasizes training programs such as Tech Tutor5, designed to equip teachers with the skills to implement gamification effectively in classrooms. These initiatives demonstrate that gamification can be a powerful tool for enhancing English language skills while making learning engaging and enjoyable, thereby fostering motivation among students.

Also, while gamification has been widely studied, there is limited research on its effectiveness in local elementary classrooms, particularly for vocabulary and writing skills. This study aimed to address this gap by exploring how gamified strategies can enhance English proficiency among elementary students in the Davao Region. The findings support the broader

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goal of promoting equitable quality education and lifelong learning, aligning with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4.

Moreover, the study has been shared through seminars, workshops, and school meetings to promote community-wide benefits. This dissemination effort supports SDG 4 by advocating for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities, ultimately contributing to the social and educational development of the Davao community and beyond. This research has been shared with students, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders to inform future teaching practices and to provide guidance for designing engaging strategies to improve elementary students' English proficiency.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study sought to identify how gamified vocabulary instruction improves English proficiency among elementary school students. Traditional language learning methods in the modern digital age do not fully reach young learners, creating difficulties with vocabulary retention and language development. This study aimed to determine how gamification enhances student motivation, engagement, and language acquisition compared to conventional teaching methods.

Specifically, the research seeks to evaluate how well students remember vocabulary words after using games-based educational techniques, examine student engagement levels in gamified vocabulary activities, evaluate both the advantages and obstacles that emerge from implementing gamification techniques in elementary English education, and provide information about how gamification tools can enhance English proficiency skills to enhance learner's English proficiency.

**Research Questions**

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of elementary teachers in implementing gamification. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the challenges encountered by elementary teachers in implementing gamification to enhance the English proficiency of learners?
2. How do elementary teachers cope with the challenges in implementing gamification in enhancing the English proficiency of learners?
3. What further gamification innovation could be proposed to enhance the learner's vocabulary acquisition?

**Significance of the Study**

The study entitled "Vocabulary Acquisition Through Gamification Strategy: Elementary Teachers' Narratives**"** provides several advantages for different stakeholders within the English subject field:

*Students.* Through gamified learning methods, students achieve better vocabulary outcomes and maintain their interest because the approach makes the study process more exciting and interactive. Gamified learning methods create excitement, making students more engaged in their studies, while repetition-based training strengthens memory retention. Through gamification, students develop positive attitudes toward learning English, leading to stronger language skills and improved communication.

*Teachers.* The research provides essential findings for teachers on the effectiveness of gamified educational techniques in improving student engagement and academic outcomes. The educational strategies presented in this study add excitement to vocabulary instruction by using modern teaching approaches. These approaches enable teachers to provide instruction aligned with diverse student learning preferences and create better outcomes in student learning, memory, classroom organization, and group participation.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section reviewed studies on gamification in English teaching, focusing on improving learners' vocabulary and English proficiency. It showed that gamification increased student engagement through rewards, points, and interactive activities. However, teachers faced challenges such as limited resources, a lack of training, and classroom management issues. To cope, they adapted materials and used simple or low-cost games. Studies also suggested that further gamification innovations were needed to better support vocabulary learning in elementary classrooms.

**Challenges Encountered by Elementary Teachers in Implementing Gamification to Enhance the English Proficiency of Learners**

Challenges in implementing gamification in education have been widely reported in international studies on English language teaching.

According to Raju et al. (2021), although gamification improves student engagement and motivation, teachers often face challenges, including limited technical skills, insufficient training, and classroom management issues. Yang et al. (2020) also highlight problems like negative competition among learners and the complexity of integrating game-based tools into lessons.

Furthermore, Aristana and Ardiana (2021) explain that some schools lack sufficient digital devices, a stable internet connection, and appropriate learning tools needed for effective gamified instruction. Because of this, teachers may find it difficult to fully integrate gamification into their lessons despite its benefits for student engagement and motivation (Alenezi, 2023).

Another challenge in implementing gamification is the time and preparation required to design gamified lessons. According to Foster and Shah (2020), teachers need to invest additional time in planning, creating materials, and ensuring game-based activities align with learning objectives. Stacey and Shah (2023), explain that this challenge becomes a concern, especially for teachers who already handle heavy workloads and multiple responsibilities in school.

Moreover, classroom management and maintaining learning focus are also important challenges in gamification (Fang, 2022). Oliveira et al. (2022), although gamified activities can increase student participation and interest, they may also lead to excessive competition, noise, and distraction from lesson

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goals. Teachers need effective classroom management strategies to ensure that learning remains organized and focused while still keeping students engaged (Burden, 2025).

In addition, Amiri et al. (2025) suggest that gamified learning strategies contribute to learner-centered education, which aligns with the global push for innovative and inclusive teaching methods under SDG 4. Mposula and Oyetade (2025) found that integrating game-based activities can help teachers support diverse learners and improve motivation, which is essential for achieving equitable learning outcomes.

Meanwhile, in the Philippines, gamification can be an effective technique for motivating and changing conventional approaches to completing specific tasks, even when those tasks are monotonous (Cabello et al., 2021). Specific gamification techniques, such as Jeopardy Classroom Instruction, have shown promise in fostering students' motivation to learn English vocabulary by promoting self-belief, learning focus, and mitigating anxiety (Kusumaningrum & Binarti, 2021). Avila and Fonseca (2021) explain that gamified approaches can yield vocabulary gains comparable to traditional teaching methods while increasing student engagement.

Furthermore, incorporating gamification into foreign language learning is an effective strategy for improving learners' language skills and developing communication competence (Catanes, 2025). Ali and Abdalgane (2022) examined the impact of Kahoot, a gamification-based application, on English vocabulary learning for academic purposes and on student motivation. Samosa et al. (2021) found that game-based learning can make a significant contribution to imparting fundamental skills to children/students who struggle to learn these skills through other means, and that teachers must assess the usability of such games to ensure they are appropriate for this target population.

Also, Dayag (2025) suggests that a gamified tool can create a more interactive and engaging learning environment that supports both vocabulary development and learner motivation. Furthermore, Sarias, Sajulan, and Pukunum (2025) found that integrating game-based elements into instruction makes language learning more enjoyable and meaningful for students. These findings highlight the growing importance of gamification as an innovative approach in foreign language education, particularly in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and sustaining student interest in learning activities.

Hence, elementary teachers face challenges such as limited resources, diverse student abilities, and technical issues when gamifying English learning. With support and training, they can better apply gamification strategies. Overcoming these obstacles improves student motivation and language proficiency. Effective gamification enhances English learning outcomes.

**Coping with the Challenges and Strategies of Teachers in Gamified Vocabulary Learning**

Teachers face challenges such as balancing student engagement with limited resources when using gamified vocabulary learning. To overcome these, they align game tasks with clear learning goals and provide timely feedback and rewards. Combining gamified activities with traditional methods effectively caters to diverse learner needs.

A study by Amalia et al. (2023). Teachers face both internal and external obstacles, including limited student vocabulary, lack of engagement, and time constraints. Also, gamification strategies, such as content and structural gamification, can enhance student engagement and vocabulary acquisition (Aisyah et al., 2024). Effective implementation in gamification involves designing quest challenges aligned with learning goals and Bloom's taxonomy (Kingsley & Grabner-Hagen, 2018). However, the shift to online learning during the pandemic presented additional challenges, including online fatigue and difficulties in fostering class cohesion (Johnson, 2023).

Despite these obstacles, gamification offers promising opportunities for vocabulary instruction, supporting student autonomy and mastery learning (Kingsley & Grabner-Hagen, 2018). To maximize its potential, teachers must carefully consider implementation strategies and address contextual factors that may impact student engagement and learning outcomes.

Moreover, workshops and training sessions can provide valuable insights into best practices and innovative strategies (Nilubol & Sitthitikul, 2023). Common gamification elements include feedback, points, quizzes, badges, and leaderboards. A study of A1-level students demonstrated that gamification via digital platforms led to statistically significant improvements in vocabulary acquisition compared with traditional methods (León-Flores & Vega-Auquilla, 2021). While gamification shows great potential, some drawbacks include technical issues and short-lived positive effects.

A study conducted in Bicol, Philippines, investigated the effects of gamified instruction on the English language proficiency of ESL students (Orejuela et al., 2022). Similarly, research on junior high school students in northern Cagayan assessed the impact of Gamified Learning Activities (GLA) on English vocabulary retention and found that GLA, incorporating word games aligned with second-language acquisition theories, significantly improved students' vocabulary retention and engagement (Samortin, 2023).

Furthermore, a study by Tobias (2021), explored the effectiveness of a game-based learning platform on vocabulary mastery in online ESL classrooms. The findings indicated that game-based learning is highly effective in enhancing vocabulary mastery, as it fosters a more engaging and motivating learning environment. In addition, a study by Remo and Velasco (2022), analyzed the effectiveness of game-based learning platforms on vocabulary mastery among ESL teachers in Manila. These findings highlighted that integrating game-based methodologies significantly improved vocabulary acquisition and student engagement.

According to Baluyot (2024), the gamification intervention in education aimed to enhance vocabulary retention among elementary pupils through word games. Abbacan et al. (2025) explain that the interactive nature of word games provided context and made learning more enjoyable, leading to better retention and active participation. Also, research focusing on elementary pupils demonstrated that gamified lessons significantly improved learning retention (Remo & Velasco,

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2022). The study highlighted that engaging students in game-based activities promotes joy and fun in learning, leading to enhanced retention and the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity.

In Davao Occidental, Villanueva and Moleño (2022), particularly in rural areas, face limited access to technological tools and reliable internet connectivity, hindering the effective integration of gamified learning activities. Engaging in continuous professional development helps teachers acquire the necessary skills to implement gamified learning effectively. Workshops and training sessions can provide valuable insights into best practices and innovative strategies.

In addition, in Davao City, some teachers may lack the necessary training to design and implement gamified instructional materials, making it challenging to utilize these methods effectively (Albores & Baguio, 2024). Working with colleagues to design and share gamified lesson plans can reduce individual workload and foster a supportive teaching community. Collaboration allows for the exchange of ideas and resources, enhancing the quality of gamified activities.

Teachers encounter difficulties like keeping students engaged and dealing with resource limitations when using gamified vocabulary learning. They address these issues by setting clear goals, offering regular feedback, and combining games with conventional teaching. These approaches support better student motivation and more effective vocabulary development.

**Gamification Innovation Could be Proposed to Enhance the Learner's Vocabulary Acquisition**

Gamification has been widely recognized as an effective strategy for enhancing vocabulary acquisition among learners. Introducing innovative gamification techniques can create more interactive and personalized learning experiences. By incorporating adaptive challenges and instant feedback, learners are encouraged to engage more deeply and retain vocabulary better. This approach not only motivates students but also supports diverse learning styles to improve outcomes.

According to Raju et al. (2021), gamified learning activities improve students' engagement and motivation by creating enjoyable and interactive classroom experiences. The study emphasized that using rewards, points, and challenges encourages learners to actively participate in vocabulary activities and improves their retention of new words. Teachers also have positive perceptions of digital game-based vocabulary learning. They believe that gamification makes lessons more creative, effective, and enjoyable for students (Lee, 2023).

In addition, gamified activities can support different learning styles and encourage active participation among learners (Sihombing & Tambunan, 2023). Arif (2025) shows that gamification improves students' motivation, engagement, and retention of vocabulary words. Avila and Fonseca (2021) found that gamified methods are as effective as traditional teaching approaches and increase student engagement in class. Online word games and digital platforms have also been found effective in improving vocabulary acquisition. Mirzoyeva and Kabdrgalinova (2021) stated that online vocabulary games help students remember words better compared to traditional teaching methods.

However, teachers still experience challenges in implementing gamification. These challenges include limited access to technology, a lack of culturally appropriate materials, and differences in students' levels of participation and interest (Tareq, 2025). Despite these difficulties, gamification continues to be viewed as a promising strategy for improving vocabulary learning and student motivation.

In the Philippine context, teachers have observed that gamified learning increases students' participation and understanding in language lessons. Game-based activities help make lessons more interesting and enjoyable for learners. According to Samosa et al. (2021), the use of gamified platforms increases students' motivation and engagement during language learning activities. However, some schools still face resource and technological limitations, making it difficult to fully implement gamified learning strategies (Tobias, 2021).

Studies also show that both digital and non-digital games are effective in vocabulary instruction for elementary students. In a rural Philippine school, Odang et al. (2023) found that using Pictionary games improved students' vocabulary in reading and listening. Similarly, Simatupang and Derin (2020) discovered that word search games helped students learn vocabulary more effectively than traditional teaching methods. Odamg et al. (2023) also emphasized the importance of using goal-oriented instruction, differentiated learning, and encouragement when applying gamification in the classroom. These findings suggest that gamification can be an effective strategy even in schools with limited resources.

Further, Alenezi (2023) argues that the future of gamified vocabulary learning in the Philippines depends on addressing the challenges experienced by teachers and schools. The long-term effects of gamification on learning outcomes. There is also a need to study the effectiveness of specific tools and platforms, such as Kahoot and other digital, game-based vocabulary-learning applications, across different educational settings (Tambunan, 2023).

Teachers need proper training to effectively implement gamified vocabulary instruction. While many studies highlight gamification's impact on engagement and motivation, few focus on vocabulary acquisition in Davao Occidental, especially from local teachers' perspectives. Challenges like limited time, lack of training, and insufficient resources persist. This study aimed to fill this gap by exploring how teachers in Davao Occidental use and view gamified innovations for vocabulary learning.

Therefore, gamification innovation offers a promising way to boost learners' vocabulary acquisition. Making learning more engaging and interactive helps students retain new words more effectively. Implementing these creative methods can significantly improve vocabulary skills across diverse learning environments.

**Theoretical Lens**

This study is anchored in the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan in 1985, Engagement Theory by Greg Kearsley and Ben Shneiderman in 1999, and the Operant Conditioning Theory developed by B.

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F. Skinner in 1937. These theories provide a strong foundation for understanding how gamification supports vocabulary acquisition among elementary learners.

Further, Self-Determination Theory explains that students learn better when they feel motivated, capable, and connected to others, while Engagement Theory highlights the importance of active participation, collaboration, and meaningful learning experiences. Operant Conditioning Theory emphasizes that learning is strengthened through positive reinforcement such as rewards, praise, and recognition. Since gamification uses points, badges, stars, challenges, and interactive activities, these strategies help increase student engagement, participation, and motivation in learning vocabulary. Together, these theories explain how gamified learning creates a more enjoyable and effective classroom experience for elementary students.

Moreover, SDT propositions focus on how social and cultural factors facilitate or undermine people's sense of volition and initiative, as well as their well-being and the quality of their performance. Conditions that support the individual's experience of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are argued to foster the most volitional and high-quality forms of motivation and engagement in activities, including enhanced performance, persistence, and creativity. In addition, SDT proposes that the degree to which any of these three psychological needs is unsupported or thwarted within a social context will have a robust detrimental impact on wellness in that setting (Deci & Ryan; R., 1985).

Also, it draws on Engagement Theory (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1999), which emphasizes that learning is most effective when students are actively involved. Gamification promotes engagement through interactive tasks, collaboration, and real-time feedback, helping improve English proficiency. The theory highlights the importance of meaningful student interaction, teamwork, and creative, purposeful activities, fostering a sense of ownership and intrinsic motivation in learning (Malik, 2021).

Finally, Operant Conditioning Theory by B. F. Skinner (1937 as cited by McLeod, 2023). This theory explains that students learn better when good behavior is followed by rewards or positive feedback. When learners receive positive reinforcement such as praise, stars, points, or badges, they become more motivated to repeat that behavior. In vocabulary learning, gamification uses fun activities such as word games, quizzes, and classroom challenges. When students answer correctly, they may receive rewards or recognition from the teacher.

As a result, they become more interested in participating in the activity and in remembering new words. This theory fits the study because gamification helps students stay active and motivated in learning vocabulary. The rewards encourage participation, while repeated practice helps students better understand and remember words. Through this, vocabulary learning becomes more enjoyable and effective for elementary learners.

Figure 1 presents the study's theoretical framework, which explains how gamified learning enhances vocabulary acquisition among elementary learners. The framework is based on Self-Determination Theory by Deci and Ryan (1985), Engagement Theory by Kearsley and Shneiderman (1999), and Operant Conditioning by B.F. Skinner (1937). These theories explain how motivation, engagement, rewards, and reinforcement influence students' participation and learning. The study also uses Constructivism and Interpretivism as inquiry worldviews, which help explain how learners build knowledge through experiences and how teachers understand the use of gamification in vocabulary instruction. Through these theories and worldviews, the study explains that gamified learning can improve students' motivation, participation, and vocabulary development.

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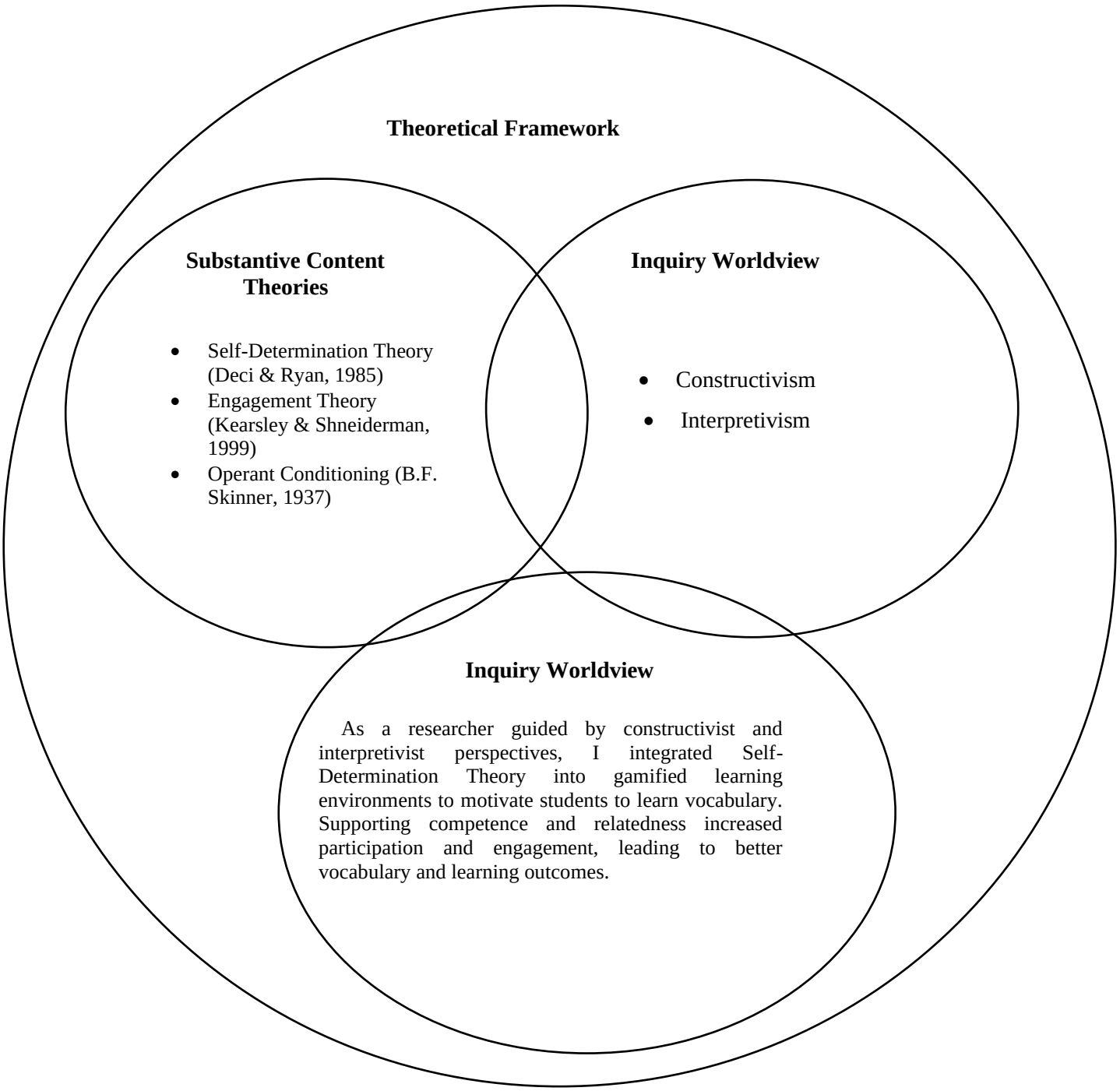


**Figure 1.** ***Theoretical Framework***

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## METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the research methods used in the study, including the approach, design, and how data were collected and analyzed. A qualitative approach was used to understand elementary teachers' experiences in using gamification for vocabulary learning. Specifically, a phenomenological design was applied to explore their real classroom experiences, challenges, and strategies in improving students' English vocabulary in Sta. Maria East, Davao Occidental.

### Research Design

This study used a qualitative research design, specifically phenomenology, to explore elementary teachers' narratives about using gamified vocabulary strategies to improve students' English proficiency in Sta. Maria East, Davao Occidental. Data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted face-to-face or online, depending on informants' availability. All responses were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns. Ethical procedures were strictly followed, including obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and respecting informants' right to withdraw at any time. Experts also validated the interview guide to ensure clarity and relevance before data collection.

### Sources of Data

The primary data for this study came from the educators at Kinilidan Elementary School, Sta. Maria East, Davao Occidental. These informants were selected because they have direct experience teaching elementary learners and using gamification strategies to support vocabulary acquisition in the classroom. Their teachers' narratives, coping with the challenges, teaching practices, observations, and insights provided valuable information for understanding how gamification influences students' vocabulary learning. Data were gathered through interviews, enabling the researchers to explore informants' narratives, challenges, and strategies for implementing gamified learning activities. The teachers' responses provided rich, meaningful data that helped explain the effectiveness of gamification for vocabulary development among elementary learners.

### Research Participants

The informants of this study were 10 elementary teachers from Kinilidan Elementary School, Sta. Maria East, Davao Occidental. They were selected based on specific criteria, including at least 3 years of teaching experience, experience with learners in grades 1 to 6, and teaching English. The study focused only on teachers with direct experience using gamification strategies for vocabulary instruction. Teachers who did not meet these criteria or were not involved in English instruction were excluded from the study. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that only qualified and relevant informants were included, thereby allowing the researcher to gather rich, meaningful data aligned with the study's objectives.

### Sampling Design

This study employed a purposive sampling design, a non-probability sampling technique in which informants are selected based on specific criteria relevant to the study. The informants were the teachers of Kinilidan Elementary School, Sta. Maria East, Davao Occidental, was intentionally chosen for their direct experience through narratives in teaching elementary learners and implementing gamification strategies in vocabulary instruction. This sampling method was appropriate because the study aimed to gather in-depth information from individuals knowledgeable about and actively involved in the phenomenon under study. Through purposive sampling, the researchers obtained rich, meaningful insights from teachers best positioned to describe their experiences and practices related to vocabulary acquisition through gamification.

### Research Instrument

To uphold the standards of credibility, transferability, and dependability, data collection involved audio-recorded, semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Each informant took part in an individual interview session lasting about three hours, allowing for a detailed exploration of narrative experiences.

An interview guide was developed, featuring three open-ended questions complemented by follow-up probes for richer responses. These questions were carefully matched to the key areas of the questionnaire, ensuring consistency in data collection and maintaining the relevance of the information gathered.

### Role of the Researcher

The researcher's role was both observational and interactive. Permission was formally requested from the Schools Division Superintendent and the respective school heads before data collection. During the study, the researcher facilitated interviews and discussions while remaining objective in their analysis of the data. An interpretive model was used to capture meaningful insights through naturalistic approaches, such as interviews. The researcher established meaningful interactions with informants through interviews and audio recordings. Interpretive approaches were used to encourage open dialogue and to construct a shared understanding of informants' experiences.

Primary data were collected through observation, interviews, questionnaires, and databases, while secondary data were gathered from published materials and past literature (Mazhar, 2021). Although primary data collection was time-consuming, it was essential for thorough research and provided insights specific to the research questions (Heap & Waters, 2019; Mazhar, 2021).

In this study, in-depth interviews were conducted to gather authentic and reliable data on teachers' experiences with using gamified vocabulary learning strategies to improve English proficiency. Participants were encouraged to express their responses in their preferred language. Interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy, and the collected data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and meaningful insights.

### Data Collection

In this study, prior to data collection, the researcher sought

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formal approval from the Schools Division Superintendent by submitting a letter that included Chapters 1 and 2 of the research manuscript and the research instrument. The letter outlined the study's objectives, rationale, and target informants.

After receiving approval from the Superintendent, the researcher sent formal requests to the principals of the selected schools, explaining the study's significance and procedures. Upon securing approval, the researcher personally approached the identified informants, oriented them about the study, and obtained their voluntary informed consent. Only informants who signed consent form were included in the study.

With all necessary permissions and consents in place, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview guide, beginning each session by collecting demographic information and obtaining permission to record. The researcher actively engaged with informants, took notes, and recorded the discussions to ensure accurate data capture.

Following the interviews, the researcher transcribed all responses, translating non-English portions into English while preserving original meanings. The transcribed data were then systematically coded and analyzed thematically, allowing for the identification of key themes, patterns, similarities, and differences across informants' insights, ultimately supporting a clear and organized presentation of the findings.

**Data Analysis**

The researcher employed thematic analysis to examine the data collected from the narrative experiences through interviews. This approach allowed me to carefully assess and interpret the informants' responses to identify meaningful patterns and recurring themes. Among the various qualitative data analysis methods, thematic analysis was widely recognized for its ability to uncover underlying trends and shared experiences within informants' narratives (Majumdar, 2019). Fuchs (2023) highlighted that this method balanced flexibility, transparency, and rigor, making it highly suitable for qualitative research. Moreover, thematic analysis helped me develop essential analytical skills applicable to other qualitative methodologies and provided rich, detailed insights (Majumdar, 2019).

**Ethical Considerations**

The ethical principles guiding this research were grounded in the Data Privacy Act of 2012, ensuring the confidentiality and protection of all informant information. Ethical guidelines were strictly followed, including obtaining informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation, and respecting informants' right to withdraw at any stage of the study. To maintain anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned to all informants, keeping their real identities confidential.

Any ethical issues concerning informants were carefully addressed, ensuring their welfare and comfort were prioritized throughout the research process. Ethical considerations were essential to this study, as they ensured that the research was conducted responsibly, presenting factual knowledge and truth without the influence of personal biases.

*Social Value.* In this study, the researcher aimed to contribute to improving the quality of life in society by highlighting teachers' experiences, challenges, and insights in implementing gamification as a strategy for vocabulary learning. The researcher focused on social concerns surrounding teachers' perceptions and difficulties in integrating gamified learning methods into their instruction. The researcher believe that the findings provided valuable insights for educational leaders and policymakers to design programs and policies that support teachers in enhancing classroom instruction and student engagement through gamification.

*Informed Consent.* Before beginning the phenomenological research procedure and scheduling interviews, the researcher provided every informant with an informed consent form. The form included an introduction to the research, the objectives of the study, and the researcher's contact information. The researcher also emphasized that participation was voluntary and that informants could withdraw at any time without consequence. Each informant signed a personal acknowledgment and consent form before joining the study. Only after signing and returning the consent letter did the researcher include them in the research.

*Vulnerability of Research Participants.* The informants were qualified English teachers who could reliably provide the necessary information because they were directly involved in the topic under investigation. The researcher ensured that informants remained accessible through their contact details in case any clarification or follow-up questions arose during the study.

*Risks, Benefits, and Safety.* The researcher ensured that the informant selection process was free from bribery, coercion, or undue influence. The researcher also provided informants with the contact details of the research panelists for any study-related concerns. If any informant felt discomfort or inconvenience during the interview, they were allowed to skip questions or withdraw from the study without penalty.

The researcher ensured the safety and comfort of the informants during interviews, whether conducted face-to-face or virtually. Interviews were held in safe, accessible venues or on secure online platforms. Pseudonyms were assigned to all informants to protect their identities, and all reasonable measures were taken to maintain confidentiality.

*Privacy and Confidentiality of Information.* The researcher strictly complied with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The researcher assured informants that their data remained anonymous and could not be traced back to them. The researcher securely stored all materials and records, and only the researcher had access to them. The researcher also maintained neutrality and presented findings without bias or misleading information.

*Justice and Transparency.* The researcher fully informed informants about their responsibilities as the researcher and as respondents. The researcher reminded them of the importance of honest and truthful responses during interviews. All communication was conducted with integrity and transparency. The researcher acknowledged informants as the primary beneficiaries of the research, as their experiences informed

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future educational improvements.

Moreover, the researcher-maintained transparency by sharing results with informants and school administrators once the study was completed. The researcher provided copies of the results upon request. Participants were allowed to review their interview transcripts and request corrections or deletions of any identifying information. The researcher used pseudonyms, modified dates, or altered minor details during data analysis and reporting to further protect confidentiality.

*Qualification of the Researcher*. The researcher was fully qualified to conduct this study, having completed all academic requirements for a master's degree. The researcher was prepared physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially to fulfill the research requirements. The researcher also worked closely with the research adviser to ensure the study's accuracy, validity, and completion.

*Adequacy of Facilities.* The study was completed within the designated timeframe using available and adequate resources. The researcher sought suggestions and recommendations from the research panel to improve the study's quality. Adequate funding was also allocated to carry out the necessary processes, ensuring the successful completion of the research.

*Community Involvement.* The researcher respected the local traditions, culture, and perspectives of the informants throughout the study. The researcher did not use any form of deception during recruitment or data collection. The researcher valued informants' genuine willingness to contribute and honored their wholehearted participation.

*Plagiarism and Fabrication.* The researcher upheld academic integrity by giving proper credit to original authors through accurate citations and paraphrasing. The researcher did not copy texts without acknowledgment. The researcher presented data truthfully, avoiding fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation. The researcher's conclusions were based solely on authentic and verifiable data collected during the research.

**Trustworthiness of the Study**

This study ensured both trustworthiness and ethical standards in conducting qualitative research. Trustworthiness was established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to ensure that the findings were accurate, consistent, and based on informants' real experiences. At the same time, ethical considerations were strictly observed, including obtaining informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation, maintaining confidentiality, and respecting informants' right to withdraw at any time. All data were handled with care and protected under the Data Privacy Act of 2012 to ensure privacy and respect for all informants throughout the study.

*Credibility.* referred to the trustworthiness of the research findings, specifically whether they were believable and accurately reflected the informants' viewpoints. In this study, credibility was enhanced by aligning the researcher's interpretations with the informants' accounts and by cross-checking and validating during analysis to ensure that the results genuinely represented their perspectives.

*Transferability*. Relates to the applicability of the findings to other contexts, settings, or groups. To support transferability, the researcher provided rich, detailed descriptions of the research context, procedures, and informant characteristics, enabling future readers to judge the relevance of the findings to their own situations.

*Dependability*. Emphasizes the consistency and reliability of the findings over time and across similar settings. The researcher addressed dependability by thoroughly documenting every stage of the research design, data collection, and analysis, making it possible for others to follow or replicate the study and achieve comparable results.

*Confirmability*. Ensures that the results are shaped by the informants' responses rather than researcher bias or assumptions. Throughout the research process, the researcher maintains transparency and a clear audit trail in data collection and analysis, enabling independent verification and reinforcing the objectivity of the outcomes of the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the study on vocabulary acquisition through a gamification strategy, based on the narratives of elementary teachers. Data were collected through interviews and carefully analyzed to identify common patterns, ideas, and experiences shared by the informants.

The findings are organized according to the research questions of the study. Each section presents the major themes and subthemes that emerged from the teachers' responses. These themes reflect the challenges they encountered, the strategies they employed to cope, and the innovations they proposed in using gamification to improve learners' vocabulary. This chapter also discusses the implications of the findings and their relation to teaching practices. The goal is to provide a clear understanding of how gamification is applied in vocabulary learning and how it can enhance the English proficiency of elementary learners.

**Challenges Encountered by Elementary Teachers in Implementing Gamification to Enhance English Proficiency of Learners**

Elementary teachers reported several challenges in using gamification to improve learners' English proficiency. A major concern was **limited resources and technology issues**. Many students lacked access to gadgets, and internet connectivity was often unstable. As a result, teachers could not fully utilize online games and platforms, which disrupted the flow of lessons and created unequal learning opportunities.

Another challenge was the **time and effort required for preparation**. Teachers explained that gamified activities demand creativity and significant preparation time, especially when designing materials or planning game variations. This workload often led to fatigue, particularly when activities needed frequent adjustments to sustain student interest.

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**Classroom management** also emerged as a difficulty. Some students became overly competitive, focusing more on winning than on learning. Others lost focus due to excitement or distraction, while repetitive activities sometimes caused boredom and reduced engagement.

Despite these challenges, teachers continued to use gamification because it increased student motivation and participation (**Chans & Portuguez Castro**, 2021). However, they emphasized the importance of proper planning, balance, and flexibility to ensure that learning objectives were achieved while keeping lessons enjoyable.

**Table 1. Challenges Encountered by Elementary Teachers in Implementing Gamification to Enhance English Proficiency of Learners**

| Emergent Themes | Core Ideas | Significant Narratives |
|---|---|---|
| **Limited Resources and Technology Issues** | • Device shortage<br>• Weak signal<br>• Access gap<br>• Tech reliance | "Dili tanan bata naa'y smartphone… lisod pud kung mag crash ang app ug wala signal." (I4) *(Not all students have smartphones… it is also difficult when the app crashes and there is no signal.)* |
| **Time and Preparation Demands** | • Time-consuming<br>• Teacher effort<br>• Activity planning | "Kinahanglan gyud ug taas nga oras sa pagpangandam sa materials." (I1) *(It really requires a long time to prepare the materials.)* |
| **Classroom Management and Learning Focus** | • Over-competition<br>• Reward focus<br>• Loss of focus<br>• Student boredom | "Usahay sobra ang competitiveness… ang bata mag pressure." (I6) *(Sometimes competitiveness becomes too much… students feel pressured.)* |

**Elementary Teachers' Coping Strategies with the Challenges in Implementing Gamification to Enhance the English Proficiency of Learners**

Elementary teachers employed various coping strategies to sustain effective vocabulary instruction through gamification. They adjusted activities based on students' abilities, simplified game mechanics, and applied classroom management techniques to keep learners engaged and focused. These strategies highlight teachers' flexibility, creativity, and responsiveness to learners' needs. By adapting their methods, teachers-maintained student engagement while ensuring that learning objectives were achieved.

The findings revealed three major coping approaches: **flexible and alternative strategies**, **adaptation to students' needs**, and **effective classroom management techniques**. These approaches ensured that gamified learning remained inclusive, meaningful, and manageable.

**Table 2. Elementary Teacher's Coping Strategies with the Challenges in Implementing Gamification in Enhancing the English Proficiency of Learners.**

| Emergent Themes | Core Ideas | Significant Narratives |
|---|---|---|
| **Flexible and Alternative Strategies** | • Offline games<br>• Backup plans<br>• Low-cost materials<br>• Method switching | "Kung kulang ug gadgets… mu switch ko sa offline games." (I1) *(If there are not enough gadgets, I switch to offline games.)* |
| **Adaptation to Students' Needs** | • Simple rules<br>• Adjusted difficulty<br>• Grouping learners<br>• Inclusive learning | "Ginapasimple nako ang rules." (P2) *(I simplify the rules.)* |
| **Effective Classroom Management** | • Clear rules<br>• Teamwork focus<br>• Effort rewards<br>• Reflection use | "Ginarewardan ang effort, dili lang ang pagdaug." (I7) *(Effort is rewarded, not only winning.)* |

**Gamification Innovation Could Be Proposed to Enhance the Learner's Vocabulary Acquisition**

Gamification innovation can be introduced as a strategy to improve learners' vocabulary acquisition. This approach incorporates game-like elements such as points, rewards, levels, and challenges to make lessons more engaging. When vocabulary lessons are gamified, learners become more motivated to participate and are more likely to retain new words. Teachers can employ simple activities such as word puzzles, matching games, quizzes, or digital learning applications to make vocabulary learning enjoyable and interactive.

This method reduces boredom associated with traditional memorization tasks and encourages active participation. Students tend to learn better when they enjoy the activity, which supports deeper understanding and long-term retention. Gamification also allows learners to practice vocabulary repeatedly without feeling pressured. Through innovative gamified approaches, teachers can create interactive learning environments that foster vocabulary growth, improve student engagement, and enhance overall language proficiency.

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**Table 3**
**Gamification Innovation Could Be Proposed to Enhance the Learner's Vocabulary Acquisition**

| Emergent Themes | Core Ideas | Significant Narratives |
|---|---|---|
| **Balanced and Meaningful Gamification** | • Clear objectives<br>• Learning focus<br>• Contextual learning | "Dili lang puro lingaw, dapat naa gyud learning." (I7)<br>*(It should not only be for fun; there should really be learning.)* |
| **Inclusive and Accessible Gamification** | • Mixed methods<br>• Equal participation<br>• Low-cost design<br>• Inclusive learning | "Ginabalanse nako ang digital ug manual games." (I4)<br>*(I balance digital and manual games.)* |
| **Varied and Context-Based Activities** | • Activity variation<br>• Real-life use<br>• Creative tasks<br>• Continuous innovation | "Role play ug storytelling ıressive ang bata." (I8)<br>*(Role play and storytellinç ıdents become expressive.)* |

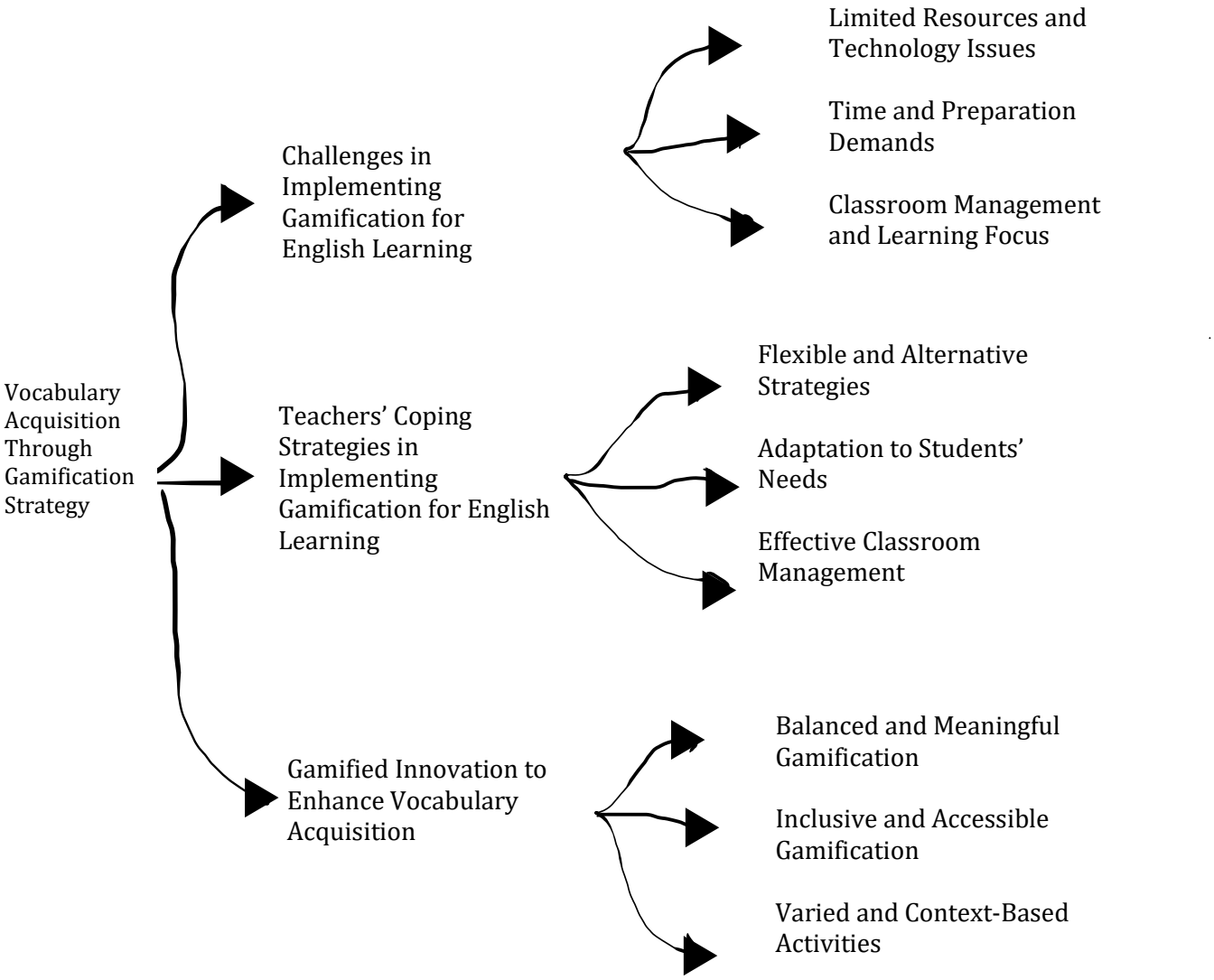


**Figure 2.** ***Vocabulary Acquisition Through Gamification Strategy***

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## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary of Findings

This study examined the effectiveness of gamified vocabulary learning as a strategy for improving English proficiency among elementary learners. The findings demonstrate that gamification not only enhances students' motivation and engagement but also facilitates meaningful language acquisition through interactive and contextually relevant learning experiences. This study explored the use of gamification in vocabulary learning based on the narratives of elementary teachers. The findings were organized according to the research questions.

1. Teachers experienced several challenges in implementing gamification. These include limited resources such as a lack of gadgets, an unstable internet connection, and unequal access to digital tools. Teachers also faced difficulties with time and preparation, since gamified activities require creativity and effort. In addition, classroom management was a challenge, as some students focused more on winning than learning, while others lost focus due to excitement or repeated activities.
2. Teachers used different coping strategies to address these challenges. They applied flexible approaches such as using offline games, preparing backup activities, and using low-cost materials. Teachers also adapted their strategies to meet students' needs by simplifying rules, adjusting difficulty, and ensuring that all learners could participate. They also managed the classroom by setting clear rules, promoting teamwork, rewarding effort, and using reflection.
3. Teachers identified important insights and possible innovations in using gamification. They emphasized the need for clear objectives, a balance between fun and learning, and meaningful use of vocabulary in context. They also highlighted the importance of inclusive practices and varied activities, such as role play and storytelling, to improve vocabulary learning

### Implications

This study has important implications for teachers, school leaders, curriculum developers, and educational stakeholders in strengthening the use of gamification to enhance learners' English proficiency, particularly vocabulary acquisition.

1. The findings imply that teachers play a crucial role in the effective implementation of gamification in the classroom. This suggests the need for continuous training and professional development focused on gamified instruction, digital literacy, and classroom management to strengthen their teaching competence.
2. The challenges encountered in implementing gamification imply that access to adequate resources and technical support is essential for successful integration. This highlights the need to improve the availability of learning materials, digital tools, and infrastructure to support interactive teaching strategies.
3. Teachers' coping strategies imply that adaptability and innovation are important in managing instructional challenges. This suggests the value of encouraging collaboration, peer sharing, and reflective teaching practices to enhance the use of gamification further.
4. The findings imply that effective gamification requires strong institutional support from school leaders. This includes providing training opportunities, sufficient preparation time, and encouragement for teachers to use interactive, student-centered approaches.
5. The proposed gamification innovations imply that learning becomes more engaging and effective when activities are structured, simple, and aligned with learners' needs. This suggests that curriculum developers should design accessible, context-based, gamified materials to improve vocabulary learning outcomes.
6. The study suggests that the successful implementation of gamification depends on the combined efforts of teachers, school leaders, and curriculum developers to address challenges and enhance instructional practices to improve English language learning.

### Future Directions

1. For Teachers. Building on these findings, several recommendations emerge for enhancing gamified vocabulary learning in elementary education. Teachers should design interactive and motivating activities that provide autonomy, challenge, and opportunities for collaboration, thereby fostering intrinsic motivation and active participation. They should also integrate scaffolded support, continuous feedback, and reflection activities to ensure meaningful vocabulary acquisition and long-term retention.
2. For Students. Students should be given more opportunities to engage in collaborative gamified tasks, allowing them to practice vocabulary in meaningful contexts, interact with peers, and develop both linguistic and social skills. Encouraging self-directed learning through game-based platforms may also promote autonomy and foster lifelong motivation for language learning.
3. For School Administrators. School administrators should support the integration of gamified learning by providing adequate resources, technological infrastructure, and professional development opportunities for teachers. Ensuring access to digital tools and offering guidance on effective gamification strategies will enhance instructional quality and improve student outcomes.
4. For Policymakers. Policymakers can strengthen gamified learning initiatives by developing curricular frameworks that recognize the importance of motivation, engagement, and interactive strategies in language acquisition. Policies that support funding for educational technology, teacher training, and research on gamification will promote sustainable and evidence-based implementation.
5. For the Community. The community can play a supportive role by encouraging students' learning beyond the classroom. Partnerships with local organizations, educational technology providers, and community centers may provide additional opportunities for gamified practice, helping reinforce and sustain vocabulary development.
6. For Future Researchers. Future studies should explore the long-term effects of gamified vocabulary learning on language proficiency, focusing not only on retention and

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fluency but also on motivation, engagement, and self-regulation. Further research may also examine the effectiveness of specific gamification elements, such as rewards, collaboration, and competition, across different learner groups to identify best practices in language instruction.

7. For Curriculum Developers. Gamification strategies may be integrated into lesson plans and teaching guides to help teachers improve vocabulary instruction. By incorporating game-based learning into the curriculum, developers can provide structured, meaningful activities that enhance student engagement, motivation, and participation. This may also promote interactive and learner-centered teaching practices, making vocabulary learning more effective and enjoyable for elementary learners.

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