



ASEAN Journal of Community Service and Education



Journal homepage: <https://ejournal.bumipublikasinusantara.id/index.php/ajcse>

Developing Students' English Language Competence through Gamification: Definition, Digital Tools, and A Literature Review from a Community Service Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This review discusses the role of gamification in developing students' English language competence from a community service perspective. Gamification refers to the use of game elements such as points, challenges, competition, rewards, and instant feedback in non-game learning contexts. In English language learning, gamified activities can support vocabulary development, grammar understanding, speaking confidence, student motivation, and classroom participation. This paper reviews literature related to gamification, digital learning tools, English language teaching, student engagement, and community service-oriented educational support. Tools such as Kahoot, Quizizz, and Wordwall can be used to create interactive and student-centered English learning activities. From a community service perspective, gamification can be understood as a practical educational strategy that helps teachers and schools improve learning engagement through accessible digital media. Gamified English learning has strong potential to support language competence, especially when implemented with clear learning objectives, teacher guidance, and attention to students' needs.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Submitted/Received 08 Dec 2025

First Revised 29 Jan 2026

Accepted 25 Feb 2026

First Available online 15 May 2026

Publication Date 01 Sep 2026

Keyword:

Community service;

English learning;

Gamification;

Language competence;

Student engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of students' English competence requires learning strategies that are interactive, meaningful, and student-centered. English learning is not only a process of memorizing vocabulary or grammar rules, but also a process of using language in communicative and contextual situations. Students need opportunities to practice, receive feedback, interact with peers, and apply language knowledge in enjoyable learning activities. Previous studies in English language education have emphasized the importance of digital media, multimedia instruction, project-based learning, assessment innovation, and technology-supported learning in improving literacy, writing performance, communication, and learning engagement (Damkam and Chano, 2024; Lestari, 2024; Nadtayay and Wongsaphan, 2025; Olowoyeye et al., 2022; Oya, 2024; Sutanto et al., 2022).

In recent years, educational technology has created new possibilities for improving English language learning. Digital platforms, multimedia materials, artificial intelligence, and online learning tools have been increasingly discussed as ways to support English language teaching and learning (Katel, 2026; Nurfazri et al., 2026; Thapa and Shrestha, 2026). These technologies can help teachers design more engaging activities and provide students with more flexible opportunities to practice English. However, technology alone does not automatically improve learning. It must be integrated into teaching strategies that are pedagogically meaningful, accessible, and relevant to students' learning needs.

One approach that can support student engagement in English learning is gamification. Gamification refers to the use of game elements in non-game contexts to increase motivation, participation, and engagement. In education, gamification may include points, scores, levels, challenges, rewards, competition, collaboration, and instant feedback. These elements can make learning activities more dynamic and enjoyable. In English lessons, gamification can be used to support vocabulary practice, grammar exercises, pronunciation activities, speaking tasks, reading comprehension, and collaborative language learning.

Digital tools such as Kahoot, Quizizz, and Wordwall provide practical examples of gamification in English language learning. These platforms allow teachers to create quizzes, word games, matching exercises, and interactive tasks that encourage students to participate actively. Instant feedback helps students recognize mistakes and improve understanding, while game-like activities can reduce anxiety and make English learning more enjoyable. Gamification can improve motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes when it is applied appropriately in educational settings (Hamari et al., 2014).

Gamified learning is also relevant to the development of language competence because it encourages repetition, recall, interaction, and active use of language. Through game-based activities, students can repeatedly encounter vocabulary items, apply grammar patterns, respond to prompts, and communicate with classmates. These processes can support retention and confidence in using English. Game-based learning environments can promote active learning, feedback, and literacy development. Therefore, gamification can be understood not only as a motivational strategy but also as a learning approach that supports cognitive, social, and communicative aspects of language learning.

From a community service perspective, gamification can be viewed as a practical educational support strategy for schools, teachers, and students. Community service in education does not only involve direct assistance, but also the development and dissemination of useful learning strategies that can improve classroom practice. In this

context, literature on gamification can provide a theoretical basis for designing community service programs that introduce interactive English learning activities in schools. Such programs may help teachers use digital tools more effectively and help students become more active, confident, and motivated in learning English.

Community service-oriented education is especially relevant when schools need practical support to improve learning quality. Teacher empowerment, digital learning assistance, and classroom-based educational innovation can strengthen the connection between higher education institutions and school communities. Studies on English learning support and teacher empowerment have shown that technology-based educational assistance can contribute to improved teaching practices and classroom engagement (Thapa and Shrestha, 2026). Therefore, gamification can be positioned as one possible strategy for community service programs that aim to support English language learning.

English language competence is also connected to cultural and communicative understanding. Language learning should help students communicate meaningfully across contexts, not only master isolated linguistic forms. Studies on mythology, intercultural communicative competence, and digitalized learning materials show that English learning can be enriched through cultural, religious, and contextual materials that support broader communication skills (Kamalova and Makhmudov, 2025; Nabiyeva and Abduramanova, 2025; Nurfazri et al., 2026). Gamification can support this process by transforming language content into interactive tasks that encourage students to engage with meaning, context, and communication.

Although gamification has many potential benefits, its implementation must be carefully planned. Game elements should support learning objectives rather than distract students from the language content. Teachers need to choose appropriate platforms, design meaningful tasks, manage classroom interaction, and ensure that competition remains healthy and inclusive. Challenges such as limited digital devices, internet access, technical problems, and unequal student familiarity with technology may also affect implementation. Therefore, a community service perspective is useful because it emphasizes guidance, support, and practical adaptation to classroom needs.

This paper reviews literature on gamification in English language learning and discusses its relevance for developing students' language competence from a community service perspective. The review focuses on the concept of gamification, the use of digital tools in English learning, the development of vocabulary, grammar, speaking confidence, motivation, and student engagement, as well as the potential of gamified learning as a community service-oriented educational strategy. The paper aims to provide conceptual and practical insights for teachers, schools, and educational communities interested in using gamification to support English language learning.

2. METHODS

This study used a literature review approach to examine how gamification can support the development of students' English language competence and how it can be understood from a community service perspective. The review focused on studies related to gamification, English language learning, digital learning tools, student engagement, motivation, and language competence.

The literature was selected based on its relevance to three main themes: gamification in education, technology-supported English language learning, and community service-oriented educational support. Sources included conceptual studies, empirical studies, bibliometric reviews, and community service-related articles discussing English language learning, digital tools, multimedia instruction, teacher empowerment, and student engagement. The reviewed literature included studies on gamification and game-based learning, as well as recent works on English learning through digital media, multimedia instruction, project-based learning, artificial intelligence, and community-based educational activities.

The review process involved identifying relevant references, grouping them according to thematic focus, and analyzing their contribution to the development of students' language competence. The selected sources were organized into several themes: the concept of gamification, gamification tools for English learning, language competence development, student motivation and engagement, and the relevance of gamification for community service in education.

Data from the literature were analyzed using thematic synthesis. The findings from previous studies were compared and interpreted to explain how gamification can improve vocabulary learning, grammar understanding, speaking confidence, collaboration, and student participation. The review also examined how gamified English learning can be applied as a community service-oriented educational strategy to support schools, teachers, and students.

This method allowed the study to develop a conceptual understanding of gamification as a practical and interactive approach for English language learning. It also provided a theoretical basis for using community service programs as a way to introduce gamified learning activities in schools and strengthen students' English language competence.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Gamification as an Interactive Strategy in English Language Learning

Gamification is a learning strategy that applies game elements in non-game contexts to increase motivation, participation, and engagement. In English language learning, gamification can transform conventional classroom activities into more interactive and student-centered learning experiences. Game elements such as points, scores, challenges, competition, rewards, and instant feedback can encourage students to participate more actively in learning tasks.

The reviewed literature shows that gamification is relevant for English lessons because language learning requires repeated practice, active participation, and meaningful interaction. Students need opportunities to use vocabulary, apply grammar, respond to questions, and communicate with peers. Gamified activities can create a more enjoyable atmosphere and reduce anxiety, especially for students who are reluctant to speak or participate in traditional classroom settings.

The main elements of gamification and their relevance to English learning are summarized in **Table 1**. Gamification does not function only as entertainment. Each game element can support specific aspects of English learning when it is connected to clear learning objectives. For example, instant feedback helps students identify mistakes, while collaboration supports communication and peer learning. This is consistent with the view that game-based learning environments can promote active learning, feedback, and literacy development.

Table 1. Gamification elements and their relevance to English language learning.

GAMIFICATION ELEMENT	FUNCTION IN LEARNING	RELEVANCE TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMPETENCE
Points and scores	Provide measurable achievement	Encourage students to complete vocabulary and grammar tasks
Challenges	Create learning goals	Support problem-solving and language practice
Competition	Increase motivation	Encourage active participation in quizzes and speaking tasks
Rewards	Reinforce achievement	Strengthen students' confidence and interest
Instant feedback	Shows correct and incorrect responses	Helps students correct grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension errors
Collaboration	Encourages peer interaction	Supports speaking, communication, and cooperative learning

3.2. Digital Tools for Gamified English Learning

Digital tools such as Kahoot, Quizizz, and Wordwall are commonly used to implement gamification in classroom learning. These tools allow teachers to design interactive quizzes, matching tasks, vocabulary games, grammar exercises, and review activities. They also provide immediate feedback, which helps students recognize their strengths and weaknesses during learning.

Kahoot is useful for live classroom quizzes and competitive learning. Quizizz allows students to answer questions individually or asynchronously, making it flexible for classroom and homework activities. Wordwall provides various templates for vocabulary matching, word search, sentence arrangement, and grammar practice. These tools can help teachers create more varied English learning activities without completely changing the curriculum.

The possible uses of digital gamification tools in English learning are presented in **Table 2**. Digital tools can be used for different language learning purposes. The use of these tools supports the idea that digital media and multimedia instruction can improve English learning engagement and performance when used appropriately (Olowoyeye et al., 2022; Sutanto et al., 2022). However, tools should not be used only because they are attractive. They must be selected based on the learning objectives, students' needs, and classroom conditions.

Table 2. Digital gamification tools for English language learning.

TOOL	POSSIBLE ACTIVITY	LANGUAGE SUPPORTED	COMPETENCE
Kahoot	Live quizzes, grammar review, vocabulary competition	Vocabulary, grammar, listening, quick response	
Quizizz	Individual quizzes, homework practice, formative assessment	Vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension	
Wordwall	Matching games, word games, sentence ordering, pronunciation prompts	Vocabulary, grammar, speaking, reading	
Digital flashcards	Repetition and recall practice	Vocabulary retention	
Online collaborative tasks	Group challenges and discussion prompts	Speaking, communication, collaboration	

3.3. Gamification and the Development of English Language Competence

English language competence includes vocabulary knowledge, grammar understanding, listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. The reviewed literature suggests that gamification can support these areas by encouraging repetition, interaction, and active use of language. Repeated exposure to vocabulary through games can help students remember words more easily. Grammar quizzes can help students practice sentence patterns and receive immediate correction. Speaking activities can be made less intimidating when they are designed as games or group challenges.

Gamification is especially useful for vocabulary and grammar development because these areas require frequent practice. Students can repeat words, identify meanings, match expressions, complete sentences, and review grammar rules through interactive tasks. The game format can make repetition less boring and more meaningful. This is important because students often lose motivation when language practice is presented only through drills or memorization.

The relationship between gamification and language competence is summarized in Table 3. Gamification can contribute to several dimensions of English language competence. It supports not only knowledge of language forms but also students' confidence and willingness to use English. This is important because language competence requires both accuracy and active communication. Studies on English teaching also show that digital and project-based approaches can support communication, critical thinking, and student engagement (Lestari, 2024; Nadtayay and Wongsaphan, 2025).

Table 3. Contribution of gamification to English language competence.

LANGUAGE COMPETENCE AREA	CONTRIBUTION OF GAMIFICATION
Vocabulary	Helps students repeat, recall, and remember words through games
Grammar	Provides practice through quizzes, sentence completion, and instant correction
Speaking	Encourages students to respond, discuss, and communicate in less stressful activities
Reading	Supports comprehension through interactive questions and text-based challenges
Writing	Can be supported through sentence ordering, short responses, and peer feedback
Communication	Promotes interaction, collaboration, and confidence in using English

3.4. Student Engagement, Motivation, and Classroom Participation

Student engagement is one of the strongest reasons for using gamification in English learning. Many students become passive when English lessons are dominated by teacher explanation, textbook exercises, or memorization. Gamified activities can change classroom dynamics by making students more involved in answering questions, working with peers, and competing in a positive way.

Gamification can also improve motivation because students receive immediate feedback and visible progress. Points, rankings, and rewards may encourage students to try again even when they make mistakes. This can help create a more positive learning atmosphere. Previous studies have shown that gamification can improve motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes in educational settings (Hamari et al., 2014). However, gamification must be

managed carefully. Competition should not discourage weaker students. Teachers need to balance competition with collaboration so that gamified learning remains inclusive. Activities should also avoid focusing only on speed, because language learning requires understanding, reflection, and communication. Therefore, teachers should design gamified tasks that reward participation, improvement, teamwork, and correct language use.

3.5. Gamification from a Community Service Perspective

From a community service perspective, gamification can be understood as a practical educational support strategy. Community service in education can help schools and teachers improve classroom learning through training, mentoring, learning media development, and implementation support. Gamified English learning can become part of a community service program because it provides a practical way to help teachers create more interactive lessons and help students become more motivated in learning English.

In this perspective, higher education institutions, teacher educators, or educational communities can support schools by introducing gamification tools, assisting teachers in designing digital activities, and helping students engage with English learning in more enjoyable ways. This is relevant to community service because the goal is not only to discuss theory but also to provide useful educational strategies that can be applied in real classroom contexts.

The possible community service model for gamified English learning is presented in **Table 4**. Gamification can be developed as a structured community service program. The process begins with identifying learning needs and continues with teacher assistance, material development, classroom implementation, reflection, and follow-up. This model is consistent with the idea that community service in education should provide practical support for schools, teachers, and students. Teacher empowerment and technology-supported assistance can strengthen English teaching practices and classroom engagement (Thapa and Shrestha, 2026).

Table 4. Community service model for gamified English learning.

STAGE	ACTIVITY	EXPECTED OUTPUT
Needs identification	Identify students' difficulties in vocabulary, grammar, speaking, or motivation	Priority learning needs are identified
Teacher assistance	Introduce Kahoot, Quizizz, Wordwall, and other tools	Teachers understand basic gamification tools
Material development	Convert English topics into quizzes, games, and interactive tasks	Gamified English learning materials are prepared
Classroom implementation	Apply gamified activities in English lessons	Students participate more actively
Reflection and feedback	Collect teacher and student responses	Strengths and challenges are identified
Follow-up	Improve activities and encourage repeated use	Sustainable classroom innovation is supported

3.6. Challenges in Applying Gamification for English Learning

Although gamification has many benefits, several challenges must be considered. First, not all schools have sufficient internet access, digital devices, or classroom technology. Second, some teachers may not be familiar with digital gamification tools. Third, students may focus

too much on winning rather than understanding the language content. Fourth, poorly designed games may entertain students but fail to support language competence.

These challenges show that gamification should be used as a learning strategy, not as a replacement for teaching. Teachers still need to explain concepts, guide practice, monitor student progress, and provide feedback. Gamification works best when it is integrated with clear learning objectives and meaningful language tasks. In community service programs, these challenges can be addressed through teacher training, simple tool selection, offline alternatives, and gradual implementation.

3.7. Conceptual Implications for English Learning and Community Service

The reviewed literature suggests that gamification has strong potential to support English language competence. It can improve vocabulary retention, grammar practice, speaking confidence, motivation, and student participation. It can also help teachers create more interactive and student-centered learning environments. From a community service perspective, gamification offers a practical and accessible strategy for educational assistance.

The conceptual relationship among gamification, language competence, and community service is summarized in **Table 5**. Gamification can be positioned as both a pedagogical strategy and a community service tool. As a pedagogical strategy, it helps improve classroom learning. As a community service tool, it can be used by educators and institutions to support teachers and students through practical educational innovation. Therefore, gamification can contribute to English language learning when it is implemented with clear objectives, teacher guidance, suitable digital tools, and attention to classroom conditions.

Table 5. Conceptual relationship between gamification, language competence, and community service.

COMPONENT	ROLE IN THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
Gamification	Provides interactive, game-based learning strategies
Digital tools	Support practical implementation through Kahoot, Quizizz, and Wordwall
Language competence	Develops through vocabulary, grammar, speaking, reading, writing, and communication activities
Student engagement	Increases through motivation, feedback, competition, and collaboration
Teacher support	Helps ensure that gamification is pedagogically meaningful
Community service	Provides assistance, training, and practical implementation support for schools

Gamified English learning has the potential to develop students' language competence and increase classroom engagement. It also provides a useful theoretical basis for designing community service programs in English education. Rather than treating gamification only as a classroom trend, it should be understood as a structured, practical, and student-centered strategy that can support schools in improving English learning outcomes.

4. CONCLUSION

This literature review concludes that gamification has strong potential to support the development of students' English language competence. Game elements such as points, challenges, rewards, competition, collaboration, and instant feedback can make English learning more interactive, enjoyable, and student-centered. When connected to clear learning objectives, gamification can support vocabulary retention, grammar understanding,

speaking confidence, reading comprehension, writing practice, and classroom communication. Digital tools such as Kahoot, Quizizz, and Wordwall provide practical ways to apply gamification in English lessons. These tools can help teachers design quizzes, vocabulary games, grammar exercises, and interactive learning tasks that encourage students to participate more actively. However, gamification should not be used only for entertainment. It must be planned carefully so that game elements support language learning, motivation, and meaningful student engagement. From a community service perspective, gamified English learning can be understood as a practical educational support strategy for schools, teachers, and students. Community service programs can introduce gamification through teacher assistance, material development, classroom implementation, reflection, and follow-up. This approach can help teachers create more engaging English lessons and help students become more confident and motivated in learning English. Gamification can contribute to English language competence when it is implemented with appropriate digital tools, teacher guidance, inclusive classroom management, and attention to students' learning needs. Future community service programs may apply this conceptual model directly in schools and evaluate its impact on students' vocabulary mastery, grammar performance, speaking confidence, motivation, and learning participation.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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