

Gamifying English Proficiency: A Needs Analysis for EFL Student Course Design

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Abstract

This study addresses critical gaps in English proficiency assessments, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, by focusing on the foundational aspect of needs analysis in designing a platform to assist EFL students in preparation for real English proficiency tests. The existing tests, such as TOEFL and IELTS, often fail to align with the practical language skills necessary for test preparation. By conducting a needs analysis, this research aims to lay a robust foundation for the development of a gamified platform tailored to the specific linguistic demands of EFL learners. Employing a cross-sectional survey method, 120 participants from undergraduate (S1), master's (S2), and doctoral (S3) programs were purposively selected from the Faculty of Letters at Universitas Negeri Malang. Data analysis followed rigorous procedures using the Rasch Model to ensure the validity and reliability of responses, examining the alignment of each survey item with the intended constructs. The findings reveal both positive and negative insights into learner preferences and goals, highlighting the importance of interactive learning experiences and practical application opportunities. The study underscores the transformative potential of gamification in language learning, emphasizing its ability to enhance learner engagement and motivation. The implications of the study extend to language educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers, advocating for the integration of learner-centered approaches and gamified elements into English proficiency courses. The study's results suggest that tailored instructional materials and innovative pedagogical strategies are critical to addressing the diverse needs of EFL students. Recommendations include exploring cross-disciplinary applications of gamified learning strategies to further enhance educational practices in various settings.

Keywords: EFL students, English proficiency, gamification, need analysis

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In the domain of English proficiency tests, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), there exists a notable limitation in assessing practical language proficiency essential for effective communication beyond academic settings (Richards, 2017; Wulyani et al., 2019). This limitation is particularly pronounced for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students who grapple with distinctive linguistic challenges that extend beyond academic boundaries (Hammad, 2022; Işıklı & Tarakçıoğlu, 2017). This realization underscores the necessity for a comprehensive reassessment of testing methodologies, focusing on the specific linguistic needs of EFL students. Moreover, in acknowledging the global influence of standardized English proficiency tests and their impact on admissions within specific national academic contexts, it is crucial to recognize the incongruity between global test expectations and the nuanced linguistic requirements of local universities (Freeman, 2017; Renandya et al., 2018; Yassi et al., 2023). This sets the stage for a nuanced exploration of the urgency in needs analysis, emphasizing alignment of assessments with students' linguistic requirements in academic and professional contexts, ensuring a tailored and effective testing approach.

Globally, the demand for standardized English proficiency tests significantly impacts international educational mobility and admission processes (Frost et al., 2020; Lee, 2018; Wolf et al., 2023). Research exposes a mismatch between global test standards and local linguistic criteria, notably in regions like Indonesia. Meeting the varied linguistic needs of EFL students demands understanding these differences. This prompts a deeper look into the importance of aligning assessments with specific linguistic requirements in academic and professional contexts through need analysis (Chemir & Kitila, 2022; Matiini & Octasyilva, 2020; McDonald, 2023; Moffett & Cassidy, 2023; Slamet & Mukminatien, 2024). Moreover, in the literature on designing English proficiency tests, there is a notable oversight in addressing the intricate challenges faced by EFL students in unique academic and professional contexts (Hess & Greer, 2016; Mustafa & Apriadi, 2016). Existing research underscores a significant gap in acknowledging the diverse linguistic landscapes of EFL students, crucial for crafting assessments aligned with their nuanced language proficiency requirements. Delving into these challenges during the need analysis phase becomes pivotal for developing assessments that surpass global standards and authentically address the specific linguistic nuances of EFL students.

The transformative potential of gamification in language learning spans critical areas essential for advancing English proficiency among EFL students (Amaya-Díaz & Bajaña-Zajia, 2020; Huseinović, 2023). One key advantage is its capacity to boost student engagement, fostering active participation and sustained interest (Dah et al., 2024; Rinjeni et al., 2024; Slamet et al., 2024a, 2024b). Gamification effectively tackles the issue of maintaining motivation, particularly crucial for EFL students who may face challenges such as frustration or learning plateaus (Amaya-Díaz & Bajaña-Zajia, 2020; Chen et al., 2018; Pereira & Wahi, 2021; Romsis et al., 2024; Şenocak et al., 2021; Slamet & Basthomi, 2024). The interactive and rewarding nature of gamified language learning sustains learner motivation and commitment. Moreover, gamification offers a dynamic and immersive environment for language practice, allowing EFL students to apply their skills in real-world scenarios (Demirbilek et al., 2022; Pereira & Wahi, 2021; Tan, 2018; Welbers et al., 2019). This practical application is instrumental in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical language use, a fundamental aspect of English proficiency. Gamification, with its adaptability to specific language areas such as vocabulary

building and grammar reinforcement contributes to a comprehensive language learning experience (Amaya-Díaz & Bajaña-Zajia, 2020; Dah et al., 2024; Demirbilek et al., 2022; Zafar et al., 2024). Gamification's adaptability in tackling various language skills highlights its potential for enhancing English proficiency platforms for EFL students. Integrating gamification elements strategically, customized to different language abilities, enhances motivation and practical language usage, ultimately improving the effectiveness of such platforms.

The pivotal role of need analysis in shaping curriculum design cannot be overstated. This process delves deep into the intricate requirements of involving a comprehensive scrutiny of specific linguistic demands, navigating challenges within academic and professional contexts, and pinpointing motivational factors crucial for fostering language engagement (Chemir & Kitila, 2022; Mafulah et al., 2023; Mustafa & Apriadi, 2016). The significance of need analysis lies in its capacity to act as the linchpin for subsequent course design (Eshtehardi, 2017; Matiini & Octasyilva, 2020), providing tailored solutions that precisely align with the diverse linguistic needs of EFL students. Thorough analysis is crucial for bridging the divide between general language education and the unique requirements of EFL students, especially in standardized test prep. This strategic method ensures a tailored curriculum, effectively tackling linguistic hurdles and enriching the language learning journey. However, despite its potential advantages, a notable gap remains in the literature, particularly regarding its benefits in English proficiency test preparation (Chemir & Kitila, 2022; Eshtehardi, 2017; Hess & Greer, 2016; Matiini & Octasyilva, 2020; Mustafa & Apriadi, 2016). This gap emphasizes the urgency for further research and examination to gain a deeper understanding of how need analysis can be optimized to elevate the language learning experience for EFL students.

To the best of our knowledge, the existing literature reveals a significant misalignment of traditional English proficiency tests with the practical language requirements of EFL students, both on a global scale and within national contexts (Hammad, 2022; Renandya et al., 2018; Richards, 2017). Despite the emphasis on tailoring language assessments to specific linguistic needs, the literature on designing English proficiency tests falls short in addressing challenges unique to academic and professional settings faced by EFL students (Eshtehardi, 2017; Mustafa & Apriadi, 2016; Yassi et al., 2023). Moreover, there is a notable absence of attention to the incorporation of gamification into language learning, especially in the context of test preparation, creating a significant gap that hinders the comprehensive preparation of EFL students (Amaya-Díaz & Bajaña-Zajia, 2020; Chen et al., 2018; Dah et al., 2024; Demirbilek et al., 2022; Huseinović, 2023; Tan, 2018; Pereira & Wahi, 2021; Rinjeni et al., 2024; Şenocak et al., 2021). Importantly, the literature lacks sufficient acknowledgment of the crucial role of need analysis as a foundational stage in the design of platforms for English proficiency courses (Eshtehardi, 2017; McDonald, 2023; Moffett & Cassidy, 2023; Mustafa & Apriadi, 2016). This oversight represents a missed opportunity for enhancing engagement and motivation in language learning. In response, this research aims to bridge the gap by integrating a need analysis with gamification into English proficiency courses. This approach seeks to offer a more holistic and effective method aligned with the diverse linguistic needs of EFL students. This research is guided to address the research question: What are the goals and preferences of EFL students at Universitas Negeri Malang regarding the design of an English proficiency course, specifically for listening comprehension, structure and written expression, reading comprehension, and the integration of gamification?

Literature Review

English Proficiency Tests and Their Challenges

English proficiency tests, notably TOEFL and IELTS, are pivotal gatekeepers determining access to international academic and professional opportunities. In the extensive body of literature, studies have adeptly outlined the challenges confronting EFL students in navigating the linguistic demands of these assessments (Elyas & Alghofaili, 2019; Wulyani et al., 2019). These standardized tests aim to provide an objective and uniform measure of language proficiency; however, they often fall short in addressing the diverse linguistic landscapes of EFL students globally (Lee & Lo, 2017; Renandya et al., 2018). The very nature of these assessments may inadvertently favor certain linguistic backgrounds, disadvantaging others. This becomes especially pronounced when considering the varied accents, colloquialisms, and cultural references present in English, factors that can significantly impact an individual's performance (Lee, 2018). This discrepancy underscores the necessity for a customized and inclusive approach that goes beyond standardized testing norms. Such an approach should acknowledge and accommodate the linguistic diversity of EFL students, ensuring fair and accurate assessments of their communicative competence. However, while addressing this challenge is crucial, it also poses potential risks. Moving towards a more tailored approach may compromise the standardized comparability inherent in these tests (Sarifa, 2020; Slamet & Mukminatien, 2024). Striking a balance between inclusivity and maintaining a benchmark for proficiency becomes a delicate task. Furthermore, the resources required for the development and administration of customized assessments could be substantial, potentially exacerbating existing disparities in access to quality education (Richards, 2017). Thus, while the call for a more nuanced approach is clear, the journey towards a comprehensive solution demands careful consideration of the trade-offs and resource implications.

Demands for English Proficiency Tests in Global and National Contexts

The application of English proficiency tests within global and national contexts introduces additional layers of complexity. Research conducted by Elyas and Alghofaili (2019) have shed light on the discrepancies between global expectations and local linguistic requirements. The globalized nature of these tests often assumes a one-size-fits-all approach, neglecting the unique linguistic challenges present at the local level (Renandya et al., 2018; Wulyani et al., 2019). This raises questions about the validity and relevance of test scores in accurately reflecting an individual's language proficiency within their specific linguistic and cultural context. On a positive note, these disparities present an opportunity to scrutinize existing testing paradigms and underscore the importance of considering regional linguistic nuances in designing effective language proficiency courses. A move towards contextualization may not only enhance the authenticity of assessments but also contribute to a more inclusive and culturally sensitive evaluation of language proficiency (Phuong & Vo, 2019; Wu, 2019). Yet, navigating the intricate balance between global and local demands poses its challenges. Tailoring assessments to specific linguistic nuances risks creating a fragmented system that lacks the standardized comparability crucial for international recognition (Lee & Lo, 2017; Sarifa, 2020). Balancing global benchmarks with regional sensitivity is crucial. Implementing changes demands collaboration among educational institutions, testing agencies, and policymakers. Addressing contextual challenges requires strategic planning and careful implementation for a harmonized framework.

Needs Analysis: Gamification and its Integration in Course Design

The transformative potential of gamification in language learning opens up exciting possibilities for enhancing EFL education (e.g., Erümit & Yılmaz, 2022; Rinjeni et al., 2024; Romsı et al., 2024; Slamet & Basthomi, 2024; Slamet et al., 2024a; Tan, 2018). Gamification offers a dynamic and interactive approach to learning, leveraging elements of gameplay to engage learners and motivate their progress. Yet, despite its proven efficacy in other educational contexts, the application of gamification in the realm of English proficiency test preparation remains largely unexplored (Amaya-Díaz & Bajaña-Zajia, 2020; Demirbilek et al., 2022; Huseinović, 2023; Rinjeni et al., 2024; Slamet et al., 2025). This represents a missed opportunity to harness the motivational and engagement benefits of gamification to address the unique challenges faced by EFL students. Integrating gamified elements into test preparation holds promise for enhancing language skills and performance (Chen et al., 2018; Friedrich et al., 2020; Puig et al., 2023). Gamification promotes autonomy and self-directed learning, empowering students in their language journey. However, challenges arise in implementation, requiring consideration of pedagogy, game mechanics, and learner preferences (Pereira & Wahi, 2021; Romsı et al., 2024; Zourmpakis et al., 2023). Alignment with test content and format is crucial, as is ensuring platform accessibility for equitable learning opportunities. Successful integration demands meticulous planning, educator-designer collaboration, and ongoing evaluation for optimized outcomes.

In light of the transformative potential of gamification, a more nuanced examination of its application in English proficiency course design is warranted. Existing literature highlights that while gamification significantly enhances engagement and motivation in various educational settings (Dah et al., 2024; Ensmann & Whiteside, 2022; Rinjeni et al., 2024; Romsı et al., 2024; Slamet et al., 2024a, 2024b; Zafar et al., 2024), its specific impact on English proficiency test preparation remains underexplored. The integration of game-based elements into language learning has been shown to improve student motivation and autonomy (Ensmann & Whiteside, 2022; Pereira & Wahi, 2021; Şenocak et al., 2021; Slamet et al., 2024b). However, research reveals that successful gamification requires careful alignment with educational objectives and learner needs, ensuring that game mechanics support rather than detract from learning outcomes (Friedrich et al., 2020; Hidayati & Slamet, 2025; Pereira & Wahi, 2021). Challenges such as maintaining pedagogical rigor, ensuring accessibility, and addressing diverse learner preferences must be strategically managed to optimize the effectiveness of gamified interventions (Rinjani et al., 2024; Romsı et al., 2024; Zafar et al., 2024). Further exploration is needed to bridge the gap between gamification theory and practical implementation in English proficiency courses, thereby maximizing the benefits of gamified learning approaches and addressing the specific challenges faced by EFL students.

The needs analysis phase emerges as a critical component in course design, particularly within the context of English proficiency test preparation (Eshtehardi, 2017; Matiini & Octasyilva, 2020). The existing literature emphasizes the need to understand the specific requirements of EFL students. However, there is a notable gap in applying this knowledge to English proficiency testing. To address this gap, a needs analysis is crucial, ensuring that the gamified platform is precisely aligned with the diverse linguistic needs and challenges of EFL students (Mustafa & Apriadi, 2016). Systematically identifying learners' strengths, weaknesses, preferences, and learning styles enables tailored instructional materials and activities to address

specific improvement areas effectively. Additionally, needs analysis identifies barriers to learning, like language proficiency, culture, and prior education, allowing for targeted interventions and support mechanisms (Hess & Greer, 2016). Thorough needs analysis involves time-consuming collaboration for accurate data, expert interpretation for actionable insights, ongoing reassessment of strategies, and careful planning for successful execution.

Method

Research Design and Participants

This study applied a cross-sectional survey methodology (Creswell, 2012; Yang et al., 2020) to comprehensively gather data on the goals, preferences, and challenges faced by the EFL students across various academic levels at the Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang. The questionnaire used in this research was adapted from a variety of sources, including Eshtehardi (2017) for the Course Design Framework, Mustafa and Apriadi (2016) and Matiini and Octasyilva (2020) for Materials Design, and Landers (2014) for Integrating Gamification Theory. The decision to use a survey methodology stemmed from two main considerations (Yang et al., 2020). A survey efficiently collects diverse data, capturing insights into EFL students' language learning needs, preferences, objectives, course design preferences, and openness to gamified learning approaches. The total of 120 participants, purposively selected from undergraduate (S1), master's (S2), and doctoral (S3) programs, aimed to provide a diverse representation of EFL students, ensuring the survey's insights reflect the broader student body (see Table 1 for participant demographics).

Table 1

Demographic Information of the Participants

Category	Subcategory	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	45	37.5
	Female	75	62.5
Age	18–24	79	60
	25–34	22	18.33
	34–44	16	13.33
	45+	2	
Academic Level	S1 (Undergraduate)	80	66.67
	S2 (Postgraduate/Master's)	21	17.50
	S3 (Doctoral/PhD)	19	15.83
Academic Background	English Department	66	55
	Non-English Department	54	45
English Proficiency Level	Beginner	48	40
	Intermediate	59	49.17
	Advanced	13	10.83

Data Collection Procedure and Analysis

The survey instrument was distributed via WhatsApp to a purposively selected sample of EFL students, including those from undergraduate (S1), master’s (S2), and doctoral (S3) programs. A total of 200 invitations were sent to potential participants to ensure a broad representation of EFL students. The survey was conducted over a four-week period in February 2024. Participants received a survey link along with comprehensive instructions detailing the survey’s purpose and the importance of their participation. To enhance response rates and ensure the sample’s representativeness, reminder messages were sent at regular intervals throughout the survey period, and personalized follow-up were employed to address any potential concerns from the participants. Out of the 200 invited participants, 120 completed the survey, yielding a response rate of 60%. This rate indicates a substantial level of engagement and provides a robust dataset for analyzing EFL students’ language learning needs, preferences, objectives, and their openness to gamified learning approaches. The data collection process was designed to minimize biases and ensure inclusivity, with careful attention to the representation of students from various academic stages and language proficiency levels. Data analysis followed rigorous procedures to ensure both validity and reliability. The Rasch Model was employed to examine the alignment of each survey item with the intended constructs, offering a robust method for assessing the validity of the instrument and ensuring the accuracy of the data interpretation. (Yang et al., 2020).

Figure 1

Likert Scale Values of Questionnaire Results Around the Andrich Thresholds

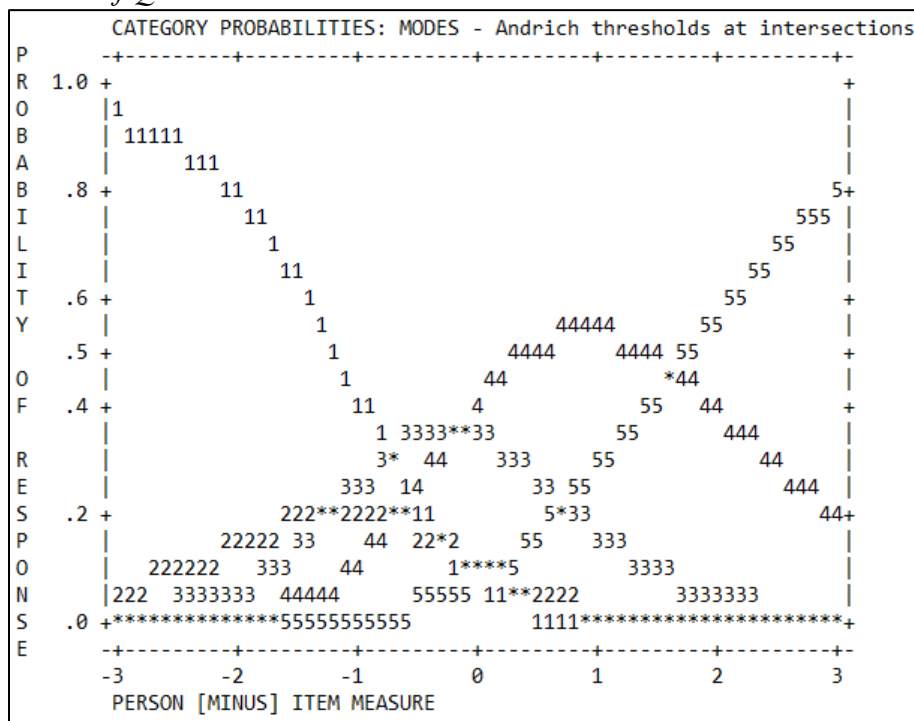


Figure 1, delineating responses to a Likert-scale questionnaire focused on the need for a gamification platform in an English Proficiency course, reveals distinctive modes at various points along the Person (P) measure. To elaborate, assigning Likert scale values to these modes

intensifies the interpretation. At $P = -1.5$, we observe a peak suggesting a concentration of responses indicative of disagreement (Likert scale value 2). Similarly, $P = -0.5$ aligns with neutrality (Likert scale value 3), $P = 0.5$ with agreement (Likert scale value 4), and $P = 1.5$ and 2.5 with strong agreement (Likert scale value 5). Quantifying Andrich thresholds strengthens our understanding of transitions between Likert scale categories. Assigning values like $P = -1.5$ and $P = -0.5$ highlights precise points where respondents shift from disagreement to neutrality. Statistical measures, including means and standard deviations, deepen analysis. A mean Likert score above the midpoint of 3 indicates an overall positive sentiment toward gamification. In summary, the Andrich thresholds validate the questionnaire's efficacy in assessing the respondents' attitudes toward integrating a gamification platform into English Proficiency courses. This result enhances the questionnaire's validity, providing valuable insights for informed decision-making in platform design.

The survey used Likert scales ranging from 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree) across five sections: Goals and Preferences (10 items), Course Design encompassing Listening Comprehensive (10 items), Structure and Written Expression (10 items), and Reading Comprehensive (10 items), and Integrating Gamification Theory (10 items). Each section aimed to capture specific aspects of EFL students' language learning experiences, preferences, and attitudes towards course components and gamified learning. High Cronbach's alpha coefficients were obtained for each section: Goals and Preferences ($\alpha = 0.879$), Listening Comprehensive ($\alpha = 0.895$), Structure and Written Expression ($\alpha = 0.908$), Reading Comprehensive ($\alpha = 0.927$), and Integrating Gamification Elements ($\alpha = 0.934$), indicating strong internal consistency. Responses were analyzed using percentages to determine attitude prevalence, while standard deviations gauged response variability across participants, providing insights into opinion consensus and diversity among EFL students at Universitas Negeri Malang.

Ethical Considerations

This study received ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of Universitas Negeri Malang (KEP UM) for Institutional Review Board (IRB) under reference number 7.3.1/UN32.14/PB/2024. The study adhered to ethical principles, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Participants were briefed on the study's purpose and assured of response anonymity. Electronic consent was obtained before survey participation, with all data securely stored and used solely for research. Adhering to ethical guidelines, participant information remained confidential, and identifiable data were anonymized during analysis. The study upheld minimal risks and offered potential benefits, ensuring research integrity and ethical standards.

Results

The study encompasses a multifaceted exploration of English proficiency course design for EFL students, focusing on distinct aspects: Goals and Preferences (GF), Listening Comprehensive (LC), Structure and Written Expression (SWE), Reading Comprehensive (RC), and Integrating Gamification Theory (IGT). In evaluating Goals and Preferences, the survey delves into the overarching objectives and preferences of EFL students, providing valuable insights into their expectations.

Table 2 provides valuable insights into the goals and preferences of the EFL students, revealing their overarching objectives and expectations regarding language learning. From a desire for diverse reading materials to a preference for interactive learning activities, these findings underscore the importance of aligning course design with their individual goals and preferences.

Table 2

The Results from GF

Code	Item	SD (n, %)	D (n, %)	N (n, %)	A (n, %)	SA (n, %)	Mean	Std. Dev
GF1	I have specific goals for improving my English proficiency.	2 (1.7%)	3 (2.5%)	13 (10.8%)	55 (45.8%)	47 (39.2%)	4.18	.850
GF2	I am preparing for an English proficiency test in my goals.	2 (1.7%)	4 (3.3%)	28 (23.3%)	37 (30.8%)	49 (40.8%)	4.06	.964
GF3	I prefer learning through interactive ways.	1 (0.8%)	1 (0.8%)	17 (14.2%)	48 (40%)	53 (44.2%)	4.26	.794
GF4	I need practical examples significantly helpful in language learning.	3 (2.5%)	1 (0.8%)	15 (12.5%)	62 (51.7%)	39 (32.5%)	4.11	.838
GF5	I need a course that covers all sections of the English proficiency test.	3 (2.5%)	5 (4.2%)	24 (20%)	51 (42.5%)	37 (30.8%)	3.95	.951
GF6	I need regular feedback on my English proficiency.	3 (2.5%)	1 (0.8%)	16 (13.3%)	69 (57.5%)	31 (25.8%)	4.03	.809
GF7	I am motivated to enhance my English proficiency for my career prospects.	2 (1.7%)	1 (0.8%)	14 (11.7%)	45 (37.5%)	58 (48.3%)	4.30	.836
GF8	I am motivated to achieve a high score in the	2 (1.7%)	2 (1.7%)	12 (10%)	37 (30.8%)	67 (55.8%)	4.37	.861

English proficiency test.								
GF9	I prefer studying alone in preparing the English proficiency test.	3 (2.5%)	19 (15.8%)	36 (30%)	39 (32.5%)	23 (19.2%)	3.50	1.053
GF10	I need a set of practices to boost my readiness for the English proficiency test.	2 (1.7%)	3 (2.5%)	20 (16.7%)	49 (40.8%)	46 (38.3%)	4.12	.891

The findings from the questionnaire concerning GF in English proficiency reveal insightful patterns among the respondents. GF1 showed a notable proportion strongly agreeing or agreeing to specific proficiency improvement goals (45.8% strongly agreed, 39.2% agreed; mean = 4.18, SD = 0.850). GF2 emphasized a significant emphasis on formal assessment and certification (30.8% strongly agreed, 40.8% agreed; mean = 4.06, SD = 0.964). GF3 indicated a strong inclination towards engaging and participatory educational experiences (40% strongly agreed, 44.2% agreed; mean = 4.26, SD = 0.794). GF4 underscored a general consensus on the importance of practical examples in language learning (51.7% strongly agreed, 32.5% agreed; mean = 4.11, SD = 0.838). GF5 showed a slightly lower level of agreement regarding the importance of a course covering all sections of the English proficiency test (42.5% strongly agreed, 30.8% agreed; mean = 3.95, SD = 0.951). GF6 reflected a consensus on the importance of ongoing assessment and support in the learning process (57.5% strongly agreed, 25.8% agreed; mean = 4.03, SD = 0.809). GF7 indicated a strong recognition of the instrumental value of language proficiency in professional advancement (48.3% strongly agreed, 37.5% agreed; mean = 4.30, SD = 0.836). GF8 demonstrated a performance-driven orientation towards language learning (55.8% strongly agreed, 30.8% agreed; mean = 4.37, SD = 0.861). GF9 revealed variability in learning preferences, with a substantial minority preferring to study alone (32.5% strongly agreed, 19.2% agreed; mean = 3.50, SD = 1.053). Finally, GF10 highlighted a general consensus regarding the importance of structured practices to boost readiness for proficiency tests (40.8% strongly agreed, 38.3% agreed; mean = 4.12, SD = 0.891). In summary, the results from Table 2 provide a detailed understanding of the diverse goals and preferences of respondents regarding English proficiency. While there is generally strong agreement on specific goals, test preparation, and preferences for interactive and practical learning, there are also variations in priorities and preferences, highlighting the need for tailored and flexible approaches in language learning initiatives.

Looking at Table 3, which explores LC, we find that students express specific preferences in their attitudes towards listening comprehension. These preferences, such as a preference for audiovisual materials, offer valuable guidance for designing listening activities that resonate with students, contributing to a more effective and engaging learning experience.

Table 3*The Results from Course Design in LC*

Code	Item	SD (n, %)	D (n, %)	N (n, %)	A (n, %)	SA (n, %)	Mean	Std. Dev
LC1	I want a course to include a variety of listening comprehensive materials.	3 (2.5%)	1 (0.8%)	14 (11.7%)	59 (49.2%)	43 (35.8%)	4.15	.847
LC2	I think exposure to diverse accents is crucial for my listening comprehensive skill.	2 (1.7%)	0 (0%)	15 (12.5%)	59 (49.2%)	44 (36.7%)	4.19	.781
LC3	I believe interactive listening exercises for understanding spoken English.	2 (1.7%)	0 (0%)	15 (12.5%)	62 (51.7%)	41 (34.2%)	4.17	.771
LC4	I prefer real-life scenarios in listening exercises enhance my listening comprehension skill.	1 (0.8%)	0 (0%)	24 (20%)	59 (49.2%)	36 (30%)	4.07	.758
LC5	I need to track my progress in listening comprehension skill.	1 (0.8%)	2 (1.7%)	17 (14.2%)	59 (49.2%)	41 (34.2%)	4.14	.781
LC6	I prefer transcripts in listening exercises.	2 (1.7%)	5 (4.2%)	29 (24.2%)	40 (33.3%)	44 (36.7%)	3.99	.966
LC7	I believe authentic audio recordings with	1 (0.8%)	2 (1.7%)	18 (15%)	51 (42.5%)	48 (40%)	4.19	.813

	various accents are effective for my listening comprehensive skill.							
LC8	I prefer interactive videos related to real-world situations to improve my listening skills.	0 (0%)	2 (1.7%)	17 (14.2%)	52 (43.3%)	49 (40.8%)	4.23	.753
LC9	I prefer online course with real-time feedback that enhance my listening skills.	3 (2.5%)	6 (5%)	37 (30.8%)	49 (40.8%)	25 (20.8%)	3.72	.935
LC10	I prefer various types of questions in listening comprehensive exercises.	1 (0.8%)	4 (3.3%)	18 (15%)	58 (48.3%)	39 (32.5%)	4.08	.826

The insights from Table 3 shed light on the respondents' attitudes and preferences concerning listening comprehension skills. Beginning with LC1, a substantial majority (49.2% strongly agreed, 35.8% agreed) expressed a strong desire for courses with diverse listening materials (mean = 4.15, SD = 0.847), indicating openness to varied resources and potential effectiveness in accommodating diverse learning styles. LC2 and LC3 similarly showed consistent agreement levels, emphasizing the importance of exposure to diverse accents (mean = 4.19, SD = 0.781) and interactive exercises (mean = 4.17, SD = 0.771) in enhancing listening skills. Contrarily, LC4 revealed a preference for real-life scenarios in listening exercises (49.2% strongly agreed, 30% agreed) with a slightly lower mean score (4.07, SD = 0.758), suggesting differing opinions on the effectiveness of this approach. LC5 highlighted a significant proportion expressing the need for progress tracking in listening comprehension skills (49.2% strongly agreed, 34.2% agreed; mean = 4.14, SD = 0.781), indicating positive recognition of the importance of feedback and self-assessment. LC6 and LC7 presented mixed perspectives on preferences for transcripts and authentic audio recordings, indicating varied respondent opinions. LC8 favored interactive videos related to real-world situations (43.3% strongly agreed, 40.8% agreed; mean = 4.23, SD = 0.753), while LC9 demonstrated mixed preferences for online courses with real-time feedback (40.8% strongly agreed, 20.8% agreed; mean = 3.72, SD = 0.935). LC10 emphasized a preference for diverse question types in listening exercises (48.3% strongly agreed, 32.5% agreed; mean = 4.08, SD = 0.826), reflecting positively on the perceived effectiveness of varied assessment methods. In summary, the findings show predominantly positive attitudes towards listening comprehension skills, yet the variability emphasizes the need for customized instructional approaches. Educators and designers should leverage these insights,

including mean scores and standard deviations, to create engaging language programs that cater to diverse learner needs and enhance proficiency outcomes.

Moving to Table 4, the EFL students' perspectives on SWE come to the forefront. Clear patterns in preferences for SWE strategies emerge, emphasizing the importance of addressing these aspects in course design to enhance their writing skills and overall language proficiency.

Table 4

The Results from Course Design in SWE

Code	Item	SD (n, %)	D (n, %)	N (n, %)	A (n, %)	SA (n, %)	Mean	Std. Dev
SWE1	I need regular practice in sentence structure is crucial for my improvement.	0 (0%)	2 (1.7%)	9 (7.5%)	73 (60.8%)	36 (30%)	4.19	.639
SWE2	I need interactive grammar exercises significantly contribute to my learning.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	15 (12.5%)	66 (55%)	39 (32.5%)	4.20	.643
SWE3	I need practical application of grammar rules in the English proficiency course.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	15 (12.5%)	68 (56.7%)	37 (30.8%)	4.18	.635
SWE4	I prefer interactive multimedia (e.g., e-book, presentation) to support my understanding in sentence structure.	1 (0.8%)	3 (2.5%)	26 (21.7%)	46 (38.3%)	44 (36.7%)	4.07	.871
SWE5	I need grammar-focused video lessons that are	2 (1.7%)	1 (0.8%)	26 (21.7%)	47 (39.2%)	44 (36.7%)	4.08	.875

	effective for mastering sentence structure.							
SWE6	I prefer interactive quizzes targeting sentence construction that enhance my learning.	2 (1.7%)	0 (0%)	28 (23.3%)	45 (37.5%)	45 (37.5%)	4.09	.870
SWE7	I need to practice choosing the best word or phrase to complete a sentence in English.	0 (0%)	1 (0.8%)	13 (10.8%)	66 (55%)	40 (33.3%)	4.21	.660
SWE8	I need to practice “identifying and correcting” errors in written English.	1 (0.8%)	1 (0.8%)	12 (10%)	62 (51.7%)	44 (36.7%)	4.23	.727
SWE9	I need online tool, such as an online dictionary, to assist my learning vocabulary (e.g., words, phrases).	1 (0.8%)	1 (0.8%)	14 (11.7%)	55 (45.8%)	49 (40.8%)	4.25	.759
SWE10	I need clear feedback on assignments is crucial for my improvement.	2 (1.7%)	0 (0%)	14 (11.7%)	68 (56.7%)	36 (30%)	4.13	.744

Table 4 provides a comprehensive overview of the respondents’ perspectives on sentence structure and grammar learning, revealing diverse preferences and needs. Starting with SWE1, unanimous agreement (60.8% strongly agreed, 30% agreed) underscores the crucial role of regular practice in improving sentence structure skills (mean = 4.19, SD = 0.639). SWE2 reinforces the consensus on interactive grammar exercises, with a significant majority expressing

strong agreement (55%) and agreement (32.5%) (mean = 4.20, SD = 0.643). Similarly, SWE3 reflects shared perspectives on the practical application of grammar rules, with strong agreement (56.7%) and agreement (30.8%) (mean = 4.18, SD = 0.635). In SWE4 and SWE5, despite minor disagreements, a considerable majority acknowledges the efficacy of multimedia resources and video lessons for grammar learning (mean = 4.07, SD = 0.871; mean = 4.08, SD = 0.875). SWE6 underscores the effectiveness of interactive quizzes, with a shared perspective among respondents (mean = 4.09, SD = 0.870). SWE7 highlights the consensus on practicing word selection for sentence completion (mean = 4.21, SD = 0.660), while SWE8 emphasizes the significance of error correction practice, despite minor disagreements (mean = 4.23, SD = 0.727). SWE9 reflects agreement on the importance of online resources for vocabulary learning (mean = 4.25, SD = 0.759), and SWE10 underscores the value of clear feedback on assignments (mean = 4.13, SD = 0.744). In summary, the results from Table 4 highlight a consistent agreement among respondents regarding the importance of various elements in sentence structure and grammar learning. The shared perspectives provide valuable insights that can inform the development of effective educational strategies and materials tailored to meet the diverse needs of learners.

Furthermore, in Table 5, the focus shifts to RC, were the students' preferences in reading materials and comprehension strategies. Understanding their inclination towards diverse and engaging reading materials guides educators in selecting content that aligns with their preferences, fostering improved RC skills.

Table 5

The Results from Course Design in RC

Code	Item	SD (n, %)	D (n, %)	N (n, %)	A (n, %)	SA (n, %)	Mean	Std. Dev
RC1	I need a course to provide a diverse range of reading comprehensive materials.	1 (0.8%)	3 (2.5%)	19 (15.8%)	56 (46.7%)	41 (34.2%)	4.15	.847
RC2	I prefer exposure to different genres enhances my reading comprehension.	2 (1.7%)	1 (0.8%)	18 (15%)	57 (47.5%)	42 (35%)	4.19	.781
RC3	I prioritize developing critical reading skills.	0 (0%)	1 (0.8%)	28 (23.3%)	60 (50%)	31 (25.8%)	4.17	.771

RC4	I prefer analyzing passages beneficial for my improvement in reading comprehensive skill.	0 (0%)	4 (3.3%)	23 (19.2%)	58 (48.3%)	35 (29.2%)	4.07	.758
RC5	I need regular progress tracking in reading comprehension motivates me.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	20 (16.7%)	64 (53.3%)	36 (30%)	4.14	.781
RC6	I need multimedia elements (e.g., audio, video) to support my understanding in reading passages.	0 (0%)	2 (1.7%)	18 (15%)	44 (36.7%)	56 (46.7%)	3.99	.966
RC7	I need interactive e-books with multimedia elements that are effective to improve my reading comprehensive skill.	1 (0.8%)	2 (1.7%)	25 (20.8%)	45 (37.5%)	47 (39.2%)	4.19	.813
RC8	I need to practice reading for “main ideas and details” in English.	1 (0.8%)	1 (0.8%)	14 (11.7%)	59 (49.2%)	45 (37.5%)	4.23	.753
RC9	I need to practice reading for “inferences and implications” in English.	1 (0.8%)	2 (1.7%)	15 (12.5%)	57 (47.5%)	45 (37.5%)	3.72	.935
RC10	I prefer comprehension	1 (0.8%)	1 (0.8%)	23 (19.2%)	58 (48.3%)	37 (30.8%)	4.08	.826

quizzes that
improve my
reading
comprehensive
skill.

Table 5 provides valuable insights into the respondents' attitudes and preferences regarding reading comprehension skills, reflecting diverse perspectives on various aspects of RC. Starting with RC1, a vast majority of respondents expressed the need for diverse reading materials to enhance comprehension (mean = 4.15, SD = 0.847), despite minor disagreement. Similarly, RC2 highlights a preference for exposure to different genres (mean = 4.19, SD = 0.781), reflecting broad agreement among the participants. In RC3, there is a shared emphasis on developing critical reading skills (mean = 4.17, SD = 0.771), with no respondents disagreeing. RC4 underscores a preference for analyzing passages (mean = 4.07, SD = 0.758), despite minor disagreement, indicating prevailing support for this approach. Moving forward, RC5 demonstrates motivation from regular progress tracking (mean = 4.14, SD = 0.781), while RC6 reflects general consensus on multimedia elements, albeit with slightly lower agreement (mean = 3.99, SD = 0.966). RC7 emphasizes the preference for interactive e-books (mean = 4.19, SD = 0.813), with overall agreement despite minor disagreement. In RC8, respondents prioritize practicing reading for main ideas and details (mean = 4.23, SD = 0.753), reflecting strong support for this practice. Similarly, in RC9, there is recognition of the need to practice reading for inferences and implications (mean = 3.72, SD = 0.935), despite some variability in responses. Finally, RC10 highlights a preference for comprehension quizzes (mean = 4.08, SD = 0.826), with overall support for this practice, despite minor disagreement. Overall, the results from Table 5 highlight a strong consensus among respondents regarding the importance of various strategies and practices in improving reading comprehension skills. These insights can inform the development of tailored educational approaches to meet the diverse needs of learners in this domain.

Lastly, Table 6 delves into the students' attitudes towards IGT into language course. The findings reveal a positive inclination towards gamified learning approaches, indicating the potential effectiveness of incorporating game elements to enhance student engagement and motivation in English proficiency course. These insights offer a segue into a more immersive and interactive learning environment.

Table 6*The Results from Course Design in IGT*

Code	Item	SD (n, %)	D (n, %)	N (n, %)	A (n, %)	SA (n, %)	Mean	Std. Dev
IGT1	I believe gamified elements would enhance my motivation to learn English.	1 (0.8%)	0 (0%)	18 (15%)	58 (48.3%)	43 (35.8%)	4.15	.847
IGT2	I need integrating games into the course that make learning more enjoyable for me.	1 (0.8%)	0 (0%)	17 (14.2%)	52 (43.3%)	50 (41.7%)	4.19	.781
IGT3	I prefer to track my progress through gamified features.	1 (0.8%)	1 (0.8%)	32 (26.7%)	57 (47.5%)	29 (24.2%)	4.17	.771
IGT4	I prefer to track my progress through gamified features.	1 (0.8%)	2 (1.7%)	30 (25%)	54 (45%)	33 (27.5%)	4.07	.758
IGT5	I need gamification that can simulate real-world English language situations effectively.	1 (0.8%)	1 (0.8%)	25 (20.8%)	54 (45%)	39 (32.5%)	4.14	.781
IGT6	I prefer achieving milestones in a gamified course.	0 (0%)	2 (1.7%)	22 (18.3%)	61 (50.8%)	35 (29.2%)	3.99	.966
IGT7	I would be more likely to complete the course if it	0 (0%)	1 (0.8%)	28 (23.3%)	59 (49.2%)	32 (26.7%)	4.19	.813

	includes gamified elements.							
IGT8	I need in gamifications elements (e.g., badges, points, level) that encourage healthy competition.	2 (1.7%)	1 (0.8%)	20 (16.7%)	53 (44.2%)	44 (36.7%)	4.23	.753
IGT9	I want gamified elements to be tailored to my individual learning style.	1 (0.8%)	2 (1.7%)	22 (18.3%)	60 (50%)	35 (29.2%)	3.72	.935
IGT10	I want the course's gamification to align with my personal preferences in learning.	0 (0%)	1 (0.8%)	25 (20.8%)	59 (49.2%)	35 (29.2%)	4.08	.826

Table 6 offers insights into the respondents' perspectives on integrating gamification elements into English learning courses, revealing various attitudes and preferences. In IGT1, respondents widely believed that gamified elements enhance motivation to learn English (mean = 4.15, SD = 0.847), with no disagreement. IGT2 similarly highlights a preference for integrating games for enjoyable learning experiences (mean = 4.19, SD = 0.781), indicating broad agreement. The respondents favored progress tracking through gamified features in IGT3 (mean = 4.17, SD = 0.771), with minimal disagreement. IGT4 also emphasized this preference (mean = 4.07, SD = 0.758), suggesting general agreement on progress tracking. IGT5 indicates a need for gamification to simulate real-world English situations (mean = 4.14, SD = 0.781), with minimal disagreement. In IGT6, respondents expressed a preference for achieving milestones in a gamified course (mean = 3.99, SD = 0.966), with slight variability in consensus. IGT7 demonstrates that respondents are more likely to complete a course with gamified elements (mean = 4.19, SD = 0.813), with minimal disagreement. IGT8 highlights a desire for gamification encouraging healthy competition (mean = 4.23, SD = 0.753), indicating general support. Respondents expressed a need for personalized gamification in IGT9 (mean = 3.72, SD = 0.935), with slight disagreement. Lastly, in IGT10, respondents wanted course gamification aligned with their learning preferences (mean = 4.08, SD = 0.826), with minimal disagreement. Overall, the results from table 6 highlight a positive attitude toward gamification in English courses, emphasizing motivation, enjoyment, progress tracking, realistic simulations, achievement milestones, completion likelihood, competition, and personalized experiences. These insights can guide the creation of engaging gamified learning environments.

Discussion

This study aims to explore the GF of EFL students, as well as their perceptions of course design encompassing LC, SWE, and RC. Additionally, it investigates the IGT into their needs and preferences. The findings from these aspects reveal valuable insights into learner motivations, preferred learning methods, and the potential impact of gamification on language acquisition.

In the GF dimension of enhancing English proficiency, the findings reveal that respondents adopt a proactive approach towards language learning, demonstrating specific goals for improving their English skills. This proactive stance aligns with contemporary research highlighting the critical role of goal-setting in language acquisition, which suggests that learners with well-defined objectives are more likely to sustain focus and motivation throughout their learning process (Işıklı & Tarakçıoğlu, 2017; McDonald, 2023; Moffett & Cassidy, 2023). Studies further underscore the relevance of goal-setting in the context of gamified learning environments. For instance, gamification research indicates that setting clear, achievable goals within game-based frameworks can significantly enhance learner engagement and persistence (Dah et al., 2024; Ensmann & Whiteside, 2022; Slamet et al., 2024a). Additionally, the respondents' preference for interactive learning methods and practical examples aligns with findings that emphasize the efficacy of experiential and task-based learning approaches in language education (Rinjeni et al., 2024; Romsı et al., 2024). This preference reflects a desire for hands-on learning experiences that not only engage learners but also facilitate the transfer of skills to real-world contexts. While these preferences are consistent with existing literature, it is important to consider individual learner differences, such as varying levels of intrinsic motivation or familiarity with technology, which may impact how effectively gamified approaches are received. Recent advancements in gamification highlight that incorporating interactive elements and real-world tasks within educational games can further boost the effectiveness of these approaches (Slamet et al., 2024b; Zafar et al., 2024). Nevertheless, while there is a clear demand for comprehensive course coverage, including all aspects of English proficiency tests, it is crucial to address individual differences in learning styles and preferences. Further research should investigate how personalized gamified learning experiences, which adapt to diverse learner needs, could enhance both engagement and learning outcomes. Recent research suggests that personalized gamified learning experiences, which adapt to diverse learner needs, can significantly improve instructional effectiveness and learner satisfaction (Dah et al., 2024). Thus, ensuring that instructional materials and activities are tailored to accommodate these varied preferences is essential for maximizing the impact of language learning interventions.

Moving on to course design, particularly focusing on LC, the study findings highlight the importance of interactive multimedia resources and regular feedback in enhancing listening skills. These findings resonate with research advocating for the integration of multimedia materials and personalized feedback to promote active engagement and skill development in language learners (Sarifa, 2020; Slamet & Mukminatien, 2024). Additionally, the preference for diverse listening materials and regular progress tracking underscores the need for varied and assessment-driven listening activities that accommodate different learning preferences and proficiency levels (Phuong & Vo, 2019; Wu, 2019; Yassi et al., 2023). While these preferences align with current trends in language learning, one must also consider the potential cognitive

load that may arise from offering too many diverse materials without sufficient scaffolding. Recent advancements in gamified learning further illuminate the value of these components. For example, gamification research highlights that incorporating interactive multimedia and feedback within game-based environments can significantly increase learner engagement and motivation (Dah et al., 2024; Slamet et al., 2024a; Zafar et al., 2024). The preference for diverse listening materials and the importance of regular progress tracking reflects a broader trend towards personalized and adaptive learning experiences. However, one potential limitation of gamified approaches is their reliance on technology, which might be a barrier for students with limited access to digital devices or internet connectivity. Studies have shown that gamified approaches, which offer varied and interactive tasks, not only cater to different learning preferences but also provide timely feedback that supports ongoing improvement (Rinjeni et al., 2024; Romsis et al., 2024; Şenocak et al., 2021). By integrating gamified elements, such as interactive simulations and real-time feedback mechanisms, educators can create more dynamic and responsive learning environments. Consequently, incorporating these gamification strategies into language courses can lead to more effective development of listening skills, aligning with contemporary trends in educational technology and learner-centered design.

In terms of SWE, respondents express a strong preference for regular practice in sentence structure and interactive grammar exercises. This finding emphasizes the importance of scaffolded and repetitive practice in developing written language proficiency (Elyas & Alghofaili, 2019; Wulyani et al., 2019), indicating that learners benefit from consistent opportunities to apply grammar rules in context. Moreover, the desire for practical applications of grammar rules and multimedia support underscores the need for authentic and technology-enhanced learning experiences in writing instruction (Hammad, 2022; Renandya et al., 2018), suggesting that integrating multimedia resources and real-world examples into writing activities can enhance learner engagement and comprehension. Furthermore, recent research on gamification aligns with these findings, indicating that game-based learning environments that incorporate iterative practice and interactive elements can substantially improve learners' grammatical skills and writing proficiency (Dah et al., 2024; Slamet et al., 2024b). Gamified platforms often employ mechanics such as points, badges, and leaderboards to motivate and engage students in regular practice (Ensmann & Whiteside, 2022; Zafar et al., 2024). Therefore, incorporating gamified elements into writing instruction can align with learners' preferences for regular practice and multimedia support, ultimately enhancing their grammar proficiency and overall writing skills.

Regarding RC, the respondents prioritize exposure to diverse reading materials, different genres, and multimedia elements to support their understanding of written English. These preferences align with research advocating for varied reading materials and multimedia resources to develop reading comprehension skills effectively (Demirbilek et al., 2022; Huseinović, 2023), suggesting that learners benefit from exposure to authentic texts and multimedia resources that reflect real-world communication scenarios. Furthermore, the desire for interactive e-books and comprehension quizzes highlights the importance of integrating interactive and assessment-driven reading activities into language courses to promote active engagement and deeper comprehension (Amaya-Díaz & Bajaña-Zajia, 2020), indicating that incorporating these elements into reading instruction can enhance learner motivation and performance. Studies on gamification further reinforce this approach, revealing that integrating interactive and

multimedia components into learning activities can significantly enhance learner engagement. For example, gamified reading platforms often use interactive e-books and comprehension quizzes to provide immediate feedback and create immersive learning experiences, which align with respondents' desires for interactive and assessment-driven activities (Pereira & Wahi, 2021; Rinjeni et al., 2024; Şenocak et al., 2021). This approach not only supports active engagement but also helps learners to apply their reading skills in practical contexts. Therefore, leveraging recent advances in gamification can provide a more effective and engaging approach to developing reading skills by integrating diverse materials and interactive resources.

Finally, in IGT, the respondents demonstrate a positive attitude towards gamified elements, indicating potential motivational benefits for learners. This finding is consistent with research highlighting the motivational advantages of gamification in education (Pereira & Wahi, 2021; Romsı et al., 2024), suggesting that incorporating gamified elements into language courses can enhance learner engagement and motivation. However, the need for personalized and adaptive gamification strategies underscores the importance of tailoring gamified elements to individual learning styles and preferences (Friedrich et al., 2020; Puig et al., 2023), indicating that educators should consider learners' individual differences and preferences when designing gamified learning experiences. By incorporating personalized and adaptive gamification strategies into language courses, educators can create dynamic and engaging learning environments that promote active participation and skill development effectively.

Overall, this study offers valuable insights into the goals, preferences, and learning approaches of EFL students, emphasizing the need for personalized and interactive instructional methods. By integrating literature and thoroughly exploring each aspect of the findings, we gain a deeper understanding of learner needs, informing effective instructional practices and curriculum design. These insights highlight the importance of diverse instructional methods to accommodate various learning styles and proficiency levels, enhancing engagement and promoting meaningful learning experiences for EFL students. However, further research should also consider the long-term effects of gamified learning and the potential for learner burnout or disengagement over time, providing a more comprehensive understanding of gamification's impact on language acquisition.

Conclusion

This study offers comprehensive insights into various dimensions of English language learning, ranging from learner preferences and goals to course design elements and the integration of gamification theory. The findings shed light on the nuanced needs and preferences of the EFL students, emphasizing the significance of tailored instructional approaches. By identifying specific learner goals, such as the desire for interactive learning experiences and practical application opportunities, this study underscores the importance of aligning course design with student expectations. Moreover, the integration of gamification theory emerges as a promising avenue for enhancing learner engagement and motivation. The findings highlight the potential of gamified elements to create dynamic and immersive learning environments, where students are empowered to actively participate and progress in their language acquisition journey. This aligns with previous research emphasizing the motivational benefits of gamified approaches in language education.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases, and the study's focus on a specific demographic or educational context could limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, while the study provides valuable insights into learner preferences and instructional strategies, further research is needed to explore the long-term effectiveness of gamification in language learning and its impact on language proficiency outcomes. Moving forward, this study has several implications for language educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers. By incorporating learner-centered approaches and integrating gamified elements into course design, educators can create more engaging and effective learning experiences for EFL students. Curriculum developers can use these findings to inform the design of English proficiency courses that address the diverse needs and preferences of learners, while policymakers can support initiatives aimed at promoting innovative instructional strategies in language education.

Declaration

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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