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EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE USE OF GAMIFICATION: BASES FOR IN-SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative-phenomenological study examined English teachers' experiences in using gamification as a basis for an In-Service Training Program. Findings revealed four major themes: increased student engagement and motivation, greater instructional creativity, improved active participation and confidence, and enhanced professional growth among teachers. However, challenges included time-consuming preparation, technical and connectivity issues, overemphasis on competition and rewards, and limited training opportunities. To address these, teachers used self-directed learning, trial and error, digital tools, time management, and administrative support. The study concludes that gamification improves learner engagement and supports teacher development, but its effective and balanced implementation requires structured training and institutional support. These findings provide a basis for designing an In-Service Training Program that will strengthen teachers' competencies in gamified English instruction.

Keywords: *Teachers, Experiences, English Teaching, Gamification, In-Service Training Program*

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INTRODUCTION

Although the term "gamification" was first formally introduced in 2008, the concept of using games to support learning has existed for much longer. Educators have long recognized the importance of making learning enjoyable through interactive activities. For instance, educational board games in the 20th century, such as *Math Bingo*, helped make arithmetic more interesting and engaging for children. These early practices laid the groundwork for what is now known as gamification, showing that the link between play and education is not new but has continued to develop over time.

At present, gamification has become an established strategy in modern classrooms for enriching the learning experience. Teachers use it to stimulate students' interest and maintain their engagement. For example, some educators use applications that allow students to earn points or badges for finishing assignments or joining class discussions. Others create classroom leaderboards to promote healthy competition and a sense of accomplishment. Aside from digital tools, gamification may also be applied in traditional classroom settings through team-based activities and role-playing exercises.

Gamification refers to the application of game elements—such as rewards, challenges, and competition—in non-game contexts. In education, this approach has been used to make learning more interactive, enjoyable, and meaningful. It is based on the idea that integrating game-like features into instruction can help create a more dynamic and participatory learning environment, which may lead to better academic performance and personal development among students.

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In addition, gamification provides extra sources of motivation for learners. It enhances engagement by making learning more interactive and enjoyable. It can also encourage students to take ownership of their learning, give them the opportunity to try and fail without serious consequences until they succeed, break tasks into smaller and more manageable parts, and make the learning process more visible. Compared with traditional teaching methods, game-based learning has been found to be more effective. According to Selawsky (2021), gamification can raise students' self-confidence by as much as 20%, improve knowledge retention by 90%, and increase task completion rates by 300%. It also enhances conceptual knowledge by 11% and practical knowledge by 20%.

Over the past decade, there has been a growing body of research on the effectiveness of gamification in various educational contexts. Numerous studies have indicated that when gamification is effectively integrated into instruction, it can enhance student engagement, encourage collaboration, and promote critical thinking skills. While existing literature has extensively discussed the benefits of gamification from the learners' perspective, limited attention has been given to the lived experiences of teachers, particularly those teaching English, who design and implement gamified activities in their classrooms.

English teachers play a crucial role in the successful application of gamification; however, they often encounter challenges related to instructional design, technological competence, time constraints, and classroom management. Understanding teachers' personal experiences, perceptions, and challenges in using gamification is essential in identifying their professional development needs.

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Hence, exploring the lived experiences of English teachers in the use of gamification may serve as a valuable basis for the development of an in-service training program that supports effective and sustainable instructional practices.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the research method, research design, study participants, data-gathering procedures, research instrument, and data analysis to be employed in the study. It aims to examine teachers' experiences in using gamification in teaching English as a basis for an In-Service Training Program in one of the largest high schools in the First Congressional District of Iloilo during the School Year 2025–2026.

Research Method

The study employed a descriptive method within a qualitative research framework, using in-depth interviews as the primary means of data collection.

The descriptive research method focuses on systematically describing a phenomenon as it exists in its natural setting, without manipulating variables. According to Elliott (2025), it aims to provide an accurate portrayal of current conditions, practices, or relationships within educational settings, enabling researchers to understand trends, patterns, and implications for practice. This approach is particularly useful in educational studies that seek to document and analyze real-world events, behaviors, or perceptions without altering the environment in which they occur (Elliott, 2025).

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During the interview, the interviewer and interviewee were seated at an appropriate distance to give the participant enough time to reflect on the series of questions regarding a particular issue. The purpose was to obtain the participants' essential views and key perspectives on the issue within a social context through their responses to the questions.

Research Design

The study adopted a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology is regarded as a philosophical approach to qualitative research that seeks to understand how individuals perceive and interpret the world, particularly how their perspectives may differ from commonly accepted views. It emphasizes a person's subjective interpretation of lived experiences and is typically carried out through interviews to gain insights into participants' impressions. This approach is commonly applied in fields such as psychology, sociology, and social work.

Furthermore, phenomenology centers on the examination of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view. Its main objective is to explore and describe phenomena as they are consciously experienced, without relying on causal explanations or being influenced by unexamined assumptions (Biemel & Spiegelberg, 2024).

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study consisted of eight (8) English teachers from Tubungan National High School who have permanent teaching status. These teachers have previously utilized gamification strategies in their English classes. The participants were selected because of their direct experience in integrating gamified activities in the teaching–learning process.

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The study aimed to explore and understand the teachers' experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding the use of gamification in the classroom. Their participation was essential in providing relevant information about how gamification was implemented and how it influenced student engagement and learning.

Sampling Design

The study employed purposive sampling as the sampling technique. Purposive sampling, according to Sofia Nikolopoulou (2023), refers to a non-probability sampling method in which participants are selected based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives. In this approach, the researcher deliberately selects participants who possess the necessary experience, knowledge, or characteristics needed for the study.

This sampling technique is appropriate for the present research because it focuses on teachers who have experience using gamification in teaching English. Through purposive sampling, the researcher ensured that the selected participants could provide meaningful and relevant insights regarding the implementation of gamification in the classroom.

Research Instrument

The research instrument utilized in the study was a researcher-developed interview schedule.

In research methodology, an interview schedule is a written set of pre-prepared questions—whether structured, semi-structured, or open-ended—designed to guide the interviewer in gathering information consistently from participants. It serves as a standardized data collection tool, ensuring that the same topics and questions are covered in every

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interview to allow systematic comparison and analysis. During face-to-face, telephone, or electronic interviews, the interviewer follows the schedule, asks each participant the prepared questions, and records their responses (Socio.health, 2024).

The interview schedule has only one (1) major question focusing on the lived experiences of teachers.

Voice and video recorders were used for data gathering and documentation depending upon the permission of the participants.

Validity of the Research Instrument

Before the validity of the researcher-made interview schedule was established, the adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, and a panel of jurors with expertise in research, testing and assessment, and English were asked to evaluate each question for review and revision. It ensured that the research instrument accurately measured what it was designed to measure and that the results genuinely reflected reality.

In establishing content validity, the questions and format of the instrument must align with the study's defined variables and objectives to guarantee that each item accurately reflects the construction under investigation.

This process often involves expert review to determine whether the items are relevant, clear, and representative of the concepts being studied. By ensuring that the content and structure of the instrument are consistent with the study's framework, researchers enhance the accuracy and usefulness of the data collected in relation to the research objective (Creswell

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& Creswell, 2022).

Comments, corrections, and suggestions of the panel of validators regarding the interview schedule were considered using the appropriate form of Good and Scates (1972) as cited by Soqueña (2021).

Data Gathering Procedures

Approval to conduct the study was secured from the adviser, the Dean of the Graduate School, the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent, the Office of the District Supervisors, the School Head, and the individual participants. The researcher personally visited the schools, community, or any other location convenient for the participants to carry out the interviews.

The researcher also encouraged the participants to sign a waiver or consent form related to the conduct of the study. Through in-depth interviews, voice and video recorders were likewise used to fully capture the interviewees' responses. After completing the series of interviews, the researcher compiled and organized all the data gathered.

Data Analyses

The data was collected through the interview schedule and was analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method designed to identify, interpret, and report recurring patterns or themes within narrative data. This approach enables the researcher to uncover meaningful insights into the responses of the participants regarding their lived experiences in using gamification in teaching English.

According to Braun and Clarke (2023), thematic analysis offers a flexible yet systematic approach to examining qualitative data, enabling researchers to identify both explicit and

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underlying meanings within participants' narratives. It is especially appropriate for educational research that aims to explore complex social and organizational processes. In addition, Nowell et al. (2021) emphasized that thematic analysis strengthens the transparency and credibility of qualitative studies by promoting systematic coding and careful interpretation of data.

The transcribed interview data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2023), since this method is suitable for identifying, analyzing, and presenting patterns or themes within qualitative data.

The analysis followed the standard six-phase process:

(1) Familiarization with the Data – reading and rereading the transcripts in both the local language and their English translations; (2) Generating Initial Codes – assigning brief words or phrases to meaningful portions of the data, such as "shared phone," "fear of judgment," and "poor signal"; (3) Searching for Themes – organizing the initial codes into broader potential themes and subthemes that capture significant patterns, for example, grouping codes such as "no insult" and "private correction" under one category; (4) Reviewing Themes – refining and checking the themes against the entire dataset to ensure that they accurately represent the participants' meanings and align with the focus of the study; (5) Defining and Naming Themes – creating clear, concise, and academically appropriate labels for the final emerging themes, which was presented in Chapter 4; and (6) Producing the Report – integrating the themes, supported by direct quotations, into the

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presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data in Chapter 4, while connecting them to the theoretical framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study was conducted to determine the Stage 1 Learners' Reading Behavior: Basis for Program Intervention at A. Montes I Elementary School, District II- Montes-Lapuz Iloilo City, during the school year 2022-2023.

The research method utilized in the study was descriptive using in-depth interview.

The study used phenomenology under qualitative research design.

The participants of the study were 16 teachers from Kinder to Grade 3 of A. Montes 1 Elementary School in the Schools Division of Iloilo City.

The research instrument utilized in the study was a researcher-made interview schedule. Voice and video recorder were also used for data gathering and documentation depending upon the permission of the participants.

A panel of experts validated the interview schedule and considered all comments and suggestions relative to the validation of the tool.

Permits from the individual participants were obtained to allow the researcher to conduct the study. The researcher personally went to the schools/community/place convenient on the part of the participants to conduct the interview and virtual instruction was done prior to the interview.

Minimum health protocols mandated by the Inter Agency Task Force (IATF), Department of Health (DOH) guidelines amidst the pandemic, DepEd Orders on the Health

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protocols, Local Government Units and the Barangay health protocols were strictly observed and followed during the conduct of the study.

Using in-depth interview, voice and video recorders were provided to completely capture the interviewee's words or responses. The researcher consolidated all the collected data after series of interviews.

The information gathered was analyzed using thematic approach.

The following are the findings of the study:

Based on the results of the in-depth interview with the kindergarten teachers, it was found that most kindergarten learners were forgetful; however, they were also attentive, imaginative, and creative.

I was found also found out that the Grade 1 learners were restless, hyperactive, and hesitant.

Grade 2 teachers revealed that the learners were forgetful, yet imaginative and creative.

Based on the interview with Grade 3 teachers, it was found that Grade 3 learners were attentive yet prone to lip synching.

It was also found out that Stage 1 learners were forgetful, hyperactive, restless, and hesitant.

Kindergarten teachers managed their learners through One-one-one instruction, Dialogic reading approach, and differentiated instruction through reading materials.

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As for Grade 1 teachers, they managed their learners through One-one-one instruction and differentiated instruction through reading materials.

Grade 2 teachers managed their learners through Dialogic reading approach, differentiated instruction through reading materials and remedial classes in reading.

Likewise, Grade 3 teachers managed their learners through Remedial classes in reading, differentiated instruction through reading materials and dialogic reading approach.

It was also revealed that teachers' way of managing the reading behavior of stage 1 learners were One-on-One Instruction, Remedial Classes in Reading, Differentiated Instruction through Reading Materials and Dialogic Reading Approach.

Based on the findings, the following insights were drawn:

The teachers find that Remedial Classes, One-on-One instruction, Dialogic Reading Approach and Differentiated learning materials in reading are very beneficial to learners in the teaching and learning process.

Pabasa sa Barangay Program/ Initiative is also significant to the teaching and learning process. It assesses the learners' progress in reading from the beginning up to the end of the school year and it also monitors the reading level of comprehension of every learner.

The access and quality of modules and learning activity sheets (LAS), and additional learning resources through ICT including its availability could relatively affect the teaching-learning process.

The class is productive when there is interaction among the teachers and learners during classroom activities.

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Home Learning Partners can serve as educational allies of teachers by assisting them in developing children's full academic potential and monitoring the quality of teaching and teaching strategies.

Good relationships among learners, teachers, and Home Learning Partners significantly provides positive results on the teaching-learning process.

Support from stakeholders and other members of the educational community of the school is necessary for the improvement of the school.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the following insights were drawn:

English teachers' experiences with gamification-based instruction reveal both opportunities and challenges in fostering 21st-century learning skills. The approach enhances student engagement and motivation, encourages instructional innovation and creativity, promotes active participation and confidence among learners, and provides emotional fulfillment and professional growth for teachers. Implementing gamification allows educators to explore new teaching strategies and cultivate a more dynamic, interactive classroom environment that supports meaningful learning outcomes.

At the same time, teachers face several challenges in applying gamification effectively. These include the time-consuming nature of preparing and designing gamified lessons, technical and connectivity issues, an overemphasis on competition and rewards over learning objectives, and limited access to training and professional development. Such challenges

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highlight the need for adequate support, resources, and guidance to ensure that gamification enhances learning rather than becoming a barrier to instruction.

Teachers cope with these challenges through various adaptive strategies. They engage in self-directed learning to strengthen their pedagogical and technological skills, apply a trial-and-error approach to refine their gamified activities, effective use of digital tools to facilitate interactive learning, implement effective time management strategies to balance workload, and seek administrative support to sustain and improve gamification practices. These strategies demonstrate teachers' resilience, creativity, and commitment to delivering engaging and effective English instruction.

Overall, the successful integration of gamification in English classrooms depends on a combination of professional development, technological readiness, adaptive teaching practices, and institutional support. When these elements are present, gamification can significant enrich the teaching and learning process, benefiting both teachers and students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings and insights generated by this study, several recommendations are proposed.

A context-sensitive In-Service Training (INSET) Program entitled "Gamify to Engage: Enhancing English Instruction through Gamification" should be developed to help English teachers effectively incorporate gamified strategies into their teaching. The program should aim to create a learner-centered classroom environment that encourages active participation,

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engagement, and intrinsic motivation. It should also include context-appropriate gamified activities and digital tools that make learning more interactive, relevant, and meaningful to students. In addition, the program should promote instructional creativity, strengthen teacher confidence, and support their professional development.

To ensure that teachers are well-prepared for gamified instruction, continuous professional development should be given priority. Training initiatives should focus on lesson design for gamification, the use of digital platforms such as Kahoot and Wordwall, the application of trial-and-error techniques, and effective time management in planning and implementing gamified activities. Through these capacity-building efforts, teachers will be better equipped to address challenges, improve their instructional practices, and enhance student motivation and engagement.

It is also important to address institutional and logistical concerns. Schools should ensure the availability of sufficient technological tools, digital resources, and administrative assistance to support the implementation of gamified instruction. Strong collaboration among school leaders and other stakeholders can further help secure resources and align gamification practices with school policies and professional development efforts.

Moreover, the INSET Program should place strong emphasis on teacher autonomy, collaboration, and reflective practice. Opportunities for sharing best practices, peer mentoring, and collaborative lesson planning can contribute to greater teacher confidence and

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professional growth. A supportive and innovative teaching culture will further encourage teachers to apply gamification strategies in a more consistent and effective manner.

Finally, a system for monitoring, evaluation, and ongoing improvement of the INSET Program should be established to ensure its continued relevance to teachers' changing needs and concerns. Regular feedback from teachers, students, and school administrators should be institutionalized to guide program enhancement. Using data to inform decisions will also help sustain and expand the program over time.

To validate and strengthen the findings of this study, similar research should be undertaken on a larger scale and should consider additional variables not explored in the present investigation.

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