

# Exploring Charades: The Benefits and Challenges of Gamifying English Learning

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**Abstract.** *This study investigates Charades as a gamified learning tool in English language teaching. It explores how this game improves vocabulary, listening, speaking, and writing skills at various educational levels. The study examines the benefits and challenges of Charades, emphasizing its ability to generate dynamic and engaging learning experiences. Despite its popularity, there has been little scholarly investigation into its specialized use as a gamification tool. This study addresses this need by performing a semi-systematic literature review to investigate the benefits and challenges of Charades. The findings show Charades' effectiveness in improving language skills, such as vocabulary retention and communication abilities. However, time limits and unexpected disturbances in the classroom setting are mentioned as obstacles. This study provides further implications to maximize the positive effects of Charades while overcoming these limitations in educational settings. This study underlines the need for additional empirical research and educational practices to properly exploit Charades' benefits while reducing its challenges for an enhanced and engaged learning experience.*

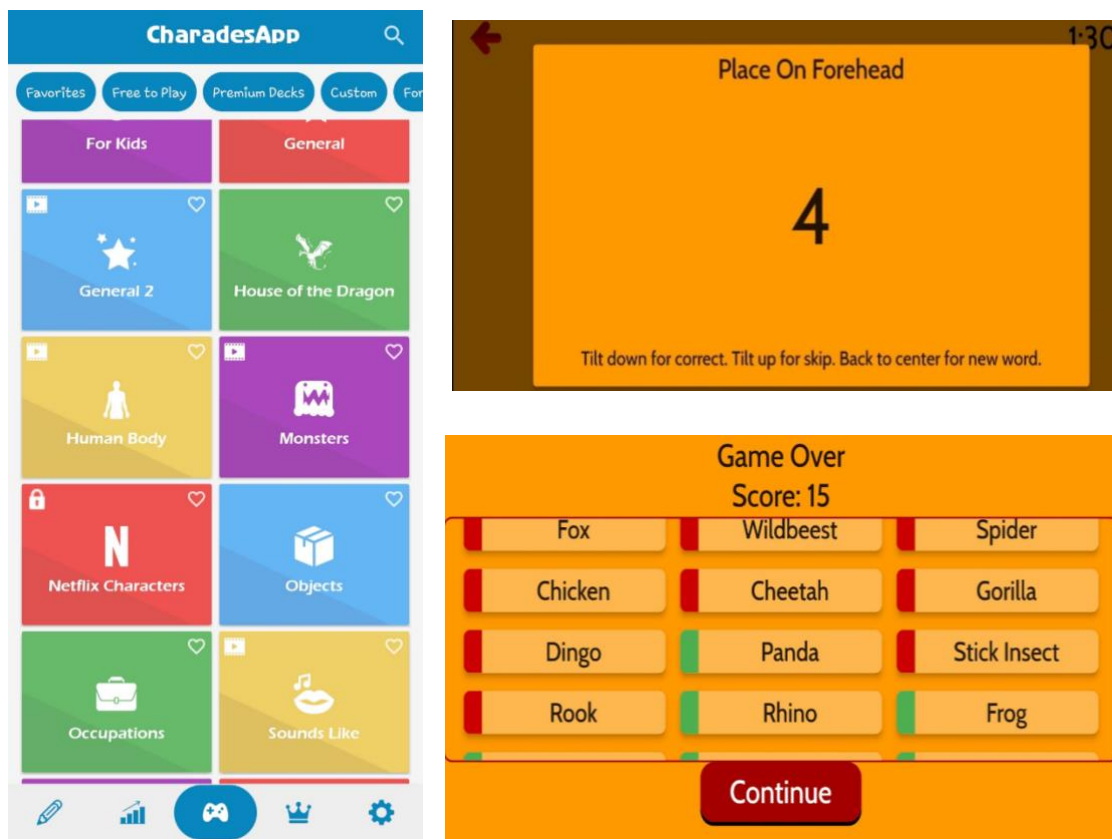
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## 1. Introduction

Education is currently facing global challenges, and research is being conducted to improve its quality through the development of technologies and the incorporation of effective methods for improving learning outcomes and engagement in both the short and long term (Sanchez et al., 2020; Hitchens & Tulloch, 2018). Gamification, which is widely employed in education, serves as an encouragement by facilitating and incorporating game components into learning. Gamification is applying the elements of games in non-gaming activities to make the players' learning experiences more enjoyable, engaging, creative, collaborative, and productive (De La Cruz, Gebera, & Copaja, 2022; Fitria, 2022; Kovalenko & Skvortsova, 2022; Lee & Baek, 2023). Formative evaluation using a gamified platform inspires students to participate in the class (Zainuddin et al., 2020); it encourages students to improve their performance when completing tasks or activities. Similarly, Laine & Lindberg (2020) highlight that gamification can contribute to promoting curiosity and analyzing informative learning processes.

According to Deterding et al. (2011), the concept of gamification revolves around three key parts of game design: dynamics, mechanics, and elements. The top of the hierarchy is made up of Dynamics, which are the concepts related to the task of the game. These Dynamics are employed to produce motivation to complete the task and are manifested through Mechanics. The Mechanics are the processes that drive the behaviours of the users and are displayed via the Components. Finally, there are extrinsic rewards and feedback elements such as points, badges, and so forth (Toda et al., 2019). These components are designed to increase user engagement by eliciting a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment. The introduction of a rating system, for example, has been

highlighted as a technique for increasing user competition (Zainuddin et al., 2020). The efficacy of gamification, on the other hand, is dependent on a thorough understanding of user preferences and motivational drivers, which must be smoothly integrated and linked with game mechanics (Anunpattana et al., 2019).



**Figure 1.** Key components of charades: dynamics, mechanics, and elements

One of the popular language learning games entailing the dynamic criteria is charades. It comprises groups of two or more people and is described as a guessing game within the teaching and learning process (Sherly et al., 2019). In this game, students attempt to guess a given word or phrase acted out or explained by their teammates within a specific time limit. At the end of the game, the score will pop out. The game has evolved as a versatile and engaging gamification technique that can stimulate interaction and enhance engagement in English language learning and teaching (Popov, 2023). Thus, it is believed that charades can boost language learning, and encourage active involvement and a lively atmosphere by having students act out words or sentences without or with speaking, challenging others to grasp their gestures and intentions. Its collaborative nature encourages teamwork and the building of social bonds as participants collaborate to grasp information.

However, studies on charades as a specialized gamification tool are noticeably lacking, resulting in significant gaps in the literature. While gamification as a broader idea has gained a lot of attention, the specific research and empirical study of charades within this framework is still restricted. Academic literature usually focuses on broad gamification concepts, ignoring the specific application and efficacy of charades as a gamified learning tool. As a result, this study seeks to fill the gap by providing theoretical

frameworks for understanding the benefits of charades in English learning and identifying the challenges of charades as a gamification tool in English language learning and teaching. To achieve the objectives of this study, the research questions are formulated as follows: 1) What are the benefits of utilizing charades as a gamification tool in English language learning? and 2) What challenges do educators have when using charades as a gamified tool to teaching English?

## 2. Method

A semi-systematic literature review was utilized to explore the benefits and challenges of charades as a gamified tool in English learning. This sort of review is also known as a narrative review (Synder, 2019) and is intended for reviewing diverse themes encountered by various researchers (Wong et al., 2013). The following steps were undertaken:

- a. Identifying relevant literature review by a thorough search of several academic databases, including but not limited to Google Scholar, ERIC, and academic journals specialized in English teaching and gamification. To find relevant sites, keywords like "gamification," "English language learning," and "charades" were used.
- b. Determining inclusion and exclusion criteria. Only peer-reviewed articles, research projects, conference papers, and books within the last ten years were considered. The emphasis was mostly on studies concerning the use of gamification, particularly charades, in English Language Teaching (ELT).
- c. Extracting data: From the selected literature, relevant material and major findings were collected and arranged into topical categories. These categories covered gamification's concept, the benefits and challenges of charades as a gamified tool in ELT, and future directions.
- d. Analyzing data: The extracted data was thoroughly examined to find repeating themes, patterns, and trends in the literature.
- e. Synthesizing and writing: The findings from the analyzed literature were synthesized and organized to make a coherent narrative. Following that, the literature review was created, combining concepts and supporting evidence from the chosen sources.
- f. Reviewing: The literature was rigorously reviewed to ensure its clarity and coherence. To improve the review's quality and rigour, feedback from peers was solicited.

By following the aforementioned steps, the literature review on the exploration of charades as a gamified tool in ELT is intended to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date understanding of the topic. It summarized relevant study data, highlighted common themes and trends, and gave a balanced perspective on the benefits and challenges in the practices of gamification in English language teaching instruction.

## 3. Results and Discussions

Some researchers have found varying results of gamification in English as A Foreign Language. Gamification could enhance the meaningful learning outcomes of English learners despite its varying results of the subsets of English proficiency (De La Cruz et al., 2022; Kaya & Sagnak, 2022; Lee & Baek, 2023). The following section discusses the benefits of Charades as a gamified tool and examine its difficulties in the

implementation of learning English. The use of Charades as an educational gamified platform in language learning, as previously noted, demonstrates its efficacy in boosting students' engagement and participation (Popov, 2023; Sanchez et al., 2020; Zainuddin, 2020; Hitchens & Tulloch, 2018;). Due to the insufficient attention in the existing literature towards the impact of Charades on language mastery skills, this section will look thoroughly into the benefits of Charades on language skills, to provide a comprehensive understanding of its impact on various elements of language competency.

Qomar, A. H., and Wati, Y. S. (2021) discovered a significant improvement in eighth-grade students' vocabulary mastery through Charades-based learning activities. The study, which was carried out as an experimental study at SMP Muhammadiyah Ahmad Dahlan Metro in 2020, used both test and observational approaches. The results revealed significant differences between the experimental and control groups. The average vocabulary mastery scores for the experimental and control groups were 74.2 and 68.8, respectively, demonstrating a substantial difference in vocabulary learning. This study emphasizes the gamified nature of Charades, where its natural engagement and enjoyment actively contribute to students' vocabulary expansion. Charades, with its participatory and fun nature, deviates from typical rote memory approaches, dynamically engaging learners (Sari & Chairani, 2017). Charades prompts spontaneous word recall and application to convey messages, facilitating vocabulary increase. Its gamified technique connects words to movements or gestures, boosting contextual knowledge and improving recall. Furthermore, the collaborative feature promotes peer interaction, creating supportive learning settings in which students can learn from one another. Therefore, by stressing participation and enjoyment, Charades offers an effective, engaging, and pleasant alternative for promoting a more dynamic learning experience free of repetitive memory strategies.

The importance of adopting Charades as a learning approach to improve listening and speaking abilities was underlined in a case study conducted by Mindog, E. (2016). One of the students stressed the need of using Charades to improve these linguistic skills. It was specifically said that playing Charades necessitates attentive listening to classmates' cues in order to answer appropriately, as well as clear and exact speaking in order to transmit messages successfully. The participant also stated that participating in Charades aided his English learning process. He emphasized that the game's time constraint forced him to think and reply in English right away, eliminating the need to first think in Japanese and then translate into English. Such a quick engagement in English thought demonstrated Charades as a beneficial exercise for minimizing translation procedures and boosting direct English language utilization, resulting in improved language learning experiences.

Specifically, several studies shed light on the critical significance of Charades in improving speaking abilities among varied groups of students (Ayuwandini, et al, 2022; Kaur & Aziz, 2021; Latifa, et al, 2019). The research of Kaur and Abdul Aziz focused on higher institute students, demonstrating the efficiency of Charades in actual language skill improvement. Similarly, Latifa et al (2019) exhibited a considerable improvement in seventh-grade students' speaking ability by using a Guessing Game similar to Charades. Their findings highlighted a variety of benefits, including improved engagement, increased activeness during learning sessions, and the development of teamwork among participants. Furthermore, in Ayuwandini et al (2022)'s case study, participants mention that that Charades has a positive impact on their speaking proficiency. They showed enjoyment and found the classes engaging, stimulating not only the acquisition of new

vocabulary and pronunciation abilities but also the kindling of excitement and self-motivation among students. These findings highlight the beneficial impact of Charades on language skills, providing engaging and productive situations that encourage active involvement and skill improvement among students at various educational levels.

In addition to vocabulary retention, enhancing listening and speaking skills, several studies also provide useful insights into the benefits of Charade Game on students' writing skills (Al Azhar et al, 2023; Hasbullah et al, 2023). The study by Al Azhar et al (2023) investigated the impact of the Charade Game on student achievement during the learning process. Using a quasi-experimental method with 60 students divided equally into control and experimental groups, they discovered substantial differences in writing skills between the experimental and control groups. The results demonstrated the effectiveness of Charade as a pedagogical tool for teaching writing, demonstrating significant improvements not observed in traditional teaching techniques.

Hasbullah, et al (2023) investigated the influence of implementing a Multiple Intelligence Learning Approach (MILA) through charades on students' English writing skills. The study found that kinesthetic intelligence through the implementation of charades was important in students' capacity to move things and use diverse physical skills, which contributed to improved writing abilities. The results showed that the interactive domain, particularly kinesthetic intelligence, was the most prevalent among MILA domains, showing its prominence in teaching and learning activities as compared to analytic and introspective domains. These studies show how effective Charade Game at improving students' writing skills. The incorporation of dynamic and interactive methods not only improves writing ability but also nurtures important abilities such as communication, teamwork, creativity, and motivation, harmonizing with current educational paradigms emphasizing holistic skill development.

From the aforementioned explanation, Charades has proven to be an effective and versatile technique in language learning over a wide range of language competencies. Its gamified approach has had a significant impact on learners' vocabulary acquisition, listening, speaking, and writing skills. Charades' ability to actively engage students, generating a pleasurable and participative learning environment, has been repeatedly demonstrated in studies. The immersive quality of the game fosters spontaneous language use, which aids in vocabulary expansion, increased communication, and improved language fluency. Moreover, Charades encourages learners' teamwork, creativity, and drive, which aligns with modern educational aims of holistic skill development. Its incorporation into language instruction provides a dynamic and interesting alternative to standard teaching methods, arguing for its continued use to help students acquire comprehensive language skills.

De La Cruz et al. (2022) maintain that students could not only obtain the skills and knowledge of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, but also the opportunity to demonstrate their comprehension and abilities with immediate feedbacks. It enables students to seek task more enthusiastically, increase vocabulary, and decrease learning barriers (Kovalenko & Skvortsova, 2022; Li, Chu, & Yang, 2022; Yaroshenko et al., 2022). Thus, it could promote self-paced learning and a sense of responsibility to reach certain learning aims, and develop their individual and group learning strategies (Demirbilek, Talan, & Alzouebi, 2022; Kaya & Sagnak, 2022).

**Table 1.** The summary of the benefits of utilizing charades as a gamification tool in developing English skills

| Study                   | Benefits                                           | Methods                                                                                   | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Qomar & Wati (2021)     | Improve students' vocabulary mastery and retention | Experimental research at SMP Muhammadiyah Ahmad Dahlan Metro through test and observation | The experimental and control groups' average vocabulary mastery scores are 74.2 and 68.8, respectively. When using the Charades game to improve pupils' language skills, there is a significant difference between the groups.                                                               |
| Mindog (2016)           | Improve listening and pronunciation                | Case study through interview                                                              | The time limit in the charades forces the student to think in English right away since he must listen closely to what his peers are saying in order to answer correctly and speak clearly in order to be understood.                                                                         |
| Al Azhar et al (2023)   | Improve writing skill                              | A quasi-experimental research using pre-test and post-test                                | In comparison to the control group, the experimental group shows a significant change and improvement in writing skills.<br>The experimental group's remarkable increase illustrates the effectiveness of the Charade game as a technique of teaching writing.                               |
| Hasbullah et al (2023)  |                                                    | Survey using lists of questionnaires and an English writing test                          | The students' activities included using gestures to depict key words and engaging in charades. The findings indicated that students honed skills through a mind-body connection. Additionally, the interactive domain elements were the most favored, constituting 76.36% of the activities. |
| Kaur & Aziz (2021)      | Improve Speaking Skills                            | A single-group quasi-experimental research through pre and post-test and questionnaire.   | There is a considerable difference between the pre-test and post-test. Charades were viewed well by students.                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Latifa et al (2019)     |                                                    | An experimental research                                                                  | Charades contribute to greater engagement, increased activeness during learning sessions, and the development of teamwork among students.                                                                                                                                                    |
| Ayuwandini et al (2022) |                                                    | A case study through interview                                                            | The students conveyed their excitement as they were able to be more confident to speak in order to win the game.                                                                                                                                                                             |

Despite its benefits, Charades presents certain obstacles. Toda et al (2018) identified four challenges in implementing gamification: indifference, loss of performance, undesirable conduct, and declining effects. Indifference arises from assignments and settings in which gamification affects or hinders students' learning while loss of performance declines students' capacity to accomplish activities due to demotivation. Gamification can result in varied outcomes, either positive or negative, often due to inadequate or the absence of planning (undesirable conduct). Lastly, declining effects are associated with a progressive loss of motivation and engagement as a result of the gamification that was implemented.

Gamification, indeed, should not only become fun activities, but a long-life learning opportunity (De La Cruz et al., 2022). Yaroshenko et al. (2022) suggest that introducing gamification needs to be accompanied by a fascinating narrative, a clear objective, a balance role of students, and levels of its complexity that not only increase teamwork but also less drawbacks of competition. Since lack of acknowledgement and progression could make the students frustrated; and some of them may have “bad luck” because of the limited chances and technical problems (Toda et al., 2019; Zhang & Hasim, 2023); the risk of striving to get good grades or being envious to the winner should be minimised (Kovalenko & Skvortsova, 2022). The students are encouraged to focus more on completing the learning objective and build cooperation enjoyably rather than competing with each other.

In implementing Charades, several students expressed dissatisfaction with the shorter period, expressing a wish for more time, saying, "We dislike the time, so little." Similarly, other students expressed displeasure with the wait time for their group's turn and felt that the time allotted for their group to play was noticeably short. Because of the time constraints and restricted playing, there was a sense of rushed participation and possible trouble truly interacting with the game's dynamics. Such little time, fewer opportunities, and the risk of aiming for good marks or being resentful of the winner should be minimized (Kovalenko & Skvortsova, 2022).

Lee & Baek (2023) suggest that designing and implementing gamification needs a careful consideration to maximize the outcomes and avoid the negative impacts. Furthermore, Kovalenko and Skvortsova (2022) maintain that modern educators should pay more attention to formulate and determine the effectiveness of gaming technologies rather than simply introducing it to the learners. In relation this, Popov (2023) points out that Charades might need a complicated classroom management, making it difficult to implement in the classroom. Similarly, Ayuwandini (2022) found that Charades creates a noisy classroom atmosphere throughout the game, as students eagerly shout out guesses while engaged in word interpretation. This active participation, while a sign of engagement, has the potential to disturb the overall classroom mood. Hence, adopting a balanced approach that solves these obstacles while improving engagement can lead to more effective and pleasurable learning experiences through gamification.

The raising question is not about whether gamification is effective or not but how to make it more suitable to the styles and the characteristics of the learning, and how it could accommodate to achieve a learning environment (Li et al., 2022). Kovalenko and Skvortsova (2022) remind us that gamification as a process would raise the students' motivation but it could lead to incomplete learning outcomes if the teachers do not emphasise the result, in other words, learning needs a specific app to produce better results (Panmei & Waluyo, 2023). The teachers still need to integrate it with learning approaches that could drive students' cognitive skills too (Díaz, Pérez, Ramírez, & Aristega, 2022; Inayati & Waloyo, 2022).

#### **4. Conclusions**

In today's educational world, the quest of better learning approaches is critical to overcoming global educational issues. Gamification, defined as the inclusion of game aspects into learning sessions, is an effective method for increasing student engagement and learning results. Gamification, which is based on the notions of dynamics, mechanics, and elements, tries to engage learners through mechanics that drive behaviour, frequently adding extrinsic rewards such as points and badges.

Charades develops as a popular and dynamic gamification tool in the domain of language learning. Students act out words or phrases in order to create interaction, engagement, and teamwork. While extensively used and enjoyed, scientific investigation of Charades as a gamified learning aid is scarce.

This study emphasized Charades' varied benefits in English language learning across multiple competencies. Previous studies reveal its positive impact on vocabulary mastery, listening, speaking, and writing skills. It also promotes active involvement, spontaneity in language use, and a supportive environment for peer learning. It has been praised for boosting vocabulary mastery, listening, pronunciation, speaking abilities, and even writing capabilities across levels of students.

Nonetheless, despite its benefits, Charades poses challenges. Time limits, noise creation, and classroom management difficulties are notable issues. To overcome these problems while assuring an effective and fun learning experience, gamification, including Charades, necessitates a balanced approach. Addressing these problems needs deliberate thought, such as improving classroom management strategies, customizing gamification to different learning types, and combining it with comprehensive learning methodologies. Furthermore, educators must emphasize learning objectives in addition to engagement to ensure a comprehensive learning experience that fosters cognitive skills.

As a gamified language learning tool, Charades has enormous promise, providing an entertaining and immersive alternative to standard teaching tools. Further empirical research, together with careful adaptation, can capitalize on Charades' strengths while resolving its limits, resulting in enhanced language learning experiences.

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