
Gamifying Extensive Reading

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Abstract

Extensive Reading (ER) is a core component of many ESL/EFL reading programs. However, it can be a challenge for learners to continue reading over the course of a full term and/or keep track of what they have read to fulfill course requirements. One method to solve this is by turning ER into a game. Gamification is the process of applying game-related principles to non-game situations to promote learner motivation and engagement. By using game elements – for instance, avatars, progress bars, experience points, rewards, badges, and leaderboards – learners can take more ownership of their learning, have more fun during the learning process, learn with reduced anxiety, and better visualize their progress toward a course objective or goal. This paper will briefly explain the basic principles of Extensive Reading and gamification, the core mechanics of games, and how ER can be gamified in the classroom in order to take advantage of these mechanics to promote learner motivation and engagement.

Keywords: gamification, extensive reading, motivation, and engagement

1 Introduction

Extensive Reading (ER) is an important element of many English as a Second/Foreign Language reading programs. In ER, students are assigned to read a lot in the target language, usually through graded or leveled readers. Ideally, students select material that is easy for them to read and read for pleasure. However, since ER is an assignment that students must complete to

pass a course, it is debatable how enjoyable ER really is for them. For example, students may be asked to read a specific number of books or a target number of words. Reaching this goal can be stressful for students and may even turn them away from reading in the target language regardless of how easy the actual reading might be. Moreover, ER activities are often assessed through quizzes, book reports, or logs so that instructors can determine whether students have completed the assigned reading or met the course goals (Bamford & Day, 2004; Helgesen, 2005; Rodrigo et al, 2007). These assessment measures can also be stressful for students and detract from the reading experience.

One method for keeping learners engaged with ER is through gamification, the practice of using game dynamics and game mechanics in non-game environments, such as in the classroom. The reasons for this are obvious. Games are an important part of most children's lives and our culture. Children are easily absorbed in games, so much so that they spend hours every day playing them, much to our chagrin. As technologies advance, the ability to download games to laptops, tablets, and smartphones makes the use of these games even more accessible, so why not take advantage of the features of games that make them so engrossing? By using common game mechanics in language education, learners will not only be more likely to stay motivated and engaged but also be more likely to find the experience more pleasurable overall.

This paper then will review the principles and benefits of ER, define gamification, and introduce ten common game mechanics which can be used to gamify Extensive Reading to encourage students to continue reading, help them better keep track of their reading progress, and, ultimately, better enjoy reading.

2 Extensive Reading

2.1 Principles of Extensive Reading

There are several definitions or interpretations of ER, but essentially students are expected to read easy material to build reading speed and fluency and to read a lot so that students are repeatedly exposed to the target language

outside of class time. Students are encouraged to select material that they can comprehend without difficulty and to read quickly. Ideally, students should select their own material so that the reading experience is more enjoyable for them and so that they can develop a healthy and happy attitude toward reading the target language. There are ten basic principles of ER (Day & Bamford, 1998; Prowse, 2002):

1. Students should read as much as possible. This means that students should always have new material to read. If they finish a book, then they should get another one rather than wait for the next class session. Rather than focus on reading and completing a book a week, students should be reading nearly every day.
2. Students should have access to a wide variety of materials so that students can select what they want to read. This means students need access to a variety of levels of material to match their reading proficiency and a variety of genres, such as fiction, non-fiction, and literature.
3. Students should be free to stop reading if the material they have selected is not interesting or is too difficult for them. This means it should not matter whether students have completed a book or not, only that they continue reading.
4. Students should be reading because they like to read and enjoy what they read. Above all else, the emphasis of Extensive Reading is to read for pleasure, though of course comprehension and learning new information are also beneficial goals.
5. Students should be reading for the purpose of reading, not to pass a quiz, write a book report, or get a higher grade for a course.
6. Students should select reading material that is at the level of the students' language proficiency so that they know most of the words and sentence structures and do not need to use a dictionary. In some cases, there may even be pictures to help students understand the material.
7. Students should be able to set their own pace and decide when and where they read. For this reason, while some of the class time can be used for

extensive reading, most of the reading should take place outside of class.

8. Students should read quickly to improve reading speed and fluency.
9. Instructors should explain the goals of ER so that students realize they can improve their overall language proficiency through reading easy material if they read a lot and often.
10. Teachers should act as a role model, guide, and facilitator so that students become active readers. Teachers should also offer advice on what books or material might be interesting to read and demonstrate that reading is not just a subject or assignment in class but an opportunity for personal growth and development.

2.2 Benefits of Extensive Reading

One of the key benefits of ER is that it can be fun, interesting, and motivating. This is because students can choose level-appropriate material that they want to read. By making reading easy and accessible, students can gain confidence and have a positive attitude toward both reading and learning in the target language. This is achieved because there is a sense of accomplishment after finishing a book and for some students a graded reader might be the first book in the target language that they have ever read. Realizing that they can read a book in an L2 may inspire students to continue to read other books.

Another benefit is ER helps students to steadily improve their overall proficiency in the target language since students are more exposed to the target language. By reading material at their level, students can consolidate and gradually improve their L2 proficiency (Day, Omura, and Hiramatsu, 1991; Nation & Wang 1999). If most of the vocabulary is known to them, students will be able to consolidate that vocabulary since they will encounter that vocabulary repeatedly and see how words are used in context (Nation & Coady, 1988; Hoey, 2005). Moreover, students will be able to develop skills in using the context of the situation to guess the meaning of unknown words if most of the other words are known (Nation & Coady, 1988; Zahar, Cobb, and Spada, 2001).

Obviously, if students read a lot and often, then students are more likely to improve their reading speed, fluency, and comprehension through ER, too.

However, the exposure to English through reading also improves other language skills such as speaking, writing, and even listening (Elley, 1991; Day & Bamford, 1998; Hoey, 2005). This is possible not just because of the increased exposure to the target language but also because much of this exposure is occurring outside of the classroom, meaning that students are receiving continuous input in the target language, not just once a week in class or one hour a week doing homework (Waring, 2000; Nation, 1997). Since students are being constantly exposed to the language in context, they are more likely to move from receptive knowledge to productive knowledge of grammar structures and vocabulary as well.

Lastly, ER develops learner autonomy. Reading is an individual and private activity. Students can read when, where, and what they want. They can start and stop when they choose and finish or not finish what they select. These choices can be empowering and lead to greater levels of motivation (Thornbury, 2002). Students may develop a routine or habit of reading in the target language after the course has finished since reading needs no partner, instructor, or class.

2.3 Concerns with Extensive Reading

While students are supposed to read a lot and read for pleasure, the sad reality is that reading is often not a pleasurable activity for students. Even if students choose easy material and are free to choose whatever material they are interested in, some students do not enjoy reading even in the native language, let alone in an L2. Some learners, particularly low-level learners, may find books at their reading level “childish” particularly if there are many pictures, the stories are too simple, or the story content targets a much younger audience. Some students don’t have healthy reading habits either, such as reading in a quiet, comfortable place, so reading becomes tiring or time-consuming. Finally, any Extensive Reading that is assigned for a course is still going to be an assignment, something for class, and not truly for pleasure. One hopes that students will enjoy or learn to enjoy reading, but this is not always going to be the case.

Another concern with Extensive Reading is that it can be a challenge for instructors and students to effectively monitor student progress, particularly if

students are expected to read a certain number of words by the end of an academic term. Some online websites, such as Mreader and XReading, keep track of the number of words students have read effectively. On these websites, if students pass a comprehension quiz of the book they have read, they earn the words from that book. Each time students pass a quiz, the number of words they have read increases. However, if instructors are not using a website like this, they must keep track of the word count or number of books read on their own. If only the instructor keeps track of this, students may not always know how close they are to reaching course goals or a desired grade unless this is repeatedly shared with students. Students could also independently monitor the number of words they have read, but some graded readers do not give a running word count, and some students confuse word count with the number of headwords, making this sometimes a challenge or one that leads to a misrepresentation of how much they have actually read.

3 Gamification

3.1 Gamifying Extensive Reading

One method of helping encourage students to keep reading over the course of the full term and better monitor their progress is to gamify Extensive Reading. Gamification is commonly defined as the use of game mechanics or game-related principles to engage learners (Kapp, Blair, and Mesch, 2014; Urh, Vukovic, and Jerbu, 2015; Landers, 2014; Bruder, 2015). Some definitions offer a more specific purpose such as to overcome obstacles, problem-solve, or promote learning or a targeted behavior (Buckley & Doyle, 2017). Other definitions describe specific game mechanics, for example, having clearly defined rules, immediate feedback, points, and badges (Brull & Finlayson, 2016). This paper defines gamification as the “use of game-related principles in non-game contexts” to motivate and engage learners and reward learners for their action or progress (Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, and Nacke, 2011, p. 2). The key point here is that the focus of gamification is not on playing games, but rather on taking the features of games that make them so engaging and applying them in other contexts to create a better, more enjoyable learning environment.

3.2 Why Use Gamification in the Classroom

The central rationale and benefit of gamification is that it can raise student motivation and engagement (Myhre, 2015; Pardoel, Papadima, and Athanasiou, 2018). Motivation and learner engagement are crucial to success in second and foreign language acquisition (Dimitroff, Dimitroff, and Alhashimi, 2018). This is particularly the case in EFL courses for non-English majors who may be forced to take the course as part of their curriculum requirements. Since gamification can be used to take an otherwise tedious or tiring activity and change it into a more fun and engaging one, learners become more involved in their learning (Myhre, 2015; Udjaja, 2018; Udjaja & Sari, 2017). Games usually increase in difficulty as they are played but are not so difficult as to be impossible. These challenges help direct player's attention to explicit objectives or goals (McGonigal, 2011). These challenges also become rewarding when completed and by repeating this process of success, players can gain self-confidence. This repetition and progression can be addictive for learners, and this is why games are commonly used in education and in language learning.

Another benefit of gamification is that it can help learners acquire or develop targeted skills (Barata, Gama, Jorge, and Goncalves, 2015). While involved in the game, learners are more likely to get lost in the playing and completion of tasks, work harder to overcome challenges or obstacles, and, in some cases, participate more in adopting new strategies or techniques to be more successful in the game (Muller, Reise, and Selinger, 2015). Moreover, in most games, players are not able to advance to the next level until they have mastered the previous task or performed a previous objective, which helps players focus their attention on a particular goal or learning outcome. While players may end up failing to reach an objective one or more times, most games do not punish players for failing to meet an objective. Players simply restart the game and make another attempt. In this way, gamification reduces anxiety since learners can continue to try again and allows learners some autonomy to work at their own pace, which also can lead to greater motivation and engagement (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2013; Little 1991). This process makes learners more active participants in the learning process and take ownership of their learning, which can help them develop problem-solving skills, skill

development, and creativity (Martí-Parreño, Seguí-Mas, and Seguí-Mas, 2016; Heick, 2019).

Gamified learning also provides instant feedback so that learners know how they are doing, whether they have mastered a skill or not, or how close they are to achieving it. In this way, students can monitor their progress, which can also facilitate learner engagement. Moreover, if students receive immediate feedback, they can then use this information more quickly to respond and improve their performance, leading to higher levels of retention (Pandey, 2015). This immediate feedback can be further used to reinforce positive behavior or address negative behavior so that students know what is expected of them and are able to use this knowledge to improve their performance when it still matters, thereby creating a better overall learning environment.

Finally, gamified learning is often done online through a variety of web-learning tools. This presents opportunities for a more varied use of multimedia to further engage learners' senses to target a greater range of learner styles (Gardner, 1993). By providing material that targets a variety of learning styles, learners are more likely to understand and recall material and use this knowledge to perform tasks well (Pazilah, Hashim, and Yunus, 2019). For example, games that incorporate audio and visual elements can cater to audio and visual learners; games that require motor skills can appeal to kinesthetic learners. Using methods that cover a range of preferred learning styles can increase a learner's engagement and make them more active and comfortable learners (Buckley & Doyle, 2017).

3.3 Criticisms of Gamification

The main complaint of gamification is that by focusing on rewards (points, badges, etc.), learners may not develop extrinsic motivation for learning. Some research has found that a reward system can reduce learner motivation, particularly for learners who struggle and thus miss out on many of the rewards (Nicholson, 2012; Deci, Koester, and Ryan, 2001). Learners may lose motivation if rewards are no longer given or if the value of the reward is no longer of interest (Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011). There is also a danger of focusing too much attention on points and leaders rather than on learning (Kim, Song, Lockee, and Burton, 2018).

While there are some legitimate concerns with gamification, the fact it can create a more engaging, positive, and emotional learning experience makes it worth exploring particularly with Extensive Reading which shares many of the same principles as gamification.

4 Gamification Mechanics: How to Gamify Extensive Reading

There are several game elements which can be used to gamify a task or learning project. By combining them, these elements can promote greater levels of motivation and engagement (Kapp, 2012; McGonigal, 2011). This paper will introduce ten common game mechanics and how they could be used in an Extensive Reading project. The ten mechanics are:

1. Avatars and individual profiles
2. Visualized progress bars and gameboards
3. Scores and points
4. Ranks and levels
5. Badges and trophies
6. Unlockable levels or tools
7. Individual and team tasks
8. Leaderboards
9. Second life opportunities
10. Quests

The following section will cover each of these game mechanics and how they were applied to a game for Extensive Reading at a private university in Japan with both English majors and non-English majors.

4.1 Avatars and Individual Profiles

One common feature in games is the use of an avatar or individual profile. This could be a picture, an icon, a token, or name. It could even be a completely new identity depending on the depth of the game. The reason avatars are used is they allow students to explore different identities. This may

help reduce anxiety by making the results of the game less personal. Since the effects of the game are applied to the character the student plays, not the player directly, avatars can help to reduce anxiety or disappointment if a task is not completed well or requires multiple attempts. Avatars also give the players a sense of ownership and control since players can design their avatar as they wish.

In the project for Extensive Reading, students were asked to create a name for themselves that combined an adjective and a noun, such as an animal. Students in the class did not know who each of the avatars belonged to. This gave students some anonymity which will be important later when discussing leaderboards. Each quarter, students could change their avatar if they wished to change their identity, create more anonymity, start “fresh”, or reflect their avatar’s growth. For example, one student used the avatar “laughing Pikachu”, *Pikachu* being a popular Pokemon character. In the fall term, the student changed the avatar to “laughing Raichu”, *Raichu* being the character that Pikachu later evolves into after gaining more experience. The new avatar then reflected the student’s feelings of growth as a reader.

4.2 Visualized Progress Bars and Gameboards

In games, there is a progress bar to let players know how close they are to achieving an objective or how much life they have remaining. This gives players immediate feedback and lets them accurately monitor their progress and let them know how close they are to completing tasks.

In the ER project, a gameboard was provided (see Appendix A) where students could record each book’s word count and keep a running total of how much progress they had made. At all times, students knew how many words they had read and how many more they needed to read to reach their objective. The gameboard allowed students to visualize their progress as well. While some websites can keep track of student progress, students must log in to the website to check how well they are doing, and it is harder for students to remember their point total or how close they are to achieving an objective. However, by using a gameboard and recording their progress themselves, students were better able to self-monitor and recall their point total. This also benefited the instructor since students were no longer asking how many words

they had read so far.

4.3 Scores and Points

Games normally give players experience points or a score that improves over time as the game continues. This score or accumulation of points can then be used to unlock levels, receive prizes or badges, or indicate if a player has succeeded or not to reach an objective.

In the ER project, students were given “reading experience points” for each word they read from a graded reader. In quarter one, if students read a book that had 3,000 words, then they would receive 3,000 reading experience points. One rule in the game, however, was that there was a maximum number of reading experience points students could receive from one book. In quarter one, students could only receive a maximum of 5,000 reading experience points for one book. This was done to encourage students to select books at their level and read a lot. The concern was that students may decide to read just one long book at the end of the term to reach the objective they wanted rather than read continuously each week. In this way, this rule helped reinforce the behavior the instructor wanted the students to follow. Students had other ways to add to their reading experience point total besides reading books which will be discussed later. If students started but did not complete a book, then students explained on what page they stopped and the instructor calculated approximately how many words they had read accordingly.

4.4 Ranks and Levels

Players improve in rank or reach a higher level in games by completing challenges. A higher rank or level displays greater ability or progress and gives players both a sense of purpose and a sense of accomplishment once that rank or level is achieved.

In the ER project, key benchmarks (levels) were shown on the gameboard so that students could see how much they needed to read to reach the result they wanted. For example, in quarter one, students were expected to read an average of 2,500 words a week for seven weeks. The benchmarks were as follows:

Reading Experience Point Benchmarks	Result
15,000 (averaging 2,500 for six weeks)	☆ “C” for the project
17,500 (averaging 2,500 for seven weeks)	☆☆ “B” for the project
18,750	☆☆☆ “A” for the project
20,000 or more	☆☆☆☆ “A+ for the project

In this way, the ER objectives were clear, and students could decide for themselves what grade they would receive by either reading more or less than the benchmarks given. Just as in most games, students had full autonomy in deciding how far they wanted to go in the project and when they wanted to stop.

4.5 Badges and Trophies

In addition to ranks and levels, games often present badges and trophies as a reward for accomplishing a task. Even exercise apps like Fitbit reward players with badges for walking a set number of steps each day as a way of encouraging people to walk more. And these badges work, particularly for those who share their steps with others and compete with them. As someone who has walked to a river late at night just to earn enough steps for another badge, I can attest to their appeal. For badges, there is motivation to earn them but also motivation to avoid losing out on receiving one, too.

In the ER project, each week, students had to choose one of the books they had read that week and write a short book report for it. Each week the type of book report students had to write changed. In class, students would share their report in groups of three or four and ask their partners two discussion questions related to the content of the book. These reports were then collected by the instructor and checked. Students who had completed the report correctly received a badge, which was a stamp on their gameboard in the following class session. These badges gave students a bonus of +100 reading experience points. If students collected five badges, they were awarded another +500 reading experience points. In this way, the badges became a form of virtual currency, another common game mechanic, in which players can earn points or prizes that can be used to purchase something in the

game to improve performance. By collecting enough badges, students could earn virtual currency in the form of more reading experience points.

Curiously, students seemed more interested in the stamp than in the bonus in reading experience points. These badges were a source of honor and pride and reflected their accomplishments. The stamp changed each week in both design and color, so many students were eager to add to their stamp collection and did not want to miss out on getting a stamp. If students submitted a book report that did not meet the criteria for passing, then they did not receive a stamp for it. However, students were given a second chance to revise the report and submit it again as will be explained in 4.9 Second Life Opportunities. Students who successfully revised their book report could still earn a stamp for it.

4.6 Unlockable Levels or Tools

In most games, as players advance, they may receive rewards in the form of new levels or challenges which were previously locked to prevent play or tools which players can use to face more difficult challenges. These new levels or tools become a goal in and of themselves and can be a source of motivation because they represent progress and more freedom of choice in what players can do next in the game.

In the ER project, as players earned more reading experience points, they could also unlock new levels. In quarter one, students were restricted from reading higher-level books until they had earned enough reading experience points. At first, they were limited to books in the Foundation series and pre-1 or beginner level from particular publishers. This step was done to ensure students selected level-appropriate books and, more importantly, prevent them from reading a book beyond their level which might be difficult and, thus, discouraging. However, after earning 10,000 reading experience points, students could “unlock” graded readers that were level 1 or unlock low-level books from other publishers. Each quarter in the academic term, students were able to unlock other levels from graded readers to expand the types of books they could select. Whether they chose to read these books or continued to read the level they had been reading was still determined by each student. By allowing students to read higher-level books, students could feel a sense of

accomplishment. By requiring students to achieve a set number of reading experience points beforehand, the instructor could also guide students toward level-appropriate books. Each time students unlocked a higher level, they were given greater learner autonomy since they had a greater selection of titles to choose from.

Unlockable levels can be done in other ways, too. Instructors could raise the limit on the number of reading experience points that students can earn from one book if using this rule as discussed in 4.3 Scores and Points. For example, if students have read a sufficient number of words, the maximum number of reading experience points for each book could be raised from 5,000 to 6,000 reading experience points. This could be done for two reasons. First, after reading a lot of books and unlocking higher-level books, the length of the books will also likewise increase. There should not be a penalty for selecting longer books. Second, if the maximum limit is increased, students near the end of the term will have a better chance of reaching the goal they wish to achieve by choosing a slightly longer book than they normally would or by receiving more credit for it.

4.7 Individual and Team Tasks

Many of the most successful online games have a mode where players can compete against others and to compete in teams. By instilling a cooperative element to the game, players are encouraged to work harder to overcome obstacles or accomplish tasks. The dynamic of working with others is also engaging for players because they not only cooperate and negotiate with their partners, but also teach and learn from them, too.

In the ER project, the individual tasks were to read books, take online quizzes on Mreader, and write a short book report about any one book that they had read that week. As a team task though, each week students were randomly assigned to groups of three or four and had to share their book reports orally. A part of the book report was to give a short summary of the book they read and their reaction to it, but the more interesting part of the report was for students to make two discussion questions based on the contents of the book and lead a group discussion using those questions. This was a cooperative activity where students had to have their book reports

completed, be able to share the reports orally in English, lead a group discussion, and take part in discussion when it was a partner's turn to share a book report.

This cooperative team task can also be a competitive one, like a weekly challenge, to encourage students to participate. In the ER project, the instructor awarded +200 reading experience points to the group that had the best, liveliest discussion with the fullest participation from all its members. Assigning a bonus to the top group, rather than to the top individuals, was important. First, often when giving prizes to the top individuals, the best students in the class receive the awards. While this isn't unnecessarily wrong, the best students in the class are the ones who generally need these rewards the least. By making this a team competition, not only will some of the best students receive the award, but so will some of the other students who might not otherwise receive one. In most cases, at least one of the group members will receive this reward for the first time.

The group competition and the bonus award also reinforce positive behavior: coming to class prepared with homework, using English or the target language in class, and being active speakers and listeners in group discussion. Students worked together to win the competition, such as by encouraging shy students to participate or to make sure everyone was involved.

Deciding the top team can sometimes be a challenge if there are a lot of students in the class. However, if there are 40 students in one course and students are placed in groups of four, monitoring 10 groups is not impossible. In the case where multiple groups do well, the instructor could give a first place and second place bonus or give the bonus to the group with more members who need it or who performed better than in previous discussions.

4.8 Leaderboards

Competition is a common feature in games and is one of the reasons games are addictive for players. Competition can motivate players to perform better. Leaderboards allow players to see how they rank compared to others and how close they are to the top. If a player ranks first or is one of the top players, this can be a source of pride.

In the ER project, every week the instructor listed the top ten on the

leaderboard by displaying the names of the avatars that students had selected and their total reading experience points. By using the names of the avatars, students were not singled out (or excluded). Students could recognize if they were on the leaderboard and be motivated by it without attention being drawn to them which could be embarrassing. While some classmates knew who some of the avatars belonged to, many of the identities were a secret. When the instructor presented the leaderboard, students would often make comments like “Who is laughinglyhippo?” or laugh when a new avatar name appeared on the board since the names were generally strange, clever, or funny.

By comparing their own reading experience points with the leaderboard top ten, students could see how they ranked compared to their classmates or how close (or far away) they were from the top. The instructor did not post the full leaderboard because it might be humiliating or discouraging for those at the bottom. By posting the top ten, there were enough names being posted that there was always some movement on the board. If the top three or five were only posted, the names would not change much, and it would not have much affect on the students in class. However, by displaying the top ten, there were often new names on the board and changes in the ranking. The leaderboard also served as a reminder of the importance of the Extensive Reading activity to the goals of the course.

4.9 Second Life Opportunities

One of the key components of games is that players usually don’t die or even if they die, they get a second life. Players can also restart the game and try again with no penalty or punishment. Since players have a second life, they are more likely to experiment and try new techniques, maneuvers, or pathways to find the method that works best. They are also more likely to make additional attempts if they fail at first, which keeps them involved in the game.

A second life in the classroom helps students avoid situations where they might fail to demonstrate a skill or accomplish a task but must, nevertheless, move on to the next task or assignment. Without learning a previous skill or accomplishing a previous task, however, students may be unable to pass or accomplish subsequent tasks or be at a serious disadvantage. Moreover, failure to accomplish tasks can demotivate students and discourage them from

trying or taking risks on future tasks.

In the ER project, students also had a second life in two ways. First, if they failed to get 60% on an Mreader quiz after reading a book, they could not earn any reading experience points for it on the website. Unfortunately, Mreader does not allow students to re-take a quiz, so the instructor allowed students to do a book report for any book in which they failed the Mreader quiz to still earn reading experience points. If the book report was complete and done well, students earned the full reading experience points. If the report was done poorly, students earned half the reading experience points they would have earned if they had passed the quiz. In this way, students could still earn some points for their effort. This option also helped address cases where students were taking an Mreader quiz and the website or computer they were using froze and the quiz ended prematurely, preventing the student from earning any reading experience points.

The other way students had a second life is if they submitted a book report that was incomplete or did not follow the instructions or guidelines. In such a case, the student would not receive a badge for it. However, students could revise it or do that book report again with another book to earn the badge the following week. In this way, students did not miss out on an opportunity for a badge due to a bad performance, a lack of preparation, or a class absence.

The focus of the book reports was to show students a variety of ways to analyze books. Giving students only one chance to demonstrate their understanding of each book report seemed unfair and unnecessary. Rather than put the emphasis on success or failure, the emphasis was put on learning. Like in a writing class where students often submit drafts and revisions before submitting a final draft, the book reports followed a similar approach. This second life also reinforced the idea that learning does not end just because an assignment receives a grade. This second life helped maintain student motivation since a failure was not permanent, and most students used this second life to re-do their book report.

4.10 Quests

In most games, players have a lot of choices about what to do, where to move, or what strategies to take. The more choices players have, the more

engaging the game. Some games offer a variety of quests or missions to engage players. What quests to take and in what order to take them in are some of the options players have, and often these choices lead to different outcomes or a more personalized playing experience. This sense of empowerment can also be motivating as has been remarked earlier.

In the ER project, students were given quests in the final quarter of the academic year. In the first three quarters, students were presented with different book reports each week. In the fourth quarter, students were able to select from these book reports freely. Thus, when the groups presented the book reports orally each week, there were often a variety of reports being shared, each one analyzing a book from a different perspective. Students often selected the easier types of book reports to write, as to be expected, but some students also chose ones that best matched the book they had read or the book report that they liked best or previously performed well on. To make this selection more interesting, the instructor created a series of quests.

If students did three book reports of the same type, they received a special mastery badge. For example, if they did three “Culture comparison” book reports successfully, they received a “Culture Comparison Mastery Badge”. These badges were printed and laminated and given to students upon completion of the quest. Each badge had a different picture and color to distinguish them. There was also a “Jack-of-all-trades Badge” for students who did five different types of book reports. Each quarter, students could submit eight book reports, so they had a chance to earn at least two badges.

Since students sometimes earned badges different from their peers, their experience was more personalized and special. Students wanted to see each other’s badges and it became a source of pride and envy for them, further motivating them to do well on the book reports and think more carefully about what kind of book report to do. By creating these quests, it also encouraged students to try different types of book reports rather than just the same one each week, or else they could only earn one mastery badge. Some students even wanted to be able to submit an additional book report at the end of the term to earn a third mastery badge.

5 Conclusions

Extensive Reading is important for many language programs and benefits students beyond just improving their reading fluency. However, reading can be a daunting task for students, particularly ones who do not have much reading experience or have low-level proficiencies in the target language. One method to help overcome student anxiety toward reading is to take full advantage of the principles of ER such as offering students a wide selection of material at their level of ability and focusing on reading for pleasure. In addition to following these principles, gamifying the experience can be beneficial, too. By using the game mechanics discussed here, students can be more motivated and engaged to read and continue reading over longer periods of time. One hopes that after students experience the joy and success of reading that they will be able to read without the need for rewards or badges.

One final point that should be made here is that while I had gamified ER in my courses, at no time did I refer to ER as a game. Rather, I used these ten game mechanics to generate more student interest and involvement in the Extensive Reading project. When using gamification, this point is important. The purpose of gamification is not to play games. The purpose is make something more fun so that students have a higher interest in the activity or task and benefit more from that more engaging experience. In this sense, gamification may be a valid option for ER and other language tasks.

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Appendix A: Extensive Reading Progress Board

Avatar Name:

Stamp Collection

Start: Read an average of 2,500 words a week and be a better reader	Week 1 <i>Ex: 2045 words 1781 words</i>	Total <i>3826 words</i>	Week 2	Summary Response Book Report
Reading lets you travel without moving your feet. – Jhumpa Lahiri	Not all readers are leaders, but all leaders are readers. – Harry S Truman	Books train your imagination to think big. – Taylor Swift	Total	Three Questions Book Report
Total	Week 4	Total	Week 3	Storyboard Book Report
Week 5	A book is a gift you can open again and again. – Garrison Keillor	If you only read the books that everyone else is reading, you can only think what everyone else is thinking. – Haruki Murakami	If you want your kids to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales. – Albert Einstein	
Total	Week 6	Total	Week 7	Three Objects Book Report
Reading is the mind what exercise is to the body. – Richard Steele	Once you learn to read, you will forever be free. – Frederick Douglas	Great books help you understand, and they help you feel understood. – John Green	Total	Character Diagram Book Report
Final Total	Bonuses	Total	Week 8	

Important Stages		Bonuses
10,000	Unlock level 1 books	Book report stamp = +100 reading XP
15,000	☆ “C” for the project	Five book report stamps = +500 reading XP
17,500	☆☆ “B” for the project	Best group discussion = + 200 reading XP
18,750	☆☆☆ “A” for the project	
20,000	☆☆☆☆ “A+ for the project	