

Roblox as a Learning Tool for Grammar and Pronunciation: EFL Learners' Experiences

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Abstract

This study explored the use of Roblox as a learning tool for English grammar and pronunciation among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. It aimed to examine learners' experiences of using Roblox and identify its potential benefits and challenges for language learning. The study employed a qualitative research design and used semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method. Participants engaged in a two-phase process: they first spent 10–15 minutes playing games designed to practice grammar and pronunciation and then participated in 20–30 minute semi-structured interviews to reflect on their experiences. The findings indicated that Roblox provided an engaging and interactive learning environment that motivated learners through game elements such as rewards and in-game challenges. However, learners also experienced difficulties in applying grammar rules and pronunciation patterns because of limited structured instructional guidance within the platform. The study concluded that Roblox had potential as a supplementary language learning tool, particularly for promoting learner engagement, but its use required targeted instructional strategies. The findings suggest that educators can incorporate Roblox into EFL instruction while providing appropriate guidance to support grammar and pronunciation learning.

Keywords: *EFL learners; gamification; grammar learning; pronunciation practice; Roblox*

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INTRODUCTION

The integration of digital platforms into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education has become a significant trend, driven by the rapid advancement of gamification and interactive technologies. Among the various digital tools available, Roblox, a highly popular gaming platform, has emerged as a promising medium for enhancing language skills. Roblox's potential to support language acquisition, particularly in the areas of grammar and pronunciation, has garnered attention, as it provides a unique and immersive environment for learners to practice these skills interactively. Previous research highlights that gamified environments, such as digital platforms like Roblox, can increase learner engagement and motivation, two crucial factors for effective language learning (Han et al., 2023; Sinar et al., 2023). Gamified elements such as rewards, challenges, and real-time interactions allow learners

to experience language learning in an engaging and non-traditional way, fostering a deeper connection with the language they are learning.

While there is a growing body of literature that supports the effectiveness of gamification in education, the specific impact of platforms like Roblox on grammar and pronunciation improvement in EFL contexts remains under-explored. Most studies on the use of digital games in language learning have focused on vocabulary acquisition and general communication skills, with little attention given to the application of such platforms for teaching more specific aspects of language such as grammar and pronunciation (Ramanujam & Ismail, 2024). Roblox, with its features like voice chat and interactive learning environments, offers unique opportunities for learners to engage with real-time communication and practice pronunciation and grammar in context. However, despite its potential, research into the effectiveness of Roblox in these specific areas is limited, and there is a need for more focused studies.

Miller and Smith (2022) identified Roblox as a tool with unique interactive features that can support language learning, but they also noted that its full potential has yet to be realized, particularly in improving grammar and pronunciation. Their study suggested that while learners are motivated by the engaging nature of the platform, there are still challenges in applying it to more structured aspects of language learning. Similarly, Brown and Lee (2020) pointed out that although digital platforms like Roblox can provide significant benefits in terms of engagement, pedagogical strategies and structured guidance are needed to ensure effective learning outcomes.

Gamification, defined as the integration of game-like elements into non-game contexts, has become a popular tool in education. It capitalizes on the engaging nature of games to increase motivation, enhance learning experiences, and improve outcomes. In the context of language learning, gamification has been shown to increase engagement and improve retention (Nilubol, 2023). Gamified elements such as rewards, points, levels, and challenges create an environment where learners are more likely to stay motivated and actively participate in the learning process. Research has demonstrated that gamified platforms like Roblox offer significant potential for enhancing EFL learners' language skills. Studies have highlighted that language learning through games can promote active engagement with vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation through immersive and interactive activities (Han et al., 2023; Sinar et al., 2023). The use of game-based tools like Roblox aligns with theories of motivational learning, where learners are driven by intrinsic and extrinsic motivators (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Moreover, game-based learning provides a dynamic, contextualized environment for practicing language in a way that traditional methods often do not. Roblox, a widely popular online platform, allows users to create, share, and play games designed by others. This interactive platform presents numerous features that can be utilized for language learning. Voice chat and interactive game environments provide learners with opportunities to practice both spoken and written language in real-time communication with peers. Miller and Smith (2022) identified Roblox as a unique digital tool that facilitates interactive language practice, but they also pointed out that its full potential has not been fully explored, particularly in the areas of grammar and pronunciation.

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory emphasizes the role of social interaction in language development, supporting the idea that communication with native speakers or advanced learners can significantly enhance language acquisition. Roblox's multiplayer games offer opportunities for learners to interact with players from different parts of the world, thereby providing authentic language practice. This interaction can enhance pronunciation through real-time feedback and increase learners' motivation as they engage with speakers from diverse backgrounds (Ramanujam & Ismail, 2024). Teaching grammar and pronunciation remains a significant challenge in EFL classrooms. Traditional methods of teaching grammar, such as rote memorization and explicit rule explanation, often fail to engage learners and may not lead to

lasting retention (Ellis, 2003). Gamified approaches, however, have been shown to increase learner engagement and facilitate active learning, allowing students to practice grammar and pronunciation in contextualized, meaningful ways. Roblox's interactive voice features offer the possibility for learners to practice pronunciation by mimicking native speakers and receiving immediate feedback on their performance. Additionally, the repetition inherent in many games helps reinforce correct pronunciation through corrective mechanisms, providing learners with repeated practice in a low-stakes environment (Skinner, 1953). For grammar learning, using games that integrate task-based activities can be highly beneficial. Task-based language teaching (TBLT), as proposed by Ellis (2003), emphasizes the use of meaningful communication tasks to practice language structures. In the context of Roblox, learners can engage with tasks that involve grammar-focused gameplay, such as fill-in-the-blank games or sentence formation challenges, which can help reinforce grammar concepts through interactive application.

Despite the promising potential of Roblox in language learning, challenges remain. One significant issue is the lack of structured language guidance within the platform itself. While Roblox offers numerous interactive features, it is not designed specifically as a language-learning tool, and the integration of language instruction within the game is often limited (Miller & Smith, 2022). As a result, learners may struggle with applying grammar rules in a consistent, structured way without proper scaffolding or instructional guidance. Additionally, technical issues such as internet connectivity and platform accessibility may hinder the learning process for some students. Technical difficulties such as lagging, server issues, or difficulty in understanding accents can impede learners' ability to practice pronunciation effectively (Selwyn, 2016).

This study, therefore, aims to fill the gap in the literature by exploring how EFL learners perceive the use of Roblox as a tool to study grammar and pronunciation. Specifically, it investigates how students engage with Roblox's interactive features to practice language skills, the challenges they encounter, and the strategies they employ to overcome these difficulties. The research also examines how the platform affects their overall learning experience, especially in terms of improving grammatical accuracy and pronunciation. By focusing on these aspects, this study contributes to the growing body of research on gamification in education, offering valuable insights into how digital platforms like Roblox can be leveraged to enhance language learning.

METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative design to explore how Roblox can support grammar and pronunciation learning among EFL learners. The qualitative approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions of using Roblox as a language learning tool. The methodology draws on narrative inquiry, focusing on how individuals make sense of their lived experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Data collection occurred in two phases: in the first phase, participants, who were university students aged between 20 and 22 years, spent 10–15 minutes playing a game on Roblox that involved grammar and pronunciation exercises. During these game sessions, observations were conducted to gauge participants' engagement and interactions with the platform. These observations provided rich context to the semi-structured interviews, which took place in the second phase. Each interview, lasting 20–30 minutes, sought to gather insights into the learners' experiences, challenges, and the features they found most beneficial. Participants were asked about how they used the platform, the specific grammar and pronunciation skills they felt improved, and the obstacles they encountered. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for flexible, in depth exploration of individual experiences (Creswell, 2012). After completing the interviews, the researcher analyzed the data and wrote reflective narratives,

synthesizing key themes such as engagement, grammar and pronunciation improvement, motivation, and challenges. These narratives offered a comprehensive understanding of how Roblox impacted learners' language acquisition and provided valuable insights into the platform's effectiveness as a tool for grammar and pronunciation practice.

The observation phase allows researchers to understand how participants interact with the platform directly. During this phase, I observed participants play Roblox for 10 minutes in a pre-designed game to practice their grammar and pronunciation skills. It's crucial to observe non-verbal interactions, such as how students navigate the game's features and their engagement in the activities. These observations provide context that enriches the data collected in the interviews, providing a more complete picture of the students' interactions with the platform. These observations are particularly useful for capturing moments of interaction that may not be explicitly mentioned during the interviews.

In this study, the semi-structured interview questions were organized into five key constructs to explore various aspects of using Roblox for language learning, specifically grammar and pronunciation. The first construct, focused on *grammar improvement*, included 3 questions to examine how participants used Roblox for grammar practice, the specific grammar skills they improved, and the challenges they faced. The second construct, related to *pronunciation improvement*, also comprised 3 questions, exploring how participants utilized Roblox's voice features to practice pronunciation and any difficulties encountered. The third construct, addressing *Roblox features that enhance language learning*, had 1 question to identify which features of the platform participants found most beneficial for grammar and pronunciation development. The fourth construct, which dealt with *technical challenges*, included 2 questions about the technical difficulties participants faced, such as connectivity issues or accent comprehension, and how these affected their learning experience. Finally, the fifth construct, focused on *confidence in using English after using Roblox*, consisted of 1 question to assess whether the platform boosted participants' confidence in using English. Each construct ensured that the study captured a comprehensive understanding of how Roblox can support language learning, while also addressing any potential barriers or challenges learners may face.

The data collection procedure for this study followed a two-phase process. In the first phase, participants were asked to play a Roblox game designed to practice grammar and pronunciation for 10–15 minutes. During this phase, I observed their interactions with the platform directly through Roblox, focusing on how they navigated the game, engaged with grammar and pronunciation tasks, and responded to in-game challenges. This allowed me to capture non-verbal behaviors and game specific interactions that were crucial for understanding their engagement. In the second phase, I conducted semi-structured interviews via Zoom, lasting 20–30 minutes. During the interviews, I asked participants about their experiences using Roblox, the grammar and pronunciation skills they felt improved, and the challenges they faced. The interview questions were based on the constructs I had developed, which were designed to explore various aspects of language learning through Roblox. This two-step process allowed for a comprehensive understanding of both the participants' direct engagement with Roblox and their reflective insights, providing rich qualitative data for analysis.

Data collected from both the Roblox observation and semi structured interviews were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the first phase, the observation of participants' interactions with the Roblox platform provided contextual data that was essential for understanding how learners engaged with the game to practice grammar and pronunciation. During the game sessions, the researcher took note of participants' non verbal behaviors, such as how they navigated the platform, responded to in game grammar tasks, and interacted with other players. These observations were then compared with the insights gathered

from the interviews (Creswell, 2012).

In the second phase, the semi-structured interviews, which focused on participants' perceptions and experiences, were transcribed and coded. The interview data were analyzed to identify recurring themes related to grammar improvement, pronunciation practice, challenges faced, and the perceived motivational aspects of the Roblox platform. The questions during the interviews were aligned with the key constructs developed for this study, which were: grammar improvement, pronunciation improvement, Roblox features, technical challenges, and learners' confidence in using English.

The coding process involved reviewing the transcripts to identify specific phrases and expressions related to these themes, which were then categorized. The data were organized into thematic categories, allowing the researcher to draw connections between participants' experiences, their engagement with Roblox, and their overall language learning progress. To ensure the validity of the findings, the data analysis was conducted iteratively, with constant comparison between observations and interview responses (Charmaz, 2014). This thematic approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how Roblox facilitated language learning and the challenges learners encountered. Descriptive statistics were also applied to quantify the frequency of themes, ensuring that the findings were both meaningful and representative of the participants' experiences.

RESULTS

In this section, we present the key insights derived from the participant interviews regarding their experiences using Roblox as a tool for learning grammar and pronunciation. The findings were categorized into four main themes: Grammar Improvement, Pronunciation Improvement, Engagement and Motivation, and Challenges Encountered. These themes reflect the participants' perceptions of how Roblox contributed to their language learning process and highlight the various benefits and limitations they experienced.

The following mind map summarizes the key insights gathered from the interviews, providing a visual representation of the core findings related to grammar enhancement, pronunciation practice, motivation factors, and the challenges faced during the learning process.

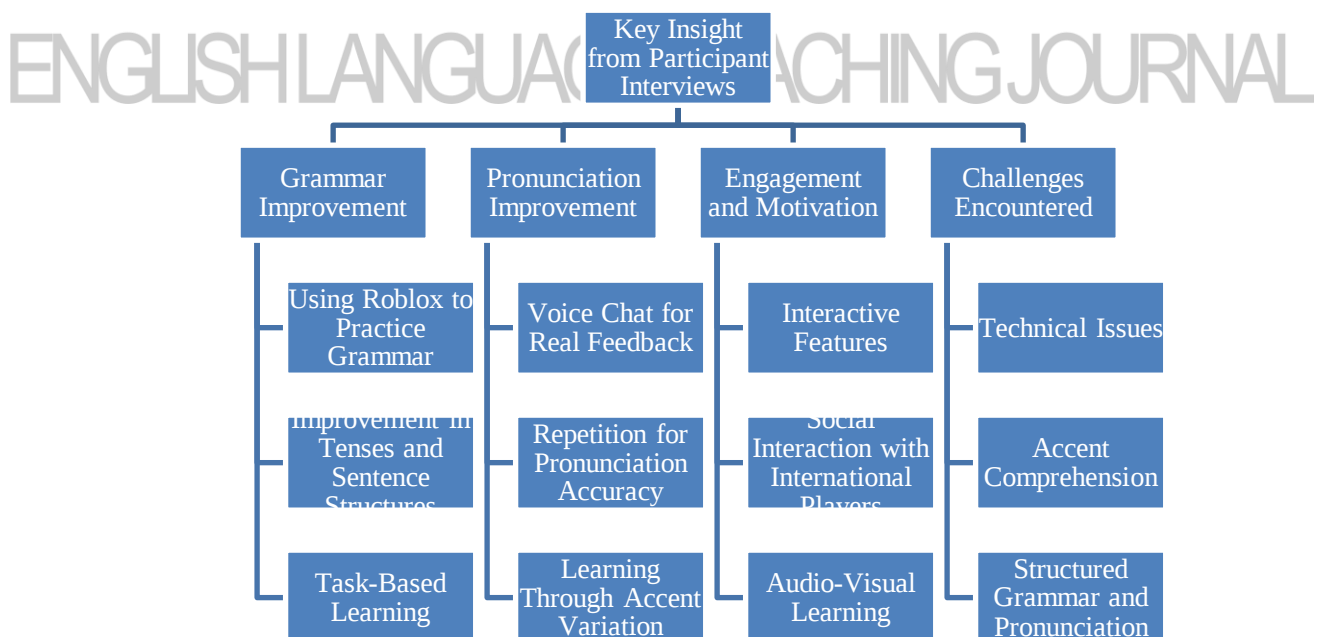


Figure 1: Key Insights from Participant Interviews on Using Roblox for Grammar and

Pronunciation

Reflection on Participant 1

In the interview with Participant 1, it was learned how Roblox helped improve their basic grammar and tense usage. Participant 1 felt that playing Roblox had a positive impact on their understanding of basic grammar, particularly present tense and simple sentences. As stated, "Setelah bermain beberapa kali, saya rasa penggunaan basic grammar saya dan tenses basic simple sentence cukup memuaskan hasilnya". This reflects improvement in using basic grammar and simple tenses, particularly in a practical, engaging context. However, a challenge was also pointed out: while Roblox is engaging and interactive, it doesn't provide structured explanations about grammar as one might receive in a traditional classroom setting. Participant 1 mentioned, "Tantangannya bagi saya adalah karena Roblox ini dia basic-nya tetap game. Jadi materi-materi bahasa Inggris, baik itu grammar, tenses, atau pronunciation yang diberikan dalam bentuk game tidak memberikan penjelasan lengkap seperti yang didapatkan di pelajaran di kelas". This realization highlights that while game-based learning is enjoyable and motivating, it may lack the deeper contextual knowledge necessary for full language understanding.

A significant moment during the interview was when Participant 1 discussed the voice chat feature in the game, which helped practice pronunciation. They emphasized that by interacting with international players using voice chat, they were able to improve their English speaking skills. Participant 1 said, "Saya berinteraksi dengan pemain internasional menggunakan voice chat, dan itu membantu saya meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara saya". However, technical difficulties such as internet connection issues were also encountered, often disrupting the learning experience. As Participant 1 explained, "Teknis yang paling umum saya dapatkan saat bermain Roblox itu sudah pasti koneksi jaringan". This reflection underscores that while technology can enhance learning, technical issues need to be addressed when using platforms like Roblox for educational purposes.

Reflection on Participant 2

In the interview with Participant 2, it was discovered how Roblox can significantly improve tense usage and confidence in speaking. Participant 2 noted, "Yang paling signifikan yang saya rasakan skill yang pertama itu skill tensis, karena kan kita ngomong bukan pakai perkataan, tapi perkalamat gitu kan". They highlighted that interaction with international players helped gain confidence in using past and present tenses. This experience illustrates the importance of social interaction in language learning, as Roblox provided opportunities to engage in authentic conversations with native and non-native English speakers.

However, challenges were also faced, particularly with accent and speed of speech when communicating with players from different countries. Participant 2 shared, "Kadang kalau ngobrol sama pemain dari luar, kecepatan bicaranya itu agak susah buat saya, terutama saat berbicara dengan native speakers". They pointed out that sometimes it was difficult to respond quickly due to the speed of the conversation, especially with native English speakers. This reflection reveals that while Roblox provides great opportunities for language practice, speed and accent barriers might make it difficult for some learners, especially those who are not accustomed to rapid, varied English accents.

Their experience also brought attention to the importance of motivation in language learning. Participant 2 mentioned, "Ketemu dengan banyak player internasional yang rata-rata menggunakan

bahasa Inggris, itu memotivasi saya untuk belajar lebih baik lagi". Meeting international players and the necessity of communicating in English to play the game increased motivation to improve skills.

Reflection on Participant 3

In the interview with Participant 3, it was found that Roblox not only helped improve grammar but also in understanding different accents in English. Participant 3 shared that voice chat in Roblox helped practice pronunciation, especially when interacting with players from different parts of the world. They said, "Kalau untuk pronunciation ya bisa berbagai voice chat. .dalam game-nya itu ada banyak player yang memainkan game tersebut dan rata-rata orang ini kan, orang luar-luar Indonesia kan". This reflects how engaging with a diverse group of players helped improve pronunciation.

However, Participant 3 encountered challenges in understanding various accents and adjusting to the speed of conversation, which highlighted the importance of listening skills in real-time interactions. They shared, "Tantangannya itu ya...karena dari pengetahuanku juga ya mungkin agak, mungkin masih beberapa ada yang belum aku ketahui, jadi lebih ke arah pengetahuan diri masing-masing". They noted that sometimes it was difficult to understand players because of their accents, which required adjusting listening skills.

Despite this challenge, Participant 3 emphasized that Roblox helped them stay motivated due to the variety of games and the opportunity to communicate with international players. They explained, "Mungkin dari variasi games-nya ya? Karena kan di Roblox itu kan ada banyak jenis game yang bisa kita gunakan juga untuk belajar bahasa Inggris". This experience helped them feel more confident in using English in conversations. Their reflection reinforced the crucial role motivation plays in language learning, especially when derived from real-life interactions and the necessity to communicate effectively in the game. It also highlighted the need to consider diverse accents and the speed of conversation when using gamified learning platforms.

DISCUSSION

This section discusses the findings of the study in greater detail, linking the themes identified in the interviews with existing theories and research. The key themes that emerged Grammar Improvement, Pronunciation Improvement, Engagement and Motivation, and Challenges Encountered are examined below. Each theme is compared with relevant literature to provide deeper insights into how Roblox functions as a tool for language learning in EFL contexts.

Grammar Learning through Roblox

Grammar Improvement was one of the most prominent in the study. Participants reported significant gains in their grammar skills, particularly with tense usage and sentence structures. They noted that using Roblox to practice grammar through interactive games, like sentence construction challenges and grammar-focused maps, allowed them to apply grammar rules in context.

For example, Using Roblox to Practice Grammar was cited by participants as an engaging way to learn. This method aligns with Ellis's (2003) Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which emphasizes using language in real-life, communicative tasks. In the case of Roblox, learners practice grammar in context, reinforcing their learning in a dynamic setting, which proves more effective than rote memorization. Furthermore, the informal learning environment created within Roblox allowed learners to develop grammar skills without the pressure of traditional classroom structures.

Pronunciation Improvement through Roblox

Another significant finding was Pronunciation Improvement, where participants highlighted the role of voice chat in enhancing their pronunciation. The real time interactions with international players allowed learners to hear native pronunciations and receive immediate feedback, which improved their pronunciation accuracy.

Additionally, participants benefitted from the Repetition for Pronunciation Practice, a feature inherent in the gaming environment. In Roblox, learners repeatedly engaged in pronunciation tasks, and if they mispronounced words, the game mechanics often required them to retry. This repetition facilitated the Reinforcement Theory proposed by Skinner (1953), where learners' correct actions are reinforced through repetition, helping them internalize correct pronunciation.

Social Interaction with International Players also contributed to Pronunciation Improvement. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory posits that learning is enhanced when learners interact with more skilled or native speakers, and this was evident in the study. Participants noted that engaging with players from different countries helped them better understand diverse accents and improved their spoken English in context.

Engagement and Motivation through Game Features

The third theme, Engagement and Motivation, was strongly influenced by Roblox's interactive game features. Intrinsic Motivation was particularly significant, as learners expressed that the game's rewards and challenges kept them engaged and motivated. Gardner's (2001) theory of Integrative Motivation highlights that social interactions with native speakers or advanced learners can lead to higher motivation, and this was evident as participants were motivated by interacting with international players, which improved their language skills.

Participants also appreciated the Visual and Audio Features of Roblox, which contributed to their motivation and helped them remain engaged. Mayer's (2005) multimedia learning theory supports this finding, suggesting that the integration of visual and auditory elements in educational content enhances understanding and strengthens motivation. Roblox's game environment utilized engaging visuals, colors, and sound effects, all of which contributed to maintaining participants' interest in learning English.

Moreover, Interaction with International Players in real-time was cited as a major motivator. The opportunity to communicate with players from different parts of the world made the learning experience feel more authentic. Deci and Ryan (1985) suggest that intrinsic motivation is fueled by the need to feel competent and connected with others, and the interaction within Roblox's diverse community supported this motivation.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the potential of Roblox as an innovative tool for enhancing grammar and pronunciation skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The findings indicate that Roblox, with its interactive and gamified features, plays a significant role in engaging learners, motivating them, and providing opportunities for real-time language practice. Specifically, learners reported improvements in their grammar, such as better use of tenses and sentence structures, and in their pronunciation, facilitated through voice chat and interactions with international players. These results support the idea that gamification, as an educational approach, can foster a more engaging and effective learning experience for EFL learners.

The research also highlighted the motivational power of Roblox, particularly through its in-

game challenges, rewards, and the opportunity to interact with a diverse group of players. The integration of these features into the learning process encouraged active participation and sustained interest in language practice, which is crucial for language acquisition. As participants engaged with the platform, they experienced an increase in their language learning confidence, especially in grammar application and pronunciation practice, which aligns with established theories of motivation, such as those by Gardner (2001) and Deci & Ryan (1985).

However, despite the positive aspects, several challenges were identified in the study. A key concern was the lack of structured grammar instruction and explicit explanations of language rules within the Roblox platform. While the game's interactive features were engaging, they did not provide the depth of grammatical instruction needed for more advanced learners, particularly in terms of comprehensive grammar explanations. As a result, learners may encounter difficulties in applying complex grammar structures consistently. This challenge points to the need for enhanced instructional design, where Roblox could integrate more explicit language teaching elements to ensure that learners not only practice grammar in context but also understand the rules behind the language structures they are using.

Another significant challenge identified in the study was technical difficulties, particularly related to internet connectivity and accent comprehension. These technical barriers often disrupted the learning experience, making it harder for learners to fully engage with the platform. In addition, the diversity of accents and speech patterns among international players created difficulties in understanding spoken language, particularly for learners who were not accustomed to various English accents. This issue reflects the broader challenge of adapting to different spoken forms of English, which could be addressed by incorporating accent training or subtitled content within the game.

Despite these challenges, the overall feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing an increased sense of confidence in their ability to use English in everyday communication. The findings underscore the importance of motivation and engagement in language learning, which are strongly supported by the immersive, social, and dynamic features of Roblox. The social interaction with international players, in particular, enhanced learners' engagement and provided a more authentic context for practicing language skills.

In conclusion, Roblox holds significant potential as a tool for language learning, particularly in enhancing grammar and pronunciation. However, to maximize its effectiveness, it is crucial to integrate more structured instructional content and address the technical barriers that learners face. Educators can leverage the motivational and interactive aspects of the platform while ensuring that learners have access to the necessary linguistic guidance. Future research should focus on refining the integration of educational strategies within Roblox, as well as exploring its potential for other aspects of language learning. The findings of this study provide a foundation for future developments in digital language learning tools and offer practical insights for educators seeking to incorporate gamification into their teaching methods.

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