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Social, Interactive, and Gamified Affordances in Mobile-Assisted Arabic Language Learning: Learners' Perceptions of Motivation in Busuu

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ABSTRACT

Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) applications combine structured instruction, social interaction, and gamification, yet how learners perceive these affordances in Arabic learning warrants examination. This study examines social, interactive, and gamified affordances in Busuu and learners' perceptions of their role in motivation to learn Arabic. A case study design combined qualitative content analysis of Busuu features with descriptive analysis of questionnaire responses from 20 Arabic Language Education students in Madura, Indonesia, with prior Busuu experience. The questionnaire comprised 29 five-point Likert-type statements and one categorical item; responses were summarized using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Platform analysis identified structured learning pathways, written and oral production activities, community comments and corrections, voice feedback, reminders, learning goals, and progress indicators. Questionnaire responses showed positive perceptions of accessibility (M = 5.00), support for independent learning (M = 4.90), and overall benefits for Arabic learning (M = 4.95). However, perceptions of established learning habits were less uniform (M = 3.75). These results distinguish affordances available in the platform from learners' self-reported perceptions. They do not establish that Busuu's features cause increased motivation or measurable language gains. The study offers a context-specific account of Busuu in mobile-assisted Arabic language learning.

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Introduction

In mobile-based language learning, sustaining learner engagement is as important as providing access to learning resources (Khuluq et al., 2024). Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) enables learners to study more flexibly and autonomously (Loewen et al., 2019), but such flexibility also means that the continuity of learning activities depends largely on how learners experience and respond to the learning environment provided (Hwang et al., 2024). Therefore, research on MALL should not focus solely on whether applications provide learning materials, but also on how they support learners' motivation and engagement throughout the learning process.

One application that has received attention in MALL research is Busuu. As a mobile-based language learning application, Busuu combines structured learning with various practice activities and user interaction (Citrayasa, 2019). Rosell's study of 4,095 Busuu users showed that learners used various application features to support their language learning and provided insights into patterns of use and the features perceived as valuable by learners (Aguilar, 2018). This study is particularly important because it presents Busuu as a mobile learning environment used by learners in authentic settings rather than merely as a medium evaluated in a classroom experiment. Beyond its use in authentic learning settings, Busuu constitutes a theoretically informative case because it brings together two dimensions that are often considered separately in mobile-assisted language learning: individually managed learning through structured activities and opportunities for social participation through interaction with other users (Soyupak & İpek, 2024). This combination is particularly relevant to Arabic language learning, where learners may engage with both written and oral language production within a mobile environment. Examining Busuu therefore provides an opportunity to investigate how social and interactive affordances coexist with structured learning activities and how learners perceive their role in motivating continued Arabic language learning

Research on Busuu has examined its potential for autonomous language learning and its role as a socially interactive learning environment. Specifically, Safitri and Dian Danayanti Safitri and Degeng (2026) investigated learners' experiences with Busuu in supporting autonomous English learning, highlighting learners' independent management of learning, including time management and control over the learning process. Valencia (2016) examined Busuu as a social networking site for language learning, drawing attention to its participatory design and the relationship between language learning and socialization. Similarly, AlDakhil and AlFadda (2021) investigated EFL learners' perceptions of the Busuu application, providing a platform-specific perspective on its use in language learning. In a broader context, Chamani et al. (2023) conducted a longitudinal study of motivational and emotional states in self-directed

language learning, showing that these experiences may fluctuate throughout the learning process. Although this study does not specifically establish how learners experience Busuu, it provides a broader perspective for understanding motivation in self-directed language learning. Taken together, these studies provide complementary insights: Busuu-specific research highlights the application's autonomous and social learning dimensions, while broader research on self-directed language learning illustrates the dynamic nature of learners' motivational experiences. However, further investigation is needed to understand how the social, interactive, and gamified affordances available in Busuu are perceived by learners in relation to their motivation to learn Arabic.

Taken together, previous studies suggest that Busuu provides opportunities for autonomous learning and social participation, while broader research indicates that learners' motivational experiences may fluctuate over time. However, these findings do not fully explain how learners perceive the role of multiple platform affordances in their motivation within a specific language-learning context. Research specifically addressing Busuu for Arabic language learning has largely examined its instructional design and pedagogical potential. Huda explored Busuu.com as interactive multimedia for Arabic learning (Huda, 2017), Albantani (2018) discussed its use for independent Arabic learning, and Taufik et al. (2023) examined its features as a learning medium for beginners. More recently, Imaduddin and Bahruddin compared the content organization, teaching strategies, and technological features of Busuu, AlifBee, and Arabits (Imaduddin & Bahruddin, 2025). These studies provide useful evidence about the application's learning materials and technological affordances, but they do not, within the scope of their respective analyses, establish how learners perceive the combined role of social, interactive, and gamified affordances in their motivation to learn Arabic. This gap is particularly relevant to Arabic learning because written production, orthography, diacritics (*harakat*), morphological forms, and pronunciation create specific contexts in which learners may receive and interpret feedback. Busuu's written corrections and voice-feedback facilities provide opportunities for responses to written and oral production, although their availability does not establish the accuracy of feedback or its perceived motivational value. Accordingly, the present study addresses a contextual and methodological gap by combining the analysis of selected Busuu affordances with questionnaire data on learners' perceptions of their role in Arabic-learning motivation among university students in Madura, Indonesia, without assuming a causal relationship between platform features and motivation.

Building on this gap, the contribution of this study lies in examining Busuu's social, interactive, and gamified affordances alongside learners' perceptions of their role in Arabic-learning motivation. Rather than evaluating the effectiveness of Busuu or comparing it with other applications, this study combines an analysis of selected platform features with

questionnaire data from university students in Madura, Indonesia, who have used Busuu for Arabic learning. By distinguishing the affordances identified through platform analysis from learners' self-reported perceptions, the study provides a context-specific account of how these features are perceived in mobile-assisted Arabic language learning without assuming a causal relationship between platform features and motivation. Accordingly, the study addresses two research questions: RQ1: What social, interactive, and gamified affordances does Busuu provide for Arabic language learning? RQ2: How do learners perceive the role of Busuu's social, interactive, and gamified affordances in their motivation to learn Arabic?

Method

Research Design and Case Boundaries

This study employed a case study design combining qualitative content analysis of selected Busuu features with descriptive analysis of questionnaire data. The case was bounded by the selected social, interactive, and gamified affordances of Busuu's Arabic-learning environment and the perceptions of university students who had used the application for Arabic learning. The study focused on the relationship between observed platform affordances and learners' perceptions of their role in motivation, rather than evaluating the application's effectiveness or establishing causal relationships (Creswell & Poth, 2023). Platform observations were conducted during early 2026, and the study examined participants' existing experiences rather than a researcher-prescribed learning intervention.

Participants and Sampling Procedures

The participants were 20 university students enrolled in Arabic Language Education in Madura, Indonesia. They were selected purposively based on their previous experience using Busuu for Arabic learning, and participation was voluntary. Participants had used the application for periods ranging from less than one month to six months, with varying weekly usage frequencies. Detailed participant characteristics and usage patterns are reported in the Results section. The sample was intended to provide context-specific descriptive evidence rather than statistical representativeness.

Platform Observation and Qualitative Content Analysis

The platform analysis used direct exploration of selected features through Busuu's mobile application and website with free access. The observation corpus was organized into four categories: (1) learning pathways and instructional materials, (2) exercises and language production, (3) community interaction and user corrections, and (4) gamification, reminders, and learning progress. The unit of analysis was an identifiable platform feature or sequence of actions relevant to these categories, such as submitting written production for community

correction or accessing reminders and progress indicators. Mayring's qualitative content analysis approach informed the systematic categorization and interpretation of the observed features Mayring, 2014). The observation records did not document the exact number of screens or instructional units examined, the precise application version, or a complete screen-by-screen inventory; therefore, the analysis is limited to the selected features documented during exploration rather than the entire platform.

Questionnaire Instrument and Descriptive Data Analysis

The questionnaire consisted of 29 closed-ended Likert-type statements rated on a five-point scale and one categorical item asking participants to identify the language skill they perceived as most improved. The items addressed access and convenience, learning structure, independent learning, gamification and learning continuity, motivational experiences, social comparison and rewards, and perceived language-learning benefits. Examples included statements concerning the flexibility of learning anytime and anywhere, the enjoyment associated with game elements, and changes in interest in Arabic. Questionnaire responses were analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages for categorical data and item-level means and standard deviations for Likert-type responses. The number and percentage of responses rated 4 or 5 were also calculated to summarize positive perceptions. Items were interpreted individually rather than combined into a composite motivation score. The available records did not document formal pilot testing, external validation, or psychometric validation; consequently, the results were treated as descriptive self-reports rather than scores from a validated motivational scale.

Cross-Source Data Integration and Interpretation

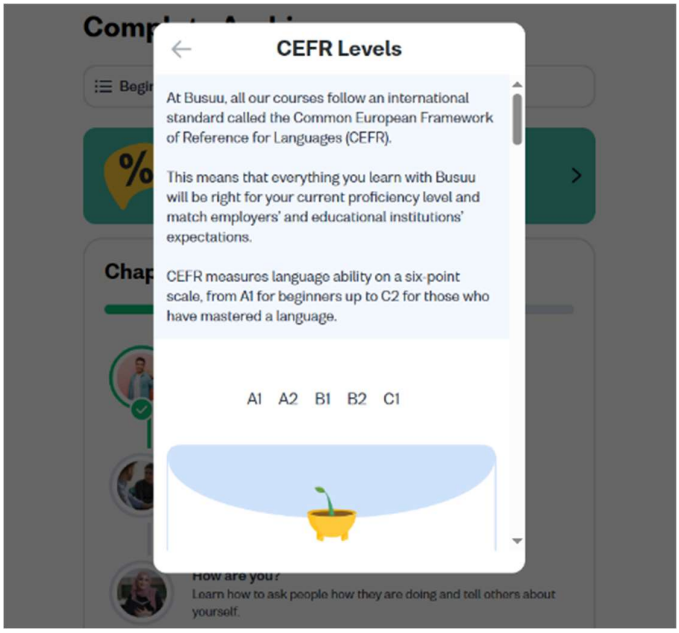
The two data sources were analyzed separately and subsequently integrated using a cross-source evidence matrix informed by the data-display and conclusion-drawing principles of Miles (Miles et al., 2014). The matrix compared observed affordances with relevant questionnaire items and their descriptive response patterns, identifying convergence only where the evidence addressed sufficiently similar aspects of the learning experience. Divergent or non-equivalent evidence was retained rather than forced into agreement. In particular, observations of community corrections established the availability of social interaction opportunities but did not demonstrate that participants had received such feedback or that it increased their motivation; questionnaire items about social comparison were not treated as direct evidence of community-feedback experiences. Questionnaire participation was voluntary, and responses were reported in aggregate.

Results and Discussion

Content Analysis of Busuu

The content analysis identified a structured and progressive learning pathway in Busuu's Arabic course. The observed learning structure comprised levels, chapters, lessons, and exercises or tasks, with materials ranging from greetings and introductions to Arabic letters, diacritics (*harakat*), numbers, colors, vocabulary, and grammar. The course structure was organized to guide learners through successive stages of learning, with proficiency levels reported as aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Busuu, 2025).

Figure 1. CEFR Level Explanation



Beyond this structured pathway, the analysis identified opportunities for written and oral language production, community-based feedback, and mechanisms for tracking learning progress. To make the analytical process transparent, Table 1 links each analytical category to the observed platform features, empirical examples, and their pedagogical functions and relevance to social interaction and motivation in Arabic language learning.

Table 1. Analytical Categories and Observed Affordances in Busuu

Analytical category	Observed platform features	Empirical examples	Pedagogical function and relevance to social interaction and motivation
Learning pathways and instructional	Hierarchical organization of learning	Levels, chapters, lessons, and exercises; materials on greetings,	Provides an organized pathway for accessing and progressing through

materials	materials and learning progress indicators	introductions, Arabic letters, *harakat*, numbers, colors, vocabulary, and grammar	learning materials. Visible progress may help learners identify completed activities and subsequent learning steps.
Exercises and language production	Written and oral production activities with opportunities for review and revision	Learners can write or record responses, review their output, edit written responses, and re-record oral responses before submission	Provides opportunities to produce and review Arabic rather than only receive input or select answers. Submission also creates a potential link between individual practice and community interaction.
Community interaction and user corrections	Community comments, direct written corrections, suggestions, and voice feedback	Submitted written or oral productions can receive responses from other users asynchronously	Provides opportunities for social participation and feedback on language production. Such opportunities may be relevant to learners' motivational experiences, although feedback accuracy, receipt, and motivational effects were not directly assessed.
Gamification, reminders, and learning progress	Daily goals, weekly challenges, reminders, and progress indicators	Notifications about learning activities and displays of learning progress	Makes learning goals and progress visible and provides prompts to resume learning. These features offer potential motivational support, but their actual effects on learning continuity or motivation cannot be established through platform observation alone.

As shown in Table 1, the observed features form a learning environment that connects structured materials, language practice, opportunities for social interaction, and mechanisms for tracking progress. The learning pathway organizes access to instructional content, while written and oral exercises allow learners to produce and review their language output. The community features extend some of these activities beyond individual practice by allowing submitted productions to receive comments, corrections, suggestions, or voice feedback from other users. This sequence can be understood as a platform-supported opportunity to connect individual language production with social responses.

The analysis also identified daily goals, weekly challenges, reminders, and progress indicators as mechanisms that make learning activities and progress visible. These mechanisms may provide prompts for continued participation, while the structured pathway helps users identify their next learning activities. Nevertheless, the presence of such features should not be interpreted as evidence that they necessarily sustain motivation or produce consistent learning habits. Similarly, the availability of community interaction should not be equated with a demonstrated improvement in Arabic proficiency. Overall, the content analysis answers RQ1 by identifying four categories of social, interactive, and gamified affordances in the selected Busuu features.

At the operational level, this pathway is translated into a hierarchical learning structure. The materials are organized into levels, chapters, lessons, exercises/tasks, and assessments, giving each stage a defined position within the overall learning journey. This structure clarifies the relationship between one learning activity and the next and provides indicators of learners' positions within the learning process. The analysis also shows that the interface visually displays the learner's current position, level, and progress, enabling learners to identify completed activities and determine which activities should be undertaken next.

From a content perspective, this structure does not merely guide learners toward understanding the material but gradually leads them toward language use. Learning activities provide opportunities for learners to develop language output through both written and oral practice. In voice-based activities, for example, the analysis found that learners can record their oral production, listen to the recording, delete and re-record it, and review the result before submitting it. In written activities, learners can write, review, edit, and then submit their production. These findings indicate that Busuu provides a production-review-revision-submission sequence rather than merely a pattern of receiving input and selecting answers.

This productive dimension is particularly relevant because learners' written and oral productions can be shared within Busuu's social environment. The platform provides opportunities for submitted responses to receive comments, direct written corrections,

suggestions, and voice feedback from other users. These features create possibilities for learners to obtain responses to their language production and, where applicable, review or revise their submissions. Voice feedback may provide opportunities for pronunciation-related responses, while written corrections may draw attention to aspects of written language production. However, the availability of these features does not establish that feedback is linguistically accurate, that learners consistently receive responses, or that such feedback improves pronunciation or other aspects of Arabic proficiency. Because this study examined platform affordances rather than the quality and outcomes of actual feedback exchanges, these features are interpreted as opportunities for social interaction rather than demonstrated mechanisms of language development.

This analysis indicates that Busuu's community feature provides a potential link between individual language production and interaction with other users. Learners can submit written or oral responses that may become the basis for comments, corrections, suggestions, or voice feedback, while the platform also provides opportunities for users to respond to other learners' submissions. In this sense, community interaction is embedded within the application's learning environment rather than functioning solely as a separate communication space. Nevertheless, the pedagogical value of these interactions depends on factors that were not directly examined in the present study, including the linguistic competence of users providing corrections, the accuracy and relevance of their feedback, the frequency and timeliness of responses, and the possibility that submissions receive no feedback. Accordingly, the findings establish the availability of community-based interaction affordances but do not demonstrate the reliability or effectiveness of peer correction. Further investigation of actual feedback exchanges would be necessary to determine how these interactions are experienced by learners and how they may contribute to Arabic language learning.

In addition to the learning pathway and community interaction, the content analysis identified gamification mechanisms and features supporting learning continuity. Busuu incorporates mechanisms such as daily goals, weekly challenges, streaks, and progress indicators to maintain users' engagement with learning activities. The notification system can remind users about unfinished lessons, daily goals, or weekly challenges. Thus, the system is not entirely passive in waiting for users to return; rather, it actively provides prompts that encourage the continuation of learning activities.

These continuity mechanisms are supported by account-based storage and synchronization of learning progress across mobile and web platforms. Information such as users' current levels, completed units, exercise performance, vocabulary development, weekly challenges, and community activity can be retained in their accounts and accessed across devices. This allows learners to resume their learning activities based on their recorded

progress without having to restart their learning pathway when switching devices. Thus, these features provide continuity of access and progress tracking across platforms, although they do not by themselves establish a distinct learner identity or demonstrate changes in learners' behavior or motivation.

The analysis further shows that the technical layer supports this overall learning ecosystem. Features such as voice recording, previewing, submission, synchronization, and offline learning enable production and interaction activities to take place with greater flexibility. The stability of recording, submission, and synchronization is important because it allows learners to use production and feedback features without being significantly disrupted by technical difficulties.

Taken together, these findings indicate that the content analysis reveals not merely a collection of features but a learning architecture with a distinctive sequence. Busuu guides learners through a CEFR-oriented learning pathway, provides materials and activities for developing language competence, transforms learners into producers of language output, brings that output into a community space for responses and corrections, and provides gamification and technical support mechanisms to sustain learning continuity. In other words, the pattern identified can be represented as follows:

Figure 2. The Learning Pattern of Busuu



The figure illustrates that Busuu constitutes a progressive and continuous learning architecture, rather than simply providing a collection of independent materials and exercises. The learning process begins with a CEFR-oriented learning path, which places learners within a structured language proficiency pathway, and then proceeds to structured learning activities through various materials and exercises. After receiving linguistic input, learners are guided toward language production, through both written and oral activities. Their productions can subsequently enter the community interaction and feedback space, where users can receive comments, corrections, suggestions, or feedback from other users. The responses received provide a basis for revision, allowing learners to improve and develop their language production. The entire sequence then leads to continued learning, enabling learners to return to the learning pathway and progressively develop their language competence. Thus, the

content analysis demonstrates that the strength of Busuu lies in the interconnection among its learning components, linking structured progression, language production, social interaction, feedback, revision, and continued learning.

Learners' Perceptions of Busuu's Affordances and Motivation

The questionnaire involved 20 Arabic Language Education students in Madura, Indonesia, who had prior experience using Busuu for Arabic learning. Most participants were aged 18-22 (90%), identified as beginner Arabic learners (70%), had used Busuu for one to three months (85%), and accessed the application three to four times per week (75%).

Overall, participants reported positive perceptions of Busuu's accessibility, learning structure, and support for independent learning. Learning anytime and anywhere received the highest mean score (M = 5.00), followed by support for independent learning (M = 4.90). Participants also reported positive motivational experiences: increased interest in Arabic, confidence, and enjoyment each received a mean score of 4.10. The perceived overall benefit of Busuu for Arabic learning received a mean score of 4.95.

Responses concerning gamification were generally positive, although perceptions of sustained learning habits were less uniform. The statement that Busuu helped develop a learning habit received a mean of 4.60, whereas the statement that learning through the application had become a habit received a mean of 3.75. Similarly, continuing to learn despite low interest received a mean of 3.85, with 70% of participants selecting scores of 4 or 5. These differences suggest that positive perceptions of the application do not necessarily indicate consistent learning habits.

Table 2. Summary of Questionnaire Findings (N = 20)

Aspect	Representative item	Mean	Positive responses*
Accessibility	Learning anytime and anywhere	5.00	100%
Independent learning	Supports independent learning	4.90	100%
Gamification	Points encourage continued learning	4.30	100%
Learning habits	Helps develop a learning habit	4.60	100%
Motivation	Increased interest in Arabic	4.10	100%
Perceived learning benefits	Helps Arabic learning overall	4.95	100%
Learning consistency	Continue learning despite low interest	3.85	70%
Habit formation	Learning through the application has become a habit	3.75	75%

Note: Positive responses combine ratings of 4 and 5 on the five-point scale.

Regarding perceived language-learning benefits, vocabulary and reading were each selected by six participants (30%) as the most-developed skill, followed by listening (25%). These responses reflect participants' perceptions rather than objectively measured language gains. In the social dimension, comparison with other users received a mean score of 4.05. However, the questionnaire did not directly measure participants' experiences of receiving community corrections, the quality of feedback, or its perceived influence on motivation.

Taken together, the platform analysis and questionnaire provide complementary evidence. Busuu's observed learning structure corresponds with positive perceptions of accessibility and instructional organization, while the questionnaire indicates generally positive motivational experiences. Nevertheless, the two sources do not establish causal effects. In particular, the availability of community feedback does not demonstrate that participants received such feedback or experienced motivational benefits from it. The findings therefore describe observed platform affordances and self-reported perceptions while recognizing the limits of the available evidence.

The findings of this study show that Busuu organizes Arabic language learning through a learning architecture that connects a progressive learning pathway, structured activities, language production, community interaction, feedback, revision, and continued learning. This finding complements previous research that characterizes Busuu as a social networking site for language learning, particularly its participatory environment that connects language learning with socialization (Valencia, 2016). The present analysis further illustrates how opportunities for social interaction are embedded within the learning pathway: after engaging with instructional materials and completing individual practice, learners can submit their written or oral productions to the community and potentially receive responses from other users. Such interaction should not be understood as occurring only after language acquisition; rather, it can form part of the language-development process by providing opportunities for learners to use the language, receive feedback, and reconsider their production. This interpretation is consistent with interactionist and sociocultural perspectives that emphasize the role of interaction in language learning and development (Li et al., 2022). However, the present study identifies the availability and sequencing of these affordances rather than demonstrating that learners consistently receive feedback, revise their production, or achieve measurable language gains as a result.

The finding concerning the structured learning pathway also offers a broader perspective on mobile-assisted language learning. MALL literature has often positioned mobile applications as means of providing learning materials, practice, and flexible access to learning

(Ishaq et al., 2021), while the development of gamified applications has increasingly focused on enhancing learners' experiences, motivation, and engagement (Balalle, 2024). In Busuu, these functions appear to be integrated: the learning structure provides direction and continuity, while progress indicators, goals, streaks, and challenges make the learning journey visible to learners. Thus, learners' motivational experiences are not determined solely by the content of the materials (Khuluq & Imamah, 2024), but are also shaped by how the learning environment and learning journey are designed to provide direction, make progress visible, and sustain learner engagement (Mubarak et al., 2024).

One important finding of this study is that language production serves as a link between individual learning and social interaction. Learners do not merely receive input from the application but produce written or oral language that can subsequently be shared with the community. These productions may receive comments, corrections, suggestions, or voice feedback before learners revise them. This pattern makes feedback not merely the endpoint of an activity but part of the learning cycle. In the context of second language learning, this finding is consistent with previous research showing that peer feedback is a multidimensional process that supports not only improvements in language production but also learners' cognitive, affective, behavioral, and social engagement (Chen et al., 2023). Previous research further indicates that the form and degree of such engagement may vary across learners depending on how they experience and respond to the feedback process (Ho & Duong, 2024).

This finding can be further understood in relation to research on mobile-based peer feedback. Ding and Zhu (2025) found that the relationship between motivation and engagement in technology-supported peer feedback was complex: learners' motivational constructs did not directly predict their behavioral engagement in providing feedback, although such engagement was associated with the feedback providers' achievement. Similarly, Xu and Rahim (2025) reported positive outcomes of peer feedback and social support for motivation, task engagement, and language mastery in an online EFL learning context. Nevertheless, the potential benefits of peer feedback should not be considered automatic or universal. Previous research has identified difficulties in providing and interpreting peer feedback, preferences for instructor feedback, and unproductive patterns of interaction (Baharudin & Razali, 2021). In a community-based environment such as Busuu, the usefulness of feedback may also depend on its linguistic accuracy, the consistency of participation, response timing, learners' relative proficiency, and whether recipients feel comfortable receiving corrections from other users. Empirical evidence has also shown that the accuracy of peer feedback may be moderate and its potential to support revision limited, indicating that the availability of corrections does not necessarily guarantee their quality or usefulness (He & Gao, 2023). Moreover, Weng et al. found that although peer feedback improved students' recognition and evaluation of feedback

quality, it did not significantly improve their use of feedback information (Weng et al., 2024). These findings suggest that, in asynchronous community-based environments such as Busuu, response availability and timing, correction accuracy, and the suitability of feedback to learners' needs warrant consideration. However, because the present study did not examine actual feedback exchanges, these factors are treated as potential constraints rather than established problems experienced by Busuu users.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides an interpretive lens for considering the potential motivational relevance of Busuu's learning environment. The theory identifies autonomy, competence, and relatedness as basic psychological needs associated with motivation (Shelton-Strong, 2022) . In second language learning, Alamer (2022) examined how satisfaction of these needs relates to motivational orientations, learning effort, and vocabulary knowledge, providing empirical support for considering basic psychological needs in understanding language-learning motivation. In the present study, however, these needs were not measured directly; therefore, the observed platform features should be understood as affordances that may provide opportunities relevant to these needs, rather than as evidence that the needs were satisfied. Busuu's self-directed learning pathway and flexible learning activities may offer opportunities for learner autonomy, while levels, progress indicators, and opportunities to review language production may provide information about learning progress that is relevant to perceived competence. Similarly, community comments, corrections, and voice feedback create opportunities for social interaction that may be relevant to relatedness. Nevertheless, the presence of these features does not establish how learners experienced them psychologically or whether they contributed to their motivation. The questionnaire findings indicate generally positive self-reported motivational experiences, but the items were not designed to measure autonomy, competence, or relatedness as distinct constructs.

interpretation helps explain the questionnaire findings. Positive responses regarding enjoyment of learning, interest in Arabic, confidence, satisfaction, and continuity of learning should not be This understood solely as effects of gamification. Mechanisms such as streaks, daily goals, levels, and achievements provide stimuli for sustaining learning activities, but students' motivational experiences also emerged in more internal dimensions. This finding is consistent with a systematic review of gamification in language learning, which indicates that gamified environments are often associated with enjoyable, engaging, and motivating learning experiences, although the sustainability of motivational benefits and potential dependence on external rewards remain important concerns (Dehghanzadeh et al., 2021).

Accordingly, gamification in this study is better understood as one component of Busuu's motivational environment rather than a complete explanation of learners' motivation.

Goals, challenges, progress indicators, and reward-related features may make learning progress visible and provide incentives to continue learning. However, their motivational significance may vary across learners and circumstances. From a Self-Determination Theory perspective, gamified features may be experienced as informative indicators of progress, but they may also encourage externally regulated behavior when learners focus primarily on obtaining rewards or meeting system-defined targets (Ryan & Deci., 2017). Research has shown that reward-oriented gamification does not necessarily enhance intrinsic motivation, even when it increases the quantity of task-related activity (Mekler et al., 2017). Similarly, Hanus and Fox found that a gamified classroom environment emphasizing badges and leaderboards was associated with declining motivation and satisfaction over time (Hanus & Fox, 2015). Nevertheless, the effects of gamification are context-dependent rather than uniformly negative, as indicated by the mixed findings of Sailer and Homner's meta-analysis (Sailer & Homner, 2020). Accordingly, streak-related pressure, reward dependence, and superficial task completion should be considered possible boundary conditions rather than assumed outcomes of gamified learning.

. The questionnaire findings reflect this complexity: although participants generally reported positive perceptions of gamification, the statement that learning through the application had become a habit received a mean score of 3.75, while the statement about continuing to learn despite low interest received a mean score of 3.85. These results suggest that positive perceptions of the learning environment do not necessarily translate into consistently sustained learning habits. Nevertheless, the present study did not directly measure external regulation, reward dependence, pressure associated with streaks, or superficial task completion; these possibilities should therefore be understood as theoretical interpretations rather than observed participant experiences. Previous research has examined gamification in mobile-assisted language learning in relation to motivation (Shortt et al., 2023), and broader learning-related outcomes (Ishaq et al., 2021). The present study adds a contextual perspective by considering gamification alongside the structured learning pathway, language-production activities, and social affordances available in Busuu, while recognizing that the motivational value of these features depends on how learners perceive and experience them.

Taken together, this study contributes a contextual understanding of how social, interactive, and gamified affordances coexist within a mobile-assisted Arabic language learning environment. Rather than attributing learners' motivational perceptions to any single feature, the findings highlight the importance of considering the learning environment as a combination of instructional structure, opportunities for language production, community interaction, and progress-related mechanisms. Self-Determination Theory provides an interpretive lens for considering how these affordances may be relevant to autonomy, competence, and

relatedness, which have been discussed in research on digitally mediated language learning(Pan et al., 2026; Yin & Fathi, 2025). However, because these psychological needs were not measured directly, their satisfaction cannot be inferred from the presence of particular platform features. Alternative interpretations must also be considered: gamification may make progress visible and encourage continued participation, but reward-oriented mechanisms may also create external pressure without necessarily promoting sustained or meaningful learning. These possibilities are particularly important in the present context, where participants' motivational perceptions were self-reported and their actual interactions with community feedback were not directly examined. Furthermore, although Busuu's Arabic-learning activities provide opportunities for written and oral language production, this study did not assess the linguistic accuracy of peer corrections or their effects on Arabic proficiency. The contribution of the study therefore lies in integrating platform-level analysis with learners' motivational perceptions in a specific Arabic-learning context, while recognizing that the psychological processes and actual learning consequences of these affordances require further investigation.

These findings further clarify the contribution of the present study to research on Busuu by situating its social and gamified affordances within the specific demands of Arabic language learning. Unlike a general account of mobile-assisted language learning, the present analysis identifies opportunities to work with Arabic letters and diacritics (*harakat*), vocabulary, grammatical forms, and written and oral language production. These features are relevant because Arabic learners may need to attend to orthographic distinctions, morphological forms, and pronunciation when producing and revising language. Busuu's written correction and asynchronous voice-feedback facilities provide opportunities for users to receive responses to written and spoken Arabic, potentially drawing attention to aspects of orthography, grammatical form, or pronunciation. However, the present study did not assess the linguistic accuracy of peer corrections or determine whether voice feedback improved pronunciation. Furthermore, the distinction between Modern Standard Arabic and regional dialects may affect how learners interpret language use and feedback, but the variety represented in the examined course was not systematically documented in the observation records. Therefore, this study cannot establish how community feedback addresses variation between standard and dialectal Arabic. Its contribution lies instead in showing how opportunities for language production and community feedback are embedded within Busuu's structured learning environment, while identifying the Arabic-specific linguistic and contextual questions that require further investigation.

Conclusion

This study examined Busuu's social, interactive, and gamified affordances in mobile-assisted Arabic language learning and learners' perceptions of their motivational relevance. Addressing RQ1, the content analysis identified an integrated learning environment comprising structured learning pathways, written and oral language production, community-based feedback opportunities, and gamified progress-tracking mechanisms. Regarding RQ2, questionnaire responses from 20 university students in Madura, Indonesia, revealed generally positive perceptions of accessibility, independent learning, motivation, and perceived learning benefits, although sustained learning habits were less consistently reported. These findings contribute a context-specific understanding of how technological affordances and learners' motivational perceptions coexist within Busuu. However, the evidence does not establish causal relationships, the effectiveness of peer feedback, or measurable improvements in Arabic proficiency.

Pedagogically, Busuu offers potential as a supplementary learning environment that extends opportunities for structured practice, language production, and social interaction beyond formal instruction. Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted cautiously given the small purposively selected sample, reliance on self-reported perceptions, unstandardized and unverified application use, and limited observation of platform features. The study also did not directly examine peer-feedback exchanges or their linguistic accuracy. Future research should employ longitudinal and mixed-method approaches integrating behavioral usage data, repeated motivational assessments, and systematic analysis of peer-feedback quality and uptake across Arabic proficiency levels. Such investigations could provide stronger evidence of how social interaction and gamification contribute to sustained engagement, motivation, and language development.

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