

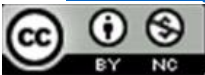
GAMIFICATION AND STUDENT MOTIVATION IN EFL CLASSROOM

ABSTRACT

In today's educational landscape, the quest to enhance student engagement and motivation remains a paramount concern for educators, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. This article delves into the realm of gamification as a novel approach to address these challenges. It aims to explore the motivational effects of gamified learning experiences in high school and higher education settings, in view of their needs and profiles as well as the potential risks involved. Drawing on insights from experts and research findings, the article explores the concept of gamification and its potential to revolutionize learning experiences in EFL contexts. It examines the core principles of playful learning experiences, the essence of gamification, and its application in fostering student engagement. Through an analysis of design elements, advantages, and challenges, the article offers a comprehensive overview of gamification's implications for language education. Moreover, it discusses considerations for its effective implementation to enhance student motivation and learning outcomes in EFL classrooms.

Key words: gamification, student motivation, extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, EFL

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Received: 22/04/2024

Revised: 29/04/2024

Accepted: 03/05/2024

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РЕЗЮМЕ

ГЕЙМИФИКАЦИЯ И МОТИВАЦИЯ УЧАЩИХСЯ В КОНТЕКСТЕ ПРЕПОДАВАНИЯ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА КАК ИНОСТРАННОГО

В современной образовательной системе стремление повысить вовлеченность и мотивацию учащихся остается первостепенной задачей для преподавателей, особенно в классах английского языка как иностранного (EFL). В этой статье рассматривается сфера геймификации как нового подхода к решению этих проблем. Цель статьи заключается в изучении мотивационных эффектов геймифицированного обучения в средних школах и высших учебных заведениях с учетом их потребностей и профилей, а также связанных с этим потенциальных рисков. Опираясь на мнения экспертов и результаты исследований, в статье исследуется концепция геймификации и ее потенциал революционизировать процесс обучения в контексте EFL. В ней рассматриваются основные принципы игрового обучения, сущность геймификации и ее применение для повышения вовлеченности учащихся. Посредством анализа элементов дизайна, преимуществ и проблем, статья предлагает всесторонний обзор последствий геймификации для языкового образования. В статье также обсуждаются соображения по эффективному внедрению геймификации, направленной на повышение мотивации учащихся и результатов обучения в классах английского как иностранного языка.

Ключевые слова: геймификация, мотивация, внешняя мотивация, внутренняя мотивация, преподавание английского языка как иностранного

ԱՄՓՈՓՈՒՄ

ԽԱՂԱՏԻՎԱՅՈՒՄԸ ԵՎ ՈՒՍԱՆՈՂՆԵՐԻ ՄՈՏԻՎԱՅԻԱՆ ԱՆԳԼԵՐԵՆԻ, ՈՐՊԵՍ ՕՏԱՐ ԼԵԶՈՒ, ԴԱՍԱՎԱՆԴՄԱՆ ՀԱՄԱՏԵՔՍՈՒՄ

Շրթադասարանի ուղղությամբ, այսօր ինչպես երբևէ, մանկավարժների առաջնահերթ մտահոգությունը մնում է ուսանողների ներգրավվածությունը և մոտիվացիայի խթանումը, հատկապես անգլերենը, որպես օտար լեզու, դասավանդման համատեքստում:

Մոյն հողվածը ուսումնասիրում է խաղաֆիկացման ոլորտը՝ այն դիտարկելով որպես այս մարտահրավերներին դիմակայելու նոր մոտեցում: Այն նպատակ ունի ուսումնասիրել խաղային ուսուցման փորձառությունների մոտիվացիոն ազդեցությունները ավագ դպրոցում և բարձրագույն կրթական հաստատություններում՝ հաշվի առնելով ուսանողների կարիքները և առանձնահատկությունները, ինչպես նաև հնարավոր ռիսկերը: Հիմնվելով փորձագետների կարծիքների և հետազոտության արդյունքների վրա՝ հողվածն ուսումնասիրում է խաղաֆիկացման հայեցակարգը և դրա հեղափոխական ներուժը՝ անգլերենը, որպես օտար լեզու, դասավանդման համատեքստում: Հողվածն ուսումնասիրում է խաղային ուսուցման փորձառությունների հիմնական սկզբունքները, խաղաֆիկացման էությունը և դրա կիրառումը ուսանողների ներգրավվածությունը խթանելու գործում: Հիմնվելով խաղաֆիկացման նախագծման տարրերի, առավելությունների և մարտահրավերների վերլուծության վրա՝ հողվածն առաջարկում է խաղաֆիկացման լեզուների ուսուցման վրա ազդեցության, համապարփակ ակնարկ: Հողվածը անդրադառնում է նաև անգլերենը, որպես օտար լեզու, դասավանդման համատեքստում ուսանողների մոտիվացիան խթանելու և նրանց ներգրավվածությունն ապահովելու համար խաղաֆիկացման արդյունավետ կիրառման առանձնահատկություններին:

Բանալի բառեր՝ խաղաֆիկացում, մոտիվացիա, արտաքին մոտիվացիա, ներքին մոտիվացիա, անգլերենը, որպես օտար լեզու,

Modern digital world has created many new challenges for teachers and the problem of student motivation and engagement has never been of so crucial importance. Teachers have constantly been seeking innovative and creative methods to boost student motivation and engagement. One of the most recent approaches to serve this purpose is gamification, that is, the integration of game elements into classrooms. Recently, gamification has

drawn more attention in a variety of contexts. The interest in gamification arises from the idea that it can influence students behaviour.

Kapp defines gamification as the process of “using game-based mechanics, aesthetics and game thinking to engage people, motivate action, promote learning, and solve problems” (Kapp, 2012:10). As a pedagogical concept gamification does not necessarily involve the use of an actual game or information technology. Rather, it involves the integration of design elements or activity patterns, traditionally found in games, into educational contexts. Games evoke powerful emotional responses, such as curiosity and joy, making learning more immersive and enjoyable (McGonigal, 2011).

Creating entertaining educational activities is not easy. Research can help us in our pursuit of creating playful learning experiences for students. What do experts mean by playful learning experiences? Scot Osterweil, the Creative Director of MIT’s Education Arcade, believes that learning experiences become playful when the student is not constrained by any rules or limitations. The idea of the four freedoms of play in relation to learning, which gives the student an interesting and dynamic experience, was developed by MIT’s Education Arcade (Osterweil, Klopfer et al, 2018).

The four freedoms are:

- freedom of effort; students can transition between intensely concentrated study sessions and leisurely breaks thanks to the internal rhythm of games. Students will have the chance to refresh their attention spans and effectively complete long-term assignments

- freedom to try on identities; this gives the students freedom to attempt new things and look at the problem from different angles, take a different perspective on a topic and generate ideas.
- freedom to fail; games allow students to fail without serious consequences. Failing quickly and making mistakes is a learning process that allows us to get better. Freedom to fail leads a group to discuss frankly and suggest unconventional ideas without any fear as there are no real world consequences in the context of play.
- freedom to experiment; games allow players to study and find new strategies and new information. When students have more freedom to fail this leads to more experimentation.

These freedoms empower students to explore topics from various perspectives, fostering creativity and critical thinking. They also give the student the chance to decide on significant decisions pertaining to their educational journey. Gamified learning interventions also satisfy some of the students' psychological needs, e.g need for autonomy is satisfied when the students are allowed to decide the activities in which they want to participate. The next psychological need is social relationships, which refers to the need for people to interact with others. Students' motivation levels can be raised through the application of gamification in social relationships since, in addition to the work that teachers assign, students generally feel more satisfied when they are working together on their learning process.

When speaking about gamification we should distinguish gamification, that is, the tools that integrate game elements to provide gameful

experiences without being games in themselves and game-based learning, which concerns the application of full-fledged educational games aimed at motivating students.

The literature identifies several design elements of games that can be integrated into educational contexts. Gamified learning interventions incorporate various design elements borrowed from games. These include clear rules, reward systems, and competition, which motivate students to actively participate and excel. However, effective implementation requires careful consideration of learning objectives and alignment with educational outcomes.

In a gamified learning intervention, students' actions are limited by rules that structure the learning activity. This makes it fundamentally different from free-form learning activities, such as essays, projects or presentations.

One of the main goals of most games is to foster a positive attitude to failure rather than forbid it.

What distinguishes gamification most distinctly from more traditional approaches is the explicit use of competition as a motivational tool. Games have reward systems. Individuals receive rewards for achieving a goal or overcoming an obstacle. Examples are badges or prizes (Glover, 2013). Students earn points for completing assignments correctly. These translate into comparable rewards – grades. This competitive element is a source of motivation (Nicholson, 2012). It is often operationalized in the form of a leader board ranking players on the basis of performance in the game

(Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, & Nacke, 2011). Since users can immediately and publicly see the results of their efforts, these rating systems act as motivators (Domínguez et al., 2013).

As we already know the two main categories of student motivation are intrinsic and extrinsic (Deci et al., 2001). Intrinsic motivation involves learners being interested in what they learn and in the learning process itself (Harlen & Deakin Crick, 2003). It is the individual and natural impulse necessary to undertake the search for new possibilities that benefit social and cognitive development; for example, comments on the work conducted, rewards, and positive feedback, which increase an individual's internal motivation by creating feelings of competence.

Extrinsic motivation is associated with individuals who engage in learning because it is a means to an end, relatively disassociated from the content and subject of learning (Harlen & Deakin Crick, 2003). Extrinsic motivation comes from sources that are external to the individual; that is, it leads an individual to be able to perform tasks that reward them or allow them to achieve other objectives. There is considerable discussion as to the impact differing types of motivation have on learning (e.g. does intrinsic motivation or extrinsic motivation facilitate learning processes more effectively? (Maehr & Meyer, 1997)).

The aim of gamification strategies or gamified learning experiences, is to promote a gameful state in students, which can be achieved by introducing elements of game in a learning environment. When it is applied

effectively, gamification fosters motivation and can thereby encourage students to become more involved in their school assignments.

More than just incorporating game aspects into instruction, gamification actively encourages students to carry out necessary activities and exhibit desired behaviors.

When training and game elements are appropriately designed and implemented, learners know what is expected of them and perform their jobs better.

The advent of the millennial generation, who have radically different learning styles and requirements from previous generations, has presented further challenges (Elam, Stratton, & Gibson, 2007; Howe & Strauss, 2003). In this context, the development of gamification can be seen as an example of the continual renewal of educational practice. While a promising technique, much work must be undertaken before gamification can be considered a mature pedagogical technique. Positive results require careful planning to guarantee that the learning activities prompted by gamification are closely linked to learning outcomes.

Most gamified learning interventions tend to be web-based, scalable and asynchronous. This makes them particularly useful in educational contexts, such as online learning. Gamified learning activities could become an integral part of flipped teaching environments (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Their social, asynchronous nature can be used to prompt students to engage with pre-prepared content, while gamified learning activities can be used in the classroom to prompt student interaction and participation. A key

point of gamification is that game design elements can be used as a tool to control and generally increase student engagement and participation (Kapp, 2012).

One of the most common type of games used in language classrooms are interactive games. According to a German psychologist Klaus Vopel interactive games interest the players and foster motivation among them, they give a sense of joy and fulfillment. As we have mentioned earlier gamification may increase student engagement and enhance learning. We empirically investigated this by exploring the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on the participation and performance of over 60 undergraduate students in an online gamified learning intervention. The results of our short-term experiment showed that gamified learning environments have a positive impact on student learning and academic performance. Our results show that while generally positive, the impact of gamified interventions on student participation varies depending on whether the student is motivated intrinsically or extrinsically. We hope that teachers and instructors working in a variety of educational contexts, and at all educational levels, who want to increase student engagement and learning, will find these findings to be of practical use.

In EFL classrooms, gamification holds immense potential to enhance student engagement and language acquisition. Interactive games, such as quiz-based platforms like Kahoot!, offer opportunities for immersive learning experiences. By integrating game elements into language lessons,

educators can create dynamic environments that cater to diverse learning styles and preferences.

As educators embrace gamification, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations and challenges. Long-term exposure to gamified interventions may diminish intrinsic motivation, necessitating ongoing refinement and adaptation of strategies. Moreover, the emergence of the technological generation (Generation Z) learners underscores the importance of leveraging technology and digital tools to foster motivation and learning. Motivation influences engagement or disengagement, and in turn, both can impact the learning process.

Considering that the generations currently studying at the university belong to Generation Z, this encourages technology to be essential in their daily activities and for them to easily adapt to it, which can be an advantage for using gamification as part of the necessary motivation in the learning process.

Although gamification platforms and applications are the preferred method, designers can also integrate game elements in the website Moodle, that is, through the use of plug-ins allowing the inclusion of badges or points into this platform, to reward students for participating in a forum.

The merits and disadvantages of using gamification in a higher level education context are widely debated in literature (Domínguez et al., 2013; Lee & Hammer, 2011). On one hand, it enhances engagement, participation, and learning behaviors, particularly in the context of modern, tech-savvy learners. People are posited to be more engaged and more

productive when playing games (Kim, 2012). . On the other hand, concerns arise regarding the potential negative impacts, such as overemphasis on extrinsic rewards and the decline in intrinsic motivation over time. Another negative impact of gamified learning strategies in student's motivation is mainly caused by social comparison and competition, showing the relevance of social-oriented strategies.

Competition is one of the reasons for failure in gamified learning systems and, consequently, social comparison should be avoided or used with caution.

In conclusion, gamification is an educational strategy that can modernize educational environments and promote motivation and engagement in students in the same ways that games do. A variety of game elements and features can be used to engage students in learning processes. However, gamification can also affect students' motivation due to the use of extrinsic rewards. Additionally, students tend to react better to gamification when the process is new, whereas after a longer period of exposure, when its novelty wears off, it can become less effective and even boring. This is the reason why, gamification needs to be explored further in education, but with caution.

Gamification represents a promising approach to address the eternal challenge of student engagement in EFL classrooms. By introducing game elements into their classrooms, teachers may create dynamic learning environments that attract and motivate students. However, success depends on careful planning, adherence to learning goals, and a sophisticated

comprehension of motivating dynamics. As gamification continues to evolve, its potential to revolutionize language education remains profound.

In essence, gamification offers not just a novel approach to learning but a gateway to transforming educational experiences into captivating adventures where students are empowered to learn, explore, and succeed.

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