

TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG CHILDREN: GAMIFICATION IN EARLY LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract: *Teaching foreign languages at an early age is one of the most effective strategies for fostering linguistic skills and cognitive development. Gamification has emerged as an innovative and engaging approach to achieve this. Incorporating game elements such as apps, badges, and rewards creates an interactive learning environment that captivates children's attention and sustains their interest. This method not only improves the effectiveness of teaching English but also motivates young learners, fostering enthusiasm and curiosity.*

Key words: *Gamification, young learners, language teaching, gamification elements, steps, platforms.*

The teaching and learning process is necessary to be understood as a base for L2 learning and interaction.²⁰ Research consistently demonstrates that gamification enhances cognitive abilities, supports social-emotional learning, and encourages collaboration among children. By using tools such as digital games and classroom-based activities, teachers can create dynamic lessons that align with pedagogical goals. These activities also promote teamwork and problem-solving skills, making learning a shared and enjoyable experience.

However, keeping the attention of young learners can be challenging, and gamification offers a solution by combining education with fun. The incorporation of rewards, levels, and progress tracking makes children feel accomplished and motivated to learn more. This interactive approach not only reinforces language acquisition but also fosters creativity and critical thinking skills in children.

This article delves into the role of gamification in the teaching process, its benefits, and its challenges. With this exploration, educators can gain valuable insights into designing lessons that are not only impactful but also enjoyable for young learners, paving the way for a more engaging and fruitful learning experience in the early stages of language development.

Playing is one of important activities that human being does in their lives. To increase encouragement and motivation in children who are learning their second language using various games activities and modern tools will be effective method and it is getting common. In addition games help teachers to achieve their learning objectives. Using games in teaching and learning not only have the potential to enhance motivation and performance, but also promote the key competencies of learners, such as problem solving, collaborative communication, and strategic thinking.²¹ From early childhood, young individuals begin to develop their own personality, self-concept, and role in their social environment. In the process, different interests, skills,

1. ²⁰ Jorge Francisco Figueroa Flores "Using Gamification to Enhance Second Language Learning" digital EDUCATION Review Number 27 June 2015

²¹ Huei-Tse Hou "Diverse Development and Future Challenges of Game-Based Learning and Gamified Teaching Research"

competencies, and talents emerge, as well as values, strengths, and limitations.²² By paying attention to these changes, for teachers it is crucial to select suitable activities.

Gamification is the integration of game elements like point systems, leaderboards, badges, or other elements related to games into “conventional” learning activities in order to increase engagement and motivation.²³ Gamification involves the use of game-based mechanics, aesthetics, and playful thinking to engage people, motivate action, and promote learning.²⁴ Most games feature elements such as rules, goals, interaction, feedback, problem solving, competition, story, and fun.²⁵ The main objectives focuses on increasing the participation of a person, which most of the time is called or mentioned as an “user”, and motivate him/her by incorporating game elements and techniques, like leaderboards and immediate feedback.²⁶

The term game is usually understood to imply the following situational components:

- * a goal, which has to be achieved;
- * limiting rules which determine how to reach the goal;
- * a feedback system which provides information about progress towards the goal;
- * and the fact that participation is voluntary.

The term element helps to distinguish the concept of gamification from serious games, which describe full-fledged games for non-entertainment purposes. Gamification on the other hand refers to the explicit use of particular elements of games in non-gaming contexts. The term design refers to the use of game design instead of game-based technologies or practices of the wider game ecology. As stated before, the area of application of gamification is very broad. To take account of that and to prevent limiting the definition to certain contexts, the area of application is just described by the term non-game-contexts.²⁷ The usage of gamification as we understood is very wide. The main task that gamification does is making entertaining environment for students to teach the language. We use variety patterns known as components to design games such as: badges, leader charts, points, progress charts. All of these elements have their own purpose and in the table given below has brief definition of each element:

Points	Numeric accumulation based on certain activities.
Badges	Visual representation of achievements for the use shown online.
Leaderboards	How the players are ranked based on success.
Progress bars/Progression	Shows the status of a player.
Performance graph	Shows player performance.
Quests	Some of the tasks players have to fulfill in a game.
Levels	A section or part of the game
Avatars	Visual representation of a player or alter ego.
Social elements	Relationships with other user through the game.

²² Savickas, M.L. Career Construction Theory and Practice. In Career Development and Counseling: Putting Theory and Research to Work; Brown, S.D., Lent, R.W., Eds.; John Wiley & Sons: Hoboken, NJ, USA, 2013; pp. 147–183

²³ Centre for Teaching Excellence, University of Waterloo “Gamification and Game-Based Learning”

²⁴ K. Kapp, The Gamification of Learning and Instruction: Game-Based, One Montgomery Street: Pfeiffer, 2018.

²⁵ Vandercruysse, S., Vandewaetere, M., & Clarebout, G. (2012). Game-based learning: A review on the effectiveness of educational games

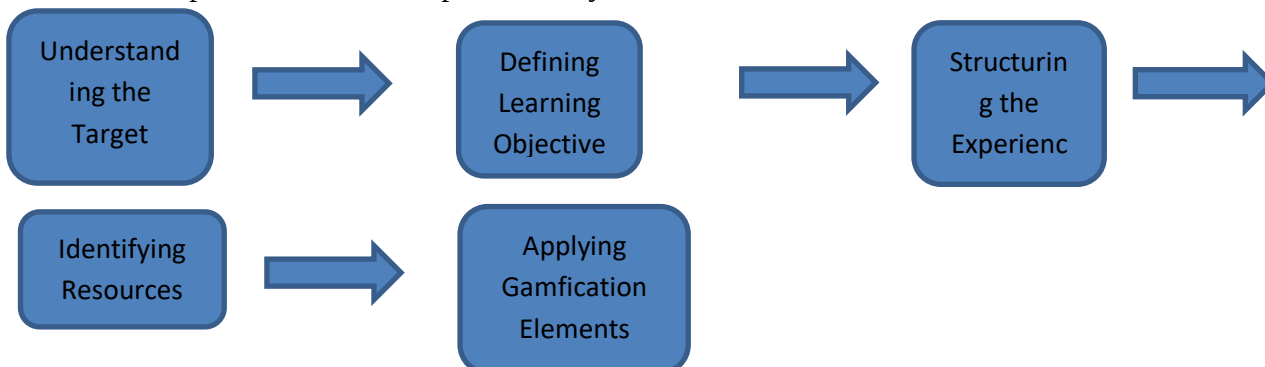
²⁶ Jorge Francisco, Figueroa Flores “Using Gamification to Enhance Second Language Learning”

²⁷ Sailer, M., Hense, J., Mandl, H., Klevers, M. (2013). Psychological Perspectives on Motivation through Gamification. Interaction Design and Architecture(s) Journal - IxD&A, N.19, pp. 28-37

Rewards/reward system	System to motivate players that accomplish a quest. ²⁸
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Table 1

Each element in Gamification helps to enhance teaching and learning process of L2. In order to apply gamification into lesson, there are series of steps that should be followed. This is called five-step model which is represented by Huan and Soman.



Educational Gamification Five Step Model²⁹

1-step

To achieve a success in education it is important to know who we are going to teach combined with the program that we are teaching. Well designed program helps students to achieve objective of the program. While analyzing, teachers should take consider of age, level, group size, skills, learning abilities.

2-step

What do we want to achieve at the end of the lesson? What does the student accomplish by completing the course? Every instructor should have their own aim and objective of the lesson that must be achieved at the end of the lesson. It can be general, specific and behavioral goals for example: when the student finishes the course he or she will be able to know the differences between tenses, complete an assignment, concentrate in class for long hours. At the same time, There may be 2 or 3 objectives in a lesson.

3-step

Staging one of the main parts of the lesson. Without structuring teacher can not achieve good results and objectives. Well planned staging helps instructors explain the topic step by step, manage the time.

4 – step

What kind of resources are needed to gamify the lesson? After staging the lesson, finding suitable resources will be easier. In addition teacher should think about tracking mechanism, currency, level, rules and feedback.

Definitions of used terms: ³⁰

Tracking Mechanism	A tool to measure the student's progress in the learning program/stage.
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²⁸ Jorge Francisco, Figueroa Flores "Using Gamification to Enhance Second Language Learning"

²⁹ Huang Hsin Yuan, W. and Soman, D. (2013). A Practitioner's Guide to Gamification of Education. Research Report Series: Behavioral Economics in Action. University of Toronto –Rotman School of Management.

³⁰ Wendy Hsin-Yuan Huang and Dilip Soman." A Practitioner's Guide To Gamification Of Education" 2013

Currency	The unit of measure, which could be points, time, money, etc. E.g. If assignments are to be completed by a certain deadline, the tracking mechanism's currency is time.
Level	A specific amount of a currency used to accomplish an objective. E.g. Once the student has completed the assignment s/he has completed the task for that level and can move to the next level.
Rules	Boundaries for what a student can or cannot do in their learning program, to ensure it is a fair learning environment for everyone. E.g. The rule for completing the first level is not only to finish it by the deadline but also, to answer all the questions correctly.
Feedback	A mechanism the instructor and/or student can use to learn about the progress being made. E.g. Students learn better from tests than studying, because they can see what they did wrong and fix gaps in their understanding.

When designing the section being gamified, a currency can help determine levels within a stage and it is possible for a level to be a whole stage in the education program. It also gives the instructor the opportunity to use currency-based levels and rules to receive and give feedback. Feedback is an important ally, as studies show that students do better when given more opportunities to complete a task.³¹

5-step

What elements do we need? As mentioned earlier there are several types of elements that can be used during the lesson and we can divide them into 2 groups:

1. Self elements: can be achievement badges, points, levels and restrictions. With this elements students can focus on themselves and do self-achievement.
2. Social-achievement: on the other hand, it can be group work, cooperation like leaderboards. These elements helps students to make a community and achieve success by being a group.

Technology is widely being integrated with teaching and learning environment. Game – based student response systems have been used. To make lessons more interesting and attract children there are useful platforms like Kahoot!, World of Classcraft (WoC). Kahoot and World of Classcraft (WoC) are online gamification and interactive learning platforms. They allow educators to create quizzes and educational activities in a game format to engage students in the learning process in a fun and participatory way. Students can answer questions in real time using their mobile devices or computers and receive instant feedback on their responses. These tools encourage friendly competition among students and provide an effective way to assess students' knowledge and progress.³²

Kahoot is an internet platform which includes various games, multiple choice quizzes, survey questions. In classroom, this platform can be projected on a large display and students also can participate using their own devices such as phones, laptops. They can engage in activities individually and collaboratively in groups. Kahoot! (<https://create.kahoot.it/>) (accessed on 12 June

³¹ Evans, C. (2011, July 31). Game designer Jane McGonigal interviewed by Cameron Evans, U.S. Education CTO, Microsoft. (J. McGonigal, Interviewer) Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-mc9Rr>

³² C. Plump and L. Julia, "Using Kahoot! in the classroom to foster engagement and active learning: A game-based technology solution for E-learning beginners," SAGE Journals, pp. 2–9, 2017.

2023)) stands as an interactive educational platform, empowering educators to craft and deploy engaging learning games for their students. Its design revolves around fostering an enjoyable and immersive learning experience. Through Kahoot!, instructors can formulate quizzes, facilitate discussions, and conduct surveys on diverse subject matters. Students can partake in these activities through their personal devices, such as smartphones, tablets, or computers. Kahoot! offers customizable features, enabling educators to tailor content and format to suit their teaching objectives. During a Kahoot! session, students engage in real-time competition, responding to questions and amassing points. At the conclusion of each activity, teachers receive a comprehensive summary of results, furnishing valuable insights into student performance. By promoting active learning, collaboration, and the cultivation of critical thinking skills, Kahoot! serves as a versatile tool that metamorphoses traditional education into an interactive and pleasurable encounter. Refer to Figure 1 for a screenshot showcasing the Kahoot! website ³³



Figure 1

World of Classcraft (WoC) is a classroom-based game designed to solve the schoolchildren's dilemma: choosing between classroom and computer games.³⁴ It is a gamified educational platform designed to engage students and enhance learning experience by incorporating elements of role-playing games. It allows teachers to create a game-like environment where students collaborate, compete, and earn rewards for their academic achievements.

There are many key features of the game such as:

1. Students can choose roles (warrior, mage, healer) each with unique abilities and create customized avatars.
2. Experience points and health points. Students can earn XP points for positive behavior and task complement and lose HP for negative behavior.
3. Teamwork. Students can work in teams encouraging collaboration and peer support.
4. Gamified rewards. Teachers can customize rewards like bonuses for achieving task.
5. Quests and missions. Educators can design curriculum – based quests where students progress through challenges related to learning objectives.

³³ Baraa Rayan and Abeer Wattad “Enhancing Education in Elementary Schools through Gamified Learning: Exploring the Impact of Kahoot! on the Learning Process” Journal “Education sciences” 2024

³⁴ Nazokat Fayzullayevna Khaitova “History of Gamification and Its Role in the Educational Process” Journal “International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding” May 2021

6. Real time engagement. Features like boss battles, random events, and leaderboards keep students motivated and involved.

Refer to Figure to the screenshot to Classcraft is given

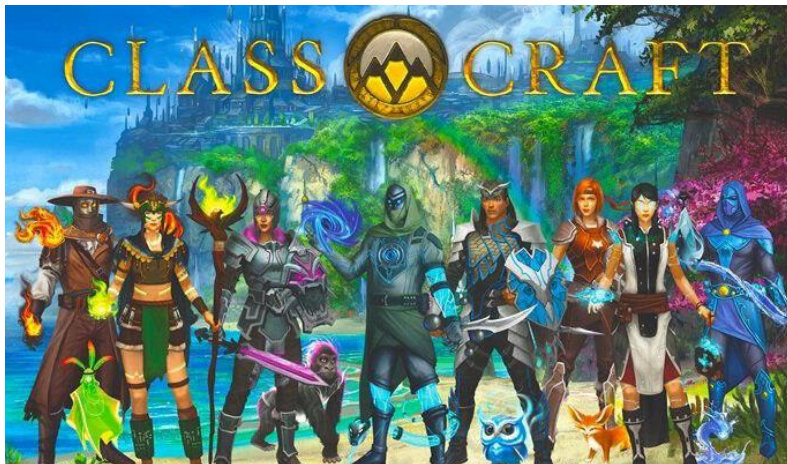


Figure 2

Conclusion

Gamification has transformed traditional educational approaches by blending interactive game elements with teaching methodologies, making learning a more engaging and effective process. By fostering enthusiasm and motivation in young learners, gamification has demonstrated its potential to enhance second-language acquisition significantly. Tools such as Kahoot! and World of Classcraft provide dynamic and immersive platforms where students can actively participate in their learning journey, whether individually or collaboratively.

Incorporating game mechanics such as rewards, progress tracking, and teamwork not only reinforces language skills but also develops critical soft skills like problem-solving, collaboration, and strategic thinking. These elements address the diverse needs and interests of young learners, ensuring that the teaching process remains inclusive and adaptive. By fostering a sense of achievement and competition, gamification builds students' confidence and enthusiasm, enabling them to overcome challenges and excel in their learning endeavors.

Moreover, the structured integration of gamification aligns well with modern educational objectives, offering opportunities for personalized learning and immediate feedback. Teachers can utilize its components, such as points systems, leaderboards, and performance graphs, to create measurable and targeted learning experiences. By doing so, educators not only meet pedagogical goals but also cultivate an environment that balances academic rigor with enjoyment.

In conclusion, gamification is not just a trend but a sustainable approach to enriching early language learning. It bridges the gap between traditional methods and modern educational needs, making learning a fun and fulfilling experience. As the field of education continues to evolve, gamification stands out as a powerful tool for shaping the future of teaching and inspiring a lifelong love for learning in students.

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EFEMIZM TERMININIŇ ÝYRENILIW TÁRIYXI

*Babaniyazova Nursulıw Konısbayevna
Ájiniyaz atındaǵı NMPI tayanış doktorantı*

Annotaciya: *Bul maqalada efemiz termininiń úyreniliw táriyxı hám olardı kimler úyrenenligi haqqında maǵlıwmatlar keltirilgen. Házirgi rawajlanıp baratırǵan dáwirde efemizlerdi tilde ádep-ikramlılıq normaların saqlawǵa, til iliminde "efemiz" túsiniǵiniń áhimiyeti, efemizmnin xalqtıń sotsiallıq turmısı hám mentalitet penen baylanışlı halda payda bolıwı haqqındaǵı pikirler bildiriledi.*

Tayanış sózler: *efemiz túsiniǵi, sóylew mádeniyatı, efemizlerdin qollanılıw sebepleri.*

Insanlar kóbinese unamsız kóringen temalardı tuwrıdan tuwrı talqılawdı qolaylı dep bilmeydi. Olar ádep-ikramlılıqtı saqlawdı qálegenligi sebepli, aqiretlew sózlerdin ornın ádebiy hám