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## GAMIFICATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MOBILE APPLICATIONS IN INCREASING STUDENT MOTIVATION

*Zhamikhanova D.K., Mukushev D.G.*

Faculty of Physics and Technology, L.N. Gumilyov ENU, Astana, Kazakhstan

Scientific supervisor: Kuzar Zh.N.

**Abstract:** The article explores gamification as a method of increasing motivation and learning quality through freedom of error, prompt feedback, gradual complexity of tasks, and narrative strategies. Our research has revealed that game elements increase academic performance and engagement, but their effectiveness depends on the pedagogical integration and adaptation of the audience.

**Keywords:** Gamification, Educational technologies, Game mechanics, Student motivation, Formative assessment, Rapid feedback, Progression, Storytelling, Integration of game elements.

**Аннотация:** Стаття досліджує гейміфікація як метод підвищення мотивації і якості навчання через свободу помилок, оперативну зворотний зв'язок, поступове ускладнення завдань і повестовательні стратегії. Наше дослідження виявило, що ігрові елементи підвищують успішність і вовлеченість, але їх ефективність залежить від педагогічної інтеграції і адаптації аудиторії.

**Ключевые слова:** Гейміфікація, Образовательні технології, Ігрові механіки, Мотивація учасників, Формирующее оцінювання, Швидка зворотний зв'язок, Прогресивне, Сторителлінг, Інтеграція ігрових елементів.

**Андапта:** Мақала зерттейді гейміфікацияны қателік еркіндігі, жедел кері байланыс, тапсырмаларды біртіндеп қиындату және баяндау стратегиялары арқылы мотивация мен оқу сапасын арттыру әдісі ретінде. Біздің зерттеуіміз ойын элементтері оқу үлгерімі мен белсенділікті арттыратынын анықтады, бірақ олардың тиімділігі педагогикалық интеграция мен аудиторияның бейімделуіне байланысты.

**Түйін сөздер:** Гейміфікация, білім беру технологиялары, ойын механикасы, оқушылардың мотивациясы, қалыптастырушы бағалау, жылдам кері байланыс, прогрессия, әңгімелеу, ойын элементтерін біріктіру.

### 1. Introduction

Gamification is the process of adding game elements, mechanics, dynamics, and frameworks to non-game contexts, specifically in educational environments. Over the past several years, many educators have experimented with the use of gaming elements to improve student engagement and academic achievement, but the effectiveness of these practices is varied.

The aim of this research is to explore the basic principles of gamification in the educational context, evaluate their applicability to modern teaching practices, and investigate the efficiency of their application through the analysis of three case studies in the area of higher education.

Focus is drawn to four underlying dynamics of gameplay:

1. The freedom to fail creates an environment where mistakes are seen as an integral part of the learning process.
2. Quick Feedback — instant response to students' actions to increase motivation.
3. Progression — structuring training by difficulty levels, similar to game missions.
4. Storytelling — using storytelling to enhance engagement and contextualize knowledge.

The analysis indicates that these principles are currently seen in pedagogical practices, though under different names. This finding supports the case for gamification, situating it not as a fad but as a conscious approach that can improve learning effectiveness.

Thereafter, the report examines case studies of the successful integration of game mechanics into university curricula based on the experiences of Indiana University, the Rochester Institute of Technology, and Simon Fraser University [1]. Based on these case studies, the report provides recommendations specifically for instructors looking to incorporate gamification into their teaching practices. The major finding of this analysis suggests that the success of gamification depends on the context and the degree to which it is integrated into the learning environment. It is important not to simply add game elements, but to create a setting that substantially supports students' motivation and engagement through meaningful pedagogical strategies.

## **2. Theoretical foundations**

Gamification increases student motivation and learning effectiveness by applying game mechanics to non-gaming contexts, like education. Its effectiveness notwithstanding, its success hinges on the implementation's quality and context. The main dynamic is that formative assessment, which moves the emphasis from assessment to learning, guarantees the freedom to make mistakes.

1. Fast feedback: Interactive tasks and progress bars show real-time gameplay changes.
2. Rapid Feedback: Progress bars and interactive tasks mirror gameplay's instant adjustments.
3. Progress follows the scaffolding standard of Bloom's taxonomy, moving from simple to complex.
4. Storytelling: Immersion storytelling improves user retention and engagement.

A comprehensive review of 128 studies reveals a predominance of achievement-based mechanics, as evidenced by 67 studies, followed by social mechanics, with 31 studies, and immersion mechanics, with 15 studies. It is noteworthy that successful implementations frequently integrate multiple mechanics, with an average of four mechanics per study. The findings indicate that 25.3% of studies reported a mixture of outcomes, 0.03% reported a negative impact, and 71.4% reported an enhancement in results. The response to these incentives has been varied, with some students demonstrating a positive response, while others exhibit indifference [2].

The limitations of the extant research include an overemphasis on achievement, an ignoring of contextual factors (demographic characteristics, student characteristics), and the rarity of studies isolating mechanics (only 7 out of 28). However, when utilized effectively (e.g., through badges or point systems), gamification has been shown to enhance engagement by up to 40%. In contrast to serious games, which involve complete immersion in a virtual environment and incorporate elements of traditional tasks such as debates and quizzes, gamification focuses on providing incentives and rewards to motivate users to engage with the content [4]. Achieving an equilibrium between audience needs, pedagogy, and mechanics is imperative to optimize the impact [3].

## **3. Implementation at different levels of education**

Gamification in education is successfully applied at all levels of education, combining game mechanics with pedagogical tasks. A comprehensive review of the extant literature identifies several key elements that are frequently incorporated into gamification in education. These elements include scores (67 studies), quests (53), badges (47), and ratings (47) [2]. In higher education, the transformation of assessment systems shows impressive results: the experience of Professor Lee Sheldon (Indiana University), who replaced grades with "experience points", increased the average academic performance by a letter grade. Modern learning management systems (LMS), such as Moodle and Blackboard, integrate progress trackers, conditional access to materials, and ratings [1,3].

In schools, gamification has proven to reduce stress while improving cognitive engagement, as seen on platforms like ClassDojo and Kahoot [3]. These platforms use quizzes, instant rewards, and progress visualization methods. Just Press Play at the Rochester Institute of

Technology, which uses RFID cards in conjunction with an achievement system, has proven the effectiveness of narrative-based methods [1]. For younger learners, the use of visual systems, like badges instead of grades, combined with game-based "missions" and mini-games intended to build basic skills, is key.

In the corporate training context, gamification principles are employed to facilitate employee acclimation. The Docebo and Accord LMS systems utilize scoring systems, business simulation, and role-playing exercises to cultivate soft skills [3].

An effectiveness analysis finds that 71.4% of the studies reviewed have a positive effect, especially when using a mix of four or more elements. Virtual reality and augmented reality collaborative potentials and mechanisms have not been widely explored. Success factors include:

1. Age-based adaptation (streamlining for schools, autonomy for universities) [2].
2. Integration of instructional methods into the curriculum [1].
3. Obtaining balance among competitive and collaborative dynamics, so eliminating disincentives [1,3].

#### **4. The benefits of gamification**

Gamification integrates game mechanics into education to boost motivation and learning. Key elements include formative assessments that reduce anxiety, immediate feedback for better retention, and structured progression aligned with Bloom's taxonomy [1]. Narrative-driven scenarios further enhance engagement by linking theory to practice.

Empirical research suggests that the application of gamification can significantly impact improved educational outcomes, as long as its elements—such as points, badges, leaderboards, adaptive challenges, quests, and simulations—are carefully designed with strategic intentionality. A meta-analysis of 128 research articles supports that these game elements not only promote learning but also enhance student motivation through social engagement that balances cooperation and competition [2]. The monitoring of individualized progress also supports the development of individualized learning trajectories and provides more flexibility. For instance, reward-based and leaderboard systems have shown the ability to improve skill acquisition by up to 40%, though over-reliance on extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation. Empirical case studies, for instance [3], Lee Sheldon's course at Indiana University, offer concrete proof of influence, where the replacement of conventional grading with "experience points" yielded considerably higher average scores. Similarly, the Just Press Play project at RIT extended the reach of gamification beyond traditional classroom walls through the use of achievements to enhance teacher-student relationships and promote social integration [1]. Ultimately, the success of gamification in educational settings depends on the careful alignment of its mechanisms with situational variables; if the game elements are poorly aligned with educational objectives, due to irrelevant narratives or superficial engagement, their potential benefits can be significantly lost.

#### **5. Problems and criticisms**

Despite the potential that gamification has to increase student engagement, its implementation faces inherent systemic limitations. Main barriers include:

1. Superficial application of mechanics: replacing terms ("grades" → "experience points") without integrating game principles (freedom of error, progression), which reduces engagement [1].
2. Dominance of achievement elements such as scores and badges, over social (cooperation) and narrative, narrowing the potential for deep engagement.
3. The risk with extrinsic motivation is a shift of focus towards the "score game," which negatively impacts the absorption of the material, especially after prolonged periods of involvement.
4. Organizational and technical barriers consist of the heavy workload of instructors, as attested to by a Lamp course showcasing a "master of assessments," restrictions from learning management systems (LMS), and the necessary technical expertise [3].

5. Ambiguous perception by students: elements are perceived as "frivolous" (Lamp role battles), and individual differences (difficulty level discrepancy) increase motivation polarization [1,2,3].

6. Research methodological weaknesses are the predominance of quantitative measures over qualitative analyses, a publication bias towards 70% of positive findings, and a lack of longitudinal data [2].

7. Contextual risks: stress caused by assessments and poor storytelling (Neustaedter), as well as inequalities in digital access [1].

Recommendations for reducing risks:

1. Deep Design: Prioritizing game principles (formative assessment, progression) over surface elements.

2. Adaptation of mechanics to age, discipline, and group dynamics.

3. Motivation equilibrium is defined as a balanced coexistence between extrinsic incentives and the support of autonomy and competence [2]

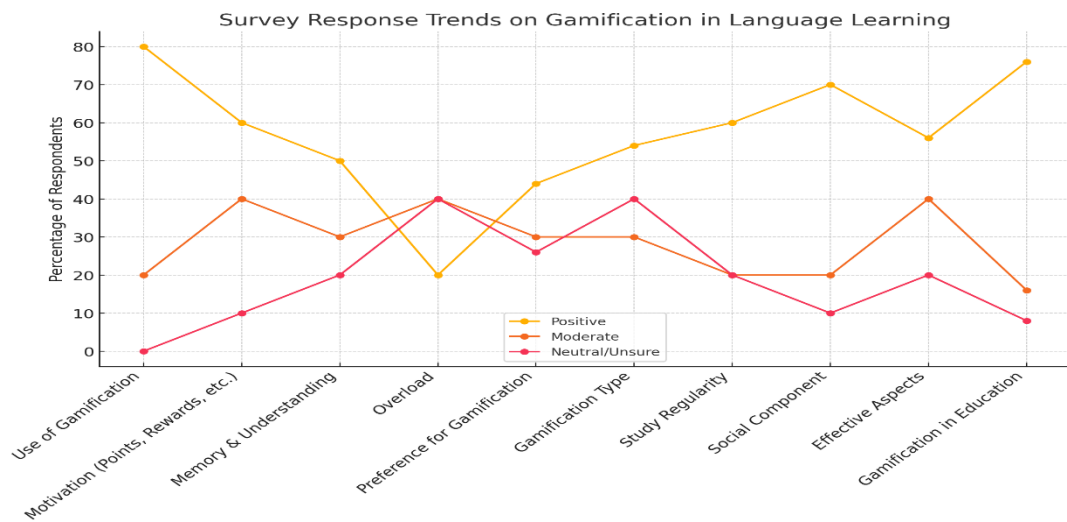
4. Different assessment methods: integration of qualitative data (level of assimilation, reflective analysis).

5. Ethical framework: decreasing competition and using inclusive design to avoid the digital divide.

The effective application of gamification requires careful consideration of pedagogical, technical, and ethical aspects to avoid a superficially enhanced learning experience.

#### **6. Analysis of survey data on gamification in learning foreign languages**

A survey was conducted to assess the perception of gamified methods of learning foreign languages. The survey was conducted among 50 respondents. The survey covered key aspects such as the use of game mechanics, the effect of gamification on motivation, the regularity of classes, preferred game elements, and possible negative effects. Figure 1 shows a summary diagram illustrating the distribution of survey participants' responses. The graph presents three main categories of opinions: The first category, Positive, includes respondents who expressed a favorable opinion of gamification, perceiving it as beneficial for language learning. - Moderate perception (Moderate) – participants who do not show an explicit preference but note certain advantages or disadvantages. – The third category, Neutral or uncertain answers (Neutral/Unsure) – respondents who do not have a clear opinion or do not use game elements in teaching. As can be seen from the diagram, the majority of participants positively assess the use of gamification in learning. Support is particularly high in the categories of motivation (points, awards, etc.) and class regularity, which indicates that game mechanics contribute to the involvement of students in the language learning process. At the same time, some participants noted the overload due to the excessive number of game elements. Thus, the survey results confirm that gamified methods can significantly increase student motivation and the regularity of classes, but at the same time require a balanced approach to prevent overload.



## 7. Conclusion

The application of gamification in learning environments is most effective when it becomes deeply integrated into the learning model, where game mechanics are not only motivational tools but also enable actual learning goals. Its success depends on a balance between recreational play and scholarly learning, tailoring approaches, and an adept synthesis of competitive and cooperative dynamics.

The future development of gamification is inherently linked to the evolution of adaptive technologies, i.e., artificial intelligence and virtual reality. At the same time, this requires a serious exploration of ethical issues, e.g., the digital divide and addiction potential. It is necessary to avoid a shallow implementation of game mechanics while keeping a constant focus on the development of the intrinsic motivation of learners.

### *List of literature*

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