

GAMIFICATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS: ENHANCING ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION

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Annotation. This article presents a critical and evidence-based overview of how gamification enhances foreign language instruction. It synthesizes data from peer-reviewed studies and applies established theoretical frameworks to evaluate the role of digital games and point-based systems in promoting vocabulary acquisition and classroom participation.

Keywords: gamification, foreign language learning, engagement, vocabulary retention, educational technology, language pedagogy

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada gamifikatsiya chet tillarini o'qitishni qanday kuchaytirishi haqida tanqidiy va dalillarga asoslangan umumiy ma'lumot keltirilgan. U mutaxassislar tomonidan olib borilgan tadqiqotlar ma'lumotlarini uyg'unlashtiradi va elektron o'yinlar va so'z birikmalarini o'zlashtirish va sinfda ishtirok etishni rag'batlantirishda ballik tizimlarning rolini baholash uchun belgilangan nazariy asoslarni qo'llaydi.

Kalit so'zlar: *gamifikatsiya, chet tillarini o'rganish, jalb qilish, lug'atni xotirada saqlash, ta'lim texnologiyasi, til pedagogikasi*

Introduction

The problem of ensuring students' activity in foreign language classes has long been a concern among teachers. Traditional methods such as grammar exercises, dictionary lists, and passive reading often discourage student interest and result in high attrition rates. In response to these restrictions, gamification emerged as a promising pedagogical tool. Gamification refers to the application of game elements—points, badges, leaderboards, quests, and cycles of feedback—to increase motivation and engagement in non-game settings (Deterding et al., 2011). The basis for gamification lies in harmony with self-determination theory (SDT), which argues that students have more reasons when they experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Digital education platforms like Duolingo, Kahoot!, and Classcraft use these principles by allowing students to learn at their pace, so that they receive immediate feedback, and participate in collaborative tasks. Although gamification is often associated with entertainment, its pedagogical significance included in encouraging constant attention, active participation, and repeated exposure to linguistic forms. This article explores how gamification affects the study of foreign languages, with special emphasis on student engagement and

vocabulary retention. By reviewing empirical research, it seeks to provide a complete understanding of the strengths and limitations of gamified education.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative literature review methodology to analyze recent scientific work focused on gamification in foreign language education. A total of six journal articles published from 2016 to 2024 were selected using the following criteria:

Articles should be in English and published in prestigious, peer-reviewed educational or linguistic journals. Gamification should be a central intervention in the context of learning a foreign language. Studies should report measurable outcomes related to motivation, engagement, or learning effectiveness.

Both quantitative and qualitative research projects are included. Searchable databases include JSTOR, ERIC, Scopus, and Google Scholar. Search terms include "gamification in language learning," "educational technology," "promoting a foreign language," and "dictionary preservation gamified." The findings were organized thematically around three key outcomes: student engagement, vocabulary retention, and teaching design.

Results

This study uses a methodology for reviewing quality literature to analyze recent scientific work aimed at gamification in a foreign language. We selected six journal articles published between 2016 and 2024 from Khol, based on the following criteria: Each article was written in English and appeared in a peer-reviewed, non-fiction journal focused on reading or linguistics.

Peer-reviewed research shows that gamification improves student outcomes in several dimensions:

1. *Increase Student Activity* – gamified platforms like Classcraft and Kahoot! foster increased class interaction through point-based participation, team issues, and real-time feedback. Sanchez et al. (2020) found that French high school students using Classcraft showed higher attendance and participation rates than control groups. Munday (2016) similarly found that university-level Hispanic students performed more homework and spent more time on language applications when using gamified platforms.

2. *Mastering and maintaining vocabulary* – gamification supports long-term storage through repetition, quick feedback, and motivational elements. Dehghanzadeh and Jafarigohar (2021) demonstrated that Iranian EFL readers achieved much higher post-test scores compared to their traditional flashcard-trained counterparts who underwent gamified dictionary exercises. Gafni et al. (2022) gamified and highlighted the cognitive benefits of intermediate replication and visual reinforcement incorporated into mobile applications.

3. *Internal motivation and learning autonomy* – gamification enhances inner motivation by offering readers a sense of achievement and control over their progress. When Huang and Soman (2013) students perceive progress through game levels and badges, they develop more commitment to their tasks.

In several studies, students felt autonomous and self-directed, which had a positive effect on their long-term learning habits.

Discussion

Evidence suggests that gamification is more than a superficial recruitment tactic—it is of great pedagogical importance when performed thoughtfully. A game-based learning environment provides the repetitive practice needed to learn a language and offers the emotional stimulation necessary to maintain the student's interest. However, difficulties remain. Excessive use of external rewards in education—such as points or prizes—can undermine students' internal motivation to learn (Deci et al., 1999). In addition, gamification requires careful coordination with educational goals; poorly designed games can distract from content or simplify complex language skills. In addition, technological disparities and cultural attitudes towards games can affect its effectiveness in different student populations. Teachers to maximize benefits: Use gamification to fill in instead of replacing the main instructions. Focus on low-level, highly meditative tasks that strengthen the course goals. Encourage cooperation, not competitive dynamics. Monitor the progress of the student to adjust the level of difficulty and prevent separation.

Conclusion

Gamification, the incorporation of game mechanics into non-game contexts, has become an increasingly popular approach to teaching foreign languages. This article investigates how gamification impacts student engagement, motivation, and vocabulary retention in language learning contexts. Based on a qualitative review of recent empirical research, the paper identifies how reward systems, problems, and interactive digital platforms contribute to improving academic performance. The analysis also looks at limitations such as superficial attraction and technological barriers. It also offers practical recommendations for designing gamified experiences that foster intrinsic motivation and contribute to sustained academic progress.

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