

USING GAMIFICATION TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES

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Annotation. This study explores the role of gamification in foreign language teaching, focusing on its impact on students' speaking skills and engagement. It highlights how game elements such as feedback, competition, and collaboration reduce language anxiety and improve fluency. The paper concludes that gamification creates a motivating and interactive learning environment.

Key words: Gamification, speaking skills, student engagement, language anxiety

Annotatsiya. Ushbu tadqiqot gamifikatsiyaning chet tillarini o'qitishdagi rolini, ayniqsa talabalarning gapirish ko'nikmalariga va faolligiga ta'sirini o'rganadi. Unda o'yin elementlari orqali til qo'rquvini kamaytirish va ravonlikni oshirish yoritiladi. Xulosa: gamifikatsiya samarali va qiziqarli o'quv muhitini yaratadi.

Kalit so'zlar: Gamifikatsiya, gapirish ko'nikmalari, talaba faolligi, til qo'rquvi

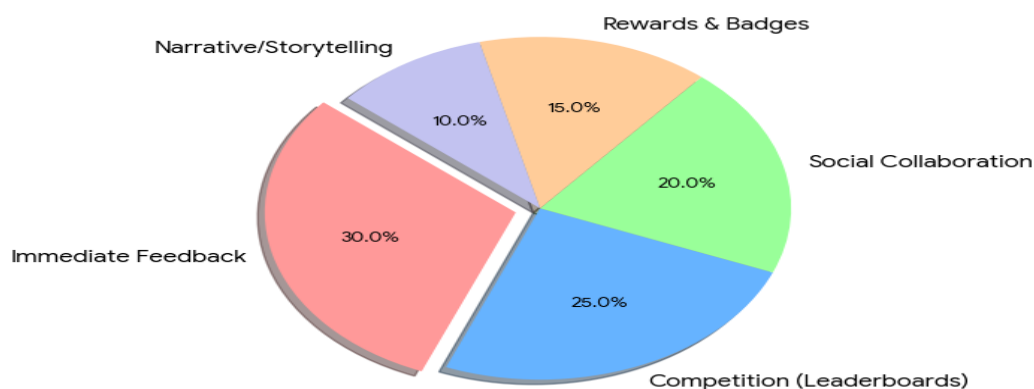
Аннотация. В работе рассматривается роль геймификации в обучении иностранным языкам, особенно её влияние на развитие устной речи и вовлечённости студентов. Показано, что игровые элементы снижают языковой барьер и повышают беглость речи. Делается вывод, что геймификация создаёт эффективную и мотивирующую образовательную среду.

Ключевые слова: Геймификация, разговорные навыки, вовлечённость студентов, языковой барьер

In the contemporary landscape of foreign language pedagogy, the primary challenge for educators is no longer the lack of information, but the lack of learner engagement [1]. Traditional, teacher-centered methods often prioritize grammar and syntax over active communication, leading to “language anxiety” – a psychological barrier that prevents students from speaking fluently for fear of making mistakes. To bridge this gap, Gamification – the integration of game-design elements and game principles into non-game contexts – has emerged as a revolutionary instructional strategy. By transforming the classroom into an interactive environment where students earn points, climb leaderboards, and face “quests,” educators can significantly increase student motivation and oral proficiency [2]. The essence of gamification in language learning lies in its ability to lower the Affective Filter, a concept introduced by Stephen Krashen, which suggests that students learn best when they are relaxed and confident. When a speaking activity is framed as a “mission” or a competitive game, the student's focus shifts from the fear of grammatical errors to the goal of the game. This shift encourages spontaneous speech and improves fluency, which is the ultimate goal of foreign language pedagogy [3].

Implementing gamification is more than just “playing games” in class; it requires a structured approach to ensure that the gaming elements serve specific linguistic objectives. This paper explores the potential of gamification to enhance students' speaking skills, evaluates the most effective digital and analog tools for the classroom, and addresses the practical challenges that teachers face when moving from traditional instruction to a game-based model.

Picture 1: Factors increasing student engagement in gamified speaking practice



The pie chart titled “Factors Increasing Student Engagement in Gamified Speaking Practice” identifies five critical pillars that transform a passive learner into an active speaker [4]. Each segment represents a psychological trigger that educators can use to improve oral proficiency.

1. Immediate Feedback: The 30% Core (Operant Conditioning).

Accounting for nearly one-third of the engagement factor, Immediate Feedback is the most vital component. In traditional speaking tasks, a student might wait minutes or hours to know if their pronunciation was correct. In a gamified system, the feedback loop is instantaneous [5]. This is based on B.F. Skinner’s theory of Operant Conditioning, where a positive “ping” or a score increase acts as a reinforcement. For speaking skills, this means the student’s brain immediately associates the correct phonetic output with a reward, accelerating the transition from conscious thought to automatic speech.

2. Competition and Leaderboards: The 25% Driver (Social Comparison)

The 25% slice dedicated to Competition addresses the “Social Comparison” theory. In a language classroom, healthy competition creates a sense of urgency. When a student sees their name on a leaderboard, they are motivated to increase their Output (L2 production). The desire to “win” often overrides the “Speaking Anxiety” that usually hinders language learners. By focusing on the game’s rank, students spend more “Time on Task,” which is the single greatest predictor of fluency [6].

3. Social Collaboration: The 20% Pillar (Social Constructivism).

While competition is important, Social Collaboration accounts for 20% of the engagement. This reflects Vygotsky's Social Constructivism, which argues that language is best learned through interaction with others. Gamification often requires students to work in teams to solve puzzles or win "boss battles". To succeed, they must use Functional Language – negotiating meaning, asking for help, and giving directions. This replicates real-world communication much more effectively than reading from a textbook.

4. Rewards and Badges: The 15% (Extrinsic Motivation).

At 15%, Rewards and Badges serve as tangible markers of progress. Language learning is a long process, and students often lose motivation because they cannot "see" their improvement. A badge for "100 Correct Sentences" or "Master of Past Tense" provides a sense of achievement. These extrinsic rewards often bridge the gap until the student reaches a level where Intrinsic Motivation (the joy of speaking the language) takes over [7].

5. Narrative and Storytelling: The 10% (Immersion).

Though the smallest slice at 10%, Narrative provides the "Why" behind the speaking. Immersing a student in a story – where they are a detective or a world traveler – provides a meaningful context. It shifts the activity from a "language exercise" to a "meaningful interaction." When a student speaks to save a character in a story, they are using the language as a real tool, which is the ultimate goal of foreign language pedagogy.

The integration of gamification into foreign language pedagogy represents a vital evolution in how we approach the development of speaking skills. While traditional methods provide the necessary structural foundation of a language, they often fail to provide the high-energy, low-stress environment required for oral fluency. Gamification fills this gap by leveraging human psychology – specifically our innate desires for feedback, competition, and social connection – to turn the difficult task of speaking a new language into an engaging and rewarding experience.

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