



Exploring the effectiveness of gamification in ESL classrooms

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Abstract

Gamification, which is the utilisation of the game design elements and mechanics like ranking lists, levels, points and badges in a non-gaming environment to increase the engagement of the learners has gained traction in English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. This paper explores the effectiveness of gamification in ESL classrooms, examining its impact on overall learning outcomes. Common gamification elements in ESL include feedback, points, quizzes, and leaderboards, while less utilized features involve collaboration and role-playing. Effective gamification designs can foster interaction, autonomy, and a fun learning environment, tailored to participants' backgrounds and preferences. Existing research has indicated that gamification can help by stability in the interest of the learners, enhancing their motivation and promoting social interaction among them leading to better learning outcomes. However, the competitive nature of gamification can demotivate some students, highlighting the need for a balanced approach.

Keywords: Gamification, ESL (English as a Second Language), language instruction, engagement, learning outcomes

Introduction

Gamification can be defined as utilising the game design elements and mechanics like ranking lists, levels, points and badges in a non-gaming environment for increasing the engagement of the learners (Li & Liu, 2022) ^[3]. Recent research on gamification in English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction highlights how the widespread adoption of this technique in language education only happened during the second half of the 2010s to make the learning process more engaging for the participants and also increasing their engagement levels by creating an interactive environment that allows the students to achieve greater autonomy (Zhang & Hasim, 2022) ^[6]. This paper explores the effectiveness of gamification in ESL classrooms, examining its impact on overall learning outcomes.

Gamification Elements in ESL Instruction

There are a variety of elements of gamification being used in language instruction with the most common being feedback, points system, quiz, digital badges, leaderboard and reward system. The gamification elements that are relatively less utilized include features like collaboration, QR code, role-playing, avatars and time limits (Zhang & Hasim, 2022) ^[6]. A successful game design for language instruction needs to facilitate interaction among students and also educate them and entertain them in the process. It should be a game design that helps the learners understand the English language integrating playability for transforming the learning experience. However, the elements to be included during the gamification of the learning experience should also be decided by taking into consideration the background of the participants, their learning preferences and the educational context to achieve the desired outcomes (Kaya & Sagnak, 2022) ^[2]. Including these elements helps in creating an atmosphere that is fun and facilitates healthy competition where the participants challenge themselves and others and also improve their skills and knowledge by engaging in autonomous learning.

Gamification and Learning Outcomes

Gamifying the ESL lessons can help in attracting more students and motivating them to learn. According to the research, game-based activities in language classes stimulate the interest of the students in learning and consequently lead to better learning outcomes (Hussin, 2020) ^[1]. The components like scores, points and badges can serve as external rewards that stimulate the desire of the students to complete the assigned activities and win the tasks making them activities participate in the learning process. Gamification also encourages the students to interact with each other creating a learning environment that is less stressful and that encourages collaboration among them (Majdoub, 2021) ^[4]. Providing this opportunity for social interaction and competitiveness among the language students can help in enhancing their social competence and encourage them to track their own progress fulfilling diverse learning needs. However, there can also be certain negative aspects of gamification and the resultant competition among the students. Not every student likes to be in an environment where a constant state of competition is being created. Along with this, failure in the game-based tasks or consistently poor scores can also demotivate the students (Yacob, Rahman, Mohamad, & Rahim, 2022) ^[5].

Conclusion

In conclusion, verification can serve as an effective strategy to enhance the learning experience of the students in ESL classrooms. This is because it increases student motivation, engagement and social interaction fostering collaboration and learning. However, it is important to adopt a balanced approach when gamifying the learning experience because it can also lead to discouraging the students because of the consistent competition and comparison going on due to the gaming elements becoming a part of the learning process.

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