

МЕДИЦИНА, ПЕДАГОГИКА И ТЕХНОЛОГИЯ: ТЕОРИЯ И ПРАКТИКА

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GAMIFICATION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: A MOTIVATIONAL CATALYST FOR 21ST-CENTURY LEARNERS IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract.

Gamification has become a revolutionary method of teaching English at a time where learners' expectations and behaviors are shaped by digital involvement. The use of gamified teaching methods in Uzbekistani EFL classes is examined in this paper, with a focus on secondary school students moving from CEFR A2 to B1 levels. The study makes the case that gamification increases motivation, engagement, and language skill retention by referencing pertinent research, learner feedback, and personal classroom experiences. Along with providing useful, context-sensitive answers, it also looks at implementation issues like cultural opposition and resource constraints. In the end, the paper presents gamification as a learner-centered approach that is consistent with constructivist concepts, rather than just a collection of digital tools.

Introduction

I deal with multilingual EFL students in Uzbekistan as a TESOL teacher, and they frequently become disinterested in conventional, grammar-heavy education. These students, particularly the teenagers, are digital natives whose expectations, attention spans, and cognitive patterns have been influenced by interactive technology. I originally used traditional techniques, as do many educators in post-Soviet settings. But I started looking into gamification as a means of changing my students' attitude toward English from one of duty to one of engagement. According to Deterding et al. (2011), gamification is the application of game features—like challenges, badges, levels, and points—in non-gaming environments. It can be an effective motivating technique in the classroom, especially for language learners who could have affective filters like fear and low self-esteem (Krashen, 1982).

Theoretical Framework

Conceptual Structure Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which holds that learners are more motivated when their demands for autonomy, competence, and

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relatedness are satisfied, is the foundation of gamification. These aspects are naturally supported by games: learners confront challenges that are suitably leveled (competence), cooperate with peers (relatedness), and have control over activities (autonomy). Furthermore, active, meaningful, and social learning experiences are valued by constructivist learning theory (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978). Gamification supports deeper language acquisition by promoting experimentation, exploration, and peer interaction—all of which are in line with this approach.

Implementation in Classrooms in Uzbekistan.

I implemented gamification in my ninth-grade EFL class using both digital and low-tech methods. Among the tactics were: • "Grammar Quest" Challenges: As they advanced through the stages, students earned badges by completing grammatical exercises. • Vocabulary Bingo: Interactive peer play that reinforces word meaning and spelling. • Digital Platforms: Wordwall, Quizizz, and Kahoot! were among the tools used to evaluate listening comprehension and vocabulary. • Classroom Economy: As a reward for participation, homework, and teamwork, students received "language coins," which they could then trade for little benefits. Students enthusiastically responded. Even typically quiet students started volunteering more frequently as participation rose. More significantly, pupils started to see English as a fun and attainable talent rather than a rigid academic need.

Impact and Responses from Students.

I used peer interviews and informal reflections to get input on how well gamification worked. Among the important insights were: • "I want to learn as much as I want to win." • "It feels more like play than study." • "For once, even grammar was enjoyable!" Additionally, gamification helped my mixed-ability students differentiate instruction. Peer assistance and visible progress tracking kept emerging learners motivated, while advanced learners may complete additional "quests."

Problems and Solutions.

Gamification is not without its difficulties in Uzbekistan, despite its advantages: • Cultural Resistance: A few parents and coworkers questioned if games constituted "serious" education. I responded to this by outlining the pedagogical justification and providing examples of advancements. • Digital Restrictions: Not every student has a smartphone or reliable internet access. I responded by creating paper-based substitutes and planning online tests for when classes are in session. • Workload for Teachers:

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Gamification calls for planning and regularity. Working with other educators and reusing flexible templates was beneficial to me.

Implications for Education Gamification is more than just a motivational tactic; it supports the worldwide ELT objectives of encouraging independence, teamwork, and critical thinking. When carefully incorporated, it facilitates: • Formative evaluation without failure-related anxiety Particularly for hesitant students, intrinsic motivation; contextual language use that fosters meaningful contact Additionally, gamification is a versatile tool in any contemporary ELT framework since it works with task-based language teaching, project-based learning, and blended education (Richards, 2006; Harmer, 2015).

Conclusion.

My EFL classroom has become a more dynamic, student-centered space thanks to gamification. Although it doesn't take the place of fundamental abilities or well-defined learning objectives, it is a potent addition, particularly for students who find conventional approaches difficult. Gamification has potential as an inclusive and culturally sensitive method of teaching English in Uzbekistan and elsewhere.

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