

# Applying Gamification in English Learning

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## ABSTRACT

More and more teachers are applying game elements to the classroom, as studies show that gamification can increase student engagement. Gamification has become a popular way to enrich the classroom, and many people have made promising predictions about its penetration. However, integrating games into an educational environment remains a daunting task. It is estimated that many gamification efforts will fail due to a lack of understanding of the design and implementation of gamification for teachers. They also have difficulty in establishing learning principles, scheduling classroom games, and engaging students. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to explore the mechanism of gamification from the perspectives of learning motivation and academic performance of young students. This article will also provide suggestions for the design of a successful classroom game. The results suggest that, first, virtualization does increase student engagement to a certain extent. Second, gamification can improve students' satisfaction and happiness in learning and dramatically increases the engagement of introverted students. This paper also provides a detailed overview of the impact of gamification on non-native English learners with different personalities at the primary school level and provide comprehensive insights into the development and design of gamification teaching.

**Keywords:** Gamification, Learning motivation, Teaching

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Gamification refers to the use of game mechanics or game design elements such as points, levels, ranking lists, badges in a non-game environment to increase learner engagement [1]. Successful gamification can attract and motivate people to change behavior, develop skills, or solve more effective problems.

First, gamification makes learning more attractive and interactive. Gamification usually enables learners to create exciting, entertaining, and educational content, hence establishing engagement during teaching and learning sessions [2]. At the same time, some studies claim that new generation learners- especially those who grew up with the Internet and computer- are likely to enjoy lessons that involve gameplay that interact with their teachers or other students when learning [3]. To this end, it infers that gamification can drive human engagement. Another benefit is the enrichment of information that encourages learners to think creatively. In particular, gamification also supports interactivity and role-play using competitive elements that add an immersive perspective of English language learning.

When applied into English learning fields, gamification is able to improve the enjoyment of tasks, the learning process, and the satisfaction of both teachers and students. It helps instructors to achieve teaching objectives through gaming elements [4]. Students generally perform well according to the feedback. In essence, English learning is more than instilling knowledge of the English language in learners. Using the gamification approach can enable learners to retain knowledge acquired during a lesson quickly. Also, it enables learning new concepts; thus, it is a rewarding experience. To this end, gamification provides endless opportunities for English language learners to see real-world applications of gameplay, which cements learners' skills and experiences by applying such learned knowledge to practical scenarios. In other words, it means that gamification can make learning more practical and enhance students' learning experiences. Accordingly, a successful game design must also consider English learners' levels and skills.

For primary school students who are not native speakers of English, the influence of gamified English teaching can be showed in the change of students'

behavior and emotion. When they are motivated, they will stand up and do physical activity instead of sitting at a desk and doing exercise. If students like games, they will change from a stable and quiet mood to a curious mood about games [5].

However, there are some issues of gamified classrooms. First, many teachers can not balance students with different personalities. Extroverted and introverted learners have distinctive learning styles. Extroverted learners are quicker and more willing to accept new elements shown in gamified teaching activities than introverts. They prefer the role of leaders in games, as well as competitive points and badges [6,7], feeling comfortable at work and being part of a large group of people. They are at ease with a team rather than alone, and they feel more productive with a team. But introvert learners show an alternative attitude toward gamified activity. Some introverted learners are resistant to group activities after being forced to join the game. As a result, the negative emotion increases as they are unwilling to play the game. This kind of resistance to games is likely to make introverted learners unable to learn knowledge, and even lead to games failing to proceed normally as expected, thus affecting the learning of other students.

In addition, the teaching objectives of English class are not always aligned with the class activities. In current primary school English classroom teaching, teachers' teaching objectives are unsuitable for the addition of games. For example, if the learning goal is just to learn some new words and the game takes a long time to play, the game session may be unnecessary. On the other hand, the teacher may think that the students can master the knowledge quickly through the game, but the students may enjoy the game more than pay attention to the study, and then the learning goal and the game design are not matched. Thus, this might reduce students' learning efficiency and the overall effect is unsatisfactory. Third, some students who have poor concentration are easily be distracted while learning, they are likely to indulge entertainment instead of learning.

Game design is consuming for teachers in terms of expenditure and time. Teacher need to do a lot of preparatory work, such as buying items and spending time designing games. These are costs that teachers need to estimate in advance. If the cost is too high, then teachers need to reconsider the game design or whether it is necessary to play the game.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how teachers overcome the obstacles of gamification and become more flexible in the face of different learning objectives, so as to design the most suitable for students to learn efficiently in games.



## **2. ENGLISH TEACHING**

Traditional English teaching is based on direct teaching method. Teachers impart knowledge to students in which students are the receivers while teacher is an initiator. Students basically sit in their own positions and listen to the knowledge points told by teachers without interaction or questions. In essence, English teaching considers specific teaching and learning methods according to different situations such as the theory of language learning, the particularity of students (non-native speakers), and the needs of learners. More specifically, different approaches to English teaching depend on a wide range of contexts. The effectiveness or efficiency of any chosen teaching method also depends on many factors, particularly the needs of learners. The same is true for gamification teaching. First of all, we should consider what learners really need and then make reasonable arrangements.

In recent years, the progress of computer-aided language learning methods innovates the interactive learning mode. It enables learners to enjoy learning English from novel and creative stimulation with diverse forms of information such as cartoon image, tablet, and audio. Gamification works well with elementary school students because children nature is outgoing and proactive. They embrace all kinds of games. According to Vygotsky, children learn by playing with others, creating and improving their zone of proximal development [8]. When they play, they are more involved in complex activities. Many games aimed at children stimulate curiosity and thinking in learners. Desire for victory and enjoy the game process is why almost all players want to play games. If students sit in a classroom for 45 minutes, some of the students are outgoing, may not like sitting in the classroom 45 minutes motionless learn, exclusion of learning, but when they participate in the games, they probably don't realize oneself in learning, and have mastered the knowledge. For any game to be successful, it has to be able to engage players and capture their attention.



### 3. GAMIFICATION DESIGN

A successful game design is a process that involves various factors. Gamification relies on teachers' comprehensive ability and the cooperation of students. The current education system has been employing several methods to help students learn and engage in different classroom. Specifically, more teachers began to apply game-play elements, such as puzzle, experiment and imitation, to their classrooms to increase learners' engagement during English lessons. With such interaction between students and teachers, learners are more easily to learn knowledge and get familiar with it. That is the reason why gamification has become increasingly valuable and popular for education setting.

Educational game developers must consider successful game designs that facilitate interaction with students and entertain or educate them [9]. The game design should also enable the learner to grasp knowledge related to English learning. At the same time, a successful game design integrates playability, Primary school students can learn English through playing their favorite games and more engage in class. Gamification is transforming the learning experience. Teachers should consider player background, educational context, and learning preferences so as to promote English learning [10]. Successful gamification process emphasizes the experience of students, which includes engagement, perception of the difficulty of knowledge, learning efficiency and conversion rate of the game in class. Participants of the game are also the learners of knowledge. Students will want to continue the game only if they have a good sense of experience. When used correctly, gamification can be a powerful tool for guiding the teaching process to good effect. Through careful use of gamification, teachers can guide the entire teaching schedule and classroom environment, successfully increasing student engagement and achievement. Of course, as with any non-gamified classroom, teachers must first carefully consider the teaching context, including but not limited to who the students are taught,

their personalities, and what they are learning. When teachers have a thorough and detailed grasp of their classroom, designing a game that works for most people becomes more achievable. Therefore, an effective game can improve students' motivation and participation, so that everyone can learn knowledge from it, and ultimately achieve the goal of teachers to adopt gamification.

In particular, since most English learners are non-native speakers or those learning English as a second language, designing easy-to-use and straightforward video enables faster adoption for English learning. Generally, English teaching still faces significant obstacles, especially concerns about employing gamification for student motivation and engagement. Notably, while gamification increases learners' engagement, awareness, and motivation to learn English, teachers must address issues affecting gameplay application in their English teaching. In particular, teachers must encourage and consider restructuring their lessons to fit the needs of learners. One way of doing this is by ensuring the fitness of games. Establishing a fitness of game enables learners to avoid challenges that impede their English learning.

Considering the many benefits of applying gamification in school or education settings, teachers must balance integrating these technologies and students' abilities to benefit from the inclusion of game-play in English learning. Overall, ensuring the game's fitness can help game designers avoid such challenges and guarantee that the game enriches the student's learning experiences while inspiring them and promoting English learning at different stages.



### 4. IMPLICATIONS

Since gamification appeared in the classroom, its way has also developed with the changes of the Times. From the initial physical games, different innovative props have been gradually added, technological advancement and integration applied in English teaching class continues to transform the learning experience. As

technology progress, the future of gamification is prone to take different dimensions. The notion that gamification can not only enable ones to learn more knowledge but also fire young learners' imagination and creativity. The future learning experience will rely on games that supporting learning (Hallifax et al., 2019). Stakeholders involved will struggle to separate learning from entertainment. For game manufacturers, they have to work more on making the games a educational space rather than a place for entertaining learners.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This article aims to understand how gamified learning can help non-native English primary school students learn English more efficiently and more motivated. through the review of present literature, it is concluded that learning through games can improve the learning experience and attract students' attention. Gamified learning, however, there are still problems existing, such as some learners may not treat this experience as a study, because it has the flexibility, for example, some inattentive young students are easily distracted when studying, they are likely to indulge the game loop to delay the class schedule, focus on the entertainment, rather than learning. This shows that while gamification teaching has been helpful to learning efficiency, it also needs more improvement. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a successful game design. A successful game design should be both entertaining and educational, and the games that students are really interested in can help them improve their learning faster. According to the current development trend of high-tech, the future gamified learning will be combined with technology to improve the learning experience. This will also help test whether gamification loses its potency over time.

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