

DETERMINING GAMIFICATION ELEMENTS THROUGH EXPERTS' PERSPECTIVES FOR TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Sabrina Adia Mohd Sharizal¹

*Rafiza Abdul Razak¹

Norshahida Hassan²

[1] Curriculum and Instructional Technology Department, Faculty of Education, Universiti Malaya

[2] Department of Literature and Social Sciences, Kolej Matrikulasi Pulau Pinang

*rafiza@um.edu.my

Abstract: This paper explores experts' opinions and perspectives from two different fields of study: English language teaching and instructional technology, in regards to determining the key gamification elements or essentials needed to teach pre-university students in their English language classrooms. Four (4) experts who were experienced in teaching and evaluating pre-university students were chosen, two from fields of English language teaching and instructional technology respectively. A series of interviews were conducted to gain the opinions and perspectives on the implementation of gamification in the English language classroom. Based on the findings, they discussed the fundamentals of applying gamification on attracting students to utilise the pedagogical aspect. A prompt list of instructions was provided by the experts based on their experiences on how to make the approach more effective and enhance students' focus and English language skills in the classroom to be implemented in the real world. The paper's conclusion outlines the practical ramifications and offers ideas for further research.

Keywords: Gamification, perspectives, English language, classroom, pre-university students, pedagogical approach

INTRODUCTION

As agreed by Rao (2019), the most widely used language in the world in various fields and functions is the English language. Due to this fact, it is possible to deduce that the language is considered the first global lingua franca. Rao (2019) then concluded that since English carries such responsibility, it has become the primary language in the exchange of communication and information in professional settings and educational institutions. This is despite the backgrounds of speakers considering the nativity of one's language. English, or any other language in the world, needs a proper understanding of the utility of the language itself by its users to avoid any misunderstandings. It is equally important to be skilful in comprehension when the conversation is being done. Since English is being used in almost every part of the world, it is important to teach and assist in the acquisition and comprehension of the English language for students, especially those who are not native speakers of English. In many countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia, the English language is a compulsory subject that must be taught in schools up until their tertiary education to ensure students have a good amount of comprehension of the said language for them to continue their studies. This also enables them to compete with people in the real world.

To accommodate the ever-changing situation of pedagogical practices in education, the notion of using media and entertainment has been discussed by instructors in efforts to catch up with the pace. Parallel to this effort, students nowadays prefer to work and learn with the help of technology, paying great attention to the incorporation of media and entertainment within the ICT prospects. In addition to promoting academic excellence and enjoyment, the inclusion of the younger generation's interests into the curriculum may be a boosting agent in the academic performance of the students. This may also assist teachers in the ease of teaching in the classroom.

Al-Arif (2019) mentioned that the utilisation of information and communication technologies (ICT) in language education has increased in the past years. One of the technologies that were being discussed to be implemented in education is through games in the educational form, whether online or offline. This process is labelled as the "gamification" process. Prathyusha (2020) believed that one of the methods to improve one's language skills and growth is through the use of games. This is because, the elements of gaming such as challenges, rewards and objectives act as factors to motivate and inspire the students. In the context of gamification, Prathyusha (2020) supported the claim by adding that gamification or any game-based learning pedagogy is a strategy that is quickly being adapted in the educational system. This is done to encourage students by enforcing game elements and design aspects into the educational system.

Hence, it is believed that the gamification process in educational settings for the English language may boost students' productivity and engagement in the classroom. However, a good grasp of gamification elements is needed to ensure that the teaching and learning process are at ease.

The primary objective of this research is to determine the gamification elements with the help of perspectives of experts from the English language and instructional technology fields in regard to teaching pre-university students English comprehension in the classroom.

This research paper seeks to answer these three research questions:

1. What are the gamification elements for teaching English comprehension in the classroom?
2. What are the effectiveness of implementing gamification in the classroom?
3. How is the applicability of gamification with English language teaching and learning?

LITERATURE REVIEW

English comprehension

Reading literacy is described as one's capability to contemplate, comprehend and utilise written language with the aim of societal activity engagements, increasing potential and knowledge as well as catering with their aims. Carroll (1993), David (1944, 1968) & Thorndike (1973) as cited by Oakhill et al. (2019) concluded that having the power to comprehend a text without any errors is dependent on the situation in which one possesses a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of lexical semantics within the text. Caccamise & Snyder (2005) noted that comprehension in theory is that one must first understand certain concepts of how language users interpret meanings cognitively. Though initially, it is not required to understand each word that exists, however, this can be measured to a certain degree since the meanings of unfamiliar words can always be deduced based on contextual cues. This is because, humans tend to acquire more vocabulary knowledge when engaged in reading activities (Oakhill et al., 2019).

Smith et al. (2021) mentioned that reading is an intuitive process that requires the readers to use their skills and utilise cognitive processes in regard to the linguistic elements that they are reading. Having extensive knowledge of vocabulary is not enough for the reading process if it means the period to comprehend the meaning of certain words is long. A higher standard of meeting demands is necessary to obtain the content foundation due to additional demands of making hypotheses based on the inability to understand a text's coherence. This will then result in the lowering level availability of workable memory to activate weak schemata and reduce one's comprehension (Smith et al, 2021).

Gamification in Education

Elaish et al. (2019) conveyed that games act as valuable tools in the education system by assisting in the teaching and learning process of a certain skill and comprehending information and boosting interests. These will then lead to improved educational results. The "gamification" term is vast and various, which can be defined as the process of the creation and designing of a game, involving game elements or principles such as rewards, leaderboards, scores and profiles to transform a non-game situation into something more similar to using real games. Based on a particular point of view, this definition defines what makes a game "essentialism". This perspective holds that a set of qualities determines the gaming functions.

According to Kirriemuir & McFarlane (2004), there are three main themes in games for education research, 1) the creation and use of gaming elements in education, 2) the integration of gaming mechanics in education, and 3) the effects of gaming elements on education. The topics and efficacy of the game itself may alter as a result of the accelerated growth of research on gamification for education. For a teaching and learning experience to be effective, these elements must be included, particularly when it comes to using technology in the classroom and observing the students and the process itself. The list of bases practitioners should include in gamified learning is: good gaming mechanisms (points, scores, leaderboards, buffs, etc.) that will engage with users. This is because, poor gaming elements lead to lower chances of achieving educational goals in the games. Other than that, having reward systems such as awards or penalties may boost the user's motivation and push the students to be more engaging in the classroom. Serious games may help with knowledge transfer because of their adaptive design process, quick feedback, demands, and ongoing use of the intended audience system by potential users during the game creation.

Therefore, the purpose of the paper is to determine the game mechanisms or elements needed to be incorporated into the pedagogical practices for English language learning and enhancing English comprehension skills for pre-university students, via experts' perspectives.

METHODOLOGY

This paper used a qualitative method, using a set of interviews with four (4) experts, two of each from different fields of English language and instructional technology. The experts are chosen because of their expertise in the English language and instructional technology in education with pre-university students. A timetable for interviewing the four experts about gamification in English language instruction was agreed upon by the researchers and the teachers. The interview strategy was used since a questionnaire was unable to provide the researchers with the detailed and particular information they sought.

1. Tenure in service for experts (years)

Table 4.1

Experts' Tenure Service Terms Distribution (Years)

Highest Degree	Frequency n=4	Percentage (%)
21 and above	2	50
20 and below	2	50

Source: Field survey (2023)

2. Highest degree program obtained by experts

Highest Degree	Frequency n=4	Percentage (%)
Doctorate degree (PhD)	3	75
Master's degree	1	25

Source: Field survey (2023)

FINDINGS

The researchers divided their conclusions into three primary categories based on the data:

1. Gamification elements for teaching English.
2. Perceptions on the effectiveness of gamification in the classroom.
3. Perceptions of gamification application with English language teaching and learning.

1. *Gamification elements for teaching English*

The first analysed data is determining gamification elements to be applied in the teaching and learning process for the English language. Experts believe that the elements should be interactive, mobile, available for reasoning or feedback, rewarding, designed in terms of game designs and user experience as well as accessible for both teachers and students.

“The games should be exciting to students, to younger generations—it should be interactive. It should also be mobile, so that we don't have to be in the same venue to conduct games.” (Expert 1, 2023)

“They should also give reasoning, not just answer questions...And there should always be a reflection on why the students had actually answered” (Expert 2, 2023)

“...giving rewards and incentives, also punishments...When talking about competitions, it is quite relevant to the cognitive domains by using rewards and points, or badges and leaderboards.” (Expert 3, 2023)

“...The game design, game contexts and user experience on that game are all important when utilising gamification...” (Expert 4, 2023)

2. Perceptions on the effectiveness of gamification in the classroom

As for the effectiveness of gamification in the classroom, the experts express their opinions and perspectives on the effectiveness of applying gamification in the classroom. The experts believe that instructors take note of students' progress based on their marks in the end to analyse students' performance at the end of the quiz or assessment followed by a series of discussions after the assessment. The results can also be measured using game learning analytics. However, one of the experts pointed out that the experts should not depend on results as students may make mistakes through intelligent guesses.

“...I would take note based on their marks that they receive...I would take note based on their marks that they receive” (Expert 1, 2023)

“...we can analyse students' performance at the end of the quiz to see their progress and then we can give the students feedback.” (Expert 3, 2023)

“...We can use and measure them using game learning analytics” (Expert 4, 2023)

“I will not just depend on marks they get at the end because sometimes some may just be just answering it and they tend to make intelligent guesses” (Expert 2, 2023)

3. Perceptions of gamification application with English language teaching and learning

The experts are questioned about their perceptions of gamification application in English language teaching and learning. Three experts remain positive with regard to applying gamification in the classroom, with one expert opinionating that gamification is only a tool for facilitating education and not an assessment tool. The three experts mentioned that gamification is possible with proper training for instructors to go through before applying the method in the classroom. They also mentioned that gamification is a suitable tool to increase students' language proficiency & skills with low and high technology. Lastly, they stated that gamification is suitable for and should be used in children's education at an early stage.

“Yes, the usage of gamification in education is possible to help students increase their cognitive skills.” (Expert 1, 2023)

“Yes, it is possible...So, each question can reflect which domain of Bloom's taxonomy, especially for quizzes used via gamification.” (Expert 3, 2023)

“However, if most of the students in the class are not tech-savvy, we can apply low tech gamification solutions or non-tech gamification solutions...we can adjust applying gamification without tech tools...it does not mean that we need to use digital components when teaching.” (Expert 3, 2023)

“That is why we have to start applying gamification in education in primary schools...However, before applying any gamification efforts, the educators or teachers must be trained by higher authorities or by the Ministry of Education themselves...” (Expert 4, 2023)

“For me, it is just a form of an approach or a method of teaching, or maybe to get feedback at the end of the lesson...So, I guess I still feel that gamification cannot be an assessment tool”. (Expert 2, 2023)

DISCUSSION

To effectively include gamification in the design of pedagogical practice, we must be able to comprehend the frequent problems that experts and students encounter. The specialists were tasked with compiling a list of frequent problems with gamification in education, both theoretically and practically. Each of the four specialists has unique perspectives on the matter, all of which point to the implications of gamification in the classroom.

Experts held the opinion that for gamification to be successfully implemented in the classroom, the pedagogical tool for gamification itself needs to be engaging for the students to prevent boredom or confusion. Friendly competitions featuring components like prizes and penalties are just one of the many activities that may be generated from the idea of gamification and the English language. Gamification should be enjoyable so it may assist the students in developing their cognitive abilities as well as gaining a deeper understanding of how a work of literature functions.

Whether or not technology is used in the teaching and learning process, one of the most important aspects is assessing students' performance by looking at their responses and how well they comprehend the assignments. Gamification is no exception; teachers and experts must still consider the performance of their pupils to improve their content and try new ways to support them.

The experts emphasised how crucial it is to use the pupils' performance when completing the gamification activities. Regarding the aforementioned discussion session, experts believed that it would be preferable if students could comprehend why they selected a specific response and how to communicate their own responses in regard to the questions they were given. Experts emphasised the value of the gamification tool's game learning statistics as well. Using gamification learning analytics, teachers can monitor and assess students' responses, performance, and behaviour based on the provided information. Instructors can use learning analytics to undertake in-depth assessments of their students' performance and to guide discussions based on the insights gleaned from the analytics data.

REFERENCES

- Al-Arif, T. Z. Z. (2019). Indonesian university students' perception and expectation towards ICT use in learning English as a foreign language. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 4(1), 133-145.
- Caccamise, D., & Snyder, L. (2005). Theory and pedagogical practices of text comprehension. *Topics in Language Disorders*, 25(1), 5-20.
- Carroll, J. B. (1993). *Human cognitive abilities: A survey of factor-analytic studies*. Cambridge University Press.
- Elaish, M. M., Ghani, N. A., Shuib, L., & Al-Haiqi, A. (2019). Development of a mobile game application to boost students' motivation in learning English vocabulary. *IEEE Access*, 7, 13326-13337.
- Kirriemuir, J., & McFarlane, A. (2004). *Literature review in games and learning*. HAL Open Sciences.
- Oakhill, J., Cain, K., & Elbro, C. (2019). Reading comprehension and reading comprehension difficulties. *Reading development and difficulties: Bridging the gap between research and practice*, 83-115.
- Rao, P. S. (2019). The role of English as a global language. *Research Journal of English*, 4(1), 65-79.
- Prathyusha, N. (2020). Role of gamification in language learning. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR)*, 7(2), 577-583.
- Smith, R., Snow, P., Serry, T., & Hammond, L. (2021). The role of background knowledge in reading comprehension: A critical review. *Reading Psychology*, 42(3), 214-240.
- Thorndike, R. L. (1973). Reading as reasoning. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 9(2), 135-147.