



An Exploratory Study Of Gamification In Education With Special Reference To English Language Teaching

Dr. Bharti Kukreja

Professor (English)

Anangpuria School of Management & Technology, Faridabad, India

Abstract: Gamification has become one of the noticeable developments in the educational domain. In fact, it is not startling that gamification has attentively been addressed in the realm of education as well as strengthening teacher-pupil relationship. In this paper we perform an in-depth study of adaptive gamification in creating a result oriented teaching and optimising learning environment in the classrooms in order to provide a synthesis of ongoing trends and developments in this field. The paper will address 03 research questions : (1) What are the current contributions of gamification in education ? (2) What is the impact of this gamified approach? (3) How the impact of gamification is measured especially in English Language Teaching ? We also provide the details of the future of gamified trends and major challenges for accomplishing diverse classroom objectives while using games . The literature review and consequent study also put emphasis on varying affordances in the implementation and the pursued goals of gamification solutions.

Index Terms - noticeable, adaptive gamification, affordances.

1.1 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

In the recent years , the integration of technological methods in educational context has transformed the traditional teaching techniques and provided new paradigms for engaging the students. The long history of the varied ways of incorporating gameful interactions to educational contexts has also lead to varying terminology for the approach e.g. serious games, edugames, games for education, game based learning, and lately, gamification. (Landers,2014 ; Seaborn & Fels, 2015; Deterding, 2014). Gamification is an innovative tool for catalyzing attention and focus in the educational environment. Games create engagement - a necessity for any learning experience (Gogos, 2013). Gamification is the use of game design patterns and elements in non-game contexts to enhance constructive learning and engagement as well as higher self-efficacy. Gamification of education is a technique for boosting up the engagement by incorporating game elements into an educational environment. The ultimate objective is to generate levels of involvement equal to what games can generally produce. Furthermore, the main goals of gamification are to unfold certain abilities, introduce objectives that give learning a purpose, engage students, optimize learning and support behavior change. According to Kapp, gamification is “using game-based mechanics, aesthetics and game thinking to engage people, motivate action, promote learning and solve problems.” (Kapp,2012).

1.2 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GAMIFICATION AND ITS SIMILAR CONCEPTS

There are certain terms that are used interchangeability with the term “gamification”. However, the boundary between them is not clear.

I.Games : Games are collaborative and competitive platform played according to a set of rules and regulations. Games are formulated not just for fun but for the deliberate purpose related to participants’ improvement. Their goal is to achieve sometimes pre-decided.

II.Gamification : It is the process of using game element and ideas with the ultimate aim of influencing the participant’s behaviour and/or performance.

III.Simulations : Simulations are operational models of the real life situations. The models represent function of an existing system that can be manipulated for experimentation and research. On the spot simulations, conversation simulations and process simulations such as chemical process in the class laboratory are used for learning and development.

2. GAMIFICATION IN EDUCATION

The most logical beginning of gamification of education is with regards to the teaching and learning using digital methods. At the same time when the students are expected to think and solve their class room and curriculum related problems critically, gamification works well. In such cases, games like simulations can be executed to improve the students’ critical skills. Digital gamification is also now emerging an evolving concept in the educational world. Where once the learning happened during the school or college time and news was consumed in the newspapers in morning, Now messages can be received and content can be delivered virtually in all hours and domains. Such content can also be utilized in a play way method in educational institutions thereby to quench the intellectual state of mind of the students. So it can be asserted that when the concept of gamification is productively executed in educational surroundings, the opportunities for the pupils’ growth expand exponentially. Learners are hooked by enjoyment and get enriched by knowledge and skills.

2.1 MECHANISM AND FUNDAMENTAL TOOLS OF GAMIFICATION IN LEARNING

Mechanism is the most crucial part of gamification. These are the most basic components of a game, such as its rules. The essence of gamification lies in its essential tools that help involve the learner in the experience of learning.

Gamification mechanics also include important elements such as points and level systems designed to keep students consistently engaged and motivated. By awarding points for completing tasks or overcoming challenges, learners experience a sense of achievement, which drives them to keep moving forward.

The key tools in gamification consist of a numerous game designs and principles in non-game environment, like classrooms, to boost up learning and interaction. Gamification, the design approach of utilizing gameful designs in various contexts induce experiences familiar from games to support different activities and extend as helping a hand in the times of need. This system also impacts the students’ natural motivation and competitive tendency by productively using the following elements :

I.Points and Scoring : The pupils earn points for completing classroom tasks, quizzes and participation in extra curricular activities. This aid in tracking progress of the students.

II.Badges and Certificates : The student participants are awarded badges and/ or certificates for accomplishing particular milestones such as attaining a certain skills thereby encouraging students sense of attainment.

III.Time challenges and goals : The students are given time challenges to complete certain tasks which usually results in quick thinking, concentration and prompt decision making.

IV.Honourboards/ Leaderboards : An honourboard is used for displaying top performing students or teams, fostering healthy competition and intrinsic motivation among the students.

V.Power-Ups : Students can earn power-ups such “clues” and “flip the question” to assist them in completing challenging tasks.

2.2 THE EXPLORATORY IMPACT OF GAMIFICATION ON EDUCATION

When gamification is executed in the educational arena, the avenues for experiential, self-paced and long term learning expand epidemically. Learners are infatuated by fun and then acknowledged by knowledge and skill. The most rational starting point for the gamification is when the virtual and online mode of education is used. The New media Consortium's 2013 Horizon report mentions "In the context of higher education, when students are expected to think critically in order to solve problems, game-like simulations can be leveraged in any discipline to reinforce the real world applications of concepts". At a number of renowned schools of India, students are learning the complexities of Indian Parliament system through a game called "Mock parliament". In this case, a role play activity is conducted. During such activity, the student participants can take on the role of Prime Minister of India and key figures of Indian Politics. In teams of ten, students form a particular political party and engage in debates to determine the viability of various political topics such as "Should Politicians Retire?" This game involves putting all the reasons against and in the motion on paper, submitting to the speaker of parliament and then conducting the debate. The teacher supervisor guides them as how to maintain decorum of the house. The students can also mimic certain political figures to make the gaming environment pleasurable. The students are given essential inputs to do experiential learning and exercise required develop inter-personal skills pertinent to the study. Through this game the students learn the parliamentary rules and certain significant laws in the Indian constitution.

Another example of gamification is that at IE Business School of Madrid students are learning the complexities of global economic policy through a game called "10 Downing Street". In this case, students take on the role of the British prime minister and work with key figures including Paul Krugman, Margaret Thatcher, and Milton Friedman to come to an argument that will affect the well being of the national economy. In teams of six, students engage in debates to determine the most viable policy option, which is then put into practice after a general election. Scenarios like this one demonstrates the power of games of mimic pressing issues, requiring students to do higher-level thinking and exercise skills pertinent to their area of study (NMC, 2013). So, it can be said that popular educational cultures have adopted the revolutionary concept of games as a mode of simulating experience and practicing skill acquisition.

According to the Education Arcade of MIT (2013) "Game Players regularly exhibit persistence, risk taking, attention to detail, and problem solving, all behaviours that ideally would be regularly demonstrated in school".

2.3 CURRENT SCENARIO IN GAMIFICATION IN LEARNING

In the recent years two types of gamification have been identified: structural and altered content modus operandi of gamification. While the structural gamification involves no alteration in the main subject matter, the altered method is about adding some content to the main subject matter. The structural mode of gamification emphasizes on the framework or environment in which the content already exists. The purpose here is to motivate sustained engagement and consistent interaction with content. But on the other hand the altered content based gamification modifies or reimagines the existing content to make it more game-like and enjoyable. Here the content is made more simulated and story driven so as to enhance immersion and long term retention. To put in simpler form, here gamification in learning is about defining and adding content to the study that comprise games which are for fun and at the same time encourage the student to carry on with it.

3.1 GAMIFICATION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

English Language Teaching (ELT) has witnessed a revolutionary transformation in the recent years, owing to the advent of dynamic pedagogical approaches. One such approach that has gained significant prominence is gamification, a pedagogical strategy that incorporates game elements and principles into typical teaching learning environment to promise in enhancing interaction, motivation and learning outcomes among learners. This approach seeks to engage students by incorporating tools commonly found in games, such as points, badges, leaderboards, narratives, challenges, and rewards, into language learning activities. The key idea behind gamification is to harness the inherent appeal of games to enhance the learning experience, making it more immersive, enjoyable, and effective for language learners (Vathanalaotha, 2022).

This introduction sets the stage for our comprehensive review of gamification in ELT, aiming to provide a deeper understanding of its significance and implications (Chamboko-Mpotaringa & Manditereza, 2023). The teaching of English as a second or foreign language in various countries poses its own unique of issues. Students usually struggle with maintaining concentration and interest, as learning of various concepts in

language can be dull and tedious. However, the advent of gamification of English Language Teaching (ELT) has opened abundant opportunities for creating alluring and interactive learning experiences. It is essential to distinguish between gamification and game-based learning within the context of ELT:

Gamification enhances traditional language learning activities by incorporating game elements into the existing curriculum. It does not replace the core learning objectives but enhances them by adding engaging tools. Gamification can be applied to various facets of language learning, including vocabulary enhancement, grammar practice, writing, speaking, listening, and reading comprehension. Whereas game-based learning involves the use of complete games or game-like simulations as the primary mode of teaching. In this approach, the entire learning experience is structured around a game, which serves as the mode for language acquisition. Game-based learning can include language learning through audio as well as video games, interactive simulations, and virtual environments designed exclusively for educational purposes. By understanding these distinctions, educators can make logical decisions about whether to integrate gamification or adopt game-based learning approaches in their ELT contexts, depending on their language learning objectives and expected outcomes.

3.2 LITERATURE REVIEW ON GAMIFICATION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

To achieve more concrete results on the impact of gamification in education, literature review was limited to the study of gamification in context of English Language Teaching (ELT). A systematic approach of review was followed in this regard. The literature review involved the following steps :

- I. **Identification of the Pertinent Literature** : A thorough and systematic search was conducted using the best available database. The review was done using various sources such as Google Scholar, ELECATION and Academic journals in the field of education, gamification and English language teaching (ELT).
- II. **Screening Criteria** : The relevant literature was compiled and screened based on the well thought out criteria. 61 Peer reviewed articles and relevant research studies from the education and learning domain were considered for the literature review. The focus was mainly on literature related to the use of gamification in education in general as well as in English Language Teaching (ELT) in particular and its impact on students' motivation as well as active participation in class room learning.
- III. **Data Collection and Compilation** : Relevant information and key findings from the screened literature were explained thoroughly. This explanation comprised of case studies, key elements of gamification, learning outcomes and challenges in gamification in education as well as ELT and future recommendations.
- IV. **Data Analysis and writing** : The compiled information was analysed to identify the varying trends in the literature. Information also comprised of the supporting evidence and citations from the other sources.

3.3 RESULT

In this literature review the most extensive overview of empirical research literature was reported. The findings of the analysis disclosed that a considerable number of research studies revealed mainly positively oriented results. The gamification was found to be one of the strongest learning tools resulting in interactive and immersive learning environment in real and virtual classrooms. "It can facilitate active learning, problem-solving, and language production, which can contribute to enhance language skills and proficiency" (Anisha & Supriyadi, 2020). By incorporating gamification in education and teaching , the teacher can garner immediate feedback and track the progress, which are all pervasive parts of teaching learning environment. The students are also able to receive instant information about their performance including their core strengths and weak areas in a very light environment. "The visual representation of progress and achievements can motivate students to set a goal and track their development (Dehghanzadeh et al, 2021). Moreover the teacher can adjust the learning strategies accordingly with the core goal to develop growth mindsets in the class. The literature review demonstrates valuable insights into the utilization of gamification in English language teaching (ELT). When analyzing these studies as a whole, following research trends and challenges became evident, offering a comprehensive view of the literature review in this field.

- I. One of the notable trends observed is the consistently positive impact of gamification on students' active involvement in ELT. Gamification elements such as points, leaderboards, and rewards have been found to strongly foster inner drive and active interest in language learning.
- II. Many studies highlight that students exposed to gamified ELT experiences demonstrated enhanced language acquisition, including vocabulary and grammar proficiency.
- III. Several studies revealed that utilization of digital tools and mobile gamification applications is becoming more prevalent, aligning with the technological advancements in the current era.
- IV. Research highlight that various gamification elements, including challenges, leaderboards, and rewards, are being employed in ELT.
- V. The studies also highlighted that Gamification can positively influence the development of students' language learning adaptive to the socio-economic conditions of the current times.
- VI. Various studies also explored teachers' use of gamification in education through various literary tools such as metaphors. Alliteration, simile, etc. for strengthening language skills. Teachers used these tools to describe gamification as an inclusive, entertaining, motivating, and creative approach that reaches every child. These devices can aid in understanding various language related concepts resulting in English language enrichment.
- VII. After the comprehensive literature review it was found that Gamification can create collaborative and personalized learning exposures and promote cognitive and socio-emotional development of the students..
- VIII. Several studies amplify the significance of technology in implementing gamification in ELT. The utilization of digital tools and mobile gamification applications is becoming more prevalent, aligning with the technological advancements of the present era.
- IX. Several studies include learners' perspectives on gamified learning experiences, with the majority expressing satisfaction and passion for gamification in ELT. This trend shows that learners usually find gamified approaches delightful and productive.

While benefits of gamification are abundant, the effective implementation of gamification is not without challenges. Technological constraints, pedagogical design issues, and assessment process require careful attention. The teacher and educators also need to design such gamification method which are able to address the maximum students as each student possesses unique personality trait and has individual needs. The educational institutions also need to have proper infrastructural facilities to design and implement the gamification strategies suited to different learning environments and nature of the subject being taught. Moreover professional development of the educators is a must to enrich them with sufficient know-how so as to incorporate gamification in their teaching practices on the regular basis rather than a one time exercise. Somewhat similar kind of gaps were identified after the extensive study of literature :-

- I. A few studies highlighted that there is a need for more in-depth research into the pedagogical methods for effectively integrating gamification into ELT curriculum. This includes coordinating gamification with subject related learning objectives and ensuring it complements as well as replaces the traditional teaching methods.
- II. A number of studies disclosed that few challenges associated with implementing gamification are technical issues and availability of proficient of trainers for teachers' training and professional development in this area. Preparing teachers to effectively use gamification tools is crucial for its successful implementation.
- III. There should be clear balance between designing gamification methods and challenges in learners' skill levels as well his grasping power. At the same time gamified activities should neither be so easy nor excessively complex so that the learners remain engaged as well as occupied physically and mentally.
- IV. The studies also mentioned that the teacher must seek constructive feedback from the learners about their way of conducting games in the class so that they keep on customizing the gaming so as to sustain the learning and interest level of the participants.
- V. The studies also suggested that all the gamified activities should also involve captivating case studies and be aligned with real life situations so as to magnify engagement and long term learning. The educators should also know the art of story telling which can make the gamified activities more fascinating to the learners.
- VI. Gamification should encompass diverse types of rewarding the learners ranging from points and badges to acknowledging them in institute's assembly. This practice will ensure the engagement for a large spectrum of students.

VII. The educators should keep on changing or modifying the rules in gamified activities and redefine the role of the participants. The educators should not merely act as typical teacher but as guides, coordinators or facilitators. They should have prime responsibility to be proactive in the gamified activities. The educators should play an instrumental role in blending the benefits of traditional teaching and gamified approach thereby extracting maximum benefit from the teacher-learners relationship to both the sides. The gamified activities should be designed in such a way that language becomes self-directed and more autonomous for the students.

4.ACHIEVING BALANCE IN GAMIFIED LEARNING

In the quest to innovate and educate through gamification, balancing play way and genuine learning is vital. Personalization and customization of games becomes paramount because users vary in their interests – some are driven by the desire to learn, while others seek fun. Startups must tailor experiences, ensuring each user finds their unique path to genuine interaction and learning.

However, this personalization should consistently be enhanced. The rewards should motivate and enhance, not overshadow, the learning process. The essence of gamification lies in enriching educational content as per the individual personality traits, not merely attracting users with prizes.

Moreover, the accurate measure of a learning platform's success lies beyond the white boards teaching. Implementation of acquired knowledge in real life is the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal of gamification must focus on motivating users to learn and apply their knowledge in real life situations. The key is to nurture a holistic learning environment where gamification accelerates meaningful and long lasting educational experiences.

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