

Application of Gamification in teaching English grammar at Dong Nai Technology University - Benefits and limitations

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Abstract: This study focuses on the application of gamification in English grammar teaching activities at Dong Nai Technology University. The study delves into analyzing the benefits that this method brings, such as increasing interest, improving memory and motivating students in the learning process. At the same time, the article also discusses the limitations and challenges that gamification can cause, such as designing activities suitable for each type of learner and effective time management. On that basis, the study proposes corrective measures to help teachers and students take full advantage of the advantages of gamification in teaching and learning English grammar.

Keywords: Gamification, teaching English grammar, benefits, limitations

1. Introduction

1.1 What is grammar?

Grammar is the system of rules that determine the way words and phrases combine to form sentences in a language. English grammar includes many elements such as tenses, sentence structure, and rules about parts of speech. According to Greenbaum and Quirk (1990), English grammar is not only the foundation of sentence formation but also a tool to help learners understand and use language accurately and effectively.

1.2 Some difficulties when teaching grammar

Teaching English grammar faces many significant challenges. First of all, maintaining student interest throughout the learning process is a big problem. Due to the dry and complex nature of grammar, students often feel bored and lose motivation, especially when having to absorb theory without a clear connection to reality. Second, students often have difficulty converting grammar theory into practice, leading to ineffective application of knowledge in real-life communication. Finally, traditional classrooms often lack active interaction between lecturers and students, as well as between students, making grammar learning monotonous and ineffective. According to Ur (2012), lack of interaction and less flexible teaching methods can reduce students' ability to absorb grammar, leading to low learning efficiency.

1.3 What is gamification?

Gamification is the integration of game-specific elements and mechanics into non-game contexts, such as in education or business, with the goal of increasing engagement and motivation of the learner or user.

These elements include points, rewards, challenges, and leaderboards, designed to create a competitive environment that encourages and motivates players. Participate in completing assigned tasks. According to Deterding et al (2011), gamification not only increases engagement but also helps improve learner performance and satisfaction by making learning activities more interesting and engaging.

1.4 Key factors of gamification

The main factors that make a game effective include:

- Score: According to Werbach and Hunter (2012), scores are a simple yet effective way to encourage participation and maintain player attention.

- Badges: Chou (2016) argues that badges are a powerful tool to motivate players to feel recognized and encourage them to continue participating.

- Levels: According to Fardo and Kapp (2013), the level system is an important factor in maintaining long-term engagement and creating a clear development path for players.

- Leaderboards: Jaramillo and et al. (2012) emphasize that rankings are effective tools for motivation by tapping into people's competitive spirit and desire to excel.

- Challenges: According to Zichermann and Cunningham (2011), well-designed challenges keep players in a flow state, where they are fully immersed in the activity.

- Immediate feedback: According to Chou (2016), immediate feedback is an important factor in maintaining player engagement and improving learning performance.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research objectives

The goal of this study is to comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of applying gamification in teaching English grammar at Dong Nai Technology University. The study focuses on analyzing the extent to which students' grammar skills improve when participating in gamified learning activities, while clearly identifying the benefits and limitations that this approach brings.

2.2 Participant

The research subjects of this topic include two main groups including 100 first-year students studying English grammar at Dong Nai Technology University and 5 lecturers teaching English grammar at the school.

2.3. Scope of the study

The study was conducted within the scope of English grammar classes at Dong Nai Technology University during the second semester (from March 2024 to June 2024) of the 2023-2024 academic year.

2.4. Research method

The study employed online survey tools and direct observation to collect data. Questionnaires were designed to gather opinions from students and teachers regarding the benefits and limitations of applying gamification. The gamification method is used in review activities, practice sessions, and knowledge assessments throughout the course. The course consists of 15 sessions, each lasting three periods; of which 7 sessions apply the gamification method, while the other 7 sessions use traditional methods such as presentations, explanations, and translation. Commonly used games include Kahoot, quizzes, Who Wants to Be a Millionaire, Hot Seat, Hangman, etc. For example, Kahoot is used for reviewing and testing previous lessons. The main contents of the lessons are incorporated into multiple-choice questions on Kahoot, through which the instructor can monitor how many students understand the material and how many do not, based on the results. The instructor can immediately identify weak students and determine which content they need to review through Kahoot's regular tracking page. Similarly, other games are used to help students practice question structures, responses, and test knowledge related to grammar and English language skills.

3. Findings and discussion

3.1. The benefits of the gamification

The survey results on the benefits of the gamification method indicate that the application of gamification in teaching English grammar offers

several significant advantages.

Table 3.1 Survey results of students on the advantages of gamifying English Grammar teaching activities

	Totally agree	Agree	Normal	Disagree	Totally disagree
Interest and enjoyment	77%	16%	1%	0.0%	5%
Quick memory retention	65%	29%	3%	0.0%	5%
High concentration	60%	26%	3%	0.0%	3%
Being motivated	72%	19%	3%	0.0%	5%
Quick feedback results	75%	16%	2%	0.0%	4%
Development of collaboration skills	77%	14%	2%	2%	1%
Development of problem-solving skills	64%	25%	2%	3%	4%
Development of strategic thinking skills	72%	16%	5%	2%	3%
Development of competitive skills	72%	20%	5%	2%	0%
Development of technology skills	69%	20%	3%	1%	2%

Survey results show that the gamification method has certain benefits in learning English grammar. Over 70% of students agree and 20% of students completely agree that this method creates an enjoyable and engaging atmosphere, helps learners concentrate, retain information quickly, and stay motivated because they receive quick feedback and rewards. Additionally, this method helps students develop several essential skills such as collaboration, problem-solving, strategic thinking, competition, and technology skills.

3.2. The limitations of gamification

Table 3.2 Survey results of students on the advantages of gamifying English grammar teaching activities

	Totally agree	Agree	Normal	Disagree	Totally disagree
Waste of time	3%	2%	21%	43%	31%
Rote learning	3%	3%	18%	37%	40%
Lack of creativity	4%	7%	19%	38%	36%
Heavy reliance on machines and technology	27%	39%	6%	15%	21%

Alongside the advantages, the survey results also reveal some specific limitations of the gamification method. 3% of students believe that this method takes too much time to prepare, manage, and organize. Moreover, learning grammar this way often leads to rote learning, heavy reliance on machines, and incomplete understanding of grammar. Additionally, 4% of students feel that this method does not provide

opportunities for learners to unleash creativity. Notably, 38% of students think that using technology-based games is highly dependent on the internet and technological devices, causing both instructors and learners to always rely on internet connectivity and technical problems.

3.3. Challenges for teachers

While conducting this research, the author faced significant challenges in explaining and persuading students to participate in the survey in an objective and serious manner. Additionally, to implement this method, the teacher must spend time reviewing materials from articles, journals, books, websites, etc.; then selecting and applying games and gamification elements into lesson content effectively and appropriately.

3.4. Challenges for students

Students are accustomed to traditional learning methods, such as copying or relying heavily on traditional teaching. As a result, some students are skeptical about the effectiveness of this method or the games used. Additionally, some students lack technological skills and are not familiar with collaboration when participating in games, so they have to spend a lot of time accessing and familiarizing themselves with the rules of the games.

3.5. Evaluation and improvement

Experimental evaluation shows that applying gamification in teaching English grammar brings significant benefits, such as increased engagement and improved application of knowledge. However, to optimize the effectiveness of this method and address the challenges encountered, the following measures should be implemented:

- **Enhance teacher training:** Provide in-depth training programs for teachers on designing and implementing gamified activities. This includes training on necessary technological tools, creative techniques in game design, and classroom management methods in a gamified environment.

- **Design diverse and inclusive game activities:** Teachers should develop games with varying levels of difficulty and types of learning activities, ensuring that all students can participate effectively and feel appropriately challenged according to their abilities.

- **Create a balanced learning environment:** This can be achieved by clearly defining learning objectives and ensuring that game activities support the achievement of these goals while maintaining student focus and motivation throughout the learning process.

3. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that applying gamification in teaching English grammar at Dong Nai Technology University provides several important benefits, including increased student engagement and participation, improved application of grammar knowledge in real-life situations, and the creation of a positive and healthy competitive learning environment.

However, the study also highlights some limitations of the gamification method, such as the need for teachers to have high levels of technological and creative skills, difficulties in designing game activities suitable for all student levels, and the potential pressure from competition affecting some students.

To optimize the effectiveness of gamification, thorough preparation and close coordination between teachers and students are necessary. Teachers should receive comprehensive training in designing and implementing games and should create diverse game activities that cater to various levels of students. Furthermore, it is essential to establish a balanced learning environment that ensures entertainment elements do not detract from focus and learning effectiveness. This coordination will help minimize limitations and maximize the benefits of gamification, thereby enhancing the quality of teaching and learning English grammar at the university.

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