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ENHANCING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS' MOTIVATION THROUGH ONLINE GAMES

Abstract. In this article, we examine the potentials of online games which teachers can employ in order to motivate their students and summarize the positive effects of playing learning games. The study addresses the question of how gamified learning is applicable to learning English as a second language. The other research questions refer to the reasons that make language learners want to play a learning game and the influence of particular game elements onto players. All of these questions are investigated on the example of Kahoot web resource. The study suggests that online learning games can foster intrinsic motivation and help engage students in learning activities. The use of online games in English as a second language learning shows the direct relationship between a high energy level of fun competition and increased motivation.

Keywords: gamification; motivation; English as a second language learning; Kahoot.

1. INTRODUCTION

The problem setting. Many researchers and practitioners argue that games have a great educational value by offering students a fun-filled and non-stressful learning atmosphere. In teaching English as a second language (ESL) to adults, games are as important as in teaching ESL to younger learners. While playing games, the learners pay attention to the message rather than the correctness of linguistic forms they use. This reduces the anxiety and fear of being negatively judged in front of other people, which is one of the main factors preventing learners from using the foreign language in public. Chen I-Jung claims that games promote communicative competence and encourage creative and spontaneous use of language [4]. They are highly motivating and learner centred, they can foster participatory attitudes of the students and give them more opportunities and encouragement to speak. A similar opinion is expressed by Mark Griffiths who believes games "to facilitate (i) discussing and sharing, following directions (understanding prepositions etc.), (ii) giving directions, (iii) answering questions, and (iv) having a discussion topic with visual aides to share with others" [14].

Games also enable learners to acquire new knowledge and enhance learning through multiple intelligences. Games combine thought and action into purposeful behaviour to complete a task; they include analysis and interpretation of new and old material, involve logical reasoning, communication, kinaesthetic, visual and spatial perception [15, 478]. Furthermore, to quote Ewa Zarzycka-Piskorz, they have the advantage of bringing variety, breaking monotony, providing a thrill when doing ordinary grammar exercises, and motivating students to work [8, 34].

Actually, most learners show an instinctive interest to explore the world, which means they are likely to find learning intrinsically motivating. In reality, however, this interest is weakened by such factors as compulsory attendance, curriculum content, and grades. To maintain and enhance motivation in ESL classroom educators have to use various methods that create an environment of competition, challenge, collaboration and fun. All these things can be applied to online games, which have become the focus of my study.

Analysis of recent studies and publications. Educational psychologists have recognized the importance of motivation in learning. Motivation is one of the most powerful factors in ESL learning as well. There are two types of human motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is long-lasting and self-sustaining; it is driven by personal enjoyment, positive feelings, interest, or pleasure, whereas extrinsic motivation is governed by external rewards. Deci et al. define intrinsic motivation "as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence. When intrinsically motivated a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external prods, pressures, or rewards" [7]. In his experiment to test motivation, Edward Deci investigated two groups of students playing Soma game. One group was paid for each puzzle they solved, while the other group played for pleasure. What Deci found is that Group A participants showed a decrease of interest in the task and stopped completing the puzzles as there was no more money to be paid. Group B, on the other hand, were engaged in playing with the puzzle and kept doing the puzzles even after the experiment ended. They were so focused on and absorbed in the task because they found doing the puzzles intrinsically exciting and motivating [6, 114].

When it comes to learning, it is apparent that teachers want their learners to be intrinsically motivated. Engagement, which is the tendency to be behaviorally, emotionally, and cognitively involved in academic activities, is the important element of learning; without engagement, learners do not properly work. Consequently, compared to less involved learners, engaged students show more effort, higher grades, and reduced failures [9].

Motivating students and encouraging engagement is a challenge for teachers. What can teachers do to promote and strengthen students' motivation and engagement? In order to engage their learners, educators are looking for opportunities to integrate gamified methods in classrooms.

Many researchers have shown games to be more effective for students than non-gaming teaching tools [13; 16; 18]. Some of game elements can facilitate learning and influence students' behaviour. They include fun, immediate feedback, mastery, progress indicators, challenges that increase. The potential of gamified learning to promote intrinsic motivation directly leads to a question of how applicable this method is to language learning. This question is addressed in the study described below.

The purpose of this article is 1) to investigate the potentials of online games in ESL classroom to facilitate language learning and 2) to describe how gamified learning enhances language learners' motivation. Thus, intrinsic motivation, pointed out as the main factor in gamified learning, is the main focus of our study. The research questions to be answered are as follows:
1) What reasons make language learners want to play a learning game?
2) To what extent is it (playing a learning game) engaging and motivating?
3) What elements are responsible for the desire to participate and engage in a language game?

2. METHODS OF THE STUDY

In this research we use both theoretical and empirical methods. We use literature review method to study and interpret the available research papers on the topic, to identify the nature of the basic concepts of our study and obtain the actual information about gamified methods of language learning and their impact on motivation and engagement. To make it possible to answer the main questions addressed in the article, we also use a series of questionnaires: the one generated by the system to assess the game itself and feelings students can feel during the game; the one designed to assess students' motivation after a series of classes and, finally, the

questionnaire designed to evaluate the components of intrinsic motivation. As for the research procedure, a group of university students was monitored at the lessons of English at the National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine in Kyiv. The research was carried out with the group of 120 students (76 boys and 44 girls). They were between 18 and 22 years old. Their level of English was upper-intermediate. They came from various university faculties: faculty of Agricultural Management, Agrobiological faculty, Mechanical and Technological faculty, faculty of Design and Engineering. Games, quizzes and competitions are especially beneficial for this age group as they can help to better stimulate the brain, develop mutual respect (through team building activities and games) and boost students' motivation and engagement.

3. THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

To better understand the phenomenon of gamified education, we need to clarify the concept of gamification. Kevin Werbach believes that gamification is the use of game elements and game design techniques in non-game contexts [19]. The term 'gamification' has been used in many contexts and in different forms. In this article, gamification is defined as the application of game elements into education which makes it more relaxed, fun and comfortable for students.

Games have been shown to be motivating as a result of their impact on cognitive, emotional, and social areas of players [1; 11], therefore gamified learning tools should have "special meaning for the user, the ability to inspire the user to master the topic and it should be autonomous, by providing a feeling of free choice" [17, 244].

Why games work is because they bring players into a mental state called "flow", a state of total focus on the task at hand [5]. Gamification helps to set flow by taking students out of their usual routine and giving them a series of engaging tasks that prevent students' minds from wandering and present a novel experience.

Besides the impact on motivation and engagement [2], gamification has a number of other benefits, including feelings of acknowledgement [3; 10] and accomplishment [3; 10].

There are many online language games that help learn new words, sentences, improve pronunciation, reading and listening skills as well (LingQ, Babbel, Bliu Bliu, Duolingo, Memrise, Rosetta Stone, to name a few). Some language games cover all of these aspects. In teaching English as a second language, one of the simplest ways to engage students in gamified learning is to try a web resource called Kahoot. In our research, we decided to work with this free application which allows teachers to create multiple-choice quizzes that students can do using their mobile devices (see Figure 1). The criteria for its selection are based on the advantages of this tool. They are as follows:
- there is no cost for creating and playing Kahoot;
- the program is applicable to a wide range of learning environments; language teachers can integrate this technology in all subject areas of ESL learning – reading, grammar, vocabulary, etc.;
- it presents a fun and challenging way to engage students in learning vocabulary and grammar;
- Kahoot quizzes can be completed both individually and in teams; students may compete against themselves, peers, and trying to answer the questions as quickly as possible.
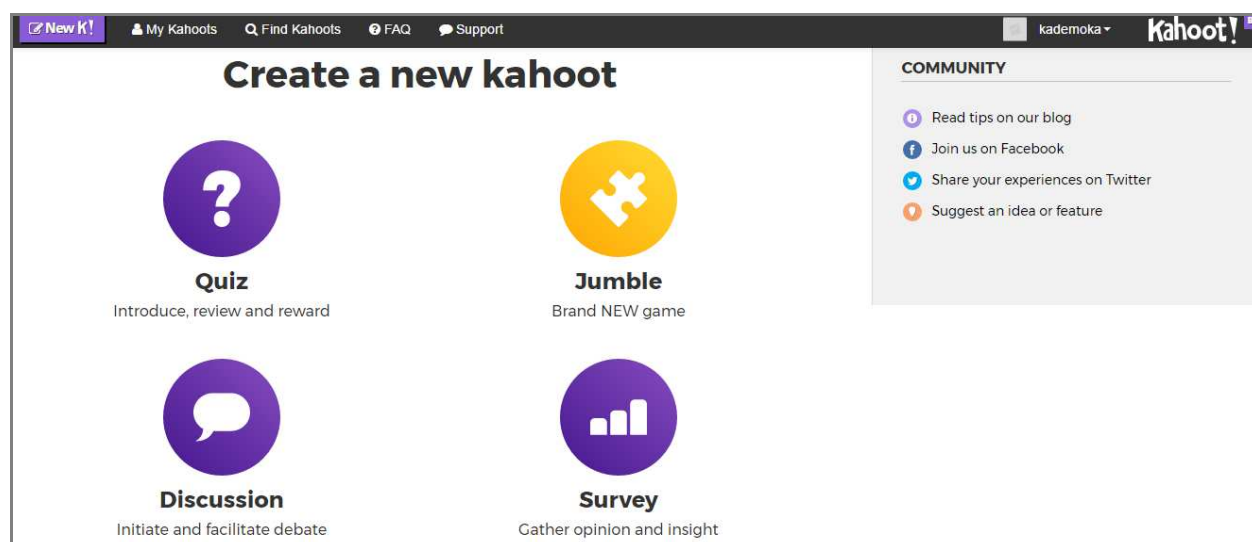
Figure 1. Kahoot web resource

Actually, there are three types of Kahoots: the classic quiz, discussion, and survey. In my classroom, I use the quiz more often. This application can be adapted both for individual or collaborative work. Students are not required to create an account, they just need to go to the website www.kahoot.it and input the PIN for the game. Students can play using their real names or nicknames for anonymity. They can also choose a team name if they want to work collaboratively. The program tracks gamers' progress after every task is completed and provides a leader board of the top five players. This adds an element of competition that students find especially motivating and fun.

The Kahoot quizzes focused on grammatical content ranging from passive voice to reported speech, conditionals and modals – the structures that often create problems for students. The first evaluation of each game was generated by the system and was carried out after the students had completed the quiz. They assessed whether it was fun, whether they learnt something and whether they would recommend this game to other learners, which are done by touching the appropriate (Like or Dislike) icon. They could also assess how they felt during the game: happy, neutral or unhappy. After a series of lessons, an additional questionnaire was implemented which assessed students' motivation that made them participate in the games and quizzes. Finally, the students evaluated the components of intrinsic motivation: the desire to win, mastery, team and purpose. These questionnaires were designed as part of research methodology to collect and analyze data on the issue of motivation for ESL learning in a gamified way.

The very first evaluation generated by the Kahoot system contained three pre-designed questions as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Students' opinions on the game system

Question	% of 'Yes'	% of 'No'
Was it funny?	76	24
Did you learn something (the intended material)?	80	20
Would you recommend it?	90	10

76% of the students thought the game was fun, whereas 24% of the students didn't enjoy the game. However, the majority of the students (80%) said that they had learnt the

intended grammar structure during the game. Moreover, 90% of the students stated that they would recommend this learning tool. This shows that students are likely to be open and eager to learn through online gaming. The pre-designed evaluation also involved assessing how the students felt after the game. The results are given in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Immediate feedback about feelings

Feeling	% of students
I feel positive.	87
I feel neutral.	11
I feel negative.	2

As it is shown in the table, the majority of students had positive feelings (87%), quite a few learners (11%) felt neutral, and a small proportion (2%) felt negative.

The second part of the research was based on delayed feedback, addressed the main questions of the research. It allowed to measure students' familiarity with language games, motivational components and reasons to play.

First of all, it was interesting to see whether the students were familiar with online language games (question 1). After that, the motivation to learn grammar in a gamified way was evaluated (questions 2 and 3). The results are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Language game experience and motivation

Question	Yes, %	No, %	Don't know %
1. Have you ever played online language games?	4	96	-
2. Would you like to learn grammar using this particular game?	68	12	20
3. Does Kahoot motivate you to learn grammar?	85	5	10

It shows clearly that the vast majority of students are not familiar with online language games, and that they would be eager to use more this way of learning in the future. The findings also suggest that using Kahoot is a motivating tool for learning grammar.

Finally, we tested the following components of intrinsic motivation: the desire to win, mastery, team and purpose.

Table 4

Reasons of motivation

Motivational components	desire to win	mastery	team	purpose
% of students	88	52	67	73

The reasons of playing the Kahoot game varied, ranging from the desire to win to the purpose. Positive emotions, immediate feedback, leader boards, progress indicators, scaffolded learning, which all are game elements used in a non-game context, seemed to be effective in motivating the students. The desire to win was appreciated by about 88% of the students as the game itself is about winning. 52% of students were interested in developing

mastery – the desire to get better in grammar, while almost half were only quite interested in it. 67% of the students liked playing with others in a team setting. The clear purpose of the game appealed to 73% of the students.

4. THE CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

Teachers have to accept the idea that gamification should be present in language classrooms.

Online games can foster intrinsic motivation and help engage students in learning activities. In this paper, we examined the potentials of gamified learning to facilitate language learning and influence students' behavior by enhancing their motivation. Gamification (on the example of Kahoot) revealed the potential of delivering significant experiences to students and giving them incentives for their efforts. The use of online games in ESL learning showed the direct relationship between a high energy level of fun competition and increased motivation. Intrinsic motivation was enhanced by the desire to win or get a reward. Thus, the teacher can use this component to introduce, revise or consolidate the complex language content. As the questionnaire results demonstrate, students appreciate clear objectives and following the rules within the team mode. Gamification in ESL learning offers many other benefits, including more relaxed atmosphere in regard to failure, increased focus on the educational material, a novel experience for students, etc. Fun and competitiveness can provide additional intrinsic enhancement.

The use of online games in ESL classroom has its potential and threats. One of the main threats is meaningless gamification – the useless implementation of the gaming elements in teaching and learning. In order to give them an educational value, this research suggests that a careful planning is needed before using gamified tools in the classroom. Carefully planned use of games provides tutorial scaffolding and feedback that is intended to motivate learners and manage the balance of challenge and pleasure in playing the game. Therefore, we believe that online games have an exceptional educational potential and should be included into ESL teaching as one of the most effective strategies to break with routine and boredom and to encourage active learning.

However, it shouldn't be thought that gamified learning is the only way of enhancing students' motivation despite the highly satisfying results. There are still many problematic issues that need to be answered. Searching for the answers to these questions could be the focus of our further research. Some problematic areas could be as follows:

1) Will the use of game mechanics, feedback loops, and rewards to spur interaction and boost engagement, fun, and learning continue to gain ground and be implemented in many new ways for language learning?
2) How effective can this learning strategy be in the long run?
3) What are the disadvantages and negative ramifications of gamified learning?

The list of research problems should not be restricted to these specific questions as the issue of using games in education is a wider area for further research.

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ПІДВИЩЕННЯ МОТИВАЦІЇ СТУДЕНТІВ У ПРОЦЕСІ НАВЧАННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ШЛЯХОМ ОНЛАЙН ІГОР

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Анотація. У цій статті ми розглядаємо можливості онлайн ігор, які викладачі можуть використовувати для того, щоб мотивувати своїх студентів, а також узагальнюємо переваги використання навчальних ігор. У дослідженні висвітлюється питання застосування гейміфікованого навчання до вивчення англійської мови як іноземної. Інші питання нашого дослідження стосуються причин, які сприяють бажанню студентів грати в навчальні ігри, а також впливу конкретних ігрових елементів на гравців. Усі ці проблеми досліджуються на прикладі веб-ресурсу Kahoot. У дослідженні доводиться, що навчальні онлайн-ігри

стимулюють внутрішню мотивацію і сприяють залученню студентів до навчальної діяльності. Використання онлайн-ігор у навчанні англійської мови демонструє прямий зв'язок між високим рівнем конкуренції і підвищенням мотивації.

Ключові слова: гейміфікація; мотивація; навчання англійської мови як іноземної; Kahoot.

ПОВЫШЕНИЕ МОТИВАЦИИ СТУДЕНТОВ В ПРОЦЕССЕ ИЗУЧЕНИЯ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА ПУТЕМ ОНЛАЙН ИГР

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Аннотация. В этой статье мы рассматриваем возможности онлайн игр, которые преподаватели могут использовать для того, чтобы мотивировать своих студентов, а также обобщаем преимущества использования обучающих игр. В исследовании освещается вопрос применения геймифицированного обучения английского языка как иностранного. Другие вопросы нашего исследования касаются причин, которые способствуют желанию студентов играть в обучающие игры, а также влияния конкретных игровых элементов на игроков. Все эти проблемы исследуются на примере веб-ресурса Kahoot. В исследовании доказывается, что обучающие онлайн-игры стимулируют внутреннюю мотивацию и способствуют привлечению студентов к учебной деятельности. Использование онлайн-игр в обучении английскому языку демонстрирует прямую связь между высоким уровнем конкуренции и повышением мотивации.

Ключевые слова: геймификация; мотивация; обучение английскому языку как иностранному; Kahoot.