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GAMIFICATION IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE

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Abstract: The use of the elements of game design in non-games, known as gamification, has turned out to be a widely used tool of instruction in language pedagogy. The paper will examine the effects of gamification on student interaction and academic performance in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Particularly, its comparison is made between the application of gamified tools such as Kahoot and Quizizz and the conventional approach to evaluation. In a quasi-experimental study with 40 EFL students in six weeks, the results indicate that the gamified learning conditions elevate the engagement levels of learners, decrease test anxiety, and provide relatively high academic benefits. The findings confirm use of gamification as an adjunct pedagogical practice in foreign language teaching-learning settings.

Key words: Gamification, Motivation, Engagement, Performance, Anxiety, Assessment, Learning, Students, Technology

Introduction

Learning in a foreign language is usually viewed as a cognitively and emotionally challenging process particularly in an environment where the learners do not have a lot of exposure to the use of the language in real life. Here, one such pedagogical concept is the concept of gamification, which has been developed with an aim of achieving motivation of learners in order to contribute to the increase in participation and performance levels (Deterding et al., 2011). Points, leaderboards, instant feedback, and badges are game-based features that make the learning process more interactive and rewarding (Dominguez et al., 2013; Hamari et al., 2014). They can be quite useful in EFL classes, where students can experience anxiety and lack of self-confidence during those activities involving communication. Despite a number of studies reporting positive outcomes of gamification on learner motivation (Al-Azawi et al., 2016; Alsawaier, 2018), the correlation between gamification and academic performance has not been studied in detail. This paper examines the effects of tools such as “Kahoot” and ”Quizizz” on both the learner engagement and achievement in an English language classroom that is under controlled conditions.

Methods

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Participants

The sample comprised 40 EFL intermediate learners (aged between 17 and 21) who come to a private language center in Uzbekistan. A pre-study placement test ensured that all the participants had the same level of the English language proficiency (B1 CEFR). They were grouped randomly in either the experimental (gamified) or the control group with 20 students each.

Instruments

Kahoot and Quizizz (gamified tools) are platforms that provide a variety of options for gamification (Andrade, 2020). Kahoot and Quizizz (gamified tools) are gamified platforms offering numerous possibilities regarding gamification (Andrade, 2020).

Paper based quizzes.

Most fields of interest are observable, and in the given case, they ought to be highlighted. Engagement observation checklist (adapted after Fredricks et al., 2004) In this survey, the researcher utilized a survey designed by Gardner, called Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). During a six-week instructional program: The same materials were read and both groups were taught by the same teacher. Experimental group: The Kahoot and Quizizz weekly quizzes done by the experimental group incorporated the game aspect of the leaderboard, timer, sound effect, and feedback. The control group completed normal quizzes on paper and did not involve any kind of gamification. Paired sample t -tests were used to compare pre-test and post-test scores. The measure of engagement was the classroom observations and post study surveys aiming at a weekly basis. The motivation was measured by using a Likert-scale questionnaire. The SPSS 26.0 was used to analyse the data.

Results

Academic Achievement

Post-test results indicated that the experimental group performed better than the control group with a mean score of improvements in score of 16.6 as compared to the control group of 11.1.

Group	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Improvement
Gamified	62.3	78.9	+16.6
Control	63.1	74.2	+11.1

The difference was found to be found to be moderately significant ($p < 0.05$) through statistical analysis.

Engagement and Motivation

The students in gamified group stated that they were more interested and motivated (90 percent). It was observed that there were more voluntary participation, less absences, and increased energy in gamified sessions. Immediate feedback, fun competition and visual design of the platforms were valued by students.4.

Discussion

The results indicate that gamification can dramatically boost both the engagement and present a medium-sized increase in academic performance. These findings correspond with the previous research (Banfield and Wilkerson, 2014; Su and Cheng, 2015) that reveal that gamified tools can help increase attention and encourage active interaction. In addition, gamification seems to ease the feeling of test anxiety since it offers a more casual and friendly testing atmosphere. This is particularly true of the foreign language learners who tend to be nervous when taking the conventional tests (Horwitz et al., 1986). The restrictions however include:

That is the fact that the study period (6 weeks) is too short.

• The novelty effect, which may go down as time goes by.

• Poor external validity, small sample size, and setting.

Nevertheless, gamification seems to be a useful addition to teaching, even though it cannot substitute the organized teaching. Teachers are urged to apply it to supplement the conventional testing without making learning objectives secondary.

Conclusion

EFL can use gamification tools such as Kahoot and Quizizz to a great extent, increasing student engagement and motivation and to a smaller degree, academic results. Their interaction aspect renders it to be a dynamic learning process that promotes participation and diminishes anxiety. But again the teachers need to strike a balance between game-based learning and pedagogical objectives so as to not to trivialize the learning process.

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