# Gamification as a Stirring Learning Tool

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## Abstract

*The present article aims to highlight the key role games have deservedly acquired in education and how gamification is able to enhance our students' academic performance as a result of boosting their motivation and participation in their own learning process. We will focus on the importance of activating our students' reward system and the benefits of creating a positive learning atmosphere in our classroom. Throughout the following pages, we will analyze game-based learning and consider different types of game-based elements and the benefits this methodology can offer to present and future education together with the use of technology. Furthermore, we will remark its value as a tool to obtain the significant learning that comes from social interaction as games will provide our students with the opportunity to follow rules in a motivational course of action [3] as well as acquiring new knowledge and evaluating their learning process [2].To conclude, we will allude to mistakes as natural elements to arise in games and its positive effect on reducing stress on our students' in academic performance and work the emotional component in a language classroom in order to get proficient learning development [8].*

**Keywords:** *Gamification, game-based learning, motivation, social interaction, reward system, neuroeducation.*

## 1. Introduction.

Over the last decades traditional methodologies have being replaced by different models which are student's centred and focus on providing them with a favourable learning atmosphere by banishing the methods used in transmission instructional models, in which students get a more cognitive learning process through teachers' directions while they passively receive knowledge [12].

Neuroeducation has provided us with wide knowledge about how a positive learning atmosphere can help our students to be more willing to be active participants of their own learning as well as offering them the possibility to feel free to express their own opinions. Thus, the use of gamification in the English as a second language (ESL) classroom will enhance a fetching atmosphere from which our students' reward system will be activated and, consequently, they will create positive associations towards the foreign language. Moreover, we will boost cooperation between classmates and develop their critical thinking.

Fortunately, new technologies have arrived to shake our previous idea of education. As for this, the learning process has been guided into a meaningful and constructivist interactive approach [9] which hooks contents to attentional focusing and motivation among our students and provides them with remarkable academic improvements [7].

Gamification in the ESL classroom enormously contributes not only to improve our students' linguistic competence but it also stimulates their concentration, motivation and socioemotional conducts. Furthermore, the use of gamification in education enables students to enjoy while acquiring new knowledge in addition to evaluating their learning process [2]. Moreover, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) [4] highlights the importance of the ludic component in the acquisition of a foreign language.

Throughout the following pages, we will go through the different types of game-based elements and the benefits gamification in the present and future of education. Additionally, the importance of mistakes during gamified lessons will highlight the convenience of gamification for our students' emotional development.

## 2. Methodology in a gamified classroom.

The evolution of more active methods which remark the importance of our students' motivation in class has shown the need of getting adapted to what it has always been the starting point of learning, discovering by playing, observing and being curious. Gamification consists of using games in a context which is not ludic to enhance our students' attention and motivation to develop positive attitudes and academic and socioemotional achievements in our groups. Thus, gamification provides us with innovative methods which use game-based elements in non-ludic environments to intentionally arise both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation [13] since in addition to game mechanics, such as medals,

prizes or other awards (extrinsic motivation), the pleasant feeling of achievement and belonging to a group have a huge impact on them (intrinsic motivation). Undoubtedly, games have always been essential in learning how to interact and socialize with others and the world. Therefore, a game-based programming, to achieve game-based learning, in which our students interact among them and with the teacher, will furnish a wide range of opportunities to work on the curriculum contents as well as on their socioemotional competence. What is more, Casado (2016) states that playing games help our students follow rules in a motivational course of action, as well as working challenging themselves to get advantage of the process. As a result, our students do not only learn the curricular contents, but they also focus and activate their brains creating new positive associations which interrelate the importance of appropriate social behaviours, by considering the established rules and the rewarding experience of acquiring knowledge in an exciting playful atmosphere.

## 2.1. Game-based learning: elements, activities and benefits.

Game-based learning implies a challenge for teachers as it requires thoughtful planning and effort. Nevertheless, the success in the achievement of a students' life-learning process is always the best reward. Moreover, students gain confidence in their own abilities and awareness of their own learning process by understanding mistakes as part of the game, which conveys meaningful learning development [8].

Some of the game-based activities used in a gamified classroom can be aimed just to review or create an active rest, such as Trivial, and others will be fully intentioned to obtained specific successful academic performance, as any strategy game addressed to content, for example, a treasure hunt in which they must investigate in groups to solve the mystery. Notwithstanding, creating specific resources is always the most attractive way to teach contents as it considers their interests to awaken their curiosity.

The main game-based elements teachers must keep in mind when planning for success are [14]:

- **Rules,** which must be clearly defined so that they all know what to expect and what their roles are.
- **Goals,** as they mean a challenge and activate their competitive nature.
- **Interactivity**, as being active and interacting with others makes games easier to play and we get les frustration and better performances.
- **Feedback.** Students understand the consequences of their choices and learn about their own learning process. It also provides them with higher transfer and less misconception.
- **Competition** generates excitement and develops creativity. Consequently, it has a deep influence on our classroom climate and students' behaviour.
- **Affective state.** A positive affective state in which mistakes are naturally understood as part of the process decreases frustration and stress in our students.
- **Displayed system**, which has an effect on our students' immersion feelings.

Technogy is part and parcel of our everyday lives and it evolves at the speed of light. Education community can not help considering technological devices and tools to integrate contents in an attractive and dynamic way as well as developing their digital competence and interest in learning. The most ubiquitous instruments to be used are smartphones [5], which permits students to define their learning in terms of access to information in educational contexts [6].

Some interesting games to be used in ESL teaching to review and assess contents with immediate feedback are Kahoot or Quizlet, with which easy question games, as well as Unity or RPG Maker, which permit us to create specific games.

Moreover, games using technological tools, such as Kahoot, have revealed their benefits in assessment as students [10]:

1. Could connect to lectures and their notes and improve their understanding of the lessons on Teaching Writing Skills.
2. Make the effort to review the contents of their lessons
3. Remember important facts or features in a more enjoyable way
4. Discover new information and, as a result, their retention power improved.

Last but not least, simulation game mechanics seem to potentially enhance socio-emotional processes and stimulate social interaction as well as collaboration among students in game-based learning [11]. Thus, game-based learning leads students to full practice of social skills for classroom integration [1].

## 3. Conclusion

Innovation in learning is at our fingertips and a gamified teaching approach does not only awake our students' curiosity and motivates them, but it also improves attentional processes. Furthermore, the benefits of game-based learning and gamification offer students immediate feedback and strengthen the cognitive process for significant learning. As for this, the use of new technologies displays a wide range of teaching resources and almost unlimited access to information, which allows us use and create significant materials which take into account their knowledge and interests.

Regarding the ESL classroom

To sum up, game-based learning contributes to our students' attentional processes and motivation as well as boosting their active participation in their own learning process. Apart from all the already mentioned benefits, game dynamics create positive attitudes towards the subject and reduce anxiety as well as bringing forth to socio-emotional development.

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