Integrating Gamification into Curriculum Development and ICT to Enhance Student Engagement in 7th Grade English Language Learning

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Abstract

This research explores the integration of gamification principles into curriculum development and ICT tools to enhance student engagement in 7th grade English language learning, aligned with the New Ukrainian School (NUS) reform framework. The study addresses the challenge of maintaining high learner motivation and active participation in the transition from basic to intermediate language proficiency levels (A2–A2+ according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). By analyzing contemporary curricula and pedagogical standards, the research identifies key areas where gamified learning strategies can effectively support language acquisition. A gamified learning system was developed, embedding elements such as points, badges, leaderboards, and leveling mechanisms within the curriculum content. Interactive digital tools that facilitate formative assessment and collaborative activities supplemented these design choices. The system encourages active engagement through thematic projects like "Designing Your Dream National Park," integrating language skills with ecological awareness and creativity. The research methodology involved a comprehensive review of curriculum documents, teacher feedback, and pilot implementations in classroom settings. Data indicated significant improvements in student motivation, participation rates, and language competence. The study highlights the importance of curriculum adaptation to incorporate ICT and gamification without compromising educational rigor or language learning goals. This research contributes to contemporary discussions on curriculum development, ICT use, and engagement strategies in foreign language education. It demonstrates how a structured gamification framework, supported by technology, can foster an interactive and motivating learning environment, ultimately enhancing language proficiency and 21st-century skills in secondary education.

Keywords: *Curriculum Development, Engagement in Language Learning, ICT for Language Learning, Gamification, Foreign Language Education, Interactive Learning*

1. Introduction

The process of learning a foreign language, particularly English, plays a pivotal role in the modern educational system, especially in the context of the NUS reform [1]. The 7th grade represents a critical transitional stage where students move from basic to intermediate language proficiency levels, corresponding roughly to the A2-A2+ levels in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) [4]. At this stage, learners begin to engage with more complex linguistic structures and develop advanced communicative skills such as argumentation, storytelling, and collaborative project work. Moreover, the age and psychological characteristics of 7th graders make them receptive to interactive and motivational approaches that resonate with their life experiences and interests, such as friendship, hobbies, sports, cinema, and the internet.

Given these factors, the integration of gamification – a method that employs game elements to increase engagement and motivation – into English language teaching can significantly enhance the learning experience [11, 12]. Gamified learning tasks, including role-playing games, quests, presentations, and digital quizzes, provide dynamic interaction, promote critical thinking, creativity, and teamwork, and foster a positive attitude toward language acquisition [5, 6, 7]. Despite the increasing global interest in gamification, its systematic application within the Ukrainian 7th-grade English curriculum remains underexplored.

This paper presents the development of a gamified learning system tailored for 7th-grade English lessons in the framework of the NUS model curriculum. Through a detailed analysis of existing educational programs [2, 3] and the design of gamification strategies such as points, badges,

levels, and leaderboards [8, 9, 10], this study aims to enhance student motivation, language competence, and key cross-disciplinary skills.

The proposed system and lesson scenarios offer practical recommendations for educators seeking to implement gamification in their classrooms effectively, ensuring a balanced approach that maintains the educational integrity of language instruction while fostering an engaging and motivating learning atmosphere.

2. Evaluating English Language Curriculum Content for 7th Grade at the NUS

2.1 Justification for the Selection of Grade 7 in This Study

Grade 7 was selected for investigating the English language curriculum due to its critical role in developing students' linguistic competencies amid pedagogical, psychological, and methodological transitions. Corresponding to CEFR levels A2-A2+, students at this stage begin mastering foundational foreign language skills, discussing familiar topics, comprehending short texts, and expressing opinions, thus preparing for advancement to B1 proficiency in later grades.

At this developmental phase, learners possess the verbal and cognitive abilities to engage in more complex communicative tasks such as discussion, text analysis, and problem-solving. Learning is motivated by personal interests including friendships, hobbies, sports, cinema, and the internet. The Grade 7 curriculum [2, 3] balances the development of all four language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – while integrating grammar and vocabulary expansion. It introduces argumentation, storytelling, and collaborative projects earlier than in lower grades, yet maintains a lighter academic load than higher grades, allowing for the effective incorporation of gamified and interactive instructional strategies.

Students in Grade 7 demonstrate increased autonomy, undertaking research-based projects and longer tasks, with role-playing, quests, and presentations proving particularly effective. This stage is optimal for fostering sustained interest in foreign language learning, which influences future academic success. The curriculum thus offers a valuable context to explore how thematic content and innovative teaching methods, including gamification, influence student motivation and learning outcomes.

This study is situated within the framework of the NUS reform, addressing gaps in the practical implementation of Grade 7 model programs that integrate innovative pedagogies. It evaluates how these curricula align with national education goals by examining their structure, thematic organization, and responsiveness to student needs.

In summary, Grade 7 represents a pivotal stage for linguistic development and pedagogical innovation. This study analyses two model curricula ("Foreign Language Grades 5-9") with a focus on thematic distribution and gamified learning tasks, highlighting opportunities to enhance foreign language education in secondary schools.

2.2 Thematic Distribution and Gamification Analysis of the Model Curriculum "Foreign Language Grades 5-9" (Grade 7) [3].

The Grade 7 English curriculum is structured into thematic units encompassing life, culture, art, and global issues. These thematic divisions facilitate the development of fundamental language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – while integrating essential linguistic components such as vocabulary and grammar, including Present Simple, Past Continuous, Passive Voice, and Conditional Sentences. The curriculum addresses topics related to everyday life (e.g., leisure, hobbies), cultural traditions (holidays, symbols), sports and health, as well as arts and global culture, thereby promoting systematic language acquisition and authentic communicative competence.

The integration of gamified pedagogical strategies – incorporating game-based elements, competitive activities, creative projects, and digital tools – serves to enhance student engagement and motivation. Such strategies are instrumental in cultivating critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and emotional intelligence. Interactive tasks simulate pragmatic speech situations through role-play (e.g., navigating directions, shopping scenarios) and quest-based learning activities that necessitate cultural investigation and cooperative group work.

Project-based learning components, including poster creation, presentations, and digital content development on topics related to English-speaking cultures, facilitate interdisciplinary skill acquisition, combining linguistic proficiency with research and digital literacy. Additionally, gamified exercises such as online quizzes and "escape room" challenges provide targeted grammar practice in engaging formats.

Moreover, the curriculum's gamified elements support cooperative learning and social responsibility through team tournaments addressing global issues including migration and climate change. Creative dramatizations and student-produced multimedia projects further enrich the learning experience. Collectively, these gamification approaches render the curriculum interactive and effective, fostering intercultural communicative competence and reinforcing key educational competencies.

2.3 Thematic Distribution and Gamification Analysis of the Model Curriculum "Foreign Language Grades 5-9" (Grade 7) [2].

The NUS-inspired Grade 7 English program integrates lexical, grammatical, and spoken language features into thematically organized units aligned with students' interests and developmental levels. Themes include "Me, my family and friends," "School," "Internet," "Cinema," "Literature," and "Ukraine and the country whose language is being studied." This thematic approach prioritizes meaningful language use, enabling learners to describe academic subjects, compare education systems, and engage in projects such as envisioning an ideal school. The "Literature" theme fosters critical thinking through plot analysis, character study, and thematic comparison, while expanding vocabulary.

Grammar instruction is embedded naturally within all themes; for example, Past Simple and Past Continuous tenses are practiced within the "Recreation and Leisure" topic. The allocation of 9 to 17 hours per theme supports thorough exploration and language integration.

Gamification strategies are employed to enhance motivation and engagement, including: (1) role-playing games simulating student elections and collaborative scenario development to encourage creativity and communication; (2) quest-based tasks involving research on cultural and literary topics; (3) interactive digital tools such as Kahoot! [13] and Quizizz for vocabulary and grammar practice; (4) creativity-oriented projects using digital technologies to create thematic resources; (5) group activities and board games supporting topic extension; and (6) emotional intelligence activities focused on describing emotions and story creation.

Overall, this curriculum methodically develops linguistic and critical competencies. The thematic design, combined with gamified methods, promotes student motivation, critical thinking, creativity, and communicative competence, facilitating relevant and active language learning.

2.4 Evaluation of Two English Language Curricula for 7th Grade: Thematic Segmentation and Gamification

The first programme [3] integrates lexical and grammatical material with life, culture, sports and health, art, and global challenges. Major topics including "Leisure", "Theater and Cinema", "Sports" and "Countries of the English-speaking world" allow students to apply their language skills to real-life circumstances. Conditional sentences and tenses (Present Perfect, Passive Voice) are included. Intercultural communication skills are developed through interactive and project-based work.

Based on the NUS, the second curriculum [2] covers more detailed topics and emphasises competency-based learning. The categories "Me, My Family and My Friends", "School", "Cinema" and "Literature" provide clear opportunities to practise critical thinking, social responsibility, and creativity. Grammar, including past simple, present continuous, phrasal verbs, and prepositions, is more consistent.

Gamification works in both programs, but task structure determines its specificity:
- The first one [3] uses role-playing games and quests to improve communication. For instance, the role-playing game "How to get to a place" and the quest "Traveling to English-speaking countries" include language into realistic circumstances. Interactive quizzes on "Sports" or "Cooking" can include group competitions.
- The second curriculum [2] allows more interactive task variation. Examples include role-playing on topics such as "Me, my family and friends" or "School" with emphasis on facial expressions, gestures, and verbal communication.

Project: making posters or websites on "Ukraine and the country whose language is being studied".

Critical thinking gamification: brainstorming, travel planning, environmental issues:
- Writing or acting on "Cinema" or "Literature" topics. The first program [3] focusses on global topics like cultural heritage and globalisation, while the second one [2] targets more specific, everyday, and educational topics that align with students' daily experiences.
- The first program [3] emphasises intercultural communication, whereas the second one [2] emphasises development of critical thinking, teamwork, and emotional intelligence.

- Gamification is typically used in project work or role-playing games in the first program [3], while the second one [2] offers more opportunities to develop social responsibility through games that address global issues.
- Both programs use interactive and gamified challenges to build language skills and critical abilities. Thematically, the first program [3] is more traditional, while the second [2] follows the National School of Ukrainian Language and Literature's innovative approach, focussing on individualisation, creativity, and social interaction. Both programs will benefit from gamification in motivating students and developing their communication and life skills.

In the context of the NUS and current education aims, the English curriculum for grade 7 [2] was chosen for the study. Several key considerations influenced this choice:
- A competency-based approach is used to teach students communication, critical thinking, creativity, cooperation, social responsibility, and lifelong learning. Its structure follows the CEFR, allowing it to meet modern students' demands.
- Compliance with children' age and psychological features, since grade 7 is a crucial time in learning English, when students graduate from fundamental to advanced language structures and skills. Teens' interests – friends, family, school, the Internet, literature, cinema, and recreation – are covered in the curriculum. This topic divide motivates learning and develops intercultural communication.
- Gamification is possible with the program's many learning assignments. Creative projects, role-playing games, quests, and interactive quizzes engage pupils. Gamification motivates students, fosters critical thinking, and improves foreign language learning attitudes.
- Digital technology, project activities, and interdisciplinary links are included into the program to reflect modern foreign language study trends. Students can gain language abilities that are valuable in academic and professional settings. The curriculum is relevant for scientific analysis, fresh, and understudied for educational application. This program can be studied to find its merits, weaknesses, and ways to improve its application in educational institutions.

Thus, the chosen research object allows us to analyse modern English teaching techniques, assess the possibility of emerging methods, such as gamification, and improve education within the NUS concept.

3. Framework of the gamification system

Gamification in any industry must improve user involvement without losing confidence [14]. Thus, participants should not benefit from increased interest. Gamification also models intended behaviour [15]. Implementing gamification in education aims to promote student participation in the learning process without their awareness by modelling participant behaviour. Unconsciousness helps replace external incentive with internal. Due to unconscious involvement, involuntary attention is activated, which improves learning. In addition to attention, student memory and perception affect memorisation. On the Learning Pyramid [16], different learning activities affect material perception and memorisation. Lectures, reading, audio-visualization, and demonstration are passive learning methods with low memorisation rates. However, debate, practice, teaching, and real-world use are active learning methods that develop competencies. Gamification enhances information perception and memorisation, which is similar to applying information in practice or using it in real life and accounts for 75 to 90% of educational material assimilation. Gamification in learning activates and realises creative potential since it involves enjoyment, improvisation, and competition. Gamification in the classroom increases student motivation, productivity, and attendance, according to foreign studies.

Gamification in distance learning has a weak emotional connection between teachers and students and between students. Gamification elements like levels, prizes, and winning scoreboards engage students' emotions, increasing engagement.

Fear of making mistakes is another major psychological issue for teachers and students. Gamification transforms the learning process, helping children overcome their fear of mistakes and use them to learn. In nonlinear gaming narratives, a character's failure leads to the discovery of a new place, whereas in traditional lessons, mistakes are frowned upon. Gamification (particularly meaningful) erases the learning process's edges, pupils abstract from their typical social roles, and they employ avatars and act out the storyline. All of this reduces error anxiety.

According to Werbach and Hunter [9], gamification development and implementation require three levels of abstraction: the most general and abstract level for house design, the middle level for structure installation, and the third level for construction tools and materials.

The authors used analogies to classify game elements into dynamics, mechanics, and components. Maximum abstraction and conceptualisation at the dynamics level. Dynamics are abstract features of the gamification system that should be considered but cannot be directly represented in the game. Time restrictions, theme, storyline, emotions, and relationships are dynamics.

The fundamental processes that drive activities are mechanics. Each mechanics element implements a dynamics element. Virtual prizes, statuses, points, challenges, teamwork, and feedback help students advance and become more engaged in learning.

Components – points, levels, medals or "badges", avatars, accomplishments, achievement board, capacity to open new levels, etc. – are the game's most concrete mechanisms.

K. Werbach and D. Hunter [8] provide a technique for integrating gamification technology based on the "6 D's": define, delineate, describe, develop, don't forget, deploy. In the first stage, "define", gamification goals must be set. In the second stage, "delineate", students must be instructed on course behaviour. Gamification and learning require an awareness of the audience of education seekers, hence the third stage, "describe", involves describing students. This will boost gamification and learning results. At the fourth step, "devise", activity cycles must include engagement and promotion cycles. Engagement cycles describe player actions and system responses on student actions. Feedback, whether in points, incentives, or new tasks or levels, motivates education seekers. Thus, an engagement cycle is a closed loop of activity, feedback, and incentive that drives each other. One engagement cycle is not enough to produce an intriguing game because if the player's experience is the same on day one and day ten, it will get monotonous. Therefore, promotion cycles are needed.

Progression cycles turn gamification into a player's journey. For the progression cycle, nonlinear learning, surprise, and level complexity must be ensured. At the fifth step, "don't forget," the gamification must be entertaining and engage students. The third stage, "deploy," implements gamification. This stage selects necessary mechanisms and components. Since after five levels, it's clear which components should be used for what, the selection of components must be justified at the last stage of integration to ensure gamification implementation's effectiveness. American scientist K. Kapp [7] divides gamification into structural and content-based categories in his monograph. Structural gamification uses game components to teach. Meaningful gamification departs from standard teaching models, which base learning on a game storyline and rules. Students' internal motivation is developed via game storyline and scenario, presence, interface design, and feedback interactivity. Educational computer games are vivid examples of purposeful gamification. In our study, we will focus on structural gamification, which uses points, medals, badges, honour boards, tiered presentation of instructional material, and quests. Gamification relies on these characteristics to motivate pupils through competition. Points define the student's progress, therefore all activities are scored. Points and rewards work differently for different audiences.

The honour board is another classic tournament element. Some studies [10] say this can demotivate pupils, thus you can establish honour boards with specific characteristics and mark only the three top students. Gamification includes levels. Training courses frequently have thematic modules that can be game levels if each level gets harder. Bosses are another fascinating gamification feature, according to K. Werbach and D. Hunter [8]. These intermediate and ultimate control tasks are demanding. Bosses in education, like in computer games, help pupils summarise and self-assess as they progress through different learning stages.

Structural gamification uses game aspects in the educational system without changing the structure or content. Use of all the above elements must be sensible and thorough to focus students' attention on solving problems to attain educational goals.

3.1 Creation of a Gamification Framework (Scores, Badges, Levels, Leaderboards) for the 7h-Grade English Curriculum at the NUS [2].

Fundamental components of a gamification system

1. Points. Success in various learning activities is scored on the national assessment scale in the education system. Scoring criteria:
- *Do homework:*
  - Completed without errors – 12 points.
  - Partially completed or with minor errors: 10-11 points.
  - Partially done or lacking – 7-9 points.
  - Not done or inadequately done: 4-6 points.

- *Group projects (posters, presentations):*
  - 12 points for quality, innovation, and full participation.
  - Completed with minor issues – 10-11 points.
  - Task completed without creativity – 7-9 points.
- *Role-playing games or debates:*
  - 12 points for active involvement, grammatical correctness, and excellent lexical accuracy.
  - Participants with minor language faults receive 10-11 points.
  - Partially participating or having trouble with vocabulary and grammar: 7-9 points.
- *Kahoot and Quizizz online quizzes:*
  - First place: 12 points.
  - Second-third: 10-11 pts.
  - Participants with above-average results receive 7-9 points.
- *For quests or simulations,* accomplish all tasks with high accuracy for 12 points; completed with errors – 10-11 points; partial or difficult completion – 7-9 points.
- *Aiding classmates:* 12 points for active and regular help; occasional help – 10 points; 8-9 points for minimal engagement.
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2. Badges. Badges display students' accomplishments and inspire them. Examples of badges:
- Vocabulary Expert – 12 points in 5 vocabulary tasks.
- Grammar Champion – 12 points in 3 grammar examinations.
- Team player – actively participated in 3 group initiatives.
- Language Leader – 10-12 points in all activities for the month.

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3. Levels. Levels determine student learning. They use task average scores. Levels of systems:
Level 1: Beginner (4-6),
Level 2: Explorer (7-8),
Level 3: Communicator (9-10),
Level 4: Leader (11-12).

4. Leaderboard. Student performance is shown on the 12-point leaderboard. The table format is:

Table 1. Leaderboard

Place	Student Name	Average Score	Level	Number of Badges
1	Student A	11.5	Leader	4
2	Student B	10.2	Communicator	3
3	Student C	9.0	Communicator	2

Integration of the system into the educational framework

- Scoring platform options include online platforms (Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams) or a physical stand in the classroom.
- Scoreboard revisions occur weekly to keep students motivated.
- Encouragement: praise in class.
- Certificates or symbolic presents for students who achieve the greatest average score at the conclusion of the month or semester.

This technique encourages better student engagement in the learning process, healthy competition, and increased motivation by visualising their successes.

3.2 Lesson script for gamification integration

The scenario is based on the ideas and exercises offered in the textbook by Kosta et al. [17, pp. 14-19] to ensure topic cohesion and program conformity.

Designing Your Dream National Park

Description: This topic encourages students to construct a unique national park as environmental planners and designers. Nature, geography, and environmental conservation will inform their meaningful, creative, and participatory English practice.

The goal of the lesson is to engage students in a creative collaborative project to practise and develop their English language skills, including vocabulary from the textbook topic "National Parks" [17, pp. 18-19] related to geography, wildlife, and conservation, using superlative and superlative adjective comparisons. A national park that balances tourism and conservation is used to teach critical thinking. Gamified elements boost motivation, teamwork, student engagement, creativity, language correctness, and strategic problem-solving in an environmentally friendly environment.

This project will help students enhance their language abilities and grasp real-world environmental challenges in an engaging and participatory way.

Language Objectives:
 - *Vocabulary Building:*
 • Game-Based Approach: Students receive points for effectively using new terminology in park design and presentation. They can gain extra points by appropriately describing map features using geography and wildlife jargon.
 • Badge System: Giving students a "Wildlife Expert" badge for vocabulary competence motivates them to grow.
 - *Practice grammar:*
 • Game-Based Approach: Students earn progress points or unlock new levels by completing grammar challenges like superlative and superlative degrees of adjective comparison. Grammar-savvy teams advance quicker on the map or get presentation bonuses.
 • Reward System: Correct adjective descriptions of the park earn points, with gold for perfect grammar and silver for small faults.

Cognitive goals:
 - *Creative and analytical thinking:*
 • Game-based approach: Teams construct national parks by answering questions like "How do you balance wildlife conservation with tourism?" and earning points for creative, practical answers.
 • Game-based tasks: Teams can acquire bonus cards with specific assignments (e.g., "Create an exhibition of endangered flora/fauna species") to think critically about sustainable development and conservation.
 - *Problem-solving:*
 • Gamified Approach: Teams develop a park map in a set time, receiving time bonuses for efficiency and points for originality in solving design difficulties (e.g., managing tourist-wildlife relationships).
 - *Teamwork and Communication:*
 • Gamified Approach: Leaderboards track progress, encouraging collaboration and communication for progress. Each team member receives points for their project participation, fostering teamwork.
 • Progress Bar: Teams' progress bars fill up when they complete tasks like naming their park or making a map, motivating them to finish the park design.
 - *Collaborative Communication:*
 • Gamified Approach: Teams receive restricted "language cues" (e.g., hints or grammatical reminders) for presenting. These indications help the team plan presentation wording.

Goals for behaviour:
 - *Environmental Awareness:*
 • Gamified Approach: Students tackle environmental concerns and decide on conservation methods for their park. If their attraction harms animals, they lose points. Teams who combine conservation and tourism receive a "Eco-Warrior" badge.
 • Progressive unlocks: Students can unlock virtual park resources (e.g., native plants, endangered animals) by making sustainable choices, relating their answers to real-world sustainability challenges.
 - *Motivation and Engagement:*
 • Game-based approach: Leaderboards show the leading teams, fostering friendly rivalry. Bonus points and team work keep students engaged throughout the class.

• Celebration: Students feel accomplished when the best-designed park receives a "Best Eco-Park" award at the end of the course.

The incorporation of these gamified components encourages students to actively engage with the lesson's material. The combination of creative assignments, competitions, and prizes guarantees that language learning is engaging and effective, assisting children in meeting their linguistic and cognitive objectives while also building environmental awareness and teamwork.

Supplies: paper, markers, cards with the names of flora, animals, and geographical features, and presentation posters.

4. Methodological guidelines for educators on the integration of a gamification system in English instruction

Gamification can engage students in learning, but it needs clear algorithms and not too much to preserve instructional value.

1. Gamification algorithm.
   - *Analysis of Lesson Objectives:*
     • State the lesson's educational and language goals (e.g., grammar, speaking, writing).
     • Choose gamification features (scores, badges, levels, leaderboards) to support these goals.
   - *Lesson planning with gamification:*
     • Pick a topic and decide which parts of the course can be gamified (e.g., vocabulary reinforcement with Kahoot or LearningApps).
     • Create program-appropriate interactive tasks like non-continuous verbs and projects.
   - *Develop a motivator system:*
     • Implement a points system for task completion (e.g., +10 points for correct completion).
   - *Create badges* ("Grammar Genius", "Vocabulary Master"), levels ("Explorer", "Adventurer"), or real incentives (certificates, symbolic prizes).
   - *Choosing gamification tools:*
     • Use Quizlet, Kahoot!, Padlet, or Canva for interactive projects.
     • Show pupils their progress using leaderboards and progress bars.
   - *Gamify all lesson phases:*
     • Prepare by starting the lesson with a with a brief quiz game to test prior knowledge.
     • Main part: Include point-earning competitive assignments or collaborative projects.
     • Consolidate information with a Kahoot! or LearningApps interactive test.
     • Analysis: Assess how well the integrated game features affected student engagement and results.
     • Get student input to improve approach.

2. How to avoid "over-gamification" while maintaining the instructional value of tasks.
   - *Prioritise educational value:*
     • Focus on learning goals, not merely amusement.
     • The game should help players talk by practicing grammar and vocabulary.
   - *Balance control:*
     • Avoid making lessons too interactive. Gamification should enhance the lesson, not replace it.
     • Gamify critical steps (e.g., material review, knowledge testing).
   - *Assessment of outcomes:*
     • Inform students that points and rewards are a bonus, but task quality and knowledge are more important.
     • Gamified task results should be assessed with traditional control methods.
   - *Gradual implementation:*
     • Implement gradually by starting with one element (e.g., badges or points) and adding others if successful.
     • Avoid overwhelming students with all game elements.
   - *Considering the interests of students:*
     • Match themes, assignments, and gamification to students' ages and cognitive abilities.
     • Let students suggest system improvements.

3. The advantages of effective gamification.

• *Increased motivation:* Students are more engaged in tasks when they see progress and attain tangible rewards.

• *Individualisation:* Gamification allows you to take into account each student's level of preparedness by assigning tasks of variable difficulty.

• *Collaborative skill development:* gamified team tasks encourage student communication and involvement.

5. Conclusion

This study examines the effectiveness of integrating gamification strategies within the 7th-grade English curriculum aligned with the New Ukrainian School (NUS) framework. Incorporating gamified elements such as scoring systems, badges, levels, and leaderboards alongside information and communication technologies (ICT) enhances student engagement, motivation, and language proficiency. This approach addresses motivational and cognitive challenges faced by learners transitioning between A2–A2+ proficiency levels.

Thematically structured curricula combined with gamification foster communicative competence and essential twenty-first-century skills, including creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and environmental awareness. The gamified environment also reduces learner anxiety related to errors, promoting active participation and sustained interaction. The study offers practical methodological guidelines for educators to implement gamification while preserving pedagogical rigor and enhancing learner autonomy.

In summary, integrating a structured gamification framework with ICT tools offers a promising strategy for secondary foreign language education. This approach aligns with contemporary educational reforms emphasizing learner-centered, interactive methodologies and contributes to improved language acquisition and holistic student development within the Ukrainian educational context and beyond.

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