

Benefits of Gamification Towards Different Learning Styles in Language Learning

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In the modern age, chalk and talk may not be as relevant as it was a decade ago. With the technology advancing exponentially, it has provided the earth citizens with its practicality and flexibility, particularly in language learning. However, there is still a majority group of people who have not fully utilised learning through technology. Gamification is one of the effective ways to learn a language as it also caters to all different types of learners. This paper aims to study the benefits of gamification towards different learning styles in language learning. This study implies that implementing gamification in education can help students to achieve their targeted goals in language learning and making teaching easier for the teachers. Future studies can investigate the challenges of gamification learning.

Keywords: *Gamification, learning styles, language learning, technology, visual learner, auditory learner, kinaesthetic learner.*

Introduction

As we are evolving further into 21st-century learning, more technology-based learning is being introduced. The power and potential of digital technologies are increasing in usage and often studied to aid language learning (Peterson, 2016). Hafner, Chik, and Jones (2015) stated that this issue explores the need for language teachers and learners to understand and consider digital literacies such as the modes of reading, writing, and communication that are made possible by digital media. Due to this, many seem to be developing and introducing new methods to use in education. The integration of technology into language education has become more common than expected. Educational multimedia courseware is being implemented as resource materials to enhance teaching and learning (Yunus, Hashim, Embi & Lubis, 2010). The impact of technology has shown in students' interest in education (Hashim, Yunus, Embi & Ozir, 2017). Students are more interested in learning if the teacher

implements technology in class, especially when it comes to playing games. Games are becoming more important today and are a part of most children's relaxation time and equally and increasingly crucial to our culture as a whole. Learning a second or a new language can be challenging to comprehend for some students hence making sure that there is an exciting way towards learning is crucial. 21st-century educators are mainly facing challenges in ensuring that their teaching materials would suit the digital natives' preferred knowledge (Hashim, 2018). Many researchers have been proving the effectiveness of gamification learning in an ESL classroom (Zhang, 2018). Using games or gamification in learning is one of the most highlighted aspects and a significant shift to the educational world and being called Education 4.0. According to Zakaria, Zaini, Hamdan, and Norman (2018), gamification brings positive encouragement to students and would motivate them to complete their tasks in a much more enjoyable way. Utilising games in education, especially language learning, has developed a special bond and relationships with the learners (Squire, 2011). Using sports as a teaching material would motivate learners to learn and brings enjoyment to the students.

Methods

This paper used a document analysis method to study the benefits of gamification towards different learning styles. Content analysis was used through secondary research. A total of 12 kinds of literature reading was gathered and themed from written publications related to gamification and learning styles.

Results and Discussion

Gamification in Language Learning

Kapp (2012) as cited by Brull and Finlayson (2016) defined a game as "a system in which players engage in an abstract challenge, defined by rules, interactivity, and feedback, that results in a quantifiable outcome often eliciting an emotional reaction" (p.2). Games in general might confuse many as to game-based approaches used in learning, namely serious games. Play is defined as " physical or mental activity or contest that has rules and that people do for pleasure" (Barata, Gama, Jorge & Goncalves, 2015 p.3). Gamification applies elements associated with video games (Urh, Vukovic, Jereb & Pintar, 2015). Gamification is a method used to implement and replace a tedious activity and convert it into a fun activity to attract interest, attention, to motivate, and to improve performance in certain activities (Udjaja, 2018). Games are commonly used in education, particularly in language learning. According to Pardoel, Papadima, and Athanasiou (2018), the central promise that the games provide is that it gives the educators several useful and powerful tools to improve learners' motivation and enhance students' engagement. According to Brull & Finlayson (2016), gamification provides learners with the ability to learn at their own pace. Games make up a



substantial proportion of human social life, and they are continually developing as we speak. They bring entertainment and interactivity and instantly become popular (Liu & Peng, 2013).

Gamification has excellent potential to help people acquire and improve skills (Barata, Gama, Jorge & Goncalves, 2015). Also, the characteristics of games provide playful and entertainment aspects; games can be used to transmit knowledge that cannot be achieved physically from generation to generation (De Moraes Sarmiento Rego, 2015). Barata et al. continued by stating that gamifying education is a growing topic, with some studies presenting beneficial effects for the students' learning experience. De Moraes Sarmiento Rego (2015), further stated that, in many studies, learning takes place automatically and spontaneously while playing takes place. Education is usually not the primary goal of a game, due to the result of one's engaging in playing and completing the tasks, the repetition of the game, and participating in trial and error and in overcoming challenges, but learning could easily take place.

In gamifying learning, particularly in language learning, there are several main web learning tools and applications that are used to create an interactive learning environment for the students, at the same time, allowing them to express themselves, collaborate, and have fun while learning new skills (Kamal, Foen & Manion, 2018). Gee (2008) argues that a good game employs good learning and that a game's design is connected to bring and teach good education for players. Among the tools created online are Kahoot and Quizziz that are suitable for learning. Above all, gamification changes a person's perception of non-game activity into games as it develops learning in a more enjoyable environment (Udjaja & Sari, 2018). Among the benefits of games are that they can also serve to stimulate different sensory and motor systems for each person and enhance a person's understanding and memory (Udjaja, 2018). Implementing technology in the classroom, especially games, would be useful and beneficial for the learners.

Learning Styles

The term 'learning styles' refers to the concept that individuals differ in depending on what mode a learner prefers in learning (Pashler, Daniel, Rohrer & Bjork, 2008). According to Cassidy (2004), learning styles are how individuals characteristically approach different learning tasks to ensure that they will be able to perform and conduct the tasks well. Each individual would usually adopt an approach to learning with which they are most comfortable and would learn best by implementing the plan. According to Pritchard (2009), it would be very helpful for learners to be well aware of their learning preferences to ensure a much more comfortable way of learning. They can also try to match a particular style of knowledge that is being undertaken, and take the opportunity to improve their potential for learning when faced with a learning activity that might steer them towards one of their preferred styles (Pritchard, 2009).

As stated by Pritchard (2009), learning styles are not fixed traits which an individual will always display. Learners will be able to adopt different forms in a diverse learning context. In the education field, mainly, it is best to understand and implement an individual preferred learning. Pashler et al. (2008) stated that the learning-styles view had acquired significant influence within the education field, with encounters from kindergarten until the tertiary level. It is crucial to incorporate all effective teaching methods to cater to different learning styles (Cassidy, 2004). Every individual has their way of learning and preferred learning techniques. Mainly, it is essential to know the students' learning styles. Understanding students' learning styles, teachers can organise classrooms to cater to their individual needs for quiet or sound, seating arrangements, mobility, or grouping preferences, (Dunn, Beaudry & Klavas, 2002).

Benefits of Gamification for Visual Learners

Visual learners are people who learn best by watching and would remember better with visual materials (Willingham, Hughes & Dobolyi, 2015). As the world is advancing rapidly, countless games implement both audio and visual elements in them. According to Atherton and Wang (2018), programmers often go for the design of interactive audio-visual games that embody both audio-driven and graphics programming in which creating impressive audio-visual games works. Audio-visual based information is most effectively perceived by students who are visual and verbal learners. According to Buckley and Doyle (2016), this dimension differentiates students who are visually orientated from students who are verbally orientated. Visual learners tend to prefer visual information transmission methods such as pictures, diagrams, flow charts, and timelines, while verbal learners prefer written and spoken explanations (Buckley & Doyle, 2016). In language learning, some languages such as Chinese, requires learners to visualise and memorise the characters to be able to write in the language correctly. According to Lim, Tan, Isak, and Hambira (2016), a language learner would usually have to memorise a vast amount of new vocabulary. Particularly in Chinese, writing Chinese characters with a perfect stroke is considered as significant in Chinese culture (Tam, 2012 as cited by Lim et al., 2016). Therefore, it is good for visual learners to be able to have a visual material such as games which can be efficient and practical. Games can be downloaded in handphones, and they can be flexible, and more comfortable to learn for those who are leading an active lifestyle (Lim et al., 2016). Hence, gamification would undoubtedly be one of the effective ways for visual learners in language learning.

Benefits of Gamification for Auditory Learners

Auditory learners are learners who would do better with an emphasis on audio (Newton, 2015). Games are said to be among the audio-visual emphasised material (Atherton & Wang, 2018). Another area found to be essential for designers of gamification for learning is audio (Scholtz, Raga & Baxter, 2016) as audio in games would attract the audience the most

(Newton, 2015). The audio-visual way of presenting is based on the dual-channel assumption, which would be one of the main premises of the cognitive theory of multimedia learning (Van Laere & Van Braak, 2017). Gamification would often include its most robust sufficient value that is set up with a fantasy feeling, which can be designed and developed through relevant visual effects, audio, or even storytelling.

According to Nurtihah, Fakhrul, Marina, and Rahmah (2016), previous reviews have stated that auditory learners learn facts better through storytelling rather than bullet lists or point form. Auditory learners need to be able to listen and imitate how a native speaker speaks. Valencia (2016) stated that gamification could improve one speaking in the targeted language. A study by Valencia (2016) showed that gamification not only can improve learners' speaking skills, but it can also boost their confidence to speak. Games or videogames that require multiplayer would usually lead the player to interact with another player who can be a native speaker. This will lead to both players communicating and can be an excellent way to learn an extensive amount of vocabulary and correct pronunciation (Valencia, 2016).

Benefits of Gamification for Kinaesthetic Learners

Kinesthetic students will learn better when they do an experiment and are involved physically in the classroom experiences. They remember information well when they actively participate in activities, field trips, and role play (Peptia & Mega, 2017). Peptia and Mega (2017), continued by stating that using games in classrooms may be able to implement the phenomena of active learning, whereby students will be forced to think on course concepts more creatively through game rules that require them to interpret, explain, and demonstrate learning targets in a non-traditional way. Games can also engage parts of the brain by incorporating verbal interactions, visual interactions, and motor skills (Martin, Basinet, Rosenblum, Schwartz & Klein, 2018). Games are able to empower kinaesthetic and tactile learners, allowing the learner to experience, manipulate, and understand through first-hand interaction. Such learners have characteristics that facilitate their learning through touch, engagement, and participation. Using games and methods in teaching contexts to increase the learner's engagement, cooperation, and competition would empower kinaesthetic learners to be more active and comfortable in learning (Hamza-Lup, 2018).

Conclusion

Above all, enhancing teaching and learning sessions aligning with the 21st century is crucial to ensure that the students are interested and motivated in learning. Gamification provides elements that not only can grab students' attention but can cater to all different learning styles. Each individual has their preferred way of education, depending on the course contexts. Hence, making sure that the students will be able to maximise their learning is



significant. Games are currently still developing and will continuously improve to match the ever-changing world. Games now can be easily downloaded in technological devices such as laptops, tablets, and smartphones making it practical and flexible. Playing and using sports as teaching material has never been more accessible. This study implies that implementing gamification in learning can help students to achieve their targeted goals in language learning and make teaching easier for the teachers. Future studies can investigate the challenges of gamification learning.

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