

ENHANCING YOUNG LEARNERS' ATTENTION AND MOTIVATION THROUGH GAMIFICATION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18152101>

Abstract: This article explores the role of gamification in English Language Teaching (ELT), focusing on its impact on sustaining attention and increasing motivation among young learners. In the digital era, children are constantly exposed to games and multimedia, which shape their learning styles, while traditional methods such as memorization often fail to keep them engaged. Gamification, understood as the use of game-like elements such as points, badges, and rewards in educational contexts, offers an innovative solution by making lessons more interactive and student-centered. It enhances concentration, motivation, and retention, while also fostering collaboration, creativity, and self-confidence—skills essential for early language development. This paper discusses the theoretical background of gamification, its practical classroom applications, and its effectiveness in language acquisition.

Keywords: Gamification, English Language Teaching, young learners, motivation, attention span, interactive pedagogy.

ПОВЫШЕНИЕ ВНИМАНИЯ И МОТИВАЦИИ МЛАДШИХ ШКОЛЬНИКОВ ЧЕРЕЗ ГЕЙМИФИКАЦИЮ В ОБУЧЕНИИ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ

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Аннотация: В данной статье рассматривается роль геймификации в преподавании английского языка (ELT), с особым акцентом на её влияние на поддержание внимания и повышение мотивации у младших школьников. В цифровую эпоху дети постоянно сталкиваются с играми и мультимедийными технологиями, которые формируют их стиль обучения, тогда как традиционные методы, такие как заучивание, часто не способны удерживать их интерес. Геймификация, понимаемая как использование игровых элементов — баллов, значков, наград и рейтингов — в образовательном процессе, предлагает инновационное решение, делая уроки более интерактивными и ориентированными на учащихся. Она способствует повышению концентрации, мотивации и запоминания, а также развивает сотрудничество, креативность и уверенность в себе — качества, необходимые для раннего языкового развития. В статье рассматриваются теоретические основы геймификации, её практическое применение на уроках английского языка и её эффективность в процессе овладения языком.

Ключевые слова: геймификация, преподавание английского языка, младшие школьники, мотивация, концентрация внимания, интерактивная педагогика.

INGLIZ TILI O'QITISHDA GAMIFIKATSIYA ORQALI YOSH O'QUVCHILARNING DIQQATINI JAMLASH VA MOTIVATSIYASINI OSHIRISH

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Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada ingliz tili o'qitishda (ELT) gamifikatsiyaning roli, xususan, uning yosh o'quvchilarda diqqatni jamlash va motivatsiyani oshirishdagi ta'siri tahlil qilinadi. Raqamli davrda bolalar doimiy ravishda o'yinlar va multimedia texnologiyalariga duch keladilar, bu esa ularning o'qish uslubini shakllantiradi. An'anaviy usullar, masalan, yodlash, ko'pincha ularning qiziqishini uzoq vaqt ushlab tura olmaydi. Gamifikatsiya bu ta'lim jarayoniga ballar, nishonlar, mukofotlar va reytinglar kabi o'yin elementlarini qo'shish bo'lib, u innovatsion yechim sifatida taqdim etiladi va darslarni yanada interaktiv hamda o'quvchiga yo'naltirilgan qiladi. Bu usul diqqatni jamlash, motivatsiya va eslab qolishni kuchaytiradi, shuningdek, hamkorlik, ijodkorlik va o'ziga ishonchni rivojlantiradi. Maqolada gamifikatsiyaning nazariy asoslari, ingliz tili darslarida amaliy qo'llanishi va tilni o'zlashtirish jarayonidagi samaradorligi yoritiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: gamifikatsiya, ingliz tili o'qitish, yosh o'quvchilar, motivatsiya, diqqat, interaktiv pedagogika.

English has become one of the most important languages of the twenty-first century, serving as a global means of communication in education, business, and culture. Teaching English to young learners is especially significant because children acquire languages more naturally than adults. However, teachers often face difficulties in keeping their students focused. Young learners between the ages of five and twelve have short attention spans and require constant stimulation to remain engaged. Conventional methods such as rote memorization and grammar drills do not always meet their needs, leading to boredom and distraction. The modern classroom must therefore adopt innovative methods that capture children's interest while ensuring effective learning.

One such approach is gamification, which refers to the use of game elements in non-game contexts. Unlike playing games for entertainment, gamification deliberately applies strategies such as points, levels, challenges, and rewards to make learning more interactive and motivating (Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, & Nacke, 2011). In the context of English language teaching, gamification aligns with children's natural inclination for play and competition, turning language practice into an enjoyable and meaningful process. This paper argues that gamification is not merely a supporting tool but a pedagogical innovation capable of reshaping English teaching for young learners.

The application of gamification in education is supported by several important learning theories. According to Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory, learners are motivated when their needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness are fulfilled (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Gamification provides opportunities to meet all three of these needs. Children feel competent when they earn points or achieve higher levels, they experience autonomy when they are allowed to make choices in the learning process, and they develop a sense of relatedness when they work together in group challenges. Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism also supports gamification because learning is viewed as a social process that develops through interaction, role-playing, and collaborative activities (Vygotsky, 1978). Similarly, Piaget's ideas on cognitive development emphasize the role of exploration and play in children's learning (Piaget, 1952), which directly corresponds to the use of gamified activities in the classroom.

Empirical research confirms these theoretical perspectives. Studies have shown that gamification significantly improves learners' engagement and attention. Hamari, Koivisto, and Sarsa (2014) demonstrated through a meta-analysis that gamification had a consistently positive impact on motivation in educational settings (Hamari, Koivisto, & Sarsa, 2014). Fernández-Rio and Suarez (2020) reported that students who practiced vocabulary through gamified tasks achieved higher retention rates than those who used traditional flashcards (Fernández-Rio & Suarez, 2020). These findings illustrate the importance of gamification as an educational strategy for sustaining motivation and concentration in young learners.

Gamification can be implemented in English teaching through various classroom practices. In some primary schools in Uzbekistan, students are awarded symbolic points whenever they use English greetings or phrases correctly. Once they reach a certain number of points, they are rewarded with recognition such as being named "Class English Ambassador." This approach, while simple, gives children a sense of achievement and encourages them to use English more actively in and outside of class.

Digital platforms provide further opportunities for gamification. Applications such as Kahoot!, Quizizz, and Duolingo have become popular tools for English learning. A study in Indonesia (Gunawan, 2024) showed that children who participated in vocabulary quizzes through Kahoot! maintained longer attention spans (Gunawan, 2024) and were more engaged compared to students who used paper-based exercises. The children themselves expressed that the quizzes felt like exciting competitions rather than routine tests, which motivated them to participate more eagerly.

Role-playing activities also demonstrate the effectiveness of gamification. When teachers ask learners to act out roles such as customer and shopkeeper and communicate only in English, the activity becomes far more engaging if points or challenges are integrated. Even shy students become more confident because they see the task as a playful challenge rather than a formal speaking exercise.

An illustrative example comes from a language center in Tashkent, where teachers organized a "Vocabulary Treasure Hunt." Students had to find hidden clues in the classroom and use English words to advance to the next stage of the game. The results were striking: students who were previously quiet and passive became highly active, and class attendance improved noticeably. This shows how gamification can turn ordinary vocabulary practice into an interactive adventure that sustains attention and fosters motivation.

Another example is the use of classroom leaderboards to display student progress. Although some educators worry that leaderboards may create unhealthy competition, many children find them motivating. They enjoy tracking their improvement compared to their peers

and feel proud when they see their names move upward. This visual representation of progress fosters a sense of achievement and encourages students to keep practicing.

The practical examples above highlight the many benefits of gamification in English language teaching for young learners. It sustains attention by transforming repetitive exercises into dynamic experiences, increases motivation through rewards and recognition, and improves retention by linking learning with play. In addition, gamification promotes collaboration, as children often work in teams during challenges, and helps build self-confidence by turning mistakes into learning opportunities within a safe and playful environment.

However, there are also challenges that must be considered. If teachers rely too heavily on extrinsic rewards such as points and prizes, students may become motivated only by rewards rather than by the joy of learning itself. To avoid this, gamification should be designed in a way that gradually fosters intrinsic motivation. Another challenge is related to resources and teacher training. Not all schools have access to digital platforms or devices, and not all teachers are familiar with designing gamified lessons. For gamification to be effective, educators must receive appropriate training and adapt game-based strategies to fit their local contexts and available resources.

In conclusion, gamification has proven to be a powerful pedagogical approach that addresses one of the central challenges in teaching English to young learners: maintaining attention and motivation. By integrating elements such as points, challenges, rewards, and playful activities, teachers can transform traditional lessons into interactive experiences that align with children's natural learning tendencies. Real-life classroom examples demonstrate that gamification increases engagement, promotes active participation, and improves language retention. Although challenges such as resource limitations and overreliance on extrinsic rewards remain, the potential of gamification to reshape English teaching is undeniable. For young learners in Uzbekistan and beyond, gamification offers not just entertainment but a meaningful, student-centered path to mastering English in the 21st century.

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