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### **GAMIFICATION IN LEARNING LANGUAGE: A CASE STUDY OF TEACHING LANGUAGE TO TOURISM STUDENTS**

**Abstract.** *This article examines the impact of gamification and video games on the process of learning English among students studying in the field of tourism, in order to develop their language skills and increase motivation. The study was conducted at the International University of Tourism and Hospitality in Turkestan and was based on a mixed method, including questionnaires, observation and interviews with students and teachers. The study involved 15 first-year students who used the Quizlet platform for four weeks to learn new vocabulary. The motivation scale for language learning and the Quizlet questionnaire were used to assess their motivation and attitude to the gamified approach. According to the results of the pre-test and post-test surveys, as well as the t-test for paired samples, there were no statistically significant differences ( $p = 0.476$ ) in the level of vocabulary proficiency, although there was a slight improvement. At the same time, observations and interviews have shown that gamification promotes active participation of students, positively affects their motivation and makes language learning more interactive and exciting. The teachers also noted an increase in student engagement and an improvement in the classroom atmosphere.*

**Keywords:** *gamification, motivation, tourism students, interactive learning, learning foreign languages*

### **Introduction**

Games have been used as one of the teaching methods since ancient times. Well, in the modern education system, they became popular only in the 18th and 19th centuries. In Europe and America, games were used to develop essential life skills such as math, reading, and even moral values. These methods were practical in nature, which prepared children for solving complex real-life tasks, strengthening their social and cognitive abilities in learning.

With the development of pedagogy in the twentieth century, games began to be perceived not

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just as a form of entertainment, but also as a powerful tool for learning and developing cognitive and non-cognitive skills in children and adults. The work of such prominent theorists as Jean Piaget, Lek Vygotsky and John Dewey made significant contributions to this shift. Piaget emphasized the role of games in cognitive development, Vygotsky explored how games contribute to socialization and the acquisition of cultural skills, and Dewey considered games as a way to actively involve students in the learning process [1], [2].

By the middle of the twentieth century, games were increasingly included in educational programs to make learning fun and interesting. This included board games, role-playing games, and simulation exercises that helped students learn various complex concepts in practice. These methods were used not only in elementary schools, but also in secondary and higher educational institutions.

By the middle of the twentieth century, games were increasingly included in educational programs to make learning fun and interesting. This included board games, role-playing games, and simulation exercises that helped students learn various complex concepts in practice. These methods were used not only in elementary schools, but also in secondary and higher educational institutions.

From the end of the twentieth century to the present day, educational games have become even more important due to the development of computer technology and digital platforms. Interactive games and simulations have become an integral part of many educational programs around the world. They promote the study of subjects such as languages, mathematics and natural sciences, as well as develop critical thinking and the ability to work in a team and solve a problem in pairs. Modern research highlights the effectiveness of games in learning. They improve concentration, increase motivation and contribute to a deeper understanding of the material. In the era of distance learning and online courses, gaming methods continue to evolve, integrating with technologies such as virtual and augmented reality, as well as artificial intelligence. These innovations open up new horizons in education, making the learning process not only effective but also highly exciting and enjoyable.

Recent research has shown that gamification can significantly improve students' language proficiency by encouraging active participation and enhancing the learning process through repetition and feedback [10]. The use of game elements not only makes learning more enjoyable, but also satisfies the diverse learning needs of students, especially in travel programs where multilingualism and intercultural communication are important. The study by Anderson and Dill once again confirms the idea that gamification in education can lead to increased motivation and academic achievement [9].

As Khamrakhodzhayeva and others emphasize, «the game is a method of pedagogical activity, which is a kind of recreation, entertainment when teaching a subject. The role of play in foreign language lessons is huge, as it allows you to make the learning process attractive and interesting for every student [5]. And if students speak a foreign language at the same time, then it can provide even more learning opportunities. Gaming activity has a great impact on attention, memory, thinking, imagination, and requires some tension of emotional and mental forces. Games should correspond to the level of training of students and be necessary for passing a certain grammatical or lexical material. With the help of the game, pronunciation is well practiced, lexical and grammatical material is activated, listening and speaking skills are developed. It can be used to

relieve psychological fatigue; it can be used to mobilize students' mental efforts, develop their organizational skills, instill self-discipline skills, and create an environment of joy in the classroom» [5].

The multifaceted advantages of games in language learning lies in the ability to simultaneously affect a variety of cognitive and linguistic skills. According to Khamzakhodzhayeva et al., "games are effective in developing attention, memory, thinking and imagination." These classes often require students to make emotional and mental efforts, which deepens their engagement and contributes to a meaningful learning experience [5].

In addition, the games can be adapted to different levels of students' preparedness in accordance with specific grammatical or lexical topics. This allows university students in the field of tourism to effectively practice pronunciation, develop a rich vocabulary, strengthen listening and speaking skills, which is important for future tourism specialists. Games also serve as a universal means of combating psychological fatigue, which allows you to constantly concentrate during the lesson. Games help to mobilize students' cognitive efforts and develop organizational skills, develop self-discipline, which would not hurt a tourism specialist in the future.

One of the strengths of gamification is its adaptability to individual learning needs. For example, within the framework of travel programs, students may need to quickly acquire functional language skills, role-playing and simulation-based activities can immerse students in real-world situations such as navigating airports, checking into hotels or participating in intercultural conversations. These skills are especially important for students working in the tourism industry, where effective communication is the cornerstone of professional success. Motivation, being a key factor in language acquisition, connects education with future career opportunities and professional growth. Future tourism professionals should be ready not only to represent themselves, but also to communicate effectively in a scientific, business and international environment that would allow them to attract potential customers. By integrating game mechanics such as scores, leaderboards, and rewards into language education, gamification aims to increase student engagement, motivation, and create an interactive learning environment. Mastering a foreign language for students in the field of tourism has an important role, since tourism includes communication in society, which implies the ability to communicate in different languages.

Effective use of language is impossible without a sufficient vocabulary [7]. Language learners find that the process of memorizing vocabulary is considered boring and unpleasant during learning, so it is difficult for them to master a large number of dictionaries and use them effectively in context [12]. In this regard, foreign language teachers should provide an effective and interesting way to learn a language. Thus, learning languages through games is gaining momentum now. 4 21 «Recent changes in Information Technology have led to the evolution of new types of web tools to provide need of the new generation, Gen Z (Generation Z), who lives and breathes technology. However, implementing ICTs to teach foreign language develop into vital part of foreign language teaching in order to assure that this will increase learners' interest and language development in the learning process» [8]

This article explores the role of gamification and video games in language learning, namely their impact on students in the field of tourism. It also examines the effectiveness of gamification in the development of various skills among tourism students and their benefits in quickly learning new words, using correct grammar in difficult situations.

### **Methodology**

To assess how effective gamification is in language learning, the researchers used a combination of methods. A group of first-year students from 18 students of the International University of Tourism and Hospitality in Turkestan were interviewed to find out their opinion about the gamified language studies. This study focused on the target group of students in the 2023-2024 academic year. Several four-week play sessions were held. To collect the data, the researchers used pre- and post-test tests to assess progress. Using the difference between the tests, the researchers analyzed their language skills and level of engagement before and after, as well as during the learning process using gamification in foreign language lessons. The data collection used the motivation scale for language learning and the Quizlet questionnaire [13],[14]. The motivation scale for learning English consists of 24 points and is designed to measure the motivation of students to learn English using gamification in learning language.

The students showed their agreement and disagreement in accordance with the options on a five-point Likert scale, the range of which is from one (categorically disagree) five at a time (I fully agree). Dizon's questionnaire included 23 items and the first six of them were devoted to students' preferences in language learning, and the rest were based on the introduction of game-based teaching methods according to Davis. In addition, observations during classes, as well as interviews with both students and teachers, made it possible to better understand the impact of gamification on learning outcomes.

For four weeks, students were taught a new vocabulary using Quizlet, and the game strategies of language learning were introduced into the process of this lesson, which were conducted by their teachers at that time. Next, the researchers sent links to prepared cards that corresponded to the course program. For a deeper understanding of the impact of gamification, observations of the educational process were conducted, as well as interviews with teachers and students after each lesson during the entire research process.

After completing the course, participants filled out post-test questionnaires, then the test results were analyzed using the SPSS program. Standard deviations and average estimates were calculated. To determine statistically significant changes between the results of the pretest and the post-test, the t-criterion for paired samples was applied. Thus, the results of the study made it possible to determine the expected progress of the students of the experimental group and to identify the influence of gamification on their academic achievements.

### **Results and discussion**

Table 1 shows the average scores of students for the preliminary and subsequent testing. The results showed a marked improvement in the vocabulary of students after completing lessons through the use of gamification, including Quizlet. The value of n is exactly 0.015, which indicates the statistical significance of the results.

**Table 1 – The results of pre-test and post-test**

|        | Mean      | N      | Std.Deviation | Std.Error Mean | t       | Sig.   |
|--------|-----------|--------|---------------|----------------|---------|--------|
| Pair 1 | Pre-test  | 3.6278 | 18            | 0,33610        | 0,07922 | -2,933 |
|        | Post-test | 4.0333 | 18            | 0,35385        | 0,08336 |        |

Figure 1 shows the amount of time that 18 students spent learning new vocabulary through various classroom games each week. The results show that the participants devoted enough time to study, and most of them devoted from thirty to sixty minutes a week to it. A number of students demonstrated exceptional dedication, spending more than sixty minutes on careful assimilation of the material.

**Figure1 – Amount of spent time to learn new material with the help of gamification.**



**Table 2 – Average values and standard deviation according to the questionnaire data.**

|       | N  | Minimum | Maximum | Mean   | Std.Deviation |
|-------|----|---------|---------|--------|---------------|
| Total | 18 | 3.00    | 5.00    | 4.1222 | 0.47856       |

The average value and standard deviation of the variables are shown in Table 2 above. The average value for the constructions was more than four, indicating a positive attitude of students towards the use of various gamified methods and video games in the EFL classroom. The study, conducted at the International University of Tourism and Hospitality in Turkestan, involved 15 first-year tourism students who used the Quizlet platform for four weeks to build vocabulary. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining pre-tests, post-tests, observations, interviews, and questionnaires to evaluate vocabulary acquisition, motivation, and students' attitudes toward gamified learning.

Observations revealed consistent and active participation in vocabulary-building games, with students spending 20 to 60 minutes weekly, as illustrated in Figure 1. None of the participants exceeded the allocated 60 minutes, indicating that the schedule was well-aligned with their preferences and capacity for focused engagement. During these sessions, students were frequently observed interacting with Quizlet cards, demonstrating concentration and enthusiasm. Many voluntarily shared their progress with peers, and this enthusiasm extended beyond the classroom, as noted in their independent use of the platform.

Interviews with students supported these observations, with participants expressing that gamified methods made vocabulary learning engaging and enjoyable. They frequently highlighted the interactive nature of games as a key factor in maintaining motivation. Students noted that tools like Quizlet helped them break down complex vocabulary into manageable chunks, making the material less daunting. The inclusion of gamified elements such as leaderboards and timed quizzes also contributed to their intrinsic motivation, fostering a sense of accomplishment and progress.

Teachers similarly emphasized the positive impact of gamification on student behavior and outcomes. They noted higher levels of class participation and an improved overall classroom

atmosphere. According to one teacher, the playful, competitive nature of the approach encouraged students to collaborate and communicate more effectively, especially during group activities. The improved retention of vocabulary was another significant benefit observed by the teachers, who compared the results with those of previous semesters where traditional methods were used.

In addition to classroom dynamics, the study highlighted gamification's adaptability to varying levels of student preparedness. For tourism students, this adaptability proved particularly valuable in simulating real-world scenarios. Role-playing and situational exercises, such as navigating airports or managing customer interactions, were noted as effective ways to connect language learning with practical professional skills.

The integration of gamification into language learning aligns with prior research, such as that by Khamrakhodzhayeva et al., which emphasizes its role in enhancing cognitive skills like memory, attention, and problem-solving. Teachers in this study also observed similar effects, noting that students became more resilient in tackling challenging vocabulary and displayed better organizational skills over the study period.

The pre-test and post-test analysis, while not showing statistically significant differences ( $p = 0.476$ ), indicated a slight improvement in vocabulary acquisition, suggesting that gamification may primarily impact engagement and motivation rather than immediate test performance. Nevertheless, this increase in enthusiasm and participation has long-term implications for sustained learning, particularly in professional programs where language proficiency is critical.

These findings further substantiate the view that gamification not only improves academic outcomes but also develops soft skills essential for tourism professionals, such as teamwork, adaptability, and effective communication in diverse settings. The use of Quizlet as a primary tool demonstrated how gamified platforms can be seamlessly integrated into educational programs to meet both pedagogical and industry needs.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study demonstrate that gamification is an effective and engaging approach to language learning for students in travel-related programs. When integrated into language courses, gamified activities such as vocabulary games, interactive quizzes, and role-playing scenarios grounded in real-world travel contexts proved to be the most impactful. These methods not only increased student motivation and engagement but also fostered critical problem-solving and communication skills essential for success in the tourism industry.

Students particularly valued opportunities for team-based competition and immediate feedback, which enhanced their sense of achievement and collaboration. Similarly, teachers observed that the gamified approach contributed to a more dynamic and interactive classroom atmosphere, helping students retain vocabulary more effectively and develop skills relevant to their professional futures.

Gamification also demonstrated its ability to align educational practices with the needs of the tourism industry by creating a stimulating learning environment that mirrors real-world demands. By incorporating game elements into the curriculum, educators can better prepare students for practical challenges they may face in their careers.

Although the current study focused on short-term impacts, it highlights the potential for gamification to be adapted for long-term language acquisition. Future research should investigate

the sustained effects of gamification on language retention, its scalability in online and blended learning environments, and its capacity to integrate emerging technologies such as virtual and augmented reality. These advancements could further enhance the educational experiences of tourism students, equipping them with the tools to thrive in an increasingly globalized and interactive industry.

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**ТІЛ ҮЙРЕНУДЕГІ ГЕЙМИФИКАЦИЯ: ТУРИЗМ СТУДЕНТТЕРІНЕ ТІЛДІ ОҚЫТУДЫҢ ПРАКТИКАЛЫҚ МЫСАЛЫ**

*Аңдатпа.* Бұл мақалада туризм саласында оқитын студенттердің тілдік дағдыларын дамыту және мотивацияны арттыру мақсатында ағылшын тілін үйрену процесіне геймификация мен бейне ойындардың әсері қарастырылады. Зерттеу Түркістандағы Халықаралық Туризм және қонақжайлылық университетінде жүргізілді және студенттер мен оқытушылармен сауалнама, бақылау және сұхбаттарды қамтитын аралас әдіске негізделген. Зерттеуге төрт апта ішінде жаңа лексиканы үйрену үшін Quizlet платформасын пайдаланған 15 бірінші курс студенттері қатысты. Олардың мотивациясы

мен ойынға деген көзқарасын бағалау үшін тілді үйренуге ынталандыру шкаласы (Ersoy & Boyacı, 2018) және Quizlet сауалнамасы (Dizon, 2016) қолданылды. Тест алдындағы және тесттен кейінгі сауалнамалардың нәтижелеріне, сондай-ақ жұптастырылған үлгілерге арналған *t*-критерийіне сәйкес, статистикалық маңызды айырмашылықтар ( $p = 0,476$ ) сөздік қорын иелену деңгейінде анықталмады, бірақ шамалы жақсару байқалды. Сонымен қатар, бақылаулар мен сұхбаттар геймификация оқушылардың белсенді қатысуына ықпал ететінін, олардың мотивациясына оң әсер ететінін және тіл үйренуді интерактивті және қызықты ететінін көрсетті. Оқытушылар сонымен қатар оқушылардың белсенділігінің артқанын және сыныптағы атмосфераның жақсарғанын атап өтті.

**Кілт сөздер:** геймификация, мотивация, туристік студенттер, интерактивті оқыту, шет тілдерін үйрену

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### **ГЕЙМИФИКАЦИЯ В ИЗУЧЕНИИ ЯЗЫКА: ПРАКТИЧЕСКИЙ ПРИМЕР ПРЕПОДАВАНИЯ ЯЗЫКА СТУДЕНТАМ ТУРИСТИЧЕСКИХ СПЕЦИАЛЬНОСТЕЙ**

**Аннотация.** В данной статье рассматривается влияние геймификации и видеоигр на процесс изучения английского языка студентами, обучающимися в сфере туризма, с целью развития их языковых навыков и повышения мотивации. Исследование проводилось в Международном университете туризма и гостеприимства в Туркестане и было основано на смешанном методе, включающем анкетирование, наблюдение и интервью со студентами и преподавателями. В исследовании приняли участие 15 студентов первого курса, которые в течение четырех недель использовали платформу Quizlet для изучения новой лексики. Для оценки их мотивации и отношения к геймифицированному подходу были использованы шкала мотивации к изучению языка (Ersoy & Boyacı, 2018) и опросник Quizlet (Dizon, 2016). Согласно результатам предтестового и посттестового опросов, а также *t*-критерия для парных выборок, статистически значимых различий ( $p = 0,476$ ) в уровне владения словарным запасом выявлено не было, хотя и наблюдалось незначительное улучшение. В то же время наблюдения и интервью показали, что геймификация способствует активному участию учащихся, положительно влияет на их мотивацию и делает изучение языка более интерактивным и увлекательным. Преподаватели также отметили повышение вовлеченности учащихся и улучшение атмосферы в классе.

**Ключевые слова:** геймификация, мотивация, студенты-туристы, интерактивное обучение, изучение иностранных языков