

# The Application of Gamification on Reading Ability in Primary and Middle School English Learning

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**Abstract.** Reading is a difficult skill for all students including vocabulary, understanding of the article, and so on. However, it doesn't have enough methods to solve this problem. How to make reading much easier for students to accept and how gamification is useful in this problem. This essay has been divided into three different comparisons about the effectiveness of traditional ways and gamification on the same topic. The first study is about the application of gamification to students' vocabulary learning. The research found that gamification can make pupils learn and understand vocabulary easily. The second study mainly focused on the application of gamification to students' English reading skills. This comparison shows gamification can make students have better comprehensive abilities like applying and solving problem's ability. The last one is about the difference in student engagement by using gamification and the traditional way. The results illustrate students are more willing to participate in class through gamification way. The results of the previous comparison and studies show the application of gamification is effective in students' reading learning. It was further concluded, that gamification can be applied in more areas and used in daily teaching. The overall aim of this thesis was to find the relationship between gamification and students' reading ability, and how the application of gamification can be effectively used in daily teaching, especially for younger pupils.

**Keywords:** Gamification, reading ability in English learning, primary and Middle School.

## 1. Introduction

Reading is one of the most difficult skills for today's people, according to Oxford Learning, about one in five people are struggling with reading [1]. Especially for younger students, they are hard to stay focused on one thing, like they can't read a long article in a specific period, because students cannot understand complex content or complex problems, teachers must find an acceptable way to teach them some skills and information. The class should use a simpler method for students to learn.

Students lack the patience to sit in a chair for the entire class; instead, they move around and struggle to focus in class because they don't fully understand what the teachers are saying. And "can't understand" and "lack of motivation" are significant reasons why children can't concentrate [2]. So teachers can use gaming in education because it not only contains what they are willing to teach but is also not boring, which can make all the students participate and have fun. At the same time, a new type of education method, gamification, is emerging. As Errol Scott Rivera and Claire Louise Palmer Garden said, gamification is a process through which student engagement states can be modified to support the achievement of learning outcomes [3].

Most educators believe that children's learning should be integrated into children's life and the concept of children's learning while playing can facilitate students' interest and initiative. From these propositions, gamification is suitable for students to learn a specific skill. At the same time, Gamified English lessons create a playful learning environment that aligns with the development of cognitive and psychological characteristics of young learners. Play-based activities allow children to explore the language in a non-threatening and fun manner, promoting language acquisition [4].

## **2. The Application of Gamification on Students' Vocabulary Learning**

### **2.1. Traditional Learning Methods in Vocabulary Learning**

The traditional way of learning vocabulary is just memorizing and remembering these words. Tips for remembering words from The British Council organizing your vocabulary list in a specific book, looking at the words after 24 hours, and reading these words in different articles many times. These processes are not only boring to use but also difficult for students to learn. For example, spoon-feeding education always uses these methods to learn. They want to ask students to memorize as much vocabulary as possible. It can't make students fully understand the vocabulary and it will also make pupils feel anxious and nervous when they need to learn new vocabulary. In an experiment of discovering for Further Education colleges in different areas, it has surprising results: issues are raised of 'swamping' students with texts, which there is little expectation of them reading and of 'spoon-feeding' students, because of a perception of their limitations in literacy [5]. It shows students learning by using traditional ways and learning in a spoon-feeding education environment it hard for them to have useful vocabulary and understanding ability in the future. These students are afraid to face some difficult articles, because they think they can't understand, and they don't want to try. Because of this situation, teaching methods need to have a big change to ask students to truly understand words and bravely face the article independently.

### **2.2. Gamification used in Vocabulary Learning**

Using gamification to learn vocabulary can provide more ways to make students understand words and apply vocabulary. It can be in three different categories: visual, verbal, and translation [6]. Teachers can give younger students cards or specific goods to show what is these words, teacher can also make the in-class activity with some rewards to motivate students to learn while they are playing games. This kind of activity can also be regarded as a kind of assessment of children's learning, teachers don't need to score that, and the most important thing is teachers can get rapid feedback from students. Situated learning is one of the most common ways teachers use in real-life classes. Based on the situational-game approach, it creates gamified activities that introduce new words in genuine contexts, like stories or real-life situations, which improves vocabulary learning and retention by giving meaningful opportunities to use the language [7]. There is a website called Kahoot! which can create puzzles, quizzes, and some small tests by using specific words. If the teacher makes a word puzzle like a story, students can much more easily understand what these words mean and they can also train their cooperation skills with others.

### **2.3. The Positive Role of Gamification in Vocabulary Learning**

The benefits of using gamification can be seen and therefore it can be proved that gamification has a positive role in teaching vocabulary. Teachers can use scenarios and other methods to make students learn through play. Vocabulary is not a type of subject that can be quickly mastered by students, and it is easy for students to feel uncomfortable with the traditional and ordinary way of teaching it. For subjects that are not quickly understood, gamification can be used to allow students to learn such skills in other ways. Also, Fithriani's experiment shows the result that gamification is useful in students' vocabulary learning. He used Quizlet to teach students, and nearly all students showed positive feedback.

## **3. The Application of Gamification on Students' English Reading skills**

### **3.1. Traditional Learning Methods in English Reading Skills**

When it comes to reading skills people easily think of grammar skills. Grammar problems are easy to have whether you are a native or non-native speaker. The traditional way of learning grammar consists of a few textbooks and a few exercises related to those words. For example, traditionally

when non-native speakers learn grammar, the books always provide example sentences. However, these examples do not allow us to understand what words to use in what situations, such as in, on, at, for example, and it is always difficult for non-native speakers to learn these prepositions. Because different prepositions are used in different situations, there are also special situations that are difficult for students to understand. Students learn without understanding, and they may not understand how to use these words in their daily lives until the end of the course when they will only be able to cope with the questions on the exam paper.

### **3.2. Traditional Learning Methods in English Reading Skills**

Teaching grammar under gamification can be done in several different ways. Firstly, grammar learning can be contextualized, where the teacher can create an authentic grammar environment for students to understand the relevance and application of grammar rules [8]. Secondly, research has found that teachers who give students language-related tasks to relate to the rules can improve their mastery [9]. Thirdly, a specific problem can be set for students to communicate in groups using grammar skills to enhance their critical thinking. Therefore, teachers can combine the innovative pedagogy of gamification with reading as it can provide students with more intrinsic motivation so that they can learn better from reading and get better reading skills. Students gain more intuitive knowledge from gamification, as well as other skills such as collaboration and critical thinking. When the teacher sets up a scenario for the students and asks them to solve a problem, they use the newly learned grammar in the discussion and strengthen the connection between the students and each other.

### **3.3. The Influence of Gamification on Students' English Reading Ability**

Students' intrinsic motivation to read can be well motivated. Grammar is a part of reading and the intrinsic motivation of students to read is also very important. Why students read is an important question. The intention of reading is for students to know more, to understand the reasoning, or to learn something from it. However, if they do not read voluntarily, but because the teacher forces them to read, the meaning of reading is not very obvious. In addition, meaningful gamification motivates students to read the material before class. This is because the game provides high-quality, quick feedback, which helps to reconstruct incorrect answers. At the same time, students will be emotionally motivated. To progress and succeed in the game, students must understand the key concepts in the reading material. Ultimately, it will help students understand the reading content better. So, using gamification has a positive impact on students' reading skills improvement.

## **4. The Application of Gamification on Students' engagement in class**

### **4.1. Students' Learning Engagement in Traditional English Classrooms**

Studies have shown that students are more easily distracted in a traditional classroom, so they do not participate well in class [10]. (A traditional classroom is not very interesting, such as reading.) There are many reasons why younger students are more distracted, such as the curriculum is boring and they prefer to talk to their classmates rather than listen to the teacher. Some of them think that listening to the teacher is boring and that they have to think independently, but in a traditional classroom the teacher is the presenter, and the students are the recipients, and they are not able to reflect on their ideas or to innovate. In their view, such a classroom will be slightly boring, they are not very willing to participate in the class will lead to a decline in the participation of the whole class. Ultimately, this will lead to these students not receiving enough knowledge.

### **4.2. Student Engagement in Gamified English Classrooms**

So, finding a way to change the identity of the student is a very important way to go about solving this problem. This is where gamification comes in. Gamification is a fun way of teaching and learning, so the students are involved in the whole classroom. Teachers can make students more interested in

participating in the whole lesson, whether by telling them a story letting them act out a story, or doing some activities. This is because their role is no longer that of a mere absorber, but that of a participant and an innovator, or a leader. The teacher's role in the lesson has changed from that of a lecturer to that of a facilitator. Gamification teaching also enables students to actively participate in the classroom, rather than the so-called passive participation. Passive participation in the classroom is that after the teacher has finished a part of the content, he will ask a question, and at this time he will teach the students to answer the question, and at this time the students who are named, he is not active to answer the question, so this is called a passive answer, but with the gamification teaching, they are active to participate in the whole topic, for example, in the group discussion, they are always distributing or exporting their new ideas. For example, in the group discussion, they are distributing or exporting their new ideas all the time, which means that they are actively participating in the discussion of the whole topic. The degree of their independent participation will be greatly increased.

#### **4.3. The Influence of Gamification on Students' Engagement in English Learning**

This change of identity and the various activities available make students more interested in participating in the class and learning something rather than just sitting in their seats and listening to the teacher. This is also a great way for students to get involved in the classroom, no matter what kind of student they are because the classroom can be set up with group discussions, individual activities, and other things like leaderboards. These activities are one of the essential parts of gamified teaching. Gamification can also encourage introverted students to participate in class, as these students often struggle to find an appropriate way to express themselves to their peers. There is a study that divides students into groups based on their daily participation in class to distinguish introverted and extroverted students. It made a distinction between groups that use gamification and those that do not. It yielded two results: participants who work in a gamified environment outperform the control group, and introverted students outperform the control group. It demonstrates how shy students can be encouraged to participate in class. Students come to school to learn something and give feedback to their teachers, so class participation is required. Teachers should not only focus on extroverted students but also provide opportunities for shy students to participate actively in class.

### **5. Conclusion**

From the studies and logical extrapolations, gamification is effective in the reading education of today's students. Reading education is not just teaching you how to read a book, but it is reflected in different aspects such as vocabulary like the ones listed in the previous article, reading grammar skills, and even classroom engagement is a form of reading education.

Gamification can transform a boring lesson into one that is more accessible to the students, so they become more engaged. Their degree of independent participation will also become higher, no longer like the previous simple absorber, but have a change of identity, at the same time in the learning of some boring content, gamification teaching can add some fun, for example, such as learning vocabulary, the teacher can use some of the tools on the Internet to create some games, or quizzes, which will allow them to be more active in the learning process. At the same time, it can also encourage different groups of people like introverted students to take the initiative to communicate with other students because there will be group discussions of this kind of activity. In conclusion, gamification education can be applied in real-life learning because it can make the whole learning process more effective.

However, it has to be said that gamification can have its drawbacks, if the teacher does not set up the whole game so that the game really becomes just a game, then the gamification is a failure because the purpose of gamification is to make the students learn something, not to make them play. So, it's easy for gamification education to make students focus purely on the game rather than letting them learn something, so teachers need to be more attentive to avoiding these risks when developing a gamification education program.

It is also possible to do further research on whether game talk teaching is still as useful as it is in learning languages, for example in other fields or other subjects.

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