

Practice and Reflection on Gamified Learning in Junior High School English Classrooms

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Abstract: This paper, based on the characteristics of junior high school English teaching and students' cognitive patterns, begins with the theoretical foundations and practical value of applying gamified learning. It elaborates on specific practical strategies for vocabulary, grammar, reading, and other modules, reflects on the problems encountered during the implementation of gamified learning, and proposes optimization suggestions. It is hoped that this paper can serve as a reference for innovation in junior high school English classroom teaching and the development of students' core competencies.

Key words: Gamified learning, Junior high school English, Classroom practice

1. Introduction

The *Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)* emphasize the need to create diverse teaching contexts to stimulate students' interest in learning and train their language application skills. Integrating gamified elements with teaching objectives can reduce students' learning anxiety and enhance classroom interaction. In this context, exploring the practical pathways of gamified learning in junior high school English classrooms and reflecting on its shortcomings in application hold significant practical importance for advancing English teaching reform and improving teaching quality.

I. Theoretical Foundations and Practical Value of Applying Gamified Learning in Junior High School English Classrooms

(I) Theoretical Support

The application of gamified learning aligns with several classic educational theories. Constructivist learning theory posits that knowledge is actively constructed by learners through contextual interaction. Gamified learning fosters the active construction of language knowledge systems by creating engaging teaching situations that provide platforms for autonomous exploration and cooperative communication. Second, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis suggests that a low-anxiety learning environment facilitates language acquisition. Gamified learning, through its relaxed and enjoyable format, reduces students' fear of English learning, lowers the affective filter, and enhances learning outcomes. Third, the Theory of Multiple Intelligences advocates for attention to individual student differences. Gamified learning employs various game formats to meet the needs of students with different intelligence types, thereby achieving the goal of personalized teaching^[1].

(II) Practical Value

The application of gamified learning in junior high school English classrooms holds significant practical importance. Firstly, it aims to stimulate learning interest and transform learning attitudes. Junior high school students are in adolescence, characterized by strong curiosity and liveliness. Gamified teaching aligns with their psychological traits, transforming dry

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language knowledge into fun activities, enabling students to learn through play and play while learning, thus actively participating in classroom interaction. Secondly, it strengthens knowledge application and enhances language skills. Gamified learning emphasizes context creation and practical operation, encouraging students to transform vocabulary, grammar, and other knowledge into language application abilities, thereby improving comprehensive listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills through interactive communication. Finally, it cultivates students' core competencies and promotes holistic development. Students must rely on cooperation to complete tasks during games, which can foster their sense of teamwork.

II. Practical Strategies of Gamified Learning in Junior High School English Classrooms

(I) Vocabulary Teaching: Fun Games Aid Memory Consolidation

Vocabulary is the foundation of English learning. Traditional vocabulary teaching often relies on rote memorization, which is inefficient. Gamified learning uses fun games to reinforce vocabulary memory and improve learning outcomes^[2]. Taking the teaching of *Unit 4 Eat Well* as an example, a "Healthy Vocabulary Context Matching Game" can be designed to cultivate core vocabulary related to healthy eating and exercise. The teacher prepares vocabulary cards and contextual pictures related to the unit theme in advance, and students are divided into groups. During the game, each group takes turns drawing a vocabulary card and must find the corresponding picture within a set time limit. They then need to use sentence patterns like "Keep fit needs.../Doing...is good for keeping fit" for oral expression based on the picture. Groups with accurate and fluent expressions earn points, and the group with the highest score wins. This game is closely integrated with the unit's teaching objectives, blending vocabulary learning with thematic contexts. Students can quickly master the unit's core vocabulary and actively use the learned vocabulary for simple expression, overcoming the monotony of vocabulary learning and enhancing its relevance and effectiveness.

(II) Grammar Teaching: Contextual Games Break Through Comprehension Difficulties

Grammar knowledge is highly logical and abstract, making it a challenging aspect of junior high school English teaching. Gamified learning allows students to learn and use grammar through practice in created contexts. Using 《Unit 4 Eat Well》 as an example, a "Diet Scenario Grammar Application Context Game" can be designed based on the unit's healthy eating theme to help students master the usage of the simple present tense. The teacher prepares scene cards, food vocabulary cards, and core verb cards related to the unit theme in advance. Students are divided into groups. During the game, each group draws one time/scene card and two to three food/verb cards. They must create three to five coherent sentences using the simple present tense, themed around daily dietary habits, within a set time limit. For example: "I usually have eggs and milk for breakfast." "She likes eating vegetables for lunch." Each group selects a representative to present their creation. The teacher scores based on grammatical accuracy, thematic relevance, and language fluency, selecting the best group. This game closely links grammar learning with the unit's thematic context, allowing students to directly experience the use of the simple present tense in near-authentic dietary scenarios, thereby moving away from the abstract nature of grammar learning.

(III) Reading Teaching: Task-Based Games Enhance Comprehension Skills

The essence of reading instruction is to cultivate students' text comprehension and information extraction abilities. Gamified learning can utilize task-driven games to improve reading efficiency^[3]. For example, a "Reading Scavenger Hunt" game can be conducted. The teacher prepares a list of questions related to the reading text in advance. After reading, students search for the answers. The group that completes the task most quickly and accurately receives a reward. This game encourages students to focus on key information in the text, improving reading attention. After reading a short story, students can be grouped to collaboratively write a continuation of the ending and share it, fostering text comprehension and creative expression skills. Additionally, role-playing games can be implemented where students, in groups, portray characters from the text and use dialogue to enact the content. This deepens their understanding of the text's main ideas and character emotions in practice while simultaneously enhancing oral expression skills.

(IV) Speaking Teaching: Interactive Games Strengthen Expression and Application

The focus of speaking instruction is to create language expression opportunities for students, breaking the dilemma of

"dumb English." Gamified learning can utilize interactive games to create expression contexts, thereby improving students' oral proficiency. Taking 《Unit 6: Rain or Shine》 as an example, a Weather Scenario Dialogue Creation Game can be designed to exercise students' ability to use weather-related vocabulary and communicative sentence patterns in authentic language environments. The teacher prepares weather scenario cards, weather vocabulary cards, and core communicative sentence pattern prompt cards in advance. Students are divided into several groups. Each group draws one weather scenario card and, based on the unit's core vocabulary and sentence pattern prompts, creates a 2-3 minute situational dialogue within a set time limit. The dialogue should include weather descriptions, travel suggestions, or activity arrangements. Each group selects a representative to perform the scene. The teacher scores based on language accuracy, fluency of expression, thematic relevance, and teamwork, ultimately selecting the "Best Performance Group." This game closely follows the unit theme, creating an authentic context for oral expression. It not only consolidates students' weather-related vocabulary and sentence patterns but also motivates them to speak actively, improving oral communication skills through interactive performance and addressing the "dumb English" issue.

III. Reflection on the Application of Gamified Learning in Junior High School English Classrooms

(I) Problems in the Application Process

Despite the evident advantages of gamified learning in junior high school English classrooms, several challenges exist in practical application. First, game design sometimes deviates from teaching objectives. Some teachers overemphasize the fun aspect of games, neglecting the integration of teaching content. This leads to a disconnect between the game and instruction, where students participate enthusiastically but fail to achieve effective knowledge acquisition. Second, classroom management can be difficult. Junior high school students often have limited self-control, which can easily lead to disorder during games. Teachers may spend considerable time maintaining order, affecting teaching progress. Third, student participation is often uneven. Introverted students or those with weaker foundations may lack motivation to participate actively, hindering self-expression, while outgoing students or those with stronger foundations may dominate, resulting in a polarization of learning outcomes.

(II) Optimization Suggestions

To address the above issues, improvements in the application of gamified learning are needed in the following areas. First, accurately define teaching objectives and optimize game design. Game design should revolve around key and challenging teaching points, deeply integrating game formats with instructional content. This ensures students learn and consolidate knowledge through the games, avoiding the pitfall of "gaming for gaming's sake." Second, establish clear game rules and strengthen classroom management. Before starting a game, teachers should clearly explain the rules, participation requirements, and evaluation criteria. Grouping should be reasonable, and group leaders can be selected to assist with management, ensuring the game proceeds in an orderly manner. Finally, pay attention to individual differences to achieve full participation. Design tiered game tasks based on students' foundational levels, providing an appropriate challenge for each student. Offer more encouragement and guidance to introverted students, fostering an inclusive classroom atmosphere.

IV. Conclusion

Gamified learning injects new vitality into junior high school English classroom teaching. It can effectively stimulate students' interest in learning and improve teaching quality, aligning with the requirements of core competency-oriented teaching reform. It is essential to scientifically organize game activities based on teaching objectives and student realities, reasonably control the teaching pace, refine evaluation methods, and avoid the problems that may arise during games. In the future, continued exploration of the integration pathways between gamified learning and English teaching is necessary. Updating game formats through multimedia technology, project-based learning, and other means will enable gamified learning to genuinely contribute to the cultivation of students' language abilities and the development of core competencies, thereby promoting the continuous improvement of junior high school English teaching quality.

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