

*Gamification: A Strategy Redefining Foreign Languages Teaching at Algerian Universities: The MOODLE Platform as a Support*

التلعيب: إستراتيجية تعيد النظر في تدريس اللغات الأجنبية في  
الجامعة الجزائرية من خلال منصة مودل

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**Abstract:**

Gamification has rapidly emerged as an innovative and essential pedagogical tool in foreign language teaching over the past decade. By examining the viewpoints of educators and learners, particularly within the university context, we investigate the concrete impact of gamification on language skill development, learner motivation, and active participation in the learning process.

The aim of this scholarly article is to comprehensively explore this teaching method, which has garnered increasing interest from researchers and practitioners, particularly in the field of foreign languages, utilizing the possibilities provided by the MOODLE platform.

**Keywords:** Gamification; teaching; pedagogy; foreign language; MOODLE platform.

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ملخص:

ظهر التلعيب بوصفه أداة تعليمية مبتكرة في تعليم اللغات الأجنبية خلال العقد الأخير. من خلال استكشاف وجهات نظر المعلمين والمتعلمين المختلفة، لاسيما في الوسط الجامعي، سنقوم بدراسة تأثيرات استراتيجية التلعيب في اكتساب المهارات اللغوية، وتعزيز الدافعية لدى المتعلمين ومشاركتهم بالنشطة في عملية التعلم.

يهدف هذا المقال العلمي إلى تقديم عرض شامل لهذه الطريقة التعليمية الحديثة التي تثير اهتمام الباحثين والممارسين بشكل متزايد، خاصة في مجال اللغات الأجنبية، لاسيما من خلال منصة مودل.

**كلمات مفتاحية:** التلعيب، التعليم، البيداغوجيا، اللغة الأجنبية، منصة مودل.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The acquisition of a foreign language is often perceived as a daunting and tedious task. School textbooks, repetitive exercises, and lengthy grammar sessions can quickly discourage learners. Hence, numerous educators are currently striving to implement new, captivating, and stimulating teaching methodologies. Among these innovative approaches, gamification emerges as one of the most promising.

Gamification involves leveraging playful techniques and game mechanics to enhance learner motivation and accelerate progress. This teaching method aims to make learning more

enjoyable and interactive by offering challenges, rewards, and increasing levels of difficulty. It can take various forms, ranging from mobile applications to role-playing games and online quizzes.

This article will provide a comprehensive understanding of gamification at the university level, thereby offering insights into the advantages and limitations of this innovative teaching method. Moreover, we will investigate how MOODLE platform can enhance foreign language learning, through all the tools offered by this learning platform, which experienced its moment of glory in Algerian universities during the Corona virus pandemic. Our aspiration is to assist educators in making informed decisions regarding the implementation of this approach to improve their students' learning experiences while sparking broader reflections on contemporary pedagogical challenges.

## **2. Understanding Gamification**

### **2.1 Definition of Gamification**

The term 'gamification' encompasses various definitions, and from these, we have identified the most relevant. According to Werbach, gamification involves employing elements from games and game design techniques in non-gaming contexts (2012). In the realm of education, gamification aims to transform learning activities into more engaging, motivating, and interactive experiences. This approach draws upon game design principles to captivate learners' attention and encourage their active involvement in the learning process.

The genesis of the term "gamification" can be traced back to its origins within the digital media sector. The first documents uses dates back to 2008, but gamification entered widespread adoption in the second half of 2010 (Deterding et al., 2011, p.1). For Euzebey, the emergence of gamification reflects professionals' inclination to draw inspiration from the realm of video games in non-playful contexts, aiming to motivate individuals and encourage the adoption of novel practices. (2016, p3).

Before delving further into the topic and to be honest, it must be acknowledged that the concept of gamification has its critics, among them Guy Boulet who wrote an article titled « Gamification is Simply Bells and Wistles » and who believes that gamification attracts your attention at first but after a while it becomes annoying and detracts you from the real objective. (Boulet, 2016)

## **2.2 Key concepts of Gamification**

**2.2.1 Motivation:** It is widely acknowledged that the success of learning through gamification largely depends on the learner's level of motivation. As Camilla Dahlstrom points out, intrinsic motivation is a psychological outcome and cannot be inferred from performance gains alone (2017, p.6). When learners are intrinsically motivated by the enjoyment and engagement inherent in game elements, they tend to be more invested and engaged in the learning process. By incorporating playful elements such as interesting challenges, captivating quests, or immersive narratives, learners are encouraged to become more involved in their learning.

**2.2.2 Feedback and rewards:** Games typically provide immediate feedback and rewards, allowing players to quickly gauge their progress and be rewarded for their efforts. In the context of gamification in foreign language, this instant feedback can be used to positively reinforce learners' language skills.

**2.2.3 Active and experiential learning:** Gamification facilitates active and experiential learning, positioning learners at the core of the knowledge acquisition process. Through problem-solving, decision-making, and active engagement in playful activities, learners can cultivate a practical and meaningful comprehension of the foreign language.

### **3. Gamification: A Valuable Tool for eLearning Enhancement**

In the ever-evolving realm of education, the convergence of technology and pedagogy has ushered in a notable transformation in our approach to learning and skill enhancement. Indeed, gamification exhibits multifaceted facets and exerts a profound influence on the domain of eLearning. We align with Arnold's viewpoint, which contends that the most logical starting point for the gamification of education is in the context of online course delivery. (2014) In the same vein, in an article published a decade ago and entitled « Gamification: Using Game Mechanics to Enhance eLearning », Rick Raymer explains how gamification can be beneficial for eLearning. (2011)

In an educational setting, educators can introduce elements of enjoyment to prevent the encroachment of monotony. Implementing gamification techniques can notably assist

students in cultivating a sense of involvement and contentment as they diligently strive for their objectives. In a study conducted by Darina Dicheva, it was determined that the effective classroom adoption of gamification implies both certain technological infrastructure coupled with an appropriate instructional framework. (2015, p.83) The delayed integration of gamification as an instructional tool within Algerian universities, especially in specific disciplines, can be partly ascribed to the extensive utilization of technology. Furthermore, the adequacy of computer and advanced technological resources exhibited shortcomings during the era of remote learning in Algerian universities amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **4. Gamification: A Dynamic Approach to Foreign Language Teaching**

According to Al-Dosakee, the purpose of implementing the gamification concept in education is to maximize learners's motivation and engagement. (2021, p.561) Moreover, the integration of gamification in teaching foreign languages offers a wide range of playful approaches and examples to make foreign language learning more captivating and interactive.

To introduce the main key gamification approaches, we outline the elements that we have experimented and validated over the course of two years in our French as a Foreign Language class designed for second-year undergraduate students at the Department of Arabic Language and Literature of Mustapha Stambouli University in Mascara.

## **4.1 Role-playing and Simulations**

As aptly defined by Nickerson, the power of the role play consists in placing oneself in another's shoes. (2007) Moreover, role-playing and simulations allow learners to assume roles and immerse themselves in realistic scenarios where they must communicate in a foreign language to accomplish specific tasks. These playful activities foster oral expression, contextual comprehension, and decision-making in an immersive environment. In a genre of exercises more or less similar, we find the dialogues, which offer students, according to Berard, more realistic scenarios and encourage greater initiative. (1991, p. 14) Among the role-playing scenarios we introduced to our students, several have achieved notable success among the majority. These scenarios include:

### **Example 1 : French Restaurant**

Students are divided into groups, with each group representing a French restaurant. They are tasked with creating a menu, practicing order-taking in French, and engaging with customers (portrayed by fellow learners) to receive orders, serve meals, and manage payments.

### **Example 2 : Guided Tour**

Students must step into the shoes of a tour guide and present French-speaking tourist sites to other learners. They can use visual aids such as photos or videos to illustrate their speeches and encourage interaction between guides and "tourists" to ask questions in French.

## **4.2 Escape Rooms and Linguistic Puzzles**

Escape rooms seamlessly incorporate elements such as challenges, problem-solving, time constraints, and teamwork, all of which constitute pivotal components of gamification. Students are inherently motivated to immerse themselves in puzzles, tasks, and challenges within these environments, propelled by their aspirations for achievement and competition. In the context of linguistic escape games, learners adeptly solve linguistic puzzles such as crosswords and rebuses to amass clues for their escape, thereby fostering an active comprehension of the French language, along with the practical application of vocabulary and grammar. Meanwhile, within cultural enigmas, participants confront challenges intricately connected to French culture, necessitating their adeptness in deciphering proverbs and idiomatic expressions, thus unmistakably showcasing their adeptness in both linguistic and cultural domains.

## **4.3 Interactive Applications and Platforms**

Leveraging interactive applications and platforms represents a technologically advanced approach to enhance the acquisition of foreign language. This approach offers a diverse range of activities and delivers immediate feedback to facilitate learners' progress. For instance, in the context of a vocabulary game application, learners participate in engaging activities such as quizzes and memory games to solidify their knowledge of foreign language vocabulary. Moreover, virtual reality learning platforms allow learners to immerse themselves in simulated foreign environments, enabling them to engage in everyday conversations at a café or navigate through a foreign city while



completing linguistic challenges. These methods create a dynamic and immersive learning experience.

## **5. Advantages and Benefits of Gamification in Education**

Here are the main advantages of gamification that we have personally identified in our aforementioned French as a Foreign Language (FLE) courses.

**-Teacher-Student Interaction :** Students can brainstorm possible solutions in Chat or Discussion forums, then present their alternate routes via the Workshop module, which allows for peer assessment. Thus learners will compare and contrast their solution and select the best one based on the group discussion. (Antonenko, p.3)

**-Instant Feedback for Enhanced Self-Assessment:** Gamification can provide immediate feedback, which can help students identify their strengths and weaknesses. (Dogan, 2023, p6)

**-Improving Language Proficiency :** Through the use of gamification, we can enhance the quality of ELT\* and improve students' language proficiency. (Dogan, 2023, p6)

**- Collaborative Learning:** Gamification can foster collaborative learning by encouraging learners to work together to achieve common goals. This strengthens their teamwork and ability to communicate in French authentically.

**-Reinforcement of Motivation and Engagement:** Gamification captivates learners' attention by converting the process of

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\* ELT stands for "English Language Teaching," which refers to the teaching and learning of the English language, particularly as a foreign or second language.

learning into an enjoyable and interactive experience. This, in turn, stimulates their intrinsic motivation to acquire foreign languages and fosters active engagement in the provided activities.

- **Skill Development:** Through the integration of games and playful activities, gamification facilitates the development of language skills among learners in an enjoyable and efficacious manner. This approach enables them to enhance their oral and written comprehension, expand their vocabulary, and refine their grammar while deriving enjoyment from the process.

- **Positive Effects on Student Personality:** In a study conducted by a team of researchers and published on 2020 on the relationship between gamified teaching and students' psychological traits, the researchers arrived at the conclusion that a change in the behavior of the gamified group resulted in a significant improvement in the accuracy of students with personality traits characterized by low agreeableness, low openness, and introversion. (Smirderle et al., 2020)

## **6. Limitations of Gamification**

Throughout this study, we have discerned that the utilization of gamification in foreign language instruction presents myriad prospects for enriching the learning encounter. Never theless, to optimally harness its potential, it becomes imperative to systematically confront the challenges and deliberate upon the constraints and limitations detailed hereafter.

-**Cognitive Overload:** Excessive gamification elements can overwhelm learners, distracting them from language acquisition. For instance, offering too many rewards, mini-games, and

challenges simultaneously can complicate the learning experience.

**-Learning Assessment:** Assessing linguistic skills acquired through gamification is challenging. Educators must devise evaluation systems that incorporate game mechanics without compromising fairness. For example, integrating quests and linguistic challenges into assessments can be tricky but is essential.

**-Long-term Motivation:** Sustaining learners' motivation over time is difficult. Repetitive game mechanics can become predictable and reduce engagement. Educators must consistently innovate to keep learners interested and prevent motivation from waning.

## **7. Exploring the Potential of Gamification with Moodle**

In this context, we aim to ascertain the extent to which the Moodle platform contributes to gamified learning and explore the means by which this synergy unfolds, as well as its potential impact. We intend to unravel the transformative possibilities that arise when Moodle's robust eLearning platform converges with the engaging dynamics of gamification.

### **7.1 Understanding Moodle**

During the academic vacation prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is undeniable that the term "MOODLE" became one of the most frequently used terms in Algerian universities. Many might mistake it for a word, when in fact, it is an acronym "**Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment,**" is an open-source learning management system (LMS) widely

recognized for its versatility and adaptability in supporting online education. MOODLE has been developed by Martin Dougiamas, a PhD student in Computer Science and Education at Curtin University of Technology, Australia. (Antonenko, p.2) in the early 2000s. It has been designed to be compatible, flexible and easy to modify. (Dougiamas, 2004) Over the years, it has evolved into a robust eLearning ecosystem, offering a range of tools and resources for educators to create, manage, and deliver online courses effectively.

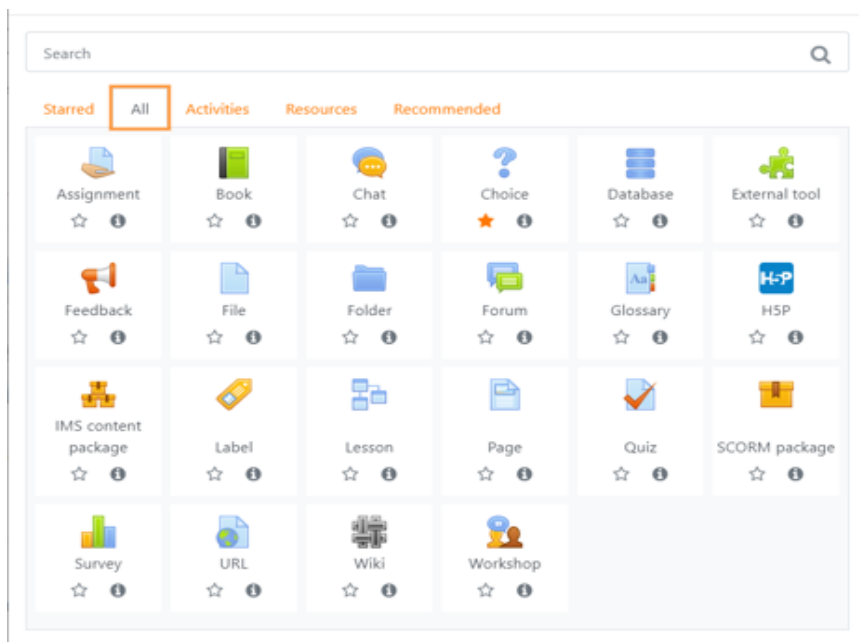
## **7.2 Exploring the Impact of MOODLE and Gamification**

Users have the capability to establish discussion forums, interactive boards, and schedule events within the Moodle platform. Furthermore, Moodle offers a diverse array of utilities to support content development. As an example, individuals can explore a wide selection of plugins and third-party applications to extend the features and capabilities available for their courses.

Users have the capability to generate forums, discussion boards, and calendar events within Moodle. Furthermore, this platform offers a diverse array of tools to facilitate content creation. For instance, users can access a multitude of plugins and third-party applications to augment the features and functionality of their courses. MOODLE also supports HRP\* resources, allowing you to easily create interactive content such as quizzes, polls, and presentations (Dogan, 2023, p75) as shown in the figure appearing below.

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\* HRP: Human Resource Planning.



**Table 1** : The activity selector : MOODLE

The illustrations and exercises presented in the preceding figure underscore the wide-ranging influence of MOODLE and gamification on education, encompassing aspects such as engagement, educational outcomes, user satisfaction, and skill enhancement. Within the MOODLE platform, functionalities such as quizzes, interactive activities, and personalized learning pathways augment the educational experience, rendering it more enjoyable and intellectually stimulating, consequently leading to enhanced knowledge retention and comprehension. Moreover, MOODLE equips educators with efficient instruments for monitoring learner advancement and evaluating performance through analytical tools and tracking features.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

This article explores the intricacies of integrating gamification into language education, addressing significant challenges such as accommodating diverse linguistic proficiency levels, managing cognitive overload, devising meaningful assessment strategies, and sustaining long-term learner motivation. Additionally, it examines limitations related to the predictability of gamified activities and their potential negative impact on learner engagement. To fully unlock gamification's potential in foreign language instruction, educators need to cultivate creativity and adaptability by seamlessly integrating engaging, proficiency-targeted experiences. This approach fosters immersive learning environments, transforming the language acquisition process into an enjoyable and interactive journey. Gamification redefines education, injecting it with innovation and enthusiasm, ultimately propelling language proficiency to unprecedented levels.

Before concluding, it's worth noting a noteworthy trend in gamification: the majority of scholars primarily hail from computer engineering and software development backgrounds. While this expertise is invaluable in specific technical contexts, the formation of collaborative partnerships between language educators and computer science professionals is paramount, particularly in foreign language modules. Such collaborations are essential for the development of exceptional gamification activities that cater to the unique needs of language learners.

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