IMPROVING LEARNERS' ENGAGEMENT USING DIGITAL GAME-BASED PLATFORMS FOR EFL STUDENTS IN UZBEKISTAN CONTEXT.

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ABSTRACT

These days, digital technologies are widely used in teaching foreign language, especially in Uzbek context, it is English. Using different platforms During teaching process, it's giving chance and opportunities for interactive, learner-centered and flexible instruction. The remaining technology platforms and apps for learning language. This article will analyze the use of digital game-based learning, DGBL, platforms such as Kahoot, Quizziz, Wordwall and similar tools, which are attracted attention widely in teaching English in Uzbekistan context. The first reason, which make these platforms effective, is immediate feedback, competition, interaction and game-like challenges. However, pedagogical value of these platforms is very high, as they are resource of entertainment. The correct use of DGBL requires teachers to combine both game mechanics and language learning objectives. The target study will investigate how digital game-based platforms can improve learners' engagement in EFL classrooms in Uzbekistan. The aim of my study is to examine learners' behavioral, emotional and cognitive engagement level during game-based English lessons and find out learners' changes when they are given opportunity to use their phones during the lesson and while they are banned to use phones during the lesson. Such platforms give chance to involve into active participation of 30-40 students in the classroom simultaneously. Data can be provided by the source or teacher or any person can create specific game or quiz according to the topic of the lesson. This gives chance to use the platforms and game-based learning in the prestige, post-stage or in main stages of the lesson. In the classroom using these tools, students can make observations, short achievement tasks or semi-structured student interviews. This study will contribute to the correctness of the implications of game-based learning into the lesson and focus on practical recommendations for teachers seeking to increase meaningful learner participation without allowing entertainment to replace language learning. Keywords: digital game-based learning, EFL learner engagement, gamification, English language teaching Uzbekistan, digital platforms.

Introduction

Digital tools are available for everyone, both in free and paid forms. These technologies created new possibilities for learning language, especially English, because IT specialists are providing a wide range of platforms and apps to learn English, which is a world language. Nowadays we are using these platforms in our Uzbek classrooms for teaching EFL learners. However, students may still experience lessons that heavily rely on explanation, teachers' guidance and textbook exercises. Although these approaches can support learners' development, however, they cannot replace fully teachers' role in the learning process. On the other hand, learners' engagement and motivation is crucial in teaching process, because it is a source for behavioral, emotional and cognitive dimensions and further improvements in learners language level (Fredricks et al., 2004). This is for. I believe that modern English classroom should provide engagement tools in the simultaneously with books, exercises, and teachers' explanation. Digital sources represent responses, challenges, questions, and can be used for engagement or to revise previous lessons. However, they are not used for explanations or introduction for new topic. DBGBL is

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widely used, especially in problem-solving topics in the classroom, which gives immediate feedback, helps to improve students' decision-making process, and these platforms can teach students to work in groups and maintain team main goal.

Role of DGBL helps to revised previously seen, will repeat language practice and contextualize learning process. Integrating accurate use of games will create competitive environment amongst students, which is the main atmosphere for improvement of each student. Plus et al. (2015) argued that game-based learning can support cognitive, behavior, affective and sociocultural engagement of individual learners. Platforms such as Kahoot, Quizizz or Wordwall are designed especially for teachers, because they can use these platforms without recreating complex educational games from beginning. Teachers may only search for the topic of the lesson, and the platform automatically will give alternatives for games to play to practice the target topic. The latest research suggested that digital game-based learning can increase motivation of students. A systematic use of such platforms may give immediate results. Researchers also started writing reviews about conducting lessons integrating digital tools from 2017. For example, Kakhya, Sultanyari and Santos et al. (2024) reported that positive effect of game-based learning helps students to increase motivation, vocabulary, learning and also skills. While Seifa et al. (2024) identified the versatilization benefits of game-based learning in teaching language, especially in the Pakistan context, which has limited exposure for English because of geographical location. However, there is an issue of integrating over gamification into the lesson. Some young teachers are not able to identify the balance between the amount of time in the lesson that should be divided for the game and the correct part of the lesson where a student should listen to teacher's explanations. Recent Uzbek focus, the research has examined gamification as a motivational tool, including the use of platforms such as Kahoot and Quizlet, but they need control all the time, because students will enter these platforms on their phones, which is easy to watch another unimportant or unnecessary to the lesson subjects.

The proposed study therefore approaches digital game-based learning not simply as a way of making English lessons more enjoyable but as a pedagogical approach that can potentially strengthen behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. By examining students' classroom participation, perceptions, language performance, and experiences, the study seeks to identify conditions under which digital game-based platforms can support meaningful EFL learning.

For Uzbek EFL teachers, the central implication is that technology should serve pedagogy rather than replace it. A successful digital game-based lesson is not necessarily the lesson in which students have the most fun or achieve the highest scores. Rather, it is a lesson in which game elements encourage learners to pay attention, make an effort, communicate, receive feedback, and think more deeply about English. In this sense, digital game-based platforms can become more than technological additions to the classroom: they can function as tools for creating active, participatory, and learner-centered EFL environments.

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