THE BENEFITS OF GAMIFICATION IN THE ENGLISH LEARNING CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at displaying the results of reviewing research-based articles about gamification in the context of learning English. The concept of games has changed from a self-entertainment into an edutainment through adjustments and modifications. This notion is adapted by teachers in big countries such as Poland, China, and the US to enhance their English class with surprisingly ensuing positive results (Rothwell & Shaffer, 2019). These results have triggered the writer to find out more about the benefits of gamification and to conduct qualitative research through the review process. The writer collected and analyzed thirteen relevant articles from journals and websites. The results indicated that gamification indeed brought benefits to students. The foremost results included motivation improvement, promoting positive attitudes and better performances, fostering 21st-century skills and better cognitive achievements, encouraging social interaction and independencies, and improving competitiveness among students during the learning process.

Key Words: English learning; gamification; teaching

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memaparkan hasil dari telaah artikel berbasis riset tentang gamifikasi pada konteks pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris. Konsep permainan telah berubah dari hiburan mandiri menjadi edutainment melalui penyesuaian dan modifikasi. Konsep ini, terutama permainan online, diadaptasi oleh para guru di negara-negara besar seperti Polandia, China, dan US untuk meningkatkan aktifitas kelas Bahasa Inggris mereka dengan yang hasil positif yang mengejutkan (Rothwell & Shaffer, 2019). Hasil ini menjadi motivasi penulis untuk menggali lebih dalam tentang manfaat gamifikasi dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris sehingga penulis melakukan penelitian kualitatif melalui proses review. Penulis telah mengumpulkan dan menganalisa tiga belas artikel yang relevan dari jurnal dan situs web. Hasil analisa menunjukkan bahwa gamifikasi memang bermanfaat bagi siswa. Manfaat yang paling utama yaitu meningkatkan motivasi dan penampilan yang baik, mengembangkan keterampilan Abad 21, mendorong interaksi social dan kebebasan, serta meningkatkan daya saing antar siswa selama pembelajaran.

Kata Kunci: Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris; gamifikasi; pengajaran

INTRODUCTION

Today's learners are very close to technology. They even are labeled as digital natives because they get along very well and cannot be separated from it (Kriyakova, Yordanova, & Angelova, 2014). The product of technology that is most frequently used by students is games. One study conducted by Basler & Dostal (2015) mentioned that students at the age of teenagers spent averagely eight to ten hours in a day playing games, either online or offline. It can be learned from the study that there is a close relationship between students and the games that they spent most of their days playing them. This would bring great effects on the aspects of their lives, not to exclude their school lives. If teachers are not aware of this, there will be a wide gap that can cause conflicts between teachers and students in learning. One of the ways to bridge this phenomenon is that the teachers have to embrace games in the learning process, and implementing gamification is the most promising one.

In the educational world, educators consider gamification as a new method. Nevertheless, principally, it was introduced firstly in 2002 and was applied in 2005 by Bunchball Company to motivate its employees to work more passionately and effectively though designing some gamified products, namely Dunder Mifflin Infinity in and Chore Wars (Christians, 2018). The results were convincing that then in 2009, the company developed Quest to Learn, a game to gamify learning environment for sixth graders with the purpose to see if the product could foster the children's skill in preserving information. From this to these days, gamification has now developed, researched, reviewed, and implemented more often in academic areas.

Experts define gamification as an innovation in learning which integrates the game features to non-game environments (Deterding, Khaled, Nacke, & Dixon, 2011; Kriyakova, Yordanova, & Angelova, 2014; Healey, 2018). Gamification employs a well-designed digital and non-digital games to stimulate learners' language, which includes elements of games or play into the learning environment to boost engagement and participation (Maloney, 2019). The nature of gamification itself is expected to increase the students' motivation and commitment, as well as to bring positive and competitive behavior to them (Marczewski, 2013).

It refers and is in line with what has been suggested by Healey (2018) in her report that gamification is designed initially based on psychological perspectives. She further mentioned

that gamification had intrinsic and extrinsic motivation delineated the desire to act, such as learning content, as well as to respond or to expect for specific rewards which came from self – determination theory (SDT) proposed by Ryan and Deci in 1985 (2018, p. 5). In SDT viewpoint, motivation in its three basic needs, so-called (1) autonomy or the feeling of being in control, (2) competence or the sense of building skills and developing mastery, and (3) relatedness or connection to others, can lead motivated people to have more interest, excitement, and confidence manifesting to enhanced performance, persistence, and creativity which are needed by learners (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Healey, 2018).

In its implementation, gamification or game-based learning adapts game elements to engage learners to take part in learning to build learners' problem-solving skills (Kapp, 2012). In countries with high educational rank, such as Ukraine, Poland, US, China, and Netherland, gamification has been familiarized and used by teachers, including English teachers that showed substantial results (Glowacki, Kriukova, & Avshenyuk, 2018; Rothwell & Shaffer, 2019; Antonaci, Klemke, & Specht, 2019). In Indonesian contexts, gamification is started to get familiarized, as well, despite its limited researches. Studies done by YanFi,

Udjaja, & Sari (2017) and Mufidah (2016) are evidence. Although these two pieces of research had different foci and were conducted to or indifferent research subjects, the results similarly emphasized that the implementation of gamification was a success in both enhancing learners' interests and motivation in learning, as well as promoting their learning achievements. Moreover, the most surprising result from these researches was gamification did motivate low-achiever learners that they would take part in learning activities actively without hesitation, even in speaking (Mufidah, 2016; YanFi, Udjaja, & Sari, 2017).

There is one similar study conducted by Dehghanzadeh et al. (2019) entitled Using Gamification to Support Learning English as A Second Language: A Systematic Review. This study was a review of 22 articles about gamification in the ESL context. The results of the study mainly talked about the researches of gamification implementation in ESL, including methodologies employed, types of game applications most used by teachers, and discussion about the impacts of gamifications on students' achievements. This study and the writer's research are similar in terms of its methodology that the writer also employed a reviewing technique in gathering and analyzing the most

relevant articles. However, there is a respective gap between the writer's research and Dehghanzadeh's et al. that is the focus of the study. The writer in this research was concerned more about finding out what kinds of benefits that could be obtained by the students after the English teachers implemented gamification in the class.

Following the aforementioned background, aimed at displaying and describing the benefits of gamification, the writer would present the analysis results focusing on the benefits of gamification discussed by the most relevant articles gathered. The writer expects that the results of the study can be helpful to accommodate English teachers who are not familiar with or curious about gamification. Also, the study is expected to give broader viewpoints of other possible approaches to conventional teachers to be more innovative and creative to promote their students' learning.

METHOD

Since this paper's purpose is to present the result of analyzing the content of the articles, a qualitative methodology is employed in which document analysis was used in gathering the intended data. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis was a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents - both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material as a means of examination and interpretation of the data to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge. There are thirteen most relevant articles in total, ranging from 2015 to 2019. In details, the writer conducted three steps of reviewing as being suggested by Bowen (2009), which include:

Selecting the related articles.

This is the first step in which the researcher selected articles about gamification in the English learning context from electronic sources (journals and websites) ranging from 2015 – 2019. There are thirteen articles selected: six from journals namely (1) Digital Education Review Journal in 2015, (2) International Journal of Computer Science and Mobile Computing in 2018, (3) Pertanika Journal of Social Science and Humanities in 2018, (4) British Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences in 2018, (5) Journal of Information Technology Education: Research in 2019, and (6) Computer Assisted Language Learning Journal in 2019; one thesis from university repository that is Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya Repository in 2016; four articles from proceedings namely (1)

CELC Symposium in 2016, (2) Proceedings of the IVUS International Conference on Information Technology in 2018, (3) International Conference on Computer and Information Sciences (ICCIS) inn 2019, and (4) Proceeding of 1st Conference of English Language and Literature (CELL) in 2019; and two articles from teachers' websites namely (1) Medium in 2017, and (2) English for Asia – TESOL in 2019.

Analyzing the content

In this step, the writer reviewed the contents of the articles. The writer analyzed the contents through comparison and interpretation. The writer highlighted how gamification was implemented in each article, its benefits to improve English skills and students' profiles, and its drawbacks (if any) by highlighting the contents.

Communicating the results

This is the last step of the review. Here the writer wrote the results of the article review in the form of a table and description, which can be seen in the finding and discussion section of this paper.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section presents and elaborates on the focus of the study, which congregates the benefits of gamification implemented in the English learning context obtained from journals and websites. The details are presented in the following explanations:

Using Gamification to Enhance Second Language Learning

This is a paper published in the Digital Education Review Journal in 2015 by Jorge Francisco Figueroa Flores. This paper is a review of using gamification in the ESL context. The paper presents the implementation of six products or games in motivating and promoting learners to learn a second language, namely Duolingo, Class Dojo, Edmodo, Zondle Socrative, and Brainscape. The paper also displays the results of reviewing several pieces of research related to the implementation of gamification in ESL in which one of them bravely to claim that students' grades improved 9%, and the number of students who failed the course decreased by 16%. Last but not least, it discusses motivational implications between gamification and ESL from psychological perspectives. The writer stated that learners would get motivated as the teachers implemented gamification in their teaching-learning that could be seen holistically in its trait involving

behavioristic learning, cognitive, self – determination, interest, and emotion.

The Effect of Gamification on English Language Anxiety and Grammar Achievement

This paper is written by Nuria Mufidah, published in the Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya Repository in 2016. This is a thesis that focuses on finding out whether Digital Game-Based Learning would reduce foreign language anxiety and promote grammar achievement amongst students of STIKES Surabaya who were preparing for an English proficiency test. Significantly, the result of the research indicated that gamified learning brought positive impacts to the learners. The researcher mentioned that the gamified learning activities that she used were effective in promoting students' grammar achievements, as well as to enhance students' engagement in the preparation class. Their anxiety was seemingly reduced based on the five-points of foreign language anxiety suggested by Young.

Use of Gamification in Vocabulary Learning: A Case Study in Macau

This article was written by Sze Lui Lam, presented and published in the CELC Symposium in 2016. This article focused on finding out the use of Web 2.0 games, namely Fling the Teacher and Jeopardy, in vocabulary learning amongst students in a tertiary institution in Macau. The results indicated that students preferred both of these games because they were fun and exciting. Students said that the games could facilitate their vocabulary retention. The results of this study had shown that gamification could help build up students' competitive spirits and can increase their cognitive and social growth. Moreover, gamification implementation improved students' attitudes towards language learning. It confirmed the appropriateness of gamification was believed to enhance learning.

Gamified EFL Instruction: An Overview of the Most Recent Research Trends

This paper, written by Vilma Mikašytė, was presented and published in Proceedings of the IVUS International Conference on Information Technology (IVUS 2018) in Kaunas, Lithuania, on April 27, 2018. This article provided an overview of six gamified learning environments, namely The Conference Interpreter, Near East University Children's Story Teller (NEUCST), Problem-based English listening game, Task-based learning AR educational game and Self-directed learning AR educational game, Happy English Learning System,

OpenSimulator Project-CLILiOP (Content and Language Integrated Learning in Opensimulator Project) which were developed for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) published in top scientific journals in 2017. The results revealed that students who played those educational games obtained significantly better results than those who received conventional EFL instruction. In gamified learning, the number of instruction was reduced; and there was more emphasis on self-regulated learning. The result was the six educational games that conformed with the student-centered educational paradigm had been successfully empowering learners to control their learning process. It also had improved 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, innovation, media literacy, ICT literacy, flexibility, initiative, and self-direction.

Development of a Gamification Based English Vocabulary Mobile Learning System

This paper is written by Olutayo Boyinbode, published in the International Journal of Computer Science and Mobile Computing (IJCSMC Journal) in 2018. This paper was presenting the result of the English performance amongst undergraduate students of Nigeria, especially their vocabulary mastery, improved after

gamification was applied. The overall result indicated that the use of Gamification based English Vocabulary learning technique had successfully motivated and encouraged learners to continue learning English vocabularies effectively. In details, the students responded to "agree" response to all the positive statements, and "disagree" to the weaknesses or negative comments. From the data, it can be learned that the games had increased students' performances in all aspects, particularly in the elements of encouraging students to interact and communicate with an average of 9.57; and motivating environment with the proportion of 9.1. These numbers proved that gamified learning was compelling to help boost students' learning.

Kahoot! It: Gamification in Higher Education

This paper is written by Debbita Tan Ai Lin, Ganapathy, and M. Manjet Kaur, published in the Pertanika Journal of Social Science and Humanities in 2018. This paper focused on investigating Kahoot! as the gamified product to boost the learning environment among English learners in higher education in Malaysia. The result indicated that the students found Kahoot! beneficial in inducing motivation and engagement, as well as fostering and reinforcing learning for

both theoretical and practical aspects. The results reflected the respondents' attitudes towards Kahoot! was notably positive, with a percentage of 100%. They experienced that Kahoot! could bring effectiveness in their academic context. 98% of them found that Kahoot! interesting, fun, and enjoyable; meanwhile, 96% answered that Kahoot! brought the atmosphere of competitiveness that they were triggered to do each Kahoot! session.

The Impact of Using Games on Developing Saudi Female EFL Students' Speaking Skills

This paper is written by Wafa K. Alfulaih, published in the British Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences in 2018. This paper was a research-based study that investigated the efficacy of students' speaking ability using gamification teaching style in Saudi English Foreign Language (EFL) Female Speaking classes. It was a Classroom Action Research (CAR) that involved 50 participants of Saudi female EFL students at Saudi Electronic University (SEU). The results of the study indicated that gamification was advantageous to improve students' speaking skills, respectively. It was mentioned that students' attitudes and motivation to speak English enhanced by 20% from 60% to 80% after implementing gamification. Not only

that, but the students' satisfaction also showed similar results; it grew 48% from 30% to 78% after gamification was used. Additionally, the students' scores in pre-test and post-test increased, as well, and the problems found in pre-tests such as mispronunciation, grammar error, fluency, speed, and limited conversations, were minimized significantly.

The Role of Gamification Techniques in Promoting Student Learning: A Review and Synthesis

This paper is written by Islam Alomari, Hosam Al-Samarraie, and Reem Yousef, published in the Journal of Information Technology Education: Research in 2019. This article was a review of 40 previous studies on the role of gamification techniques in promoting students' learning. The results indicated that gamification techniques differently shaped students' learning. The data analyses were presented in the form of a bar chart that displayed the gamification techniques, including points, badges, leaderboards, levels, rewards, progress bar challenges, feedbacks, and avatars. In detail, there were the top three techniques that gained the highest percentages. The most one went to points (75%) in which the studies suggested that the point-based system

could help motivate students to engage in a sharing network that was accepted by the other group members enthusiastically. The second was badges (68%), which could increase the social interaction amongst students because they spent more time and devoted more effort to solving cases by exchanging ideas that could promote positive attitudes in their performance. The last was leaderboards (38%). Leaderboards expanded students' achievements by building a sense of competition amongst them, creating a social comparison among the learners, which motivated them to increase their contribution rate; and based on the spirit of reputation they might attain when they got a higher rank as compared with others. Even though the rest of the gamification techniques was less utilized in promoting students' performance in learning English, they still had a contribution to motivate students to learn.

Using Gamification and Serious Games for English Language Learning

This article is written by Nacim Yanes, and Ikram Bououd, presented and published in Conference: 2019 International Conference on Computer and Information Sciences (ICCIS) in 2019. The paper presented the results of utilizing gamification and a serious game for English language learning a SWOT analysis with 49 participants in total. The results, which were divided into three parts (strengths, opportunities, and weaknesses), showed that both gamified learning and serious games would create a joyful ambiance, as well as a pleasant and relaxed place for learning. Students who were involved in these two learning contexts were attracted to learn and felt better involved in the classroom. They enhanced their confidence in English skills, especially speaking one. By using high technologies as learning material, the students formed a framework that language courses were following the technological frame which better fit their own needs causing them to foster creativity and led to discover their motivation to learn. From the three parts of the data display, strengths got the highest points, followed by opportunities. There were weaknesses of gamified and serious games, but they could be overcome in such a way that could be considered as a no significant deal aspect.

Using Gamification to Support Learning English As A Second Language: A Systematic Review

This paper is written by Hojjat Dehghanzadeh, Hashem Fardanesh, Javad Hatami, Ebrahim Talaee, and

Omid Noroozi, published in Computer Assisted Language Learning journal in 2019. This paper is a systematic review that analyzed 22 publications dating from 2008 to 2019. The results of the study indicated that none of the articles or publications talked about the negative impacts or weaknesses of implementing gamification. Being enjoyable, engaging, motivating, and fun were the behaviors exposed to gamified LESL environments. The learning outcomes were targeted to meet content language learning, engagement, motivation, and satisfaction. There presented various gamified learning instructions and products from the 22 articles being reviewed. Among all publications, 13 articles reported that the learning experiences of learners for gamified LESL were positive, particularly the content language learning such as vocabularies (15 papers), grammar (5 publications), pronunciation (4 papers), speaking (5 papers), writing (3 papers), listening (4 papers).

Gamification to Improve Students' Engagement in Learning English

This paper is written by Hadirotun Nikmah, published in Proceeding of 1st Conference of English Language and Literature (CELL) in 2019. The research focused on describing students'

attitudes and perceptions towards Kahoot It! as the learning platform for students. The writer mentioned that while Kahoot It! was being used by the teachers, the students were highly motivated to engage in the learning activity. They were triggered to take part in all learning sections, including quizzes actively. This result was supported by previous researches that also indicated similar results.

How to Gamify Your English Class: Teaching Teens in the 21st Century

This article is written by Elena Persada in her blog named Medium, published on March 31, 2017. Elena was an English teacher who was dealing with teenagers. She found out that it was not easy to control students' behavior when they disliked the learning environment. They mostly became hyperactive or misbehavior when they did not feel like to engage with conventional activities. Then, the teacher applied gamification in her classroom after reading many threads and articles about the power of gamification to boost students' performances and achievements in learning. In her article, she wrote that she experienced positive results after implementing gamified learning. The students' behavior was constantly changing. The students started working

hard and even asked for extra assignments.

Moreover, the weaker ones gained confidence and improved their performance. The writer noted that even parents got the ambiance that they were happy since their children were highly motivated to do their English homework. This article also provided steps on how to gamify the English classes and explained how the elements of games (e.g., points, badges, levels, and leaderboards) were effectively used in her class.

Gamification in English Language Teaching: More Than Child's Play

This article is written by Sharon Maloney, published in English for Asia – TESOL blog on July 2, 2019. This article was a thread from a teacher who had implemented gamification in her English class. She experienced quite similar situations with other teachers that her students were demotivated, stultifying, and bored during the course. She mentioned that a well – designed game could be more potent than any other teaching strategies. "Traditional methods of education no longer work because they are designed for students to be fundamentally passive," she said. This statement was against the nature of children, which was playful, cheerful, and active. She, furthermore, emphasized that if the

students failed, probably the teaching or the learning environment was not supportive enough to make them successful. After implementing gamification, she bravely claimed that digital games were excellent catalysts for collaborative work and sharing experiences. In her article, the writer also provided some steps to gamify learning without digital actions to support the teachers who probably were not supported by digital equipment.

The analysis of the articles above indicated there are four main benefits of gamifications in English learning. The first and foremost benefit that gamification has brought to students is related to motivation. It is found out 75% or nine out of thirteen articles being analyzed indicated that gamified learning is propitious to motivate students to learn English (Flores, 2015; Mufida, 2016; Peresada, 2017; Boyinbode, 2018; Lin, Ganapathy & Kaur, 2018; Dehghanzadeh et al., 2019; Yanes & Bououd, 2019; Alomari, Al-Samarraie & Yousef, 2019; Alfulaih, 2019).

The second benefit is in line with the positive attitudes and better performance of the students during the class. The gamified activities leaped the barrier between active and passive learners so that the learners were no

more anxious to engage in the learning process (Alfulaih, 2019; Lin, Ganapathy & Kaur, 2018; Mufidah, 2016). The number of active learners had improved significantly (Yanes & Bououd, 2019; Alomari, Al-Samarraie, & Yousef, 2019; Peresada, 2017;). They also devoted more effort to participating in the activities to succeed (Alomari, Al-Samarraie, & Yousef, 2019). Nevertheless, they showed decent attitudes and good responses when gamified learning was being implemented (Mufidah, 2016; Mikasyte, 2018; Samarrie & Yousef, 2019; Dehghanzadeh et al., 2019).

The third one is related to 21st-century skills and better cognitive achievements. The skills which included critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, innovation, media literacy, ICT literacy, flexibility, initiative, and self-direction were found in the gamified activities (Mikasyte, 2018; Persada; 2017). These skills foster practical and theoretical aspects of learning (academic) such as better scores and performance in grammar, vocabulary, speaking skill (including fluency, mispronunciation, speed, and limited conversation), reading, writing, and in using technology to assist learning (Flores, 2015; Mufidah, 2016; Lam, 2016; Mikasyte, 2018; Boyinbode, 2018; Lin, Ganapathy & Kaur, 2018;

Dehghanzadeh et al., 2019; Alfulaih, 2019).

The fourth benefit is gamification promotes social interaction and independencies, as well as increases competitive spirit. The elements of gamification are the factors that could empower students' social skill because they were given opportunities to solve given cases through exchanging ideas that forced them to interact actively and use prior knowledge to accomplish the tasks that led them finally to be more competent and independent in learning English (Lam, 2016; Lin, Ganapathy, & Kaur, 2018; Alomari, Al-Samarraie & Yousef, 2019).

Discussion

Since Bunchball Company introduced and published the success of Quest to Learn, a game to gamify learning environment for sixth graders, the gamification approach started to be known widely in education (Christian, 2018). Its potency to promote learning achievement, especially in English acquisition, is indisputable (Kriyakova, Yordanova, & Angelova, 2014). English, which is considered boring and difficult to be acquired by foreign learners, turned out to be more exciting. The thirteen articles analyzed in this paper have demonstrated and confirmed the benefits of gamification in English acquisition. Although the participants,

interests, and the setting are different, the articles shared comparable advantages of gamification that are summed up into four main benefits: improving motivation, promoting positive attitudes and better performances, promoting 21st-century skills and better cognitive achievements, and encouraging social interaction, independencies, and competitive spirits.

According to the findings above, the students who did not find learning interesting at first turned out to gain much interest in every exercise, tasks, or projects; and they even asked for extra assignments to do (Peresada, 2017) while the gamified learning being implemented. This behavior change indicated an improvement in the intrinsic motivation amongst students. They developed fully self-regulated learning (independence in learning) to engage in activities out of interest, as well as to experience a sense of volition (Ferreira, Cardoso, & Abrantes, 2011). The results also emphasized that motivated learners would react positively to psychological aspects such as behavioristic learning cognitive, self-determination, interest, and positive emotion (Flores, 2015).

Moreover, in terms of attitudes and classroom performances, the class where gamifications were implemented tended to be much livelier. During the activities, there were no gaps between high English achievers and low English achiever students. All the students engaged in the activities, and no one was anxious to take part in the class (Alfulaih, 2019; Lin, Ganapathy & Kaur, 2018; Mufidah, 2016). They spoke English much more often than before gamification was implemented Flores, 2015; Mufidah, 2016; Lam, 2016). Besides that, the badges used in the games have helped improving social interaction and competitive spirit among students. As a result, the students had higher opportunities to enhance social competence shown by seamless interactions, as well as to improve English competencies proven by better scores and performance in grammar, vocabulary, speaking skill (including fluency, mispronunciation, speed, and limited conversation), reading, writing, and in using technology to assist learning (Flores, 2015; Mufidah, 2016; Lam, 2016; Mikasyte, 2018; Boyinbode, 2018; Lin, Ganapathy, & Kaur, 2018; Dehghanzadeh et al., 2019; Alfulaih, 2019).

CONCLUSION

This study has confirmed that gamification is indeed beneficial for students in the English class. It appears to be the solution for an unsuccessful

and passive learning environment as it is beneficial to assist teachers in creating a more exciting and meaningful learning experience for students. A livelier learning environment, more active engagement, better English skills (especially speaking skill), and improved cognitive achievements (proven by good scores) are the indicators of successful implementation of gamification in the English class. Therefore, it is highly recommended for the English teachers who have problems with their class, especially in terms of activeness and English skills, to apply gamification in their classes.

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