

# **Gamification in language learning: Teachers' perspectives**

Bachelor's Thesis

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English  
Spring 2023

**JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO**

Tiedekunta – Faculty Humanisti-yhteiskunnallinen	Laitos – Department Kieli- ja viestintätieteiden laitos
Tekijä – Author Aaro Turunen	
Työn nimi – Title “Gamification in language learning: Teachers’ perspectives”.	
Oppiaine – Subject Englanti	Työn laji – Level Kandidaattitutkielma
Aika – Month and year Huhtikuu 2023	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 23 + 1 liite
Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Tulevien vuosien aikana pelillistäminen tulee lisääntymään etenkin kielten oppiaineissa. Pelillistäminen tarjoaa uuden ja luovan tavan opetella kieliä ja sen hyödyt ovat kattavia. Sen on todettu esimerkiksi lisäävän opiskelijan motivaatiota. Aihetta on tutkittu, mutta tulevaisuudessa lisää tutkimusta tullaan tarvitsemaan.</p> <p>Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli selvittää, mitä mieltä Suomen lukion englannin opettajat ovat pelillistämisestä, ja kuinka he hyödyntävät sitä oppitunneilla. Tutkimus toteutettiin haastatteleamalla kahta englannin opettajaa ja tulokset analysoitiin kvalitatiivisen sisällön analyysin keinoin.</p> <p>Tulokset osoittavat pelillistämisen olevan hyödyllistä ja sen koetaan myös nostavan motivaatiota. Opiskelijoiden motivaation todetaan kohentuvan, kun he pääsevät esimerkiksi kilpailemaan toisiaan vastaan. Negatiivisena pidettiin kuitenkin sitä, että pelillistäminen ei tarjoa työkaluja autenttiselle oppimiselle. Tämän lisäksi huomautettiin, että digitaaliset työkalut rakentavat muureja oppilaan ja opettajan väliin. Tutkimuksessa saatiin myös selville, että opettajat hyödyntävät toisinaan mieluummin fyysistä opetusmateriaalia. Haastateltavat totesivat kuitenkin lopussa, että tulevaisuudessa pelillistämistä tullaan hyödyntämään enemmän. Opettajat käyttivät perinteistä Kahoottia, mutta myös sovelluksia kuten Gimkit ja Quizzes. Jatkotutkimusta voitaisiin tehdä tutkimalla suuremmalla skaalalla, mitä mieltä opettajat ovat aiheesta tai tutkimalla tarkemmin pelillistämisen mahdollisia haittavaikutuksia.</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords Pelillistäminen, motivaatio, gamification, game-based	
Säilytyspaikka – Depository JYX	
Muita tietoja – Additional information	

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## 1 Introduction

Gamification is a term that seems to be used more and more frequently in an educational setting. For instance, Adkins (2019: 37) states that game-based learning will have a growth of 15,4% from the year 2019 to the year 2024. Gamification will be a prominent part of education in the near future. Gamification can be defined in many ways, but Merriam-Webster defines it in a very clear way: Gamification is “a process of adding games or gamelike elements to something (such as a task) so as to encourage participation”. The definition will be discussed in more detail in a later section. Previous research has been done on the topic for instance by studying graduating students’ opinions. Additionally previous research seems to suggest that there is still a lack of information and knowledge on the topic.

In this study, I am interested in finding out what Finish high school teachers think about the current use of gamification, and how they themselves use it in the classroom. Therefore, one must understand how Finnish high school teachers operate to understand the context of the study better. Heikkinen (2018) points out that autonomy is very important when it comes to teaching in Finland. Moreover, no-one orders the teachers to use certain methods. On the contrary, they can decide by themselves what methods are useful and beneficial. Heikkinen (2018) continues by explaining that teachers are taught to be independent thinkers and ethical action-takers. Furthermore, teachers are the best at helping and teaching other teachers. Another important factor to know about Finnish teachers is that teachers consider all students as individuals, and everybody is treated respectfully and equally (OAJ). It is also important to know that in Finland the teachers guide the students with varying tasks during lessons/lectures. Because of this autonomy it would be beneficial to find out teachers’ thoughts regarding things such as gamification.

In this report, I will firstly describe the theoretical framework of the study. Following that I will discuss the methodology: the research questions, the data-collecting method and how the data was analysed. Thirdly, I will state the results and explain their importance. And finally, there shall be a brief conclusion explaining the main points of the study itself.

## 2 Gamification in language learning

To understand what the study is going to be about, I am going to discuss some of the main ideas surrounding gamification and its definition. Firstly, I am going to describe what gamification means and what definition is going to be utilized throughout this paper. Secondly, I shall state some of the motivational benefits gamification has on students and their learning. Following that, I will present the main opinions teachers have on gamification and how it is being used right now. Finally, I will briefly explain the need for and the benefits of the present study.

### 2.1 Defining gamification

Gamification as a term has become more and more well-known among scholars as the years have passed. Depending on the field one studies the definition might change slightly. For instance, Seaborn and Fels (2015: 16) explain that the root of gamification lies in marketing and business. However, in this paper, the focus will be on the benefits gamification has on education. Several papers (Caponetto, Earp, and Ott 2014; Flores 2015) define gamification simply as creating gaming elements in a non-gaming environment. Hamari, Koivisto, and Sarsa (2014: 2) on the other hand define gamification “as a process of enhancing services with (motivational) affordances in order to invoke gameful experiences and further behavioural outcomes”. The definition varies somewhat, but the underlying definition is always the same: The goal of gamification is to change non-gaming environments into gaming environments where things such as motivation and participation increase.

To understand gamification and how it can be utilized in education, one must understand what games and game elements mean in an educational setting. Nowadays, games are extremely common and can be found in several different forms and environments. For example, there are mobile games, console games, and online games. Moreover, there are ‘real life’ games such as hide-and-seek and several different board games. So, games can be found in several different forms and played in various places and ways. Seaborn and Fels (2015: 16) manage to create an extensive list of common rules when defining what a game is. These common elements include things such as games having rules, structures, uncertain outcomes, conflicts, resolutions, representation, and voluntariness. They continue by explaining that these elements are used in various ways to create a game. Many of these rules can be fitted into an educational setting such

as giving a student always the option not to participate in an activity. One could also argue that there is a link between the benefits of gamification and the current core curriculum. The National Core Curriculum for higher education (Opetushallitus 2019) describes several times how important it is to understand oneself and other cultures to increase one's skills and understanding. These ideas relate somewhat to the game element of representation (Seaborn and Fels 2015: 16).

The final and perhaps the most important aspect of gamification to understand is the different game elements and how they could be fitted into a non-gaming educational environment. Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, and Nacke (2011: 12) explain that several different game elements can be sorted into different levels. These levels include, for example, game design patterns and mechanics which include things such as time constraints, limited resources, and turns. Deterding et al. (2011: 12) also describe how badges, leaderboards, and levels are examples of game interface design patterns. Furthermore, some other important elements include avatars and rewards (Flores 2015: 39). Each element has its benefits when considering its usefulness for education, for instance, avatars let students be different kinds of people, badges and points encourage working more, and progress bars help students follow how far they are in a task.

In the present study, gamification is defined as turning non-gaming situations (classes) into gameful environments with the help of varying game elements and games with the goal of increasing things such as motivation and engagement.

## 2.2 Motivation and engagement in gamification

In my definition of gamification, I mentioned the importance of increasing motivation in students and getting them to engage more. In the following, I shall describe the motivational effects gamification has on students and especially in second-language learning. Flores (2015: 46) explains that the common denominator between L2 learning or SLA (second language acquisition) and gamification is in fact motivation. They continue by explaining that personality factors dramatically influence how a person (student) learns a second language. Furthermore, they state that there are two types of motivation that affect L2 learning, and these are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Jarjoura (2014: 196 - 197) explains that intrinsic motivation refers to when people do something because they want to and/or are interested in something. Extrinsic motivation on the other hand is based on wanting to achieve something or avoid, for instance,

punishment. The goal of gamification is to combine these elements and get students to be both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to work (Flores 2015: 47). They continue by explaining that extralinguistic motivation can be achieved by using game elements such as points and badges.

There have been several studies where students' engagement has increased significantly when different kinds of game elements have been introduced (Alsawaier 2017: 15). Furthermore, this happened nearly at all ages (Alsawaier 2017: 17-18). However, in some cases, motivation/engagement did not improve. Consequently, it is important to consider the significance of motivation and engagement when designing a gamified course or lecture. Nicholson (2015) describes that it is important to create challenges suited for students at different levels. However, these challenges cannot be too difficult because this might result in a lack of interest. Nicholson (2015: 4) describes six elements to make gamification more meaningful and thus increase motivation. These elements include play, exposition, choice, information, engagements, and reflection. Giving a student, or a player, for example choices to make, makes the gameful experience more engaging. By letting students choose what kind of tasks they want to complete, they will most likely enjoy doing the tasks more. As seen above, there are several ways to enhance motivation and engagement.

A study conducted by Vera, Figueredo and Canese (2021: 80) concluded that gamification and game-based learning enhance motivation and engagement in a classroom setting. Furthermore, there are several different perspectives to consider when discussing the effects gamification has on motivation. Sailer, Hence, Mandl, and Klevers (2013: 31-33) list different perspectives on what kind of motivation people might have and what should be considered if the goal is to create a gameful environment that everyone can enjoy. For instance, players/students in the trait perspective get motivated if achievements are emphasised and competition encouraged. Moreover, players in the cognitive perspective get motivated if there is a clear goal to follow. Consequently, it is important to create games that motivate students from different backgrounds and with differing personalities.

Flores (2015: 50) describes that gamification contributes positively to learning and helps students with differing stages of motivation and considers their personality traits. However, an important thing to keep in mind is the factors that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation play. Flores (2015: 50) states that achieving intrinsic motivation might be a challenge and that extrinsic

motivation might interfere with learning if, for instance, a game becomes repetitive or perhaps boring. All in all, however, gamification has mostly positive impacts on students' motivation and engagement.

### 2.3 Teachers views on gamification

Gamification seems to have gained a more prominent status in current conversations about schools and different subjects. For example, Bergmann and Sams (2012 as cited in Buckley and Doyle 2014: 11) state that in the future gamification can become crucial when implementing flipped teaching environments. Flipped teaching environments refer to using class time to deepen knowledge about something that has been practiced at home by the students (Love, Hodge, Grandgenett, and Swift 2014: 317). A clear question remains whether gamification can be implemented into each subject.

Previous research conducted in Spain by Marti-Parreno, Segui-Mas, and Sequi Mas (2016) has shown that only a small percentage of teachers use gamification in the classroom. However, it must be mentioned that participants for this research were collected with snowball sampling which means that there is no real control who answers the questions. Nevertheless, the results of the study also state that teachers' opinions regarding gamification are positive and high. The results raise a conflicting question: why do teachers not use something they consider useful and interesting to enhance learning? Yet, it is worth noting that the mentioned study mostly focuses on universities.

Several studies (Rincon-Flores, Mena and Lopez-Camacho 2022; Nahmod 2017) seem to suggest that the benefits of gamification are clear. Some of these benefits include instant feedback, the rapid development of skills, and the availability of clear indicators of progress (Yaroshenko et al., 2022: 441). Yaroshenko et al. (2022) conducted their study by analysing previous scientific literature and tried to find out the benefits of gamification. Moreover, Yaroshenko et al. (2022: 443) describe that for an educational game to work it must have, for instance, a clear plot and quests. Michos (2017: 512-513) brings up even more advantages gamification can have in a language classroom. They describe for instance that gamification increases learners' feelings of happiness, modifies the mood in a classroom, and makes learning fun.



Technology has been part of education for a while now and there have also been several studies about teachers' opinions regarding gamification and whether they consider it to be an essential part of the classroom. Previous research suggests that a high number of teachers consider the use of technology to be beneficial for students and that students should be prepared for a digital workplace (Picton 2019: 3). However, the study also found that more than half thought that non-technology-based teaching is better or as good as technology-based teaching. Furthermore, another study concluded that teachers have positive views on the usage of iPads (Lewis, 2018). Yet, at the same time, the teachers considered that the iPad had too many barriers. This kind of phenomenon continues in other studies where something is considered positive, yet something is also wrong with that same thing and should be done better. All studies, however, seem to agree on the fact that more research should be done on the topic to deepen the understanding.

How gamification is concretely used in a classroom is mostly up to the teachers of the class. As mentioned above, some consider books to be the way to go and some believe technology to be useful for teachers and students alike. There have been several studies focusing on the usefulness of the app Kahoot (Michos 2017; Bicen and Kocakoyun 2018; Premarathne 2017). For instance, Michos (2017: 515) concludes that Kahoot is recommendable for different kinds of educational institutions. The use of Kahoot seems to be very present and common in several different classroom settings. Flores (2015: 49-50) gives additional examples of apps to use to enhance L2 learning and SLA. Some of these include Duolingo and Socrative, which most likely are familiar to most people. Different types of games are used in classrooms to teach students. Only time will tell what other games start to be used more and more.

## 2.4 Research gap

Different authors seem to raise coherent points regarding gamification's usefulness and its development. Furthermore, a frequently raised question is whether gamification should be studied more because only limited literature exists. For instance, Boudadi and Gutierrez-Colon (2020: 57) describe how only a little research exists on how gamification affects motivation and learning outcomes. In addition to this, Buckley, and Doyle (2014: 1173) state that they want to prompt more studies in this area with the help of their results.

This paper aims to complement the study of gamification and find out whether teachers have experienced, seen, or noticed anything positive or negative regarding gamification. Moreover,

it would also be beneficial to learn about the teachers' opinions regarding the links between gamification, motivation, and engagement. And finally, it would be beneficial to find out in what forms is gamification being used, for instance. The results most likely will line up with previous research mentioned above and more extensive research will need to be done in this area. Furthermore, there have been previous BA studies regarding gamification and what is thought about it. However, in these studies, the focus has been on teacher students or teachers in general. The present study focuses on the thoughts of high school English teachers specifically and what their opinions are on the matter.

### 3 The present study

In this chapter, I shall describe the aims of the research and the research questions. Furthermore, I will also describe the interviewees and justify why research interviews and content analysis were the best methods for my study.

#### 3.1 Aims and research questions

The present study aims to gain information regarding teachers' opinions and thoughts on gamification. These thoughts and ideas will be analysed and discussed with the help of theoretical background. In addition, the present study aims to find out how gamification is utilized in teachers' classrooms. However, in situations where gamification might not be used, it is going to be beneficial to find out why it is not being used or what could be improved so that it would be used more frequently in the future. Below can be found two of the research questions the present study aims to answer:

1. *What do Finnish high school English teachers think about gamification and its usefulness in a classroom setting?*
2. *How do Finnish high school English teachers utilize gamification in a classroom?*

#### 3.2 Semi-Structured interview

The present study was conducted as a qualitative semi-structured interview. Denscombe (2010: 175) explains that a semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to be more flexible while at the same time having a clear list of issues to cover during the interview. Furthermore, they describe that the method allows the interviewee to develop ideas and speak more widely. Thus, the method was great when trying to get the teachers' opinions regarding gamification. In addition, research interviews allow interviewees to go into more depth (Denscombe 2010: 192) on certain subjects which generates useful information for a study. It is also worth mentioning that the information gained is subjective so it cannot be generalised for all high school teachers.

The interviewees were acquired separately in two different ways. The first interviewee was acquired directly by messaging them through email. The other contacted me directly after hearing about the present study. Both interviewees were asked permission to record the face-

to-face zoom interviews. Both agreed to the terms and conditions. Furthermore, both zoom interviews lasted for approximately 30 minutes.

The study itself was conducted by interviewing two high school teachers and finding out their thoughts and ideas regarding gamification. The interviewees had both recently graduated and lived in different areas of Finland. It is worth mentioning that interviewing a few teachers does not allow generalization. However, the interviewees' ideas and thoughts will be useful when considering future research on a similar topic. The interviews were semi-structured interviews because it allowed the interviewees and the interviewer to be more flexible. Some of the questions were for example: How would you define gamification in an SLA (second language acquisition) context? And are there situations where the traditional book or something else is better than a gamified learning tool? The rest of the questions can be found in the appendix.

### 3.3 Content analysis

To analyse the data collected from the qualitative structured interviews I used the method of qualitative content analysis. Bengtsson (2016: 10) states that content analysis can be used on various types of texts. In the present study, however, the material has come from transcribed research interviews. And as Weber (1990: 10) explains one advantage of content analysis is the fact that one can operate directly on transcripts from human communication. In addition, they (Weber 1990: 9) also state that content analysis is useful for instance when conducting audio studies. When using content analysis, one must also consider the issues regarding reliability. Stemler (2000: 3) explains that reliability issues may appear when working closely with the data. Furthermore, they (2000: 5) state that validity problems may also appear. While analysing the data of the present study, I considered those factors frequently and remained objective and clear about where all the information came from. Categorization (Bengtsson 2016: 12; Mayring: 2000) is also an important part of content analysis. It refers to forming different kinds of categories for different kinds of subjects such as motivation, opinions, etc.

Both interviews provided a lot of interesting and useful information for the present study. The interviewees mostly answered questions asked by the interviewer. However, at certain points the interviewees discussed things they came up with during the interviewing session. The interviewees were recorded to ensure correct transcribing. Moreover, the audio files were transcribed to a word-document and thereafter the transcriptions were categorized according to the questions asked. For instance, all answers referring to the motivational effects of

gamification are categorized into the same group. The aim was to find how the interviewees answers and thoughts related to the two research questions.

## 4 Results and discussion

In the following section, I shall briefly describe the interviewees thoughts on what gamification means. It is vital for getting any results and answers to make sure that both interviewees understood the meaning of gamification and what it is used for. Moreover, they also stated that role-playing is important when considering what gamified tools to use. Interviewee 2's definition shows a clear indication that the subject was not new to them:

*“Joooh no aika silleen konkreettisesti mä näkisin tän semmosina eri peleinä tai sovelluksina, joita käytetään sielä oppitunnilla tai kotona päästään sen pelin kautta oppimaan kieltä”*

*” Yeah so, I see it concretely as different kinds of games or applications that are used there in the classroom or at home to enhance learning a language”*

Interviewee 1's thoughts also clearly point out that gamification is not a new term to them. Furthermore, it seems that they also know some of the forms gamification can take (role-playing):

*“Varmaan, miten määrittäisin yleisesti: Luodaan tehtäviä oppilaille, jotka ei, jotka ei... joiden avulla pääsee pois luokkatilan fyysisestä rajoitteesta [...] Osissa määritelmässä oon nähny sellasta roolipeli määritelmää eli saatu roolipelit siihen mukaan.”*

*” Probably how I would define it in general: Creating games that do not, that do not... which can help to get rid of the physical boundaries of the classroom [...] In some definition I have seen a kind of role-playing definition meaning that roleplaying is added to it.”*

All in all, both interviewees seemed to think that playing games could in some way enhance learning languages. Their thoughts also align with the definition I gave for gamification: gamification is defined as turning non-gaming situations (classes) into gameful environments with the help of varying game elements and games with the goal of increasing things such as motivation and engagement.

In the following sections, I shall discuss and reflect on the interviewees' answers and thoughts. Firstly, I will describe the tools the interviewees used during lessons. Secondly, I shall describe

what they had to say about motivation and engagement. Thereafter, I shall state the interviewees thoughts on other positive effects. Fourthly, I will open what negative ideas the interviewees had about gamification. And finally, I shall summary the results.

#### 4.1 Games used

The interviewees had differences regarding what games they used during their lessons. Interviewee 1 used a mix of different kinds of games such as Gimkit (a vocabulary game where one collects money and uses upgrades), Quizzes (a quiz game where one can draw, write, etc), Kahoot (a basic quiz game) and Bamboozle (a jeopardy kind of a game). Whereas interviewee 2 only used Kahoot and sometimes Quizlet to teach students. However, interviewee 2 suggests something for students that interviewee 1 did not even mention:

*“Ite mitä käytän vapaa-aikana ja mitä oon suositellut oppilaille, et mitä he voisivat käyttää, vapaa-ajalla on esimerkiksi Duolingo. Mut sitä me ei sit tunnilla tehdä vaan ne voi just vapaa-aikana tehdä sitä”*

*” What I use on my free time and what I have suggested for the students, like what they can do on their free time is Duolingo. But we do not use it during the lessons rather they can do it on their free time”.*

It is interesting to note that interviewee 2 encourages the students to use gamified tools more during their free time rather than during the lesson, whereas interviewee 1 tries to find varying games to suit different needs and try to keep the learning experience fresh. Furthermore, interviewee 1 describes that they also try to use physical games such as Tarsia to change the ways students learn new vocabulary etc. Tarsia is a puzzling game where one can build beautiful pictures by putting correct words next to each other.

There was also a divide between the interviewees when asked about where they have learned of their games and whether they teach new games to older teachers. Interviewee 1 learned all the games they know during their teaching practice and additionally, they use their free time to find new games. On the other hand, interviewee 2 does not use their free time to find games and only knows Kahoot and Quizlet. Interviewee 1 had this to say about older teachers:

*“Mut tosi hyviä pelejä oon löytäny ja niitä on tosi kiva kertoa meiän opettajillekin: Hei tällaisia on niin neki on ihan innoissaan. Moni opettaja on sanonut: Olisi kiva tietää näistä kaikista peleistä ja alustoista, kun ite en tiedä näistä mitään”*

*” But like I have found a lot of good games and it is fun to present them to other teachers: Like they are really excited about them. Many have said: It would be nice to know more about these games and platforms because I do not know anything about them.”*

Whereas interviewee 2 described that they had learned a lot from other older teachers. There seems to be some kind of gap between teachers’ knowledge of certain games. But one thing is clear and it is that everybody knows Kahoot.

## 4.2 Motivation and engagement

As previously mentioned in chapter 2.2 motivation can be considered one of the most important factors when considering the use of gamification. Moreover, it is important to choose games to suit different students at different levels. Surprisingly, the interviewees did not have a lot to say about motivation and engagement even though previous research has pointed out them being extremely important. Furthermore, the interviewees also seemed to disagree somewhat with each other on how important games are when considering students engagement and motivation. Interviewee 1 described the following when asked if gamification enhances motivation:

*”Juuh, todellaki! Kun pääsee pelaamaan, niin on pienempi kynnys tulla mukaan. Et pääsee niinku osallistumaan omalta koneelta tai puhelimelta. Mut siis yleisesti ottaen kaikki tulee mukaan”*

*” Yeah, absolutely! When one gets to play, there is a smaller threshold to participate. Like one get to participate with their own phone or computer. But like in general everybody participates”.*

And interview 2 stated the following:

*”Kaikki osallistuu ja motivaatiota löytyy ihan ilman pelejäkin”*

*” Everybody participates and there is motivation without any games”.*

Interview 2 continues by explaining that they only use gamified tools a couple of times in one course because they do not feel it is that important. However, they did also mention that games where students compete increase students’ motivation levels. It seems like interviewee 1 considers gamification to be extremely beneficial whereas interviewee 2 seems a bit more



reluctant to use it. The interviewees' knowledge of different types of games most likely has something to do with this.

Interviewee 1 also brought up an interesting insight into different age groups. They stated that younger students seemed to enjoy only using technology and love playing games whereas amongst older students it is a bit more common to enjoy playing 'physical' games rather than just using computers etc. They continued explaining that probably, however, in the future all students will only prefer doing digital exercises and games.

Furthermore, as stated previously by Nicholson (2015) it is important to create challenges suited for all students. Both interviewees seemed to agree that both high-level and low-level students were motivated to participate in all the games.

### 4.3 Positive effects

As expected, the interviewees had a lot to say about the different positive effects of gamification. Both interviewees agreed on the notation that by using gamified tools the learning situation becomes more open and students are not just stuck on their own screens. Interview 2 described the following:

*"Noh mä nään et se ehkä tehostaa jopa eniten sillä tavalla et se tuo jotakin uutta tai jotain erilaista tyylitapaa siihen oppituntiin, että se ei oo vaan sielä kirjassa tai omalla näytöllä tehtäviä juttuja vaan silleen et okei nyt otetaan tämmönen erillinen pelitilanne, jossa kaikki saa tehdä yhdessä"*

*" So, like I think it enhances learning maybe even the most by bringing something new or something different to the lesson. Like hey let's have a separate gaming situation together rather than just read the books or do some exercises on the computer"*

Both interviewees thought that it is important to have different kinds of exercises to do with the class so that the learning would not be so 'boring'. Interviewee 2 also seemed to encourage teamwork when using different types of games so that no one would be left alone. Furthermore, it was important for both interviewees to make sure that everybody could participate in gamified sessions. Both carried separate papers with tasks in them in case someone could not or did not want to participate. Moreover, both spoke about technology sometimes being unreliable, so it is always good to be prepared.

Both interviewees used gamification to help students learn vocabulary. Interviewee 1 described:

*“Mä tykkään käyttää pelillistämistä lähinnä sanaston harjoitteluna. Silleen, et hei tiedätkö tätä sanaa jne. Ei käytännössä sen syvällisempää. Sillä on paikkansa tutustuttaa oppilaita sanastoon, vaikka kielioppiasiassa”*

*” I enjoy using gamification mostly with vocabulary. Like, hi do you know this vocabulary. Nothing deeper than that. It has a place in making certain words familiar for students for instance, grammar”.*

Both interviewees seemed to be somewhat reluctant to use gamification to do anything else than practice vocabulary. The most frequent and possibly the most important positive factors about gamification according to the interviewees are instant feedback and clear indicators of progress as stated by Yaroshenko et al. (2022: 441). Both interviewees agreed that gamified tools make following students' progress much easier, and the tools also save time. For instance, interviewee 1 described that with one game of Kahoot, they directly see who knows what vs. reading homework which might take them a couple of hours. Consequently, both interviewees believe using gamified tools gives teachers time to focus on other important matters.

#### 4.4 Negative effects

The interviewees seemed to have a lot of negative thoughts about gamification and in several cases considered its use to be problematic. The first issue brought up was about authentic learning experiences and whether gamification can offer them. Both agreed on the fact that at the current state of gamifications it does not offer enough authentic learning. Interviewee 1 described the following:

*“Vaikee implementoida sellaseen autenttiseen oppimiseen, miten kieltä käytetään. Jos sen pystyis tuomaan silleen puhetasolle, jos sen pystyis tuomaan tilanne tasolle niinku, miten toimia puhetilanteissa yms. Tulevaisuudessa tarvitaan enemmän eloisaa dramatiikkaa, kun keskittymiskyky vaan heikkenee”*

*”It is difficult to implement it to authentic learning, how language is being used. If it could be used to practice speaking, if it could be like used to practice how to discuss with people. In the future we are going to need more lively dramatics because concentration skills are weakening”.*

Both interviewees see the possibilities of gamification and would eagerly want to try it out. However, both interviewees believe that right now it cannot be used to do anything else but to learn vocabulary. Moreover, both interviewees seem to consider using phones and computers a bit risky. Interviewee 2 describes how it is impossible to know what students are doing on their phones and whether they are playing the correct games. Interviewee 1 even states that using computers and phones creates a barrier between the students and the teachers. This aligns somewhat with Lewis' (2018) research that some teachers consider iPads to be barriers between teachers and students. Interviewee 2 continued by explaining that sometimes using physical games might be more beneficial because then one can see what is going on.

An interesting fact brought up by both interviewees was that they enjoy using physical books more than their digital counterparts. Interview 2 explained their views as follows:

*“Jos meillä olis kirjamateriaalit niin se olis paljon parempi, koska silloin näkisi, mitä ne tekevät jo sieltä opettajanpöydän takaa. On mahdotonta tietää, mitä ne oppilaat tekevät niiden tietokoneiden takana”*

*“If we had the physical books it would be much better because then it would be easier to follow what they're doing even behind the teachers desk. It is impossible to know what the students are doing behind the computers”.*

Interview 1 also offered interesting insight on why digital materials, and gamification might not be so useful:

*“Haluisin pysyä mahdollisimman paljon pois näytöltä. Niih eikä haluis liikaa pelata noita pelejä. Olis hyvä välttää ylimääräistä digimatskua, kun nuorilla on koko ajan ne puhelimet siinä”*

*“ I would like to avoid using screens as much as possible. I do not want to play too many games. It would be beneficial to avoid excessive digital materials because young people have their phones always there”.*

Both these quotes offer vital insight when trying to understand the negative effects of gamification. Both interviewees believe that by using digital material and digital games students might not actually be doing what they are supposed to. However, it is important to keep in mind that neither claim that gamification is not useful. Both interviewees want to create teaching sessions where gamification and non-gamified tools are used even-handedly to create the best possible lessons.

## 4.5 Summary

The interviewees had several things to say about the gamified tools they use during their lessons. Both interviewees knew of several games that could be used to enhance learning. Interviewee 1 seemed to have more experience with different games whereas interviewee 2 mostly only used Kahoot, and sometimes Quizlet. Interviewee 1 mentioned several games such as Gimkit, Quizzes, Kahoot and Bamboozle. Furthermore, interviewee 1 also mentioned that they enjoy using physical games such as Tarsia. Interestingly interviewee 1 stated that they had taught new games to older teachers whereas interviewee 2 explained how older teachers had taught them all the games they know. It seems like Kahoot is still the most frequently used method by teachers. However, this is not surprising because as Michos (2017: 515) states Kahoot is suitable for all kinds of different educational settings and institutions. A question that remains is that whether teachers should try to find more varying games (gamified tools) or is it even necessary. Kahoot, as of now, seems to be the gamification tool of most teachers.

Finnish high school teachers thoughts about gamification and its usefulness in a classroom setting were interesting. Both interviewees had a lot of thoughts and insight into the effects of gamification in learning English. They agreed that gamification is useful and helps students in various ways. Furthermore, both stated that motivation grew in certain situations like when the students managed to compete against each other. However, motivations positive effects, such as increased participation, were not as big as previous research would have suggested. Perhaps, this has something to do with the previously mentioned intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Jarjoura 2014: 196-197). As Flores (2015: 47) states, the goal of gamification is to combine these two to achieve best possible learning results. Moreover, by mostly using Kahoot as a learning tool, it is possible that students are not motivated because of the lack of for instance challenge, variety, and competition. One might therefore argue that the games used do not affect motivation in the expected way because they only offer ways to learn for instance vocabulary.

However, both did have several positive things to say about gamification such as collaboration during games. Another frequently mentioned positive effect is that it is possible to observe what students have learned. Furthermore, this aligns with previous research on that gamified tools offer instant feedback and clear indicators of progress (Yaroshenko et al., 2022: 441). Yet interestingly both interviewees also managed to state several negative aspects including the fact that it is sometimes impossible to know what a student is doing while they are using, for example, computers, or I Pads.

Finally, it was interesting to notice that both interviewees hesitated when asked if gamification should be used more frequently in English lessons. Both brought up similar issues regarding the fact one must be aware of what needs to be learned during a certain course. Gamification tools for instance do not offer authentic learning (speaking) exercises and are not very useful when studying grammar. Moreover, digital interfaces '*create a wall between the teacher and the student*' (Interviewee 1). Thus, the interviewees sometimes prefer using traditional books and non-digital games to teach the students. Interestingly, Picton (2019: 3) also described how more than half of the teachers in their study considered non-technology-based teaching to be better or as good as technology-based teaching. It seems like quite many teachers still prefer traditional options instead of using new technological tools. Yet, again a question raises whether these teachers should start embracing technological tools more or keep doing the same things as always. Nevertheless, both interviewees agreed that gamification has a time and a place. Interviewee 1 even hoped that in the future it might evolve to be even better. All these thoughts line up with previous research by Marti-Parreno, Segui-Mas, and Sequi Mas (2016). The interviewees consider gamification to be useful but end up using it only a little.

## 5 Conclusion

The purpose of this BA was to interview teachers and find out what their thoughts are on gamification and its usefulness. Interviews were conducted as semi-structured face-to-face zoom interviews to let the interviewees speak more widely and develop ideas and thoughts (Denscombe 2010: 175). Future research might better be done as a questionnaire to acquire more data to help generalize the information.

The results showed clear ideas about what Finnish high school English teachers think about gamification and its usefulness in a classroom setting. Furthermore, the results indicate that there still is a clear lack of information and research on gamification in Finnish high schools. The results showed clearly that teachers enjoy using gamification but only to teach vocabulary. However, the teachers did think that using gamification sometimes increased motivation and engagement. It seems like Finnish high school teachers do not want to use gamification in every situation because it does not offer authentic learning experiences. One can ask whether it is even necessary: Is it not authentic enough that students discuss with each other in the classroom?

The findings about how Finnish high school English teachers utilize gamification in a classroom were also significant. One of the results was that teachers sometimes prefer using traditional books and games to teach students. This is because the teachers thought traditional books help the students to focus because nowadays almost everything is digital. However, gamified tools were also clearly popular amongst teachers. Teachers used games such as Kahoot, Quizlet, Gimkit etc. Furthermore, teachers also had promising thoughts about the future and what kinds of learning tools were being developed.

Even though the interviews offered a lot of helpful and clear information, there is still a lack of understanding of negative and positive effects of gamification. Most studies focus on the positive effects: so, my suggestion would be to study more about gamifications negative effects and compare that data to the current information we have. However, the field of gamification is constantly changing so further research will need to be conducted in the future. A question remains about whether gamification is going to become the main learning tool in Finnish High schools in the future. Only time will tell.

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## Appendix

Interview questions:

- How would you define gamification in SLA context?
  - Examples from them?
- Does gamification or game-based learning enhance L2 learning or SLA?
  - How?
- What gamification methods are used during your lessons?
  - Have you come up with your own ‘games’? Or do the books perhaps have any suggestions for the teachers?
  - Have the students suggested any games?
    - What kinds of games?
- For what content are these methods being used?
  - Grammar? Vocabulary?
- Have you noticed any advantages in using different kinds of games during the lessons?
  - What kind of differences have you seen in students’ motivations etc. while using these methods?
- Have you seen the negative effects of gamification if so, what have these effects been?
  - Have you tried to prevent these negative effects, or can you even prevent them?
  - What is done to make sure that every student can participate in the games? Does the school offer support? (Eriarvoistaminen)
- Are there situations where the traditional book or something else is better than a gamified learning tool?
  - Give examples please!
- Should gamification be used more frequently in English lessons and if so, why?
  - And if not why?