



EXAMINING THE INTEREST AND ADAPTABILITY OF UNDERGRADUATE RURAL STUDENTS TO GAMIFICATION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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Abstract: In order to cope with the global pandemic, the educators are looking for novel ways to reach the learners. One of the greatest challenges faced by the teachers is the incorporation of technology in the teaching and learning process. The advancement of science and technology has fashioned a demand in the educational field to strive with its pace of growth. This tremendous growth has propelled the educational field to adopt new methods of teaching and learning. The outgrowth in teaching and learning process is envisioned in all the streams of education and English language has not excluded itself from it. In this modern era, it is a great challenge for the English teachers to choose an appropriate method among the innumerable teaching methods to teach English language. Hence, the present research has minted to detect the prominence of game-based learning to teaching English language among the college students. The concept of gamification in education paves way not only for developing the learners' motivation but also for assimilating game-based learning in educational setting. The research has been accomplished by selecting 50 rural Arts students from Erode district as the sample group and their interest in Game-Based Learning has been examined. The research has detected that the sample group has acclimatized themselves to Game-Based Learning method.

Keywords: adaptability, game-based, learning, English, interest

I. INTRODUCTION:

With the advent of science and technology educators are enforced to re-examine the objectives of education with the extensive growth in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) sector. As a result, the educators are burdened to address the issues of digital learning. In order to cope with the emerging technological changes, teachers need to prepare their students as tech-savvy individuals by integrating innovative teaching methods, and Game-Based Learning is one such method used in today's education milieu. Games have been shown to be effective in promoting learning "partly because learning takes place within a meaningful context" (Van Eck 18) which allows for practical application of the learners. As quoted by Deterding et-al: gamification can be defined as "the use of game-design elements in non-game contexts" (2426). The use of game-design elements in the process of teaching and learning have been greatly adopted in the top-notch educational institutions following international curriculum. Whereas the students learning under other curriculum and institutions certainly feel that they are deprived of such a learning facility. This highlights the research gap thereby to identify whether the students who are deprived of such an environmental learning desire to acclimatize themselves to Game-Based Learning. Therefore, the present research aims to explore the interest of the rural students in Game-Based Learning.

Objectives:

The objectives of the present research are as follows:

- Use of gamification in an educational setting.
- To detect the interest of students in game-based learning.
- To determine the psychology of students behind game-based learning.
- To examine the zone of proximal development.

Need for the study:

Over the past decade, gamification has allured much attention in various sectors such as business, health websites and so on. It is also used for commercial purposes. As stated by Mollick and Rothbard educational workers used gamification “in order to engage and motivate a target group with successful outcome(79)”. In connection to this, Hanus and Fox have observed that “Gamification’s impact on student motivation and performance is an important topic as there has been increased interest in gamification at the college level.” (153). The research explores how game-based learning can help students to learn English language and how rural students can actively engage themselves and leverage their learning. Students residing in rural area are not able to access the same standard of education as their counterparts residing in urban setting.

Bruner mentions the zone of proximal development as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (97). Vygotsky believed that when “a student is in the zone of proximal development for a particular task, providing the appropriate assistance will give the student enough of a “boost” to achieve the task(92)”. Thereby, it is evident that this study draws the attention of teachers and exhibits their role in helping the learners. It also demonstrates how gamified approach to learning can be beneficial for the learners as they receive feedback in the form of rewards, badges, coins or few encouraging words and remarks from the game. As stated by Granic & et. al. the psychological case for game-based learning.

games can involve ... competitive and cooperative objectives, players immerse themselves in pretend worlds that are safe contexts in which negative emotions can be worked out, and games allow a sense of control with just enough unpredictability to feel deep satisfaction and intense pride when formidable goals are finally reached... socially interactive in a way never before afforded ... players are gaming online, with friends, family and complete strangers, crossing vast geographical distances and blurring not only cultural boundaries but also age generation gaps, socioeconomic differences and language barriers. (69)

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

According to Kapp “Gamification is using game-based mechanics, aesthetics and game thinking to engage people, motivate action, promote learning and solve problems” (10). By using game-based learning, learners can enhance their learning experiences and at the same time it is important for the learners to know its application in the real world. It is a method employed to create purposeful experience by integrating instinctive play in non-recreational environment. Thereby, game-based learning refers to the use of games to enhance one’s learning experience by maintaining a balance between content and its application in the real world. With the introduction of gaming, the methodology was renamed as “digital game-based learning”(4) by Prensky. In this connection, Kapp has affirmed that “serious games and gamification are trying to solve problems, motivate, promote learning using game-based thinking and techniques”(16). As Blunt stated numerous investigations have focused on the influence of video games in education(948).

In this regard, the present research explores the challenges faced by the rural students in adopting game-based learning. Cebrian rightly pointed out how several studies indicated that remarkable improvements in terms of increased motivation, enjoyment and task commitment are connected with video games. For Blunt, “there is not enough research to determine the relationship between video games and learning” (952). In this setting, learners can learn English in an immersive environment which acknowledges to the sandbox model within the educational setting comprising teachers developing educational activities which are customizable based on the needs of the learners.

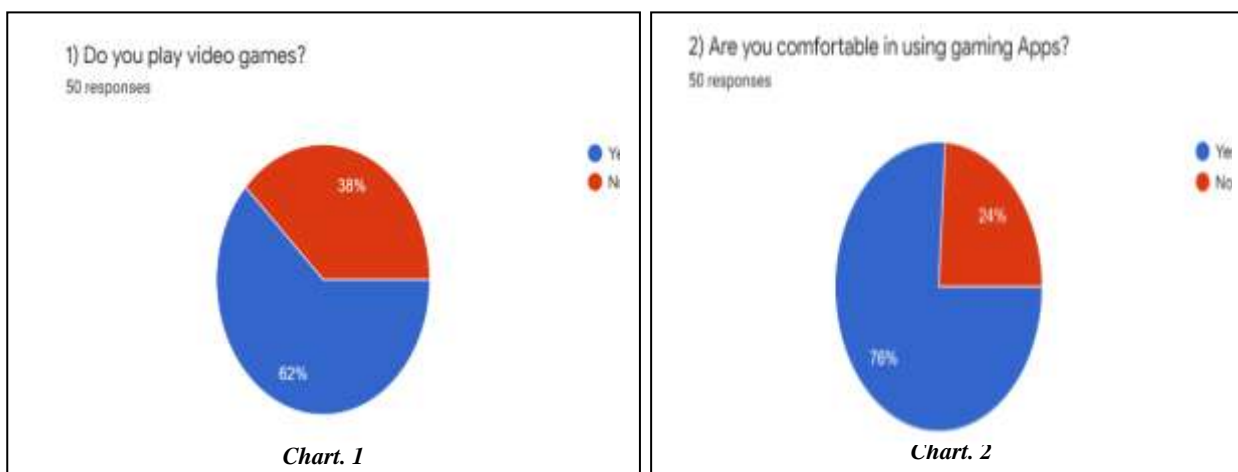
III. METHOD:

The present study has used the questionnaire as a tool, consistent with the objectives of the investigation. The researchers have selected III BA English Literature students studying in an Arts College in Erode. The current study investigated not only individual attitude of the rural learners to game-based learning but also provided their psychological insight in using game Apps in learning English.

The experimental group consisted of 50 rural learners as the participants and the group was homogeneous as the learners belonged to the same peer group and educational level. The researchers implemented the survey technique using a mixed questionnaire as a tool and the participants responded explicitly to open-ended questions without any inhibitions. In this way, they serve to reinforce and reiterate values obtained in the quasi-experimental design and descriptive analysis.

IV. ANALYSIS:

Out of ten questions in the questionnaire, the first five questions aimed at detecting how efficacious the students are in using technology and identifying their interest in using technology as a part of their leisure activities.

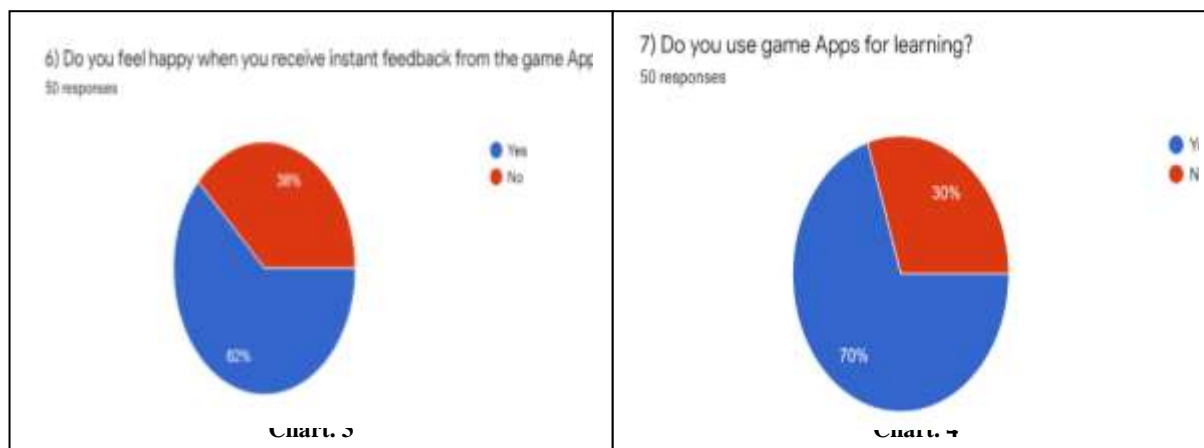


From chart.1 it is evident that 62% of the students play video games regularly and the rest 38% of the students have registered that they do not play video games. There could be several reasons presumed for abstaining themselves from playing video games and of all, the most substantiating reason could be the rural environment. Chart.1 exhibits the students’ relationship with technology in their spare time. In order to find

out the students' interest and relationship with gaming Apps, the present research tried exploring the number of Apps being presently used by them. The maximum number of responses indicated that on an average the students are using at least one App and there are some deviating cases as well. The students' interest in using gaming Apps is exhibited through the response of fifth question, which enquires about the total number of hours that a student spends with the gaming Apps. In some extreme cases, students who use up to seven Apps and the range of other users of gaming Apps fall between two hours and six hours. By juxtaposing one can find that a small number of participants do not use any game Apps, which could be because of the rural setting up that they are in; this is parallel to the response of the first question. When it is evident that a handful of students do not use any game App, there is a need evolving to detect the interest of such students in using game Apps. To find their interest in the gaming Apps, the research has attempted to examine the comfortability of the students for which 76% of the students responded that they are excessively comfortable in handling gaming Apps and the remaining 24% of the students have recorded their discomfort in using gaming Apps. Thus, it indicates that the reason behind 38% of the students refraining themselves from using gaming Apps maybe due to their constraints with such Apps. When their comfortability was examined, there was an immediate need to scrutinize if the students are undergoing any technical challenges. It has been found that 62% of the students do not face technical challenges despite being in a rural environment and 38% of the students undergo such technical complexity.

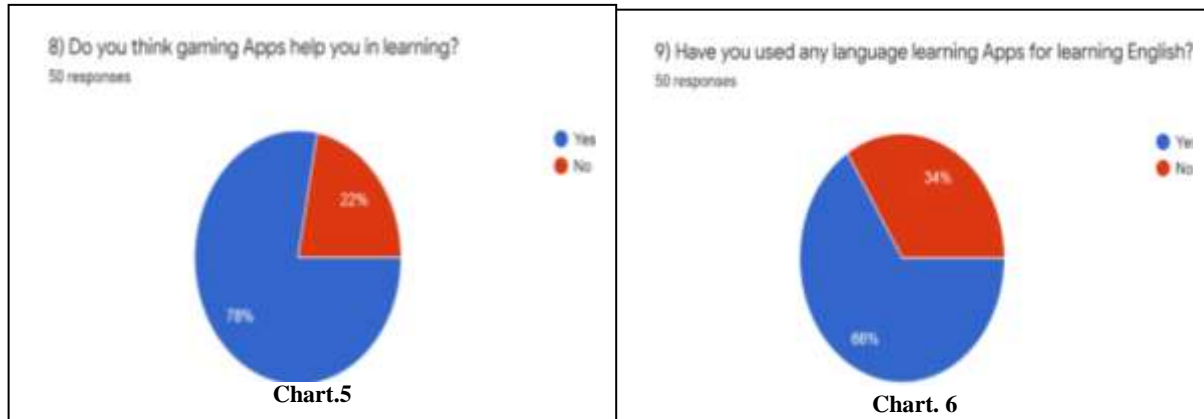
From the above analysis the reasons behind those 38% of the students not using gaming Apps have come to light:

- i. Those 38% of the students have no interest and are not comfortable in using game Apps. The respondents have explicitly registered their inhibitions to indulge themselves in such activities.
- ii. The second reason is that they face technical difficulties. This could be due to their milieu which has put them comparatively lesser privileged in this modern era.



Thereby, there was a need to connect the use of Apps and learning through Apps for which the sixth question: 'Do you feel happy when you receive instant feedback from the game App?' was introduced. As chart.3 represents, the students who use game Apps confirmed that they are contented to receive feedback in the course of their use of the gaming Apps. Respondents who do not use gaming Apps could not respond to this question. The research wanted to find whether the students who do not use gaming Apps have any acquaintance with other learning Apps, and a slightly noticeable difference was seen in this regard. Through chart.4 it is evident that there are 8% of the students who refrain themselves from using gaming Apps and are involved in using other learning Apps. Here learning Apps indicates dictionary, thesaurus, idioms, grammar and so on. It is conspicuous that the present-day educational setting has motivated the learners who are disinterested to use gaming Apps to use learning Apps and this can be perceived as the successful

achievement of the modern technological development in education. This intervention has promoted the learners to modernity both physically and psychologically. The present research has further attempted to collect the opinion of respondents about gaming Apps' contribution in the process of learning and acquiring knowledge about English language.



Referring to chart.5, it can be justified that 78% of the students believe that gaming Apps assist them in learning in addition to entertaining them. A minority group of 22% of the students have recorded that gaming Apps do not support their learning and there are a few reasons presumed behind this. The primary reason could be that the minority group of students are not well-informed to handle gaming Apps in such a learning milieu. Secondly, it gives a chance to question their efficiency in handling such Apps. There is a sort of connection between eighth question and ninth question; these questions have tried figuring out the role of Apps in learning process. From chart.6 one can understand that the students' use of learning Apps to learn English and a majority of 66% of the students have registered that they use language learning Apps. Even the students who believe that gaming Apps can help them in learning have not practiced it in their day-to-day learning process. Therefore, there is a deviation of 12% which highlights this difference.

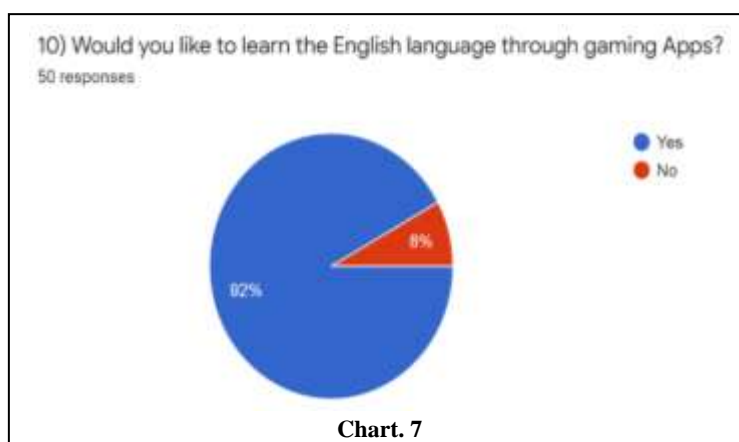


Chart.7 delineates the finding of the present research by shedding light on the interest of the rural students in using Apps in their learning process in future. Tenth question is absolutely direct to the point of research and thus detects the future role of Apps in learning English and acquiring knowledge about English language.

More than half of the students nearly 92% have opted to have Apps incorporated into their learning process, specifically in the process of learning English language. A meager group of 8% of the students have registered their dislike to have Apps involved in their future learning. Chart.7 clearly exhibits that the respondents are psychologically adaptable and modernized to the new digital environment for the process of learning.

V. DISCUSSIONS:

From the data triangulation and result analysis the following points can be concluded:

- i) The sample group positively responded their interest in game-based learning.
- ii) It is also suggestive of the fact that the learners' engrossment in using Game Apps in learning English.
- iii) Game-Based learning paves way to innovative educational processes.

Limitations of the study:

The study has been confined to detect the interest of the rural students in learning English language through the use of game Apps.

VI. CONCLUSION:

The present research has successfully detected the interest of the rural students in using Apps. Though the respondents do not have much access to technology like that of the city students, it is found that they are interested to adapt themselves to a new learning process and environment. The majority of the students wish to have game-based learning method in the process of learning English language. By juxtaposing chart.1 and chart.7, one can argue without any obscurity that the minor group of the students who do not use any game Apps have moved away from their current position towards the end of the questionnaire. Hence, there is a deviation in proportion of the students who do not play any video games but have come forward to agree that they want their teachers to adopt game-based learning while teaching English language in their future classrooms. This reveals the acclimatizing psyche and behaviour of the rural students. Finally, it can be concluded that the sample group is psychologically prepared to acquire new knowledge about English language through a new teaching and learning method.

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