Understanding Games and Gamification: A Kappian Analysis[1]

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Abstract

Gamification is the use of gaming elements in a non-gaming context. But in order to understand gamification, a sound theoretical background is mandatory. Karl Kapp is one of the renowned experts on gamification. The main focus of this descriptive paper is to analyse Kapp's inventory of game features and to relate it to four online gamification tools. In doing so, the author hopes to instil a sense of clarity in the minds of teachers on how gamification can be used in the effective structuring of classroom teaching in the online and the offline modes. The four games, *Have U Herd, Chakalaka, Time Out*, and *Beekeeper*, are described in detail and analysed in relation to Kapp's nine characteristics of a game. Furthermore, this article highlights the importance of these games in terms of English language teaching and learning. In the conclusion, the paper offers an explanation of why Kapp's inventory was chosen and provides insights into the significance of gamification.

Resumen

La gamificación es el uso de elementos de juego en un contexto no lúdico. Sin embargo, para comprenderla, es fundamental contar con una sólida base teórica. Karl Kapp es uno de los reconocidos expertos en gamificación. El objetivo principal de este artículo descriptivo es analizar el inventario de características de juego de Kapp y relacionarlo con cuatro herramientas de gamificación en línea. Con ello, el autor espera aclarar a los docentes cómo se puede utilizar la gamificación para estructurar eficazmente la enseñanza en el aula, tanto en línea como presencialmente. Los cuatro juegos, *Have U Herd, Chakalaka, Time Out* y *Beekeeper*, se describen en detalle y se analizan en relación con las nueve características de juego de Kapp. Además, este artículo destaca la importancia de estos juegos para la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del inglés. En la conclusión, el artículo explica por qué se eligió el inventario de Kapp y ofrece información sobre la importancia de la gamificación.

Introduction

This paper aims to analyse and apply Kapp's (2012) game elements to four games from *Wisc-Online*, a platform for learning and gamification from the University of Wisconsin. In doing so, it intends to bridge the gap in technology-enhanced language learning with respect to the Indian teaching/learning organization. Although teachers and pedagogues claim that they are tech-savvy and that they have a fairly good knowledge of technological tools that can be used in the language classroom, there is a lacuna in terms of applying digital and technological tools in the best way. This paper aims at providing clear insights on how a gamification platform can be optimised in the right sense.

Background of the study

Online teaching is relatively new as far as India is concerned. Although it remained a predominant mode of teaching and learning in reference books and research articles, there were few institutions where online teaching was implemented as an add-on for mainline courses or electives. The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic no doubt ushered in a period of anxiety, uncertainty, panic, and dread, but the silver lining that stood out in this dark cloud of disease was the introduction of online teaching as the mode of instruction and learning. Teachers undoubtedly were the primary learners here, spurred on by the instrumental motivation to adapt to the online environment mainly for survival purposes. The popular dictum that the teacher who uses technology will replace the one who does not, hung like Damocles' sword, threatening the teaching fraternity with a do-or-die situation.

With a whole range of webinars focusing on tools for online teaching and web-based instruction, online teaching soon gained momentum and prominence although as with a baby, there were teething problems. Platforms like *Google Meet, Zoom, Teams*, and *Webex* not only proved effective for webinars and online meetings, but provided effective tools in synchronous or asynchronous teaching. Nevertheless, the online mode was not fully internalised due to the following reasons:

Adherence to the lecture mode: Most teachers continued to employ the lecture method, the only difference being the interface – the laptop, tablet or the smart phone. Therefore, students' interest in online classes waned and most of them chose to log into online classes, mute their audio and video, and do whatever appealed to them (Maimaiti et al., 2021).

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Inability to integrate tools and activities in the teaching practicum: Webinars, workshops, seminars, and symposiums have undoubtedly oriented teachers on the range of digital tools that they can optimise. However, applying them in classroom contexts is a challenge in itself. In most online classes, teachers chose to use a digital tool without having a clear idea of its pedagogic value, intended outcomes, or its viability with a certain target group (Haarala-Muhonen et al., 2023).

In other words, during the pandemic the use of online tools was more of an isolated activity that simply could not be internalised or integrated into classroom teaching. Winter et al. (2021) conducted a survey involving thirty-eight primary and post-primary teachers in Ireland to ascertain how tech-savvy they were. The results clearly revealed that a small number of them claimed to have some awareness of technology but avoided using technology most of the time. The others admitted that they had a very basic knowledge of technology.

This gap in online teaching, as mentioned above, is evident in the fact that we have a group of digital immigrants groping with digital platforms and tools, teaching a set of digital natives (Generation Z) who have shorter attention spans, more awareness of the digital world, and who do not find the online classroom interesting and challenging enough.

The following are the specific research gaps with regard to gamification:

Ignorance of the term and the concept it represents: Although the term gamification was coined in the early twenty-first century, most academicians are not aware of what the term means although there is a plethora of literature on the subject. Most people think that gamification means designing or creating games and are therefore wary of its very presence or even mention (Deterding et al., 2011; Kapp, 2012; Koivisto & Hamari, 2019).

Range of gamification tools: A casual *Google* search may yield thousands of results on tools for gamification. But most of them are not user-friendly for novices or beginners of technology-enhanced language learning (TELL). A few others are priced high and are not within the reach of teachers and researchers. The present study of four gamification tools clearly reveals that most of the other games in the platform contain weak gamification elements that may not hold the attention or interest of learners for long.

Reluctance to study the theory: Gamification is one of the relatively newer sub-fields of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) or technology-assisted language learning (TALL). Although there are a number of research articles in the field, most teachers who use such gamification platforms are not very adept at the theory behind it. Hubbard (2021) remarks, "Scholars have been studying CALL technology, materials, tasks, environments, and interactions for four decades, yet many teachers who use technology and even present their experiences with it at major conferences seem to know little or nothing of this literature" (p. 48). This accounts for a lack of a deeper understanding of gamification concepts.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this research paper is to illustrate how using gamification tools in practical teaching does not require specialised knowledge in game mechanics, game design, software programming, or artificial intelligence. Besides, the aim of gamification is to facilitate a participatory learning atmosphere where learners explore and experience their learning potential through fun-filled, game-based activities.

Defining a game

There are many definitions of a game, each focusing on a different perspective. Koster (2013) provides a detailed definition: "Games are something special and unique. They are concentrated chunks ready for our brains to chew on. Since they are abstracted and iconic, they are readily absorbed. Since they are formal systems, they exclude distracting extra details…In other words, games serve as very fundamental and powerful learning tools." (p. 36).

Andrew Wright et al. (2006) provide a more concrete definition from a language teaching and learning perspective. According to them, a game is an entertaining, engaging, and often challenging activity in which there is play and interaction among players. To Salen and Zimmerman (2004), a game is a rule-defined system involving artificial conflict that results in a quantifiable outcome.

Based on their own definitions, authors provide six distinct characteristics of a game – system, players, artificiality, conflict, rules, and quantifiable outcome. Juul (2005) states that a game is

1. a rule-based formal system;
2. with variable and quantifiable outcomes;

3. where different outcomes are assigned different values;
4. where the player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome;
5. the player feels emotionally attached to the outcome;
6. and the consequences of the activity are optional and negotiable. (pp. 6-7)

While Juul is correct about the features or qualities of a game, in order to delve deeply into gamification, it is better to understand the concept in simpler terms.

Kapp (2012), who has fame in gamification, modified Koster's (2013) definition to provide a working definition of a game: "A game is a system in which players engage in an abstract challenge, defined by rules, interactivity, and feedback, that results in a quantifiable outcome often eliciting an emotional reaction" (p. 7). As in the case of Salen and Zimmerman's (2004) definition, the key elements of a game may be extracted from this definition. However, Kapp's (2012)'s elements form the pivotal point of this research paper. But, before going into the elements of a game, it is necessary to provide an overview of gamification.

Gamification

In 2002, a British video game programmer, Nick Pelling, coined the term *gamification*. In simple terms, it refers to the use of games in a non-gaming context like business or education. Kapp (2012) provides a clear and extensive definition of gamification, which is often quoted in research articles and books on gamification: "Gamification is using game-based mechanics, aesthetics and game thinking to engage people, motivate action, promote learning, and solve problems" (p. 10). In the words of Deterding et al (2011), it is "the use of game design elements in non-game contexts" (p. 9). According to Sheldon (2012), gamification involves "applying game mechanics to non-game activities" (p. 75).

Aguilos and Fuschs (2022) said, "One major field that has put gamification techniques into proper use has been the education sector" (p.1). Therefore, Kapp's (2012) classification can be considered most relevant in this regard. He distinguishes between two types of gamification: structural gamification and content gamification. Content gamification is when the learning content itself is structured like a game offering the learner more opportunities and challenges for experiential and participatory learning. Structural gamification is test-based. "The test retains its usual structure wherein it consists of the usual type of questions like gap-filling, true or false, multiple choice, matching, or short answers. But certain elements of gamification are built around it, thereby making it different from the traditional type, *Google Forms or the Go Conqr* quizzes" (Menon, 2021, pp. 233-234).

Gamification software or platforms

It can be said that the internet is teeming with gamification sites. At the same time, for a teacher or anyone willing to experiment with gamification, sites like *Genially*, *Raptivity, EdApp, Educandy, Kahoot, Wisc-Online, BookWidgets, Educaplay, Wordwall and Gamilab* offer clear insights on gamifying elements. Of these, *Wisc-Online* is an open educational resource that is totally free of cost. The other platforms or sites offer free and paid options, of which free options restrict users to the number of games that can be created or the features that can be used (as in the case of *Educandy*, *EdApp*, and *Wordwall*) a limited trial period, or inability to share one's resources (as in the case of *BookWidgets or Class*). In the case of *Educaplay* and *ClassTools*, the paid subscription allows you to privatise your games and keep ads away.

The most remarkable factor about these games is that one does not have to be versed in game design or AI in order to use these platforms or games for teaching/ learning purposes. One only has to type in questions in the template provided, and the software converts it into a game based on the in-built templates that the platform contains. In other words, "Designing a quiz or any learning content is as simple as designing a survey or quiz on *Google Forms*" (Menon, 2021, p. 234). Apart from the above-mentioned gamification sites, there are other sites that contain readymade games and do not offer room for authoring, as in the case of Game Zone (https://www.english-online.org.uk/games/gamezone2.htm).

Wisc-Online

Wisc-Online is a web-based platform from the University of Wisconsin, which contains a repository of web-based resources called "learning objects" (*wisc-online.com*). The games that form part of the platform may be categorised under assessments (informal, of course) or drill-and-practice activities that are used for reinforcement and recapitulation of learning content. There are twenty games listed in *Wisc-Online* (https://www.wisc-online.com/gamebuilder) of which the paper intends to discuss four: *Chakalaka, Have U Herd, Beekeeper*, and *Time Out*. Instead of treating them in isolation, the features of these games are better understood if examined in the light of game characteristics.

Chakalaka: The player/user has to answer multiple-choice questions one after the other. If the player answers a question correctly, he or she gets to play five moves of a matching game, which contains images of animated vegetables. The player must match three or more identical vegetables vertically or horizontally, like in *Candy Crush* type arcade games. The voice message "Very good" serves as an encouragement in addition to the five moves. If a wrong answer is chosen, the player forfeits the privilege of playing the five moves. At the same time, he or she can regain the privilege if the forthcoming question is answered correctly. At the end of the game, the voice-over says, "Boom boom chakalaka." The player is also given the option of playing again in case the earlier performance is considered ineffective.

Have U Herd: This game is set against a narrative context. The player needs to form a band, for which aliens from space decide to offer support. The game begins when the player presses the button ADD MEMBER. A spaceship arrives with three aliens, each of whom can play a different musical instrument. On clicking on an alien, the player can preview the sound that the alien's musical instrument produces. Out of the three, the player can choose any one alien. However, to add that alien to the band, the player needs to answer a multiple-choice question correctly. If the answer is wrong, the spaceship will leave with the three aliens. The process of adding a new member to the band is repeated this way till all the questions are answered. Light flashes on the musical band once the game is over, followed by a notification that the game has come to an end.

Beekeeper: This is a remake of the roll-the-dice game, the difference here being that instead of the dice, the player gets to click the SPIN icon. The game offers the choice of a single player playing against the computer or two players playing against each other. On clicking the SPIN icon, a number appears. If the number is seven, then upon answering a multiple-choice question correctly, the bee moves seven steps forward. This continues until the goal is reached – the bee reaches its hive. A wrong answer makes the bee tipsy and keeps it in the same place. But, if the player gets most answers right, there are chances for the bee to reach the hive without answering all the questions.

Time Out: This game is a typical timer-controlled game. A question is first displayed, and then the notification appears asking the user to start the timer and to answer the question. The quicker the answer, the greater the reward (more points). The slower the answer, the fewer the points.

Now that the concept of game, gamification, and the four games have been explained, it is necessary to tie up the loose ends by relating these games to Kapp's (2012) game elements.

Elements of a game

Many experts on game theory and gamification have outlined the characteristics of a game (Juul, 2005; Koster, 2013; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Wright et al., 2006), but, as mentioned earlier, Kapp's (2012) conceptualisation has been chosen for this study due to its extensive nature. His theory outlines nine characteristics of a game.

Abstractions of concepts and reality

A game focuses more on ideas pertaining to reality rather than specific events. A game operates within a limited space and offers scope for more focus. The four games chosen for this study operate within a limited range set by the teacher.

The second point is that the cause-and-effect factor is clearly identified in the above-mentioned games. In *Time Out*, a quick answer to the multiple-choice question warrants more points, while a slow answer (just seconds before timing out) guarantees fewer than ten points. A wrong answer, as in most games, carries zero points. In the case of *Chakalaka*, a wrong answer denies the user the reward of playing five moves in the matching game. *Beekeeper* does not allow the bee to progress if the answer is wrong, while in *Have U Herd*, the spaceship leaves with its three aliens.

The third point of abstracted reality is, as Kapp (2012) states, leaving out extraneous information that affects attention. For instance, in *Have U Herd*, the user is supposed to form a music band of aliens. Although the aliens are the element of fantasy here, the tiring work, the tension, and the running around (the unwanted reality) that is required in creating a team is not necessary here because this is merely a representation of a realistic situation, starting a music band.

The fourth point in this feature is the reduction of time required to grasp the concepts of the game (Kapp, 2012). Understanding the basic know-how of *Have U Herd* (relatively more challenging than the other three games) requires very little time. Forming a band as a novice may take a very long time in real life. But, in a hypothetical situation, things are easier and more relaxing.

Goals

The goal is the main factor that distinguishes between a game and play. While the fun element is predominant in play and the goal recedes into the background, a game is largely determined by its specific goal(s). A goal generally implies purpose, focus, and measurable outcomes. In a game, the very idea that you have won an alien (*Have U Herd*) for your band, or have gotten more points (*Time Out*), or have helped the bee move forward quickly (*Beekeeper*) shows how close you are to the goal. The same applies to mistakes that slow down your progress towards the goal. Usually, in a game, minor goals (winning aliens one by one, or getting more points, or having correct answers t to help the bee move forward) eventually lead to the major goal (building a music band, getting more points on the leader board, helping the bee reach its hive), which also signifies the completion of the game.

Rules

The main objective of rules is to limit or rregulate player actions and to keep the game manageable (Kapp, 2012). Salen and Zimmerman (2004) list three types of rules of play: operational rules, constitutive rules, and implicit rules. Operational rules are guidelines that players require in order to play. For instance, the game will not start in Beekeeper unless the SPIN icon is pressed. Similarly, in *Have U Herd*, one needs to click on the ADD MEMBER icon in order to start the game and also to proceed further after gaining an alien. One also needs to confirm an alien before proceeding to answer the multiple-choice question.

Constitutive rules refer to the mathematical rationale or the general logic that operates under the surface of operational rules. At the language teaching level, they could refer to language theories or concepts whose pedagogic value is deployed by the teacher while framing questions. They could also refer to the language teaching theories that these games embody. At another level, they could refer to the game builder's logic that is responsible for the recurrence of aliens, the probability of a certain number occurring on the dice (>5, >10, for instance) and the possibility of matching three or four vegetables.

Implicit rules are those that are not stated openly. For instance, after confirming an alien, you cannot go back to choose another one. Similarly, you cannot play more than five moves of matching. You cannot change the option after the timer rings. These rules vary according to the nature of the game.

Salen and Zimmerman (2004) outline six characteristics of game rules. According to them, game rules, limit player action, are explicit and unambiguous, are shared by all the players, are fixed, are binding, and are repeatable.

These rules are self-explanatory. The rules are fixed for all games, including the above-mentioned ones, and the steps can be repeated (gaining rewards, playing the game again, or answering the question again in case it is wrong). The rules are clear in most games, and there is little room for doubt or confusion.

Conflict, competition, or cooperation

Conflict is a challenge provided by an opponent (in most cases, the computer). In the case of the four games, the questions are posed at random by the computer, and the answers are provided at random, so if ten users play the game, each may have questions and options appearing in a different order. Competition, on the other hand, is a race to victory. As Kapp (2012) aptly puts it, "Winning is accomplished by being faster, cleverer, or more skilled than the opponents" (p. 32). Cooperation is where players work with others as in a role play. However this aspect is not included in these games unless players chose to play the game in pairs or small groups in which one person handles the device and the controls while the others guide the person towards the right answer.

This feature of a game has always been a point of contention among language teaching experts and game experts. For instance, Wright et al. (2006) are of the opinion that,

> *Competition against others is not an essential ingredient of games, but challenge often is. In selecting and describing our games we have tried to minimise competition, with winners and losers, and to maximise challenge, where everyone feels inspired to 'have a go' and do their best. Competition may be stimulating for some, but it can also be destructive, making players anxious, with losers categorising themselves as 'no good' and the winners categorising themselves as 'very good'. Neither of these things may be true, and neither helps learning. (pp. 1-2)*

They are quite concerned about lowering the self-esteem of learners in the process of game and play. On the other hand, Sailer and Homner (2020) hold a different view:

> *Collaboration—as well as competition augmented by aspects of collaboration (i.e., constructive competition)—can have additional beneficial effects on intrinsic motivation when compared with solitary engagement in an activity; as in cases of collaboration and competition augmented by aspects of collaboration, the need for relatedness is fostered*

> *additionally. Mere competition, however, can thwart feelings of relatedness when the goal is to defeat each other rather than to improve skills together. (p. 81)*

Time

Of the four games mentioned, *Time Out* is the only time-bound game. Usually, in games time is related to getting more points, the top position on the leaderboard, or various awards and badges. In the case of *Time Out*, more points and a position in the leaderboard are the main stimuli that encourage players to pursue the game to its very end.

Reward structures

According to Kapp (2012), there are two views on rewards and badges. One is to make sure that they are initially easy to get in a game so that players stay motivated and pursue the game to the very end. The other is to avoid rewards and badges because the very act of playing a game as part of the learning experience is a reward in itself. In the four games, as mentioned earlier, the leaderboard is the chief impetus that keeps the game moving.

Feedback

Kapp (2012) emphasises that feedback not only evokes the right behaviour, but also guides learners towards the right outcome. Hunicke (2009) uses the 3E formula to define juicy feedback – feedback that is effective, engaging, and exciting. She goes further to outline eight parameters of juicy feedback:

Tactile: This should not be seen as something the player can touch, but as something they can feel. The motivation, the sense of excitement, and the anxiety in gaining more points are all tactile in nature and provide effective feedback to players.

Inviting: The player is keen on achieving the feedback, particularly an encouraging word or a visual like balloons popping or the sound of applause.

Repeatable: Actions of encouragement and warning recur throughout the game to keep the player focused. For instance, the "Very good" occurs after every right answer in *Chakalaka*.

Coherent: The feedback is mainly set within the context of the game. The four games mentioned offer feedback within the framework of each game.

Continuous: The feedback is a natural flow of events. There is no pause in the four games and instantaneous feedback is provided to players depending on the options they choose.

Emergent: This is similar to the coherent and continuous quality – the feedback emerges from the game and not outside the game.

Balanced: In most cases, although the player likes the encouragement that ensues from a right answer or move, he or she is not solely dependent on it. For instance, the "very good" audio is not the sole source of motivation for the player, but an add-on.

Fresh: This refers to sudden twists and turns during the game. While this is a recurring feature in PlayStation games and other multimedia-enhanced animation games, learning games are devoid of this feature. They are simpler and 'unsophisticated', and therefore, it is no surprise that the four games mentioned do not possess this feature.

Levels

Again, the four games chosen do not consist of different levels (beginner, intermediate, advanced). There is only a single mission-based level—getting the answers right and thereby accomplishing the goal. Therefore, player levels in terms of higher expertise and accomplishment are hardly seen in these games.

Storytelling

The four games have a weak narrative element and two of them hardly have a narrative element – *Time Out* and *Chakalaka*. In *Beekeeper*, the only narrative is that a bee lost its way to the hive, and every right move helps it to its hive. The hurdles in its journey are the wrong answers. Similarly, in *Have U Herd*, the context of creating a music band offers a lean narrative element in the game.

Why Kapp?

Having outlined the features of a game, it is now time to explain why Kapp's (2012) inventory of game characteristics has been chosen:

- These characteristics serve as parameters in understanding gaming platforms and the scope they offer in teaching and learning.
- Using these characteristics enables researchers and teachers to understand the gaps in gamification tools and consequently, open venues for resolving these issues.
- Teachers and researchers may employ these features to understand the rationale behind every game and choose the one best suited for their target group.

Why Gamification?

Gee (2003) lists three main characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

1. The learner must be enticed to *try*, even if he or she already has good grounds to be afraid to try.
2. The learner must be enticed to *put in lots of effort* even if he or she begins with little motivation to do so.
3. The learner must *achieve some meaningful success* when he or she has expended this effort. (p. 61-62)

According to Gee (2003), these three qualities are found in video games. But, instead of limiting these qualities to a narrow sphere, it would be more appropriate to relate them to game-based activities in general. Dyer (2015) said that gamification is a popular concept mainly because of the element of play. Earlier learning frameworks considered play 'non-relevant' in terms of engagement for facilitating cognition in education. However, recent advances in the field of game-based learning have demonstrated that play has a vital role in terms of learner retention and engagement (pp. 47-48).

Although one may agree with Dyer's (2015) view, it is not just the play element that serves as the key advantage. Even with the slightest degree of brainstorming, it is possible to come up with a lot of advantages in gamification and its pivotal role in language learning. Kim et al. (2018) affirm that there is more to gamification than we perceive. They believe that gamification is not intended for fun and entertainment. On the other hand, it is an instructional approach with which teachers will be able to:

- Increase student engagement and motivation.
- Enhance learning performance and academic achievement.
- Improve recall and retention.
- Provide instant feedback on students' progress and activity.
- Catalyze behavioral changes.
- Allow students to check their progress.
- Promote collaboration skills. (p. 5)

Skill development

Apart from the advantages mentioned above, gamification has been an effective tool in the teaching of basic communication skills. Samosa et al. (2021), through their research, illustrate how gamification improves learners' writing skills. Aynsley et al. (2023) have demonstrated the effectiveness of gamification in enhancing listening skills and Sultan et al. (2023) affirm that gamification facilitates active vocabulary skills. The four games mentioned in the *Wisc-online* platform can be used to effectively practice grammar, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and even writing skills. However for grammar tasks or activities, the following types of questions would be more appropriate:

- Provide a sentence in the active voice in the question. Then, provide three sentences (or even four) in the passive voice (or impersonal passive) and ask learners/ players to choose the right sentence (to the question) in the passive voice.
- Provide a sentence in the declarative form and provide three or four options in the interrogative form. Learners/ players have to choose the right sentence that is the equivalent of the declarative sentence.
- Create a gap-filling activity in which a sentence is provided with gaps to be filled in with an article, adjective, adverb, pronoun, verb, conjunction, or preposition. The sentence will feature in the question followed by the instruction (Fill in the gaps using the right preposition). Learners/ players will choose the right option from a set of three or four options provided.

For vocabulary tasks, gap-filling activities would be most appropriate, while for spelling and punctuation, the question can be to find out the correct spelling or the sentence with the correct punctuation where learners can choose the right option.

In the case of writing tasks, a topic can be given in the question (e.g., *My Best* Friend), and three or four topic sentences can be given in the options. Learners/players can choose the most appropriate topic sentence. For pronunciation activities, a phonemic symbol can be provided in the question slot, followed by instructions on how to find the word containing that phoneme. Learners/players can choose from three or four options, where each option is a word. Teachers can also use these games to help learners practice spoken expressions (though in the written or digital form). For instance, the question can be: *Which expression would you use to ask for permission?* Three or four options containing different expressions can be provided for the learners to think and choose.

Grey areas

In spite of all the advantages that experts have listed, one must accept that gamification has a long way to go, at least in terms of authoring tools that are used in the teaching and learning set-up. For instance, while the four games mentioned in the study are highly engaging and motivating, they do not offer the possibility to add images or audio to questions, a feature that is commonly found in some of the games in *Wordwall* and *Educaplay*. Most platforms have weak gamification elements that may not succeed in holding learners' attention for long in the years to come. With learners' minds tuned towards games that employ a great number of graphics and multimedia, these games are poor substitutes that can hardly compete in the race for students' attention, let alone win it.

Furthermore, the number of open educational resources must be on the increase to enable teachers and researchers from developing countries to experiment with such resources and to gain more insights into effective language teaching and learning tools. It is hoped that the day will not be far when gamification shall become an integral part of the Indian educational system.

Conclusion

This research paper, based on theoretical or descriptive research, affirms that a clear and lucid understanding of game features and the rationale behind certain gamification tools can help teachers to discover which tool is more likely to suit their target group, and which outcomes they can expect in the process. In addition, students who wish to pursue their research in applied linguistics and language teaching may find it an appropriate starting point if they are interested in game-based or activity-based teaching/learning.

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