

**OPEN ACCESS**

SUBMITTED 12 August 2025

ACCEPTED 08 September 2025

PUBLISHED 10 October 2025

VOLUME Vol.05 Issue10 2025

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Theoretical Foundations Of Teaching English To Children Aged 5–6 Based On A Gamification Approach

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Abstract: This article examines the theoretical foundations of applying the gamification approach in teaching English to children aged 5–6. It highlights the psychological and pedagogical characteristics of young learners, defines the main principles of gamification, and analyzes its forms and methods in educational practice. The study concludes that game-based technologies significantly enhance motivation, communication skills, and interest in learning a foreign language at the early stages of education.

Keywords: Gamification, game-based learning, English language, motivation, children aged 5–6, innovative methods, education.

Introduction: Modern education requires continuous innovation in teaching methods and forms aimed at increasing students’ engagement in the learning process. This is especially important at the primary level, where the foundations of cognitive activity, independence, and motivation for learning are formed.

One of the most effective and contemporary directions in pedagogy is the gamification approach, which involves the use of game mechanics and elements in a non-game educational context. For children aged 5–6, whose leading activity is play, this approach serves as a natural and productive way to acquire a foreign language.

Children aged 5–6 are in the transitional period from preschool to primary school. During this time, attention, memory, and imagination develop rapidly, and intrinsic motivation for learning begins to form. However, effective learning at this age requires emotional

engagement and the use of play as a core activity.

According to L.S. Vygotsky and D.B. Elkonin, play is the main form of activity through which children's cognitive abilities, speech, and thinking develop. Therefore, English language teaching at this stage should take into account the natural play-based nature of children's learning. [1,2]

The term "gamification" refers to the use of game elements—points, levels, rewards, and competition—in non-game contexts to increase motivation and engagement [4].

The key principles of gamification include:

Motivation and engagement through play;

Progression through levels and achievements;

Immediate feedback through results and rewards;

Freedom of choice and learner autonomy;

Emotional satisfaction and enjoyment.

In pedagogical practice, gamification fosters positive attitudes toward learning, reduces anxiety, and develops teamwork and communication skills.

In teaching English to children aged 5–6, gamification can be implemented through various forms:

Traditional games: flashcard games, board games, movement-based games (e.g., "Find the Color," "What's Missing?").

Role-playing activities: "At the Shop," "My Family," "Travelling to London."

Digital platforms: Kahoot!, Wordwall, Quizizz, Duolingo Kids, Lingokids.

Achievement systems: learners receive points, stars, or badges for completing tasks.[5]

The game-based structure of lessons helps develop listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in a natural and relaxed manner.

According to Prensky M. studies demonstrate that game-based learning significantly enhances student motivation, improves the acquisition of vocabulary and grammar, and supports communication skill development.[3]

Practical experience with gamified English lessons for children aged 5–6 shows:

increased interest in the subject;

active participation of all learners;

improved memory and attention;

reduced learning anxiety.[6]

Hence, gamification contributes to creating a positive learning atmosphere and fosters sustainable interest in learning foreign languages.

CONCLUSION

The gamification approach in teaching English to children aged 5–6 represents an effective pedagogical technology that ensures high levels of motivation, emotional engagement, and cognitive activity.

Using game elements allows educators to adapt the learning process to the psychological characteristics of young learners, making language acquisition both natural and enjoyable.

Thus, gamification is not merely a modern trend but a scientifically grounded and promising direction in contemporary education, promoting successful early foreign language learning.

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