Chapter 12
Gamification as a Teaching Resource for English–Medium Instruction and Multilingual Education at University

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ABSTRACT

Gamification has emerged in recent years as a resource that incorporates game-related elements and mechanics into the classroom to foster students' motivation, engagement, and further competences. With the proliferation of English-medium instruction (EMI) and multilingual degree programs at university nowadays, new and innovative teaching tools are desirable to help students cope with the double-challenging task of acquiring new and complex disciplinary content through a foreign language. This chapter provides an overview of some recent computer-based gamification tools that may be applied in EMI and multilingual university settings. More specifically, the main features and advantages of these tools for these specific educational contexts are explored. This chapter may be useful for researchers and practitioners in the field of EMI and multilingual teaching in higher education.

INTRODUCTION

English-medium instruction (EMI) and multilingual education is gaining momentum in higher education institutions worldwide. The increasing need to foster internationalization at universities has resulted in an exponential growth of courses and degree programs taught through a foreign or second language (e.g. English) (Doiz et al., 2012; Macaro et al., 2017; Smit & Dafouz, 2012). Within these settings,

students find an extra degree of difficulty. The challenging task of acquiring new and complex knowledge is reinforced by the fact that it is taught in a language different from the native one, which may lead to increasing student inhibition, content understanding issues and low in-class participation rates. Consequently, a strong demand for new teaching methods and techniques to cope with these issues in EMI and multilingual environments has arisen among the university teaching community (Sánchez-Pérez & Salaberri, 2017). Faced with this need, new and innovative teaching resources to facilitate the teaching and learning of subject content through a non-native language are increasingly emerging. This is the case of gamification, a teaching technique defined as "using game-based mechanics, aesthetics, and game thinking to engage people, motivate action, promote learning, and solve problems" (Kapp, 2012, p. 10). Gamification incorporates game-related elements and mechanics into the classroom with the aim of fostering students' motivation, engagement and further competences. The recent interest in gamification as a tool in educational contexts has given rise to an ever-growing number of studies aiming to provide evidence that demonstrates that gamification is a powerful and effective teaching resource in computing sciences (Caton & Greenhill, 2014; Ibáñez et al., 2014). Given the connection between motivation and language learning (Brown, 2007), gamification has also gained increasing attention in second language education (cf. Al-Hadithy & Ali, 2018; Figueroa, 2015; Garland, 2015, among many others). In addition, university students have been found to be particularly sensitive to gamified courses in different fields and disciplines (Barata et al., 2013; Caton & Greenhill, 2014; Fanfarelli & McDaniel, 2017; Wiggins, 2016).

Within this context, our main contention is that EMI and multilingual settings may benefit from game elements and mechanics at university levels. In order to support our claims, we first present an outline of the recent challenges faced by tertiary level teachers in multilingual contexts, and the reasons that point to the suitability of computer-based elements in these settings. Then, we provide an overview of some of the most relevant aspects of gamification, including insights from some of the most recent studies engaged in assessing the advantages and drawbacks of gamification as a pedagogical technique. Lastly, we address some recent computer-based gamification tools that may be applied in EMI and multilingual university settings. In particular, we explore the main features and advantages of these tools for these specific educational contexts.

MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION AND COMPUTER-MEDIATED TECHNIQUES AT TERTIARY LEVEL

The approaches to multilingual education at university level have been reconsidered since the implementation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This involves a complete restructuring of the traditional concepts ranging from the use of new technological resources to the understanding of new roles of both students and lecturers. This new academic system needs to adapt to the emerging demands of the higher education arena and, for such purposes, some changes are necessary, which means certain separation from traditional educational concepts and methods.

A new aspect supported by the EHEA is the implementation of activities aimed to develop critical and creative thinking among students. Accordingly, new learning ways are constantly appearing, along with new methods and resources to improve the teaching-learning process (Pérez et al., 2009). Within the EHEA, the cognitive needs and the level of the students have a crucial role, especially when the

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