

## Unlocking Language Learning Through Play: The Power of Goose Chase in EFL Education

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### **Abstract:**

Gamification has become a transformative tool in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. This study explores the use of Goose Chase, a digital scavenger hunt platform, in first-year EFL courses at a Sino-American university in China. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 40 students who participated in scavenger hunts over three semesters. The analysis identified three key themes: socialization benefits, skill development, and novelty, along with challenges in management, game design, and student perceptions.

Findings show that Goose Chase promotes English skill development through interactive missions, fosters leadership and communication, and enhances classroom dynamics by encouraging collaboration. However, students faced challenges with motivation, time management, "camera shame," and occasional perceptions of missions as purposeless. Design limitations, such as restricted video upload durations and mission inflexibility, were also noted.

This study highlights six strategies for effective mission creation: fostering choice, encouraging creativity, incorporating the target language, integrating review opportunities, emphasizing fun, and promoting teamwork. These strategies enhance engagement and address platform constraints. Ultimately, Goose Chase helps connect learning to real-world contexts, deepening language understanding and building key skills. This research offers valuable insights for educators, emphasizing the importance of balancing engagement with pedagogical purpose in gamified learning environments.