

# Gamifying Vocabulary Learning

A Moodle-based learning activity for the  
Academic Word List

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# Presentation Outline

- Project background and overview
- Vocabulary learning habits: an XJTLU survey
- Outcome: Academic Word List Game for the XJTLU Moodle (aka. “ICE”)
- Future directions



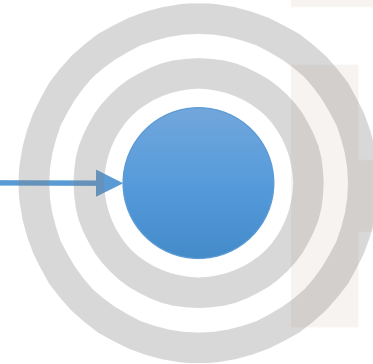
# Gamification: Definition

Games



Learning from games;  
Understanding what makes the games  
successful

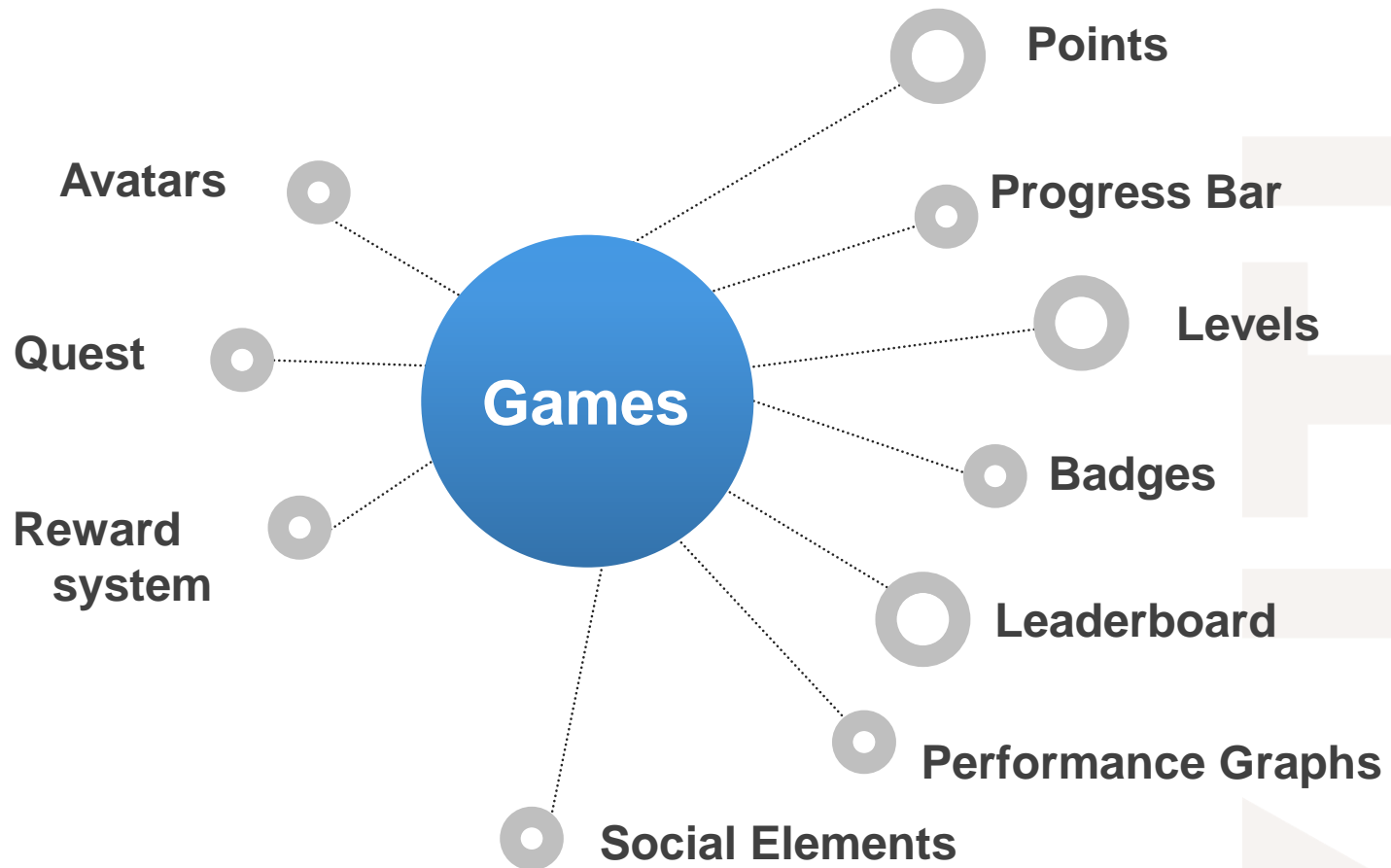
Non-game Contexts



Gamification: the “use of game  
elements and game design  
techniques in non-game contexts”  
(Werbach & Hunter, 2012).



# Elements of Games



Source: Figueroa Flores (2015, p.39)



# Gamifying Vocab Learning: Context

- Little research has looked into how gamification could help young adult learners acquire academic vocabulary.
- Academic Word List (AWL) 570 word families frequently used in academic texts (Coxhead, 2000)
  - 10 sublists
  - Increasing difficulty
- In the past, XJTLU students were usually encouraged to learn the AWL on their own.



# Level Up!

- a Moodle plug-in
- offers gamification elements
  - Levels
  - Points
  - Badges
  - Leaderboards
- available to purchase and install on ICE

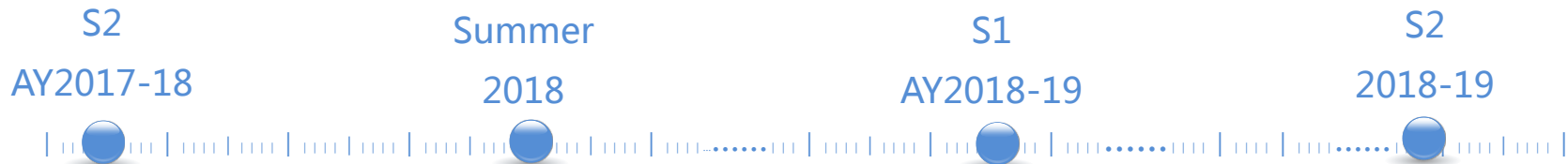


# Our Project's Aims

- To develop a learning activity that will gamify the learning of the AWL for ICE, the XJTLU Moodle platform.
- To progress, students complete a series of exercises and gain points.
- The game will be completed once the students have finished and passed all the sublist quizzes.
- Received a grant of £5700 in Dec. 2017 from XJTLU's Teaching Development Fund



# Project Development Timeline



- **Stage 1: Online Survey**





# Survey of Vocabulary Learning Habits

- Aimed to examine:
  - Perceptions about Vocabulary Learning
  - Study Habits
  - Experiences with AWL
- Instrument: designed by project investigators; 3 sections of 23 Questions
- Participants: XJTLU students
- Survey platform: XJTLU Online Survey



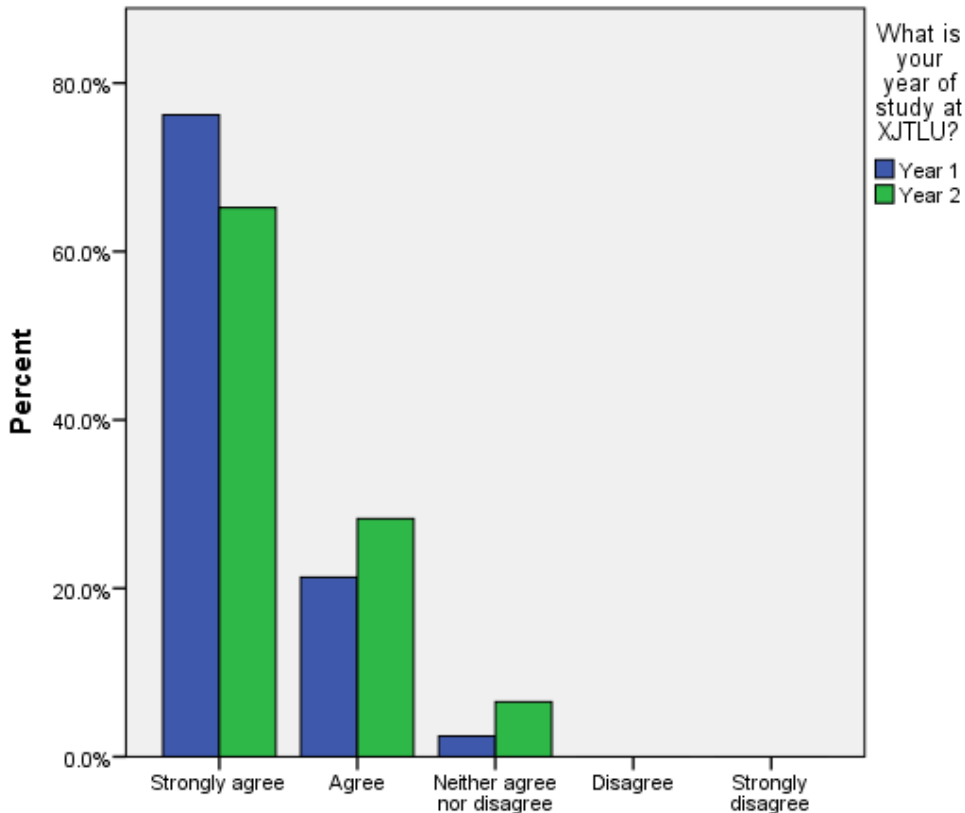
# Vocabulary Learning Habits

- **Participants:**
  - Y1: 122 students
  - Y2: 46 students



# Perceptions about Vocabulary Learning

“It’s **important** for students to learn vocabulary **in their free time.**”



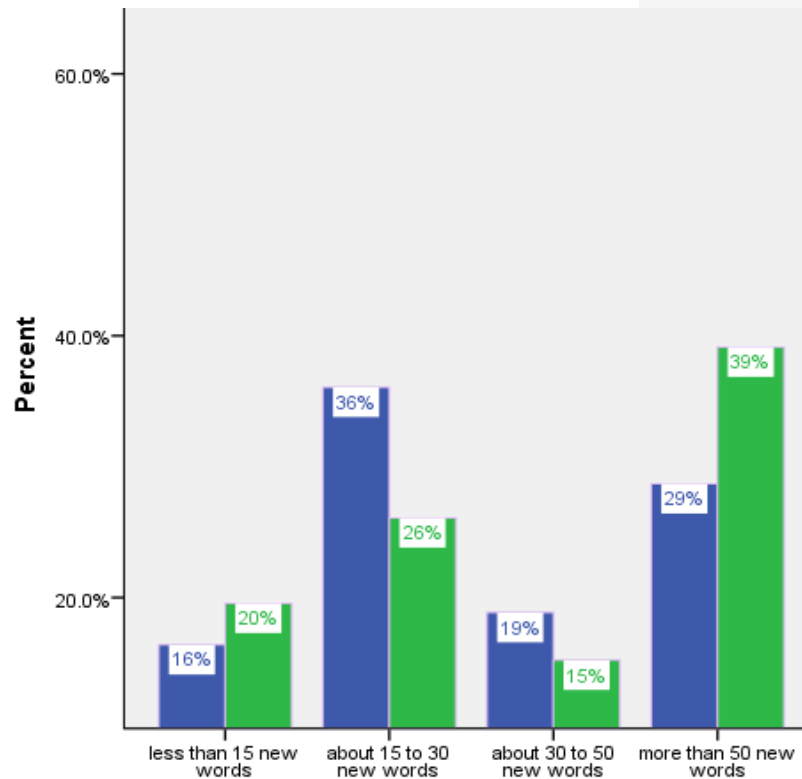
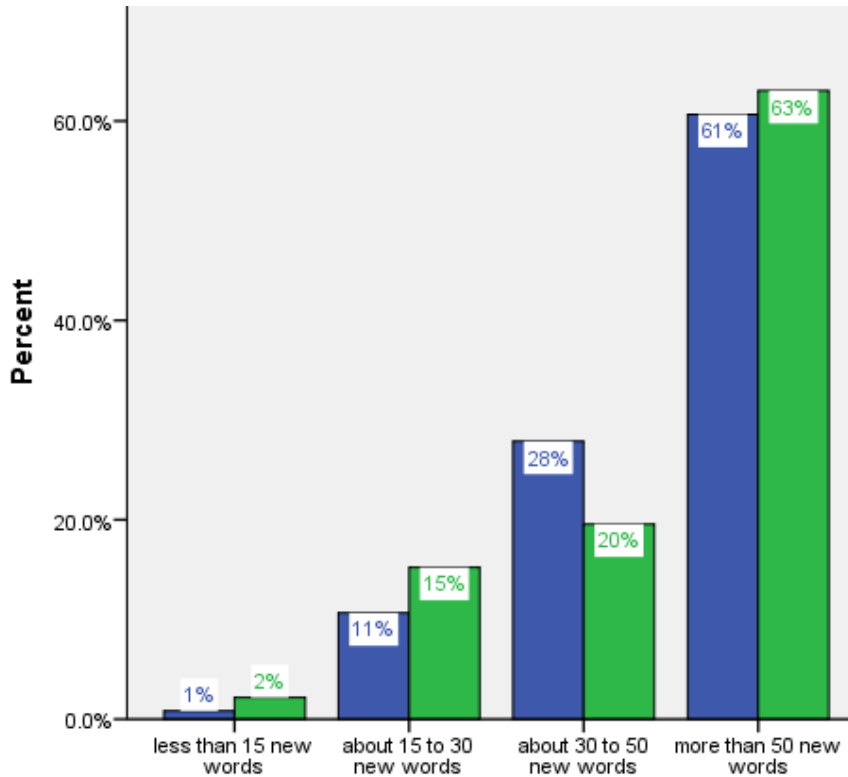
98% of Y1 students &  
94% of Y2 students  
agree with the  
statement



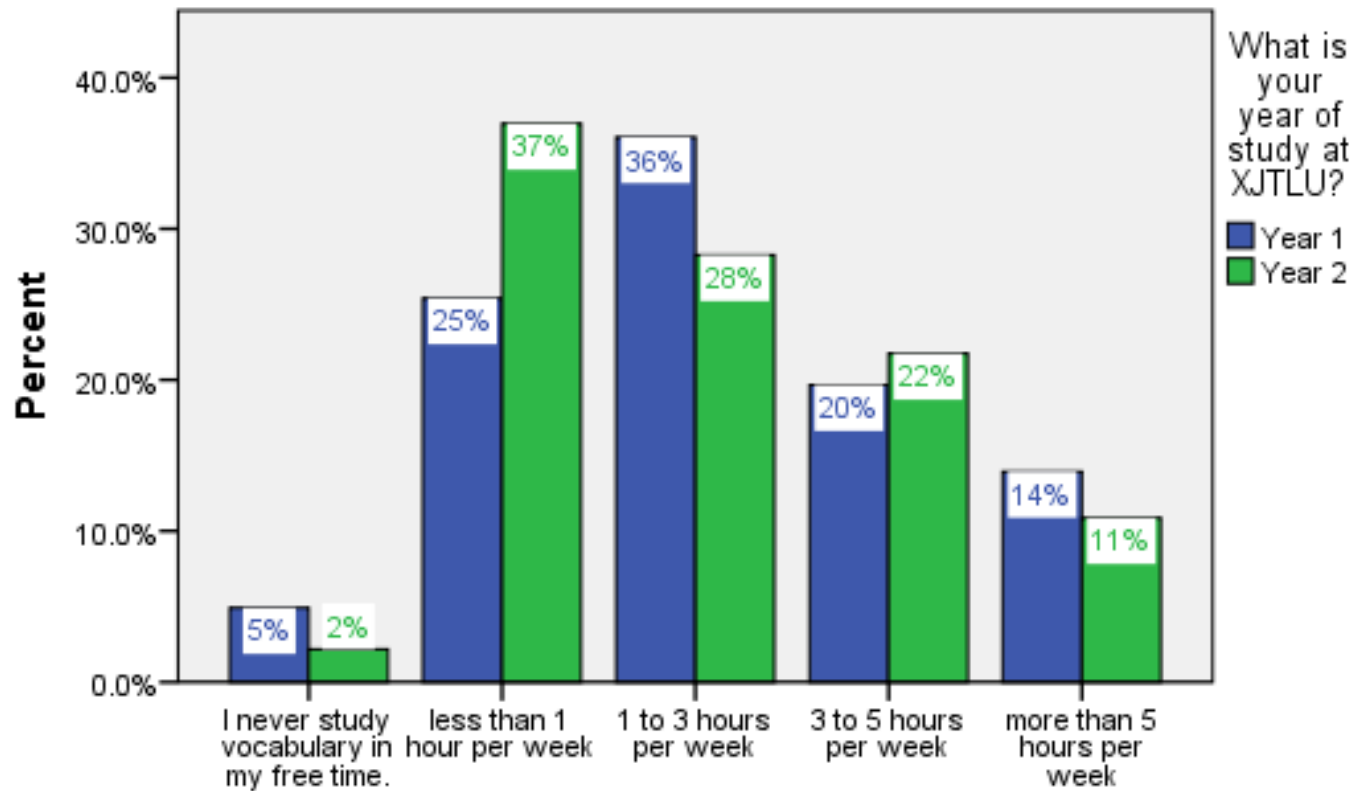
# Vocabulary Learning: Words per Week

How many words do you think a student should learn?

How many words do you learn?



# Time Spent Learning Vocabulary per Week



# Findings from the Survey

- Students understood the importance of vocabulary learning, but generally didn't act on this.
- Similarly, students found the AWL useful in their EAP studies, but they didn't focus on it.
- Overall, there was little evidence that students had clear strategies to learn vocabulary.



# Project Development Timeline



- **Stage 2: Development of AWL sublist question banks.**



# Project Development Timeline



**Stage 3: Integration to ICE**





# Project Development Timeline



**Stage 4 Initial Trial with 100+ students (Semester 2, AY 2018-2019)**



# Level Up! on ICE

- Live demo



# Challenges and Constraints

## Game Design

- Making rules about progression
  - Having a pass grade vs. reattempts
- Speed of completion/avoiding frustration

## ICE (Moodle platform)

- Building question bank: practicality
- Lack of appealing gaming elements

## Students

- Volunteer engagement



# Future Directions

- Trials are underway
- Feedback from trial users will commence soon
- Possible enhancements
- Full release later in 2019 to the community



# Wider Applications of *Level Up!*

- Not limited to EAP
- Can be used to gamify other module work, self-study and projects
- Possible examples:
  - Reading programs
  - Other glossary study



**Thank you!**  
**谢谢**



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- Instructional Designer at International Business School Suzhou at XJTLU



# References:

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