

Assessing Teachers' Readiness for Integrating Gamification in ESL Instruction Using Quizizz in Teaching Vocabulary Skills

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Abstract

Despite the potential benefits of gamification in ESL education, challenges persist in its integration due to issues like technical difficulties and limited integration of gamification in lessons. There is limited understanding of teachers' perceptions and experiences with gamification tools, in particular Quizizz to teach vocabulary skills. This study investigates the integration of Quizizz in teaching vocabulary in Malaysian ESL classrooms, focusing on two research questions: (1) What are teachers' attitudes toward using Quizizz in teaching vocabulary? and (2) What are the perceived outcomes for students' language learning? This qualitative study was designed, using semi-structured interviews with two ESL teachers selected through purposive sampling to answer these questions. The findings reveal that teachers view Quizizz as a highly engaging tool due to its interactive features, instant feedback, and gamified structure, which promote student motivation and active participation. Teachers also noted improvements in students' vocabulary retention, confidence in communication, and ability to apply vocabulary in speaking and writing tasks. Challenges such as limited access to technology and internet connectivity were significant, but teachers mitigated these issues through strategies like offline quizzes and peer collaboration. Teachers expressed a desire for further platform enhancements, including real-time collaborative features, to foster teamwork and deepen learning outcomes. Overall, This study aims to bridge the research gap by providing insights into teachers' readiness, challenges, and strategies for integrating Quizizz in ESL vocabulary instruction, offering practical implications for enhancing gamified learning in diverse classroom settings.

Keywords: English Language Education, ESL Instruction, Gamification, Quizizz, Vocabulary Learning

Introduction

In English language education, the integration of gamification as a teaching strategy seems promising. Its integration may enhance student engagement towards achieving learning outcomes. However, the successful implementation of gamification hinges on teachers'

readiness, encompassing their attitudes, in-class practices, challenges faced during implementation, and suitable strategies for improvement (Sáez-López et al., 2022). Despite the potential benefits, there is a gap in understanding teachers' perspectives and readiness towards incorporating gamification in ESL instruction.

Research on gamification has demonstrated significant positive correlations between increased motivation, effort expended, time dedicated to tasks, and improved learning outcomes among students (Chans & Portuguese-Castro, 2021; Puspitasari, 2023; Dirgantoro, 2022). Similarly, Kurniati (2021) highlighted that gamification not only motivates students but also encourages them to embrace challenges and learn from failures, thereby fostering a growth mindset. However, despite its potential benefits, ESL educators encounter various challenges such as lack of understanding of gamification integration, time constraints in lesson planning, and varying attitudes towards its effectiveness; all of which can impede the successful implementation of gamification strategies in ESL education. (Araújo & Carvalho, 2022). Aligned with those challenges, Lester (2023) also discussed various barriers to the utilisation of gamification and game-based learning in higher education, emphasising that educators often encounter difficulties related to the perceived complexity of gamified systems. Rodríguez and Argüello (2023) also contribute to this discourse by indicating that teachers perceive gamification as a challenging strategy that requires significant time and effort to develop effective interventions. Their findings suggest that educators often feel overwhelmed by the demands of creating gamified lessons while balancing other teaching responsibilities. This resonates with the time constraints mentioned by Araújo and Carvalho. These challenges necessitate a deeper understanding of the enablers and barriers to successful integration. Technical issues, such as those arising from inadequate technological skills among teachers, constraints in internet accessibility and device availability, have been identified as hindrances to the seamless implementation of gamified learning activities in ESL instruction (Mazlan et al., 2022). Furthermore, the variability in design elements used in digital game-based language learning (DGBLL) presents challenges in designing gamified activities that cater to the diverse needs and preferences among ESL learners (Govender & Arnedo-Moreno, 2021). Moreover, while gamified learning can enhance engagement, it also poses challenges related to sustaining student engagement over time, balancing competition with collaboration, and ensuring a positive learning environment (Nathan & Hashim, 2023; Zhang & Hasim, 2023). These challenges underscore the complexity of integrating gamification into ESL instruction and the need for educators to navigate them effectively.

Existing literature also highlights deficiencies in research, including limited studies specifically addressing teachers' perspectives on gamification in ESL instruction and a lack of comprehensive exploration across different educational levels and contexts (e.g. Sajinčič et al., 2022; Helvich et al., 2023). Additionally, there is a lack of consensus among educators regarding best practices and strategies for integrating gamification into ESL instruction, emphasising a need for further research in this area (Mårell-Olsson, 2022). Furthermore, the challenges faced by ESL teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in adapting to distance learning, suggest the importance of exploring innovative teaching methodologies, for example, gamification (Yaccob et al., 2023).

Given the growing integration of technology in education, it is crucial to examine how ESL teachers perceive and adapt to gamified learning tools. Understanding their readiness

and experiences can provide valuable insights into the practical challenges of gamification implementation and how it can be optimized for vocabulary instruction. By investigating teachers' perspectives on Quizizz, this study contributes to the existing body of research by offering qualitative insights into their attitudes, challenges, and strategies. These findings can inform teacher training programs, curriculum designers, and policymakers on how to better support educators in leveraging gamification for effective language learning. Therefore, this research is conducted to address the said issue based on these two research questions: (1) What are teachers' attitudes toward the use of Quizizz in teaching English vocabulary? and (2) What are the perceived outcomes towards students' language learning by using Quizizz in teaching English vocabulary?

Literature Review

English Vocabulary

The acquisition of English vocabulary among Malaysian secondary school students is critical to enhancing their English proficiency. Research indicates that Malaysian upper primary ESL learners are exposed to vocabulary aligned with the CEFR curriculum, which emphasises the significance of vocabulary in daily communication (Fadzli, 2023). Innovative pedagogical strategies such as storytelling and game-based learning have been identified as effective tools for vocabulary instruction, offering an engaging and immersive environment for students (Centeno et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2022). Despite these advances, challenges persist, including anxiety, lack of motivation, fear of criticism, and inadequate teaching approaches in speaking lessons using newly learned vocabulary (Jie et al., 2023). The varying proficiency levels of students highlight the need for differentiated instruction to cater to diverse learner needs (Raj, 2023).

Ismail (2021) further explored vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) in Malaysian ESL learners, identifying a reliance on determination strategies such as context clues and dictionaries, as well as social strategies like peer learning. The study emphasised the importance of explicit instruction in enhancing vocabulary retention, advocating for its integration in Malaysian classrooms. Other studies have also explored the role of authentic materials in teaching reading (Mara & Mohamad, 2021), students' preferences for English literature teaching (Atek et al., 2020), and the effectiveness of gamified platforms (such as Quizizz) in developing vocabulary skills (Nordin, 2023). Additionally, research on explicit vocabulary instruction (Tahir et al., 2021) and the use of memory strategies (Mohamad et al., 2021) highlights the importance of understanding students' preferences and strategies for vocabulary acquisition (Husin et al., 2022).

Gamification

Gamification, first introduced by Pelling in 2002 and popularised in 2010 (Jusuf, 2016), involves using game mechanics, aesthetics, and playful elements to engage individuals and motivate them to learn (Kapp, 2012). It is widely used in education to foster interaction, motivation, and engagement through elements like points, badges, and leaderboards (Garcia-Iruela & Hijon-Neira, 2020). Gamification promotes enjoyable learning experiences, where players complete challenges, earn rewards, and measure progress through rankings.

Gamification in education is used to improve student motivation and engagement by embedding game components into learning activities. These include digital and analog

elements such as time constraints, challenges, and competition, designed to make learning more enjoyable and meaningful (Beil & Garca Jiménez, 2022; Foncubierta & Rodriguez, 2014). Ortiz Colón et al. (2022) highlight how gamification strategies amplify motivation and support self-directed learning. Essential elements of gamification, including points, badges, and leaderboards, serve to enhance interaction, foster competition, and encourage continued participation in learning activities (Armanda & Indriani, 2022).

Gamification in Education and its elements

Gamification strategies are increasingly seen as valuable tools in education, helping to tackle motivational challenges and foster dynamic learning environments (Ortiz Colón et al., 2022). The incorporation of gamified elements such as points, badges, and leaderboards is essential for creating engaging learning experiences (Sailer et al., 2017). Successful gamification requires careful alignment with students' interests and clear instructional objectives to ensure transformative learning (Beil & Garca Jiménez, 2022).

English Vocabulary and Quizizz as a type of Gamification

Gamification has emerged as an effective strategy for improving English vocabulary learning. Several studies have found that gamified approaches, such as those involving apps like Quizizz, significantly enhance vocabulary acquisition, motivation, and satisfaction among students (Yu, 2023; Daulay, 2023; Kusumayanthi, 2021). These methods foster student engagement and improve learning outcomes (Rahmawati, 2023). The use of gamified techniques in apps has also been shown to enhance students' motivation and learning habits (Chen, 2022; Fu et al., 2021). Reviews of gamification in vocabulary learning highlight its ability to overcome challenges in vocabulary acquisition (Zainal, 2023; Contento, 2023), with platforms like Quizizz showing positive effects on vocabulary mastery (Purnawan et al., 2022).

Quizizz, an interactive e-learning platform designed to enhance student motivation and learning outcomes through gamified quizzes, has become widely used in educational settings (Pangestu, 2024). Studies show its effectiveness in improving vocabulary mastery, grammar achievement, and self-regulated learning (Maming et al., 2023; Marcella, 2022; Malvado et al., 2022). Students have expressed positive feedback regarding its interactive features, which foster a more engaging and participatory learning environment (Dewi et al., 2022). The platform's ability to provide formative assessments in a fun and interactive way has contributed to its popularity in various subjects, including language learning (Lestari & Khairuna, 2022).

Technology Acceptance Model

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Davis in 1985, remains the dominant framework for understanding technology adoption in educational settings. Drawing from Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) Theory of Reasoned Action, TAM posits that technology adoption is influenced by users' attitudes (A) and perceived usefulness (U) (Davis et al., 1989). King and He (2006) refined the model, suggesting that behavioural intention (BI) is shaped by attitudes and perceived usefulness. This model helps explain how users decide whether to adopt new technologies based on their beliefs about its value and functionality (Burton-Jones & Hubona, 2006).

Connectivism

Whether educators are immigrants or natives in this context, the premise of learning integrated with emerging technologies presupposes that students are digital natives. They must adapt to and receive instruction for the substantial demands of technological and networked societies immersed in the information and knowledge era. This is particularly relevant in an age marked by the constant influx of information from various sources and the ease with which access to such information is facilitated by time and resources.

In the domain of digital age education, George Siemens (2004) underscores in his Connectivism theory that comprehensively understanding a situation necessitates approximating diverse perspectives. This practice engenders a critical framework and exhaustive examination of ideas, fostering innovation. Furthermore, the act of promoting, nurturing, and interlinking diverse postulates assumes crucial significance for thriving in a knowledge-centric society (Simons, 2004). In simpler terms, the ability to meld our viewpoint with that of others through various mechanisms, such as technological devices, enriches knowledge and advances learning. The inclusion of multiple perspectives accelerates the process and deepens comprehension, thanks to discussions and debates (Vadillo, 2011).

Methodology

Research design and Setting

This qualitative study is designed to explore teachers' perceptions, experiences, and strategies related to the use of Quizizz in teaching English vocabulary. By employing a qualitative approach, the researchers are able to provide deep insights into the experiences of participants, allowing for a richer understanding of the subject matter. The qualitative study method specifically aimed to capture how these teachers integrate Quizizz into their teaching and how they perceive its impact on student learning outcomes. The use of qualitative research design is particularly effective in educational contexts, as it allows for the exploration of complex phenomena within their natural settings, providing a nuanced understanding of participants' experiences (Baxter and Jack, 2015). Additionally, qualitative research methods have been shown to be beneficial in understanding learners' experiences and perceptions, particularly in educational settings (Gal and Ograjenšek, 2010). The flexibility of qualitative approaches allows researchers to adapt their methods to the specific context of their study, making them suitable for examining the intricacies of teaching practices and student interactions. Furthermore, qualitative research is increasingly recognized for its contributions to educational research, providing insights that quantitative methods may overlook (Bush et al., 2020).

The study was conducted in two different states in Malaysia: Selangor and Pulau Pinang. These locations were chosen due to the accessibility of English teachers who work in secondary schools, ensuring participants were easily reachable and willing to participate in the research. The selection of these states also provided a diverse sample of educational settings, which contributed to the study's objective of exploring the implementation of gamified teaching tools e.g. Quizizz in varied school contexts.

Participants

The participants of this study were English language teachers from the selected states (Selangor and Pulau Pinang) who had experience using Quizizz in their lessons. Specifically,

two teachers were chosen using purposive sampling, targeting individuals who could offer valuable insights into the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The selection criteria included teachers aged 25 to 40, with both early-career and mid-career professionals represented. This range allowed the study to capture perspectives from teachers familiar with contemporary educational technologies and gamification, while also ensuring a variety of professional experiences. Participants were drawn from two different schools to provide a broader understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by Quizizz in teaching ESL vocabulary in different educational settings.

Research Instrument

Data was collected through a semi-structured interview comprising 20 questions. These questions were specifically adapted from Sajinčič (2022) and tailored to explore the integration of gamification, focusing on Quizizz. The questions were framed around the TAM to assess participants' perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, attitudes, and intention to use Quizizz. The interview questions included both open-ended and exploratory queries, allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences, challenges, and perspectives regarding gamification in their teaching practices. For example, participants were asked about their familiarity with Quizizz, the perceived impact on student engagement and learning outcomes, and the challenges they faced when using such tools.

The research instrument is meticulously designed to elicit detailed insights into educators' experiences, attitudes, and methodologies concerning the utilisation of Quizizz in teaching English vocabulary. Thus, the interview instrument comprised four distinct sections: (a) demographic information, (b) attitudes towards Quizizz, (c) perceived outcomes for students' language learning using Quizizz and (d) closing. Part A focuses on demographic information and the participant's familiarity with Quizizz, capturing essential background details and their engagement with online teaching platforms. Part B investigates teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards Quizizz, exploring their opinions, the evolution of their views, and the challenges encountered. Part C examines the perceived effectiveness and impact of Quizizz on students' vocabulary learning, seeking specific instances that illustrate its benefits. The instrument concludes with a closing section that expresses gratitude, ensures comprehensive data collection, and establishes avenues for future communication if additional queries arise. To maintain consistency and detail, most questions asked participants to provide qualitative responses that elaborated on their experiences and perspectives.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity of the research instrument, it was reviewed by an expert in the field, who provided feedback on the clarity and appropriateness of the questions. A pilot study was conducted with one teacher in Pulau Pinang to test the instrument's reliability, ensuring that the questions were clear and could generate meaningful responses. The pilot study also allowed for minor adjustments to be made before the actual data collection began.

Data Collection Procedure

For the pilot study, permission was obtained from a school in Pulau Pinang, and one teacher was selected to participate. The participant was briefed on the study's objectives and

confidentiality measures. The feedback gathered from the pilot study was used to refine the interview questions.

For the actual study, two teachers from different schools were recruited following a similar procedure, ensuring ethical considerations such as informed consent and confidentiality were respected.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the interviews was manually coded using thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), to identify themes and patterns related to teachers' experiences with Quizizz. The researcher began by familiarising with the interview transcripts through multiple readings, followed by open coding to capture key themes. These themes were then refined to provide a deeper understanding of how teachers perceive and integrate Quizizz into their vocabulary instruction. Thematic analysis is recognized for its flexibility and effectiveness in exploring subjective experiences, allowing for a rich and detailed account of the data, which is essential for understanding the impact of educational technologies on teaching practices (Vaismoradi et al., 2013; Islam et al., 2019).

Findings and Discussion

This section presents the key themes identified from the study, based on teachers' interviews regarding their use of Quizizz in teaching English vocabulary. The findings are organised according to the research questions guiding this study, which are: (1) What are teachers' attitudes toward the use of Quizizz in teaching English vocabulary? and (2) What are the perceived outcomes towards students' language learning by using Quizizz in teaching English vocabulary?

Teachers' Attitudes Toward Quizizz in Teaching Vocabulary

The findings reveal generally positive attitudes among teachers toward the use of Quizizz in teaching vocabulary. One prominent theme is the platform's ability to engage and motivate students. Teachers highlighted that Quizizz's game-like structure, coupled with instant feedback, fosters a positive and interactive classroom atmosphere. These features encourage student participation and enhance their learning experience, making vocabulary exercises less intimidating. Findings reveal generally positive attitudes among teachers toward the use of Quizizz in teaching vocabulary, consistent with existing literature on gamification in ESL instruction. Teachers highlighted the platform's ability to engage and motivate students, describing its game-like structure and instant feedback as key features that foster a positive and interactive classroom atmosphere. One teacher remarked, "It really engages students. The game-like setup and instant feedback keep them motivated." These findings align with studies by Dirgantoro et al. (2022), which emphasised gamification's role in increasing motivation and promoting a growth mindset. Similarly, the interactive nature of Quizizz supports findings by Dewi et al. (2022), who noted the platform's effectiveness in creating engaging ESL learning environments.

Ease of use emerged as another factor positively influencing teachers' perceptions. While initial reluctance was expressed due to unfamiliarity, most teachers found the platform user-friendly after exploration. One teacher noted, "I was afraid that the platform might be too daunting. However, after exploring, I think Quizizz is user-friendly and excellent for

formative assessment.” This observation resonates with Yunus and Hua’s (2021) findings, which reported that educators value Quizizz for its practicality and ease in lesson planning and assessment.

However, challenges such as limited access to technology and internet connectivity were frequently mentioned, particularly in resource-constrained schools. Teachers described how some students lacked devices or stable connections, impacting their ability to fully engage with Quizizz. One teacher explained, “The discouraging part is not all students are able to have access to it.” This aligns with Mazlan et al. (2022) and Rodríguez and Argüello (2023), who identified technological barriers as significant impediments to gamification integration. Nonetheless, teachers demonstrated resilience by employing creative solutions such as downloading quizzes for offline use and pairing tech-savvy students with peers less comfortable with digital tools. As one teacher noted, “To solve these issues, I pair tech-savvy students with others and use my own internet data.”

Another factor influencing teachers’ positive perceptions is ease of use. While some teachers expressed initial reluctance to use Quizizz due to unfamiliarity, this apprehension dissipated after exploring the platform. Many found it user-friendly, with features that simplify formative assessment and lesson planning. As one teacher noted, “I was afraid that the platform might be too daunting. However, after exploring, I think Quizizz is user-friendly and excellent for formative assessment.”

Despite that, teachers also identified challenges that impacted their attitudes. Limited access to technology and internet connectivity emerged as a significant barrier, especially in less resource-equipped schools. Teachers reported that some students lacked devices or stable internet access, restricting their ability to engage with Quizizz fully. To address this, teachers employed creative solutions such as downloading quizzes for offline use or pairing tech-savvy students with peers less comfortable with digital tools. These challenges, while significant, did not overshadow the overall positive perception of Quizizz as a valuable instructional tool.

Overall, the study supports existing literature by demonstrating that gamification tools like Quizizz can effectively enhance vocabulary learning through interactive and engaging features. At the same time, it highlights persistent challenges such as technological constraints, which require strategic solutions and infrastructure improvements for sustainable implementation across diverse educational settings.

Perceived Student Outcomes in Vocabulary Learning with Quizizz

The findings reveal that Quizizz significantly benefits students’ vocabulary acquisition and overall language learning outcomes, consistent with prior research. Teachers emphasised the platform’s impact on vocabulary mastery and retention, highlighting the effectiveness of features like word-definition matching and instant feedback. One teacher remarked, “Quizizz is particularly effective in emphasising word-definition exercises. It enhances students’ ability to accurately remember meanings.” This finding aligns with research by Yu (2023) and Rahmawati (2023), which demonstrated that gamification enhances memory retention and comprehension by engaging students in repetitive, focused learning activities.

Another key outcome observed was the development of confidence and communication skills. Teachers reported that students who actively engaged with Quizizz were more confident in using newly acquired vocabulary in spoken and written communication. For instance, one participant noted, "Students became more confident using vocabulary in conversations. They really enjoyed the interactive quizzes, which made learning fun." This reflects findings by Rahmadani et al. (2022), who noted that the interactive and gamified nature of platforms like Quizizz helps build student confidence and encourages practical application of learned vocabulary.

Additionally, the gamified features of Quizizz, including real-time feedback and competition, were found to boost engagement and motivation. Teachers emphasised that these features kept students interested and motivated to improve their scores. This finding supports studies by Dewi et al. (2022) and Dirgantoro et al. (2022), which highlighted the role of gamification in fostering an engaging learning environment that drives student motivation. Furthermore, the collaborative aspects of Quizizz, where students supported one another in understanding new vocabulary, align with research by Subarkah (2023), emphasising the social benefits of gamified learning tools in enhancing peer learning and interaction.

Despite the benefits, teachers expressed a desire for further enhancements to Quizizz, such as introducing real-time collaborative features to foster teamwork. One teacher suggested, "I'd really love to see a feature that lets students collaborate on quizzes in real-time. It could foster teamwork and make vocabulary discussions much more interactive." This aligns with findings by Rodríguez and Argüello (2023), who noted that while gamification fosters individual engagement, its collaborative potential remains underexplored.

In essence, these findings demonstrate that Quizizz offers substantial benefits in enhancing vocabulary mastery, confidence, and engagement, supporting the broader literature on gamification's potential in language learning. However, they also highlight opportunities for further development to maximise its collaborative potential and address diverse learning needs.

Conclusion

This study underscores the potential of Quizizz as an innovative gamification tool to enhance vocabulary acquisition in ESL instruction. The findings reveal that teachers hold predominantly favourable perceptions of the platform, citing its interactivity, adaptability, and capacity to foster student motivation and engagement. The gamified elements of Quizizz, such as immediate feedback, points, and leaderboards, were instrumental in creating a dynamic learning environment that facilitates vocabulary retention and promotes student confidence in applying newly acquired linguistic skills.

Despite these advantages, the integration of Quizizz is not without challenges. Constraints such as limited access to technological resources, inconsistent internet connectivity, and varying levels of teacher preparedness to effectively utilise the platform remain significant barriers. Teachers demonstrated resilience by employing adaptive strategies to mitigate these issues; however, the findings emphasise the necessity for systematic investments in technological infrastructure and targeted professional

development programs to enable equitable and effective implementation across diverse educational contexts.

This study underscores the potential of Quizizz as an effective gamification tool for vocabulary acquisition in ESL instruction. By exploring teachers' attitudes, experiences, and strategies, it provides deeper insights into the enablers and barriers to successful gamification integration. The findings contribute to the field by highlighting the practical benefits of gamification, such as increased engagement and motivation, while also addressing significant challenges like technological limitations and resource constraints. These insights can help educators, policymakers, and educational technology developers refine gamified learning approaches to better suit diverse classroom contexts. Future research could expand on these findings by exploring the long-term impact of gamification on student learning outcomes, conducting comparative studies with other gamified platforms, or investigating how professional development programs can enhance teachers' readiness for gamification integration. By addressing these areas, further research can support the sustainable and scalable adoption of gamification in ESL education.

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