

Teachers' Perception Of Using Digital Game-Based Learning Method In Motivating Students To Learn Grammar

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Abstract

Experimenting with new methods of learning instead of traditional methods may promote improve student motivation, and in order to create a dynamic learning environment, language teachers can use digital game-based learning method to help students achieve learning goals in the most effective way. As a result, based on the essentials of grammar in learning a new language, educators' perspectives on digital game-based learning method were polled in order to establish the best way to apply this method to enhance students' motivation in language class. I decided to focus my research on the impact of digital game-based learning methods on motivating students to learn grammar. In this study, the application of some digital game-based method such as Kahoot, Quizizz or Quizlet was assessed using qualitative method. The study employed individual structured interviews with 2 Vietnamese EFL teachers teaching in university. The findings indicate that digital game-based learning method will increase student participation in the classroom and have a positive impact on students' motivation in learning grammar. In addition, this study received several useful comments from participants on how to develop and implement digital game-based learning methods in the classroom.

Key Word: Digital Game-based Learning Method, motivation, learning grammar.

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I. Introduction

Teaching grammar, on the other hand, is a challenging task. Students feel that grammar classes are boring and difficult to learn, therefore they are unmotivated to study English grammar, are passive, and do not want to engage in the sessions. Aside from students' bad attitudes about grammar, one of the causes is the techniques used by the majority of Vietnamese teachers. Many teachers strictly teach grammar, which makes courses uninteresting and unattractive. As a result, grammar classes become boring, and students are unable to learn English grammar properly, which has a significant impact on how they use English. Therefore, I would want to use a digital game-based learning method in the classroom to inspire students to study grammar and encourage them to participate more actively in the lessons, especially grammar lessons.

II. Research Purpose And Significance

The objective of this research is to study the effectiveness of a digital game-based learning method for encouraging students to learn English grammar. Furthermore, this research seeks to assess student responses to the usage of digital game-based learning methods such as Kahoot, Quizlet, or other online game tools in terms of motivation and excitement, as well as to build a better understanding of the benefits and drawbacks of utilizing digital game-based learning methods.

Research Questions:

1. How does the use of digital game-based learning method have on motivating students to learn English grammar through teachers' perspective?
2. What are teachers' perspectives about the pros and cons of applying digital game-based learning method to encourage students to learn English grammar?

III. Literature Review

About digital game-based learning method

In recent years, game-based learning has become more popular in education as educators seek to renew students' access to knowledge and create an engaging learning environment through the use of diverse methods and approaches. Activities and games can be utilized in the classroom to help pupils learn more effectively. Perrotta et al. (2013) argue that using educational games to help the teaching and learning process is a good idea.

Games, according to Zirawaga et al. (2017), can not only be used to supplement traditional teaching techniques, but can also be utilized to educate students how to solve problems, increase critical thinking, collaborate in groups, and improve communication skills. Digital game-based learning, according to Coffey (2017), is a teaching method that incorporates learning content into video games with the purpose of enticing students. He also noted that digital game-based learning ties subjects' knowledge to computers or video games, and that it may be applied in a wide range of disciplines and ability levels. The goal of a digital game-based learning approach is to increase students' knowledge acquisition, it focuses primarily on the role of students in the classroom and can assist instructional purposes. (Perrotta et al., 2013; Erhel and Jamet, 2013).

Learners' responses towards using Digital game-based learning method

In a study conducted by Chiang (2020), 65 second-year students at a Taiwanese college were asked to express their experiences about the use of Kahoot in language classes. The participants claimed that mobile game-based apps can assess their knowledge instead of traditional method and increase interest in the class. The author also concluded that establishing a competitive environment might impact students' emotions, attention, and motivation, therefore pushing them to study and develop their language abilities, and students can also retain the knowledge better owing to increased attention in class. Additionally, there is no gender difference in the appraisal of the usage of these apps in foreign language classes; both male and female students think that the use of game-based applications has made the classroom environment more enjoyable and exciting, attracting their attention significantly. Another study that involved 14 students at a New Zealand carried out by Licorish et al. (2018) to examine students' motivation, classroom's dynamic, and Kahoot's influence on their learning indicated that using a game-based approach like Kahoot in the classroom help students engage and promote discussion in the lesson, so class dynamism will be increased. The authors discovered that a game-based strategy can capture students' attention and keep them interested since students feel more at ease interacting with their classmates and lecturers during the activity.

However, some researchers have stated that there are significant challenges when using digital game-based learning method in language classroom. In 2020, Tahir collaborated with Wang in a study to investigate the relationship between Kahoot – one of the most popular digital game-based method – and students' performance and anxiety, classroom dynamics, and teacher and student attitudes. They showed some studies that suggested Kahoot has very little or no effect on students' performance, because some teachers lack experience with computer games, they are often hesitant to apply this method in the classroom.

The importance of students' motivation in language learning

Using a set of questionnaires provided to 80 Malaysian students in a rural school, Rahman et al. (2017) discovered that teachers play an important role in encouraging students; most students are absolutely delighted when their teachers encourage them to talk with their peers, and teachers should employ a variety of teaching tactics to encourage students to practice in class. Furthermore, the findings of this study revealed that students with a positive attitude are more motivated and successful in language acquisition. Despite the fact that most students see the value of learning English, many find it difficult to learn and practice. The final finding is that parents can influence students' learning motivation; even if they do not speak English well, students can be influenced by their parents' encouragement and support. Riyanti attempts to identify the essential role of student motivation, as well as the causes of students' low motivation and the teacher's role in increasing students' motivation in acquiring a new language in 2019, based on her own experience and related information from a number of previous studies. She emphasized that motivation is a critical factor in how pupils learn a new language. Some of the reasons why students are unmotivated to learn English include a lack of student willingness, a lack of skilled teachers and facilities, and a lack of instructional materials. Based on the experience and relevant studies, Thohir (2017) discussed the differences between integrative and instrumental, intrinsic and extrinsic, global, tasks, and situational and focused on the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the class. He argued that it is important for students to recognize the value of a second language and enjoy studying to participate in learning activities actively. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, such as an exciting learning environment or goal setting, may encourage students in most learning tasks.

This literature is relevant to my research problems and provide me with the knowledge of digital game-based learning method and its influence on students' motivation to learn a new language and grammar as well.

IV. Methodology

Qualitative research method

It is obvious that research is the most commonly utilized and successful technique for increasing and gathering information about a particular problem. Empirical research is classified into two types: qualitative and quantitative. Quantitative research is focused with obtaining evidence regarding social events, and conclusions will be formed based on logical, numerical, and statistical observations; whereas, understanding people's feelings

and attitudes about a problem is the goal of qualitative research. Data is acquired through observations and interviews with participants, and then presented in the language of the participants (Minichiello et al., 1990).

In education, qualitative research method plays a significant role in assisting educators understand educational phenomena from the perspective of students or other educators, which allows researchers to gain new ideas or deeper insights into teaching and learning approaches. Mirhosseini (2020) stated that “designing qualitative language education research as the link between the theoretical and imaginative side of the research endeavor with the practical side” (p.43). In this chapter, the author suggested that the first stage of doing qualitative research is designing a project when researchers find out the idea and have some research questions that they want to explore. To undertake the real process of conducting study, researchers need to read some sources related to the issue, then, gather data to address the research questions. After that, researchers need to have prior plan about types and scopes of the data bodies to be collected before analyzing the data sets. According to the author, this is the most complicate stage in qualitative research. He also recommended that researchers need to consider about the meaning and quality of a qualitative research when design research. I find qualitative research method is suitable to my research problem as I would like to identify the impact of digital game-based learning method in motivating students to learn grammar based on the perception of EFL teachers.

Interviews

According to Barret and Twycross (2018) cited in their article based on the comprehension of various studies, there are three approaches to collect data in qualitative research such as focus groups, observation and interviews. With qualitative researchers, one of the most effective strategies to gather detailed and rich data is the interview. Interviews, unlike other approaches, have distinguishing characteristics that make them reliable and become the central of data collection in qualitative research designs. In order to offer some suggestions for conducting interviews effectively, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explored the many sorts of interviews, how to start an interview and ask great questions, how to record and evaluate data effectively, as well as discussed how to engage with participants in the interview. The authors stated that to decide which interview type should be used in qualitative research, the researcher need to determine the number of structure desired. There are three types of interviews such as highly structured, semi-structured and unstructured. And semi-structured is the most common type as it is driven by a collection of concerns and questions to be investigated, but without the precise words or the questions' order to follow. In order to ask good questions, they suggested to avoid multiple, leading questions or yes/no questions in the interview; instead, ideal position, hypothetical, interpretive and devil's advocate questions can be used to ask for participants' opinions and knowledge to elicit data effectively. In another study about interviews in qualitative research, Cormac et al. (2018) also cited qualitative research interview as an essential data collecting technique and recommended twelve tips which based on their own experience and the extensive literature on qualitative research method to conduct qualitative research interviews effectively. For example, the researchers should choose which problem is appropriate for conducting interviews and read further literature relating to the approach used and how to conduct an interview. The interviews should take place at a time that is convenient for the participants. Researchers, moreover, should create an interview guide and test the interview question at least once. The researcher should deal with unexpected emotions, talk less, and listen to how the participants respond, as well as reflect on whether the study questions were interpreted correctly. Because data transcription is time-consuming, it should begin and be examined as soon as feasible. Researchers should also return interview transcripts or discuss analytic results with participants to ensure agreement. It is obvious that the authors' suggestions are beneficial at various phases of the qualitative research interviews.

Based on the information from various literature, I determined that semi-structured interview is the most suitable type of interviews that I should use in my project since I seek to know teachers' perspectives on the impact of digital game-based learning method in motivating students to learn grammar based on their own experiences. Interview data would be analyzed based on their responses to the interview questions. I interviewed two classmates via Zoom – an online meeting platform – and recorded the interview. After that, I transcribed the interviews' data and sent them to the participants so that they could double-check and ask whether there was anything further they wanted to modified to improve the project's reliability.

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is a basic process for educators to review their own teaching experience to learn from themselves and consider new ways to improve teaching method to gain better quality of teaching and learning process. In an article written by Cirocki and Farrell in 2017, the authors collected some relevant studies about reflective practice and defined it as a cyclic process in which teachers analyze, assess, and adapt their teaching on a regular basis based on their opinions, supported by proof research and strengthened via cooperation with others. Furthermore, they also mentioned three types of reflection such as reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action and reflection-for-action, and suggested different tools teachers can use to reflect on their teaching include teacher

journals, collaborative blogging, post-observation conferences, peer sharing, and action research. In a study conducted by Slade et al. (2019) to examine the impact of reflective practice on teacher candidates' learning, they concluded that reflective practice has a significant impact on teacher candidates' knowledge, skill, and acquisition, they gain more benefits from reflective practice in their critical thinking. moreover, they become self-aware of their perspectives and attitudes in teaching. As a consequence, in this project, I would like to reflect on the influence of digital game-based learning methods on students' motivation to study grammar in order to self-evaluate and improve my own use of this approach in my classroom.

Scope, Limitations and Boundaries of the Project

This study is designed to examine some relevant information about the influence of digital game-based learning method in boosting students to learn English grammar. The data collection will be carried out for 2 English lecturers in Dong Nai University, they are experienced EFL teachers teaching general English for freshman in university for more than 5 years and get used to using some digital quiz games to support their teaching. The research would be done through the use of interviewing to identify teachers' perspectives about the digital game-based method and their students' performance while applying that method in grammar lessons. By this strategy, I will be able to explore the influence of digital game-based learning method such as Kahoot or Quizlet in motivating students to learn English grammar. The study will not address other issues that are not considered as one of the digital game-based learning methods.

Participants

There are three participants in my project including two colleagues and myself. The two participants are lectures in Dong Nai University who have experience as EFL teachers with over 6 years teaching English. I contacted them after planning my project, fortunately, they were willing to participate in my survey. Because I would like to understand my research problem from teachers' perspectives, I found my classmates suitable to participate in my project. They have taught English at both universities and English center, and get used to applying digital game-based method in their lessons.

Procedure

The semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with each participant via Zoom – an online meeting app instead of face-to-face interview because of the Covid-19 pandemic in Vietnam. At the end of each interview, I did not forget to express my gratitude for their cooperation. The interviews' recordings were then transcribed into words and sent back to be double-checked before being analyzed and coded. Then, the data was examined and grouped into themes using a coding methodology (Appendix). According to William and Moser (2018), coding is an essential stage in qualitative research, in which data collected is analyzed by assembling, categorizing, and thematically sorting before developing theory and contributing the meaning of the research. In their article, they stated that there are three levels of coding such as open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Open coding allows researchers to choose which concepts and themes to categorize, whereas axial coding is concerned with identifying, aligning, and categorizing topics. The third level – selective coding – allows researchers to “select and integrate categories of organized data from axial coding in cohesive and meaning-filled expressions” (William and Moser, 2018, p.52). These three levels of coding are critical to achieving study objectives and allowing researchers to immerse themselves in the material.

Data collection instrument

A list of 9 open-ended questions were used during the interviews as a list below:

1. How important does the grammar affect to other English skills?
2. How many periods do you spend per week to teach grammar?
3. Do you often apply digital game-based learning method such as Kahoot, Quizlet or Quizizz in teaching grammar? How often do you apply them?
4. Does the use of digital games take most of time of a lesson?
5. What is great about using digital games in the acquisition of grammar in your classroom?
6. How do your students react when learning or practicing some grammar structures with the application of digital quiz games? Give some students' emotions and behaviors when practicing English grammar with quiz games?
7. Do you often give your students some quizzes as homework to let them improve their self-learning at home? Do they all finish the quizzes?
8. What are challenges when you apply digital game-based learning method in teaching grammar in the class?
9. Do you think teachers should apply digital game-based learning method such as Kahoot, Quizlet or Quizizz in language classroom in the future? why?

The questions were developed based on my readings of related literature and evaluated with other classmates in master course and my colleagues, then tweaked to reduce the ambiguity.

V. Findings And Discussions

Disadvantages of using a digital game-based learning method

To answer my questions about the challenges, the two participants reported that both teachers and students may face difficulties when applying digital game-based learning method in grammar lessons. For example, a participant said that time-consuming is an issue for teachers, although there are a variety of free resources and materials available in the online platform, teachers have to select appropriate quizzes related to the grammar structures and edit the content of the quizzes to fit students' learning demand and levels so that they can not only engage in the class, but also achieve the aims of the lesson effectively. She also mentioned the lack of facilities as a dilemma, not all students have a laptop or smartphone with internet connection to join in online quizzes. Moreover, students often experience technical problems such as loss of connection or device power-off. The other participant stated that she spent a significant amount of time planning and designing questions, and that occasionally, due to technical issues, the quiz was lost without being saved. Furthermore, before allowing students to take the quiz, she had to properly explain the instructions; nevertheless, some students do not understand, and she had to repeat many times. She also stated that "Students sometimes get trouble with internet connection, so they take a bit long to log in the quiz". It is interesting that two participants mentioned about the unstable internet connection as a common problem when applying digital game-based method in the class. As I am concerned, internet connection has a significant influence if this method can be applied effectively or not. Moreover, in my opinion, to talk about the drawbacks of using digital quiz in the class, one of the biggest problems is that the quiz is only available online, so student's devices are required to connect to the internet. However, the internet connection at university is always unstable due to the large number of users, so some students could not access to the quiz or participate in the activities well, which greatly affects the students' emotions a lot and leads to negative mood among certain students in the class. If they cannot join in the quiz, they may be left behind. Moreover, the faster students choose correct answers, the higher points they can get. Another drawback of using digital game-based learning method is that sometimes students just want to choose the answer quickly to get higher points without consideration. This finding resonates with the finding by Tahir and Wang (2020) that some students guess the answers without thinking or reflection because scoring is based on how quickly they choose the answers. As a result, the reliability of the quiz is influenced a lot if teachers want to assess students' acquisition in grammar structures based on the quiz's results.

Advantages of using digital game-based learning method

All the participants agreed that digital game-based learning methods can bring many benefits and support teaching and learning process a lot, especially in learning grammar. For example, one of the participants said "using digital games in teaching grammar create an interesting and interactive learning environment for students, which can improve students' retention of grammatical structures, students can memorize the target grammar points better", and the increase of students' acquisition in learning grammar is proved in her class, she stated that "most students in my class give over 90 percent correct answers when doing quizzes". Moreover, she mentioned that she can help students to achieve the objectives of grammar lessons easier because she can find a lot of quizzes related to grammar structures and suitable to learners' levels to let student practice in the class thanks to the free, unlimited resources of digital games in some digital platform such as Kahoot, Quizzizz, or Baamboozle. In these online platforms, users from all over the world can create quizzes and share them with others. Moreover, the other participant brings another benefit of using digital game-based learning method is the effective cooperation between students. She said "sometimes I let students do quizzes in groups and I think by using digital games or quizzes in class, students can better interact with others. I have never seen my students cooperate so well in class like that to become the winner", which is relevant to the finding of Chiang (2020) in his article that by providing competitive environment, students can be encourage and remember the knowledge better due to the increase of their attention in the class. Based on my experience, I agree that the application of digital game-based learning method in the class can boost students' competitiveness and make learning grammar more enjoyable. Students are motivated and encouraged to collaborate with partners to find the proper answers, especially when I offer them prizes if they win the quiz. Another advantages of using digital game-based method in the class is that teachers may quickly design appealing quizzes by adding photos, amusing memes, or videos to the questions and feedback, which can capture students' interest and create an energetic environment in the classroom.

In addition, teachers can provide some quizzes as homework to let students practice more, review the lessons after the class and enhance their self-study. All the participants in the interview reported that they give quizzes as grammar exercises to let students practice at home and the reports showed that all students completed the quizzes, which means digital games or quizzes can stimulate students to study even without teachers' observation or support.

- *Participant 1: "I give quiz as homework once a week, all students complete on time".*
- *Participant 2: "Not frequently, because they have lots of tasks from other subjects to do at home. But all students finish".*

- Me: "Sometimes, all students never miss any homework"

Students' attitudes toward the application of digital game-based learning method in grammar lessons

All participants agree that English grammar makes an important role to support other skills.

- Participant 1: "Grammar is essential for English learners if they want to speak fluently".
- Participant 2: "Grammar is the backbone to learning other skills. Especially for speaking or writing"

However, there are not many periods to teach grammar, and grammar is often combined with other lessons such as reading or writing, so students do not have much time to practice English grammar. Therefore, English teachers have to improve the method to help students learn English effectively. Unfortunately, when I asked about the application of digital game-based learning method in grammar lessons, the participants showed their interest and stated that they often use this method in their lessons. And due to the time limit of each lesson, they just spend about 10 to 15 minutes letting students do digital quizzes. In terms of learners' attitudes and actions about the use of digital game-based learning methods in grammar classes, all participants believe that this technique is more successful than traditional methods in motivating students to study grammar, it is an enjoyable method to boost students' interest and involvement in the classroom. Moreover, the application of digital game-based learning methods not only helps students to improve their motivation and acquisition in learning grammar, but also develops other skills such as cooperation or communication. A participant stated that her students feel glad and confident to discuss the alternatives in each question with their teammates when doing the online quizzes, which means by using digital game-based method, students' interaction and teamwork skills are enhanced. After finishing the quiz, they even ask to do more quizzes in the next lessons and looking forward to doing quizzes in grammar lessons. It can be seen that students are more open and willing to address grammar exercises in an exciting way. Additionally, according to what I observe in my class, digital quizzes also increase students' competitiveness because all students want to be the winner. They actively join in the quizzes, but sometimes, the leaderboard is not satisfied them, so they ask to do quizzes again to improve their result, which create dynamic learning environment. I find my students participate in the quizzes dynamically and enthusiastically. Agree to our idea about the positive behaviors of students in applying digital game-based in the class, other participant said "they are excited and happy, and more competitive and active in learning grammar when I transfer grammar exercises into online quizzes". Furthermore, she mentioned that the use of digital quizzes and games in teaching grammar has transformed the way her students acquire knowledge, particularly grammar – one of the most boring aspects of learning English. In the past, when using traditional methods, students were quiet and boring in grammar lessons, they did not want to raise hands to answer teachers' questions or complete exercises, nor did they want to actively engage in the lessons, which significantly affects students' acquisition of knowledge. However, when she applies this method in grammar lessons, she notices that her students' pressure is decreased and the classroom atmosphere is greatly improved.

VI. Conclusion

This study investigated the perception of teachers about the application of digital game-based learning method in motivating students in learning English grammar. According to the findings of this study, digital game-based learning methods have a beneficial impact on students' motivation in learning grammar. Particularly, digital game-based learning method brings a lot of benefits that support the teaching and learning process. For example, teachers can save time creating quizzes using various resources in the platform and quickly assess students' grammar acquisition. Moreover, teachers can assign digital quizzes as homework to help students practice after school and enhance their self-study. This study also indicated that by using this method in grammar lessons, students' stress can be reduced, which can improve students' acquisition and memorization in learning grammar. Besides, students are not only more motivated, but also more active and cooperative in the class. However, this study also points out some disadvantages when applying digital game-based learning method in the class such as technical and connectivity issue, the lack of facilities or only being available online. In terms of limitations, the research survey was conducted with only two participants and myself, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Nonetheless, this study does provide support for the positive influence of the application of digital game-based learning method as a tool of motivating students to learn grammar from teachers' perspectives, and it is hoped to provide valuable information for further studies in this area.

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