

# EXPLORING HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER'S VIEWS ON THE INTEGRATION OF DIGITAL GAMES IN EFL INSTRUCTION

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## Abstract

This study investigates the use of digital games in (EFL) instruction within the context of rapid technological advancement and students' increasing familiarity with digital platforms. Gamification features such as leaderboards, badges, and points can enhance student motivation and engagement; however, teachers often face challenges due to infrastructure limitations and limited digital competence. Using a qualitative case study design, this study explores the perspectives of high school English teachers regarding the advantages, challenges, and strategies used in using digital games as a teaching medium. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews comprising 15 questions on perceived benefits, implementation challenges, and instructional strategies. The participants were English teachers at a private senior high school in Malang, Indonesia, and each interview lasted approximately 10–15 minutes. The data were analysed using thematic analysis through coding, categorisation, and theme development. The findings show strong support from teachers for platforms such as Quizizz and Kahoot, which help increase student motivation, confidence, and engagement while indirectly supporting language development. However, there are obstacles such as technical problems, lack of infrastructure, or lack of knowledge about digital games. Careful and thorough preparation can help teachers deliver material in accordance with learning objectives through the effective implementation of digital games in classroom learning.

**Keywords:** digital games, teacher's view, EFL instruction, high school.

## INTRODUCTION

In this contemporary age, technology has integrated itself into daily life through a variety of widely accessible digital tools and platforms, playing a significant role by streamlining activities associated with education, work, and entertainment (Larenas et al., 2023). Digital games, which are defined as interactive media engaged on computers or other digital devices for enjoyment and purposeful interaction, represent a prevalent means by which individuals utilize technology (Atabek, 2001). The integration of digital games in educational environments has given rise to Digital Game-Based Learning (DGBL), a teaching strategy that incorporates game elements such as leaderboards,

points, and badges to enhance the educational experience. As the adoption of DGBL increases and students grow more comfortable with digital devices, this instructional method is becoming progressively pertinent in contemporary classrooms (Umamah & Saukah, 2022).

DGBL accommodates many types of format including computer games, console systems and web based platforms that enable different pedagogical applications (Razak et al., 2012). Worldwide, its adoption has grown considerably, especially in developed nations where technological infrastructure and digital proficiency are firmly established (Lee et al., 2022). In developing contexts such as Indonesia, however, implementation remains uneven. Schools frequently encounter technological limitations, insufficient facilities, and limited teacher preparedness, resulting in conventional classroom practices with minimal technological integration (Champa et al., 2020).

Despite these challenges, English teachers in Indonesia demonstrate strong interest in integrating digital media, including digital games. Barriers such as limited technological skills, inadequate training, and infrastructure constraints continue to hinder effective implementation (Marzuki et al., 2024). Teacher readiness is a crucial determinant of successful integration, as insufficient professional development restricts the creation of innovative and engaging learning environments (Wulandari et al., 2021). Many EFL teachers remain in the exploratory stage of developing digital competencies, limiting the transformative potential of technology in language learning (Priyantin & Herawati, 2023).

When effectively implemented, digital games can turn a typical classroom into something way more dynamic and engaging. Studies say game-based learning tends to boost motivation, gets students working together, helps with vocabulary, and can even raise grades overall (Susaniari & Santosa, 2024). Digital media, in general, seems to offer better learning outcomes along with a more enjoyable classroom vibe (Fauziah & Rofi'ah, 2025). DGBL (digital game-based learning) classrooms also seem to encourage interaction, teamwork, and working toward goals - things that tend to keep students interested and involved (Hwang & Chen, 2022).

Previous research suggests teachers, students, and trainees see DGBL in a good light. Many feel digital games make learning more fun, more creative, and help with language skills (Sihombing & Tambunan, 2023; Umamah & Saukah, 2022). Still, there are some hiccups - students have different levels of tech know-how, and it's not always easy to make things work in practice. Plus, a lot of the research so far focuses on universities, while teachers' views at the high school level haven't gotten as much attention.

Thus, this research paper examines how teachers of English in a private high school in Malang see the inclusion of digital games in EFL instruction. It strives to examine the motives that compel teachers to use DGBL, their experiences when implementing it, and classroom dynamics that arise when using it. This research by

analyzing the views of teachers in a secondary school setting adds to the understanding of the potential and the barriers to the implementation of digital games in EFL education. Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What do high school EFL teacher think about the benefits of digital games in English learning?
2. What are teacher views on the potential challenges of using digital games to develop students' language skills and motivation in EFL classrooms?
3. How do teacher adapt their strategies to incorporate digital games into their teaching practices?

## **METHOD**

In this study, the qualitative case study design was used in order to examine the perception of an English teacher on the application of digital games in EFL teaching. The case study methodology was selected as the means of gaining in-depth information about the practices in the classroom and offering contextual information regarding the integration of technology, especially in reaction to the plethora of quantitative methods in earlier research.

The study was carried out in a private high school in Malang whereby technology has been well incorporated in various subjects and departments. The study population consisted of a participant who was selected based on purposive sampling: he had to fit the study criteria that included experience in working with technology as instructional media and digital games integration in teaching EFL. The participant, referred to as Hyge, is a 46-year-old English teacher in the school since 2019 and has been using digital games in classroom learning since 2020 after a school policy encouraged technology-based learning.

The data were gathered using semi-structured interviews with 15 questions that were based on the instruments created by Ekholm (2024). It was found that the interview protocol had three key fields of investigation, namely the perceived advantages of digital games, the difficulties in the way of their implementation, and the methods of overcoming those difficulties. The interviews took place in Indonesian, where clarity and accuracy of the response were ensured and were implemented using face-to-face communication and a WhatsApp call. The sessions were about 530 minutes long and were audio recorded under the consent of the participants. The researcher informed the interviewees about the importance of the study and assured confidentiality before the interviews.

The thematic analysis was applied to the data in accordance with the steps suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006). It included transcription of the tapes, reading repeatedly to get familiarized with the content and deductive coding under the influence of the research questions, coding and the process of classification of the codes into themes and interpretation of the results. Member checking was applied to improve the credibility and trustworthiness of the research by providing the participant with the transcript of the

interviews to verify that it was accurate and to enable the researcher to confirm, clarify and refine the responses provided.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

#### **1. What do high school EFL teacher think about the benefits of digital games in English learning?**

The following findings are presented based on interview data to answer research questions regarding teachers' views on the benefits of using digital games in EFL learning. The participant, who uses the pseudonym Hyge, has integrated digital games into teaching since 2020 and reports various positive impacts on student engagement and learning development.

#### **Digital games are easy to use**

Participants emphasized that digital games are easy to develop and implement. The availability of templates, variety of content, and flexibility of features make it easy for teachers to prepare materials without compromising learning objectives.

*"The first advantage is that it makes my work in class easier. Developing it is not too difficult... even people who are not familiar with IT can get started. Sometimes I also use other people's templates."*

In addition, the variety of game modes helps maintain students' attention and makes learning more interactive.

*"There are many material options and game modes... students are no longer easily bored, and classes become more interactive."*

#### **Increase student motivation**

Participants reported a significant increase in learning motivation when digital games were used. The elements of play and competition made the classroom atmosphere more enjoyable than conventional learning.

*"Digital games make the class feel fun... there is also a sense of competition between students."*

Motivation increased when the rules of the game and missions were clearly given, and made student more competitive.

*"When students understand the rules and missions, their involvement skyrockets and they show a healthy competitive side."*

### **Improvements of students' self confidence**

The use of digital games also boosts students' confidence in participating and answering questions in class.

*"I have seen an increase in their confidence and engagement... they are more confident in expressing answers even if they still make mistakes."*

Group activities provide a safer environment for students to use English. It can make student more confident to express themselves.

*"Group work makes them converse more confidently with their group members using English."*

Participants also observed a decrease in students' anxiety when using English.

*"The use of digital games reduces students' anxiety... it feels like a challenge and achievement for them."*

### **Development of students' independences**

Digital games encourage independence and decision-making skills through the mechanisms of choice and strategy in the game.

*"Students are given choices and must decide what is best... they think independently in solving puzzles."*

Group discussions in completing game challenges also increase self-control and responsibility for learning.

*"Sometimes I use group project, they can control themselves and express their respective opinions in solving puzzles or commands in digital games. a sense of competition not to lose to other groups and at the same time have to discuss to complete the task, making their self-control also increase"*

### **Enhancement of English language skills**

Participants emphasized that the main purpose of using digital games was to develop English language skills. They observed improvements in vocabulary, grammar, and speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills.

*"There has been a noticeable increase in students' interest and language skills such as vocabulary, grammar, speaking, listening, and reading."*

Audio-based activities were used to practice listening and speaking. Meanwhile, text-based games help develop grammar and reading skills.

*"They have to listen carefully to the commands so they don't lose to their friends. For reading, writing, and grammar, I prefer text-based games because they are more interactive and suitable."*

## **2. What are teacher views on the potential challenges of using digital games to develop students' language skills and motivation in EFL classrooms?**

Despite recognizing the benefits of digital games, the participant reported several challenges during implementation, particularly in the early stages. These challenges included teacher readiness, selecting appropriate games, technological limitations, time management, and students' attention and understanding.

### **Teacher readiness and digital competence**

The participant identified personal readiness as the primary initial obstacle. Limited technological knowledge and unfamiliarity with digital game features caused stress and hindered early implementation.

*"My initial obstacle was actually my own preparedness... my understanding and skills were very lacking at first, and that was really a problem."*

technical errors also reduced instructional effectiveness and affected student expectations.

*"I made a mistake in the settings and the game didn't work properly... my students were disappointed."*

### **Selecting appropriate type of digital games for learning object**

Choosing suitable digital games for specific learning goals was another challenge. The participant noted confusion due to the wide variety of platforms and limited knowledge of their pedagogical functions.

*"There are so many digital games available... I didn't understand which ones were suitable for each lesson."*

Misalignment between game features and instructional objectives sometimes prevented lesson goals from being achieved.

*"I wanted students to arrange sentences, but Quizizz only allowed multiple choice... so I decided not to use it."*

### **Technological and infrastructure limitations**

Infrastructure constraints were a major barrier to effective implementation. Stable internet access and adequate devices were essential but not always available.

*"If the Wi-Fi is not fast enough, it becomes a problem... if I experience lag, the whole class cannot follow."*

Technical issues with equipment also disrupted instruction. School policies restricting device use also created practical difficulties.

*"Sometimes the projector cannot connect or is broken, and that wastes a considerable amount of time."*

## **Time management**

Time management emerged as another challenge. Preparing and launching digital games could consume significant instructional time, particularly when technical issues occurred.

*“If it is not prepared well before class, the preparation alone may take 10 to 15 minutes... learning time can be cut short just to prepare the media.”*

## **Students’ understanding and attention**

Students’ unfamiliarity with digital games initially required additional guidance.

*“They did not really understand what to do... students must first be given guidance.”*

The use of mobile devices also increased the risk of distraction during activities.

*“Students can easily become distracted... checking social media, and this disrupts the learning process.”*

### **3. How do teacher adapt their strategies to incorporate digital games into their teaching practices?**

#### **Enhance comprehension of digital game**

Hyge strengthened his understanding of digital game-based learning through professional development and independent exploration. He participated in workshops and used online tutorials to learn how to integrate digital games effectively and select tools aligned with instructional objectives. This preparation enabled him to evaluate suitable platforms and adapt them to classroom needs. He explained,

*“I often attend workshops and teaching trainings focused on the use of technology... besides these workshops, I often use YouTube as a source of my training because there are many tutorials and unique digital game media that can be used in the classroom.”*

#### **Instructional adjustments through the selection of suitable games and device preparation**

Game selection was guided by alignment with learning objectives, student proficiency levels, and motivational value. Hyge emphasized that digital games must support lesson goals rather than replace them.

*“I look at several criteria before using digital games... I choose games that match students’ level and still meet learning objectives.”*

He preferred accessible platforms such as Kahoot! and Quizizz because they are efficient and adaptable for vocabulary practice and interactive activities.

*“I prefer games that are easy to access... if learning vocabulary, I will choose Kahoot because the implementation is very easy.”*

To address infrastructure limitations, Hyge prepared backup equipment and connectivity in advance. He explained,

*“Sometimes the projector doesn’t work, the cables are damaged, or the Wi-Fi signal doesn’t reach the classroom. Because of that, I bring a laptop, HDMI cables, and even my own internet connection as a backup.”*

Device restrictions were managed through group work and QR-based participation. As he noted,

*“There are two ways to avoid device problems: assign group tasks using one device, or use the Quizizz QR feature so fewer devices are needed.”*

### **Classroom management through group-based game design**

Clear instructions, demonstrations, and structured group organization were essential for successful implementation. Hyge emphasized that student understanding of procedures determines effectiveness.

*“If done correctly—by following instructions, giving examples, and assisting students—motivation and interest increase.”*

Before starting gameplay, he explained procedures, formed groups, and demonstrated the activity with selected students.

*“Before I begin, I explain what game will be played... then I give an example in front of the class so other students understand.”*

### **Adding rules and consequences to enhance motivation**

To strengthen engagement and competitive spirit, Hyge incorporated rules, time limits, and light hearted consequences. He further noted that such strategies create a lively learning atmosphere while encouraging students to participate actively and think quickly, resulting in a more enjoyable and motivating classroom experience.

*“To increase motivation, to increase student motivation in participating in this learning activity, I usually add rules to the games we play, as well as some penalties for those who lose. This kind of activity makes the classroom atmosphere enjoyable. Not only that, but the students also become enthusiastic.”*



## Discussion

The results show that the introduction of digital games into English language learning offers significant pedagogical advantages, as well as offers practical difficulties that need to be addressed through strategic management. The participant has mentioned the use of platforms like Kahoot, Wordwall and Quizizz platforms and has mentioned that the tools helped ease the preparation and delivery of materials in the classroom as they were intuitive. This aligns with the past research that educators are likely to use such platforms as Kahoot and Quizizz due to their convenient user-interfaces that allow creating content and tracking performance in a smooth manner (Umamah & Saukah, 2022). Convenience allows making the work of teachers less demanding and more accepting of technology (Supasa et al., 2024), which implies that perceived usability is a very important factor in technology acceptance.

The other significant advantage that was realized was student motivation. The participant noted that a digital game provided a pleasant learning experience and a desire to take an active part. This is in line with research indicating that game based platforms are more effective in motivating due to the ability to provide instantaneous feedback and competition (Heriyawati and Elfiyanto, 2023). The presence of group rivalry created the urge to do better, turning the usual classroom activities into enjoyable learning courses and ensuring a positive classroom atmosphere (Fakhruddin and Nurhidayat, 2020).

The results also showed the increase in student confidence and participation. Due to the supportive atmosphere produced by the digital games the students felt less anxious and were willing to share their answers and opinions more openly. This undergoes studies that game-based learning fosters positive emotional interaction and classroom engagement (Sihombing and Tambunan, 2023). The more confidence the higher the learner autonomy and self-regulation, as the students were more ready to cooperate, make decisions, and control their own learning processes. Digital games fulfill psychological needs as well with challenges and feedbacks that are interactive to maintain engagement (Stott and Neustadt, 2013).

Language development In the language development, the study established that digital games favored the advancement of vocabulary, grammar, speaking, and listening abilities. The interactive gameplay also supported the gradual acquisition of the language and strengthened the receptive and productive skills, which was consistent with the results that digitally-based learning via games helps to improve the language proficiency because of collaboration, motivation, and competition (Larenas et al., 2023; Bakan et al., 2022; Hwang and Chen, 2022).

Although such advantages came in, there were a number of difficulties such as a lack of teacher preparedness, an insufficient technological network, unreliable internet connectivity, and distraction of students when using the gadgets. These results are in line with previous studies that suggested technical and institutional issues in the application of digital games (Tseklevs et al., 2016; Marzuki et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the

participant had developed adaptive coping measures to overcome these barriers including training herself on the game features, distractions minimization through QR code, backup internet access preparation, and one-per-group device use. These are adaptive practices that are based on the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK), which considers that teacher competence is critical in the adoption of technology.

In addition, the experiment establishes that antecedent, perioperative, and post-game learning guidance optimizes learning. Interaction between teachers and groups was facilitated and encouraged by help of the teacher, which contributed to the results that digital games can enhance communication skills when teachers play an active role in facilitating interactions as opposed to allowing students to play games without supervision (Bakan et al., 2022). On the whole, these findings indicate that digital games can serve as an efficient teaching tool in case the strategies of pedagogical planning, technological preparedness, and classroom management are properly coordinated.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, the views and approaches of a high school EFL teacher who teaches English language using digital games are explored. These findings suggest that digital games can be used to bring pedagogical value to classroom learning as long as they are employed strategically. The respondent shared that online games can be played by even novice players, as well as help boost student confidence, motivation, and interaction, making the classroom more interactive and fun. The language skills can also be developed with the help of game-based activities, which foster collaboration, competition, and instant feedback. Moreover, the digital game promotes the autonomy of learners by providing them with the ability to choose, solve challenges, and organise group work, allowing the students to engage more actively and take risks.

Although these advantages are present, there are still a series of challenges, such as the willingness of teachers and students, inadequate infrastructure, poor internet penetration, and some system malfunctions, which can create anxiety in the process of implementation. Student distraction through personal smartphones is also possible due to a lack of supervision. To overcome these difficulties, the participant used adaptive strategies which included: preparation in advance before the classes, choice of features of the games according to the learning goals, backup preparation devices and internet connection, and the use of group gameplay in order to increase competitiveness with minimal distraction. These were the strategies that helped the teacher reach learning objectives. In general, digital games may serve as useful, interesting, and pedagogically useful tools in the learning of the English language, with sufficient infrastructure and the willingness of stakeholders.

The researcher is interested in offering suggestions to teachers, schools, and upcoming researchers who are likely to employ digital games as a learning medium. It is advised that teachers should use a combination of individual and group games and clear

instructions and scaffolding to facilitate meaningful learning and reduce technical challenges. The schools are to be reinforced in terms of the technological infrastructure, such as the availability of a high-quality internet connection, efficient digital devices, and learning classrooms that will accommodate game-based learning, and the schools should be equipped with training programs aimed at improving the technological skills and cooperation of the educators. It is suggested to include more participants to enhance the generalizability of the results in future studies, examine the viewpoints of students and their educational outcomes, as well as address the application of digital games in various educational environments, such as elementary schools, rural environments, and institutions with limited resources.

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