

## TO PLAY OR NOT TO PLAY?

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**Abstract.** *The article discusses the reasons for the use of games in teaching English. This research has the empirical and descriptive nature; its results provide practical results that can be applied in teaching.*

**Keywords:** *online learning, games, interactive approaches.*

## ИГРАТЬ ИЛИ НЕ ИГРАТЬ?

**Аннотация.** *В статье обсуждаются причины необходимости применения игр в преподавании английского языка. Это исследование носит эмпирический и описательный характер, его результаты предлагают некоторые практические решения, которые могут быть применены.*

**Ключевые слова:** *онлайн-обучение, игры, интерактивные подходы.*

## INTRODUCTION

The implementation of new and developing instruments in education is a contentious issue among educators and educational institutions. Gaming in education may be perceived as an impediment to learning, but its role in education is to increase students' motivation and engagement, improve visual skills, improve students' interaction and collaboration abilities with their peers, and enable them to apply gaming values in a real-world situation. Since the first wave of COVID 19 lockdown educational technology has been intensively used to simplify and improve learning, but it does not immediately influence student accomplishment since technological tools must be aligned with the curriculum in order to be effective. This article examines the deployment and use of gaming applications in online mode of teaching.

Gaming is a form of play in which players adhere to predetermined rules. According to (Houghton, 2013), educational games are used to help teaching and learning. Games may be used as a supplemental tool to augment conventional teaching techniques to enhance the learning experience for students and teach additional skills including adhering to rules, adapting, problem-solving, interaction, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and good sportsmanship. Learning should not be boring, and it shouldn't only be rote memory exercises where pupils memorize information or study for tests. In order to raise student achievement, teachers may benefit from the vitality and creative thinking that technology-enhanced learning offers.

Instructional institutions, schools, and households all apply and employ a variety of educational game kinds. The primary goal of using games in the classroom is to help students develop their critical thinking abilities while teaching a particular subject by encouraging them to think creatively while adhering to the rules. Other games are available that are restricted to enhancing knowledge in a particular area, and the most well-liked of them are math games. According to (Yue, & Zin, 2009), while games like chess help players develop their reasoning abilities and other qualities desired in education, they cannot be classified as educational because they do not impart content or convey curricular material. Instructional games are those that contain curricular information or other educational games.

Lengeling and Malarche (2007) categorize the advantages as follows:

## Affective:

- Playing games reduces the emotional filters.
- They promote the use of words in a free-flowing, inventive manner.
- They also foster communication skills
- Games are entertaining and encouraging.

## Cognitive:

- Games help students learn.
- They reinforce and broaden learning.
- Games put a communicative emphasis on grammar.

## Dynamics of Classes

- Games place a lot of emphasis on students
- The instructor just serves as an intermediary
- Games promote class unity
- They can encourage class engagement in general
- Games foster constructive competition

## Adaptability:

- Games' difficulty, level, and audience may be quickly altered
- they use each of the four skills
- After the first creation phase, games require the least amount of preparation.

Teachers may be encouraged to employ games to assist students practice language in the classroom in light of these characteristics. Indeed, games can educate, and can make a lesson genuinely enjoyable. To make sure that students are covering the content required for any given course, semester, or even lesson, making your way through the syllabus and finishing the required material remain vital. This should not be hampered by games. It's crucial that they serve as a tool rather than taking on a life of their own. Games can then be presented as yet another method for facilitating deeper understanding once the basic material of any particular session has been delivered and comprehended, and activities that practice and employ the new language have been finished.

Teachers are considered the "true change agents" when it comes to applying teaching techniques in schools, according to Bourgonjon et al. (2013, p. 30). They have investigated teachers' attitudes to digital games in formal education and found that hardly any of the teachers have played digital games. The majority of teachers, 77.5%, believe that students can learn through digital games, yet only 9.4% use video games in the class. Teachers' difficulties when implementing games are lack of time, installation of the game and setting up computers. According to many teachers in the study, teachers need relevant training and support so that they can use games in language learning.

Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al. (2011) conducted an international survey with 275 primary and middle school teachers from Denmark, Finland, Norway, Portugal, and the U.S. The results of the study show that roughly 60% of all teachers have used games in their teaching. Mathe (2020, p. 59) is a Swedish study of teachers' attitudes to digital games and their challenges. Around two-thirds of the teachers have implemented some digital games across different subject areas at some point in time. Most teachers are comfortable applying digital games in their teaching and are interested in using them, even though many do not have any interest in games.

Bourgonjon et al. (2010, p. 1145) studied 858 secondary school pupils' opinions about digital gaming. Female pupils don't like video games in the classroom, whereas male students do. Most students believe video games can be educational (Bourgonjon et al., 2010, p. 1149). Some student groups don't play digital games, thus they can't be considered a homogeneous gaming group. Due on the findings, the authors recommend differentiating games in the classroom (Bourgonjon et al., 2010, p. 1152).

Mifsud et al. (2013) studied students, teachers, and parents' attitudes toward and the impact of video games in classroom learning in four Maltese secondary schools that teach English as a second language. The authors surveyed students on the pedagogical potential of digital games in school and how they used games in classes (Mifsud et al., 2013, p. 37). The findings suggest that most (79.1%) of the 1,441 students are enthusiastic about using digital games in the classroom because they can help them develop English skills (Mifsud et al. 2013, p. 48).

Erkkilä (2017) studies 779 Finnish students' views about digital games and what they think they may gain from them for English language acquisition. The bulk of pupils are upper-level. Most students believe that game-acquired language improves their classroom performance and makes learning easier, while some disagree (Erkkilä, 2017, p. 72). Many pupils said playing games boosted their willingness to study. Students also claimed that games boosted their enthusiasm to learn English. 592 kids said computer games helped them learn English at school. 339 students considered learning English using games little or somewhat useful, whereas 241 found it extremely or significantly helpful (Erkkilä, 2017, p. 72).

Wiklund and Gilbert (2005) interviewed 21 Botkyrka high schoolers. All 21 pupils play games often and feel they can learn English from computer games without instructor help. Students believe digital games may boost their understanding of scholastic topics (Wiklund & Glimbert, 2005, p. 1).

Engagement and learning are important for educational games' efficacy. Groff et al (2012) compares school console gaming to other activities. Both students and instructors said the game was more interesting and motivating than previous ways (Marklund, 2015, p. 125).

Digital games bring delight, deep and passionate participation, structure, motivation, learning, adrenaline, creativity, social groupings, and emotion, according to Prensky (2007, p. 144). He says that digital game-based learning works because it adds interest and uses an interactive learning approach. This depends on the learning objectives. Match material to learner. If not, no approach will produce learning (Prensky, 2007, p. 147)

According to Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al. (2011), video games increase students' knowledge, abilities, and attitudes about the material presented. He says game-based learning is more stimulating and effective (Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al., 2011, p. 32). Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al. (2011) surveyed 275 instructors in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Portugal, and the US. Only 12% of instructors consider games as a teaching approach that may engage and encourage pupils, according to the authors (Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al., 2011, p. 193).

Yu et al. (2020, p.4) selected a number of peer-reviewed academic publications and summarized the findings. According to Yu et al. (2020, p. 11), empirical research show that students' performance, attitude, motivation, and critical thinking ability increase with contextual game-based learning. Educational games may improve students' academic performance via

learning techniques, game-based learning, collaborative learning, and context-aware learning. To increase games' academic benefits, emphasize game, player, and context interactions. Yu et al.

Mifsud et al. (2013) studied the usefulness of videogames in the English classroom. The experimental group (EG) made considerable English increases compared to the control group (CG) (Mifsud et al., 2013, p. 32). The experiment's game practiced many secondary school language topics (Mifsud et al., p. 39). The instructors thought the game's language objectives were appropriate to their pupils' English curriculum (Mifsud et al., 2007).

The findings demonstrate substantial differences for all tasks except antonyms and synonyms (see Mifsud et al., 2013 for details). The EG and CG began off with identical English skills, but the EG improved significantly while the CG did not (Mifsud et al., 2013, p. 48). Seven instructors who used digital games in the classroom gave input. Six of seven instructors said pupils were "extremely engaged and keen to play and study" (Mifsud et al., 2013, p. 46). According to the professors, the kids improved their cognitive and receptive abilities such as reading, listening, grammar, and vocabulary (Mifsud et al. 2013, p. 46). Overall, instructors said the game was successful for student learning and "increased student interest and engagement" (Mifsud et al., 2013, p. 47).

Sundqvist & Wikström (2015, p. 65) looked at extramural play and in-school English vocabulary and grades. 80 Swedish second-language English learners were sampled. Frequent players had the highest rated essays, employed the most complex terminology, and received the best ratings. These studies show that digital games may help ESL learners. The authors advise using language diaries to map out-of-school language. Teachers may construct learning assignments based on the available information (Sundqvist & Wikström, 2015, p. 74).

Ho (2020) studied Chinese college students who learn English. Ho mixed digital games with active learning tactics like narrative building and storytelling and saw good benefits on English learning. She says game-based learning increased "behavioral, cognitive, and motivational involvement" Her work suggests that digital games for language learning may boost academic engagement and reduce fear and reluctance to speak English (Ho, 2020, pp. 432-433).

Xu et al. (2020, p. 877) reviewed 59 papers on digital games and English language development. One of their study issues is how digital games affect English language learners' hearing, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, pragmatics, and overall English competence. Vocabulary was the most studied language skill, followed by English language competency, pragmatics, grammar, writing, and speaking (Xu et al., 2009). (2020, p. 889). In 59 research, approximately 80% found digital game-based learning to be beneficial to English language learners (Xu et al., 2020, p. 890).

During the lockdown the pre-foundation students were taught online, thus in order to make lessons more engaging the teachers used some of the internet resources for teaching by gaming. Here is a description of tools that were used successfully to explain topics and revise covered materials.

Wordwall. (<https://wordwall.net>)

Wordwall can be utilized as both an online interactive and printable activity. Online interactive activities can be played by students individually or in groups; moreover, a teacher may manage the whole activity by asking students to take turns to answer questions.

Activities are created by using different templates such as 'match-up', 'quiz', 'random wheel' and so on. Once a template is chosen, content is entered. Even after creating an activity, it

is possible to change the template easily to another one in a couple of minutes according to students' knowledge and interest.

The activity can be made public which allows other educators also to use it by getting the link for the game. Moreover from "Community" search results a lot of activities might be found and played for educational purposes. On the other hand, it is possible to block access to the activity by privacy features.

Activities can be used during the lesson or assigned as a home task. Results are visible and only the teacher can see them.

Google forms:

Google forms is one of the free tools which can be used to assess students' knowledge during online classes. It is convenient to use since the teacher only has to insert questions and answers. The rest of the work is done automatically. At the end, when students submit their responses they can get answers with explanations. This makes teacher's job straightforward.

Moreover, "Google Forms" gives a chance to design surveys to get feedback from students.

Quizlet. (<https://quizlet.com/latest>)

Quizlet is also a free learning tool that consists of flashcards and games. It is possible to create a new study set or use ready materials designed by other educators.

In order to organize a study set, one should insert terms and definitions. The same study sets can be used in various ways as a flashcard, tests, matching tasks. Also, interactive online games can be played by choosing a type of study. This tool can be used with mobile apps as well which makes students' study easy and portable. Moreover, audio for terms and definitions is available. With "Quizlet" teachers can make their classroom interactive, engaging and enjoyable.

Kahoot. (<https://kahoot.com>)

Popular website Kahoot helps with online class learning. It's straightforward for students and instructors to utilize, which is vital when looking for online classroom games. Kahoot is a free website; simply sign up to enjoy additional features and share with more students.

Students may play Kahoot games on their phones when you share the screen. It's fantastic for group lessons since kids will compete to win. There are games for beginners, Cambridge-based games, Disney or Star Wars-themed games, and current events games for experienced learners. All ages and levels may use it. Students get 10/20/30 seconds to answer each multiple-choice question, so it is a good way for them to revisit a topic and assess their understanding. It is a nice approach to introduce a new subject and assess pupil knowledge.

Baamboozle. (<https://www.baamboozle.com/games>)

Baamboozle is another excellent website for use in online classrooms with many students. Again, it is free and simple for both students and teachers to utilize. They provide nearly half a million games that include vocabulary, grammar, tenses, and sentence structure. In addition to allowing students to compete against one another, Baamboozle awards points for each accurate response. My children like the innovative function that allows them to trade and steal points from their peers. Students get points by selecting a number from a grid and responding to the question with a full phrase or by selecting the right response option. If you have a large online class, you may also divide your students into teams using Bamboozle, and they can answer questions as a group. The games may be used to teach new concepts, review



current or prior assignments, and assess students' comprehension. They are also an excellent icebreaker for new students and courses.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Games are regarded as an efficient method for imparting new skills to students, while requiring a great deal of time and effort on the part of the instructor to arrange and supervise. In addition, a majority of students like playing games. There is also a subset of students that feel inadequate in the face of formidable opponents when playing games; for this reason, they were not excited about using games in the classroom.

Despite the absence of games in the book, instructors continue to use games in their ESL classes since they have seen their effectiveness with students. In conclusion, games are an effective method for teaching English while being time-consuming and exhausting for the instructor.

Due to the fact that teaching a foreign language needs a great deal of work and time, it deserves major consideration. On the basis of this survey's results, the following suggestions may be made:

- Teachers should pay greater attention to disinterested pupils and modify games accordingly.
- Teachers should have extra time in their classes to rehearse game strategies and complete lesson preparations.
- Teachers may sometimes arrange games outside of the classroom.

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