



Teachers' Experiences with Using Online Games in EFL Classrooms: A Study of Moroccan Teachers

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ABSTRACT:

Advancements in technology have led to the emergence of various learning models and tools that can enhance the language teaching-learning process. Language practitioners are now able to leverage technology, including hardware and software, to increase student engagement in the language learning process. This study investigates the experiences of Moroccan English teachers with online games in EFL classrooms. The study surveyed 107 educators, 52.3% of whom were male and 47.7% of whom were female. The results indicate that online games motivate students to learn, improve classroom rapport, and promote 21st Century Skills. However, the findings report that online games create noise, disorder, and time loss. Furthermore, the study highlights that Kahoot is the most widely used online game among Moroccan English teachers. This research provides insights into the potential benefits and drawbacks of using online games in EFL classrooms. It also underscores the importance of considering context-specific factors that impact the use of online games by EFL teachers.

Keywords: Online games, Kahoot, motivation, Moroccan Education, experience, 21st century skills, noise

Introduction

In this digital age, technology has shaped nearly every aspect of human existence. In this sense, technology has significantly reformed our personal existence, the business world, and various industries around the globe (Dellos, 2015). Certainly, technology has also influenced the education sphere, particularly through the provision of new instructional tools deemed to improve education quality and transform learning.

However, in recent years, there has been a growing interest in using online games as a tool for language acquisition, especially in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Several studies (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2007; Cox & Rogers, 2005; Kim & Reeves, 2007; Koile & Singer, 2006) found that the use of technological tools like computers, tablets, and online teaching and learning applications increases students' engagement and active participation in the classroom. Nevertheless, the extents to which teachers use online games in EFL classrooms and their experiences with this innovative instructional practise are still not well researched.

This study aims to examine the Moroccan English instructors' experiences with using online games in EFL classrooms. Specifically, the study intends to identify the varieties of online games used by teachers, the purposes for which they are used, and the benefits and challenges associated with using online games in EFL classrooms. By investigating these issues, the study intends to shed light on how online games can be used effectively in EFL classrooms and how the challenges associated with their use can be overcome.

This study's findings will contribute to the growing body of research on using online games in language learning and provide teachers with practical recommendations to effectively use them in EFL classrooms. The study's ultimate objective is to facilitate the creation of more engaging and effective language learning environments for EFL students.

Research Questions:

1. What are the benefits of using online games in EFL classrooms?
2. How does using online games negatively impact the teaching-learning environment?
3. What is the most popular online game among Moroccan teachers in EFL classrooms?

Literature Review

In recent years, the use of online games in language instruction has been the subject of extensive research. This literature review will examine several past studies that investigated the use of online games in EFL classrooms, focusing on the most popular online activities and their potential benefits and drawbacks.

Game-based learning in EFL classrooms

Icard (2014) defined gamification as the concept of using game-based activities and the process of utilising video games to engage an audience or solve problems. Educational gamification is implemented by incorporating educational assessment into video games. The development of interactive games for classroom use encourages independent and collaborative learning. Gamification also improves analytical and problem-solving abilities (Icard, 2014). In this sense, this instructional pedagogy seeks to make the learning process significantly more engaging and to promote a motivating, enjoyable learning environment. Indicators of progress in a game also make learning and self-evaluation more apparent. Young learners feel more engaged and at ease in gaming-based learning; games are a common component of young learners' daily lives. Theoretically speaking, an entertaining and engaging gaming environment increases student responses and participation in the learning process, leading to more positive learning outcomes (Dellos, 2015).

Motivation and engagement

The ability to motivate students to learn is one of the most frequently cited advantages of using online games in language education. According to a past study entitled "How does an online game-based learning environment promote students' intrinsic motivation for learning natural science and how does it affect their learning outcomes?" by Kuo (2007), online activities can increase students' engagement and enjoyment of learning, with the potential to improve learning outcomes. For instance, the author found that an online game-based learning environment can promote students' intrinsic motivation to learn natural science, leading to better learning outcomes.

Similarly, Hwang et al. (2011) investigated the impact of an online game approach on improving students' learning performance in web-based problem-solving activities. The research's findings suggest that the online game approach can improve students' learning performance in web-based problem-solving activities. The authors also found that the experimental group outperformed the control group in terms of problem-solving accuracy, speed, and the number of problems solved correctly. The students in the experimental group also showed higher levels of motivation and engagement than the control group.

Moreover, using online games in a teaching and learning context has played an essential role in promoting sustainability. For example, Hazar Dib and Nicoletta Adamo-Villani (2018) conducted a study aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of a serious game for teaching and learning about building sustainability. The study's findings suggest that the serious game was effective in promoting the teaching and learning of building sustainability. The authors found that the game improved students' knowledge of sustainable building concepts and increased their motivation and engagement in the learning process.

21st Century Skills

Online games can also aid in developing 21st-century skills such as critical reasoning, problem-solving, and teamwork. This is due to the fact that many online games require these abilities for success (Meihua Qian and Karen R. Clark, 2016). The two authors wrote an article on "Game-based Learning and 21st Century Skills: A Review of Recent Research," which provided a comprehensive review of recent research on game-based learning and its impact on 21st-century skills development. Meihua Qian and Karen R. Clark (2016) summarised the findings of the reviewed studies, highlighting the positive impact of game-based learning on the development of 21st-century skills such as problem-solving, collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking. The authors also identified the key game design elements that contribute to the effectiveness of game-based learning, including interactivity, feedback, challenge, and immersion. Furthermore, Eseryel et al. (2014) found that online games not only motivate and engage students to learn but most importantly foster their thinking skills.

Drawbacks

There are, however, potential disadvantages to using online activities in language instruction. Past studies demonstrated that one of the most frequently cited challenges is the potential for games to cause noise and disorder and occupy a great deal of time. Some educators are also concerned about the relevance of the material and the potential for games to detract from the learning objectives (Stojković, M. K., & Jerotijević, D. M., 2018). The authors conducted a survey of 35 EFL teachers in Serbia to collect data on their attitudes towards using games in the classroom. The findings suggest that teachers who use games in their classrooms do so primarily to increase student motivation, engagement, and participation. Teachers who avoid using games cited lack of time, lack of resources, and a focus on traditional teaching methods as the main reasons for their decision.

Many instructors continue to use online games in their language instruction despite these obstacles, and researchers continue to investigate this approach's potential benefits and drawbacks. Literature suggests that online games have the potential to be effective instruments for motivating students

and developing their 21st-century skills, but that careful consideration must be given to their integration into the curriculum and the management of potential challenges (MeihuaQian and Karen R. Clark, 2016).

Kahoot

Kahoot is a gamification-based platform that contains quizzes, discussions, and surveys. In 2013, Kahoot was introduced and quickly became a global educational brand. Kahoot possesses distinctive characteristics for interactive and competitive gaming and instructional models. Kahoot is based on the concept of creating a game-based platform for students to appreciate learning in a competitive, engaging, and enjoyable manner. Rather than the traditional method of reading textbooks and class notes, Kahoot's users are encouraged to learn, play, and socialise in classrooms, thereby making the learning process active (Graham, 2015). Kahoot is a game-based response system in the classroom that is played by the entire class in 'live' time. During a lecture, Kahoot's questions will be displayed on the screen, and students will be required to respond using technological devices such as tablets, smartphones, and computers. However, Kahoot's online games bring about advantages and disadvantages to the teaching-learning classroom environment (Rajabpour, 2021). Furthermore, integrating Kahoot into classroom activities creates a fun and interactive atmosphere (Lee & Hammer, 2011). This helps in building a good rapport between teachers and students.

Aidoune et al. (2022) examined the "Effect of the Online English Learning Game "Kahoot" on L2 Undergraduate Learners in a Malaysian University." Their study highlighted a significant increase in English language learning among the students who used Kahoot, indicating that the game may be an effective tool for assisting language learners.

In the same vein, Jankovi et al. (2022) investigated the effects of Kahoot and Quizizz, two game-based learning platforms, on the academic achievement of third-grade primary school students. The authors found that Kahoot and Quizlet significantly improved students' academic performance compared to the control group. However, the study revealed that Kahoot was more effective than Quizizz at improving students' academic performance. The findings indicated that game-based learning platforms such as Kahoot and Quizlet could help enhance elementary school pupils' academic achievement.

Kahoot as a fun online platform can also be used as an assessment tool to evaluate students' learning outcomes. For instance, Nurhadianti and Bambang WidiPrattolo (2020) discussed Kahoot's function in language learning and its potential as an assessment tool. According to their study, the majority of students believed that Kahoot is a fun and engaging tool that helps them effectively acquire and practice English vocabulary. In addition, students reported that Kahoot is a valuable instrument for evaluating their learning progress and identifying problem areas. Nonetheless, some students reported that Kahoot was distracting and that they experienced technical difficulties during the assessment. The study emphasized the significance of incorporating technology into language learning and assessment as well as the need for additional research into the potential of Kahoot and other technology-based assessment tools in language learning.

Moreover, the article "Perceptions of Students for Gamification Approach: Kahoot as a Case Study" by H. Bicen and S. Kocakoyun in 2018 explored students' perceptions regarding the use of gamification in education through the case study of Kahoot, a popular online game-based learning platform. The results showed that most students thought using Kahoot was beneficial because they found it interesting, enjoyable, and helpful for learning programming concepts. The study also found that using Kahoot improved students' motivation and attention in the classroom.

Methodology

Research and design:

The nature of this study is both descriptive and quantitative. The research focuses on gathering quantitative data to describe the experiences of English teachers in Morocco who use online games in EFL classrooms.

Participants:

The survey was administered to 207 educators, 52.3% male, and 47.7% female. A random selection of participants guaranteed a representative sample.

Data collection:

An online questionnaire was used to collect data. Participants were asked to respond to survey questions using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" and a six-point frequency scale ranging from "always" to "never."

Data analysis

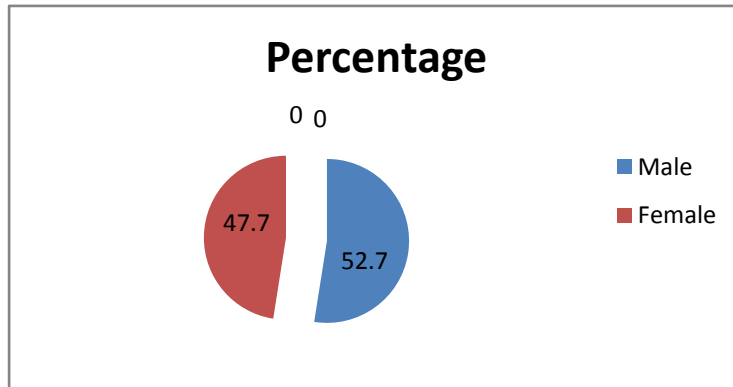
The study used descriptive analysis, presenting the data in charts, tables, and graphs. The data were summarized and described using descriptive statistics, including measures of central tendency and variability. Statistical software was used to analyze the data.

Ethical considerations:

Ethical considerations were considered to safeguard the confidentiality and privacy of the target population. Participants were apprised of the study's purpose and could withdraw at any time.

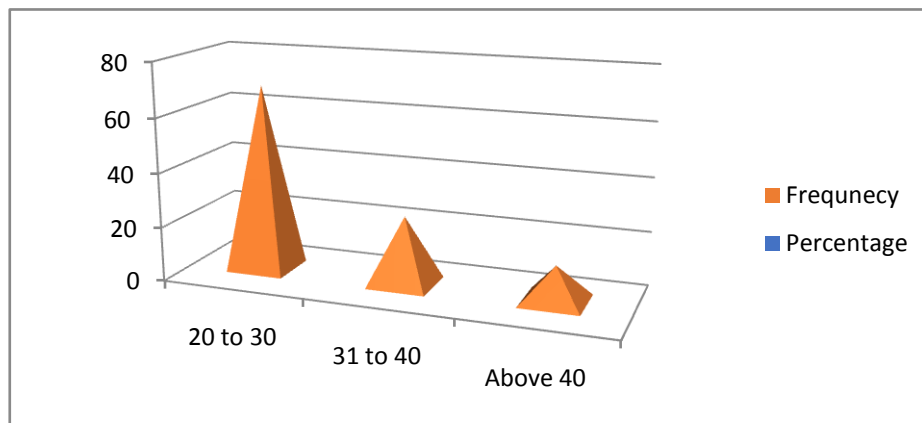
Results

Figure.1: Gender of Participants



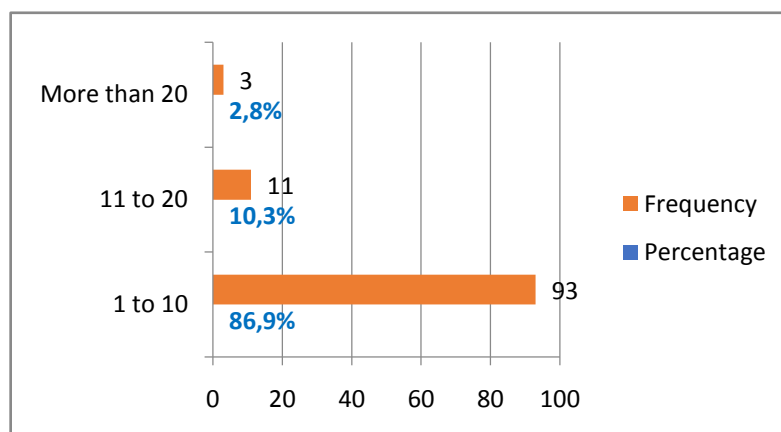
The result presented in Figure.1 provides information about the gender distribution of the participants in this study. The chart shows that 52.3% of the participants are male teachers, while 47.7% are female teachers. This information indicates that the study or survey is focused on a population of teachers, with a relatively equal gender balance.

Figure.2: The age of participants.



The finding presented in Figure.2 indicates the age distribution of the participants in this survey. The chart shows that the majority of the participants fall within the age range of 20 to 30 years, with 64.5% of the total participants falling in this age bracket. The next largest age group is participants aged 31 to 40 years, comprising 23.4% of the total participants. The remaining participants are above 40 years old, accounting for 12.1% of the total participants.

Figure.3: Years of Teaching



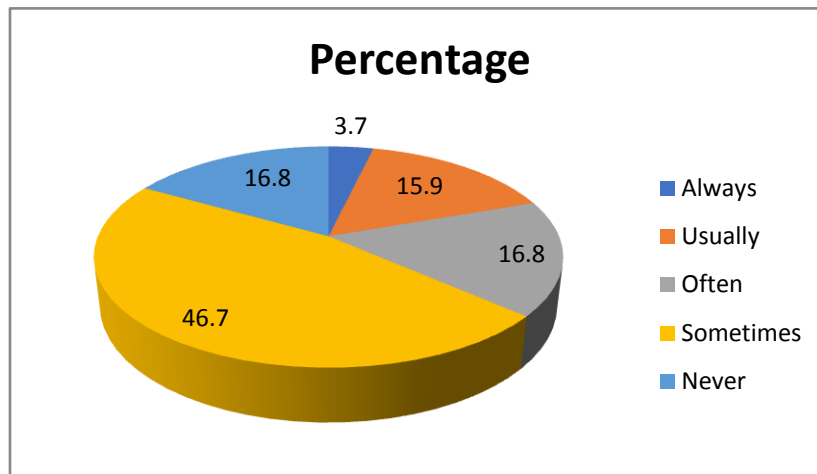
The figure3 shows that the majority of individuals have teaching experience ranging from 1 to 10 years, accounting for 86.9% of the total. This suggests that most of the individuals are relatively new to teaching, and have less than a decade of experience. The next category is individuals with teaching experience ranging from 11 to 20 years, which represents 10.3% of the total while the smallest proportion of individuals, 2.8%, have more than 20 years of teaching experience. This suggests that the number of individuals with extensive teaching experience is relatively low compared to those with lesser experience.

Figure 4: Educational degree

| Educational Degree | Percentage | Frequency |
|--------------------|------------|-----------|
| Bac | 4,7% | 5 |
| B.A | 79,4% | 85 |
| Master | 15% | 16 |
| Ph.D. | 0,9% | 1 |

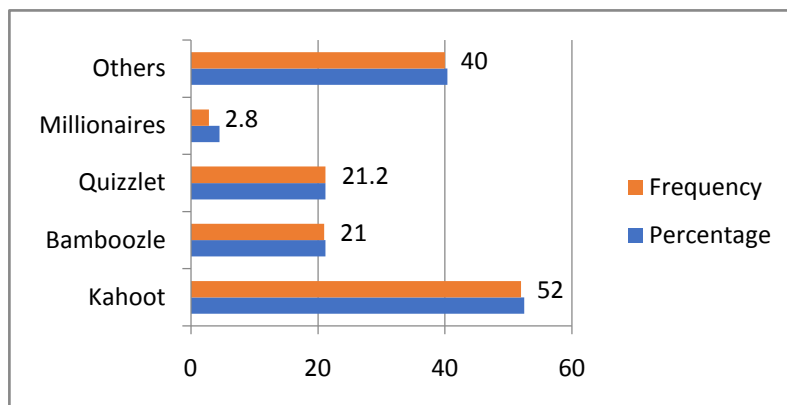
The 4thfigure shows that the majority of individuals, 79.4%, hold a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree. This indicates that the most common educational degree among the group of individuals in this study is a B.A. degree. The next most frequent educational degree is a Master's degree, which represents 15% of the total. This suggests that there are fewer individuals with higher-level degrees, compared to those with a B.A. degree. Only 4.7% of the teachers hold a Bachelor's (Bac) degree, which is the least common degree among the group. Finally, only 0.9% of individuals hold a Doctorate degree (Ph.D.), which is the least frequent educational degree among the group. This suggests that there are very few individuals with the highest level of academic achievement among the group.

Figure 5: The frequency of using online games by Moroccan English teachers



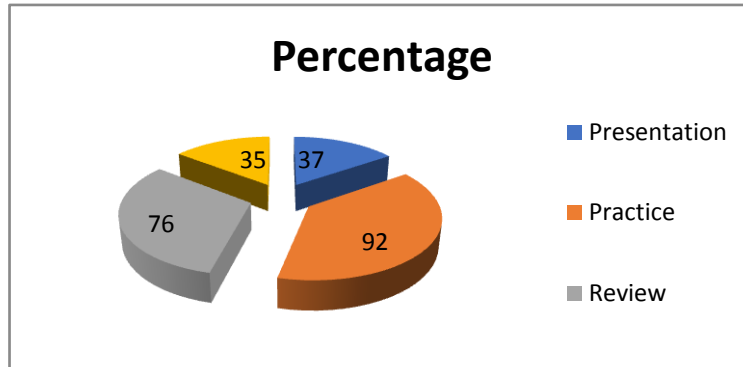
The 5thgraph shows that the most common response is "sometimes," which represents 46.7% of the total. This suggests that a significant number of teachers use online games in their classes occasionally or sporadically. The next most common response is "often" and "usually," representing 16.8% each. This suggests that a smaller proportion of teachers use online games in their classes regularly, but not necessarily in every class. Only 3.7% of teachers reported using online games "always," which is the least frequent response. This may point out that very few teachers who are used to this pedagogical practice. Similarly, 16.8% of teachers reported never using online games in their classes. This shows that a significant number of teachers do not use online games at all, for a number of factors such as lack of access or ICT competence or preference for other teaching methods.

Figure 6: Most popular online games used by Moroccan English teachers



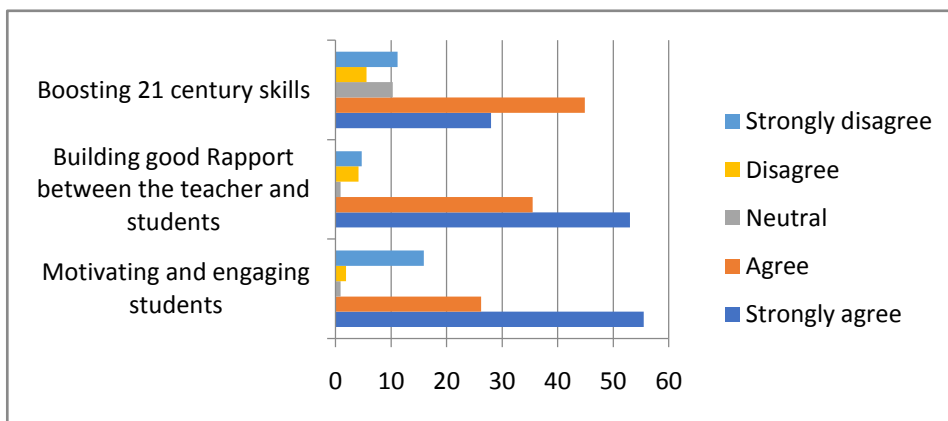
The 6th figure represents the results of the most popular online games used by Moroccan English teachers. The graph shows the percentage of teachers who reported using each game, with Kahoot being the most popular at 52.5%, followed by Bamboozle and Quizzlet, both at 21.2%. Millionaires were reported to be used by only 4.5% of teachers, while 40.4% reported using other games not listed.

Figure 7: Teachers' agreement for using online games during the lesson



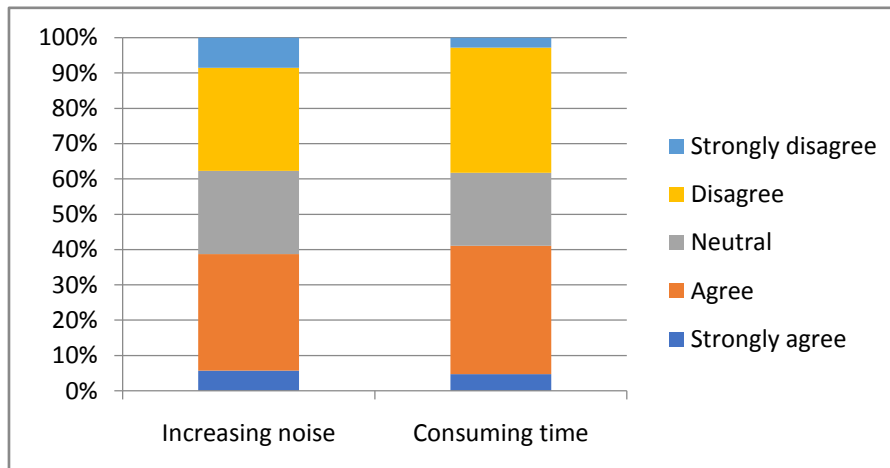
The results of 7th graph reveal that Moroccan English teachers highly value the use of online games in their classrooms. The majority of teachers reported using online games for practicing (92%) and reviewing (76%) learning outcomes. Additionally, online games were found to be an effective tool for presenting new information, with 37% of teachers using them for this purpose. In terms of summative assessment, 35% of teachers reported using online games for this purpose. This finding suggests that online games are not as commonly used for summative assessment as they are for practice and review. However, the fact that a third of teachers are using online games for summative assessment highlights their potential as a versatile tool in the classroom.

Figure 8: Online games motivate and engage, build rapport and enhance 21st century skills



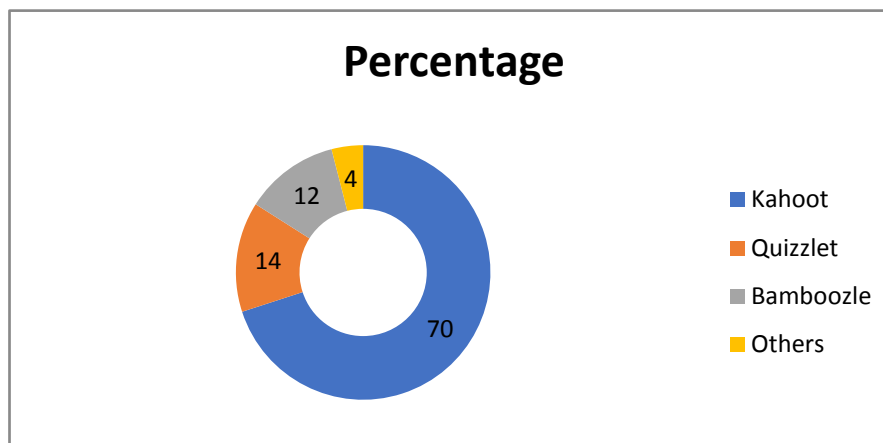
The findings of the 8th figure indicate that motivating and engaging students is seen as the most important factor (a high percentage of participants (55.5%) strongly agree that 26.2% agree), followed by building good rapport between teachers and students (a majority of participants (53%) agree that this is important, with 35.5% strongly agreeing), while boosting 21 century skills may be viewed as less critical by some respondents (only 28% strongly agreeing that this is important, and 44.9% indicating agreement).

Figure 9: Drawbacks of using online games



The 9th figure show that the majority of participants believe that online games can lead to increasing noise, with a significant proportion agreeing (33%) or strongly agreeing (5.7%) with this concern. Additionally, a large number of participants also believed that using online games can consume a lot of time, with a majority agreeing (46.4%) or strongly agreeing (4.7%) with this statement. These findings demonstrate that users may perceive these as potential negative consequences of using online games, which may have implications for their overall usage and enjoyment of these platforms.

Figure 10: Teachers' recommendations about the best online games



The finding of the 10th figure is related to teachers' recommendations for the best online game to use, with a breakdown of the percentage of their preferences. According to the result, 70% of the teachers recommend using Kahoot, 14% recommend using Quizlet, and 12% recommend using Bamboozle. The remaining 4% of teachers suggest other online games. This reveals that the popularity and effectiveness of Kahoot among Moroccan English teachers.

Discussions

This chapter discusses the findings related to the research questions, which sought to investigate the advantages and disadvantages of online games used by Moroccan English instructors as well as the most popular online game used in EL classrooms. The findings are based on survey data collected from an assortment of Moroccan English teachers.

Research questions:

RQ 1:

What are the benefits of using online games in EFL classrooms?

Motivation and engagement

The majority of teachers surveyed believe that online activities like Kahoot, Bamboozle, and Quizlet are practical tools for motivating and engaging students. These activities provide an engaging and interactive learning environment that increases students' interest in the subject matter. The current findings display that online activities make learning more entertaining and engaging for students. This is consistent with the study by Gwo-Jen Hwang, Po-Han Wu, and Chi-Chang Chen titled "An online game approach for improving students' learning performance in web-based problem-solving activities." The article's findings suggested that the online game approach can enhance students' problem-solving performance on the web. Additionally, students in the experimental group demonstrated greater motivation and engagement than those in the control group. The present results also align with the study done by Delos (2015). The author highlighted that using online games in schools helps motivate students to participate and facilitates the teaching-learning process in the classroom. Dellos (2015), on the other hand, concluded that online games create an enjoyable learning environment where students feel excited to learn.

Building Rapport

Several teachers reported that online games foster positive relationships between teachers and students. They serve as a platform for instructors and students to interact, collaborate, and communicate. This contributes to establishing a positive classroom climate, facilitating effective learning. The present study's findings are in line with one that Lee, Hammer, and students conducted. They serve as a platform for instructors and students to interact, collaborate, and communicate. This contributes to establishing a positive classroom climate, facilitating effective learning. The present study's findings align with Lee and Hammer's (2011) research. The authors found that online activities promote a friendly and relaxed classroom environment conducive to learning.

21st-century skills

Some educators believe that online activities enhance the 21st-century skills of their students, such as collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and communication.

The findings also reveal that online fun activities boost students' problem-solving and communication skills, which are crucial for success in this modern world. These results of the current study mirror the findings of research conducted by Meihua Qian and Karen R. Clark and are crucial for success in this modern world. These results of the current study mirror the findings of research conducted by Meihua Qian and Karen R. Clark (2016) titled "Game-based Learning and 21st Century Skills: A Review of Recent Research," which provides a comprehensive review of recent research on game-based learning and its impact on 21st-century skills development. The authors summarised the findings of the reviewed studies, highlighting the positive impact of game-based learning on the development of 21st-century skills such as problem-solving, collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking. The authors also identified the key game design elements that contribute to the effectiveness of game-based learning, including interactivity, feedback, challenge, and immersion.

Briefly, the findings of the first research question indicate that using online games to teach English has numerous advantages and disadvantages for both teachers and students. Online games can help to motivate and engage students, create rapport between instructors and students, and help learners develop 21st-century skills, without neglecting the negative aspects of this pedagogical practise, including noise and time loss in the classroom. These results of our study are useful for the quality of English language instruction in Morocco, with an emphasis on the need for additional research on the efficient use of online games in language instruction.

RQ 2:

How does using online games negatively impact the teaching-learning environment?

The majority of respondents agreed that integrating games online can result in an increase in background noise that is distracting and could have an adverse effect on classroom performance. In addition, many teachers expressed their worries about how much time games consume in the classroom. The finding of the second research question is consistent with Stojkovic and Jerotijevic's (2011) study. The authors acknowledged that games have several disadvantages, especially issues related to the excessive noise and chaos students create while playing the game in class.

These results stress the need for educators to weigh the benefits of adopting online games with caution before deciding to implement this practise in language classes. However, educators need to be wary while dealing with this practise to limit its negative aspects. To better implement this instructional tool, teachers may employ some useful procedures such as setting clear objectives, limiting students' time spent on online games, and enforcing rules about volume and conduct.

RQ 3:

What is the most popular online game among Moroccan English teachers in EFL classrooms?

The study's findings show that Kahoot, Bamboozle, and Quizlet were the three most frequently played online games by Moroccan English teachers. However, it is noteworthy that 40.4% of teachers reported using other games not listed in the study, indicating a diverse range of game options available in EFL classrooms.

Kahoot's interactive and competitive aspect, which enables real-time feedback and assessment of students' learning, may explain why it has become so popular among Moroccan English teachers. Kahoot's gamified leaderboards and points systems may help keep students interested and involved in the class. These findings are compatible with the research article "Perceptions of Students for a Gamification Approach: Kahoot as a Case Study" by Bisen and Kocakoyun. These findings are compatible with the article "Perceptions of Students for a Gamification Approach: Kahoot as a Case Study" by Bisen and Kocakoyun (2018). The study explored students' perceptions regarding the use of gamification in education through the case study of Kahoot, a popular online game-based learning platform. According to the findings, the majority of students thought using Kahoot was beneficial because they found it to be interesting, enjoyable, and useful for learning programming concepts. The study also found that the use of Kahoot improved students' motivation and attention in the classroom.

Nurhadianti and Bambang WidiPratoko's (2020) study is another that supports our present results. The authors discussed Kahoot's functions in language learning and its potential as an assessment tool. Most students reported that this online platform is a fun and engaging tool that helps them effectively acquire and practice English vocabulary.

On the other hand, Rajabpour's (2020) study, "Teachers' Perception of Advantages and Disadvantages of Kahoot!" partially contradicts the current research findings. Rajabpour (2021) highlighted that Kahoot brings several benefits to the learning environment; however, some Omani teachers reported that this online game could be time-consuming, and the use of the tool could lead to technical difficulties in some cases.

In addition, the findings of this research can be useful for EFL educators in other countries who are considering using online games in their classrooms. By taking the level of interest in online games among Moroccan educators into account, classroom instructors can select games that are both appropriate for their learners and in line with their pedagogical goals. However, the third research question shows that Kahoot is widely used in EFL classes in Morocco and underscores the significance of employing online games with gamification aspects and interactive features.

Conclusion

The study sheds light on the experiences of Moroccan EFL teachers with online games in the classroom. The majority of educators view online games as effective instruments for motivating students to learn, enhancing 21st-century skills, and facilitating the learning process. However, some teachers associate this practice with difficulties with commotion, disorder, and time management. Besides, the study emphasizes Kahoot's popularity as the preferred online platform among Moroccan educators. This study's findings can be helpful for EFL practitioners and researchers who wish to gain a deeper understanding of the potential benefits and drawbacks of using online games in language classrooms, as well as how teachers navigate the challenges and opportunities of integrating them into their teaching practices. Future research could investigate the efficacy of different types of online games for various language skills and learning outcomes, as well as how online games can be used for assessment and evaluation purposes. In addition, this study is a call for future researchers to explore the perspectives and experiences of EFL students regarding the use of online games for language acquisition.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations can be made:

- Provide professional development and training opportunities for EFL teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills related to using online games in language teaching.
- Encourage the development of new online games that are specifically designed to address the needs of EFL learners and target specific language skills.
- Provide guidelines, and best practices for integrating online games into the EFL curriculum, and help teachers navigate the challenges and opportunities of using these tools in their teaching practices.
- Encourage further research to investigate the effectiveness of different types of online games for different language skills and learning outcomes, as well as the ways in which online games can be used for assessment and evaluation purposes.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study that need to be acknowledged:

- The study was conducted in a specific context, namely Moroccan EFL classrooms, and the findings may not be generalizable to other contexts.
- The study relied on self-reported data from teachers, and the perceptions and experiences of EFL students were not directly examined.
- The study did not investigate the impact of online games on language learning outcomes such as students' proficiency, accuracy, or fluency.

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