Rismat

Original Article

Exploring Students' Preferences Between Gamified Quiz Platform vs Traditional Text-Based Quizzes in An Indonesian EFL Context: A Qualitative Study at SMA Widyagama Malang

Vera Marta Sabila[1✉], Putu Dian Danayanti Degeng[2]
[1,2]Universitas Brawijaya, Jl. Veteran, Malang, Indonesia
Correspondence Author: dian_degeng@ub.ac.id[✉], veramartasb@student.ub.ac.id

Abstract:

This study examines the preferences and emotional responses of secondary students when engaging with gamified quiz platforms compared to traditional text-based quizzes in an EFL setting. A qualitative approach was employed involving five eleventh-grade students selected through purposive sampling. Over an eight-week period, students engaged in both gamified quizzes (Blooket and Zep Quiz) and conventional text-based quizzes. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews based on the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration framework and analyzed using thematic analysis. The results show that gamified quizzes enhanced enjoyment, lowered perceived stress, and boosted interaction among peers. Students also reported enhanced feelings of autonomy and competence due to immediate feedback, along with an increased sense of relatedness while playing. In comparison, text-based quizzes were viewed as more intellectually challenging and formal, yet less emotionally engaging. All participants preferred gamified quizzes, yet acknowledged the educational benefits of conventional formats. These findings suggest that integrating gamified and text-based assessments may help balance student engagement and academic challenge in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: Gamification, EFL Classroom, Student Preferences

Introduction

The use of technology into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction has profoundly altered student interactions with material, educators, and classmates (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021). The ongoing integration of technology has facilitated the development of creative teaching approaches to enhance student participation and engagement. A significant innovation is gamification, which is characterized by the use of game mechanisms, including competition, points, awards, and feedback, to augment

motivation and engagement (Deterding et al., 2011). Modern students, especially those in secondary school, are increasingly identified as digitally engaged learners who thrive in interactive, multimedia-dense, and socially interactive settings. Being digital natives, they often favor engaging and visually appealing learning experiences rather than static and text-heavy formats. In rapidly evolving digital learning ecosystems, teaching methods that do not align with students' tech habits and motivational requirements may find it difficult to maintain engagement. Consequently, incorporating creative and engaging methods into teaching practices has emerged as not just preferred but fundamentally essential (Li et al., 2023). In the Indonesian EFL context, gamified learning has become increasingly popular as teachers seek to address persistent classroom challenges, including low motivation, test anxiety, and limited exposure to English (Ashfiah et al., 2025). These obstacles frequently affect students' reactions to classroom evaluations and their level of comfort during educational tasks.

Stress from academic pressure and assessment is a well-acknowledged concern among secondary school students, impacting their reactions to classroom assessment formats (Xing et al., 2024). In response to these challenges, educators have started to investigate alternative assessment methods that uphold academic standards while lowering anxiety and boosting engagement. Pham (2023) also discovered that employing gamified grammar teaching via Quizizz greatly enhanced ESL students' performance and boosted classroom involvement. Their study underscores that gamified methods not only enhance engagement but also create more emotionally supportive educational settings that can lessen anxiety and foster active involvement. This need has become more apparent in the post-pandemic period, as interactive digital technologies are crucial for facilitating participation in mixed and online learning settings (Baidawi et al., 2025). This shift in learning modalities has consequently increased the demand for assessment approaches that leverage such digital innovation.

Digital assessment tools provide numerous benefits over traditional paper-based or text-based quizzes. They enable educators to deliver prompt feedback, track students' advancement instantly, and modify teaching based on learners' replies. Furthermore, several digital platforms incorporate interactive features that can engage students and maintain their involvement during classroom tasks. These characteristics place digital assessments as not only means for evaluating learning results but also as instruments that actively influence students' learning experiences (Zolfaghari et al., 2025). Nonetheless, despite their growing implementation, uncertainties persist about how students truly view and emotionally react to various kinds of digital and non-digital quiz formats in actual classroom settings. As a result, educators have started incorporating various digital assessment tools into their teaching practice to create a more engaging and adaptive learning environment for students.

Quizzes are widely used as both formative assessment tools and learning triggers. Traditionally, quizzes have been text-based, consisting of written or printed questions that emphasise correctness and recall. However, digital advancements have introduced gamified quiz platforms such as Blooket, Zep Quiz, Kahoot!, and Quizizz. These platforms incorporate scoring systems, leaderboards, animations, and interactive feedback to promote participation and engagement (Li et al., 2023; Furkan Kurnaz & Koçtürk, 2025). While text-based quizzes offer structured and focused assessment, gamified quizzes provide a more socially interactive and emotionally engaging experience. Although they are organized, conventional text-based quizzes frequently involve passive participation, slow feedback, and minimal interaction, potentially diminishing engagement and

increased performance pressure for students (Zhang & Hasim, 2023). In contrast, gamified quiz platforms have arisen as a solution to these constraints by integrating real-time feedback, competitive yet entertaining components, and social interaction features designed to boost motivation and classroom involvement (Li et al., 2023; Furkan Kurnaz & Koçtürk, 2025). This change signifies a broader educational evolution from assessment viewed simply as evaluation to assessment seen as an interactive and emotionally engaging learning experience. This contrast raises important pedagogical questions regarding how students perceive and emotionally respond to different quiz formats (Ratinho & Martins, 2023).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) offers a valuable framework for comprehending students' motivating experiences. Deci and Ryan (1985; 2017) assert that motivation is shaped by the satisfaction of three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy (feeling of control), competence (sense of mastery), and relatedness (sense of social connection). When these demands are fulfilled, pupils are more inclined to feel intrinsic motivation and engagement. Conversely, when these demands are unmet, motivation may diminish. Utilizing Self-Determination Theory in gamified and text-based quizzes facilitates an analysis of how various assessment formats may either fulfill or hinder students' psychological demands.

Previous research has demonstrated that gamification can enhance student engagement and motivation across various educational contexts. For example, Ashfiah et al. (2025) reported positive effects of gamified learning on EFL learners' motivation, while Liu et al. (2025) discovered that game-based training enhanced vocabulary acquisition and engagement relative to conventional techniques. Li et al. (2023) determined in their meta-analysis that gamification often enhances motivation and engagement, however its efficacy is contingent upon deliberate pedagogical design. These findings suggest strong support for gamified approaches, however, some studies also indicate that structured traditional formats may promote focus and cognitive discipline in assessment contexts.

Despite growing interest in gamification, limited qualitative research has explored Indonesian secondary school students' subjective emotional experiences when comparing gamified and traditional text-based quizzes. Existing studies tend to focus on university-level learners, specific language skills, or widely used platforms, leaving emerging tools such as Blooket and Zep Quiz underexamined. Moreover, few studies have explicitly analysed students' experiences through the lens of Self-Determination Theory within Indonesian socio-cultural contexts.

This research seeks to examine the preferences and emotional experiences of high school students while using gamified quiz platforms in contrast to standard text-based quizzes. This study uses Self-Determination Theory as an analytical framework to investigate the relationship between students' views and the constructs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This research enhances the current information base by offering qualitative insights into the subjective motivating experiences of secondary-level EFL students using new gamified platforms in Indonesia.

Methods

This study used a qualitative design to explore how high school students describe their experiences and preferences regarding gamified and text-based quizzes in an EFL context. This design and setting were appropriate for answering the research questions because they allowed for natural, detailed accounts of students' emotions, motivation, and psychological needs, rather than numerical score comparisons, in a real classroom

environment.

The research was conducted in one Grade XI Science class at one of private high schools in Malang, East Java, where English is a compulsory subject and students had previously used both Blooket and Zep Quiz alongside traditional text-based quizzes in their regular learning activities. The study was conducted during eight weeks in August–October 2025, the first semester of the 2025–2026 academic year. Participants were 5 eleventh-grade science students selected through purposive sampling on the basis that they had direct experience with both gamified and traditional quizzes in English, so they could compare the two formats from their own perspective. Their participation was voluntary, and before data collection, the purpose of the study and their rights as participants were explained so they could indicate willingness to participate. This small, focused sample was considered appropriate for a qualitative study aiming at in-depth exploration rather than statistical generalization. The emphasis of this study was not on representativeness, but on capturing detailed and context-specific insights from participants with direct experience of both quiz formats. This small, focused sample was considered appropriate for a qualitative study aiming at in-depth exploration rather than statistical generalization. The emphasis of this study was not on representativeness, but on capturing detailed and context-specific insights from participants with direct experience of both quiz formats.

Data were collected using a semi-structured interview framework informed by Self-Determination Theory and the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale (BPNSFS), which addresses autonomy, competence, and relatedness as needs that may be satisfied or thwarted. Instead of using the BPNSFS as a numeric scale, its three dimensions were converted into open-ended questions about freedom of choice, sense of competence, and connection with peers when using gamified and text-based quizzes, plus additional questions about perceived focus, pressure, shortcomings, and quiz-type preference. The guide was written in Indonesian so that students could express their feelings and experiences more freely in their first language. Each student took part in a 15–20 minute, individual, semi-structured interview designed to elicit focused and experience-based responses rather than broad generalizations. All sessions were recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim in Indonesian, and then translated fully into English with efforts to preserve meaning.

Zoom for online interviews, a digital audio recording function for documentation, and personal laptops or smartphones used by participants during quiz implementation were the main study instruments. The gamified quiz platforms examined were Blooket and Zep Quiz, both web-based interactive quiz platforms that allow real-time competition, scoring systems, leaderboards, and instant feedback. Furthermore, reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process, with the researcher being aware of her positionality and its potential influence on data interpretation. Conventional text-based quizzes without interactive digital components such as Google Form and printed or static typed question sheets. The selection of these resources was based on real-world classroom experiences.

The six-step thematic analysis methodology by Braun and Clarke was used for data analysis, including data identification, initial code generation, topic determination, theme review, theme definition and naming, and report compilation. To improve credibility, member verification was performed by disseminating simplified interpretations to participants for validation of meaning correctness. To guarantee consistency and transparency in theme development, code choices were also examined several times.

These methods contributed to the findings' increased reliability and trustworthiness.

The purpose of using the two quiz forms was to give students a chance to experience both quiz formats before asking them to consider their choices. Although having a dual role as both teacher and researcher allowed for close observation of classroom dynamics, it also introduced the potential for response bias. To minimize this, several measures were taken. Participation was clearly stated as voluntary, and students were reassured that their responses would not affect their academic standing. In addition, interviews were conducted individually to reduce peer influence, and students were encouraged to share honest experiences, including negative opinions, without judgment. Although having a dual role as both teacher and researcher allowed for close observation of classroom dynamics, it also introduced the potential for response bias. To minimize this, several measures were taken. Participation was clearly stated as voluntary, and students were reassured that their responses would not affect their academic standing. In addition, interviews were conducted individually to reduce peer influence, and students were encouraged to share honest experiences, including negative opinions, without judgment. Furthermore, reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process, with the researcher being aware of her positionality and its potential influence on data interpretation.

Results

Contrasting Learning Experience in Gamified and Text-Based Quizzes

The analysis revealed clear differences between students' experiences using gamified quizzes compared to those using text-based quizzes. Across all five participants, gamified quizzes were consistently described using positive emotional vocabulary, including terms such as "really fun," "exciting," "interesting," and "new experience." One participant stated that the implementation of Blooket "kept things from getting boring," while another explained that it made the content "easy to grasp" and "easy to absorb." Students frequently associated gamified quizzes with increased enthusiasm and motivation, expressing that they felt "more enthusiastic," "more excited to learn," and "more motivated." Competitive elements, such as "racing for points" and striving to "get the top position," were described as refreshing and engaging.

Researcher: Well, how did you feel about that experience at the time?

Informant 3:   It was really fun, and the material was easy to grasp.

In contrast, text-based quizzes were predominantly described using negative connotations. Students characterised them as "boring," "monotonous," "flat," and "the same old thing." Several participants reported experiencing "increased pressure or tension" when completing text-based assessments. One student described text-only formats as "just questions and answers, nothing else," while another stated that reading large amounts of text was "overwhelming." From a cognitive perspective, text-based quizzes were frequently perceived as more demanding. Participants referred to them as "harder to think," "hard to do the work," and at times "confusing."

> Researcher: Ah, okay, that's when the quiz is game-based, but at that time I also held something like... The Google form that you use online and the one we use for exams is on paper, right? So, in your opinion, if we use text-based quizzes, literally just questions and answer, nothing else. What do you think about that?
>
> Informant 1: So, doing that feels more pressured or tense, Because with a game, we're more relaxed, so it's more enjoyable to do.

These findings suggest a consistent experiential contrast between the two quiz formats. Gamified quizzes were perceived as emotionally stimulating and supportive of engagement, whereas text-based quizzes were experienced as more repetitive and cognitively demanding. This contrast suggests that quiz format may plays a significant role in shaping students' emotional responses and perceived learning experience. These results align with Indonesian EFL research indicating that gamified resources significantly boost students' enjoyment and motivation in English learning (Inayati & Waloyo, 2022; Laudy Armanda & Priyana, 2025; Fitria, 2023; Fahada & Asrul, 2024) and are also consistent with Li et al. (2023), who found that gamification enhances affective engagement across educational contexts.

However, viewing text-based quizzes as "harder" and more serious implies an alternative type of cognitive involvement. Ratinho and Martins (2023) argue that traditional formats may support sustained concentration and structured thinking, even if they generate lower emotional stimulation. Thus, the difference seen in this research highlights a separation between emotional engagement in gamified settings and cognitive demands in text-focused evaluations. These results suggest that quiz format influences both engagement levels and the character of students' learning experiences, advocating for a balanced instructional strategy instead of entirely replacing traditional methods.

Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness in Students' Experiences

Students expressed an increased feeling of freedom and adaptability while participating in gamified quizzes. They emphasized the wealth of "lots of games," "various ways," and "lots of choice" provided by platforms like Blooket. The ability to "switch games according to the material" and "choose our own avatar" was recognized as making the experience more captivating and personalized. In contrast, text-based quizzes were described as "simply text, questions, and answers" and a "formal examination format." Multiple participants reported that these formats limited their feeling of control, as they were reduced to "simply reading and responding." Still, text-based quizzes were viewed as providing a straightforward and consistent framework, enabling students to focus solely on finishing the task with minimal interruptions.

These findings indicate that although text-based quizzes provide autonomy via structured clarity, gamified quizzes enhance perceived autonomy through options and personalization. This result aligns with research showing that gamified settings can improve learner autonomy and self-regulation (Pratiwi & Waluyo, 2023; Slamet & Basthomi, 2024), and is also consistent with Self-Determination Theory, which highlights the significance of choice in promoting intrinsic motivation (Li et al., 2023; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

These findings indicate that although text-based quizzes provide freedom via organized transparency, gamified quizzes enhance perceived independence through options and personalization. This result aligns with research showing that gamified

settings can improve learner autonomy and self-regulation (Pratiwi & Waluyo, 2023; Slamet & Basthomi, 2024), and it corresponds with Self-Determination Theory, highlighting the significance of choice in promoting intrinsic motivation (Li et al., 2023; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Regarding competence, gamified quizzes frequently offered instant feedback and clear scores, aiding students in assessing their performance. Students observed that they could "immediately tell what's right and what's wrong" and "view their scores," which boosted their confidence. Nonetheless, some reported "feeling insecure" or "annoyed" when others excelled, suggesting that competitive aspects might occasionally impede their sense of competence. These results correspond with earlier research indicating that gamified systems can either bolster or test students' abilities based on the visibility of performance and the dynamics of the classroom (Inayati & Waloyo, 2022; Cheng et al., 2025).

> Informant 4: Well, if in the game-based we can immediately tell what's right and what's wrong. So we can figure out which one is correct. For example, the question A, but the correct answer is B, so there I can know the correct answer is that one.

Conversely, text-based quizzes led to greater cognitive involvement, necessitating attentive reading and analytical thinking. Though viewed as more challenging, they were also associated with seriousness and academic rigor. This indicates that proficiency in text-based formats is cultivated through analytical processing instead of instant performance feedback.

In terms of relatedness, gamified quizzes encouraged social interaction and engagement among peers. Students said the experience was "more fun because we do it together" and mentioned that it strengthened their connections with peers. Competitive aspects were usually seen as fun, although some frustration was occasionally noted. These results reinforce SDT views that social engagement boosts motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017) and correspond with studies indicating that gamified platforms enhance classroom interaction in EFL environments (Zhang & Hasim, 2023).

> Informant 1: If it's text-based, we focus more on our own stuff, right? If it's games, there are usually challenges, so we're more like we want to win against our friends, right? So there's interaction.

Conversely, text-based quizzes fostered a more personal and regulated setting, diminishing peer engagement and social assessment. Although this heightened attention benefited certain students, it also reduced chances for social interaction. These results suggest that gamified quizzes enhance feelings of relatedness more effectively, whereas text-based quizzes offer a more consistent yet less engaging social environment

Final Students' Preferences for Gamified and Text-Based Quizzes

All five participants showed a strong preference for gamified quizzes compared to text-based ones. Students often voiced preferences like "I prefer Blooket," "I'd choose the game," and "I like game-based ones," primarily because gamified quizzes were seen as more enjoyable, engaging, and less stressful. These results align with Cheng et al. (2025), who indicated enhanced enjoyment of language in gamified EFL environments, as well as with Indonesian research demonstrating that gamified learning reliably boosts motivation

and positive attitudes towards learning (Fitria, 2023; Inayati & Waloyo, 2022; Laudy Armanda & Priyana, 2025; Saptarina, Dabamona, & Yulianingsih, 2025).

Even with this strong preference, students recognized the worth of text-based quizzes. These were linked to equity, gravity, and mental discipline, indicating their ongoing importance in formal evaluation settings. Zhang and Yu (2022) also contend that although gamification boosts motivation, conventional formats still play a crucial role in organized cognitive processing.

In general, the findings suggest that gamified quizzes improve emotional and social involvement, whereas text-based quizzes aid in cognitive challenge and academic organization. Consequently, instead of substituting conventional assessments, merging both methods might more effectively cater to the varied psychological and educational requirements of students.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research revealed the preferences and emotional responses of high school students when interacting with gamified quiz platforms compared to traditional text-based quizzes in an EFL classroom. The results show that gamified quizzes were regularly linked to increased enjoyment, reduced stress, and improved social interaction, while text-based quizzes were viewed as more serious and intellectually challenging.

Viewed through the perspective of Self-Determination Theory, these variations illustrate how each type of quiz fulfills students' psychological requirements for autonomy, competence, and relatedness in unique manners. Gamified quizzes usually promote emotional involvement and active engagement, whereas text-based quizzes aid in organized thinking and scholarly discipline.

This study indicates that students' inclination towards gamified quizzes is mainly influenced by emotional and social involvement, while conventional formats still hold educational significance. This study offers qualitative insights into the experiences of secondary EFL learners, enhancing the existing research on gamified learning and emphasizing the significance of matching assessment design with psychological and academic learning requirements.

Suggestion

The results of this study suggest various practical and research implications that can be taken into account. EFL teachers are urged to incorporate gamified quiz platforms in classroom practice as an additional assessment method to boost student engagement, alleviate anxiety, and foster interactive learning settings. Simultaneously, conventional text-oriented quizzes ought not to be overlooked, as they continue to play a vital role in encouraging enhanced cognitive processing, concentration, and academic discipline. Consequently, it is advisable to utilize a mix of gamified and text-based evaluations to support students' emotional involvement alongside their cognitive growth.

Regarding pedagogical design, educators must thoughtfully evaluate how various quiz formats affect students' psychological needs, especially autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Gamified aspects like prompt feedback, options, and social engagement can be effectively employed to enhance motivation, all while upholding organized activities that guarantee significant learning results.

Future research should include larger and more varied samples from different educational levels to improve the generalizability of the results. Furthermore, using

quantitative or mixed-method strategies might offer greater understanding of the connection between quiz formats, fulfillment of psychological needs, and observable learning results. Future studies could additionally investigate how personal factors, like previous gaming exposure, skill level, or learning styles, affect students' reactions to gamified evaluation instruments.

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