

تصورات الطلاب العراقيين حول تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من خلال تعلم المفردات
باستخدام الألعاب الرقمية: (دراسة استقصائية وصفية في جامعة كربلاء)

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Iraqi EFL Students' Perceptions of Digital Game-Based Vocabulary Learning: A Descriptive Survey at the University of Karbala

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Keywords : Digital Game-Based Learning; Vocabulary Learning; EFL; Learner Motivation; Language Anxiety; Vocabulary Retention.

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المخلص

يواجه العديد من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL) المبتدئين يواجهون صعوبات كبيرة في فهم المفردات، خاصة في المدارس التي تعتمد على طرق تقليدية لتعليم المفردات. وقد ظهرت فكرة التعلم القائم على الألعاب الرقمية (DGBL)، كوسيلة مثيرة للاهتمام لتعلم المفردات، لأنها توفر بيئة تفاعلية، وتقدم ملاحظات فورية، وتسمح بالتكرار، وتتيح استخدام اللغة بطريقة فعالة وواسعة النطاق. في هذه الدراسة، تم استطلاع آراء طلاب المرحلة الرابعة في جامعة كربلاء، والدارسين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، حول استخدام الألعاب الرقمية الافتراضية لتعلم المفردات. تم اعتماد تصميم دراسي كمي، وتم جمع البيانات من خلال استبيان إلكتروني مكون من 20 سؤال، موزعة على أربعة أبعاد: الانخراط والدافعية، والتغذية الراجعة الفورية، والقلق والتوتر، والتكرار والاحتفاظ بالمفردات. تم تعديل الاستبيان وجمعه بمساعدة 40 طالبًا من هذه الفئة. أظهرت النتائج أن هناك مستويات مرتفعة من الاحتفاظ بالمفردات التي تم تعلمها عبر الألعاب الرقمية. ووافق 92.5% من الطلاب على أن الألعاب الرقمية تساعد في التغلب على

الصعوبات وتحليل المفردات الجديدة. كما وافق 82.5% على أن التغذية الراجعة الفورية تساعد في التعرف على الأخطاء وتصحيحها، وهو أمر ملحوظ. وأيضًا، وافق 90% على أن التكرار كان طبيعيًا وسهلاً. بشكل عام، تشير النتائج إلى أن الألعاب الرقمية يمكن أن تكون وسيلة مفيدة للتدريس، خاصة من حيث الدافعية، والتغذية الراجعة، والحد من التوتر، وتكرار المفردات. ومع ذلك، لا تدل هذه النتائج بشكل مباشر على تحسن مستمر على المدى الطويل.

Abstract

Acquisition of vocabulary comprehension remains a major endeavor for many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) beginners, especially in contexts where vocabulary training is closely based on traditional recognition strategies. Digital game-based learning (DGBL) has emerged as a perhaps attractive approach to vocabulary acquisition by providing interactive contexts, on-the-spot notes, repeated descriptions, and opportunities for substantial language use. Therefore, the perceptions of fourth-year EFL students at Karbala University were investigated and a look at the use of virtual computer games for studying English vocabulary. A quantitative descriptive study design was used. Data are collected through an online dependent questionnaire with 20 items distributed across four dimensions: engagement and motivation, interactive real time feedback on their language performance, language anxiety and repetition, and perceived vocabulary retention. The questionnaire was modified to be completed with the help of 40 fourth-year EFL students. The findings generally revealed amazing retentions of digital entertainment-based vocabulary recognition in general. Exactly 92.5% of individuals agree that digital games influence them to overcome challenges and analyze new vocabulary, while 82.5% agree that immediate feedback helps them to be aware of and correct their mistakes, which are prominent, 90 % agree that repetition was natural and natural virtual traditional vocabulary is extra powerful than Overall, the findings advise that researchers adopt digital computer games an undoubtedly useful complementary approach. Overall, findings support researchers' understanding of digital games as a potentially useful complementary technology to vocabulary training, especially in terms of motivation, immediate feedback, perceived language stress reduction, and repetition of vocabulary do not directly represent evidence of improvement over a longer period of time.

Introduction

Vocabulary information is widely established as an important aspect of English language skills because it supports novice learners' abilities to learn and communicate language through listening, speaking, reading,



and writing as Wilkins famously said, “Without grammar very little can be conveyed, but without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed”. University contexts, where students are expected to increase lexical information sufficient to understand academic texts and communicate effectively (Aedo & Millafilo, 2022). Vocabulary building in Iraqi college contexts, however, may closely rely on traditional rote learning practices. practices can help with initial mastery of vocabulary, they offer novices constrained opportunities to interact with new words in interactive and meaningful contexts (Abidah et al., 2023). This situation highlights the need to promote non-forgetting opportunities). repetitive associations of vocabulary. One approach that has received increasing attention is digital game-based learning (DGBL). Digital video games can provide interactive learning environments where beginners stumble upon language through a mixture of textual, visual, auditory data, in addition to receiving immediate notes on their responses Such skills can additionally create engaging opportunities in addition to vocabulary mastery and motivate beginners to communicate with target sentences (Hazar, 2020). Unlike traditional vocabulary activities, which may rely primarily on learning and repetition, virtual video games may require novices to make choices, solve problems, respond to demanding situations, and use language when completing leisure tasks (Kottacheruvu, 2023), Learners may also understand it as promoting vocabulary building and conservation.

Previous studies have generally stated the beneficial perceptions and effects associated with the use of virtual games in language acquisition. The study highlighted the skill benefits associated with student motivation, engagement, annotation, and vocabulary learning. Digital games can additionally create less threatening gaining knowledge of the environment by allowing inexperienced individuals to practice language in interactive environments and receive immediate feedback on their actions, but tons of dominant research have been conducted outside of the Iraq context. Thus, there is still limited empirical evidence on how Iraqi college EFL college students understand the use of specifically digital games for vocabulary learning, and whether they understand such environments as supportive of motivation, feedback, language stress reduction, and vocabulary retention. This gap is particularly relevant in Iraqi higher education, EFLteachers' knowledge and perceptions can help determine whether activities based primarily on virtual games are considered appropriate and potentially useful supplementary tools for vocabulary training. Rather than measuring the effectiveness of digital video games experimentally, the current study specializes in students'

reported perceptions of four factors of digital game-based vocabulary learning: engagement, motivation, interactive and immediate notes, linguistic stress and repetition, and vocabulary retention. Conceptual data is provided in these dimensions .in Figure 1.

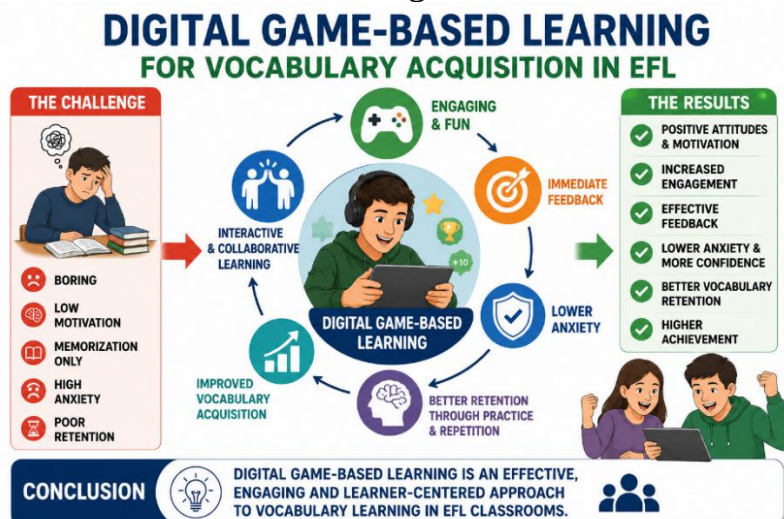


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Students' Perceptions of Digital Game-Based Vocabulary Learning in EFL

The present examination thus explores the perception of fourth-year students within the Department of English at Karbala University to acquire virtual game-based vocabulary knowledge. Focusing on the 4 dimensions identified above, the overview seeks to provide empirical evidence from the Iraqi EFL context on how university students adopt the pedagogical status of the vocabulary reading skill in digital games. The findings may additionally provide useful insights for university English teachers and curriculum designers considering a mix of digital games-primarily based games as supplementary technologies for vocabulary instruction. At the same time, the findings are interpreted within the limits of a descriptive study design and thus should reflect students' informed understanding of research questions instead of experimentally verified effects on vocabulary performance or long-term retention.

Q1. What are the perceptions of fourth-year EFL students at the University of Karbala regarding digital game-based vocabulary learning?

Q2. How do students perceive digital game-based vocabulary learning in terms of engagement and motivation, interactive and immediate feedback, language anxiety, and repetition and perceived vocabulary retention?

Q3. Which of the four dimensions receives the most positive responses from the participating students?



2. Theoretical and Empirical Background

2.1 Vocabulary Learning in EFL

Knowledge of vocabulary is an important part of grammar in second and foreign language learning, because it allows beginners to understand and communicate important messages. An adequate lexical repertoire helps develop four dominant language skills-listening, speaking, analyzing, and writing-and contributes to beginners' ability to communicate effectively, as Wilkins stated, "Without grammar very little can be conveyed, but without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (Wilkins, 1972). Consequently, vocabulary development has received considerable attention in EFL research.

Despite its importance, it can be difficult for beginners to learn vocabulary in EFL, especially when preparation relies heavily on individual word lists, rote learning, and repetitive physical games. Such techniques can also help beginners to invent and not forget words, but nevertheless offer opportunities to use them in vocabulary-learning contexts. Repetitive memorization may also contribute to boredom and reduced learner engagement, particularly when learners have few opportunities to interact with vocabulary in communicative situations (Shahriarpour & Kafi, 2014). For these barriers, it is recommended that researchers and language teachers recall several learner-centered approaches that provide opportunities for meaningful support, interaction, repetition, and lively participation. In this context, digital game-based learning (DGBL) has attracted increasing attention as a complementary approach to vocabulary training. Digital games can provide contextual encounters with vocabulary while incorporating interaction, problem solving, repetition, and notes into the learning game.

2.2 Digital Game-Based Learning (DGBL)

Digital game-based learning (DGBL) refers to the use of virtual games as environments or activities through which learning objectives can be supported. In language training, virtual games can give novices the opportunity to engage with the language as responsibilities are solved and solved. To receive feedback and comments on issues, challenges. These characteristics distinguish game-based play from educational approaches that often rely on straightforward explanation and isolated vocabulary exercises. Digital educational video games can typically include games specifically designed for instructional tasks, as well as commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) games that can be tailored or integrated into instructional activities. Serious video games are advanced with specific educational goals, while COTS computers are often designed for subservient but underdeveloped moreover, communicative contextual

atmospheres provide learning when appropriately decided upon and incorporated into practice (Hazar, 2020; Lorensen, 2019).

One of the skill benefits of virtual games to learn vocabulary is contextualized exposure. Instead of just encountering vocabulary as distant objects, new words emerged as they fulfilled responsibilities, followed directions, solved problems, and even interacted with game environments. Visual and auditory contextual cues can help students with lexical meanings and situations. Previous studies have advised that contextualized and multimedia-supported learning can also facilitate vocabulary learning along with presenting a pair of sources of registers for the processing of lexical items. (Rasti-Behbahani, 2021). Repetition is any other feature relevant to the vocabulary study. Digital games also allow beginners to be exposed to targeted vocabulary as they progress through responsibilities or levels of play. Repeated meetings can provide additional opportunities to observe, correct, and not forget unusual words. Similarly, immediate comments can inform novices whether or not their answers are correct and help them catch errors in the course of proprietary interest. These competencies provide a theoretical basis for analyzing students' perceptions of repetitive response and participation in digital entertainment-based and full vocabulary learning.

2.3 Theoretical Foundation

The effectiveness of virtual game-based identification (DGBL) can be better understood based on the theoretical foundation. Several well-established theories in educational psychology and language improvement offer motivations as to why virtual laptop computer games embellish vocabulary learning and motivational engagement.

•Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning

The cognitive theory of multimedia learning (CTML) provides a useful theoretical perspective for understanding how multimedia features included in virtual games can also facilitate language acquisition. Meyer and Fiorella (2021) offer an explanation that meaningful learning emerges when inexperienced individuals' technique data through verbal and visual representations and actively integrate these representations with prior information. Digital computer games can integrate written sentences, spoken language, pictures, animations, and interactive actions, thus providing beginners with a couple of types of input to acquire knowledge in vocabulary, mixing oral and visual records can additionally help new lexical forms, meanings, objects, even broader visual or interactive context. Thus, this theoretical perspective helps to explore students' perceptions of digital games as environments that can facilitate vocabulary information and repeated exposure.



•Krashen's Input and Affective Filter Hypotheses

Krashen's Input Hypothesis and the Affective Filter Hypothesis provide another theoretical angle applicable to the present view. The input assessment emphasizes the importance of promoting access to intelligible language. It is understood that it also provides beginners with opportunities to provide language beyond current education. Digital games can additionally provide contextual linguistic input through instructions, dialogue, visual recordings, and challenge-related vocabulary. The affective filter hypothesis is primarily relevant to the awareness of the dominant study of language anxiety. Krashen argues that influencing factors of stress, low motivation, and low self-confidence can influence newcomers' readiness to communicate with language approach. Digital entertainment environments additionally offer very low-stakes opportunities for novices to attempt tasks, receive immediate feedback, and make repetitive tasks easier to understand than traditional games. repetition. room activities. This theoretical position does not suggest that virtual games always reduce stress for all inexperienced people. Rather, it provides a basis for investigating whether or not novice learners themselves perceive virtual game-based vocabulary activities as less anxiety threatening and additionally supportive of participation.

•Motivation Theory

Learners' motivation and engagement are important considerations in vocabulary development because continued engagement can affect the amount of interest and commitment of those who begin the practice for language activities. Digital games typically have tasks that include dreams, challenges, growth indicators, rewards, competition, and instant feedback. These tasks can encourage novices to actively participate and continue to interact with expert tasks. Previous research has reported positive relationships between digital game-based activities and learners' motivation and engagement (Shahriarpour & Kafi, 2014; Bin-Hady, 2021). In the context of the current study, motivation and engagement are thus not examined as objectively measured changes in student motivation but as perceived measures of virtual game-mainly based vocabulary mastery.

2.4 Empirical Studies

The studies summarized in Table 1 show that digital knowledge acquisition based primarily on entertainment has been studied using specific study designs and in several EFL contexts. Experimental studies typically focus on vocabulary compliance, motivation, engagement, or retention, while survey-based aggregate research provided evidence of

novice perceptions of digital video games Together, they support research that virtual games additionally offer contextualized vocabulary retrieval, highlighting, and retrieval no interaction. However, the existing literature also exhibits well-known contextual and methodological gaps. Many of previous studies have been conducted outside of Iraq, and several studies often focus on happiness outcomes, not digital game based generally monitoring university students' perceptions of vocabulary learning in multiple dimensions It addresses this gap by means of monitoring perceptions of perceived vocabulary and retention.

Table 1. Selected Empirical Studies on Digital Game-Based Learning and Vocabulary Learning

Study	Participants	Research Design	Main Findings
Yip and Kwan (2006)	University EFL students	Experimental	Vocabulary and teacher motivation to learn vocabulary have improved commendably compared to traditional preparation.
Shahriarpour and Kafi (2014)	Iranian EFL learners	Experimental	Digital video games improve vocabulary development, motivation, and student engagement and reduce boredom associated with learning out of rhythm.
Akdogan (2017)	University EFL students	Experimental	Completely game-based vocabulary generation led to improved vocabulary outcomes and increased student engagement compared to traditional instruction.
Lorenset (2019)	University language learners	Mixed-method	Commercial virtual video games promoted knowledge of contextual vocabulary, repeated exposure, and real language use.
Castillo-Cuesta (2020)	Ecuadorian EFL students	Experimental	The Educaplay game improved as students' engagement, especially learning vocabulary and grammar, increased.
Hazar (2020)	Review of educational games	Review	Digital games provide meaningful mastery environments that help with active participation and vocabulary development.
Rasti-Behbahani (2021)	University EFL learners	Experimental	Multimedia and contextualized gaming environments improved vocabulary retention through visual and verbal integration.
Bin-Hady (2021)	Saudi EFL learners	Experimental	Digital game-based learning positively affected vocabulary acquisition, motivation, and learner engagement.
Abidah et al. (2023)	Indonesian EFL learners	Survey	Students reported positive perceptions of digital games, although technical limitations affected implementation.
Alshabeb	University EFL	Experimental	Digital games improved vocabulary



(2024)	students		learning, reduced language anxiety, and enhanced immediate feedback during learning.
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2.5 Research Gap

Although previous studies have investigated the use of digital games in language and vocabulary learning, there are still significant gaps. First, many of the available studies have been conducted in contexts outside of Iraq, limiting the extent to which the findings can be generalized at once to Iraqi university EFL settings. Specifically, Iraqi EFL novices receive limited interest in mixed perceptions of engagement and motivation, interactive immediate feedback, language anxiety, repetition, and perceived vocabulary retention. The present study addresses this gap by analyzing these dimensions of fourth EFL students. The observation therefore supports contextual evidence on how Iraqi university novices understand virtual games as a supplementary technique for English vocabulary learning.

2.6 Conceptual Framework:

The conceptual framework of dominant looks to organize the 4 dimensions used to explore students' perceptions of digital game-based thorough vocabulary learning. Digital game-based learning is considered an important teaching context, and at the same time, engagement and motivation, interactive and immediate notes, language stress, and repetition and perceived vocabulary retention are the 4 dimensions examined by the questionnaire. The relationships between these dimensions within the conceptual structure of the observation are described in Figure 2.

The framework currently does not recommend empirically verified causal relationships between these dimensions. Rather, it provides an organizational structure for analyzing how learners perceive non-standard features by acquiring virtual game-primarily based vocabulary knowledge. This distinction is important because the current study uses a descriptive survey design and is based on students' self-reported responses. As shown in Figure 2, digital game-based learning provides an overarching educational context in which the four dimensions can be explored.



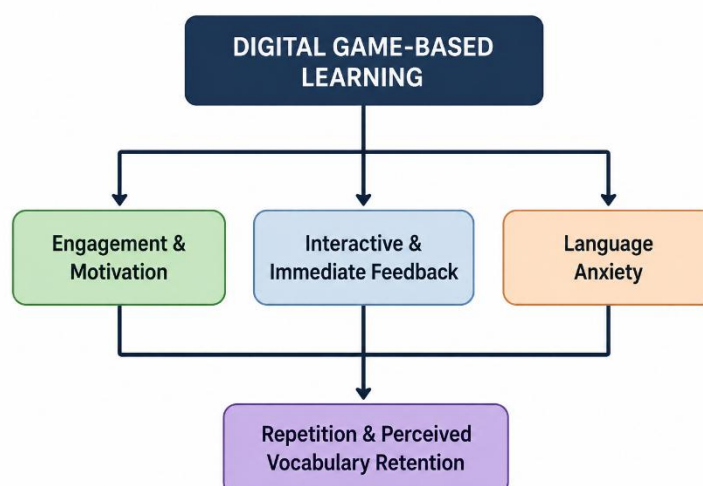


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of Students' Perceptions of Digital Game-Based Vocabulary Learning

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

In this overview, a quantitative descriptive study design was used to explore fourth -year EFL learners' perceptions of digital entertainment-mainly based vocabulary instruction at the University of Karbala. The Look at focused on four dimensions: engagement and motivation, language anxiety , language stress, and perceived vocabulary retention. A structured questionnaire was modified to be used as the primary statistical reporting tool. The have a look that was conducted to explain the mentioned perceptions of university students of the ability instructional costs of digital computer games in vocabulary mastery instead of experimental training changes in actual vocabulary success. Accordingly, the findings are interpreted in terms of students' perceptions and self-reported learning and should not be taken as direct evidence of causal effects or as direct evidence of objectively measured vocabulary gain.

3.2 Participants

The individuals are fourth-year students enrolled within the Department of English at the University of Karbala. The sponsors were selected from the available fourth- year EFL learner group, and participation in the experiment proved to be voluntary. The very last model consisted of 40 students completing a web questionnaire. Any participant was modified as excluded on the basis of teaching performance or various personality traits.

3.3 Sampling

A voluntary non-probability sampling method was modified to be used. The questionnaire is distributed electronically to fourth-year graders.





month university students within the Department of English at the University of Karbala via a Google form. Students participated voluntarily, and only completed responses are retained within the descriptive analysis.

3.4 Research Instrument

Data were collected through a structured online questionnaire consisting of 20 items as exploratory case study. The questionnaire was administered using Google Forms and was designed to examine students' perceptions of digital game-based vocabulary learning. The questionnaire consisted of four dimensions, with five items representing each dimension:

Dimension	Number of Items
Engagement and Motivation	5
Interactive and Immediate Feedback	5
Language Anxiety	5
Repetition and Perceived Vocabulary Retention	5
Total	20

The items addressed students' perceptions of the motivational, interactive, affective, and retention-related aspects of learning English vocabulary through digital games

3.5 Questionnaire Development

Questionnaire instruments were developed based on relevant previous research that mainly addressed digital entertainment-based introduction, vocabulary proficiency, learner motivation, annotation, language stress, and vocabulary retention to reflect the specific context of the EFL vocabulary in Karbala university the items that Numerous research developed through current literature. The resulting questionnaire was designed in 4 dimensions corresponding to the main components studied in the current perspective: engagement and motivation, interactive and direct comments, language stress, and repetition and perceived vocabulary retention.

3.6 Response Format

The questionnaire mainly used a clear response format based on members' agreement or wording with each statement. For each item, members indicated whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement regarding digital game-first based vocabulary learning.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was administered electronically using a Google form. The questionnaire link is distributed to fourth-year graders. month EFL students at Karbala University. Participants completed the questionnaire

voluntarily, and completed responses were stored electronically. A total of forty valid responses were received and included within the evaluation. The use of an online questionnaire facilitated the collection of member responses and action initiatives and allowed the researcher to obtain information in a standardized manner.

3.8 Data Analysis

Questionnaire responses were analyzed using descriptive data. For each item, the frequency and percentage of members agreeing or disagreeing with the statement were calculated. The results are then prepared to correspond to the 4 dimensions of the questionnaire: engagement and motivation, interactive and on-site comments, language stress, and repetition and perceived vocabulary retention. Because the questionnaire used specific agree/disagree responses, the evaluation generally targeted response frequency and probability instead of treating responses as a continuous measure. Typical response patterns were interpreted descriptive of the research questions and current literature.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was converted to voluntary. The participants were aware of the general reason for the questionnaire and their responses are collected through a web form for the study. No identification was required within the questionnaire, and responses were treated confidentially.

4. Results and Findings

This section contains findings from a questionnaire administered to forty-fourth year EFL students at the University of Karbala. The results are organized according to the 4 dimensions examined within looking at: (1) engagement and motivation, (2) interactive and direct comments, (3) language anxiety, and (4) repetition and perceived vocabulary retention. Since specific agree/disagree responses were used in the questionnaire, the use of effect frequency and probability is given. The findings are interpreted descriptively in relation to the research questions.

4.1 Engagement and Motivation

Table 2 presents the participants' responses concerning engagement and motivation. Overall, the responses indicate a favorable perception of digital game-based vocabulary learning. The highest level of agreement (92.5%, $n = 37$) was recorded for the statement that overcoming challenges in digital games motivates students to learn new English vocabulary. This was followed by the perception that learning English through digital games is more enjoyable than using traditional textbooks (90.0%, $n = 36$). Furthermore, 87.5% of the participants ($n = 35$) agreed that digital games motivate them to study vocabulary more than



traditional memorization methods. However, the levels of agreement were comparatively lower for looking forward to participating in game-based vocabulary activities (70.0%, $n = 28$) and for the motivational effect of winning or completing game levels (65.0%, $n = 26$).

These findings indicate that most participants viewed digital games positively in terms of enjoyment, challenge, and motivation. At the same time, the lower agreement associated with competition and participation in game-based sessions suggests that not all game elements were perceived equally positively.

Table 2. Students' Responses to the Engagement and Motivation Items

No.	Item	Agree, n (%)	Disagree, n (%)
1	Learning English through digital games is more enjoyable than using traditional textbooks.	36 (90.0%)	4 (10.0%)
2	Overcoming challenges in digital games motivates me to learn new English vocabulary.	37 (92.5%)	3 (7.5%)
3	Digital games motivate me to study vocabulary more than traditional memorization methods.	35 (87.5%)	5 (12.5%)
4	I look forward to participating in game-based vocabulary learning activities.	28 (70.0%)	12 (30.0%)
5	My desire to win or complete game levels encourages me to learn new English words.	26 (65.0%)	14 (35.0%)

4.2 Interactive and Immediate Feedback

Table 3 presents the participants' responses concerning interactive and immediate feedback. The results show generally positive perceptions of the feedback provided through digital games. Three items received the same highest level of agreement (82.5%, $n = 33$). These concerned the ability of immediate feedback to help students identify and correct mistakes, the perceived effect of instant feedback on the speed of vocabulary learning, and the usefulness of corrections and hints for understanding new vocabulary more quickly.

In addition, 80.0% of participants ($n = 32$) agreed that immediate confirmation of correct or incorrect solutions makes vocabulary easier to remember. The lowest level of agreement within this dimension was

recorded for receiving points or rewards after using words correctly, with 72.5% (n = 29) agreeing with the statement.

Overall, the responses indicate that members particularly appreciated the informational components of game-based comprehensive comments, along with corrections, suggestions, and confirmations of solutions . Although points and rewards were also viewed positively, they received a comparatively lower level of agreement.

Table 3. Students' Responses to the Interactive and Immediate Feedback Items

No.	Item	Agree, n (%)	Disagree, n (%)
1	Immediate feedback in digital games helps me identify and correct my mistakes.	33 (82.5%)	7 (17.5%)
2	Instant feedback from digital games improves the speed of my vocabulary learning.	33 (82.5%)	7 (17.5%)
3	Receiving points or rewards after using words correctly helps me remember new vocabulary.	29 (72.5%)	11 (27.5%)
4	The corrections and hints provided by digital games help me understand new vocabulary more quickly.	33 (82.5%)	7 (17.5%)
5	Immediate confirmation of correct or incorrect answers makes vocabulary easier to remember.	32 (80.0%)	8 (20.0%)

4.3 Language Anxiety

Table 4 presents the responses related to language anxiety. This dimension received some of the highest levels of agreement across the questionnaire. Specifically, 92.5% of participants (n = 37) agreed that they felt less anxious when learning English vocabulary through digital games than in a traditional classroom.

Similarly, 87.5% (n = 35) agreed that they felt more confident using new English vocabulary during game-based activities. The statements concerning a safe environment in which students were not afraid of making mistakes and the enjoyable and relaxed atmosphere reducing fear of failure each received 85.0% agreement (n = 34). In addition, 82.5% of participants (n = 33) agreed that the low-stress environment of digital games encouraged them to experiment with unfamiliar vocabulary Taken together, these responses imply that most individuals perceived digital



entertainment-based vocabulary games as a rather enjoyable and low-stress learning environment. The findings particularly highlight university students' perception of reduced anxiety and increased confidence while using entertainment-based vocabulary activities.

Table 4. Students' Responses to the Language Anxiety Items

No.	Item	Agree, n (%)	Disagree, n (%)
1	I feel less anxious when learning English vocabulary through digital games than in a traditional classroom.	37 (92.5%)	3 (7.5%)
2	Digital games provide a safe environment where I am not afraid of making mistakes.	34 (85.0%)	6 (15.0%)
3	I feel more confident using new English vocabulary during game-based activities.	35 (87.5%)	5 (12.5%)
4	The enjoyable and relaxed atmosphere of digital games reduces my fear of failure.	34 (85.0%)	6 (15.0%)
5	The low-stress environment of digital games encourages me to experiment with unfamiliar vocabulary.	33 (82.5%)	7 (17.5%)

4.4 Repetition and Perceived Vocabulary Retention

Table 5 presents the participants' responses concerning repetition and perceived vocabulary retention. The findings indicate generally positive perceptions of repeated exposure to vocabulary during digital games. The highest level of agreement (90.0%, n = 36) was recorded for the statement that natural repetition in digital games is more effective than traditional memorization for learning vocabulary. Three other statements received 87.5% agreement (n = 35). These concerned repeated exposure to vocabulary helping students remember new words for a longer time, encountering the same vocabulary in different game situations improving perceived vocabulary retention, and repeatedly using vocabulary to complete game tasks making new words easier to recall later. The lowest level of agreement in this dimension was recorded for the statement that continuous use of vocabulary during gameplay helps students remember words after finishing the game, with 75.0% (n = 30) agreeing. While this is the lowest percentage within the measurement, it nonetheless represents the vast majority of participants.

Overall, the findings indicate that members generally viewed repetition and contextual exposure to vocabulary as helpful for remembering and recalling novel sentences .

. However, these results represent perceived retention rather than objectively measured long-term vocabulary retention.

Table 5. Students' Responses to the Repetition and Perceived Vocabulary Retention Items

No.	Item	Agree, n (%)	Disagree, n (%)
1	Repeated exposure to vocabulary during digital games helps me remember new words for a longer time.	35 (87.5%)	5 (12.5%)
2	Encountering the same vocabulary in different game situations improves my vocabulary retention.	35 (87.5%)	5 (12.5%)
3	Repeatedly using vocabulary to complete game tasks makes it easier to recall new words later.	35 (87.5%)	5 (12.5%)
4	Natural repetition in digital games is more effective than traditional memorization for learning vocabulary.	36 (90.0%)	4 (10.0%)
5	Continuous use of vocabulary during gameplay helps me remember words after I finish playing.	30 (75.0%)	10 (25.0%)

4.5 Comparison of the Four Dimensions

To address the third research question, the average percentage of agreement across the five items within each dimension was calculated descriptively. This comparison provides an overall indication of the relative positivity of students' responses across the four dimensions. As shown in Table 6, Language Anxiety received the highest average level of agreement (86.5%), followed by Repetition and Perceived Vocabulary Retention (85.5%), Engagement and Motivation (81.0%), and Interactive and Immediate Feedback (80.0%).

Table 6. Descriptive Comparison of the Four Questionnaire Dimensions

Dimension	Average Agreement (%)	Rank
Language Anxiety	86.5	1
Repetition and Perceived Vocabulary Retention	85.5	2
Engagement and Motivation	81.0	3
Interactive and Immediate Feedback	80.0	4





These values provide a descriptive contrast of the 4 dimensions examined within the questionnaire. Because looking at the specific agree/disagree responses that were used no longer used inferential statistics tests, variation across scales should be interpreted descriptively in terms of statistically sound size variation. Contrasts show that the most favorable normative perception of learners is related to affective measures of language stress, followed by repetition, perception of vocabulary comprehension and overall, the results provide evidence that fourth-year EFL novices actually had favorable perceptions of virtual vocabulary-based enjoyment. These findings address only the primary and secondary research questions describing students' perceptions of the four dimensions, while the contrast in Table 6 provides a descriptive solution to the 1/3 research question.

5. Discussion

This section discusses the perception of the fourth-year EFL college students of digital games-mainly based vocabulary introduced at Karbala University. The findings are organized into four dimensions examined within looking at: engagement and motivation, interactive and immediate feedback, language stress, and repetition and perceived vocabulary retention. Overall, responses showed favorable perceptions across all four dimensions. However, since looking at dependence on self-pronunciation responses following a descriptive study design, the findings should be interpreted as evidence of students' perceptions that digital games enhance vocabulary development or long-term retention rather than direct evidence .

5.1 Engagement and Motivation

The findings show that members generally perceived digital games as engaging and motivating for vocabulary learning. The maximum agreement in this dimension became recorded for the statement that dealing with demanding situations in digital games stimulated university students to learn new English vocabulary (92.5%). Furthermore, 90% agreed that learning English through digital games is more enjoyable than using traditional textbooks, while 87.5% agreed that digital games motivated them to study vocabulary more than traditional memorization methods. These findings advise that enjoyment and active participation may be important features of digital game-based vocabulary learning. Similarly, low levels of forward-looking configuration were recorded for participation in game-based full-word retrieval games (70%) and for the motivational or completing game levels (65%) . These low figures

support that all game elements were certainly not perceived equally, and the tuition of game-based study may additionally not be based best on the presence of video games than additionally on how game factors are designed and contained to acquire knowledge of language.

These findings are broadly consistent with previous studies reporting positive relationships between digital games, student engagement, and motivation. Shahriarpour and Kafi (2014), for example, reported positive motivational effects of digital games for novice EFL learners, while Hamari et al. (2016) emphasized the effectiveness of challenging game activities in fostering engagement and immersion. Similarly, Abidah et al. (2023) reported favorable perceptions of digital game-based learning in vocabulary education. The present findings extend this research framework by utilizing the evidence that fourth-year EFL students within the Iraqi university context additionally had generally favorable perceptions of the motivational and engaging features of digital games.

5.2 Interactive and Immediate Feedback

The second dimension concerned students' perceptions of interactive and immediate feedback. Overall, the results were positive, with 82.5% of participants agreeing that immediate feedback helped them identify and correct their mistakes. The same percentage agreed that instant feedback improved the speed of their vocabulary learning, and that corrections and hints provided by digital games helped them understand new vocabulary more quickly. Furthermore, 80% agreed that immediate confirmation of correct or incorrect answers made vocabulary easier to remember, while 72.5% -the lowest agreement in this dimension -agreed that receiving points or rewards after using words correctly helped them remember new vocabulary.

These findings suggest that participants particularly appreciated the informative aspects of the comments. The relatively excessive treatment of errors, corrections, and guidelines indicates that students viewed timely, informative comments as particularly useful for acquiring knowledge. The deficit agreement regarding point rewards could also result in informative comments being perceived as simultaneously applying to vocabulary mastery rather than game-based rewards in general. This interpretation is consistent with the broader literature on entertainment-based learning, which emphasizes interaction, active participation, and feedback as key features of effective learning environments (Gee, 2007; Plass et al., 2015). It can also be considered in light of the cognitive theory of multimedia learning, which highlights the importance of actively processing and integrating verbal and visual information (Mayer & Fiorella, 2021). Feedback in digital video games



can combine textual, visual, and auditory information, undoubtedly helping inexperienced individuals learn their responses within the context of the task, but these findings should not be interpreted as evidence that on-the-spot comments objectively advance or reinforce students' vocabulary learning; Instead, they implied that the vast majority of members considered the notes useful for these components of knowledge acquisition. Measuring those blessings objectively would require experimental or pretest/exposure experimental designs, which are beyond the scope of the current approach.

5.3 Language Anxiety

Verbal stress elicited a particularly sharp response from the participants. As shown in Table 4, 92.5% of the students agreed that they feel much less stressed learning English vocabulary through digital games than in the traditional lecture hall. Furthermore, 87,5% mentioned more confidence when using new English vocabulary during games based mainly on games, while 85% agreed that digital video games provided a safe setting where they were much less afraid of making mistakes., and 82.5% agreed that the low-stress environment encouraged them to experiment with unfamiliar vocabulary.

These findings suggest that many participants perceived virtual game-based games as a relatively good setting to work on vocabulary. The ability to test solutions, take notes, and keep playing would also make mistakes less threatening to the inexperienced .This interpretation is consistent with Reinders and Wattana (2015), who examined affect and willingness to communicate in digital game-based language learning and reported that game-based environments can create opportunities for language interaction in a less threatening context. Peterson (2016) similarly highlighted the potential of digital games to provide interactive language-learning environments.

These findings can also be interpreted in relation to Krashen's (1985) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which suggests that lower anxiety and higher confidence may create more favorable conditions for engaging with language input. However, the current study does not now directly test Krashen's hypothesis: the questionnaire measured college students' perceptions of anxiety and confidence rather than physical or experimentally measured changes. The findings must therefore be understood as supporting the relevance of influential factors for university students' understanding of game-based with all vocabulary learning, in contrast to the empirical claim of causal mapping suggested by the theory.

5.4 Repetition and Perceived Vocabulary Retention

This dimension received some of the most favorable responses overall. The highest agreement was recorded for the statement that natural repetition in digital games was more effective than traditional rote learning for vocabulary (90%). In addition, 87.5% of participants agreed that repeated exposure to vocabulary helped them remember new words for a longer time, that encountering the same vocabulary in different game situations improved their vocabulary retention, and that repeatedly using vocabulary to complete game tasks made new words easier to recall later. The lowest agreement in this dimension was recorded for the statement that continuous use of vocabulary during gameplay helped students remember words after finishing the game (75%) - still a substantial majority. These results suggest that students particularly valued repeated and contextualized encounters with vocabulary, indicating that repetition was perceived as more beneficial when embedded meaningfully within gameplay rather than delivered mechanically through rote memorization.

This finding is consistent with research emphasizing repetition as an important component of vocabulary acquisition. Webb (2007) confirmed the importance of repeated exposure for developing various aspects of vocabulary knowledge, while Nation (2013) and Schmitt (2008) similarly emphasized the role of repeated encounters in vocabulary learning. Rasti-Behbahani (2021) likewise discussed the potential benefits of digital games for vocabulary mastery, particularly through contextualized, multimodal support. However, it is important to note that "vocabulary retention" in the present study refers to perceived retention rather than objectively measured long-term retention: the questionnaire asked students whether they believed repetition helped them remember vocabulary, but no delayed vocabulary test was administered. The findings therefore cannot confirm that digital games produced longer-term vocabulary retention; rather, they indicate that students perceived repeated exposure within game-based contexts as supportive of vocabulary recall and memory.

5.5 Overall Interpretation of the Findings

Taken together, findings indicate that participants felt digital entertainment-based vocabulary mastery across the 4 dimensions commonly examined. Engagement and motivation have been strongly supported by high-level handling of leisure activities and leisure-related challenges. Interactive and on-site also proved to be equally concerning, especially for identifying errors and understanding new vocabulary. Language stress had the most powerful person-benefit responses, with





92.5% of individuals reporting less anxiety in reading vocabulary through digital games than traditional reading room settings. Finally, repetition was perceived as an essential feature to aid in vocabulary recall, with 92% agreeing that natural more repetition in the video game was effect than the traditional digital game. The convergence of these findings suggests that students may value digital games not because they replace conventional vocabulary instruction, but because they provide additional opportunities for interaction, feedback, repeated exposure, and active participation. This interpretation is consistent with the literature on game-based learning, which emphasizes the potential of interactive environments to support engagement and learning (Gee, 2007; Plass et al., 2015; Peterson, 2016). It is important to interpret these findings within the methodological boundaries of the study. The participants were fourth-year EFL college students, the sample consisted of forty respondents, and information is collected through self-report questionnaires on the use of agree/disagree responses. The findings therefore describe students' perceptions of a specific institution in a specific context and cannot be generalized to all EFL learners. Future studies need to use large samples, tested instruments, and experimental or longitudinal designs to observe whether the tremendous retentions found in this study correspond to measurable improvements in vocabulary development, long-term retention, motivation, or reduced anxiety.

Overall, the present approach provides contextual evidence on how total vocabulary mastery based on digital games is perceived through EFL learners at Karbala University. The findings guide the use of digital video games as a supplemental learning method instead of replacing traditional vocabulary training. Their capacity costs appear to lie in the additional opportunities for newcomers to interact with vocabulary—through assignments, interactions, on-the-spot commentary, reduced perceived stress, and repeated exposure.

6 Conclusion

It explores the perceptions of proficient fourth-year EFL learners to fully understand a virtual game-based English vocabulary improvement at Karbala University. Findings note generally favorable perceptions across the 4 dimensions examined: engagement and motivation, interactive and direct comments, language stress, and repetition and perceived vocabulary retention. Among the individual dimensions, language stress obtained the best trended agreement score obtained through repetition and perceived vocabulary retention, association and motivation, and interactive and immediate comments. The findings show that researchers

perceived digital games as arguably engaging and supportive frameworks for exploring vocabulary. Specifically, people expressed pleasant perceptions of the motivational charge of entertainment-primarily based on distractions, usefulness of snapshots, perceived language stress discounting, and repetition of help with vocabulary. These findings are broadly consistent with previous studies suggesting that interplay and interaction help methodological scope. Because the study specified a descriptive study design primarily based on self-reported responses from students, the effects do not establish causal effects of virtual computer games on vocabulary performance, nor do they provide direct evidence of long-term vocabulary retention practices on lecture room culture. the vocabulary. well-designed digital totally game-based games can additionally provide additional opportunities for newcomers. Educational institutions must not forget to assist teachers with appropriate training and assets to facilitate the integration of digital games into vocabulary instruction now.

Future research may want to use experimental, longitudinal, or mixed-method designs to use larger and more samples. Future studies should additionally include targeted vocabulary tests, including pretests and promotion-screening measures, to determine whether microretention in college students is associated with measurable improvements in vocabulary success and long-term retention. Further studies can also examine virtual game-mainly based skills programs for various language skills, including analysis, listening, make me communicate, writing, and grammar.

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