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Author for correspondence:
Ana Quinonez-Beltran
alquinones@utpl.edu.ec
Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja

Implementing FunBingo as a Video Game to Increase EFL Students´ Motivation to Learn Vocabulary

Ana Quinonez-Beltran, Elsa Morocho-Cuenca, Carmen Benitez-Correa

Abstract

Background/purpose. Digital games have been recognized as valuable tools for creating motivating, interactive learning environments, particularly for vocabulary learning. In this line, the purpose of the present study is to determine the impact of the FunBingo video game on students' motivation to learn English as a Foreign Language vocabulary.

Materials/methods. The research process lasted five months. A quasi-experimental design with a quantitative approach was used with a sample of 416 public school participants (242 females and 174 males) aged 11 to 12. Their proficiency in English was A1 according to the Common European Framework. The students were divided into an experimental and a control group; the control group was assigned to learn vocabulary using traditional resources, while the experimental group used the FunBingo game. Data were collected using a survey and pre-test and post-test techniques with their corresponding validated instruments (a motivation questionnaire and multiple-choice questionnaires, respectively). The data were analyzed using SPSS software.

Results. Findings demonstrate that key motivational constructs, such as enjoyment, interest, and satisfaction, were fostered by the FunBingo video game in EFL vocabulary learning. Besides, the results confirmed meaningful gains: the experimental group outperformed the control group ($H = 14.61$, $p = .00013$) and showed substantial pre- to post-test improvement ($H = 225.04$, $p < .00001$), with a moderate-to-large time-factor effect ($\eta^2 = .271$

Conclusion. FunBingo significantly increased students' motivation and contributed positively to vocabulary learning, demonstrating the potential of gamified tools to enhance learner engagement and retention.

1. Introduction

Vocabulary plays a fundamental role in foreign language learning, as it provides the essential building blocks for communication, comprehension, and academic achievement (Nation, 2013; Schmitt, 2008). Learners with a robust vocabulary are better able to express ideas, interpret messages, and interact effectively in different contexts (Alqahtani, 2015). At the same time, motivation is a key driver of successful vocabulary learning. When motivation is low, students are less likely to retain new words, which in turn restricts their overall language development (Dörnyei, 2020; Tanka, 2017). For this reason, fostering both vocabulary knowledge and learner motivation has become a central concern in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction (Papi, 2018).

In recent decades, vocabulary teaching has evolved from traditional memorization techniques to more interactive, context-based, and learner-centered methodologies (Teng, 2020; Webb & Nation, 2017). Among these, game-based learning has emerged as an effective methodology to promote engagement, enjoyment, and persistence (Ebadi & Bashir, 2021; Derakhshan & Zare, 2023). Digital games have been particularly recognized for their potential to personalize learning and make vocabulary practice more meaningful (Mahyoob, 2020). Nevertheless, much of the existing research has concentrated on general language skills or on the use of traditional games, with fewer studies exploring the impact of digital video games specifically designed to support vocabulary learning and motivation (Ahmed et al., 2022; Orhani & Shatri, 2025; Zhang et al., 2024).

This gap highlights the need for empirical research on how targeted digital games can influence the affective dimension, particularly the motivation of EFL vocabulary learning. FunBingo creates an interactive and motivating environment where learners actively use EFL vocabulary to achieve communicative goals. This dynamic context encourages deeper processing and increases the likelihood of vocabulary retention (Nation & Meara, 2013; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Moreover, FunBingo supports collaborative learning, strategic thinking, and immediate feedback, which are key components that enhance learner motivation, engagement, and autonomy.

Therefore, the present study addresses both dimensions in an integrated manner: on the one hand, it examines how FunBingo influences students' motivation to learn EFL vocabulary, and on the other, it evaluates the extent to which this gamified tool contributes to measurable learning outcomes in vocabulary learning. By making this dual focus explicit, the study ensures conceptual consistency between the research questions and the theoretical framework, clarifying that motivation and vocabulary learning are interrelated focal points rather than competing priorities, thereby contributing evidence on the pedagogical value of digital games in foreign language education.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Learning English Vocabulary

Vocabulary is defined as a lexical unit that conveys a specific meaning, encompassing individual words and phrases or clusters of multiple words (Al-Fak, 2015). Vocabulary knowledge plays a crucial role in fostering successful language learning for all learners (James et al., 2021). This knowledge is acquired through structured vocabulary instruction, including targeted teaching methods, discussions, and contextual learning opportunities (Moody et al., 2018). Some authors also highlight the importance of vocabulary learning, as it plays a key role in language learning, contributing not only to building knowledge structures but also fostering communication (Jacobs, 1998). In this regard, some authors, such as Richards and Rodgers (2014), argue that grammar, function, and notions are not as essential components of communication and language learning as vocabulary.

Additionally, Nation (2011) states that vocabulary is a crucial component of EFL language learning, as it directly impacts students' ability to develop their listening, speaking, reading, and

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writing skills. Waer (2021) highlights its role in enhancing language proficiency, while Karakoc and Durmusoglu (2017) assert that vocabulary learning particularly strengthens reading and writing. Furthermore, Nguyen (2022) emphasizes that a solid vocabulary foundation enables learners to express their thoughts, emotions, and ideas more effectively.

In this context, Schmitt (2008) affirms that vocabulary is the key linguistic element that provides meaning to both spoken and written texts, making it a fundamental factor in language development. A limited vocabulary range can hinder communication and academic success (Brown et al., 2008; Moir & Nation, 2002; Schmitt, 2002; Schmitt & Garras, 2011). In fact, insufficient vocabulary knowledge hinders real communication and negatively affects learning outcomes (Macis & Schmitt, 2017). This shows that vocabulary is essential in the communicative process, but also dependent on other factors, such as motivation, which plays a key role in learners' willingness to engage with new words.

2.2. Motivation to Learn Vocabulary

Motivation is the driving force that stimulates students to participate in an activity with enthusiasm and use their intellect and emotions to achieve their goals through perseverance (Feng et al., 2023). It is a crucial factor in the learning process, enhancing learning experiences and helping people achieve their academic and professional goals (Affuso et al., 2023; Tsai et al., 2024). In this context, motivation plays a decisive role in determining the effectiveness of language learning, particularly in vocabulary learning (Alamer & Alrabai, 2023; Tseng & Schmitt, 2008). It encourages students to see themselves as active participants in lexical development and empowers them to apply strategies to succeed. In fact, motivational conditions create a positive and cohesive learning environment that promotes engagement with new words and sustains effort (Smith et al., 2021). Consequently, highly motivated learners tend to achieve greater success in expanding their vocabulary (Sadeghi, 2013). For this reason, English teachers are encouraged to foster motivating classroom environments by implementing diverse strategies, media, and resources that make vocabulary learning more engaging and effective (Elaish et al., 2019; Kingsley & Grabner-Hagen, 2018; Kusumaningrum & Binarti, 2021).

Building on Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), it is important to distinguish between intrinsic motivation, which is linked to enjoyment and personal interest, and extrinsic motivation, which is driven by rewards or external recognition. One of the resources that stimulates both types of motivation is digital games since they foster intrinsic motivation by making the learning experience enjoyable (Ahmed et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2024), while elements such as points, medals, or trophies reinforce extrinsic motivation by rewarding persistence and achievement (Alhebshi & Gamlo, 2022; Waer, 2021). In this sense, FunBingo illustrates how both forms of motivation can work together by promoting enjoyment through play while sustaining engagement through immediate corrective feedback and visual rewards such as trophies. Moreover, its collaborative features offer opportunities for group play, further enhancing engagement and supporting vocabulary learning. Building on this motivational foundation, the following section explores how video games leverage these mechanisms to support vocabulary learning.

2.3. The Use of Video Games to Learn Vocabulary

Video games are interactive electronic media intended primarily for entertainment. They provide players with the opportunity to engage with virtual realms presented in 2D or 3D (Quwaider et al., 2019). In this regard, the Information Resources Management Association (2021) asserts that video games represent a new form of gaming in which users play through audiovisual platforms featuring content based on stories with historical or fantasy themes. Indeed, video games refer to the visual aspect of games, which are considered a source of entertainment for many people and have effects on well-being (Halbrook et al., 2019). In addition, Ferdig (2008) affirms that video games are not only

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used as playful or fun resources but also in different fields and for various purposes, such as education.

According to Shahriarpour and Kafi (2014), video games are useful technological resources that help students learn new vocabulary and improve their vocabulary learning outcomes. This is further supported by Li (2021), who emphasizes their effectiveness in vocabulary learning. In addition, Nation (2011) claims that the features of video games, such as colourful imagery, varied sounds and fonts, and the repeated use of certain words, promote vocabulary learning. These features make students like to play video games to learn words pleasantly. Therefore, vocabulary learning through video games becomes an engaging activity for students, which helps them strengthen their vocabulary knowledge more easily. Thus, motivation (revised in the previous section), vocabulary learning, and the affordances of video games converge, making them highly suitable for the design of tools like FunBingo.

In this context, FunBingo, a video game developed by the authors of the present study, combines the necessary technical and pedagogical features to serve as a reliable instructional tool that encourages English vocabulary learning in a lively, interactive way, promoting active student engagement and motivation through its gameplay mechanics. Its practical benefits include offline functionality on mobile devices, the ability to customize categories to match the study content, and unlimited access. As shown in Figure 1, the application offers five categories (food, hobbies, clothing, verbs, and adjectives), each with two bingo boards (types A and B), illustrative images, audio pronunciation, and a reward system that reinforces user progress. In each round, the player selects a category and a board; FunBingo then plays the pronunciation of a target word while displaying its image, prompting the student to find and mark that word on the board. This cycle repeats until all squares are filled. Additionally, FunBingo includes a trophy section that awards users based on the number of rounds they win, providing a clear visualization of their progress and further motivating them throughout the experience. These features make FunBingo a valuable tool for inspiring students to learn new vocabulary and apply it in real-world communication contexts in an innovative, simple, and enjoyable way. To better understand how these features support vocabulary learning and sustain motivation, the following section analyzes the theoretical foundations that explain the cognitive and affective mechanisms underlying FunBingo's design and pedagogical effectiveness.

Note. The figure presents screenshots of the FunBingo application, including the home page, the vocabulary categories, and a sample game table.

Figure 1. FunBingo Application

2.4. Theories Supporting Game-Based Vocabulary Learning

The use of FunBingo to motivate students in vocabulary learning can be understood through some theoretical perspectives. For instance, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) explains how intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors shape learning behaviors. According to this theory, learners are more motivated when they experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness. FunBingo directly supports these conditions: students choose how they participate and engage with the game (autonomy), apply and expand their vocabulary knowledge in a meaningful way (competence), and interact socially with their peers while playing (relatedness). When these three

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factors align, intrinsic motivation increases, leading to deeper, more sustained learning. Similarly, Constructivist Learning Theory (Piaget, 1972; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978) emphasizes that knowledge is actively constructed through interaction with the environment and collaboration with peers. In FunBingo, students are not passive recipients of vocabulary; instead, they actively process and use words to achieve a communicative goal, marking the correct vocabulary items to win. This active engagement encourages deeper processing and stronger retention of new terms.

From a cognitive perspective, Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1994) highlights that learning is facilitated when extraneous cognitive demands are minimized and attention is directed toward essential content. The playful, low-stress format of FunBingo reduces anxiety and unnecessary cognitive load, enabling learners to focus on vocabulary itself. By embedding learning within a familiar and enjoyable structure, the game supports working memory and improves retention. Finally, the Involvement Load Hypothesis (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001) argues that vocabulary learning is more effective when tasks include the components of need, search, and evaluation; FunBingo clearly embodies all three. Learners experience 'need' because they must recognize and recall vocabulary to participate successfully. They engage in 'search' as they scan their cards to locate the correct lexical item corresponding to the teacher's clue or definition. They also perform 'evaluation', deciding whether the selected word truly matches the given prompt before marking it. For example, when the teacher provides a synonym or contextual sentence, students must compare possible options on their cards and select the one that best fits. This process promotes deeper lexical processing, making vocabulary learning more durable.

Based on these theories, FunBingo can be seen as more than a playful digital tool. It is a learning environment that addresses motivational, cognitive, and social dimensions while operationalizing the mechanisms described by the Involvement Load Hypothesis. This not only clarifies the pedagogical rationale behind FunBingo but also provides a solid explanation of why the game has the potential to enhance both motivation and vocabulary learning among EFL students. These theoretical insights are further reinforced by empirical studies showing that game-based learning supports both motivation and vocabulary learning.

2.5. Previous Studies on Video Games to Increase Motivation to Learn EFL Vocabulary

Recent research has highlighted the potential of digital game-based learning (DGBL) to enhance motivation and support vocabulary learning in EFL contexts. Zhang et al. (2024) implemented a self-regulated digital game-based vocabulary learning program. They found that learners in the experimental group not only developed significantly more vocabulary knowledge but also reported higher motivation levels. Importantly, motivation was identified as a full mediator between self-regulated learning strategies and vocabulary development.

Similarly, Sihombing and Tambunan (2023) examined EFL teachers' perceptions of DGBL in Indonesian primary schools. Teachers viewed DGBL positively, noting its appropriateness, creativity, and motivational value in the classroom, despite some challenges such as time constraints and students' limited digital skills. Another study by Ahmed et al. (2022) investigated the impact of game-based learning on Iranian learners' anxiety and motivation. Results revealed that this approach reduced language anxiety and significantly increased motivation compared to traditional instruction.

In the Saudi context, Alhebshi and Gamlo (2022) explored the use of mobile games via Quizizz to support vocabulary learning among university foundation students. The experimental group outperformed the control group in vocabulary tests and reported lower cognitive load, higher engagement, and more positive attitudes toward game-based learning.

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These studies highlight the motivational and pedagogical benefits of integrating digital games into EFL vocabulary instruction, suggesting that such a resource can effectively foster both emotional engagement and lexical development. Taken together, these studies and the theoretical perspectives discussed above provide the foundation for positioning FunBingo as a practical and innovative tool that combines vocabulary learning, motivation, and game-based pedagogy.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Methodology and Procedures

This quantitative research employed a quasi-experimental design, which, according to Stockemer (2019), involves the use of statistical and numerical data to quantify variables. As Creswell (2018) highlights, quasi-experimental design is advantageous in educational settings because it allows researchers to work with pre-existing groups. In this study, the quasi-experimental design enabled an examination of the impact of the FunBingo video game on EFL students' motivation to learn vocabulary, facilitating real-world observation without requiring random assignment.

The research lasted five months and consisted of four phases: training, diagnosis, teaching, and evaluation. In the first phase (training), the experimental group took a training course to learn how to install and use FunBingo. They also played this game several times to become familiar with its functions and interface. In the second phase (diagnosis), both groups took a pre-test to determine the students' mastery of EFL vocabulary. In the third phase (teaching), the participants attended on-site English classes. Each 40-minute class was planned based on the three stages of the didactic sequence: anticipatory set, main teaching input, and assessment. In each stage, students completed different activities to learn the new words, which were divided into five categories: clothing, verbs, food, hobbies, and adjectives. The control group learned the vocabulary through traditional materials such as flashcards, realia, pictures, and drawings. On the other hand, the experimental group learned those categories through the FunBingo application; it was used in at least one stage of each class. The gaming characteristics of this video game allowed students to play, win rewards (bronze, silver, and gold cups), and practice the vocabulary as many times as needed without feeling pressured, which reduced their anxiety, kept them motivated, and made the learning process more appealing.

In the last phase (evaluation), both groups took a post-test to determine their progress on the vocabulary words learned during the on-site classes. Besides, participants in the experimental group completed a survey to assess their motivation to learn vocabulary through the FunBingo application. Based on this data, statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics v25 at a confidence level of 95%.

3.2. Study Population and Sample

The sample consisted of N= 416 Spanish native language students (242 female and 174 male) who studied in public schools in a region of Ecuador. Their ages ranged from 10 to 11 years old, and they were enrolled in seventh grade. They took three English classes per week (forty minutes per session) in agreement with the policies set by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education. Their English level was A1 according to the Common European Framework. This sample was purposefully selected, using groups of participants who were conveniently available. According to Mertler (2019), convenience sampling is a technique where participants are selected based on their availability and willingness to take part in the study.

The participants were divided into two groups: an experimental group consisting of 214 students and a control group comprising 202 students. Both groups were similar in terms of demographic characteristics such as age, educational background, and English knowledge. They were engaged in learning EFL vocabulary as part of the research; the control group employed traditional resources for

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their learning, while the experimental group utilized the FunBingo video game as a gamified learning tool.

To verify the initial comparability between both groups, the pre-test results were analyzed to confirm sample homogeneity. Levene's test showed no significant differences in variances ($p > 0.05$), indicating that the groups had equivalent baseline conditions in vocabulary knowledge. This ensured that the observed post-intervention differences could be attributed to the FunBingo treatment rather than pre-existing disparities between groups.

3.3. Study Instruments

The instruments used in the present study were a pre-test and a post-test that were administered to both the control and the experimental groups to measure the vocabulary knowledge before and during the intervention. The pre-test shared similar characteristics to the post-test regarding the structure and number of sections. These instruments consisted of 20 items divided into two sections. The written section included 15 items (5 matching, five classification, and five multiple-choice questions), whereas the oral section contained five items requiring students to produce short sentences with specific target words. This structure ensured a balance between receptive vocabulary recognition and productive use. The evaluation criteria were straightforward: one point was awarded for each correct written response, while oral items were scored using a five-point rubric that assessed the accuracy of vocabulary use, grammatical appropriateness, and comprehensibility.

The vocabulary items for the pre-test and post-test were carefully designed based on three main criteria. First, the target words were selected from the official curriculum for seventh-grade students established by the Ministry of Education, ensuring alignment with learners' proficiency level (A1 according to the CEFR). Second, the items were organized according to word level (e.g., high-frequency words in categories such as food, clothing, hobbies, verbs, and adjectives) to reflect students' expected lexical knowledge. Third, the test design followed taxonomic objectives adapted from Bloom's revised taxonomy, ranging from recognition and recall tasks (e.g., matching images with words) to application tasks (e.g., producing short sentences with target words). These criteria ensured that the test assessed not only surface-level recognition but also initial productive use of vocabulary. To further enhance validity, the instruments were reviewed by three EFL experts, who confirmed their appropriateness and alignment with this research.

Besides, a survey motivation questionnaire was administered to assess how the FunBingo video game influenced students' motivation to learn English vocabulary in the experimental group. The instrument was adapted from Tanaka (2017) to fit the purpose of the present study. It consisted of eleven statements rated on a six-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Slightly Disagree, Slightly Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree). This survey was administered at the end of the intervention during regular class sessions; the researchers provided instructions and ensured that the questionnaire was completed independently. On average, students required 10 minutes to complete it. The items targeted key motivational constructs, including enjoyment and interest in vocabulary learning, perceived usefulness of vocabulary knowledge, self-confidence and self-efficacy, satisfaction with learning outcomes, and autonomy in learning. Reliability and validity were examined through some procedures. First, two EFL specialists reviewed the questionnaire to confirm content validity and ensure alignment with the study objectives. Second, Rasch analysis was applied because it provides stronger evidence than classical test theory, allowing verification of item functioning and dimensionality. Results from this process confirmed the unidimensionality of the items and satisfactory construct validity, with person reliability estimates ranging from 0.75 to 0.88 (comparable to Cronbach's α). Infit and Outfit Mean Square (MNSQ) statistics fell within the acceptable 0.7–1.3 range, and person/item separation indices demonstrated adequate discrimination, supporting the robustness of the motivation questionnaire.

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3.4. Study Questions

The current study aimed to determine the impact of the FunBingo video game on students' motivation and vocabulary learning outcomes by answering the following study questions:

Q1: What is the influence of the FunBingo video game on students' motivation to learn EFL vocabulary?

Q2: How does the FunBingo video game impact students' learning of EFL vocabulary?

4. Results

Question One: What is the influence of the FunBingo video game on students' motivation to learn EFL vocabulary?

Table 1. Students' Motivation to Learn EFL Vocabulary through the FunBingo Video Game

N.	STATEMENTS	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	TOTAL
1	Learning English vocabulary is enjoyable.	0.9%	0.0%	3.7%	10.3%	26.2%	58.9%	100%
2	Learning English vocabulary is interesting.	0.0%	0.0%	3.7%	11.2%	30.8%	54.3%	100%
3	I feel happy about increasing my English vocabulary	0.9%	0.9%	1.9%	7.5%	16.8%	72.0%	100%
4	I like learning English vocabulary.	0.0%	0.0%	2.8%	12.1%	28.0%	57.1%	100%
5	It is important to acquire English vocabulary.	0.9%	0.0%	1.8%	5.6%	20.6%	71.1%	100%
6	I feel satisfied with my performance in learning vocabulary	0.0%	0.9%	3.7%	11.3%	22.4%	61.7%	100%
7	Learning English vocabulary is useful	0.0%	1.9%	0.9%	5.6%	28.0%	63.6%	100%
8	I feel like I am able to get high scores on English vocabulary	0.0%	2.8%	5.6%	16.0%	26.1%	49.5%	100%
9	I feel confident in my ability to learn vocabulary	0.0%	0.9%	7.5%	12.1%	28.0%	51.5%	100%
10	I feel that I can learn vocabulary well.	0.0%	0.0%	3.7%	10.3%	28.5%	57.5%	100%
11	I feel like I am free to decide how to study vocabulary for myself.	0.9%	1.8%	1.8%	12.2%	20.6%	62.7%	100%

Note. Descriptive results of students' motivation to learn EFL vocabulary through FunBingo. Percentages reflect positive responses ("Slightly agree," "Agree," and "Strongly agree") across 11 items on the motivation questionnaire.

As seen in Table 1, students' affective attitudes toward learning English vocabulary through the FunBingo video game were uniformly positive across all eleven statements. When considering the combined percentages of 'Slightly agree,' 'Agree,' and 'Strongly agree,' enjoyment of vocabulary learning (Item 1) reached 95.4 % positivity, closely matched by interest in vocabulary learning (Item 2) at 96.3 %. These two foundational measures suggest that FunBingo effectively fosters both enjoyment and sustained interest in EFL vocabulary learning.

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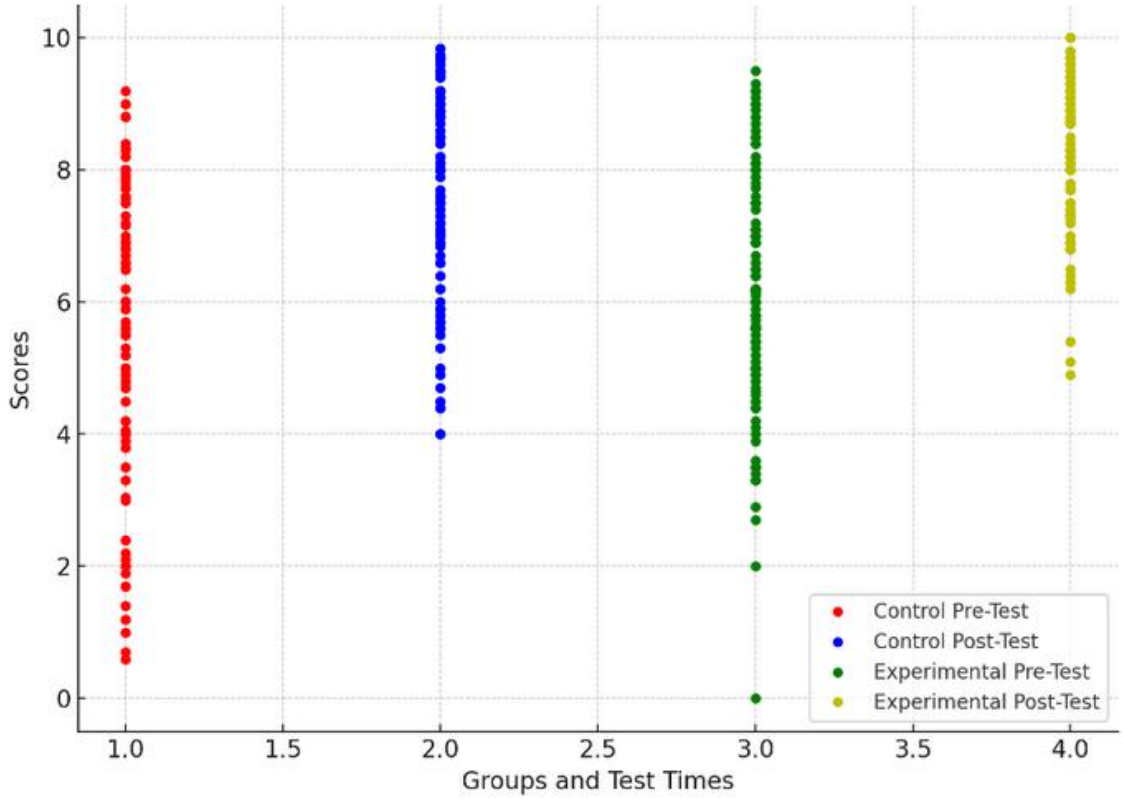
Beyond enjoyment and interest, affective response measures also ranked highly. The statement 'I feel happy about increasing my English vocabulary' (Item 3) and 'Learning English vocabulary is useful' (Item 7) each reached 96.3 % and 97.2 % positive responses, respectively, indicating that students not only enjoyed the process but also recognized its practical value. Satisfaction with personal performance (Item 6) was slightly lower but still substantial at 95.4 % positive agreement, underscoring learners' confidence in their own progress.

Assessments of perceived importance and self-efficacy serve to underscore the game's effectiveness. Fully 97.3 % of students agreed that acquiring English vocabulary is important (Item 5), the highest positivity in the survey, while 96.3 % felt capable of learning vocabulary well (Item 10). Self-confidence items showed marginally lower but still strong results: 91.6 % felt able to achieve high scores on vocabulary tasks (Item 8) and 91.6 % expressed confidence in their ability to learn vocabulary (Item 9). These slightly lower, but still strong, self-efficacy perceptions may point to opportunities for scaffolding performance feedback to strengthen learners' confidence in quantitative measures of success.

Finally, autonomy in learning (Item 11) was endorsed by 95.5 % of respondents, indicating that the majority felt free to decide how to study vocabulary for themselves within the game environment. Taken together, these quantitative results demonstrate that the FunBingo video game not only promotes enjoyment and interest but also supports learners' perceptions of usefulness, importance, performance satisfaction, confidence, and autonomy in EFL vocabulary learning, key motivational constructs in language learning research.

Question Two: How does the FunBingo video game impact students' learning of EFL vocabulary?



Note. Comparison of pre- and post-test vocabulary scores for both groups, illustrating the distribution and overall trend of improvement after the FunBingo intervention.

Figure 2. Pre- and Post-Test Scores for Control and Experimental Groups

Figure 2 illustrates the pre- and post-test scores for both the control and experimental groups. The box plot clearly shows the improvement in scores, with the experimental group showing a more

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significant increase after the intervention. To assess the impact of the FunBingo video game on students' ability to learn new EFL vocabulary, we conducted a statistical analysis of the pre-test and post-test scores from both groups. Before performing the inferential analyses, the data were tested for normality to determine the most appropriate statistical procedures. The Shapiro–Wilk test was applied, as it is suitable for small to medium-sized samples (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012). The results indicated that the data did not follow a normal distribution ($p < 0.05$). Consequently, non-parametric analyses were selected to ensure methodological validity. Given the non-parametric nature of the data, Kruskal-Wallis tests were used to analyze the differences in scores across the groups and time (pre vs. post-test).

The results revealed a statistically significant difference between the control and experimental groups ($H = 14.61$, $p = 0.00013$), as well as between pre- and post-test scores ($H = 225.04$, $p < 0.00001$). The effect size was calculated using eta squared (η^2), which showed a moderate-to-large effect for the time factor ($\eta^2 = 0.271$), indicating that the FunBingo intervention significantly enhanced vocabulary learning. On the other hand, the effect size for the group factor ($\eta^2 = 0.0176$) was small, suggesting that while the experimental group performed better than the control group, other factors may have influenced the results.

5. Discussion

The findings regarding the first research question suggest that the FunBingo video game had a significant positive impact on students' motivation and effectively engaged them in vocabulary learning. It aligns with previous research by Eltahir et al. (2021), who found that game-based learning platforms significantly enhance student motivation and engagement in language learning. Moreover, similar to the findings of Nadeem et al. (2023), who reported that interactive and enjoyable learning experiences through digital games lead to higher levels of student motivation.

In line with these results, the motivational effect of FunBingo can be further understood through the principles of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which identifies autonomy, competence, and relatedness as essential components of intrinsic motivation. FunBingo encourages autonomy by allowing learners to select categories and control their pace, while immediate feedback and visual rewards strengthen their sense of competence. Its collaborative nature fosters relatedness, making the learning experience both engaging and socially meaningful. This interpretation aligns with the findings of Alhebshi and Gamlo (2022), Nadeem et al. (2023), and Zhang et al. (2024), who indicate that digital games enhance motivation when learners' psychological needs are met. Accordingly, the design of FunBingo, which balances intrinsic enjoyment through play with extrinsic reinforcement through trophies, offers a cohesive motivational framework that explains the consistently positive responses observed in this study. However, it is also important to notice that not all studies report equally positive effects of gaming on motivation. For instance, researchers such as Mutlu and Çimen (2024) indicate that playing video games does not necessarily lead to higher language learning motivation, nor does it significantly influence the type of motivation students experience. On his part, Sabiri (2025) argues that the impact of video games on English language motivation is minimal, citing limited benefits in certain educational contexts.

Despite these contextual variations reported by Mutlu and Çimen, Sabiri, the results of the present research confirm that the use of FunBingo not only motivates students but also creates a more enjoyable learning environment that can foster better vocabulary retention and learning outcomes. The significant clustering of positive responses around statements like 'Learning English vocabulary is enjoyable' and 'I feel happy about increasing my English vocabulary' highlights the emotional and affective benefits of integrating game-based learning tools into language education. These results imply that incorporating such tools could lead to broader educational benefits, particularly in motivating students who may otherwise find vocabulary learning tedious. This study

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thus contributes to the growing body of literature advocating for the use of digital games in language learning, reinforcing the idea that well-designed educational games can significantly enhance learning experiences and outcomes. However, while these motivational outcomes are encouraging, it is also important to acknowledge that the consistently high positive ratings may partially reflect social desirability bias. Some students might have responded favorably due to the novelty of the game, their rapport with teachers, or their willingness to please the researchers. Although anonymity and voluntary participation were ensured, this bias cannot be ruled out entirely. Recognizing this limitation strengthens the reliability of the motivational findings and suggests the need for future studies to triangulate self-reported data through complementary techniques such as observations.

Concerning the second research question of this study, the findings demonstrate that the use of the FunBingo video game significantly improved students' ability to learn EFL vocabulary, as evidenced by the statistically significant difference observed between the pre- and post-test scores ($H = 225.04$, $p < 0.00001$). Remarkably, the effect size associated with the time factor was moderate-to-large ($\eta^2 = 0.271$), indicating a substantial impact of the FunBingo intervention over time. These results align with the research by Kucher (2021), who asserts that students exposed to game-based activities improve retention of the knowledge they acquire. Besides, Adipat et al. (2021) emphasize the effectiveness of game-based learning in improving language learning by making the learning process more engaging and interactive. This method also contributes to enhancing students' coordination and creativity.

In contrast, the comparison between control and experimental groups also revealed statistical significance ($H = 14.61$, $p = 0.00013$); however, the effect size was small ($\eta^2 = 0.0176$). This implies that although the experimental group outperformed the control group, the difference was limited in magnitude. This result may be attributed to several contextual and individual factors that potentially influenced students' vocabulary learning outcomes. Particularly, differences in learning styles and prior vocabulary knowledge may have affected students' responsiveness to the FunBingo intervention. Additionally, the teacher effect could have contributed to this variation, as differences in instructional delivery and classroom management can subtly influence engagement and achievement. Environmental factors, including classroom dynamics, access to digital devices, and technical constraints, may also have introduced variability across groups. Although these elements were not the primary focus of the study, acknowledging them provides a more insightful interpretation of the findings and underscores the importance of controlling such variables in future research. Furthermore, these considerations suggest that while FunBingo positively influences motivation and learning, its impact could be further enhanced through differentiated instruction, teacher training in gamified pedagogy, and improved classroom conditions.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that the use of FunBingo significantly enhanced students' motivation to learn EFL vocabulary, as evidenced by the high proportion of positive responses (Agree and Strongly Agree) across all survey statements from the experimental group. This suggests that FunBingo not only made the learning process more enjoyable and engaging for students but also contributed to an increase in their vocabulary learning.

Besides, the results of this study provide empirical evidence that the FunBingo video game can effectively support EFL vocabulary learning. The significant improvement observed over time, coupled with a moderate-to-large effect size, suggests that integrating gamified tools into language instruction can enhance learners' vocabulary retention and engagement. Although the difference between the control and experimental groups was statistically significant, the small effect size indicates that additional variables may have influenced their vocabulary learning. Therefore, while

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FunBingo proves to be a promising pedagogical tool, its implementation should be complemented by broader instructional strategies to maximize its impact.

7. Suggestion

The findings of this study suggest that EFL teachers embed this application systematically into their vocabulary teaching process. By incorporating regular FunBingo sessions aligned with specific lexical targets and following each gameplay with communicative tasks that harness students' heightened interest, instructors can foster sustained engagement and make vocabulary learning both enjoyable and pedagogically effective. Future research could adapt this application for other EFL areas, such as pronunciation practice, to evaluate its impact on learners' pronunciation accuracy and speaking fluency.

8. Research Limitations

Given the substantial sample size of 416 participants and the structured quasi-experimental design, the findings of this study can reasonably be generalized to other comparable EFL learning contexts. This generalization should be made with caution, as the sample was limited to a specific age group (10–11 years old) and to public schools within a particular region of Ecuador. Despite these positive findings, a limitation of this research was the slow internet access among participants or the inadequate devices they had, which may have hindered their full engagement with FunBingo.

9. Pedagogical Implications

The pedagogical implication of this research is that teachers should integrate video games into their EFL lessons by selecting titles that target specific vocabulary and by guiding game play and structured reflection afterward, ensuring students remain motivated and effectively retain new words.

Declarations

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Conflicts of Interest. The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.
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Ethical Approval. The study was approved by the Vicerrectorado Académico of Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja, date of approval: (Oficio Circular Nro. 085-VA-UTPL-2021 - 11 de octubre del 2023)
Data Availability Statement. The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.
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During the preparation of this work, the authors used the ChatGPT SERVICE in order to improve language and grammar. The authors declare that they reviewed and edited the final output as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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About the Contributor(s)

Ana Quinonez-Beltran, is a professor at the Filosofía, Artes y Humanidades Department of Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja, at the Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y extranjeros Major. She has a Master's degree in Educational Technology: e-Learning and Knowledge Management at Universidad Rovira i Virgili. She has a Doctoral degree in Educational Research from Universidad Nacional de Loja. She is a Research Group EFL Learning, Teaching and Technology member. She has 18 years of teaching experience at the higher education level, and she has been a co-author of some important indexed articles and chapter books
Email: alquinones@utpl.edu.ec
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5722-1096

Elsa Morocho-Cuenca, holds a Master's Degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language from NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY in Miami, USA, in collaboration with Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja. Bachelor's degree in Education Sciences, with a specialization in English from Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja - Ecuador. University instructor for both undergraduate and postgraduate programs at UTPL. Seventeen years of experience in the field of Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages, including six years in the Translation Unit of RESEC-UTPL
Email: elmorochox@utpl.edu.ec
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2573-1593

Carmen Benitez-Correa, holds a Ph.D. in English Philology from the National University of Distance Education (UNED) in Madrid, and a Ph.D. in Educational Research and Planning from Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (UTPL). Bachelor's degree in Education Sciences, with a specialization in English. Academic coordinator of the "English New Generation" courses at UTPL. Twenty-three years of teaching experience in the English program at UTPL; member of equipo de Gestión de la calidad en UTPL. Coordinator of the research group English Foreign Language Teaching and Technology (RFL tech) at UTPL. Author of indexed articles and book chapters.
Email: cdbenitez@utpl.edu.ec
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9745-4938