Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal
ISSN: 0123-4641
caljournal.ud@udistrital.edu.co
Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas
Colombia

Batlle Rodríguez, Jaume; González Argüello, Vicenta
Foreign Language Teachers' Perceptions after Gamified Classroom Practice
Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal, vol. 25, núm. 1, 2023, Enero-Junio, pp. 31-41
Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas
Bogotá, Colombia

DOI: https://doi.org/10.14483/22487085.18921

Disponible en: https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=305774956010

RESEARCH ARTICLES

Foreign Language Teachers' Perceptions after Gamified Classroom Practice

Percepciones del profesorado de lenguas extranjeras tras las práctica de la gamificación en aula

Jaume Batlle Rodríguez[1]
Vicenta González Argüello[2]

Citation/ Para citar este Artículo: Batlle, J. & González, V. (2023). Foreign Language Teachers' Perceptions after Gamified Classroom Practice. *Colomb. Appl. Linguistic. J.*, *25*(1), pp. 31-41.

Received: 21-Dic.-2021 / **Accepted:** 21-Oct.-2022

DOI: https://doi.org/10.14483/22487085.18921

Abstract

This study examines the perceptions and beliefs of thirteen teachers of foreign languages who have received specialized training in gamification and have put it into practice in the classroom. Specifically, the study analyses the impact of gamification in the three years following its introduction into their teaching practices. To gain insights into teachers' perspectives and attitudes towards gamification, thirteen semi-structured interviews were conducted. The analysis of the interviews revealed that gamification is viewed by teachers as a motivating and collaborative strategy which can be challenging to implement in some courses but can be facilitated by certain key elements such as the use of narratives in the classroom. Additionally, teachers highlighted the need for more training in this new pedagogical strategy and the importance of collaborative planning of gamified experiences with colleagues. The value of this study lies in showing the impact of gamification on the perceptions of foreign language teachers in the medium term after its introduction into their classrooms.

Keywords: foreign language teachers, gamification, teachers' perceptions, teacher training

Resumen

Este estudio examina las percepciones y creencias de trece profesoras de lenguas extranjeras quienes han recibido formación especializada en gamificación y la han implementado en sus aulas de clases. Específicamente, la investigación se enfoca en analizar el impacto que la gamificación ha tenido en sus prácticas docentes tres años después de su implementación. Para conocer las perspectivas y actitudes de las profesoras sobre esta estrategia pedagógica, se realizaron trece entrevistas semiestructuradas. El análisis de ellas reveló que las profesoras perciben la gamificación como una estrategia motivadora y colaborativa, aunque su implementación puede ser difícil en ciertos tipos de cursos. Sin embargo, destacan que la gamificación puede desarrollarse en clase a partir de ciertos elementos clave, como la narrativa. Además, las profesoras resaltaron la necesidad de una mayor formación en esta nueva estrategia metodológica y la importancia de construir experiencias didácticas gamificadas colaborativamente con otros profesores. El valor de este estudio radica en mostrar el impacto de la gamificación en las creencias y

1 Departament d'Educació Lingüística I Literària i DCEM. Universitat de Barcelona (Barcelona, Spain). ORCID : https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7429-9768. jaumebatlle@ub.edu

2 Departament d'Educació Lingüística I Literària i DCEM. Universitat de Barcelona (Barcelona, Spain). ORCID : https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5262-9500. vicentagonzalez@ub.edu

percepciones de las profesoras de lenguas extranjeras en el mediano plazo, una vez que han introducido esta metodología en clase.

Palabras clave: desarrollo profesional, formación de profesores, gamificación, percepciones del profesorado, percepciones del profesorado

Introduction

Foreign language teaching (FL) is characterized by the search for methodological innovations that can enhance the effectiveness of target language learning. This is evident in the emergence of various methodologies, such as task-based learning and project-based learning, which prioritize the student's active involvement and engagement in the learning process (Almulla, 2020; Beckett & Miller, 2006; Ellis *et al*., 2019; Richards & Rodgers, 1999; Samuda & Bygate, 2008). FL teachers understand that to make their work more effective they must keep abreast of novel methodological trends. The current framework of FL teaching is shaped by the search for methodological strategies that best match students' learning requirements and the intended learning context (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Therefore, professional development in this field consists in learning about different approaches and methods and putting them into practice.

Gamification (Kapp, 2012; Pujolà & Herrera, 2018) is one of these new methodological strategies. Broadly defined as the use of game design elements in non-game contexts (Deterding *et al*., 2011), gamification aims to achieve a number of goals, including greater student motivation and engagement in the teaching-learning process (Alsawaier, 2018). This strategy is being implemented across various settings (El Shoubashy, EL Kader & Khalifa, 2020; Hamari *et al*., 2014), including foreign language (FL) teaching and learning (Dehghanzadeh *et al*., 2019). Numerous studies have examined the impact of gamification on vocabulary learning (Hasegawa *et al*., 2015; Kingsley & Grabner-Hagen, 2018), grammar learning (Purgina *et al*., 2020), FL learning in general (Figueroa, 2015), the development of oral presentations (Girardelli, 2017), and the strengthening of student motivation (Cruaud, 2018; Sun & Hsieh, 2018). Additionally, studies of gamified teaching design for FL learning have identified the importance of narrative in constructing gamified didactic interventions (Batlle *et al*., 2018) and the relationship between learning objectives and activities in gamified didactic sequences (Batlle & Appel, 2019). However, there is still limited knowledge about the work of teachers who have developed didactic interventions and used their experience to consolidate the use of gamification over time.

To gain a more detailed understanding of the relationship between gamification and FL teaching-learning, this study examines the perceptions and the beliefs of a group of FL teachers who participated in a training course on gamification and subsequently implemented their own gamified content. We aim to examine how each of the teachers conceptualizes gamification three years after its introduction into their classroom practice. Thus, the primary research question of this paper is: How do foreign language teachers perceive gamification three years after completing a training course and having implemented various gamified didactic interventions?

Teachers' beliefs about gamification

In foreign language education, teachers' beliefs play a fundamental role in shaping their approach and understanding of a particular pedagogical reality (Borg, 2011; Pajares, 1992; Woods, 1996). Such beliefs are constructed on a complex system of thoughts, attitudes, perceptions, and theoretical conceptualizations of a given pedagogical setting. This system informs teachers' subsequent understanding of the different aspects involved in daily practice and their decision-making processes.

Several studies have explored FL teachers' perceptions of gamification as a methodological strategy, in particular regarding its characteristics and viability. According to Martí-Parreño *et al*. (2019), higher education teachers commonly believe that gamification promotes group work and the development of spoken communication skills, as well as critical thinking and social skills to a lesser

extent. Similarly, Bolstad and McDowall (2019) observed that a group of primary and secondary education teachers in New Zealand perceive games as highly effective for learning content across a range of subjects, provided they are designed from an educational perspective. In their study, the interviewed teachers emphasized the importance of keeping an open mind in regard to exploring and experimenting with games.

Sánchez-Mena *et al*. (2016) found that trainee teachers who had completed a 10-hour training course on gamification consider it a useful and easy to implement methodological strategy for their classes and plan to use it in their future teaching practice. Meanwhile, Damevska (2020) analyses the opinions of five female FL teachers regarding their professional development after completing a gamification-based teacher training course. Prior to and following the training, the teachers exhibited a favorable attitude towards gamification. However, they struggled to formulate a clear conceptual idea of the methodology and its implementation, particularly with regard to their specific course syllabus and their students' willingness to participate in gamified activities.

Method

Participants

This study focuses on the work of 13 female FL teachers (6 teach English, 3 Italian, 2 French, 1 German and 1 Russian) at 8 different foreign language schools in Catalonia, Spain. All the teachers had extensive teaching experience (6−32 years) at the time of the interview, with most of them (n = 9) having more than 20 years of experience.

All participants in this study had completed a teacher training course in gamification, which included designing and implementing a gamified didactic experience as the final task, in most cases consisting of a single teaching unit. Thus, the participants had prior specific training and had put the strategy into practice on at least one occasion. In fact, nine out of the thirteen teachers had applied gamification after completing the training. Among them, six teachers repeated the gamified experience they had designed at the end of the course.

Data collection and analysis

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 1996), which allowed for a versatile approach to gathering the greatest possible amount of information from the participants on the topics covered by their responses. The total interview time was 4 hours and 48 minutes. Interviews were conducted in Catalan and Spanish between December 2019 and January 2020, approximately three years after the teachers had completed the training course. All interviews were carried out via Skype or Zoom and recorded to facilitate data processing. The purpose of the interviews was to establish whether the teachers had used gamification after the training course and, if so, how they had implemented the methodology. During the interviews, teachers expressed their conceptual understanding of gamification and gave an appraisal of its use. Interviews were transcribed verbatim without the use of a specific transcription system and data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis. The researchers located the information on the teachers' perceptions of gamification and their experiences with the methodology. After that, the extracts were studied within an interpretative paradigm. The participants' anonymity was maintained at all times. Quotations taken from interviews were given a code that specifies the teacher who provided the information and their response. So that, each teacher was assigned a number (T1, T2, T3, etc.) and each quotation was identified by a number separated by an underscore (e.g., T3_10), which corresponded to the answer given during the interview.

Results

Interviews were conducted to determine whether and how the teachers had implemented gamification in their teaching practice in the three years after completing a specific training course in this new methodological strategy. The data collected from the interviews included the teachers' conceptual understanding of gamification and their

appraisal of its use. From this data, we identified four main areas of interest: the impact of gamification on the class group, the suitability of gamification for specific types of courses, the conceptualization of gamification as a methodological strategy, and professional development in the area of gamification.

Impact of gamification on the class group

One of the areas of interest that teachers focused on most closely in their assessments was the impact of gamification on student participation. Specifically, regarding this aspect, the topics mentioned by the teachers included motivation, engagement, effectiveness, their own attitudes, and the cohesion of the class group.

The main element they referred to is motivation. The teachers expressed the belief that gamification is a methodological strategy which seeks to motivate students. For example, Teacher 9 (T9) associated gamification with high levels of motivation, as "gamification for them [the students] represents a challenge" (T9_21). She observed that her students were studying vocabulary much more than before thanks to gamification (the learning objective was the acquisition of vocabulary, so this was the linguistic object on which the gamified activity was constructed and points were scored). This motivational boost was also evident in the fact that the students tried to find ways to score points when they lose or set new rules to gain bonuses and extra lives (T9_23).

The teachers consider that their students' willingness to engage is crucial when creating gamified learning activities. For example, Teacher 6 noted that her students "like competition a lot" (T6_13) and therefore viewed gamification as a viable methodological strategy to boost their motivation to participate in different activities. Along the same lines, Teacher 6 believes that the success of gamification "depends a lot on the commitment [of the students] when it comes to completing the tasks" (T6_15). Therefore, implementing activities that motivate her students in the classroom will increase the likelihood of their carrying out the proposed tasks.

Gamification can fail if the students "do not have the time or the enthusiasm" (T1_6). Accordingly, the successful delivery of a gamified intervention largely depends on the relationship that students are willing to establish with the intervention (T5_7). However, Teacher 13 considers that gamification is a good way to involve students since they "learn with emotion" (T13_6). Teacher 6 believes that when gamified learning content has an experiential, emotional component, students tend to engage with the activity, which "generates greater interest and participation" (T13_7). Similarly, Teacher 11 considers that gamification is good for "breaking the routine and motivating . . . because it breaks the ice a little, getting the group together" and encouraging greater interaction (T11_24). It is positively acknowledged that gamification increases students' motivation to engage with activities that had not previously motivated them in class (T12_19).

As we can see, the teachers agree that gamification must connect with students in order to be successful, but this can be challenging in practice. Teacher 2 explains that "the key is to engage with them and understand how to do so" (T2_25). Some teachers also emphasize the importance of the class atmosphere. Teacher 3, for example, prefers gamification when there is "a really good atmosphere, so [the students] end up producing much better work because they spend more time [practicing the target language]" (T3_21). Another important task highlighted by the responses is understanding students' gaming practices and preferences, so that "what you incorporate into gamification will be extremely useful to them later" (T2_6). By ascertaining their students' preferences, teachers can create gamified experiences that are more attractive and motivating.

However, the teachers also note that gamification can prompt a negative reaction. This is noticeable, for example, in classes where the primary goal is to obtain certification of a particular level. While Teacher 4 suggests that gamification enables students to practice extensively, improving their preparation for the level test, as "there is no need to do exam practice per se in order to be ready for an exam" (T4_21), other students deemed gamification to be a waste of time and prioritized exam preparation over

taking part in the gamified activity (T2_6). Teachers who observed this negative attitude explain that in order to prevent students from feeling that they are wasting their time, gamification must be carefully designed as an effective learning sequence, with clear learning objectives and timeframe that give students a tangible sense of progress. As Teacher 2 notes, it is especially important to stress the usefulness of the gamified content in classes with particularly demanding groups of students.

During the interviews, teachers' attitude was also identified as a crucial element for the success of gamification. Teacher 1 alludes to the importance of teachers' engagement for classroom development: "Whatever we do as teachers, if you don't like it, it doesn't work" (T1_22). Therefore, it is important for teachers to transmit enthusiasm for what they are doing, as this greatly increases the chances that students will "get on board". As such, to foster student engagement with the methodology, "the teacher must convey their own enthusiasm for the activity they are doing" (T4_29). When this is successfully accomplished, the experience becomes extremely gratifying. Additionally, teacher motivation may have a knock-on effect on the students' motivation to take part in gamification. According to Teacher 2, if the teacher can transmit their enjoyment of the gamified experience, this enthusiasm is likely to be contagious and lead to greater student engagement.

Another aspect that teachers deem important to the success of gamification is the cohesion of the class group. Teacher 8, for example, explains that her gamified intervention was successful because "the group members already knew each other" (T8_6). This suggests that gamification is more likely to be effective when the group already functions well together. As one of the teachers points out, this hinges on "the chemistry between you [the teacher] and the students and the chemistry among students themselves" (T6_15).

Suitability of gamification for specific course types

The teachers assessed the suitability of gamification for classroom practice on the basis of the specific characteristics of their respective courses. For example, Teacher 3 explained that she would not attempt to gamify a blended-learning course, which was the mode of delivery of her course at the time of the interview, because "it is very difficult to bring the group together and . . . [in] gamification you need to have a really good group atmosphere" (T3_8). Similarly, Teacher 8 considered gamifying a blended-learning course more challenging than a face-to-face course, because in the former she only sees her students for two hours, once a week (T8_6), and when they are in class, they want to focus on the formal content. From these appraisals we can infer that teachers consider essential having a strong and trusting relationship with the group in order to implement a gamified approach. In contrast, Teacher 7, who carried out her gamified didactic intervention through the class group's virtual campus area, believes that the strategy would be difficult to implement outside the virtual campus (T7_43), as developing a consistent narrative would be harder in a traditional classroom setting. She considers that it is easier to adopt an avatar in the game in a virtual learning environment because in a traditional classroom, where she is viewed as the teacher, it is more difficult to change her role.

The fact that students in a blended-learning group carry out part of their course individually from home is also identified as a constraint on the successful implementation of a gamified methodology. For instance, Teacher 3 considers group activities to be essential to gamified teaching practices but notes that in face-to-face courses, students are often focused on the formal content: "They want to go to class and really get on with things" (T3_11). Consequently, it can be inferred that students enrolled in blended-learning courses may see gamification as a waste of time and may require to be convinced of its benefits for their learning process. Teacher 3 believes that students who choose blended learning do so primarily because they feel they do not have time to attend class every day, among other factors. As a result, she is concerned that introducing gamified learning content will cause students to think "that they are wasting their time" (T3_11). Thus, gamification is more difficult to implement in blended learning that in a face-to-face course. Moreover, the individualism

that is implicit in the choice of blended learning underpins teachers' belief that gamification is not a suitable methodological strategy for this type of course. Consequently, the teachers consider that familiarity and social ties between group members are significant factors in the potential success of gamification.

Conceptualization of gamification as a methodological strategy

Of the various factors that teachers consider in their appraisal of gamification, one of the most significant is the way in which it is conceptualized. During the interviews, teachers made several references to gamification and their conceptual understanding of it as a methodology. The central aspects in their conceptualizations are gamified practice per se and its specific value as a methodological strategy for FL learning.

Narrative is one of the most significant elements of gamification, understood as a methodological strategy based on the use of game design elements in non-game contexts. Five of the teachers interviewed consider narrative to be crucial in constructing gamified didactic interventions and believe that it determines the success or failure of the game. In this regard, Teacher 12 claims that in gamified practice it is important to "have a complete story that accompanies [the experience]" (T12_25), while Teacher 1 states that it can be "a motivational factor for the student, encouraging them to engage with the game" (T1_12). Meanwhile, Teacher 8 connects narrative with thematic progression in FL teaching. She believes that it would be difficult to adapt gamification practices to other levels because the content depends on the students' current learning stage. Instead, the narrative should be changed to construct a similar intervention for each successive level. From this perspective, there is a correlative relationship between narrative and learning content (the lexical and thematic content of each unit). Teacher 1, however, considers that her gamified proposal is suitable for adaptation to successive levels, implying that gamified practice is not directly determined by students' level of language competence.

The difference between these views stems from a specific understanding of the nature of gamification: while Teacher 1 believes that the content of gamification can be extrapolated to other learning levels, Teacher 8 considers that every level has its specific content and that the narrative should therefore be changed in each case. Narrative is also considered a "coagulating" element in gamification: Teacher 4 believes that the narrative element of gamification makes it a suitable methodological strategy for linking activities.

Three of the teachers make explicit reference to the fact that their gamified didactic interventions were conceived specifically as learning activities. Teacher 1, for instance, understands gamification in these terms and believes that students should not lose sight of this. The underlying reasoning is that Teacher 1 sees gamification as a motivating methodological strategy: therefore, if her students are not motivated by the prospect of gamified content, they should treat it as a learning activity and engage with it as they would any other of the course activities.

The interviews also shed light on the inherent group dynamics of gamified learning. According to Teacher 1, gamification is a methodological strategy that necessarily entails collaborative practice (T1_5), whereas Teacher 3 perceives group work as an inherent dynamic of gamified practice, observing that almost all of the teachers "who used gamification [during the training course in which they participated] made students work in groups" (T3_17). Additionally, Teacher 5 believes that the success of gamification is influenced by the composition of the class and the groups formed for each activity.

In addition to its potential as a learning strategy, gamification is also evaluated for its ludic qualities. For example, Teacher 2 encountered difficulties with her gamified practice and opted to skip the third and final stage of her intervention due to students' lack of motivation and the perception that it was a waste of learning time, despite her belief that this stage provided meaning to entire gamified experience. On the other hand, Teacher 9 emphasizes the importance of balancing the desired game outcomes

and the learning objectives, arguing that failure to do so can result in "ruined gamification, causing disappointment, reducing flow and even leading to complaints from the students" (T9_65). Teacher 9 also notes that overly complicated games may prompt students to complain (T9_63). Consequently, in order for gamification to be a success, she argues, the game should be constructed in such a way that students are able to play with relative ease.

The ludic nature of gamification has also drawn the attention of teacher who recognize the importance of rules in this context. Teacher 9 explains that in gamified settings students tend to challenge the rules and attempt to modify them for their own benefit, unlike in other types of learning activities such as exams (T9_30). The absence of formally established rules within a game gives students the confidence to negotiate with the teacher in their own interest: "gamification is a new extra element that they have not tried before, where they think they are empowered to (…) act in their own interest" (T9_30). As a result, gamified learning is perceived as a game that may allow participants to legitimately seek to change the rules. Nonetheless, teachers must ensure that this aspect of a gamified learning experience is thought out in advance, since, as Teacher 12 stresses, "the rules of the game cannot be changed halfway into the intervention" (T12_14).

Professional development in the area of gamification

The participants in this study also stated their opinion of gamification in terms of professional development. Six teachers in particular regarded gamification as a novel strategy that warrants further exploration, as it has implications for their professional development. Teacher 1, for instance, showed interest in being involved in more gamified experiences to consolidate the knowledge and skill acquired through training.

However, the aspect most clearly highlighted in regard to the teachers' professional development is the difficulty of implementing a gamification strategy alone. Teacher 1 acknowledges the challenges of undertaking gamification on her own (T1_22), while Teacher 3 explains that none of her colleagues uses gamification "and that doesn't help" to make it feasible (T3_28). Moreover, Teacher 5 indicates that she "would be more enthusiastic about [applying a gamification approach] with colleagues" (T5_4). Similarly, Teacher 5 expressed her desire to work alongside colleagues to feel more encouraged to participate and to discuss technical and practical doubts, stating that "undertaking the gamification adventure alone" (T5_4) is detrimental.

The possibility of collaborative work would also help to stop gamification "eating up" so much time (T7_34), allowing gamified didactic interventions to be constructed more thoroughly. According to Teacher 7, working in a team makes the experience more rewarding and instructional "for the teacher as well, because you really get to share and everyone sees it in a particular way. Even creating the story, the narrative, must be great to do in a team" (T7_35). Teacher 9 described feeling lonely and isolated in gamified learning given the limited adoption of this methodological approach among her colleagues. She wished to be a part of a teaching community more involved in gamified learning. In her words, "[I do] what [I] think and what I learned on the course, but if other people can see it and I can share material with them, for me personally it's beneficial" (T9_68). Therefore, the gamified content she develops is primarily based on her training in gamification rather than on experiences shared by others.

The teachers call for specific training in gamification. Teacher 1 drew on the training course when designing her own gamified teaching: the intervention she developed "was very similar to our gamification course" (T1_19). Teacher 4 believes that training in gamification has enabled her to use certain tools of the approach such as narrative to construct non-gamified classroom activities, while Teacher 9 acknowledges that the course provided her with a model for developing her own gamification practices and gave her sufficient understanding of what gamification is (T9_38). Teacher 5 also explains that the training served as inspiration for her own practice (T5_3).

While some teachers have found the gamification training course to be helpful, others felt that a second course was necessary. For example, Teacher 2 stated

that the course was not comprehensive enough (T2_5) and encouraged trainers to develop a second part because she "would like to have gone into more detail and to have been able to work directly with the proposed strategy" after experimenting with it in class (T2_8). She also expressed feeling uncertain when working on her own designs without help or support. While the tutoring during the training course was successful in providing the necessary guidance for the planning and implementation of gamified practice, she falls prey to doubt when this support is removed. Similarly, Teacher 2 would like to have taken a second course to delve more deeply into the subject, working directly on her own designs and reflecting on their strengths and weaknesses (T2_7). On the other hand, Teacher 5 reports that she misses the technical support, above all with ICT applications, which she believes can be used in the design of gamified learning experiences (T5_9).

Based on the teachers' responses, we can conclude that they still view gamification as an experimental practice, even after applying it several times following their initial experience with it during the final activity of the training course.

Discussion

The participants of this study have a complex conceptual understanding of gamification, which encompasses many facets. Our analysis revealed that the teachers emphasize different aspects of gamification, including its impact on the class group, suitability for specific course types, its conceptualization as a methodological strategy, and its implications for professional development. Their varied appraisals draw a complex, multi-sided picture of gamification in FL teaching and learning, with effects beyond its implementation in the classroom.

According to the interviewed teachers, gamification a methodological strategy that must motivate students and involve them in the teaching-learning processes. Motivation, then, is one of the key outcomes that gamification must target. Teachers believe that gamification provides them with the tools to motivate their students and transform their learning experiences, as suggested by Lee and Hammer (2011). However, in their experience, they have also found that some students may consider the approach a waste of time. This is observed, for example, in cases where students are focused solely on the assessment outcome of a course taken for the purpose of certification.

Another aspect considered by teachers is how gamification is implemented in the FL classroom. Teachers of blended-learning courses questioned the viability of gamification for this mode of delivery due to the more individualistic and less collaborative attitudes exhibited by students in class. This contrasts with the beliefs of teachers interviewed in the study carried out by Sánchez-Mena *et al.* (2016), where the majority of teachers thought that gamification is an easy methodological approach to implement. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the specific training received by the participants in the study of Sánchez-Mena *et al.* (2016) consisted primarily of gamification practice in online learning settings (Pujolà *et al.*, 2017). This may explain why they considered this methodological strategy to be more easily applicable to this mode of delivery. However, the teachers in our study broadly agree that gamification can be more readily implemented in face-to-face courses.

Our interviews also revealed two main elements in the conceptual construction of gamification: narrative and collaborative practices. In general, teachers believe that narrative is the key to the successful implementation of a gamified activity and to student motivation. They also consider collaborative practices as a crucial element in gamification, since it is implicit in gamified learning. These opinions are consistent with the beliefs expressed by the teachers interviewed by Martí-Parreño *et al.* (2019). In both studies, teachers understand collaboration to be an essential element in gamification, which contrasts with the view of students in other studies (Morschheuser *et al.*, 2018) in which they show a greater affinity for competition than for collaboration.

Finally, the teachers based their conceptual understanding of gamification on its relationship with professional development. They felt they

needed more training in gamification and stressed that implementing a gamified approach individually is a highly complex undertaking; they missed the possibility of working as a team, whether with colleagues in their place of work or with colleagues from other centers who share their interest in gamification. These responses indicate that considerable time and effort must be put in to building effective gamified teaching interventions, a view not shared by the teachers interviewed in the study carried out by Sánchez-Mena *et al.* (2016), who see gamification as a straightforward strategy to implement. We find that the teachers interviewed for this study also consider gamification to be a challenge (Bolstad & McDowall, 2019) and although some of them have three years' experience using the strategy, they still believe that they need more assistance (Damevska, 2020). The fact that gamification is perceived as a methodological strategy that requires further development implies that it is not an easy strategy and requires considerable dedication.

Conclusion

Gamification is an increasingly widespread methodological strategy in FL teaching and learning. However, the way in which it is implemented (and whether it is implemented at all) is determined by the perceptions of FL teachers, who are ultimately responsible for deciding whether they wish to put this methodological innovation into practice. Those who have already experimented with gamification play a crucial role in encouraging other teachers to take a risk and apply the methodology in their own classrooms. It is therefore important to analyze the teachers' perceptions of gamification once they have completed a training course, put gamified activities into classroom practice, and had sufficient time to make a reasoned appraisal of the strategy.

This study has sought to investigate how a group of FL teachers with practical experience of gamification perceive this new methodological strategy. Analysis of the interviews revealed that the teachers view gamification as a collaborative methodological strategy that motivates students, in the sense that it at least entails a necessary collaboration between learners. The teachers also identified narrative as a fundamental element in engaging students and believe that gamified interventions are difficult to apply in blended-learning settings. Finally, the teachers considered that gamification is a complex methodological strategy that requires specific training and collaborative effort to implement in the FL classroom.

The results of this study contribute to a more precise understanding of how gamification is perceived as a methodological strategy and provide the FL teaching community and teacher trainers with valuable insights into how teachers appraise gamification in relation to their own didactic procedures. The views of teachers who have put this strategy into practice can serve as a guide for those interested in using this innovative approach in their own teaching. Teachers who would like to experiment with gamification will be able to harness this understanding to design more effective innovative learning experiences.

However, the study is limited by its small number of participants, consisting solely of FL teachers in the same education context: all the participants teach foreign languages to adult learners. Future research could explore the attitudes and beliefs of teachers who have gamified in other contexts, such as primary schools and universities, and examine the impact of different foreign languages on gamification experiences, while increasing the dataset with more interviews. Moreover, it could be of interest to observe how teachers develop their gamification practices in the classroom and analyze their perceptions about gamification regarding its implementation.

References

Almulla, M.A. (2020). The Effectiveness of the Project-Based Learning (PBL) Approach as a Way to Engage Students in Learning. *SAGE Open*, *10*(3), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020938702

Alsawaier, R. S. (2018). The Effect of Gamification on Motivation and Engagement. *International Journal of Information and Learning Technology*, *35*(1), 56-79.

Batlle, J., & Appel, C. (2019). Instructional Sequences in Foreign Language Gamified Didactic Interventions. In Arnedo-Moreno, J., C.S. González, & A. Mora (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 3rd International Symposium on Gamification and Games for Learning (GamiLearn'19)*. CEUR Workshop Proceedings. http://ceur-ws.org/Vol-2497/paper12.pdf

Batlle, J., González, V., & Pujolà, J.T. (2018). La narrativa como elemento cohesionador de tareas gamificadas para la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras. *Rivista dell'Instituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea, 2*(II), 121-160. https://doi.org/10.7410/1357

Beckett, G., & Miller, P. (Eds.) (2006). *Project-based second and foreign language education*. Information Age Publishing.

Bolstad, R., & McDowall, S. (2019). *Games, gamification, and game design for learning. Innovative practice and possibilities in New Zealand schools*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Borg, S. (2011). The impact of in-service education on language teachers' beliefs. *System*, *39*(3), 370-380. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2011.07.009

Cruaud, C. (2018). The playful frame: gamification in a French-as-a-foreign-language class. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, *12*(4), 330-343. https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2016.1213268

Damevska, L. (2020). *Game not over: Experienced language teachers' self-reported beliefs about the use of gamification in the foreign language classroom*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Universitat Rovira i Virgili (Tarragona, Spain).

Dehghanzadeh, H., Fardanesh, H., Hatami, J., Talaee, E., & Noroozi, O. (2019). Using gamification to support learning English as a second language: a systematic review. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 34*(7), 934-957. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2019.1648298

Deterding, S., Dixon, D., Khaled, R., & Nacke, L. (2011). From Game Design Elements to Gamefulness: Defining "Gamification". In Lugmair, A. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 15th International Academic MindTrek Conference* (pp. 9-15). Association for Computing Machinery. https://doi.org/10.1145/2181037.2181040

Ellis, R., Skehan, P., Li, S., Shintani, N., & Lambert, C. (2019). *Task-based language teaching: Theory and practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108643689

El Shoubashy, H., El Kader, H.A. & Khalifa, N. (2020). What is Gamification? Literature Review of Previous Studies on Gamificacion. *Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences, 14*(8), 29-51. https://doi.org/10.22587/ajbas.2020.14.8.4

Figueroa, J. F. (2015). Using gamification to enhance second language learning. *Digital Education Review, 27*, 32–54. https://doi.org/10.1344/der.2015.27.32-54

Girardelli, D. (2017). Impromptu speech gamification for ESL/EFL students. *Communication Teacher*, *31*(3), 156–161. https://doi.org/10.1080/17404622.2017.1314522

Hamari, J., Koivisto, J., & Sarsa, H. (2014). Does gamification work? A literature review of empirical studies on gamification. In Sprague, R. H. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 47th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences* (pp. 3025–3034). IEEE Computer Society. https://doi.org/10.1109/HICSS.2014.377

Hasegawa, T., Koshino, M., & Ban, H. (2015). An English vocabulary learning support system for the learner's sustainable motivation. *SpringerPlus*, *4*(99), 1-9. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40064-015-0792-2

Kapp, K. (2012). *The Gamification of Learning and Instruction: Game-based Methods and Strategies for Training and Education*. Wiley & Sons.

Kingsley, T. L., & Grabner-Hagen, M. M. (2018). Vocabulary by gamification. *The Reading Teacher*, *71*(5), 545–555. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1645

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006). *Understanding Language Teaching: from Method to Postmethod*. Routledge.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Sage.

Lee, J. J., & Hammer, J. (2011). Gamification in education: What, how, why bother? *Academic Exchange Quarterly*, *15*(2), 146-151.

Martí-Parreño, J., Galbis-Córdoba, A., & Currás-Pérez, R. (2019). Teachers' beliefs about gamification and competencies development: A concept mapping approach. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, *58*(1), 84-94. https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2019.1683464

Morschheuser, B., Hamari, J., & Maedche, A. (2018). Cooperation or competition – When do people contribute more? A field experiment on gamification of crowdsourcing. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, *127*, 7-24. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhcs.2018.10.001

Pajares, F. (1992). Teachers' Beliefs and Educational Research: Cleaning up a Messy Construct. *Review of Educational Research*, *62*(3), 307-332. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543062003307

Pujolà, J.T., Berríos, A., & Appel, C. (2017). Applying DMC in a gamified teacher course on gamification. In González, C.S. (Ed.), *V Congreso Internacional de Videojuegos y Educación CIVE 17* (pp. 1-7). Universidad de la Laguna. https://riull.ull.es/xmlui/handle/915/4769

Pujolà, J.T., & Herrera, F. (2018). Gamificación. In J. Muñoz-Basols, E. Gironetti and M. Lacorte (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Spanish Language Teaching Metodologías, contextos y recursos para la enseñanza del español L2* (pp. 583-596). Routledge.

Purgina, M., Mozgovoy, M., & Blake, J. (2020). WordBricks: Mobile technology and visual grammar formalism for gamification of natural language grammar acquisition. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, *58*(1), 126-159. https://doi.org/10.1177/0735633119833010

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (1999). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

Samuda, V., & Bygate, M. (2008). *Tasks in second language learning*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Sánchez-Mena, A., Queijo-Ameijeiras, C., Galbis-Córdova, A., Martí-Parreño, J., & Álvarez-Jareño, J.A. (2016). Student Teacher's Intention to Use Gamification. In Gómez Chova, L., A. López Martínez, & I. Candel Torres (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICERI2016 Conference* (pp. 4488-4494). IATED Academy. https://doi.org/10.21125/iceri.2016.0206

Sun, J C.-Y., & Hsieh, P.H. (2018). Application of a gamified interactive response system to enhance the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, student engagement, and attention of English learners. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, *21*(3), 104–116. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26458511

Woods, D. (1996). *Teacher Cognition in Language Teaching. Beliefs, Decision-Making and Classroom Practice*. Cambridge University Press.