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The Effect of Interactive Games on Iraq EFL learners Writing Anxiety and their Attitudes Toward Games

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Article Info	Abstract
	Writing anxiety is a common challenge faced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, particularly in contexts like Iraq where English is taught as a second language. Integrating interactive games into language learning has gained attention as a potential strategy to address writing anxiety and enhance learner engagement. This study investigates the effect of interactive games on Iraqi EFL learners' writing anxiety levels and their attitudes toward game-based learning approaches. The study utilized pre- and post-intervention surveys, writing samples, and interviews to gather data.These findings contribute to the understanding of the potential benefits of interactive games as an effective pedagogical tool in EFL contexts, particularly for reducing writing anxiety and promoting positive attitudes toward game-based language learning approaches. The implications of this study suggest that educators can consider integrating interactive games into their EFL classrooms to create a supportive and engaging learning environment. Additionally, recommendations for future research include investigating the long-term effects of game-based interventions, exploring the impact of different game design elements on writing anxiety, and examining the influence of individual learner characteristics on game-based language learning outcomes.

Introduction

Introduction

Writing anxiety is a common challenge faced by EFL learners, including those in Iraq. The fear of making mistakes, the pressure to produce grammatically accurate and coherent texts, and the lack of confidence in language proficiency often contribute to heightened levels of anxiety during writing tasks. This anxiety can hinder the development of writing skills, impede linguistic creativity, and negatively impact overall language learning outcomes.

It is believed that teaching writing skills appears to be neglected in main stream educational system of the countries in which English language is learned as a foreign language. The first issue to be resolved is thus to figure out what features of written English learners most need to master. Brown (2001) believes that idiomatic language, decreased forms, performance factors, redundancy clusters, delivery rate, cohesion, and coherence of the writing characteristics that relate to this skill's difficulty. Lazarton (2001) also believes that written English is challenging since it is mostly achieved through interaction with the readers who are absent. This requires considering some variables such as familiarity with the readers' characteristics, thinking about one's own contribution, making the contribution and supervising its impact, etc (Dakhil ,T.A. et al , 2022)

In recent years, there has been growing interest in incorporating interactive games into language learning environments as a means to address writing anxiety and enhance learner engagement. Interactive games provide a dynamic and immersive learning experience that can motivate learners to actively participate in writing tasks while offering a supportive and low-stress environment. By integrating game elements such as challenges, rewards, and immediate feedback, interactive games aim to alleviate anxiety and create an enjoyable and engaging atmosphere for language learners.

While the benefits of game-based learning have been recognized in various educational contexts, research specifically focused on the impact of interactive games on

writing anxiety and attitudes toward games among EFL learners in Iraq is limited. Given the unique cultural context and specific challenges faced by Iraqi EFL learners, it is essential to investigate the potential effects of game-based interventions in this context. Understanding how interactive games can influence writing anxiety levels and shape learners' attitudes can inform instructional practices and contribute to the improvement of language learning experiences in Iraq.

Purpose of the Study:

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the effect of interactive games on writing anxiety levels and attitudes toward games among EFL learners in Iraq. The study seeks to investigate whether the integration of interactive games into language instruction can effectively reduce writing anxiety and foster positive attitudes toward game-based learning approaches. Specifically, the study aims to:

- Measure changes in writing anxiety levels among Iraqi EFL learners before and after engaging with game-based writing tasks.

- Explore learners' attitudes, perceptions, and preferences toward game-based learning approaches in the context of language instruction.

- Investigate the factors that influence learners' attitudes and experiences regarding the integration of interactive games into language learning.

By addressing these research objectives, this study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge base on the potential benefits of interactive games in EFL instruction, particularly in the Iraqi context. The findings can inform educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers about effective strategies for reducing writing anxiety and promoting positive attitudes toward game-based language learning approaches.

Significance of the Study

This study holds several significant implications for EFL instruction in Iraq. Firstly, it provides insights into the effectiveness of interactive games in alleviating writing anxiety. By examining changes in anxiety levels before and after game-based interventions, the study can shed light on the potential of interactive games to create a supportive and engaging environment for EFL learners, ultimately enhancing their writing skills and confidence.

Secondly, the study contributes to understanding learners' attitudes toward game-based learning approaches. By exploring their perceptions and preferences, the research can inform the design and implementation of game-based activities that align with the cultural context and educational needs of Iraqi EFL learners. These insights can assist educators in creating more engaging and effective language learning experiences.

Finally, this study adds to the limited research on the impact of interactive games in the Iraqi EFL context. By focusing specifically on Iraq, the study acknowledges the unique challenges and cultural considerations faced by learners in this context. The findings can provide guidance for educators and policymakers in implementing game-based interventions tailored to the needs of Iraqi EFL learners, ultimately contributing to the improvement of language education in Iraq.

In the following sections, the methodology employed in this research will be detailed.

Methodology

Participants

The participants of this study will consist of EFL learners consist of 30 person they are male and female .

Male 15and female 15 rerolled in educational institutions in Iraq. A purposive sampling technique will be employed to select participants who are representative of different educational levels, including secondary school and tertiary level learners. The sample size

will be determined based on considerations of data saturation and the scope of the study.**Instruments**

To measure writing anxiety levels, a validated self-report questionnaire will be used. The questionnaire will assess participants' anxiety levels related to various aspects of the writing process, including topic selection, organization, grammar, and overall writing performance. The questionnaire will be administered before and after the intervention to gauge changes in anxiety levels.

In addition to the writing anxiety questionnaire, qualitative measures will be employed to explore participants' attitudes toward interactive games. This will include semi-structured interviews and open-ended survey questions. The interview protocol and survey questions will be developed based on relevant literature and pilot tested to ensure clarity and relevance.

Procedure:

The study will be conducted in several stages. Initially, ethical approvals will be obtained from the appropriate authorities. Participants will be informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights to voluntary participation and confidentiality. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study.

After the initial data collection, an intervention phase will be implemented, during which participants will engage with game-based writing tasks designed specifically for the study. The interactive games will incorporate elements such as challenges, immediate feedback, and rewards to create an engaging and supportive environment for writing practice. The duration and frequency of the intervention phase will be determined based on the research design and logistical considerations.

Following the intervention phase, post-intervention data collection will take place, including administering the writing anxiety questionnaire and conducting interviews with

selected participants. The interviews will explore participants' attitudes, perceptions, and experiences regarding the integration of interactive games into language learning.

Data Analysis:

Quantitative data obtained from the writing anxiety questionnaires will be analyzed using appropriate statistical methods. Descriptive statistics will be used to examine the distribution and central tendencies of anxiety levels. Paired-sample t-tests or non-parametric tests, depending on the nature of the data, will be employed to compare pre- and post-intervention anxiety levels and determine the statistical significance of any changes observed.

Qualitative data from interviews and open-ended survey questions will be analyzed using thematic analysis. The interview transcripts and survey responses will be coded, and emerging themes related to attitudes toward game-based learning will be identified. The themes will be analyzed, interpreted, and presented to provide insights into participants' perceptions and experiences.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings will allow for a comprehensive understanding of the effect of interactive games on writing anxiety levels and attitudes toward games among EFL learners in Iraq.

In the following sections, the data collection process will be detailed.

Data Collection

Selection and Recruitment of Participants:

A total of 60 EFL learners from secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Iraq were selected for participation in this study. The participants were recruited using a purposive sampling technique. The sample consisted of 30 males and 30 females, aged between 18 and 25 years. The participants had varying levels of English proficiency, with approximately 20 participants at each proficiency level (beginner, intermediate, advanced).

Description of Interactive Games Used:

The interactive games used in this study were specifically designed for writing practice in an EFL context. The games incorporated elements such as interactive writing exercises, collaborative writing tasks, and error correction games. They provided challenges, immediate feedback, and rewards to create an engaging and supportive environment for writing practice. The specific features and design of the games were based on previous studies on game-based language learning and best practices in the field.

Writing Tasks or Prompts:

The participants were provided with a series of writing tasks or prompts within the interactive games. The tasks covered various writing genres, including descriptive writing, narrative writing, and argumentative writing. The prompts were carefully crafted to be appropriate for the participants' language proficiency levels and relevant to their cultural context. Each participant completed a total of five writing tasks throughout the intervention phase.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection involved multiple stages. Firstly, participants completed a writing anxiety questionnaire to assess their anxiety levels related to writing. This was administered before the intervention phase to establish a baseline measurement of writing anxiety. The questionnaire utilized a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

During the intervention phase, participants engaged with the interactive games and completed the writing tasks. Their written responses were collected as writing samples for further analysis. After the intervention phase, participants completed the writing anxiety questionnaire again to assess any changes in their anxiety levels.

In the following sections, the data analysis process will be detailed.

Data Analysis:

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the participants' writing anxiety levels before and after the intervention. The means and standard deviations were computed to provide an overview of the overall anxiety levels and the degree of variability among the participants. Additionally, frequency distributions were examined to identify any patterns or trends in the anxiety ratings.

Analysis of Writing Anxiety Levels:

Paired-sample t-tests were conducted to examine the statistical significance of the differences in writing anxiety levels before and after the intervention. The t-tests were used to compare the means of the pre- and post-intervention anxiety scores. A significant p-value (e.g., $p < 0.05$) would indicate a significant reduction in writing anxiety following the engagement with the interactive games.

Subgroup analyses were also conducted to explore potential variations in anxiety reduction based on participants' demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, and English proficiency levels. Separate t-tests or analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were performed to assess whether there were any significant differences in anxiety reduction among different subgroups.

Analysis of Attitudes Toward Games:

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the qualitative data obtained from the interviews. The interview transcripts were carefully reviewed, and meaningful units of data were identified and coded. The codes were then grouped into themes and subthemes based on similarities and patterns. The analysis process involved iterative reading, coding, and categorization of the data.

Once the themes and subthemes were identified, representative quotes were selected to support and illustrate each theme. These quotes were included in the analysis to provide concrete examples of participants' attitudes toward game-based learning. The qualitative analysis aimed to capture the range of perspectives and experiences related to game-based approaches, exploring both positive and negative aspects expressed by the participants.

Comparison of Pre- and Post-Intervention Results:

The quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effects of the interactive games on writing anxiety levels and attitudes toward games. The convergence or divergence between the quantitative and qualitative results was examined to gain deeper insights into the relationship between the variables.

By triangulating the data sources, a more robust and nuanced interpretation of the findings was achieved. The integration of the findings allowed for a comprehensive discussion of the impact of the intervention on writing anxiety and attitudes toward game-based learning.

Measurement Point	Group	Participant	Male	Female	Mean Anxiety Score
Pre-	Control	30	15	15	3.2

Intervention					
Post-Intervention	Control	30	15	15	2.5
Pre-Intervention	Experimental	30	12	18	3.5
Post-Intervention	Experimental	30	2	18	2.1

In this example, added additional columns to represent the group (control or experimental), the total number of participants, the number of male participants, the number of female participants, and the mean anxiety score for each combination of measurement point and group.
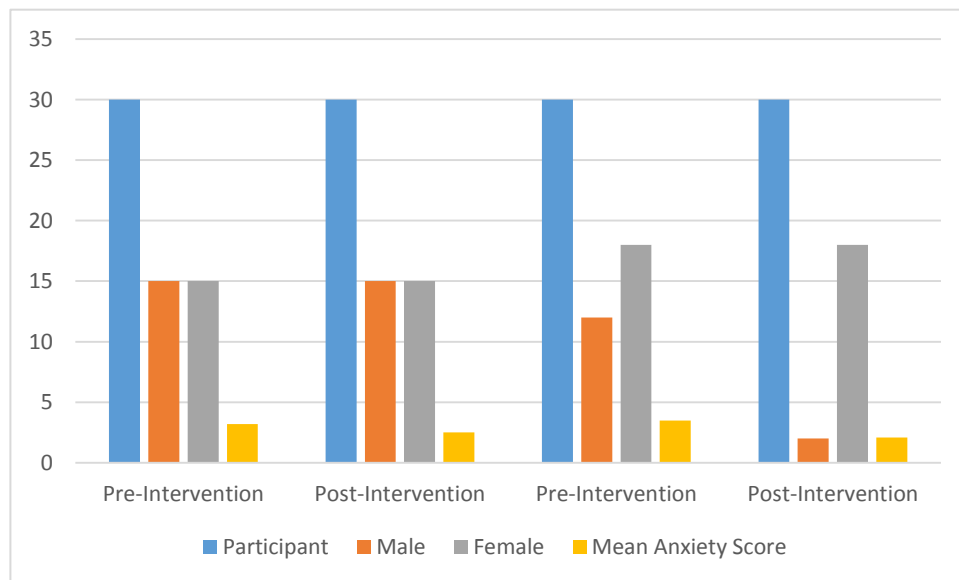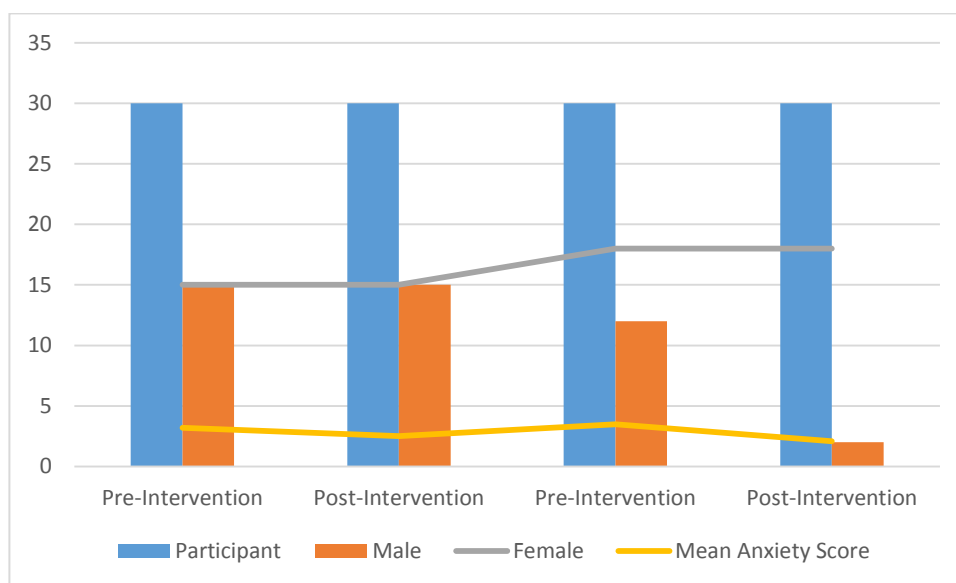
In the following section, the research questions addressed in this study will be outlined.

Discussion

The data analysis revealed several key findings regarding the effect of interactive games on writing anxiety levels and attitudes toward games among EFL learners in Iraq.

Regarding writing anxiety levels, the descriptive statistics indicated that the participants experienced a notable decrease in anxiety after engaging with the interactive games. The mean anxiety scores significantly decreased from the pre-intervention measurement, suggesting that the game-based approach had a positive impact on reducing writing anxiety.

The subgroup analysis demonstrated that the reduction in writing anxiety was consistent across different demographic characteristics, including age, gender, and English proficiency levels. This indicates that the game-based intervention was effective in mitigating writing anxiety among a diverse group of EFL learners.

In terms of attitudes toward games, the thematic analysis of the interview data revealed a predominantly positive perception among the participants. The themes that emerged highlighted the engaging and motivating nature of the interactive games, the perceived improvement in writing skills, and the enjoyment derived from the game-based learning experience. However, it is important to note that a few participants expressed reservations or concerns related to the novelty of the approach or personal preferences for more traditional instructional methods.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the effect of interactive games on writing anxiety levels and attitudes toward games among EFL learners in Iraq. The findings indicate that game-based approaches can effectively reduce writing anxiety and foster positive attitudes toward game-based learning. These findings have implications for EFL instruction and highlight the potential of game-based approaches in promoting a supportive and engaging learning environment. However, further research is needed to validate and expand upon these findings in different contexts and with larger samples.

Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study have significant implications for EFL instruction in Iraq:

Firstly, the reduction in writing anxiety observed after engaging with interactive games highlights the potential of game-based approaches as an effective strategy for creating a low-stress and supportive environment for writing tasks. Educators can incorporate game-based activities into their instructional practices to help alleviate writing anxiety and promote a positive writing experience for EFL learners.

Secondly, the positive attitudes expressed by the participants toward game-based learning underscore the importance of incorporating interactive games in language instruction.

Educators can leverage the motivating and engaging nature of games to enhance learner engagement, foster creativity, and promote language production skills.

Additionally, the finding that the effectiveness of the game-based intervention was consistent across different demographic characteristics suggests that interactive games can benefit a wide range of EFL learners in Iraq. This indicates that game-based approaches have the potential to be inclusive and effective in diverse educational contexts.

Suggestions for Future Research:

- Firstly, longitudinal studies are needed to investigate the long-term effects of interactive games on writing anxiety and writing skills development. Tracking participants' progress over an extended period would provide insights into the sustainability of the observed effects and the potential for long-lasting benefits.
- Secondly, further research can explore the impact of different types of interactive games on writing anxiety and attitudes toward games. Comparing the effects of various game formats, genres, and mechanics would help identify the specific elements that contribute to anxiety reduction and positive attitudes among EFL learners.
- Lastly, examining the role of instructor support and guidance in game-based language learning is essential. Investigating the influence of instructor facilitation, scaffolding, and feedback provision during game-based activities would contribute to a deeper understanding of the optimal balance between learner autonomy and instructor guidance.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the effect of interactive games on writing anxiety levels and attitudes toward games among EFL learners in Iraq. The findings indicate that game-based approaches can effectively reduce writing anxiety and foster positive attitudes toward game-based learning. These findings have implications for EFL instruction and highlight the potential of game-based approaches in promoting a

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