

# Digital Games and Tools in the Remote EFL Classroom

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## ABSTRACT

*In recent years, there has been a rekindled interest in gamification in English Language Teaching (ELT) and, it may be argued, Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) has triggered the use of interactive tools and games to engage students remotely. This paper will share the lessons learned from the design and implementation of digital tools and games in the online classes of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) during ERT in 2021 at a training college in Argentina for about 100 students. Considering the main insights and tenets in gamification, some theories and research on language learning and the three modes of interaction in distance education, different EFL games were designed using some of the latest digital tools available. The games were played synchronously in the online classes on Meet and the students' participation and engagement were quite positive. At the end of the term, an anonymous survey was administered to the students' opinions; the survey data, together with the teacher's experience, have shown that a few digital games and tools designed in an informed way using different modes of interaction can motivate students to learn, revise and enjoy learning English at a distance.*

**KEYWORDS:** digital tools, gamification, English as a foreign language (EFL), remote teaching, educational games.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a rekindled interest in gamification in ELT (English Language Teaching). Healey (2016) and Reinhardt (2017), two leading experts in the field of language games, argued that the use of technology has greatly contributed to this renowned interest. Technology has offered different types of games for language teaching over time, from text-based simulations and multimedia games on videodisc and CD-ROMs to massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) like World of Warcraft (WoW) (Healey, 2016). Moreover, online tools and applications like Padlet (2008), Wordwall (2008), Kahoot (2012), Mentimeter (2014) and Quizziz (2015) have also given teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) the opportunity to design mini games for their classes to tailor their learners' language needs and preferences.

It may be argued that ERT (Emergency Remote Teaching) (Hodges et al., 2020) has triggered the use of interactive tools and games. These unprecedented times have forced ESL/EFL teachers to find new ways to teach online and engage students remotely. As online games can be played synchronously or asynchronously through different devices, the use of games has become a great resource to teach and foster

interaction in times of online language learning through the pandemic at different educational levels.

Independent of the context of implementation, online games of various kinds offer ELT/EFL teachers and students the opportunity to interact, expand their creativity and learn the foreign language in a fun way. Research has shown different affordances of games for ELT (Reinhardt, 2017). One main potential is that games offer “sheltered contexts for controlled exposure to, and practice with, input that may be repetitive and redundant” (Reinhardt, 2017, p.206). This could be a great asset, especially to students who find difficulty in speaking in English to others, as it has been shown by the study conducted by Reinders and Wattana (2012 in Reinhardt, 2017). Another affordance is that games can foster learners’ collaboration leading to the development of linguistic and cultural competence (Reinhardt, 2017). This is particularly the case of MMORPGs where players of different backgrounds and language competence work together to win the game as they improve their language knowledge (Rama et al., 2012; Thorne, 2008 in Reinhardt, 2017). Reinhardt (2017) stated that another great potential is that games can help foster autonomous learning as students may play games to learn the language in an informal context as it has been shown in the study by Chik (2014 in Reinhardt, 2017), for example. Finally, “mediated game environments can afford development of lexical, genre, pragmatic, and narrative competences” (Reinhardt, 2017, p. 206). Many studies have shown the positive impact of games on language learning when pedagogical decisions guide the use of games.

This paper will share the findings and lessons learned from a small-scale action research project on digital tools and games in online classes during ERT in 2021 in an EFL course at a training college in Argentina. As it is a state-owned university with a large student-teacher ratio, classes in 2021 continued to be taught remotely and one of the main challenges was to keep students motivated and engaged despite the fatigue experienced due to long hours using videoconferencing systems and decoding messages (what has commonly been known as “zoom fatigue”). Most of the students of the EFL course of the project were between the ages of 18 to 20, they were native Spanish speakers and they were starting their first year at the university. The main aim of the online classes was to help students develop their proficiency in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at level B1. Considering the problem of digital technologies in low-resource contexts (Hockly, 2013) and that ERT marked what Oskoz and Smith (2020) referred to as “digital divide”, the live sessions were optional. For this reason, and in order to encourage students to attend and take part in these non-compulsory sessions, different digital games and tools were used considering the main insights and tenets in gamification (Healey, 2021; Reinhardt, 2017, 2019), some theories and research on language learning and the three modes of interaction in distance education (Moore, 1989). The games were played synchronously in the online classes on Meet and the students’ participation and engagement were quite positive. To observe and evaluate the effects of the action, at the end of the term, an anonymous and optional survey was administered to the students. The survey data, together with the participation and the number of students attending the optional live classes and the teacher’s experience, could be used to inform the design and

implementation of the digital games in future EFL face-to-face and online classes.

This project went through the classic stages of action research as first described by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988 in Burns 2009):

1. Planning: the action was planned considering some principles and insights gamified language learning;
2. Action: online tools and games were chosen, designed, developed and implemented in the live sessions to engage students;
3. Observation: data from the students participating in the project were collected to observe the effects of the action; and
4. Reflection: the teacher/researcher analyzed, evaluated and reflected upon the effects of the action and planned further action. Each stage of the project is described in detail in the different parts of this work.

## **2. Principles to design the digital games for the live sessions**

Considering the problems of digital divide, zoom fatigue and optional classes and planning the activities for the online classes for about 100 EFL students at a teacher/translator training college in Argentina, the following principles and insights in gamification, language learning methodology and interaction in distance education were considered.

### **2.1 Few key technologies**

Access to authoring tools, programs that allow users with no programming or design skills to produce electronic materials, offered EFL teachers the possibility of creating content tailored to suit their learners' needs (Dudeney & Hockly, 2012). However, as Stannard (2012) highlights, it is better to know a few technologies very well than to know little about a lot of resources. He argues that even simple-to-use digital tools require time and effort to master and may pose some problems when designing and implementing language activities. If teachers are not well-acquainted with the tools they are using, they may not know how to tackle the problems their students may encounter, leading to a discouraging experience with digital games. For these reasons, for the selection of the tools for the live sessions, only a handful of key technologies were chosen with different levels of difficulties and game elements.

### **2.2 Pedagogically mediated games**

One of the affordances of games in ELT is that they can foster the development of language competences and skills if they are properly pedagogically mediated (Reinhardt, 2017). As most of the games used for the online classes were vocabulary games, the design of the activities was informed by insights from research and model activities for vocabulary teaching in English (Lewis, 1997; Ur, 2012, 2021). Moreover, the tools to design the games were selected according to their potential and available features to design the vocabulary activities suggested in the literature.

### **2.3 The "broccoli-problem"**

When trying to design educational games with clear content and teaching

goal, teachers may fail to design games that are perceived as such by the learner-players. Habgood and Ainsworth (2011 in Reinhardt, 2017) have termed this problem the “chocolate-covered broccoli” as students perceive the games as long boring exercises and not as playful games. Players’ attitude is fundamental to design successful motivating games (Reinhardt, 2017) and this maxim was also considered for the games of the live sessions.

**2.4 Modes of interaction**

The games were also designed considering Moore’s (1989) three modes of interaction in distance education. Moore describes three categories of interactivity: student-instructor, student-student, and student-content. In student-instructor interaction, the instructional design and selection of learning activities influence the quality and quantity of interaction. For this kind of interaction, the way instructions are given is essential to achieve the expected outcome of the activities (or games). Student-student interaction “forces learners to construct or formulate an idea in a deeper sense” (Moore & Anderson, 2003, p. 134). Games that are collaborative in nature can help successfully achieve this outcome. Finally, student-content interaction is mediated through the use of media. With different game elements (such as levels, scores and badges), games can engage students in this kind of online interaction.

Varying the types of interactions in one lesson can help change the pace of the lesson and engage teachers and learners in different ways. This could be particularly useful in online lessons to avoid a lack of interest or “zoom fatigue”. Consequently, the modes of interaction prompted by the games were considered when implementing the games and planning the online classes (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Digital games for different modes of interaction

**3. Digital games for the live sessions**

Considering the above principles for the design of the online games, the following online free tools and games were selected and used to include games in the live sessions at the teacher/translator training college in Argentina.

### 3.1 Wheel of Names (<https://wheelofnames.com/>)

This random name picker is a free and easy-to-use tool. Originally intended to enter names, spin the wheel and pick a random winner, the wheel can be adapted for various vocabulary activities and games. There is not much research on the use and effect of the Wheel of Names or any spinning wheel in ELT. In an unpublished thesis, Sartika (2019) used spinning wheel media to foster speaking skills for storytelling in tenth-grade EFL students at a state senior high school in Indonesia. The 37 students in the experimental class scored higher on the post-speaking test than the 35 students in the control class. There is some research reporting on the use of the Wheel of Names to foster participation in educational contexts in general. Rosales and Torres (2021), for example, reported on the positive effects of using this digital tool and participation points to encourage participation in a synchronous nursing class in times of ERT. For this research, the students' names were written on the wheel so that randomly chosen students had to turn on the cameras and answer the nurse educator's questions.

In the live sessions at the training college in Argentina, the wheel was used to revise the meaning of keywords, complete collocations or work with prepositions (Fig. 2). The teacher shared the screen with the wheel, spun it and students had to type the answers in the chat box or use their microphones. It proved a great tool to foster teacher-student interaction in the live sessions and could be easily implemented in face-to-face classes as well.

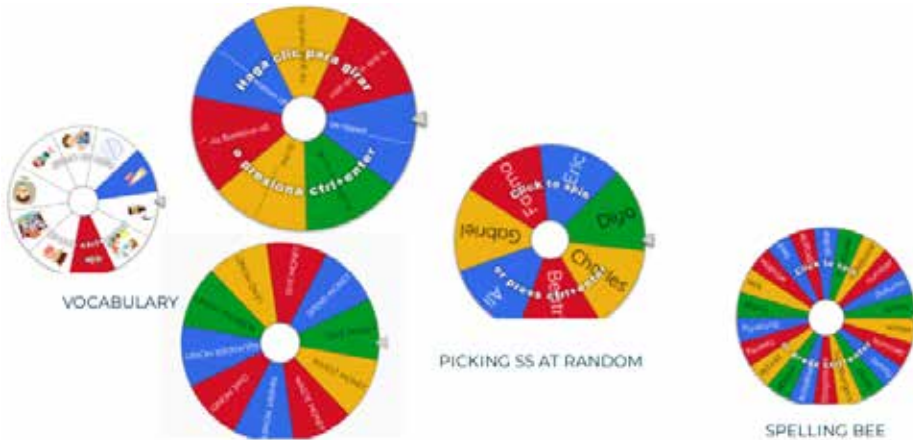


Figure 2. Vocabulary games with Wheel of Names

### 3.2 Wordwall (<https://wordwall.net/>)

Wordwall is a teaching resource that allows teachers to make customized activities and games through different templates. Different types of games fostering different modes of interaction can be played synchronously or asynchronously with Wordwall. One of the drawbacks of this tool is that there is no scoring system or leaderboard to see the winners when the games are played synchronously, but the game interface is really engaging and the tool is quite easy to use and implement.

Recently, many studies have been published on the use of this tool in ELT. Moorhouse and Kohnke (2022) studied the conditions to use Wordwall to create decontextualized vocabulary learning activities and foster vocabulary learning independently. Similarly, Pradini and Adnyayanti (2022) conducted a quantitative study to evaluate the effect of Wordwall on teaching nouns, verbs and adjectives to young learners of English in Indonesia. The results show that there was some improvement in the students' scores with the help of the online tool. Mazelin et al. (2022) investigated the positive impact of Wordwall on improving students' engagement in an online English class at a secondary school in Terengganu. Using a mixed research method, the authors concluded that this tool could not only help improve students' participation but also their understanding of the English language.

It is noted that in the live sessions at the School of Languages, Wordwall was used to create collocation games or warm-up vocabulary revision games and foster teacher-student interaction (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Collocation game with Wordwall

### 3.3 Tricider (<https://www.tricider.com/home>)

Tricider is an easy-to-use brainstorming and voting tool that allows users to share their views and make comments to other participants' posts.

Though there are no studies on the use of Tricider for ELT, this tool has great potential and can be used to develop different language skills. Cowie and Sakui (2013) mention Tricider as a great tool for motivating ESL/EFL students and fostering participation. Peachey (2016) states that Tricider is his favorite digital tool for doing online surveys, exploring the advantages and disadvantages of a class topic, gathering students' views on a subject and voting for the best idea. Peachey (2016) mentions that Tricider is simple, quick to use and implement and that students can get instant results. The only problem the author mentions is that the survey data could be difficult to analyze.

For the live sessions, Tricider was used to revise keywords and expressions related to food: students had to complete the Tricider with information on their recent breakfast and they voted for the best option (chocolate with mate, a typical Argentinean drink, was the most voted entry). Tricider was also used as a brainstorming tool for a writing assignment and as an ice breaker (students completed with their weekend activities) (Figure 4). As students might complete the survey anonymously or with a fictional name, Tricider was also used as a role-play activity: students had to answer a question using the names of the characters of a short story we were reading. This game fostered students' motivation and creativity and it was really enjoyable for teachers and students.



Figure 4. Uses of Tricider for ELT

### 3.4 Jamboard

This Google tool can be used to foster visual collaboration among users. Though there is no specific research on the use of Jamboard and ELT, some studies have shown that this Google tool is positively valued by students in different educational fields (Niladatika & Hassanuddin, 2021).

In the live sessions, the teacher shared the screen with the students, posted a question or prompt with a "sticky note" and then shared the link with the students so they could contribute with their answers in real-time. Jamboard was particularly useful for warming up activities to revise vocabulary learned in the previous lesson. As the "sticky notes" can be grouped and changed into different colors, Jamboard also proved a great tool for brainstorming ideas for writing assignments (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Jamboard and interactive vocabulary activities/games

### 3.5 Quizziz (<https://quizziz.com/>)

Quizziz is an educational application created in 2015 by Antik Gupta and Deepak Joy Cheenath that enables teachers to create a quiz or lesson. Within a quiz, teachers can opt for multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, draw, open-ended, poll and slide. The quiz can be played live or assigned for homework. Quizziz has a great game interface and many game elements such as a timer, background music, a leaderboard, “power-ups” to improve the score and a podium with the top winners.

Some recent studies report on the use and effectiveness of Quizziz in ELT with various results. Inayati and Wayolo (2022) investigated students’ engagement and learning outcomes with Quizziz at a junior high school in Indonesia. The case study reports that Quizziz aided engagement, participation and discipline though more studies should focus on the effect on learning outcomes. At a rural school in Malaysia, Jalani and Hashim (2020) conducted an experimental study using Quizziz to assess EFL students online. The results show that the experimental group increased engagement and showed better test scores than the control group. Various studies report on the positive attitude that students of English and students of other subject areas have when Quizziz is used in class (Alvarez et al., 2021; Fakhruddin & Nurhidayat, 2020).

In the live sessions, the vocabulary games with Quizziz were played live to foster interaction, motivation and competition. Multiple choice, T/F and gap-filling games were used to practice and revise words, collocations, idioms, phrasal verbs and fixed expressions (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Vocabulary games with Quizziz

### 3.6 Educaplay (<https://www.educaplay.com/>)

Educaplay is an educational games generator that allows teachers to create and access multimedia activities. Teachers can design and save multimedia activities, and create groups with students and colleagues. Moreover, it is possible to share the activities on Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams and export them to any virtual platform with SCROM or LTI like Moodle, Canvas or Blackboard. There are 16 types of activities available, and they range from common activities available on other platforms, like gap-filling, matching and multiple-choice/true-false quiz, to more unusual activities that are not available on other applications like riddle, map quiz, alphabet game, memory game, wordsearch puzzle, crossword and word and letter unscramble. The activities can be played live or asynchronously and they have many game elements like a scoring system, hints for help and a leaderboard.



In higher education, Educaplay is reported to be a useful tool in ELT. In Ecuador, Castillo-Cuesta (2020) conducted experimental research with EFL students at Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja. Educaplay was one of the tools used for 5 months and post-tests showed that the experimental group outperformed the control groups in the areas of vocabulary and grammar. In Argentina, Cad and Carrera (2021) used the tool to teach grammar and foster collaborative learning at the School of Languages, National University of Cordoba. Their descriptive study shows that Educaplay has great potential in these areas. In the online classes, the vocabulary activities designed with Educaplay were ABC games (Figure 7), memotests and crosswords.

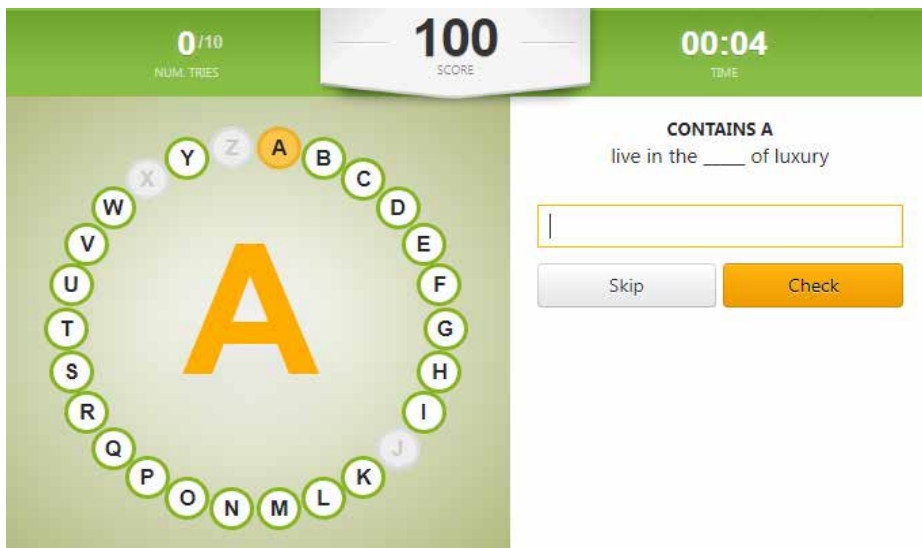


Figure 7. ABC game with Educaplay

#### 4. Students' reaction and feedback to the online games

To observe and evaluate the impact of the action, class notes and an anonymous survey were used to collect data. During the online sessions, the teacher recorded the number of students participating in the sessions and their comments in the chat box.

Though the live sessions were optional, about 60 students attended each lesson regularly and the numbers did not drop during the term. Students used the chat box occasionally to ask questions or contribute in the class but their participation increased when the online games took place. Students expressed their enjoyment through the chat (in English or Spanish or even through emojis) when the teacher mentioned that they were to play a game: "Siiiiii" "Get ready!". Their participation was also more dynamic when games were implemented, especially with live games such as Quizziz or Educaplay as students cheered their classmates or made comments on the questions or game difficulties: "Congrats to the winner" "Well done" "Oh miss that was tricky!" "Don't cheat!". Students also expressed their positive views on the use of games in the chat and they even mentioned that they were posting pictures of the games as Instagram stories.

At the end of the term, an informal survey was administered to the students and their opinions reflected what the teacher could notice when implementing the games. The survey was designed with Google Forms and administered through Meet. It consisted of one closed question where students had to rank the digital tools according to their preferences and open-ended questions about each individual: students had to name what they liked and did not like about each tool. Students were invited to participate anonymously in English or Spanish, their mother tongue, and 39 students participated. Following inductive analysis (Hatch, 2002), the data corresponding to the open questions was grouped into sets and the salient domains of each set, i.e. distinctive characteristics in the responses of the students, were identified.

Table 1 shows students' preferences to the games. Quizziz was the preferred game (96%), followed by Educaplay (96,2%) and Wheel of Names (90,2%).

Table 1. Students' preferred games

Wheel of Names	89,2 %
Wordwall	83,4%
Tricider	86,5%
Jamboard	87,8%
Quizziz	96%
Educaplay	96,2%

In their answers to the question "What do you like and what don't you like about Quizziz?", many students just answered "I love it!". It was possible, however, to identify some salient domains in their answers as well: "competition and interaction", "fun" and "good way to learn and practice". A few students mentioned that they really liked the adrenaline it generated though that was the reason why one student mentioned that he did not like Quizziz because it made him nervous.

"I loved that page because it was very exciting to compete with your partner and learn new expressions as well." (Student 1)

"I like it because it is funny and it motivates you to participate." (Student 2)

The comments about Educaplay were quite insightful as well. The two main themes among students' answers were "learning and revision of vocabulary" and "interaction with the classmates". Some students also mentioned "fun". As regards the negative aspects, surprisingly, many students mentioned that they did not like the time limit or the limited number of mistakes allowed in the games.

"It makes you think hard because you know that you have a time limit and also makes you see what vocabulary you have to study more. It's great for reviewing key vocabulary." (Student 3)

Wheel of Names ranked the third most preferred game. Some students agreed on the fact that this digital tool was useful for "vocabulary learning and revision" and it was "dynamic". One student mentioned that the random options were engaging. As for the aspects that students did not like about the Wheel of Names, two

characteristics were common in their answers: “short time to think of the answers” and “not being able to answer individually”.

“By far, this is my favourite digital tool because I enjoy the feeling of not knowing what expression will be until the wheel stops spinning!” (Student 4)

Many students made interesting comments on Jamboard, the fourth most preferred game. The main salient theme in the students’ answers was “sharing ideas”. Other recurrent themes were “brainstorming”, “class participation” and “learning about other classmates’ ideas”. Few students mentioned that “time-consuming” was the reason why they did not prefer this tool.

There were not many students’ comments on Tricider and Wordwall though it was possible to identify some common themes. Tricider was considered useful by some students for “sharing ideas” and “learning about other classmates’ ideas”. A few students mentioned that they found it hard to read all their classmates’ posts in Tricider. As regards Wordwall, some students mentioned that they liked the warm-up activities done with this tool. Some students mentioned that they preferred the games with the other tools better. Table 2 summarizes the main salient themes of each digital tool from the students’ answers.

Table 2. Students’ salient comments on the digital games

Digital game	Positive aspects	Negative aspects
Quizziz	competition and interaction vocabulary learning and practice fun easy to use adrenaline	nervousness
Educaplay	vocabulary learning and revision competition and interaction fun	limit of mistakes difficult
Wheel of Names	vocabulary learning and revision dynamic fun	short time
Jamboard	sharing ideas brainstorming seeing others’ ideas participation	Time-consuming
Tricider	sharing ideas brainstorming	difficult to read the posts
Wordwall	nice activity	not favorite

### 5. Discussion and implications

From the teachers’ class notes, it can be observed that the use of digital tools and games in online classes prompted participation and engagement. The comments in the chat box when games were implemented increased significantly, showing that students were more involved in the class behind the screen. The number of students

attending the live sessions did not decrease, and from the students' answers in the survey, it might be inferred that the use and combination of games fostering different modes of interaction in the same class (Moore, 1979) may have had some incidence in class attendance.

The survey data revealed some interesting points about the impact of the use of digital games in a university setting. The most preferred games by the students were Quizziz and Educaplay. Not surprisingly, these were the only two tools that offered live games where students were able to play synchronously and compete against their classmates. Both Quizziz and Educaplay display earned points, a leaderboard and the top winners. These game elements might have contributed to avoid the "chocolate-broccoli problem" (Reinhardt, 2017): students perceived the game as a game (and not as a language exercise). However, the use of digital tools with engaging game elements is not enough to make a game "fun". Certain aspects were also considered when designing the live games. Since students played with a time limit, the sentences/prompts were not long and the options given, if this was a T/F or multiple-choice activity, were clear and relevant. Moreover, the level of difficulty of each prompt was tailored according to the students' proficiency in the language; the prompts were not so easy that students lost interest, nor too difficult that made students feel discouraged to continue playing. Some students mentioned in their answers that the time limit or the number of attempts of the games designed with Educaplay was too short. Unfortunately, for some game types, Educaplay has some default options that cannot be altered. To avoid discouraging students, the level of difficulty of the options should be carefully considered, consequently.

Apart from "fun", a common theme among the students' answers was "vocabulary learning and practice". This reflects one of the main potentials or "affordances" of games, as described by Reinhardt (2017), namely, the possibility of offering sheltered forms of learning and practice. However, to foster learning, the design of the games should be pedagogically mediated (Reinhardt, 2017). As most of the games used for the online classes were vocabulary games, the design of the activities was informed by insights from research and model activities for vocabulary teaching in English (Lewis, 1997; Ur, 2012, 2021). In the survey, students mentioned that the Wheel of Names was useful for learning and revising vocabulary. This shows that some tools, despite their intended purpose, can be adapted to suit the students' needs and preferences. In fact, this type of random wheel is primarily intended to pick students' names randomly. There is so far no evidence in the literature showing other uses of the wheel. However, in the live sessions and to foster engagement and learning, the Wheel of Names was used to make students revise lexical items such as collocations, phrasal verbs, fixed expressions and prepositions. The survey data revealed that students enjoyed revising vocabulary randomly with the wheel and typing their answers in the chat box. The only negative aspect shown was that for some students, thinking of the right meaning or answer was time-consuming and they did not have enough time to reply as other students revealed the answers in the chat box. To avoid this, the teacher could give students some minutes before asking them all to share the answer.

The survey data showed that students enjoyed using Jamboard and Tricider to share, exchange and brainstorm ideas. Tricider is a brainstorming and voting tool and it proved engaging and fun for students at the university. The only problem mentioned by the students, and also in the literature (Peachey, 2017), is that it is difficult to analyze the data. This problem is incremented when Tricider is used by many students, as it was the case of the project, since a long list with more than 40 posts was displayed on the screen. Scrolling down, reading and voting for all the posts were perceived as discouraging by some students. To avoid this, for large classes, using more than one Tricider and dividing students into small groups could be instrumental. Unlike Tricider, Jamboard is not intended as a brainstorming tool. However, the experience with this visual collaboration tool in the live sessions showed that Jamboard could be easily adapted to foster brainstorming and the exchange of ideas. In the live sessions, the teacher posted a note in the centre of a Jamboard with a possible writing topic and students had to post notes with ideas. Then, with the help of the students, the teacher grouped and colored the notes according to main subthemes. In this way, students were able to read and analyze all the ideas and identify similar ones. In a university setting, where teaching academic paragraph writing and the importance of clear supporting ideas is paramount, using Jamboard in this way was very useful for remote teaching. The survey data also reflected this point: Jamboard was the fourth preferred tool mainly for its brainstorming potential.

Wordwall was not ranked as the preferred digital game among the students in the survey. However, it should be noted that this teaching resource was not fully used in the project. Only one of the various templates was used to design ice-breakers or vocabulary activities where all the students had to answer at the same time. Students did not have the chance to see the various customized activities Wordwall has and this could account for their lack of interest in the tool. Though Wordwall offers easy-to-use and customized game activities with an appealing interface, the main reason why it was not used in the live sessions was that it does not display a scoring system or a leaderboard to see the winners when the games are played synchronously.

## 6. Conclusions

The students' opinions gathered with the survey, together with the teacher's experience, showed that the use of games to teach and practice vocabulary in the online lessons was a rewarding experience. The experience of using games in the English class also showed some principles and practical ideas to consider for the design and implementation of digital games in future EFL face-to-face and online classes in university settings and other EFL educational contexts.

- We should not forget that digital tools and games are just that, tools to teach. We need to design the activities considering the teaching methods and approaches that guide our practices and we should also draw on our own creativity.

- We need to become familiar with the settings, modes, tool interface and possible options. Technical problems usually come up when implementing the activities, so we need to be confident enough to be able to sort them out (and enjoy using the games!)

- We need to take our time to discover the intended purpose of the tool and its possible potentials. With a bit of imagination, we may even exploit a tool in more than one way but it will be really difficult to try to force a tool to achieve a purpose that it was not originally designed for.

- We should try to avoid the “chocolate-broccoli problem” when designing games (Reinhardt, 2017). The game should be playful and be perceived as a game (not a test or an endless boring activity) by the students.

- It could be really useful to include in each of our sessions/classes games and activities that combine the three modes of interaction in distance education (Moore, 1989): teacher-student, student-student and student-tool.

The small-scale action research project also helped reflect on some strengths and weaknesses of the different digital games used in the live sessions at a university setting (Table 3). These suggestions could be followed when designing and implementing digital games in ELT in a university setting or other educational contexts.

Table 3. Summary of main points of the digital games used

Digital tool	Strengths	Weaknesses
Quizziz <a href="https://quizziz.com/">https://quizziz.com/</a>	There are different types of activities: multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, draw, open-ended, poll and slide. Games can be played live or assigned for homework. It has many game elements such as a timer, background music, a leaderboard, “power-ups” and a podium with the top winners.	There is a time limit to do the activities when played synchronously.
Educaplay <a href="https://www.educaplay.com/">https://www.educaplay.com/</a>	There are “challenges” to play with the class synchronously. This teacher-friendly tool comes with a tutorial and “help” option to test and improve the activity. The top 10 results are displayed for each activity.	The default time limit and the number of attempts with some types of activities could be discouraging.
Wheel of Names <a href="https://wheelofnames.com/">https://wheelofnames.com/</a>	It is a random name picker. Easy to use. The wheel can be adapted for various vocabulary activities.	All the students have to respond to the prompt in the wheel at the same time.

Digital tool	Strengths	Weaknesses
Jamboard	<p>This Google tool is used to foster visual collaboration among users.</p> <p>It can be used to share, interchange and brainstorm for ideas.</p> <p>It is a very good tool to foster pre-writing techniques.</p>	<p>Using and grouping the notes can be time-consuming and demanding for the teacher.</p>
<p>Tricider</p> <p><a href="https://www.tricider.com/home">https://www.tricider.com/home</a></p>	<p>It is an easy-to-use brainstorming and voting tool.</p> <p>It allows users to share their views and make comments to other participants' posts.</p> <p>It can be used to share, interchange and brainstorm for ideas.</p> <p>It is a very good tool to foster pre-writing techniques.</p>	<p>The survey data could be difficult to analyze, especially if Tricider is used in large classes.</p>
<p>Wordwall</p> <p><a href="https://wordwall.net/">https://wordwall.net/</a></p>	<p>It allows teachers to make customized activities and games through different templates.</p> <p>It has a very good game-like interface with different game elements.</p> <p>Different types of games fostering different modes of interaction can be played synchronously or asynchronously.</p>	<p>There is not a scoring system or a leaderboard to see the winners when the games are played synchronously.</p>

There are still many lessons to learn and each new experience and research project with digital games in the ESL/EFL class will give us new principles and ideas to consider. Probably ERT has indeed fostered the use of games in the remote class and, hopefully, the use of digital tools and games will be part of our future practices and lesson plans with a new technological perspective in mind.

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