

Improving English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Students' Motivation in Blended Learning

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ARTICLE INFO

Kata Kunci: Blended Learning, Student Motivation, Classroom Action Research, Quizizz

Received : 1 November

Revised : 19 December

Accepted: 20 January

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ABSTRACT

Siregar, Dio Ilham Prasetyo. Improving English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Students' Motivation in Blended Learning. Thesis. Yogyakarta. Faculty of Language, Art and Cultures, Yogyakarta State University. This study aims: (1) examine how blended learning is being used in teaching writing of EFL Hamong Putera junior high school setting. (2) to determine the ways in which blended learning can raise students' motivation in teaching writing of EFL Hamong Putera junior high school. The research design includes 2 cycles, each comprising four phases: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The study involved 18 ninth-grade students over 2 cycles. Data collection methods included observations, interviews, and questionnaires, with data analyzed using a quantitative descriptive approach. The qualitative findings from observations and interviews revealed significant improvements in EFL student motivation within a blended learning environment

INTRODUCTION

To address the identified gap and explore the various potential applications of blended learning in Indonesian schools, this study was conducted to examine its improving on students' motivation, particularly in teaching English through English material. With concerns about the future development of blended learning among Indonesian teachers, the research aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed instructional approach, identify possible challenges for future improvement, and highlight its potential to enhance the existing curriculum. This study represents one of the pioneering efforts in implementing blended learning instruction within the Indonesian education system.

Based on previous observations at Hamong Putera Junior High School in Yogyakarta, the observation was found that English teachers had been using blended learning methods for approximately a year, especially in English language teaching. This approach was seen as a more flexible option compared to purely online learning, as it allows for easier teaching and learning across different locations. However, blended learning is still a relatively new method, and not all teachers have incorporated it into their teaching practices. What sets this research apart from previous studies is its particular focus on understanding students' motivation to learn English through blended learning. Based on the above information, the researcher plans to conduct a study titled "Improving English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Students' Motivation in Blended Learning." The research questions are based on the previous description: How is Blended Learning applied in teaching writing of EFL Hamong Putera junior high school? In what ways does blended learning improve students' motivation in teaching writing of EFL Hamong Putera junior high school?

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Theoretical Review

1. Motivation

a. Definition of Motivation: According to (Uno, 2012) Motivation is a drive that exists within a person to try to make better behavioral changes in meeting his needs. Opinion (Djamarah, 2008) motivation is a drive that changes energy within a person into a real form of activity to achieve goals. According to the views of the aforementioned motivation specialists, motivation is an internal drive or inspiration to accomplish objectives.

b. Students' Motivation Theory in the Context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL): The study identified nine types of motivation and found a significant correlation between language grades and achievement. Similarly, a study by (Al-Tamimi, A., & Shuib, 2009) identified three types of motivation: instrumental, integrative, and personal motivation. Both studies concentrated on low-achieving English students.

2. Blended Learning

a. Definition of Blended Learning: Blended learning is an instructional approach that reduces expenses for both education and teaching since students can avoid commuting to school and can finish their assignments online. This method integrates the e-learning system with traditional or in-person teaching methods (Rooney, 2003). From these viewpoints, it can be concluded that blended learning is a model that combines traditional education with online elements, utilizing media and tools within the e-learning environment to achieve educational objectives.

b. Blended Learning Theory in the Context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL): Key considerations for its implementation include teachers' ability to use both learning models effectively, their willingness to adapt to digital technology advancements, the availability of ICT resources at universities, flexibility in learning schedules, and students' readiness to manage the responsibilities of both learning models (Albiladi, W. S., & Alshareef, 2019). If all parties are willing to cooperate, this need is not extremely difficult to meet.

B. Conceptual Framework

In the execution of the educational process, various methods and media are essential for learning. Learning methods are understood as distinct approaches to achieve specific educational outcomes under varying circumstances. These methods are referred to as strategies that can be applied in particular situations to reach the intended learning results. Additionally, these methods are known as learning strategies. The variables related to learning methods or strategies are crucial for the presence of effective learning. Since condition variables and objective variables are fixed and must be accepted as given, they should be used as a foundation for action. The only available option is to adjust the variables of learning methods to accomplish the desired educational results. The Quizizz learning model focuses on actively engaging students in the educational process. This engagement becomes evident when students interact, provide feedback, or teach their peers. Considering the benefits of the Quizizz learning model, which fosters student activity and creativity, learners can take greater responsibility for their educational journey.

METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

In this study, the researcher will use Classroom Action Research (CAR) designed by Kemmis and McTaggart (Cohen et al., 2000, p.229) Their design consisted of two cycles with four phases in each period, such as planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The figure below is the cycle of the research for this study:

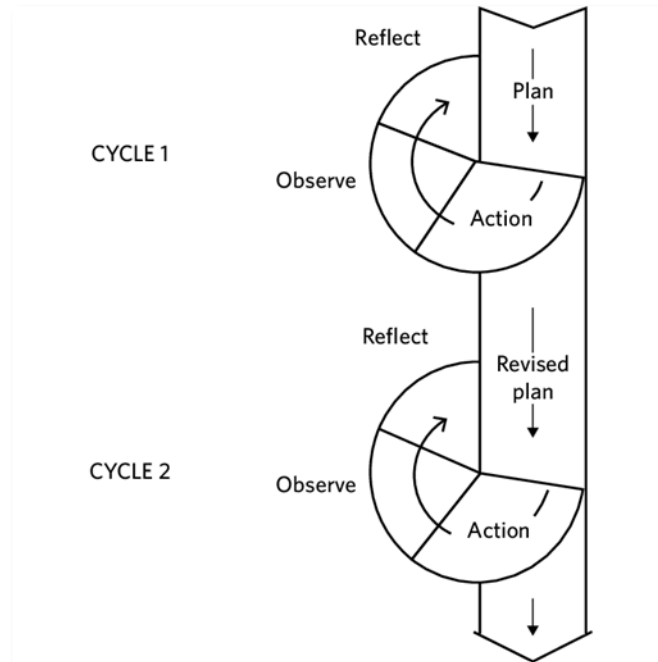


Figure 1. Classroom Action Research Designed by Kemmis and McTaggart

In the class action research, there are 4 phases that will be implemented for this study. The phases are:

1. **Planning:** In the planning stage, the researcher will create a lesson plan applied during the learning session. The researcher will discuss it with the English teacher by looking into a syllabus of English lessons. The researcher also will modify the original plan or idea in this preparation.
2. **Acting:** In this phase, the researcher will carry out the planning that has been done before this step. He will begin to put the plans into action, introduce the methods for collecting the data that involve observation and description of the situation, including the participants. Through the work, the process validity has been met by examining the data and identifying whether the students can continue learning during the process or not.
3. **Observing:** In this step, the researcher will observe the students' learning activities and motivation in the classroom. The researcher tries to make the data became more sensible by preparing the data from the qualitative stage. The researcher also seeks to ensure the trustworthiness of the data from this observation.

4. Reflecting: While doing the reflection, the researcher will evaluate all of the process in the research. The researcher and the teacher will discuss whether this action has negative or positive impacts on students' motivation by looking at the indicators of achievement in learning English through blended learning.

B. Data Analysis Technique

The qualitative data in this research will be presented in descriptive form, utilizing observation, field notes, and interview stages. As outlined by (Miles, Mathew B., 1994), the process of analyzing qualitative data involves three key steps:

1. Data Reduction: Involves selecting, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming raw data collected in the field. This process occurs continuously throughout the research, beginning during data collection and continuing until the final report is prepared. Researchers may summarize, code, cluster, score, or create memos to manage the data. The goal of data reduction is to clarify, categorize, and organize the information, removing unnecessary elements to facilitate drawing conclusions and verifying findings.

2. Data Display: Involves organizing and presenting information in a structured manner to support the analysis process. (Miles, Mathew B., 1994) emphasize the importance of presenting data in forms such as matrices, graphs, networks, or diagrams. Proper data display allows researchers to assess the findings, identify patterns, and refine their conclusions or continue their analysis.

3. Drawing Conclusions and Verification: Drawing conclusions is an integral part of the analysis process. Verification ensures that conclusions are accurate, relevant, and valid. This step involves reviewing field notes, conducting thorough examinations, and engaging in discussions with colleagues to confirm or refine findings. New data that emerge must also be checked for accuracy and relevance. Conclusions are developed throughout the research process but must be tested for reliability and accountability to ensure validity.

C. Trustworthiness

Triangulation will be employed to ensure the validity of the research findings. (Cresswell, 2012) describes triangulation as a technique to enhance the reliability of data by utilizing multiple data collection methods, such as observations and interviews, from various sources of qualitative data. Similarly, (Imam, 2013) highlights that triangulation serves to strengthen the trustworthiness and consistency of data by enabling researchers to verify or compare findings from different methods, such as observations and interviews. The purpose of triangulation is to deepen the researchers' understanding of the data and the phenomena under investigation, as gaining a thorough comprehension of the event being studied is a key objective in qualitative research. By applying triangulation, researchers can draw conclusions that are both robust and credible.

RESULT

1. Reconnaissance

a. Identification Problem from Interview: Preliminary interviews were carried out to assess the overall conditions of teachers, students, and classroom environments, with a particular focus on the English learning process. These interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format on July 29, 2024, from 11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. The researcher posed a set of 10 questions to the teachers during this session. The questions focused on evaluating the state of the English classroom using the blended learning method and its influence on students' English skills. They also explored the challenges students faced in developing their English proficiency and examined the materials and strategies employed by the teacher prior to implementing Classroom Action Research (CAR) to address students' difficulties in English lessons.

b. Identification Problem from Observation: Observations were conducted to examine the teaching and learning process of English writing activities prior to implementing the planned intervention. These observations involved ninth-grade students at Hamong Putera Junior High School, Yogyakarta, during the 2024/2025 academic year. A total of 18 students participated, with observations taking place on July 31, 2024, from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. The data were gathered using a classroom observation checklist and field notes.

2. The Implementation of Classroom Action Research (CAR)

Description of Cycle 1

a. Planning: During the planning phase, the researcher developed several lesson plans to guide the teaching and learning process. Materials and exercises were carefully selected based on the ninth-grade junior high school syllabus. The researcher also prepared instructional media to support the research objective of enhancing students' motivation to learn English.

b. Acting : First Meeting: Before starting the research, the researcher planned the activities for Cycle 1. On July 29, the first meeting was dedicated to interviewing ninth-grade English teachers to gather preliminary data. The researcher visited the school to introduce herself, submit a research permit letter to the principal, and conduct a 45-minute interview with the English teacher from 12:00 to 12:45 PM.

Second Meeting: On July 31, during the second meeting, the researcher asked the English teacher to introduce her to the students and distribute questionnaires. These questionnaires were administered twice: as an initial survey in Cycle 1 and as a concluding survey in Cycle 2. After collecting the responses, the researcher introduced the Quizizz platform as a teaching and learning tool. Additionally, the researcher prepared a pre-test using Quizizz to assess student learning outcomes before and after the intervention.

c. Observing: At the first meeting in Cycle 1, many students lacked confidence, hesitating to answer questions related to the day's material. They appeared unmotivated and fatigued, as English was the last subject of the day. While the teacher delivered the lesson, several students were distracted, chatting with peers or engaging in non-lesson-related activities. Although a few students took notes, many did not pay attention to the teacher's explanations. However, after

introducing Quizizz, about half of the students demonstrated increased enthusiasm during the learning process.

At the second meeting, noticeable improvements were observed. Students showed greater interest in learning and were better prepared, having completed and submitted their homework. They displayed curiosity about Quizizz and felt more confident participating in the lessons. More students were active compared to the first meeting, as evidenced by their willingness to speak in front of the class and ask questions about the material. Some even requested permission to take photos of the lesson to aid their understanding. Their active and enthusiastic contributions created a collaborative learning environment.

d. Reflecting: At the end of Cycle 1, a critical component of the assessment process involved administering a pre-test on August 7, 2024, followed by a post-test on August 28, 2024. These assessments were essential for evaluating the effectiveness of the strategies and interventions implemented to improve students' motivation. Designed to align with the learning objectives and content covered in Cycle 1, the tests assessed students' progress and growth in motivation for learning English. The detailed results provide a comprehensive view of students' performance during Cycle 1.

Table 1. Comprehensive View of Students' Performance During Cycle 1

No	Students Participants	Cycle 1	
		Pre-test Score	Post-test Score
1	Student 1	75	85
2	Student 2	70	90
3	Student 3	75	90
4	Student 4	70	90
5	Student 5	70	85
6	Student 6	80	85
7	Student 7	75	95
8	Student 8	80	95
9	Student 9	70	90
10	Student 10	80	95
11	Student 11	70	85
12	Student 12	70	85
13	Student 13	80	90
14	Student 14	80	90
15	Student 15	75	85
16	Student 16	80	95
17	Student 17	75	95
18	Student 18	75	95

The test results from Cycle 1 demonstrated notable improvements in student motivation, as reflected in their enhanced quiz performance. The categorization of scores highlighted areas of growth in student understanding, serving as a valuable resource for identifying successes and pinpointing opportunities to further develop student potential in future cycles. Beyond providing a quantitative measure of knowledge, the scores offered qualitative insights into the effectiveness of the instructional strategies employed.

Description of Cycle 2

a. Planning: Cycle 2 was conducted over three learning sessions in ninth-grade students using the blended learning method and focusing on report text material. The researcher implemented Cycle 2 in September 2024, aiming to enhance student learning outcomes through the blended learning approach with Quizizz as the learning medium.

b. Acting: First Meeting: The first meeting of Cycle 2 took place on September 4, 2024. Upon entering the classroom, the researcher noticed some positive changes. The students appeared prepared for the lesson, with several practicing English through conversation, and some already had their books open on their desks. The researcher began by greeting the students, taking attendance, and reviewing the previous material.

Second Meeting: On September 11 2024, Since no students asked questions, the teacher began the lesson by presenting the report text material using a PowerPoint displayed on the projector. While showing an example of a report text, the teacher invited several students to practice and analyze the sentence structure of the text together. During the explanation, many students actively engaged by paying attention, taking notes, capturing slides with their phones, or requesting a copy of the material to save on their flash drives.

c. Observing: According to the observations, the researcher noted that the ninth grade students' learning process had significantly improved compared to cycle 1. This improvement was evident in their motivation and persistence in classroom activities. At the first meeting of cycle 2, many students demonstrated increased self-confidence as they had practiced speaking English with peers or teachers and followed the material effectively. They also showed an improved ability to comprehend complex sentences given by the teacher.

d. Reflecting: The post-test in Cycle 2 represented a pivotal moment for evaluating the pedagogical outcomes of the intervention. It summarized the cumulative effects of using Quizizz, assessing students' retention and comprehension of the material. This evaluation offered valuable insights into the effectiveness of Quizizz as an interactive and engaging learning tool for enhancing motivation in English language education. The results demonstrated how Quizizz contributed to improving students' abilities and sustaining their motivation throughout the sessions. Key findings from this post-test are outlined below:

Table 1. The Results Demonstrated How Quizizz Contributed to Improving Students' Abilities And Sustaining Their Motivation Throughout the Sessions

No	Student Participants	Cycle 2
		Post-test Score
1	Student 1	100
2	Student 2	100
3	Student 3	100
4	Student 4	100
5	Student 5	100
6	Student 6	100
7	Student 7	93
8	Student 8	93
9	Student 9	93
10	Student 10	93
11	Student 11	93
12	Student 12	93
13	Student 13	80
14	Student 14	80
15	Student 15	80
16	Student 16	80
17	Student 17	80
18	Student 18	80

The results of the second post-test showed significant improvement in students' performance on Quizizz, reflecting progress compared to the initial post-test. The score classifications highlighted advancements in comprehension, providing educators with valuable insights into student achievements and areas for further improvement. Beyond measuring knowledge, the scores served as qualitative evidence of the success of the instructional strategies used.

3. Description of Implementation Using Quizizz Media

Following the implementation of the action, the researcher compiled and presented the data on student learning outcomes from cycle 1, which utilized the blended learning method with Quizizz as the learning media. The results are detailed below.

a. The Result of the Teacher's Interview: The researcher conducted an interview with a ninth-grade English teacher in the teacher's office before class began. During the interview, the researcher asked the questions to gain insight into the

teacher's views on using blended learning to enhance student motivation. The first question was about the teacher's opinion on the implementation of blended learning, particularly in English lessons. The teacher responded that online learning at the school was not ideal, as it relied solely on WhatsApp during the pandemic.

The second question explored when the teacher began teaching during the school's implementation of online learning. The teacher explained that the school faced significant challenges at the start of the pandemic. Lessons were limited to material summaries and assignments shared via WhatsApp groups. While teachers attempted to engage with students through discussions and casual communication, socioeconomic factors created barriers. Many students came from lower-middle-class families, and their parents often struggled to provide educational support due to their own limited education. Assignments involving tools like Canva or video creation were particularly challenging, as not all students could complete them.

b. The Result of Students' Interview

In addition to interviewing the teacher, the researcher also conducted interviews with the students to gather data and understand their opinions and experiences while using Quizizz in the classroom. These interviews took place during class, involving the same students who had been consulted for data before the research began. The findings from the student interviews are as follows:

1. The Influence of Quizizz on Students' Motivation to Learn English: The students demonstrated their enthusiasm and engagement, showing increased passion for learning English. All participants agreed that their motivation improved when the teacher incorporated Quizizz into the teaching and learning process. This conclusion is supported by the students' interview responses, as detailed below:

Student 1: "Using Quizizz really boosts your motivation! It's exciting when you can answer correctly, the material becomes easier to understand, and you even get rewards, which definitely motivates you to study more."

2. Enhancing Student Motivation Through the Use of Quizizz

This study explores ways to boost student motivation by incorporating Quizizz. To collect the data, the researcher analyzed it by categorizing factors such as students' self-confidence, their attitudes toward school, their focus on learning, their planning and monitoring skills, and their persistence.

a) Student Confidence: According to (Brophy, 2004), fostering and maintaining students' confidence as learners requires teachers to provide motivational support, which can include strategies like goal setting and performance evaluation. Quizizz integrates these strategies, helping students build confidence as they engage in classroom activities. (Garris, R., Ahlers, R., & Driskell, 2002) also highlighted that Quizizz creates a practice environment where students can explore and learn without the fear of real-world consequences, such as disappointment.

In this study, ninth-grade students actively participated in English lessons, practicing together without hesitation or needing to observe others first. Many students were willing to try and answer questions posed by the teacher without fear. The students agreed that Quizizz significantly boosted their confidence in learning English, as reflected in their statements:

Student 1: "Yes, I feel very confident because using the game makes everything enjoyable. I'm not afraid to answer or make mistakes, so we can improve a lot through the game." (Student 1).

b) Students' Perspectives on English and Academic Performance: This engagement fostered a stronger motivation to learn English, aligning with (Imron, 2011) assertion that meaningfulness is a key principle of student motivation. Many students expressed how their perception of English had evolved:

Student 4: "It's important and enjoyable because Quizizz is so engaging. I've learned a lot of new material, and it's exciting. Quizizz motivates me to keep learning, making English both important and fun."

c) The Students' Learning Focus: (Garris, R., Ahlers, R., & Driskell, 2002) highlight that feedback can boost students' motivation by encouraging them to persist, concentrate, and dedicate more effort to their tasks. As a result, the number of focused students has increased compared to earlier observations, as reflected in their interview responses shared below:

Student 1: "I feel more focused when learning through games. Treating it as a game doesn't make it less productive; instead, it enhances focus. Using games in English lessons draws us deeper into the practice, making it engaging and rewarding. The rewards motivate us to participate more actively."

d) The Students' Planning and Monitoring: During the implementation of cycles 1 and 2, students' attitudes showed noticeable improvement. Additionally, students appeared more prepared before entering the class, as reflected in their comments during subsequent interviews:

Student 2: "After you started teaching here, my friends and I began studying right away, like memorizing the material. For instance, when there are games or quizzes on Quizizz, we often get prizes if we win, which makes us more excited and motivated."

e) The Students' Persistence: During the implementation of cycles 1 and 2, Quizizz games demonstrated a greater impact on students' persistence compared to traditional classroom methods. According to interview responses, students noted the differences they experienced, as highlighted below:

Student 5: "In my opinion, using Quizizz is definitely not boring. It also helps all my classmates stay more consistent and engaged in learning English."

DISCUSSION

1. Strategies to Enhance Students' Motivation

Game-based media, in particular, has emerged as a powerful tool to enrich the learning process. Educators are encouraged to adopt innovative methods that blend enjoyable elements, diverse materials, and technology to foster a more engaging English language learning environment. Games, as a medium, enhance student participation by incorporating game mechanics into the learning process, thereby fostering motivation to learn (Lopez & Tucker, 2019). This approach aligns with 21st-century education goals, which prioritize critical thinking and enjoyable learning experiences (Groening & Binnewies, 2019). Platforms like Quizizz offer a practical solution by enabling collaborative review of all questions while addressing the sense of isolation often felt during individual gameplay, as noted by Medvedovska et al. (2016).

The decision to integrate Quizizz into English language learning stemmed from students' expressed preferences for technology-driven, interactive experiences. Quizizz aligns with these preferences by serving as an engaging platform that supports both interactive learning and curriculum assessment. Furthermore, educators benefit from its user-friendly design, which facilitates evaluation of students' language proficiency and comprehension (Baeta Bury, 2007). With its interactive features, including quizzes and games, Quizizz not only satisfies the demand for dynamic and fun learning but also provides an effective means to enhance the educational process.

2. Utilizing Quizizz to Boost Student Motivation

Initially, assessments revealed low performance levels, prompting the integration of Quizizz into the curriculum. However, the transition required students to adapt to the platform's game-based format and interactive features, presenting a learning curve for those unfamiliar with it. During this adjustment period, educators identified specific challenges students faced, enabling targeted support to build their proficiency and confidence. Over time, as students became more comfortable with Quizizz, active engagement increased. In Cycle 1, this resulted in notable improvements. As Boulden et al. (2017) demonstrated, Quizizz effectively enhances vocabulary learning by capturing students' interest and encouraging participation.

Building on this insight, Cycle 2 was strategically designed to incorporate adaptive approaches targeting specific areas for improvement identified from the post-test analysis of Cycle 1. The implementation featured interactive sessions using Quizizz, fostering a dynamic and participatory learning environment. Post-test results from Cycle 2 demonstrated further increases in student motivation, confirming Quizizz's continued positive impact on their linguistic abilities.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The purpose of this study is to explore the implementation of blended learning in the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in junior high schools. The research aimed to address a number of important questions: 1. How is Blended Learning implemented in EFL Junior High School context? 2. In what ways does blended learning improve students' motivation in EFL Junior High School context? 3. Is there any influence of blended learning towards junior high school students' motivation?

The study's findings reveal that blended learning has a positive impact on the motivation of EFL students in several ways. It improves student engagement and participation by combining online and in-person instruction, providing flexibility and fostering interactive learning experiences. Second, as blended learning enables learners to track their own progress and learn at their own speed, it fosters increased autonomy and self-management. This promotes a sense of control and responsibility regarding their educational journey. Third, when students can tailor their learning experiences with adaptive feedback, they feel encouraged to meet their specific educational needs, significantly boosting their motivation.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations, so it is necessary to carry out further research related to the topic of Improving English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Students' Motivation in order to improve this research and add insight to readers.

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