



EXPLORING TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE USE OF GAMES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AT SMPN 1 WARU

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Abstract:

This study aims to find out teachers' perspectives on using games in English learning at SMPN 1 Waru, Sidoarjo. Using a descriptive qualitative design, the data collected from questionnaires and interviews of the 7th-grade English teachers are analyzed. The findings of this study show that the teachers view that the use of games in English learning can give a new learning impression to students because the presence of the game can affect their learning style. The presence of games in the midst of English language learning can address the misconception that language acquisition is primarily based on reading textbooks. Of course, some challenges have also been felt, such as the presence of games for the first time in the midst of learning English gives a sense of lack of excitement when students are first introduced to one type of game, but over time, there must be a competitive spirit and a great sense of enthusiasm. In addition, some problems, such as using digital games and the need for strict supervision during running language games, so as not to become a boomerang for the teacher.

Keywords: *Game-Based Learning, Learning Media, Teacher's Perspective*

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning a language requires sustained effort and cannot be achieved quickly. However, games can accelerate and reinforce the process in an engaging and challenging way. The combination of effort and entertainment through games can create a more productive and efficient learning environment. Teacher's perspectives on language learning and the use of games are closely intertwined. Educators recognize that integrating games into the learning process not only increases student engagement but also reinforces the acquisition of language skills. Through carefully designed games, teachers can create an environment where students feel challenged and entertained, thus making the learning experience more dynamic and effective. This combination of educational objectives and game elements allows teachers to harness the power of games to keep students more engaged in their language learning journey.

Becoming proficient in English is a long process (Kristianto, 2016), especially for Indonesian students learning English, which is not their mother tongue or second language. They often find learning English challenging as it requires significant effort to understand. Therefore, the role of teachers becomes an important component in learner's language acquisition, especially at the junior high school level (Maria et al., 2019). Their responsibility is more than just giving instruction. They must apply various strategies and methods to facilitate effective learning. This includes understanding the diverse needs of their students and adapting teaching methods accordingly. Other efforts made by educators, such as incorporating interactive activities, multimedia resources, and technology, can make learning more interesting and practical for students. Moreover, education in Indonesia continues to improve the quality of the learning process by introducing a new curriculum called the "Merdeka Curriculum (Munir et al., 2023). The independent curriculum enables learning that encourages freedom of



thought, innovation, and independent and creative learning. Teachers are given the freedom to customize learning materials and learning. Teachers are given the freedom to customize learning materials and learning outcomes according to the characteristics and learning environment of students (Nafi'ah et al., 2023). This implies that teacher's perceptions should enable them to recognize and utilize the surrounding resources effectively, especially in the context of English language learning. Many have the misconception that language learning is traditionally seen as a serious task with no room for fun and play; in other words, learning must always be serious. In fact, games can be one of the important tools that language teachers can use to make the classroom more interesting and fun. By incorporating these fun elements, language learning will become more effective and engaging (Maria et al., 2019), thus helping beginners understand the sounds, rhythms, and meanings in a foreign language in an easier way. It can be concluded that games not only make learning more fun but also significantly enhance the teaching and learning experience (Ben El Moudden, 2021).

Nowadays, games have many roles to play in children's development. Apart from improving their understanding of grammar and vocabulary (Andriani et al., 2024), games also act as a catalyst for the development of important social and communicative skills. When children engage in games, they not only focus on linguistic aspects but also learn the importance of cooperation and fair play. In line with the study conducted by Wang and Zhao (2020), in addition, using games can make children more motivated, help them acquire more vocabulary, and reduce the anxiety that may arise due to pressure from their peers. With this activity, they can collaborate effectively with their peers by learning to navigate social interactions, thus improving their interpersonal skills. In addition, through games, children can learn the language in a lively environment. This is related to research by Ibrahim (2017), which showed that teachers involved in the study agreed that introducing and implementing language games is very beneficial for EFL learners because these language games improve students' English learning outcomes and create a strong connection with their new language. When students speak while playing games, they feel more comfortable and can communicate with their classmates by using the structures they have learned well, either through interpreting meaning, imitating sounds, or understanding the rhythm of speaking, which is expressed in the study by Worde (2003). Children can learn language in a fun and useful way through games. This experimental learning process not only aids language comprehension but also instills confidence and enthusiasm for further language exploration and acquisition. Finally, according to a study conducted by Hang (2017), good games for children are those designed to achieve learning objectives. The games should also help children learn to cooperate, have flexibility and adaptability, and enable them to use English in a fun way.

Many previous studies on the use of games in language classrooms have focused more on the effects and views of teachers towards games in language learning and how it affects students' language development. However, research that discusses game models used in English classrooms, challenges, and ways to overcome obstacles in using games for secondary school students is limited, especially at the junior high



school level. Therefore, this study seeks to fill the gap in the understanding that games might be effectively integrated into English language learning, particularly from the perspective of English language teachers who teach at the same level at those schools. This study aims to investigate the problems and benefits of using games to develop several English language abilities in EFL students, including speaking, writing, reading, and listening. The findings are likely to help English teachers implement more effective ways and solutions for incorporating games into their courses, hence improving their teaching tactics. Furthermore, this study can serve as a helpful resource for individuals interested in conducting additional research on the use of games in English language acquisition, contributing to developing more engaging and effective classroom practices.

2. METHOD

The opinions of English teachers, especially those teaching in grade 7, were investigated regarding the use of game technology in English language learning through qualitative research methods. This study aims to gain a deeper insight into how educators perceive and utilize games in English language teaching by interpreting qualitative data. Thus, the interviewees do not have to be well versed in the form of games (either manual or digital games) in English language learning, as the researcher only wants to know their views on it, according to what they know and based on their experiences. This study employed qualitative research methodologies, with semi-structured interviews as the primary data-obtaining tool, guided by four open-ended questions formulated throughout the interview process. The researcher posed several interrelated questions, beginning with the two teachers' perspectives on the role of games in English learning, why they believed games were important, a comparison of game models between manual and digital formats, the challenges of designing and implementing games, and efforts to overcome these challenges. The interview was conducted individually with two participants from the same school and teaching level, ensuring that the information gathered by the researcher was relevant to the conditions of the research location despite the fact that their perspectives differed.

The data then are analyzed through several stages. It is started by transcribing the recordings from the voice recorder to get written information from all parts of the interview (Textual information, which was still in Indonesian, was translated into English), organizing data by using the transcriptions to make general statements that represent all interview questions, classifying and summarizing participants' responses to each component of the research question based on the topic asked about their opinions on games, how important games are in English language learning, the challenges they face in designing games for English language learning, the challenges when implementing the games in English language learning. Then, the researcher made some keywords that refer to important terms or phrases that the researcher identified through responses from participants and described the answers of participants who gave similar answers. The final results were summarized, adjusted to the topic asked, and concluded.



3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This study looked at the role of games, the challenges faced, and the tactics utilized to overcome obstacles when designing and executing games for English language acquisition among 7th-grade students. The findings show that both teachers value games in English language learning. Still, they approach their utilization, problems, and hurdles in different ways, depending on their particular experiences and teaching styles.

3.1 The role of games in English language learning

RQ 1: What is the role of games in English language learning?

- Teacher 1 said that games are important, saying, from his point of view, games are a basic need. They make learning more varied and exciting, preventing monotony. This teacher believes that games are a key motivator for learning, raising student engagement and competitiveness.
- Teacher 2 used a more situational approach, playing games based on students' moods and classroom dynamics. "I apply games at the beginning, middle, or end of the lesson depending on the students' spirit. This teacher sees games as a versatile way to engage students throughout the class.

To better comprehend the teachers' viewpoints, the researcher studied how games contribute to English language acquisition. Both teachers agreed and recognized that games can increase student excitement and engagement despite their different approaches.

While both teachers think that games are important for instilling excitement and interest in learning English, their strategies differ. However, their varied approaches, Teacher 1 consistent usage as a fundamental motivator and Teacher 2 flexible use based on situational needs- reflect differing perspectives on how games might best help learning. These findings show that, while using games, in general, can make lectures more engaging, a more adaptive, mood-responsive strategy may be more suited to varied classroom dynamics. Combining these viewpoints could result in an optimum approach in which games are both fundamental and flexible tools for improving student learning and engagement in English language classes.

3.2 Important of games

RQ 2: Why are games important?

- Teacher 1 said that games had become an integral part of students' lives, thus influencing the way they interact with learning materials in schools; he also asserted that games could replace traditional instruction approaches to be more interesting and can keep students learning relevantly.
- Teacher 2 emphasized the aspect of competition, stating that points and rewards can encourage students' effort and hard work in learning. "Games can be an effective tool to attract students' interest by providing rewards or points in them, through these rewards or points earned can motivate them to try harder and be actively involved during English learning".



The researchers also explored the use of games in English language learning, agreeing on their motivational value. They argued that games hold students' attention and promote motivation, hence improving learning outcomes.

Both teachers highlighted that games are essential to engage and inspire students. This opinion aligns with the research on the benefits of game-based learning conducted by Tsybal (2018). Teacher 2 emphasized the effect of gamification on motivation by giving points and rewards to those who worked harder during the lesson—meanwhile, teacher 1 concentrated on improving learning by adjusting to students' familiarity with the game. In addition, both teachers stated that games are an effective instructional strategy because they can encourage active participation in English learning and encourage students to continue learning.

3.3 The challenges faced in designing and implementing games

RQ 3: What are the challenges faced in designing and implementing games?

After the researcher inquired about the importance of the game, there were definitely challenges faced. Both teachers experienced significant problems while designing and executing games for English language learning, which were frequently related to differences in game styles and classroom dynamics.

Design challenges

- Teacher 1 found it difficult to adapt games to changing classroom situations and struggled with the cost of digital gaming platforms. *“Manual games often need adaptation to each class, as methods effective in one may not work in another”*.
- Teacher 2 preferred simpler games to prevent complications. *“I always give games that I think are simple enough for me to understand; if it's too complicated for me, it likely will be for my students”*.

Implementation challenges

- Teacher 1 decided not to introduce the game into the English language learning that he taught in Grade 7 because he felt that no game content was suitable for the material or topic of learning in Grade 7.
- Teacher 2 has challenges with group dynamics, especially when students in a group with different English proficiency are competing, which causes dissatisfaction or blame among teammates. *“The problem arises when the diverse abilities in one team cause dissatisfaction when the group loses in a competition. usually, it is felt by students whose English level is above average”*.

In terms of the challenges experienced by the two teachers above, they highlighted the importance of combining classroom management and accessibility in game-based learning in English language learning. teacher 1's experience shows the difficulty of finding and designing low-cost game activities that still attract



children with various skills. On the other hand, teacher 2's experience shows how important it is to create a supportive environment and collaborate to prevent conflict during game activities in English language learning in the classroom. Game-based learning is very rewarding, but dealing with the technological and social challenges of different classroom settings and the two different approaches requires careful planning in advance. To maximize the potential of game-based learning in English language learning, finding the right balance between cost management, efficient classroom dynamics, and creative and engaging game design is crucial.

3.4 Form of handling effort

RQ 4: How did teachers solve these challenges?

Last, the researcher learned more about the form of efforts to solve and deal with the problems faced by the two grade 7 English teachers above. The researcher tried to ask about the teachers' efforts to deal with the challenges mentioned earlier in terms of planning and implementing game activities in English learning. these efforts need to be known in order to align the needs of students and future teacher strategies as the primary focus for both teachers to improve game activities in English learning in the future.

Handling the design challenges

- Teacher 1 concentrated on evaluating students' characteristics, talking with counseling personnel, and picking economical, user-friendly game platforms.
- Teacher 2 ensured the games were easy and offered clear directions to help students comprehend.

Handling the implementation challenges

- Teacher 1 did not have a specific strategy because there was no implementation of using games during English language learning in his class.
- Teacher 2 makes a verbal rule to explain that the game is a means of learning, not competition. The rule is stated in order to regulate group dynamics and maintain control of the classroom atmosphere so that it can end the game according to conditions.

Both teachers highlighted the importance of classroom adaptations as well as student-centered strategies in the effective use of games during English language learning. Teacher 1 emphasized resource accessibility and personalization, while Teacher 2 emphasized classroom structure and management, demonstrating the importance of incorporating flexible and tailored approaches to overcome the challenges of game-based English language learning. the results suggest that understanding the social and practical aspects of game integration, as well as emphasizing inclusion and flexibility, can increase the effectiveness and maximize game-based English language learning in various classroom contexts.



The results of this study provide important insights into how games were implemented into the English language learning of Grade 7 students, the various barriers encountered, and the strategies used by both teachers to overcome these barriers. Although both teachers agreed that games are important for increasing student engagement, the findings highlight that classroom dynamics and personal teaching philosophies can influence how the teachers act. Studies show that the strategic use of games in the classroom can increase their motivation, engagement, and understanding of language, supporting the perspective of Hanus and Fox (2015). Their study supports the idea that, while competition may encourage students to be motivated, they also highlight that designed game elements, such as leaderboards, exist to create a competitive environment and can reduce intrinsic motivation over time if students feel overwhelmed or if game mechanics prioritize competition over cooperation. This corresponded with teacher 2's experience with our findings, as they saw difficult group dynamics and potential conflicts between children of different abilities when playing competitive games. Furthermore, these studies suggest that carefully selected, cooperation-centered game elements, such as trackable progress and personal achievements, can increase student engagement and enjoyment of the learning material through the game. This is in line with teacher 1's strategy of using games as motivators to foster a more dynamic and inclusive learning environment, as well as an adaptable approach in customizing the type of game according to the needs of the students. In my findings, the individual perspectives of the two teachers highlight the larger debate in educational research as to whether flexible or even structured game approaches are more effective in increasing student motivation and engagement in the classroom.

Furthermore, regarding the function of games in language acquisition, especially English, as asked in (RQ 1), both teachers agreed and recognized the importance of games in developing student engagement, although their strategies differed. Teacher 1 believes games are a very important learning tool and a means to keep learning engaging and prevent boredom. This viewpoint aligns with research showing that games can promote active learning, which is very beneficial in language acquisition (Gee, 2003). Teacher 2, on the other hand, took a more situational approach by applying games based on the students' mood and the class atmosphere at that time. As a result, the lesson phase showed an understanding that flexibility can meet one of the various needs of students (Tsymbal, 2018).

(RQ 2) Both teachers agreed with the importance of games in language learning, emphasizing their motivating potential and ability to make classroom learning more interesting. Teacher 1 said that games are already part of students' lives, thus making them a natural tool for learning. This viewpoint represents the idea that combining students' interests with learning content can increase engagement, as argued in gamification research by Kristianto (2016). Teacher 2 emphasized the motivational benefits of games, particularly with rewards, which research has shown to be effective in fostering a sense of achievement and goal-oriented learning, especially in gamification such as research by Anisa et al. (2020), which emphasized that game elements such as rankings and points on challenges contained in games can foster a



sense of competitiveness. Research by Anisa et al. (2020) supports the idea that gamification is not only a more engaging learning experience but also helps improve learning outcomes by building a dynamic environment that encourages students to participate and strive for victory. This research is also consistent with their findings, which imply that the feeling of excitement generated by students allows for increased student attention and participation. From my point of view, incorporating components of both approaches can result in optimal engagement, with games serving as both a fundamental motivator and a versatile tool that adapts to classroom dynamics.

When investigating the problems teachers experience when designing and implementing games in English language learning (RQ 3), both teachers emphasized the complexity of tailoring games to students' requirements and classroom environments. Teacher 1 explained the difficulties with traditional games, pointing out that strategies that work in one classroom may not be effective in another owing to differences in student characteristics. Teacher 2 prioritized simplicity, designing games that were not overly complicated to ensure they were accessible and understandable. Furthermore, teacher 2 encountered difficulties with the group dynamics, where variations in ability occasionally resulted in student conflict, a common issue in cooperative learning contexts (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Johnson and Johnson (1999) research highlights the need to create a cooperative atmosphere in which students are encouraged to interact and connect with one another, as this can lay a solid basis for game-based learning. They discovered that structured cooperative projects strengthen social skills, increase student engagement, and boost accomplishment by encouraging positive interdependence, face-to-face connection, individual accountability, and social skill development. These ideas are consistent with the findings of this study, particularly the emphasis on teachers employing games as a technique to boost motivation, engagement, and social collaboration among students. The incorporation of game-based learning into group activities can develop a sense of teamwork and peer support if teachers can effectively manage group dynamics (Gillies, 2016). In his research, he found that when students work together in any activity that is structured with clear goals and roles, they not only engage more deeply with the subject matter in class but also gain important moral and social skills or attitudes such as communication, empathy, and cooperation. This validates the findings where both teachers emphasized the importance of games in motivating students and building a lively learning environment, which can even solve classroom problems related to mood. In addition, research Gillies (2016) emphasizes the importance of adaptability in managing varied group dynamics when conducting game-based learning, which reflects the flexibility observed by the teachers in this study when integrating games, whether digital or manual, to suit the needs of the class.

To overcome these challenges, each teacher used different strategies and approaches. Teacher 1 learned the characteristics of the students through face-to-face meetings and discussions with counselors at the school so that they could design the game according to the student's needs. In addition, teacher 1 emphasized finding and using free and easily accessible gaming platforms, demonstrating an understanding of



the economic barriers that can limit access to digital resources, as evidenced by research on equity in educational technology (Selwyn, 2016). Teacher 2 emphasized proper instruction before conducting game-based learning and various teaching approaches to help students understand the game. This aligns with research that clear instructions can improve students' understanding and build an inclusive atmosphere (Mayer, 2019). To prevent conflict in team game activities, teachers talk to students at the beginning before the game starts by explaining the purpose of the game only as a learning tool, not as a competition. This verbal rule initiative shows dedication to fostering a more conducive and cooperative classroom climate, thus achieving success in the classroom.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings suggest that games can help students learn English in the classroom in a more effective and fun way. Both teachers believe that games can encourage students by increasing their interest and engagement in the lesson. Teacher 1 considers games an important component of English learning, and she plans to use them regularly to keep learning interesting and prevent boredom. Teacher 2, on the other hand, uses games based on the students' mood and energy and the classroom atmosphere. These various techniques show that while games are beneficial to learning, they can work best with varying combinations of use and timing, depending on the context in the classroom. In addition, both teachers emphasized that games can meet the various needs of students by integrating fun learning according to the English learning materials at that time.

However, both teachers faced challenges in designing and implementing games in the classroom. Teacher 1 struggled with adapting games to various classroom learning materials and was concerned about the cost of digital game platforms. Teacher 2 preferred using simple games that teachers and students could understand to avoid confusion or difficulty when applying them. Implementation barriers also varied: Teacher 1 did not use game dynamics, especially when students with different English language proficiency levels. These findings suggest that the use of games in the classroom requires careful design planning to ensure that the games are accessible and adaptive and promote positive relationships when implemented in the classroom.

Combining strategies and approaches can help improve game-based learning in classrooms, especially English classes. Teacher 1 should try to reach a compromise between consistent use of games and a mood-based approach that can be adopted by Teacher 2. This means being able to use games consistently while changing the timing and type of games depending on students' moods, energy levels, and engagement requirements. Another recommendation is to ensure that the games used are simple (not burdensome for teachers or students), inclusive, and appropriate for students with varying levels of English proficiency. This will keep all students engaged and reduce the likelihood of students with certain skills feeling excluded or scared. Also, setting explicit guidelines for teamwork in-game activities can also reduce concerns about competition by encouraging students to collaborate among team members rather than compete against each other.



Last, both teachers can concentrate on identifying the challenges already outlined and then creating more cost-effective and accessible game material content. Consulting with school professionals, such as counselors and homeroom teachers, can also help teachers understand the needs of diverse students and adapt games according to their needs. Teachers can maximize the use of games in English learning by emphasizing flexibility, inclusion, and cost-effectiveness, resulting in a more cooperative and enjoyable classroom atmosphere.

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