INTEGRATING GAME-BASED LEARNING TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY ENGLISH TEACHERS AT SMP BINA BANGSA

Efri Putri Wulandari[1], Rizka Safriyani[2], & Dwi Agustina[3]
[1,2]UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, [3]SMP Bina Bangsa
[1]*putriefri5748@gmail.com* , [2]*rizkasafriyani@uinsa.ac.id* , [3]*tinasweet2684@gmail.com*

Abstract:
In the context of the Indonesia Merdeka curriculum, this research investigates what challenges English teachers at Bina Bangsa Junior High School face in taking a pedagogical approach to anticipate the needs of diverse students. Every teacher has challenges and this research will address the implementation of adaptive teaching strategies, which may be hindered by limited resources and professional development opportunities. Using a qualitative approach and Collaborative Classroom Action Research (CCAR), this study explores how game-based learning (GBL) can be integrated into English language teaching to address these challenges. Through teacher interviews and classroom observations, this study reveals that understanding students' diverse backgrounds, language proficiency, and learning preferences promotes an inclusive learning environment. The research also found that GBL effectively increased students' motivation and participation, especially in grammar comprehension. The research also looks at CCAR as a reflective and collaborative framework that supports teacher development and the implementation of innovative teaching methods. The findings suggest that the combination of GBL and CCAR can improve English language teaching practices, make classrooms more responsive to student diversity, and enhance overall learning.

Keywords: *Collaborative Classroom Action Research,* G*ame-based Learning, Teaching Strategies*

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the diverse backgrounds of students have led to a demand for inclusive teaching practices, which has made a significant transformation in the education domain, especially in the independent curriculum in recent years. It is known that their teaching strategies to accommodate students with various socio-economic backgrounds, language proficiency levels, and learning styles have been challenging for junior high school English teachers. (Rokayah et al., 2023). For now, education focuses on how each student's learning takes place, which requires creative ways to engage students and improve learning outcomes, especially in classrooms with diverse student populations. Teaching students with varying levels of English proficiency and learning needs is a challenge for English teachers at Bina Bangsa Junior High School. it is therefore possible to improve the classroom environment with this diversity, but it is also important to create lessons that successfully interest every student.

At Bina Bangsa Junior High School, English teachers face the complexity of teaching students from diverse backgrounds, each of whom has different learning needs. (Zhao, 2018). Difficulties in managing these differences can habitually hinder the development of inclusive and student-centered teaching strategies. (Lee & Hannafin, 2016). One solution that has been found to address these challenges is game-based learning (GBL), which has been shown to effectively improve student motivation and learning outcomes(Qian & Clark, 2016). Through integrating digital games into the classroom, GBL can encourage active participation, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, providing students with immersive learning experiences (Subhash & Cudney, 2018). However, despite its potential, GBL is still underutilized in secondary

education due to barriers such as teacher perceptions and the absence of a clear pedagogical framework (Hainey et al., 2016).

Underpinning the framework of this collaborative classroom action research (PTK) is the aim to address the significant challenges faced by English teachers at Bina Bangsa Junior High School as they strive to meet the diverse needs of their students in the context of the emerging Merdeka curriculum in Indonesia. Through detailed interviews and in-depth classroom observations, this research necessarily explores how the potential of Game-Based Learning (GBL) plays a role as an adaptive teaching strategy that could in turn facilitate personalized learning experiences, increase student engagement and motivation, and contribute to a more inclusive classroom environment. The use of GBL is explored not only as a tool to foster motivation and enthusiasm among students, but also as a mechanism to address students' varying levels of language proficiency, learning styles and backgrounds.

Although this research focuses on practical and contextualized teaching methods, it does show that there is a need for English teachers to know how flexible and innovative approaches can address student diversity, especially in the areas of language comprehension and critical thinking skills. Knowing that such methods require more than isolated teaching adjustments, this research aims to find out the continuous development of strategies that are responsive to students' needs. the CCAR can provide for teachers to share best practices and foster dynamic and mutually supportive learning.

Unnecessary, this research contributes to the Indonesian education landscape through a practical model of how teachers can implement adaptive teaching techniques within the Merdeka curriculum. With the application of GBL and PTK approaches, this research will provide valuable insights into how teachers can bridge gaps in learning, and ensure that every student can access and benefit from the learning experience. With its focus on individualized student support and collaborative teacher development, this research underscores the importance of fostering an educational environment that not only meets curriculum standards, but also empowers teachers and students to thrive in a diverse and inclusive environment. From that, this research aims to inform ongoing efforts to improve educational outcomes for diverse students in Indonesia; it also highlights the role of teacher collaboration in implementing these strategies effectively.

Adapting teaching practices to meet the needs of diverse students is crucial, especially in heterogeneous classrooms. emphasized that teachers should use culturally responsive pedagogies that take into account students' socio-economic backgrounds, prior knowledge, and varying levels of language proficiency (Hersi, 2010). Differentiated instruction, scaffolding, and formative assessment are identified as effective strategies to create an inclusive learning environment where every student has the opportunity to thrive(Langelaan et al., 2024). In this context, innovative teaching methods are needed to engage students across the spectrum of abilities and backgrounds, especially in subjects such as English, where language barriers further complicate learning.

In Indonesia, the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum has presented challenges and opportunities for teachers working with diverse student populations. The Merdeka curriculum focuses on developing a learning environment that is student-centered and flexible to meet individual learning needs (Ndari et al., 2023). However, adapting to this model requires a shift from traditional instructional approaches, which requires teachers to find new ways to ensure engagement and motivation in the classroom. This includes recognizing and addressing the unique socio-economic and language differences that students bring to the learning environment (Saa, 2024).

Game-based learning (GBL) is emerging as a promising pedagogical approach that can meet diverse student needs while increasing engagement and motivation. Research shows that GBL can have a positive impact on student learning outcomes, especially when used to teach complex subjects that benefit from an interactive problem-solving approach(Qian & Clark, 2016). Games provide an immersive experience, allowing students to actively participate and apply critical thinking skills in real-time, which is particularly beneficial in language learning settings where traditional methods may fail to engage all students (Subhash & Cudney, 2018).

GBL integrates digital games into the educational process, offering students the opportunity to learn in a simulated and risk-free environment. Research has found that GBL increases motivation by tapping into students' natural interests and competitive instincts, making learning more fun and less intimidating (Plass et al., 2015). In addition, games encourage collaboration and communication among students, which can be particularly effective in language learning (Abdul Jabbar & Felicia, 2015). Despite its potential, GBL faces various barriers to its widespread adoption, especially in secondary education. Barriers such as teacher perceptions, lack of experience, and the absence of a strong pedagogical framework have limited its integration into classroom practices (Proctor & Marks, 2013).

GBL is highly effective in meeting the needs of diverse students by offering a personalized learning experience. Through adaptive game mechanics, students can progress at their own pace, receiving immediate feedback that helps them improve specific skills (Wouters et al., 2013). In language education, GBL can be used to simulate conversations, vocabulary exercises, and other language tasks that cater to different levels of proficiency, allowing teachers to address individual learning differences(Qian & Clark, 2016). This personalized approach is aligned with the goals of the Merdeka curriculum, which encourages flexible learning tailored to the needs of each student (Rokayah et al., 2023)

In conclusion, integrating GBL into English language teaching offers a practical solution to the challenges posed by classroom diversity. By combining the motivational aspects of games with the principles of student-centered learning, GBL has the potential to improve engagement and educational outcomes. However, for GBL to be successfully implemented, teachers must also be equipped with the necessary tools and frameworks to effectively integrate this approach into their teaching practices.

1. What challenges do English teachers at Bina Bangsa Junior High School face in their teaching methods?
2. What strategies can be used to those challenges among students?

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative case study design as outlined, which is ideal for exploring "how" and "why" questions in real-life contexts (Baxter & Jack, 2015). The goal is to investigate the challenges faced by English teachers at Bina Bangsa junior high school in adapting their teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students. The case study allows for in-depth exploration by collecting data from interviews and classroom observations. The design also enables the analysis of teaching strategies within individual classrooms and across different teaching environments, ensuring a holistic understanding of the issue.

By collecting direct descriptions from English teachers at Bina Bangsa Junior High School about the challenges they face in knowing the needs of students who have diverse backgrounds, semi-structured interviews will be conducted. the aim is to collect information that they provide in detail about their experiences in engaging students, teaching strategies, and their openness to game-based learning (GBL). the focus in these interviews will be on how descriptive knowledge and also thematic analysis are carried out, without changing the data based on the teachers' teaching experiences.

Another data analysis is classroom observation which will aim to describe the use of teaching strategies, especially game-based learning, in meeting students' needs. The observations will be analized by documenting descriptive information about students' engagement, participation and understanding in real-time. This approach will aim to capture what happens in the classroom without conducting a detailed analysis process.

So, for analyze data from teacher interviews and classroom observations that will use a thematic analysis approach. This method will identify patterns, themes or main keywords that appear frequently. For the English teacher interviews, the themes will be analyzed as well as those related to what challenges they face in meeting the needs of diverse students, and also what strategies are used to increase student engagement, and how they view the implementation of game-based learning (GBL). In addition, there are classroom observation results whose data will also be analyzed to find out how the development of student behavior, the level of participation, and the effectiveness of this GBL technique in improving communication skills. Through this analysis, results will be obtained on what challenges teachers face and how the methods they use impact students.

The last step is to determine whether or not the data is valid to ensure the veracity of the data, by cross-referencing from various sources, including teacher interviews and classroom observations. This step is to help identify between what the teacher reports and what is observed in practice. Observation notes from classroom activities will be analyzed to find out what are the changes in student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes in both GBL implementation cycles.

Later this reflection step is done based on feedback from both research cycles. From trhat, data from teacher reflections and classroom observations will be reviewed to determine how the effectiveness of the teaching strategies implemented. The congruence between cycles allows for a reflective process later that essentially provides a better understanding of how GBL can meet the needs of diverse students and improve overall learning outcomes.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing the interview and observation results from the research conducted at Bina Bangsa Junior High School, this study demonstrates knowledge of the importance of the challenges faced by English teachers in interpreting their teaching methods for diverse students within the realm of Merdeka curriculum. Using qualitative descriptive analysis, this study integrates to find out what are the teachers' experiences, how are the classroom dynamics, and how game-based learning (GBL) impacts on students' engagement and learning outcomes.

1. Understanding Student Diversity

   One key takeaway from this research is the critical role of understanding student diversity in effective teaching. Teachers emphasized that students at Bina Bangsa Junior High School come from various socio-economic backgrounds, have different levels of English proficiency, and exhibit different learning preferences and needs. Teachers recognize that adapting to these differences is important for creating an inclusive learning environment. However, they note that consistently streamline this variety in a traditional classroom environment is challenging due to limited time, large class sizes and the need for differentiated instruction.

2. Challenges in Implementing Adaptive Teaching Strategies

   While teachers admit the importance of adaptive teaching strategies, their implementation remains a continuing challenge. Some teachers still rely on conventional teaching methods that may not fully meet the various needs of students in their classrooms. This research revealed that balancing the student-centered learning objectives in Merdeka curriculum with practical constraints such as limited resources, varying student readiness, and lack of professional development in adaptive strategies is also not easy to put into practice. Teachers expressed the need for more structured support and training to better implement differentiated and student-focused learning methods.

3. Student Engagement and Active Learning through GBL

   The main finding of this research is the positive impact of game-based learning on student engagement and active participation in the classroom. teachers observed that students became much more active when GBL techniques were used. The interactive nature of the game fosters a more engaging and fun learning environment, especially in terms of vocabulary acquisition and grammar practice. GBL reduces students' anxiety in learning complicated topics, language and increases their willingness to participate, especially for those with lower proficiency levels. It also

bridges the gap in learning among diverse students by providing an engaging platform that can encourage collaborative learning and peer interaction.

4. Motivation and Learning Outcomes

From the results that have been analyzed both, teacher interviews and classroom observations show the important role of motivation in influencing learning outcomes. Motivated students show higher levels of participation and pick up learning more quickly such as in new vocabulary and grammar concepts. Teachers consider that GBL not only increases students' motivation, but also makes the learning process more enjoyable and effective. Maintaining consistent motivation is not easy as among students it remains a challenge, especially without interactive and innovative teaching methods.

5. Collaborative Classroom Action Research (CAR) and Teaching Improvement

Another finding was the effectiveness of the Collaborative Classroom Action Research (CCAR) initiative in supporting teachers. Teachers who participated in CCAR told us that they felt better able to address classroom challenges, as the process encouraged collaboration, shared learning and reflective teaching practices. The CCAR framework allowed teachers to design new strategies for them - such as using scaffolding and differentiated instruction in each skill, hence better meeting the needs of diverse students. This collaborative effort also resulted in the development of practical and adaptive teaching methods, which allowed teachers to feel confident in looking at challenging situations posed by student diversity.

6. Game-based Learning as a Solution for Grammar Learning

As seen from teacher reflections and classroom activities. The use of game-based learning is seen to be an effective solution for teaching grammar. As GBL not only makes grammar lessons more interactive and fun, but also helps students to remember the what's and how's of grammar structures better than traditional methods. Teachers noted that GBL became a learning solution that enabled a better and contextualized understanding of grammar concepts, which made a new contribution to the improvement of learning outcomes. The collaborative aspect of the game also encouraged active participation from students of different ability levels, thus making the classroom environment more inclusive and supportive of diverse students.ammar structures better than traditional methods. Teachers noted that GBL became a learning solution that enabled better contextualized understanding of grammar concepts, which contributed to improved learning outcomes. The collaborative aspect of the game also encouraged active participation from students at different ability levels, making the classroom environment more inclusive and supportive for diverse students.

The researched findings show how valuable it is to adapt teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students at Bina Bangsa Junior High School. As Indonesia's changing curriculum, now the Merdeka curriculum, continues to emphasize personalized education and student-centered learning, the role of English teachers in creating an inclusive and adaptable learning environment is important. However, this study identified several challenges that hinder the implementation of this approach.

One challenge that teachers may face is the need to understand and respond to student diversity. While teachers also look at how students' social backgrounds, language abilities and learning styles are, there are also technological limitations to adequately address this. Thus, this study established that without adequate training and resources, it is not easy for teachers to fully adapt adaptive strategies in their classrooms. So it can be concluded that this suggests the need for more comprehensive professional development programs to equip teachers with the necessary skills to effectively implement differentiated instruction and formative assessment.Of course, motivation also plays an important role in student success, as indicated by the research findings. Role of English teachers in creating an inclusive and adaptable learning environment is important. However, this study identified several challenges that hinder the implementation of this approach.

One of the most recurring challenges faced by teachers is the need to understand and respond to student diversity. While teachers also take into consideration students' social backgrounds, language abilities, and learning styles, there is limited technology or time to adequately address this. Thus, this study determined that without adequate training and resources, it is not easy for teachers to fully adapt adapt adaptive strategies in their classrooms. This suggests the need for more comprehensive professional development programs to equip teachers with the necessary skills to effectively implement both differentiated instruction and formative assessment.

Motivation also plays an important role in student success, as indicated by the research findings. The positive relationship between student engagement and learning outcomes suggests that improving student motivation should be a priority for teachers. encouraging active participation, making learning fun, and creating a less stressful environment for students to practice language skills makes game-based learning emerge as an effective solution to this challenge. However, to integrate game-based learning into the curriculum is also not easy, requiring careful planning to ensure that the games are aligned with the educational objectives and reinforce key concepts. with Merdeka's curriculum objectives by making learning more flexible, engaging, and tailored to individual student needs into an approach.

In addition, the use of Collaborative Classroom Action Research shows that PTK can be an effective learning technique for teachers to collectively address classroom challenges. The collaborative nature of PTK allows teachers to share what best practices are, reflect on their experiences, and continuously improve their methods to keep evolving. In Bina Bangsa Junior High School, CCAR can help teachers develop more adaptive and responsive teaching strategies. However, for CCAR to be sustainable, the school must support ongoing collaboration and reflection among teachers through structured professional learning communities or workshops.

From this, this study shows that although teachers at Bina Bangsa Junior High School have taken whatever steps are used to adapt to the needs of diverse students, there is still much to be done to align teaching practices with the demands of the Merdeka curriculum. Using adaptive strategies can foster student motivation through game-based learning, and engaging in collaborative research allows teachers to create

a more inclusive and effective learning environment. After all, this research lays the groundwork for future initiatives that aim to improve educational outcomes for diverse students and can support teachers in professionalizing their learning methods.

4. CONCLUSION

In establish English teachers' teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students at Bina Bangsa Junior High School, in conclusion, this study discusses what challenges English teachers are facing, especially in the Merdeka curriculum. The findings indicate the need for inclusive and adaptive approaches that incorporate student diversity and encourage teaching strategies that aim to foster enthusiasm, engagement and a deeper understanding of the subject matter. The research emphasizes that a one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient to achieve meaningful learning outcomes when recognizing different types of learning styles, abilities, and backgrounds within the classroom.

In this study, Game-based learning (GBL) emerged as a proven effective and student-centered solution, to improve language acquisition - especially in complex areas such as grammar and vocabulary comprehension into a dynamic and interactive method offering. This role of GBL not only helps students to be fully involved (Student-centered), but also makes students have a deeper curiosity and becomes a pleasure for them. This can create a conducive environment for English language learning. However, this study revealed that integrating GBL effectively requires overcoming several barriers, including a lack of familiarity with digital tools among teachers and the need for a structured pedagogical framework. Without adequate training and support can also be a barrier or challenge for teachers, who may find it difficult to effectively use GBL in a consistent and goal-oriented manner. Therefore, the emphasis on teacher training and guideline development also plays an important role to facilitate effective integration of GBL.

From there, CCAR makes it possible for teachers to work reflectively and collaboratively, encouraging them to reflect on their own teaching practices, share insights, and collectively develop strategies that better suit the needs of students. As such, this research sees the Collaborative Classroom Action Research (CCA) approach as a tool to promote teacher development and adaptation. This collaborative Action Research not only promotes professional growth, but also contributes to creating a more resilient and adaptive community of teachers, who will be able to meet the unique demands of each classroom with diverse students. By engaging in reflective practice and ongoing experimentation, teachers are well positioned to improve their teaching methods to achieve higher levels of student engagement and learning.

Lastly, this study also foreshadows future findings in the broader notion of education reform in Indonesia, especially with regard to the Merdeka curriculum, by providing ideas on practical approaches that relate to the curriculum's objectives to encourage independence and adaptability in teachers and students. Although the results and conclusions of this study remain challenging, the combined use of GBL and collaborative professional development, such as CCAR, provides sufficient direction to

improve teaching practices and enhance student learning. Further research from this study should focus on developing comprehensive training programs and resources that will equip teachers with the skills needed to effectively implement GBL and other adaptive strategies. In addition, other research could further examine the sustainable impact of this method, initiating more ideas about its long-term benefits, potentials and development in different educational settings in Indonesia.

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