



FROM PLAY TO PROGRESS: ILLUMINATING STUDENTS' INTEREST IN DIGITAL GAME-BASED LEARNING

Luluk Masluhatil Hasania¹, Rakhmawati², & Siti Salisa Fithrijah³

^{1,2}UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, ³SMPN 1 Lamongan

¹llulukmasluha@gmail.com, ²rakhmawati@uinsa.ac.id, ³salisa70@gmail.com

Abstract:

This study investigates the role of digital game-based learning (DGBL) in increasing students' interest and motivation in English language learning. The study is based on 33 students from class 8E at SMPN 1 Lamongan and uses qualitative methods, namely observation and interviews to identify factors that influence students' engagement with digital games in the classroom. The findings reveal that DGBL significantly increases student motivation and comprehension of English materials. However, challenges such as the need for adequate technological resources and alignment of games with educational objectives are noted. Teachers perceive that DGBL promotes higher enthusiasm and interactive learning, but emphasize that careful planning and effective facilitation are crucial for successful implementation. The study provides important insight into the integration of technology in education and highlights the importance of the DGBL method in improving students' motivation and engagement.

Keywords: *Digital Game-Based Learning, Student Interest*

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital Game-Based Learning (DGBL) is an innovative approach to education that uses gaming elements to enhance students' learning experience. DGBL combines game design principles with educational objectives to create an interactive and engaging learning environment. The history of DGBL dates back to the 1980s when computers began to be used in education. Since then, DGBL has evolved with advances in technology and the accessibility of digital devices, changing the educational environment and creating new opportunities for teachers and students.

Being an English teacher will definitely find various challenges in the process of learning English, especially nowadays, where technology has developed very rapidly into every aspect of people's lives. Student live in a digital world surrounded by technological advances and this requires teachers to organize learning by utilizing the innovations provided by technology itself, ensuring that their teaching approaches are still relevant and successful.

Based on constructivist theories of education, digital game-based learning (DGBL) combines educational content with computer or video - based games and can be used in almost all subjects and at all levels. Proponents of digital game-based learning argue that this method can provide students with more interactive learning and help prepare them to participate in a globalised society, technology and 21st century society. This approach not only improves critical thinking and problem solving skills, but also the ability to collaborate and communicate, which are very important skills in today's interconnected world.

Besides, Prensky (2017) specifically coined the term "digital natives" to describe contemporary students who are fluent in the language of computers, smart phones, video games and the internet. The dominance of student in using technology puts



greater pressure on teachers to increase the use of technology in the teaching and learning process. However, many teachers continue to use traditional approaches to learning, which can leave their teaching behind and ineffective. This mismatch between technological advances and teaching methods highlights the importance of training and professional development to integrate technology into the classroom.

According to Khitam Altawalbeh (2023) in the “Journal of Educational Technology and Instruction” entitled “Game-Based Learning: The Impact of Kahoot on a Higher Education Online Classroom” focuses on the effectiveness of using Kahoot game-based learning platform in increasing motivation, enjoyment, engagement, and utility for learning in a college online classroom. The results show that Kahoot can support all these aspects, can improve the overall learning experience, although it does not substantially affect individual differences on the other hand, Ika febriana Wati and Yuniawatika (2021) entitled “Digital Game-Based Learning as A Solution to Fun Learning Challenges During the Covid-19 Pandemic” focuses on how digital games such as kahoot and quizizz can make the learning process more fun, increase students' creativity and skills. the results show that digital game-based learning is effective in increasing student motivation and engagement during online learning.

Another study conducted by Zi-Yu Liu, Zaffar Ahmed Shaikh, and Farida Gazizova (2020) in an article entitled “Using the Concept of Game-Based Learning in Education” focuses on the application of game-based learning and gamification to develop 21st century skills in students. The results showed that the use of games in learning can improve students' motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes compared to traditional learning methods. 88.55% of students rated learning with this method as interesting, and objective test results showed an improvement in the quality of students' understanding and memory. However, despite the increase in motivation, only 51.16% of students consistently wanted to continue learning with this technique.

Polyxeni Kaimara, Emmanuel Fokides, Andreas Oikonomou, and Ioannis Deliyannis (2021) in an article entitled “Potential Barriers to the Implementation of Digital Game-Based Learning in the Classroom: Pre-service Teachers' Views” which focuses on the barriers faced in the implementation of digital game-based learning in the classroom, based on the views of pre-service teachers. The results showed that there were five main barriers: lack of financial resources, preference for traditional teaching methods, lack of ICT training, lack of infrastructure, and lack of policies and frameworks, and participants with the age group of 24-30 years tended to consider traditional teaching methods as a barrier to the implementation of DGBL.

Over the past few decades, digital game-based learning (DGBL) has become an important area of research, mainly due to technological advances and students' increased access to digital devices. According to Hamari and Koivisto (2015), their research shows that game elements such as recognition, achievement and competition can help increase students' motivation and engagement in learning.

A study conducted by Surendeleg and Suryani (2016) showed that DGBL can be used to improve students' problem-solving skills and enhance their critical thinking skills. They found that well-designed games not only help students understand the



content, but also build the skills needed to face real-life challenges. This study shows that games that combine educational components with relevant challenges can produce better learning outcomes compared to traditional teaching approaches.

However, a study conducted by Wang et al. (2016) found that the use of DGBL in English language learning can help students improve their language skills in a fun and engaging way. They found that students who engaged in game-based learning showed significant improvement in their speaking and listening skills. In addition, students reported that they felt more confident in using English after participating in the course.

Furthermore, the idea of tacit assessment in DGBL, which involves assessing student learning outcomes through play, was discussed in a study conducted by Shute (2019). The study found that, compared to traditional assessment methods, tacit assessment could provide a more accurate and thorough assessment of student learning. This research highlights the potential for DGBL to transform the way we assess student learning.

Another study, conducted by Dichev and Dicheva (2017), looked at how gamification can help students become more independent and organised in their online learning. The research showed that gamification components such as points, badges and leaderboards can increase students' motivation and engagement by giving them a sense of control and freedom in learning. According to this research, DGBL can support student-centred learning approaches.

Interest in learning is important to enhance learning, which then leads to sustained high level attention and enthusiasm. Today, interest is truly regarded as a process that contributes to learning and achievement in the teaching and learning process. To trace out the issue of this study, the researcher formulated the research question as follow: What are students' interest in digital games in the english classroom?

Based on the research question above, the purposes of this study to explore the reasons for students' interest, finding factors that influence students' interest in the use of digital games in learning English in the classroom.

2. METHOD

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is an inquiry process that aims to explore social or human problems and is particularly suited to exploring complex social phenomena and understanding individual experiences and perceptions. Therefore, the researcher used a qualitative research approach in this study. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to find out why students prefer digital game-based learning and what influences their engagement with digital games in English language learning. By knowing these factors, teachers can use digital games as an effective and engaging learning tool for their students.

This research focuses on junior high school students at SMPN 1 Lamongan, specifically class 8E which consists of 33 students using digital game-based learning. This class was chosen because of their active engagement with the researcher in the MBKM process, making it an ideal place to investigate how digital game-based learning can increase student interest.



The authors of this study used observation as the main way to understand the situation from a more objective point of view. During the digital gaming sessions, observations were made in real time, allowing the researcher to observe the students' interactions with the game, their emotional reactions and their level of engagement. This particular observation technique involves the collection of verbal and non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions, body language and group dynamics. This provides important insights into the students' experience.

In addition to observations, interviews were also conducted to gain a better understanding of teachers' experiences and opinions about the use of digital games in the classroom for student learning. Semi-structured interviews ensure that important issues are covered, while providing flexibility to explore teachers' thoughts and feelings. The focus of the interviews was to find out why students are interested in digital game-based learning and what challenges teachers face. The researcher's aim is to provide a comprehensive picture of students' interest in digital game-based learning by combining observation data with interview responses. Ultimately, this will help to develop more interesting and effective teaching methods.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This research explores students' interest in digital game-based learning in English language learning in class 8E of SMPN 1 Lamongan. The research findings show that DGBL has great potential in increasing students' interest in learning English. However, the implementation of digital game-based learning in the classroom faces several challenges, including the need for adequate technological resources and the suitability of the game to the learning objectives.

Teacher's perceptions of Game Based Learning

In the interview with the teacher, I gained a lot of important knowledge about game-based learning. The teacher said that digital games are very effective in learning compared to traditional approaches. This is because games have the ability to increase student motivation and make the learning process more enjoyable. Students tend to be more engaged and active in learning, which also leads to a better learning experience.

Games provide students with interesting challenges, both against themselves and their peers, and games also help students to collaborate, especially when playing in groups. In addition, the immediate feedback that games provide allows students to better understand their mistakes. And this has the effect of increasing student engagement.

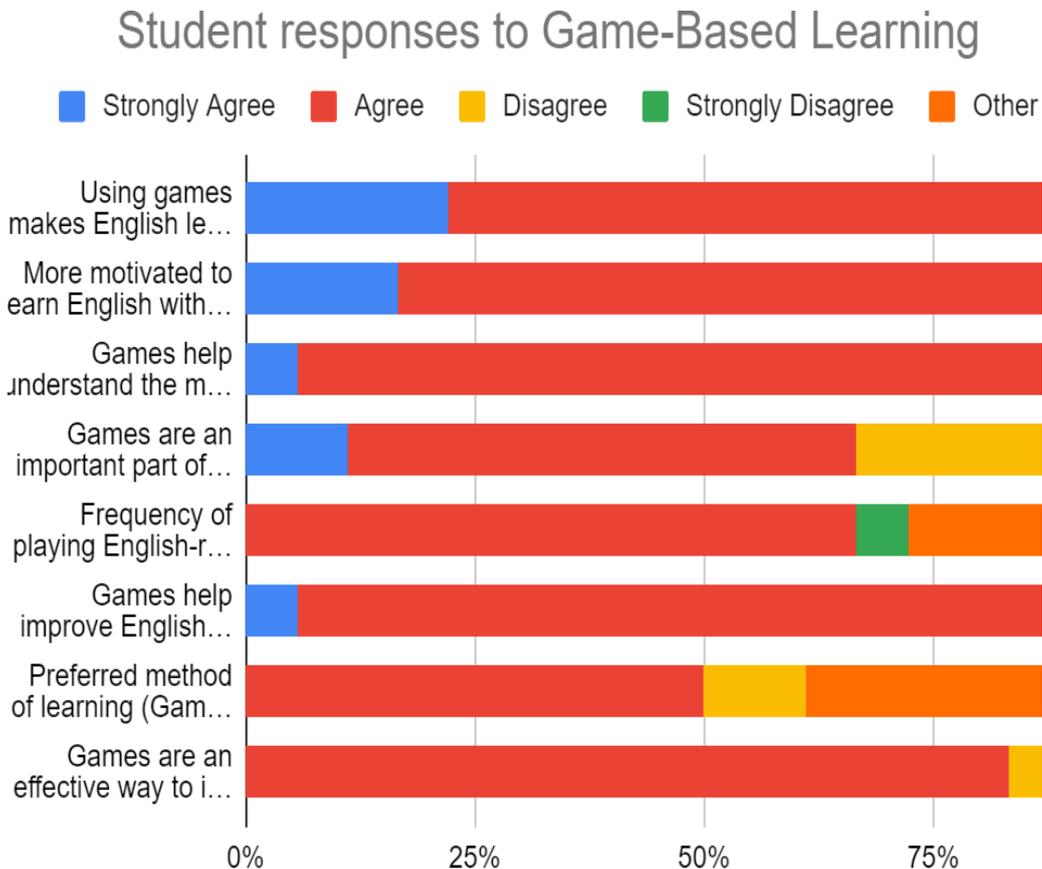
However, teachers face a number of challenges when using game-based learning. These include selecting games that are appropriate to the curriculum; teachers need to prepare the games appropriately; ensure that the devices are accessible to all students; and balance the learning time between games and materials. The teacher monitors student engagement, assesses or gives feedback after the game session and asks for student comments to determine learning success.

There are concrete examples from teachers' experiences where the use of games has successfully improved students' learning outcomes, especially in English vocabulary learning. Students who are normally less active showed increased participation after playing the game, and teachers also adapted the game to meet

different learning needs by dividing students into groups based on their respective abilities.

Teachers have many hopes for the future of using games in learning. These include better acceptance by schools and more training for teachers. They also believe that the integration of games with other learning materials is very important. Firstly, other teachers should start with small steps and continuously monitor student engagement to adjust the learning approach. Finally, teachers should address differences in students' interests and abilities by using the same game.

Figure 1 Graph of Student Response to Digital Game Based Learning



In the graph above, it can be concluded that the findings of this research show that students have a strong interest in digital games in English classes through data analysis conducted through observations and questionnaires with students.

The results show that students have a strong interest in the use of digital games in English language learning. The analysis of data from observations and questionnaires showed that 22.2% of students strongly agreed that games in English learning can increase students' engagement and motivation. Meanwhile, another 77.8% of students also strongly agreed with this idea. This shows that games not only make learning more interesting, but can also capture students' attention and make them more engaged in the learning process.

In terms of motivation, the game-based approach increases motivation to learn English, according to 72.2% of students. Of these, 11.1% of students disagreed with the statement and 16.7% strongly agreed. This shows that most students experience



increased motivation, but some may not feel the same. This gives us the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the components that influence students' desire to learn, especially when it comes to the use of games.

In terms of understanding the material, most students felt that the games used in learning really helped them to understand the English material. A total of 94.4% of students agreed with this statement, with a further 5.6% strongly agreeing. The results show that games can not only increase participation, but can also serve as an effective tool for conveying complex concepts and information in a more interesting and understandable way.

However, students differ in their views on the importance of games in classroom learning. Overall, 55.6% of students agreed that games are an important part of classroom learning, while 11.1% of students strongly agreed. In contrast, some students disagreed with this statement. This suggests that while many students value the role of games in learning, research is needed into the perspectives of students who are less supportive of the use of games in education.

The results showed that in terms of the frequency with which students played English-related games, 66.7% reported rarely, 11.1% several times a week and 5.5% never. The data suggests that while game-based learning is highly desirable, the frequency of use of games outside the classroom needs to be increased to maximise its benefits.

In terms of impact on English language skills, the majority of students believe that games improve their English language skills. A total of 83.3% of students agreed that games improved their English language skills, while 11.1% disagreed and 5.6% strongly agreed. The results show that students see a clear link between using games and improving their English language skills. This can be the basis for developing a more creative and interactive curriculum.

In terms of preferred learning method, half of the students chose game-based learning, while 38.9% chose conventional or game-based methods and only 11.1% chose conventional methods. This shows that although there is a strong push for game-based learning, there are some students who prefer traditional learning. Therefore, it is imperative to consider methods that combine these two techniques in order to meet the needs of all students.

And the last in terms of the effectiveness of game-based learning, most students found the method effective in improving their English language skills. Specifically, 83.3% of students agreed that game-based learning was a useful method, while 16.7% of students did not find this method useful in improving their English. The results show that game-based learning has great potential and further research is needed to identify the components that can increase the effectiveness of this method in the classroom.

The picture above supports the observation made by the English teacher in class 8E that the students were very enthusiastic and motivated to participate in the Digital Game-Based Learning (DGBL) activities. This finding shows that students are not only interested in digital games, but also feel that this learning technique has a positive impact on their learning experience. In other words, DGBL not only helps students to learn, but also motivates them.



In this study, DGBL has the potential to transform English language teaching, especially to capture the attention of modern students who are constantly connected to technology. In today's technological age, where technology is becoming an essential part of everyday life, it is important for educators to change their teaching methods to meet students' wants and needs. By incorporating digital games into the curriculum, educators can create a dynamic and interactive learning environment that is not only engaging, but also relevant to students' everyday lives.

The study also highlights that DGBL is in line with constructivist theory, which emphasises the importance of experiential learning and the active involvement of students in the learning process. In this context, DGBL provides students with opportunities to learn through exploration and interaction, which in turn can help them to better understand what they are learning. Students not only receive information but also actively participate in the learning process.

In addition, Prensky's notion of 'digital natives' reminds educators of the importance of adapting their teaching methods to meet the needs of students who use technology. Growing up in a technology-rich environment, today's students have a different approach to learning than previous generations. DGBL seems to be an interesting method to improve students' learning outcomes by encouraging their curiosity and activity. Although DGBL has many advantages, there are some challenges. These are mainly related to technological resources and compatibility with learning objectives. Therefore, educators should be well prepared to integrate DGBL into their curriculum.

This study observed the great impact of DGBL on students' motivation, engagement and English language proficiency, although there are still issues to be addressed. Students perceived DGBL as an effective method for understanding English language learning and stated that they preferred this method to conventional or simple methods. This shows that DGBL is not only attractive to students, but also produces good results in terms of English comprehension and skills.

However, successful implementation of DGBL requires adequate technological resources and sufficient support from teachers. Teachers play an important role in creating a supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable to participate and experiment with digital games. With the right support, DGBL can be successful and provide a rewarding learning experience.

In conclusion, this study highlights the use of DGBL to meet the needs of today's students. We can increase students' interest and desire to learn English by using learning methods that match their interests and preferences. Students use DGBL not only as a tool, but also as a bridge that connects them to a wider and more interesting world of learning. Therefore, DGBL has great potential to change the way teaching and learning is done, making it more relevant and effective in contemporary education.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the use of digital game-based learning (DGBL) can significantly increase students' interest and desire to learn English. In-depth observations and interviews with Grade 8E students at SMPN 1 Lamongan showed that DGBL can make the conventional learning environment more interesting and interactive. Students showed a significant improvement in their understanding of the



English material when game elements were incorporated into the educational framework. They also found the learning process more enjoyable. Through its interactive nature, DGBL encourages students to be part of the learning experience. This is very important for language acquisition.

The results of this study show that DGBL enhances students' sense of solidarity as they work together and compete in a fun and supportive environment. This collaborative aspect is particularly important for language learning, where interaction and communication are crucial. Students said that the addition of digital games made them feel more motivated to participate in class activities. This shows the positive effect that gamification has on their attitude to learning. In addition, the use of digital games allows students to see their strengths and areas for improvement in real time, which is crucial for effective learning.

This research found that although DGBL has clear benefits, there are some problems associated with its implementation. One of the main issues is the lack of technological resources in some educational settings. Many schools may lack the necessary infrastructure, such as reliable internet access and enough devices for each student. This lack of infrastructure can make it difficult for students to integrate digital games into the curriculum. Teachers may also find it difficult to adapt games to specific learning objectives. This requires creativity and careful preparation. These challenges suggest that teachers need to develop their professional skills in order to use technology effectively.

In addition, this study shows that institutional support is crucial to support the integration of DGBL. Schools should invest in technology resources and provide training for teachers to ensure they are confident in using digital games in the classroom. By creating an educational environment that embraces innovation and technology, educational institutions can enhance students' learning experiences and prepare them for the future.

The results show that DGBL is essential for teaching methodologies, especially for English language learning in the digital age. DGBL has positive effects on students' motivation, engagement and comprehension. Digital game-based learning offers a way to make educational experiences more dynamic, relevant and effective as educators face the challenges of contemporary teaching. Going forward, educators need to recognise the potential of technology in education. They should prioritise the development of strategies that use digital tools to improve student learning outcomes. In doing so, we have the opportunity to create a generation of learners who are not only proficient in English, but also have the skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly digital world.

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