International Journal of Teaching and Learning (INJOTEL) e-ISSN: 3025-8308
Vol. 4 No. 4 (2026), pages: 209~215

STUDENTS' MOTIVATION IN LEARNING ENGLISH THROUGH GAME-BASED LEARNING AT THE EIGHTH GRADE OF SMP ALFAQIH MUQADDAM KUBU RAYA

Tedi
English Education Study Program, Teacher Training and Education Faculty,
Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Kalimantan Barat
Alamat: Jalan Ahmad Yani II, Parit Derabak Desa Parit Baru Kec. Sungai Raya Kab. Kubu Raya Kalimantan Barat
Korespondensi penulis: tedi@gmail.com

Abstract. *This study explores the effect of game-based learning on students' motivation in learning English at the eighth grade of SMP Alfaqih Muqaddam, Kubu Raya. Two games, Sentence Scramble and Matching Words, were used as instructional media, and a descriptive qualitative approach was employed through classroom observations and student interviews. The research focused on motivational aspects such as interest, participation, and enthusiasm. The findings show that students were more attentive, engaged, and enthusiastic during game-based lessons compared to traditional teaching. Collaboration and enthusiasm were the most strongly influenced aspects, while vocabulary-focused activities, particularly Matching Words, generated slightly higher participation than grammar-focused activities like Sentence Scramble. Students reported that games made learning English more enjoyable and less intimidating. The teacher confirmed these results, noting improvements in vocabulary mastery and sentence construction, though challenges such as classroom noise, time management, and shy students were observed. The study suggests that teachers should regularly integrate games while balancing them with traditional methods. Schools can support this approach with resources and training. Future research may expand the sample size, explore different types of games, and investigate the long-term effects on English proficiency. Overall, game-based learning effectively enhances students' motivation and engagement in English lessons.*
Keywords: *Game-Based Learning, Motivation, English Learning, Vocabulary,*

INTRODUCTION

English has become an essential language in the global era, not only as a tool for communication but also as a requirement in education, technology, and international relations. For students, mastering English involves several skills, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking. However, achieving proficiency in these skills often depends on students' motivation and engagement. Motivation is a key factor in the learning process, as it drives students to actively participate, persist in learning, and overcome challenges. According to Dornyei (2001), highly motivated students tend to be more attentive, enthusiastic, and willing to take risks in using the language, which ultimately improves their learning outcomes. Conversely, low motivation can lead to passive learning, lack of participation, and slower progress.

At SMP Alfaqih Muqaddam in Kubu Raya, English is taught as a compulsory subject starting from the lower grades. Teachers have observed that many students face challenges such as limited vocabulary, difficulty in forming sentences, and lack of confidence in using English in daily communication. Traditional teaching methods, such as lectures and repetitive exercises, often fail to engage students fully and may result in decreased interest and participation. This situation highlights the need for more interactive and student-centered learning strategies that can enhance students' motivation and make learning English more enjoyable.

One of the effective approaches to address this issue is game-based learning. Game-based learning integrates educational content into interactive activities that are both enjoyable and challenging for students. It has been widely recognized as a method that can increase students' interest, participation, and overall motivation. By engaging students in playful and meaningful learning experiences, games can transform the classroom into a dynamic environment where students are encouraged to take an active role in their own learning.

In this study, two specific games were implemented: Sentence Scramble and Matching Words. Sentence Scramble involves giving students scrambled words that they must arrange to form grammatically correct sentences. This game is particularly effective in helping students practice grammar and sentence structure while promoting critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Matching Words requires students to connect vocabulary words with their corresponding definitions or pictures, which strengthens their vocabulary knowledge and comprehension. Both games are designed to be interactive, collaborative, and motivating, allowing students to learn English in a fun and meaningful way.

The reason for choosing game-based learning as the focus of this study is based on both practical and theoretical considerations. Practically, observing students at SMP Alfaqih Muqaddam showed that traditional teaching methods often fail to capture students' attention and motivate them to actively engage in learning activities. Theoretically, research has indicated that interactive learning methods, including games, positively affect students' motivation and learning outcomes (Prensky, 2001; Gee, 2007). By implementing Sentence Scramble and Matching Words, this study aims to explore how structured educational games can enhance students' motivation and participation in learning English.

This study is important because it addresses a common problem in English learning, low motivation among students, and proposes an effective solution through game-based learning. The findings are expected to provide practical insights for teachers on how to design engaging lessons that improve both motivation and language proficiency. Therefore, the study title, "Students' Motivation in Learning English through Game-Based Learning at the Eighth Grade of SMP Alfaqih

Muqaddam, Kubu Raya", reflects the research focus on the impact of interactive games on students' motivation in a real classroom setting.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design to explore how *game-based learning* influences students' motivation in learning English at SMP Alfaqih Muqaddam, Kubu Raya. Qualitative research is appropriate for understanding social phenomena from participants' perspectives (Creswell, 2014). The research will be conducted during the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year, involving approximately 25 eighth-grade students selected through *purposive sampling*. The study focuses on two learning games, namely *Sentence Scramble* and *Matching Words*, as instructional media in the natural classroom setting (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 1996).

Data will be collected through three techniques: observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation focuses on students' motivation indicators, including interest, participation, and enthusiasm during the implementation of both games. Interviews will be conducted with selected students and the English teacher to explore their perceptions and experiences regarding *game-based learning*. Meanwhile, documentation, including lesson plans, students' written work, and classroom photographs, will provide supporting evidence. These techniques are supported by the principles of qualitative data collection described by Creswell (2014) and Sugiyono (2018).

The data will be analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model (1994), which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction involves selecting and organizing relevant information, while data display presents the findings through descriptive narratives and supporting tables. Conclusions will then be drawn and verified through data triangulation to strengthen the credibility of the findings. The research procedures include preliminary investigation, research planning, classroom implementation, data collection, data analysis, and reporting. Through these systematic procedures, the study aims to describe how *Sentence Scramble* and *Matching Words* contribute to students' motivation in learning English (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Sugiyono, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section presents the findings of the study based on data collected from observations, student interviews, and teacher interviews. The focus is on how **game-based learning using Sentence Scramble and Matching Words** influenced students' motivation in learning English at the eighth grade of SMP Alfaqih Muqaddam, Kubu Raya.

Observation Results

The observation involved 20 students during English learning activities using Sentence Scramble and Matching Words. Students' motivation was measured through indicators such as interest, participation, and enthusiasm.

The results are summarized as follows: The observation results showed that students demonstrated a high level of motivation during the implementation of the games. Around 90% of students paid close attention to the teacher's explanation, while 70% showed interest by asking questions, although some remained shy.

Participation was also encouraging, with 80% of students actively engaged in constructing sentences through Sentence Scramble and 85% taking part in Matching Words, indicating slightly higher interest in the latter. Collaboration was the strongest aspect, as 95% of students worked well in groups, demonstrating effective teamwork. Enthusiasm was also high, with 90% of students showing positive energy by smiling, clapping, or volunteering answers.

In terms of task completion, 75% of students were able to finish the game activities on time, though a few required extra time. Additionally, 80% of students gave positive comments about the use of games in class. Overall, the findings suggest that students showed strong motivation, particularly in collaboration and enthusiasm,while participation in asking questions remained the lowest indicator at 70%, reflecting that some students were still hesitant to speak up.

Interview Results with Students

From the interviews, most students shared positive opinions about learning English with games. Fifteen out of twenty students said the games made lessons more fun. When asked which game they liked more, twelve students chose *Matching Words*, six preferred *Sentence Scramble*, and two liked both the same. Sixteen students said the games increased their interest in learning English. During the activities, fourteen students felt excited, four were nervous at first, and two were shy but still joined in. Eleven students thought *Matching Words* was most helpful for practicing vocabulary, while seven felt *Sentence Scramble* helped them with sentence construction. Seventeen students also admitted they were more enthusiastic during games than in regular lessons. As for suggestions, many students recommended adding more types of games and giving small rewards to make the activities even more interesting.

Interview Results with Teacher

The teacher's responses confirmed both the observations and the students' perspectives regarding the use of games in English lessons. The teacher considered games effective in creating a fun and motivating classroom atmosphere, as students showed greater enthusiasm and participation during both *Sentence Scramble* and *Matching Words*. According to the teacher, enthusiasm and participation were the

most strongly influenced aspects of motivation. In terms of learning outcomes, *Matching Words* was seen as helpful for improving vocabulary mastery, while *Sentence Scramble* supported the development of grammar skills, particularly sentence construction. Nevertheless, some challenges were noted, including increased classroom noise during group work, difficulties in managing time effectively, and the need to encourage shy students to participate. Despite these challenges, the teacher recommended the regular use of games in English lessons, while also emphasizing the importance of balancing them with traditional methods to ensure deeper comprehension of the material.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that game-based learning, specifically Sentence Scramble and Matching Words, significantly increased students' motivation in learning English.

1. Effect on Motivation

The results from both observations and interviews indicated that students demonstrated greater attention, participation, and enthusiasm in game-based lessons than in conventional classroom activities. This outcome is consistent with Prensky (2001), who emphasized that the use of games can enhance learners' engagement and motivation within educational settings.

2. Interest, Participation, and Enthusiasm

The findings showed that students displayed a high level of collaboration (95%) and enthusiasm (90%) during the game-based activities. Participation was slightly higher in *Matching Words* (85%) compared to *Sentence Scramble* (80%), suggesting that vocabulary-based games were more engaging for this group of students. These results are in line with Arsyad (2011), who reported that educational games can enhance students' motivation while also supporting improvements in their language learning outcomes.

3. Students' Perceptions

Most students expressed positive feelings toward the use of games, noting that English lessons became more enjoyable and less intimidating when games were included. Their stronger preference for *Matching Words* indicates that vocabulary-focused activities may be easier to understand and therefore more appealing to learners. This finding is consistent with Gee (2007), who emphasized that meaningful and interactive tasks are more effective in fostering student engagement.

4. Teacher's Perspective

The teacher confirmed that the use of games successfully boosted students' participation and enthusiasm, while also contributing to improvements in both vocabulary and grammar skills. However, several challenges were noted, including increased classroom noise, time management issues, and the need to encourage shy students to take part more actively. These findings suggest that while game-based

learning is highly effective, teachers need to carefully manage classroom activities in order to minimize these challenges and maximize the benefits of this approach.

Summary of Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study show that game-based learning had a positive impact on students' motivation in learning English. The most noticeable improvements were seen in students' enthusiasm and participation, which increased significantly during the game sessions. Among the two activities, *Matching Words* appeared to be slightly more effective in motivating students, especially in supporting vocabulary learning, while *Sentence Scramble* contributed to strengthening sentence construction skills. Together, the games offered complementary benefits, helping students engage in improving both vocabulary and grammar. Although some minor challenges were encountered, such as classroom noise, time management, and encouraging shy students, the teacher strongly recommended the continued use of games as a motivational strategy in English learning.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion presented in Chapter IV, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Game-based learning using Sentence Scramble and Matching Words had a positive impact on students' motivation in learning English at the eighth grade of SMPAlfaqih Muqaddam, Kubu Raya.

   Students showed higher levels of attention, enthusiasm, participation, and collaboration compared to traditional lessons.
2. The most influential aspects of motivation were enthusiasm and participation.

   More than 90% of students were actively engaged in the learning process, smiled, clapped, volunteered answers, and worked well with peers during the games.
3. Matching Words was slightly more effective than Sentence Scramble in increasing students' motivation.

   Students found vocabulary games easier, more enjoyable, and less intimidating. However, Sentence Scramble also contributed to improving grammar and sentence construction skills.
4. Both students and the teacher perceived game-based learning positively.

   Students expressed that learning with games made English more fun, while the teacher observed increased classroom participation and recommended using games as part of teaching strategies.

REFERENCES

Arsyad, A. (2011). *Media Pembelajaran*. Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada. Alex, Joseph Maxwell. Qualitative Research Design. London: SAGEPublications: 1996.

Arikunto, Suharsimi. Prosedur Penelitian, Suatu Pendekatan Praktek.Jakarta: PT. RinekaCipta, 2002.

Arikunto, Suharsimi. Prosedur Penelitian: Suatu Pendekatan Praktik.Jakarta:PT. Rineka Cipta: 2013.

Awed, Ahmad, and Awan Mahmoud. Journal for Educational & Psychological Research & Studies: Using Games to Promote Students' Motivation toward Learning English. Vol. 2 - No. 5.

Brown, H. Douglas. Principles of Language Learning and Teaching.New York: Addison Wesley Longman. Inc., 2000. 4th Ed.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Denzin, Norman K. and Yvona S. Lincoln. Handbook of Qualitative Research. California: Sage Publications: 1994.

Djamarah, Syaiful Bahri. Psikologi Belajar. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2008.

Gee, J. P. (2007). *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy* (2nd ed.). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Prensky, M. (2001). *Digital Game-Based Learning*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Sugiyono. (2018). *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan: Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.

Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom*.Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Harmer, J. (2007). *The Practice of English Language Teaching* (4th ed.).Harlow: Pearson Longman.

Larsen, Diane & Freeman, Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Lavrakas, Paul J. Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods.California: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2008.

Oxford, R. L. (1990). *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Slavin, R. E. (2009). *Educational Psychology: Theory and Practice* (9th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Uno, Hamzah B. Teori Motivasi & Pengukurannya (Analisis di Bidang Pendidikan). Jakarta: Penerbit Bumi Aksara, 2008.

Ur, P. (2012). *A Course in English Language Teaching* (2nd ed.).Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.