

THE ROLE OF GAME-BASED LEARNING IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

Game-based learning (GBL) is highlighted as an exceptionally popular and beneficial teaching methodology, particularly for young English learners. The article summarizes a systematic review of Indonesian studies, concluding that GBL offers numerous advantages. These benefits include enhanced student engagement, improved learning outcomes, and increased motivation. Specifically, GBL helps young students in developing practical language skills, mastering basic vocabulary, and cultivating essential 21st-century skills such as creativity and digital literacy. The review confirms that GBL positively influences students' attitudes towards English learning.

Keywords

Game-Based Learning, English Learning, Primary Students

Introduction

The introduction emphasizes that the 21st century has revolutionized education, largely driven by the pervasive growth of Information Technology (IT). This era demands that human life adapt to new temporal and geographical constraints, necessitating ubiquitous, anytime, and anywhere access to information and communication.

Consequently, there is an urgent need to integrate technology into educational fields. The teaching of English, a crucial 21st-century skill, has been particularly affected. Traditional methods often fall short of meeting the diverse learning demands of contemporary students. This is where combining traditional learning materials with technology-driven methods, such as game-based materials, proves beneficial. GBL is presented as an effective and enjoyable alternative to conventional instruction, shifting the learning paradigm from mere instruction to a balanced approach of amusement and purposeful study.

Application and Existing Research

The text highlights that GBL is intentionally designed to enhance the learning process by making the atmosphere more interactive, motivating, and enjoyable. Research suggests that GBL has the potential to overcome student boredom and reluctance towards conventional, teacher-centered methods.

A preliminary observation in one primary school revealed that while teachers are aware of the importance of connecting material to real-life situations, they often default to traditional lecture methods. This reluctance is attributed to teachers' unfamiliarity with creative techniques or their inability to dedicate time to developing new, innovative materials.

The Method of GBL

GBL offers a practical solution to these issues. According to experts, the game-based theory aligns well with educational procedures. GBL is compatible with young learners because the game elements naturally captivate their interest and ensure they are actively involved in the learning process, which helps them easily grasp the material. Furthermore, GBL helps students acquire and retain a structured learning strategy when material is presented within a game framework.

Empirical Evidence

* Ghazy et al. (2021) found that GBL significantly improves student achievement and interest in the classroom.



* Saputra et al. (2021) noted that GBL was particularly effective among young English learners in enhancing their vocabulary.

* Bakin and Basir (2018) emphasized that game activities are advantageous for students in terms of retention, cognitive understanding, and application of information.

* Morales and Ferrer (2020) reported that GBL successfully provided pre-service teachers with practical opportunities to use game-based techniques in teaching.

* Conversely, the study by Muthannaethorn and Insuk (2021) showed that while the majority of higher-education students preferred GBL, their learning approaches were often more conventional than the game-based method allowed.

Research Focus

This section details the research methodology, selection criteria, and initial findings of the systematic review on Game-Based Learning (GBL).

Research Focus and Reference

The researcher's primary objective is to conduct a review of existing studies concerning the impact and application of Game-Based Learning (GBL) on young learners in the English language context. The resulting data from this research is intended to serve as a practical reference for both teachers and students, helping educators to implement new learning strategies and ensure the classroom environment remains engaging and non-monotonous.

The review process involved:

* Data Sources: Google Scholar and ResearchGate databases.

* Keywords: "Game-based learning for young learners in EFL" and "Game-based learning for elementary school students".

* Selection Process: Articles were filtered using specific acceptance and exception (inclusion/exclusion) criteria.

Acceptance and Exception Criteria (Table 1):

Acceptance Criteria	Exception Criteria
Must focus on Game-based English learning for young learners	Should not focus on GBL for students in general
Must be empirical research	Should not be non-empirical research
Must have been published between the years 2017–2022	Should not have been published outside of the 2017–2022 timeframe
Must be written in the English language and related to the ESL or EFL context	Should not be in other languages or outside the ESL/EFL context

After the filtering process, seven articles were ultimately selected for in-depth review.

Findings & Discussion

Based on the review of the seven articles, the researchers concluded that Game-Based Learning plays a vital role in supporting teachers during the English learning process for young learners, particularly at the elementary school level.

Key findings from the literature review emphasize that GBL is effective because:

* It is a powerful medium for teaching English vocabulary to young learners.

* It makes lessons fun and attractive by using topic-related games, making the presentation of material lively and engaging.

* The use of GBL is valuable for helping students acquire and develop necessary skills through highly enjoyable activities.

This paraphrase covers the findings, advantages, and final conclusions of the systematic review on Game-Based Learning (GBL) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

Findings and Discussion (Continued)



The systematic review of seven selected articles confirms that Game-Based Learning (GBL) is a crucial tool for English teachers working with young learners, especially those in elementary school.

A summary of the literature revealed several significant ways GBL contributes to the learning process:

- * GBL is an excellent medium for teaching vocabulary to young English learners.
- * It utilizes topic-related games to make lessons fun, attractive, and lively.
- * It facilitates the acquisition and development of necessary skills through highly enjoyable activities.

Advantages of GBL (Table 2)

A detailed analysis of the seven articles produced a breakdown of the key advantages of GBL, as shown in Table 2:

Advantages of GBL	Frequency (f)	Selected Articles (Examples)
Upgrading motivation (for students)	3	Mahayanti et al. (2020), Lastari et al. (2020)
Give a positive perception (of learning)	2	Lastari et al. (2020), Fidyariningrum et al. (2018)
More amusement	7	Mahayanti et al. (2020), Lastari et al. (2020)
Upgrading students' vocabulary	3	Fidyariningrum et al. (2018), Fatchiyah & Fauzi (2018)
Upgrading students' learning process and performance	3	Mahayanti et al. (2020), Lastari et al. (2020)
Improving student's critical thinking basics	1	Behnannia et al. (2020)
Making creative environment	1	Behnannia et al. (2020)
Attract students' learning interest	7	Behnannia et al. (2020), Lastari et al. (2020)

Based on the evidence from the reviewed articles, GBL offers various advantages that directly contribute to students' acquisition and understanding of English as a Foreign Language. The appeal of GBL lies in its capacity to attract students' interest and make learning highly amusing.

Furthermore, GBL is effective because:

- * It assists in developing problem-solving and critical thinking abilities.
- * This method positively influences the learning process and accelerates young learners' familiarity with practicing skills.
- * It helps students improve their grasp of vocabulary.

The most effective method for teaching vocabulary to young learners involves utilizing games. By integrating games, teachers can successfully provide the best medium to enhance vocabulary acquisition.

This section summarizes the remaining discussion, practical implications, and the final conclusion of the systematic review on Game-Based Learning (GBL).

Discussion and Practical Implications

The paper argues that a fun and enjoyable learning process, where students are motivated to engage in learning activities, is crucial for achieving successful learning outcomes. When students feel pleasure and joy in the classroom, they are more inclined to participate in challenging tasks.

The study emphasizes that it is essential for teachers to know their students' interests and to connect learning materials with creative, real-world ideas that resonate with young learners. The review clearly indicates that Game-Based Learning (GBL) methods are highly effective in creating an environment where enjoyment and learning objectives are achieved simultaneously.

Furthermore, the document notes that successful use of GBL relies on teachers being proficient in using technology and digital literacy skills, and having the ability to set up



educational games. Teachers must be prepared to integrate creativity and technology in a manner that supports the development of young learners' creative and educational principles.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this systematic review has proven the significance of Game-Based Learning (GBL) as a highly beneficial method for English teaching, especially for young learners. The method offers a substantial positive impact on students' learning during the process.

Key Takeaways:

- * GBL effectively increases students' interest and motivation.
- * It helps reduce student confusion and enables them to continuously improve their ability to utilize educational technology.

- * Teachers are advised to be skilled in choosing and creating suitable games that provide variety, ensuring that students remain highly engaged and are not reliant on a single type of game.

Summary of Advantages (Based on Table 2)

The review confirmed that the most frequent advantages of GBL were:

- * More amusement (reported in 7 articles).
- * Attracting students' learning interest (reported in 7 articles).
- * Upgrading motivation, upgrading vocabulary, and upgrading learning process and performance (each reported in 3 articles).

The paper specifically states that the best way to teach vocabulary to young learners is by utilizing games, which serve as an excellent medium to improve vocabulary skills.

This section summarizes the final part of the systematic review, covering the conclusion, recommendations for teachers, and the list of reviewed literature.

The paper concludes by asserting that the systematic review strongly supports the use of Game-Based Learning (GBL) as a highly effective and beneficial method for teaching English, particularly to young learners.

Key Impacts of GBL:

- * GBL has a substantial positive effect on students during the learning process.
- * It effectively increases students' interest and motivation.
- * It helps reduce confusion and enhances students' ability to continuously improve their familiarity with educational technology.

Recommendations for Teachers:

Teachers must be adept at selecting and creating varied games suitable for instruction. This variety is necessary to ensure students remain highly engaged and avoid monotony from using only one type of game. Furthermore, effective GBL implementation requires that teachers are skilled in using technology, possess digital literacy, and are able to creatively set up educational games. This approach supports the development of young learners' creative and educational principles.

References (Abridged List)

The article relies on an extensive list of scholarly publications. The systematic review utilized seven empirical studies published between 2017 and 2022.

Examples of cited works supporting the review's findings include:

- * Fatchiyah & Fauzi (2018): Research on mastering English vocabulary for young learners using the Kahoot! game.
- * Ghazy, et al. (2021): A study on the use of game-based learning in English that resulted in improved student achievement and interest.
- * Lastari, et al. (2020): Research confirming that GBL is an effective tool to engage young learners in the EFL classroom.
- * Mahayanti, et al. (2020): A study on GBL specifically targeting elementary school students in Romania.



* Fidyariningrum, et al. (2018): Work focusing on improving young learners' vocabulary mastery through Game-Based Learning.

The cited literature collectively reinforces the paper's conclusion that games are the best medium to teach vocabulary and enhance overall skill development in young English learners.

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