

THE INFLUENCE OF GAMIFICATION STRATEGY TOWARDS ENGLISH VOCABULARY MASTERY AT THE NINTH GRADE STUDENTS OF MTS N 2 NORTH LAMPUNG

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Abstract: The problems in this research were that the ninth-grade students of MTsN 2 North Lampung had low English language skills, limitations in mastering English vocabulary, low learning motivation, and a less of interest in learning English. In addition, teachers had not applied much variation in English teaching techniques, and games were rarely used as a learning method in English classes. To overcome these problems, the researcher applied a gamification strategy as an alternative method to improve students' English vocabulary mastery. This study aimed to find out the influence of the gamification strategy towards English vocabulary mastery at the ninth-grade students of MTsN 2 North Lampung. The population of this research was all ninth-grade students, totaling 224 students. The sample consisted of two classes: IX.1 as the experimental class and IX.2 as the control class, each consisting of 33 students, selected using the purposive sampling technique. The research method used was a quantitative quasi-experimental design with a nonequivalent control group design. The data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests to measure students' vocabulary mastery before and after the treatment. The instrument used was a multiple-choice test consisting of 40 validated and reliable items. The data were analyzed using normality, homogeneity, and hypothesis tests with a t-test formula. The results showed that the average post-test score of the experimental class was significantly higher than that of the control class. The t-test result indicated that $t_{\text{observed}} > t_{\text{table}}$ ($0.937 > 0.334$) at a significance level of 0.05, meaning that H_a was accepted. This finding shows that there is a significant influence of gamification strategy towards English vocabulary mastery at the ninth-grade students of MTsN 2 North Lampung. Therefore, gamification can be considered an effective and enjoyable learning strategy to enhance students' engagement and vocabulary acquisition in English learning.

Keywords: *Gamification Strategy, Vocabulary Mastery, English Learning*

Abstrak: Permasalahan dalam penelitian ini adalah siswa kelas sembilan MTsN 2 Lampung Utara memiliki kemampuan bahasa Inggris yang rendah, keterbatasan

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dalam menguasai kosakata bahasa Inggris, motivasi belajar yang rendah, dan kurangnya minat dalam belajar bahasa Inggris. Selain itu, guru belum banyak menerapkan variasi dalam teknik pengajaran bahasa Inggris, dan permainan jarang digunakan sebagai metode pembelajaran di kelas bahasa Inggris. Untuk mengatasi permasalahan tersebut, peneliti menerapkan strategi gamifikasi sebagai metode alternatif untuk meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata bahasa Inggris siswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh strategi gamifikasi terhadap penguasaan kosakata bahasa Inggris di kalangan siswa kelas sembilan MTsN 2 Lampung Utara. Populasi penelitian ini adalah seluruh siswa kelas sembilan yang berjumlah 224 siswa. Sampel terdiri dari dua kelas: IX.1 sebagai kelas eksperimen dan IX.2 sebagai kelas kontrol, masing-masing terdiri dari 33 siswa, yang dipilih menggunakan teknik purposive sampling. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah desain quasi-eksperimental kuantitatif dengan desain nonequivalent control group design. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes awal dan tes akhir untuk mengukur penguasaan kosakata siswa sebelum dan sesudah perlakuan. Instrumen yang digunakan adalah tes pilihan ganda yang terdiri dari 40 item yang tervalidasi dan reliabel. Data dianalisis menggunakan uji normalitas, homogenitas, dan hipotesis dengan rumus uji-t. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa rata-rata skor tes akhir kelas eksperimen secara signifikan lebih tinggi daripada kelas kontrol. Hasil uji-t menunjukkan bahwa $t_{observed} > t_{table}$ ($0,937 > 0,334$) pada tingkat signifikansi 0,05, yang berarti H_a diterima. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa terdapat pengaruh yang signifikan dari strategi gamifikasi terhadap penguasaan kosakata bahasa Inggris di kalangan siswa kelas sembilan MTsN 2 Lampung Utara. Oleh karena itu, gamifikasi dapat dianggap sebagai strategi pembelajaran yang efektif dan menyenangkan untuk meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa dan perolehan kosakata dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris

Kata kunci: Strategi Gamifikasi, Penguasaan Kosakata, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris

I. INTRODUCTION

English is an essential subject in the Indonesian education system, especially at the junior high school level, because it is not only a compulsory subject but also a vital skill in the global era. Effective communication in English enables students to understand written and spoken information and express ideas clearly. One of the most

fundamental components of English language learning is vocabulary, as it serves as the foundation for mastering the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students who have limited vocabulary often experience difficulties in communication and academic achievement (Ambarwati & Mandasari, 2020).

Vocabulary plays a central role in language acquisition because it carries meaning and allows learners to understand and produce language effectively. Without sufficient vocabulary, language learning cannot be achieved optimally. A strong vocabulary base helps students comprehend texts, communicate fluently, and perform better in all English skills (Sari & Aminatun, 2021). Therefore, vocabulary mastery is considered the core element of foreign language learning.

Based on interviews and classroom observations conducted at MTsN 2 North Lampung, it was found that many eighth-grade students still have serious difficulties in mastering English vocabulary. These difficulties were evident when students were asked to complete written and oral exercises, create dialogues, summarize lessons, answer questions in English, and translate sentences. Many students depended heavily on dictionaries and showed confusion when using English in class. These findings indicate that students' limited vocabulary negatively affects their comprehension and communication skills.

In addition to vocabulary problems, students' motivation and interest in learning English were relatively low, particularly in classes VIII 1 and VIII 2. During the learning process, many students were inattentive, talked with their classmates, and showed little enthusiasm for participating in classroom activities. This lack of motivation made the learning process less effective and reduced students' engagement in English lessons.

Students' low English achievement is also reflected in their test scores. Data showed that more than half of the students did not reach the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 75. This indicates that the overall English proficiency of students is still low. One of the main factors contributing to this condition is students' limited vocabulary, which makes it difficult for them to understand texts and apply language skills effectively (Br Simamora & Oktaviani, 2020).

Another contributing factor is the use of conventional teaching methods that rely heavily on memorization and repetitive practice. Such methods are often perceived as boring and ineffective because they do not encourage students to think critically or actively participate in the learning process. As a result, students tend to become passive learners with low vocabulary retention (Guo Ziyu et al., 2023).

To address these problems, innovative and engaging teaching strategies are required. One promising approach is gamification, which involves the use of game elements such as points, badges, levels, challenges, and leaderboards in the learning environment. Gamification aims to increase students' motivation, engagement, and enjoyment in the learning process (Jusuf, 2016). By integrating game elements, gamification creates a more interactive and meaningful learning atmosphere.

Several studies have shown that gamification has a positive impact on vocabulary learning. Gamification encourages students to be more active, motivated, and focused during lessons

by creating a competitive and enjoyable learning environment (Zhou & Wei, 2024). Game elements such as badges and points have been proven to improve students' vocabulary mastery and make learning more effective and enjoyable (Shahidan et al., 2024). In addition, gamification has been reported to help students remember vocabulary more easily and improve learning outcomes (Cuello et al., 2023; Jaiswal, 2024).

Based on the issues described above, this research aims to investigate the influence of gamification strategy on English vocabulary mastery among ninth-grade students of MTsN 2 North Lampung. The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable contributions for teachers as an alternative and innovative teaching strategy, for students in improving vocabulary mastery and learning motivation, and for future researchers as a reference for further studies on gamification and language learning strategies.

II. METHOD

This research employed an experimental research method using a quantitative approach. Experimental research is designed to determine the influence of an independent variable on a dependent variable under controlled conditions (Sugiyono, 2022). In this study, the independent variable is the gamification strategy, while the dependent variable is students' English vocabulary mastery. The primary purpose of experimental research is to examine whether a particular treatment

causes a significant effect on the outcome variable.

Specifically, this research applied a quasi-experimental design, which is a development of true experimental research. According to Sugiyono (2022), quasi-experimental design includes both an experimental group and a control group; however, it does not fully control external variables that may influence the research process. This design was chosen because the researcher could not randomly assign students to groups or control all external factors in the real classroom setting.

Based on this design, two groups were involved: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received treatment using a gamification learning strategy, while the control group was taught using conventional teaching methods commonly applied by teachers. Both groups were given a pre-test to measure their initial vocabulary mastery and a post-test to measure improvement after the treatment. The experimental group received five sessions of gamification-based instruction, whereas the control group participated in five sessions of conventional learning in accordance with the existing curriculum. The difference between the post-test results of the two groups was used to determine the effect of the gamification strategy on vocabulary mastery.

The population of this study consisted of all ninth-grade students at MTsN 2 North Lampung, totaling 224 students across seven classes (Sugiyono, 2022). Due to the large population size, sampling was necessary. The sample

was selected using a purposive sampling technique, which involves selecting participants based on specific considerations (Sugiyono, 2022). Two classes with similar characteristics and relatively low vocabulary achievement were chosen as samples. Class IX 1, consisting of 33 students, served as the experimental group, while class IX 2, also consisting of 33 students, served as the control group. Thus, the total sample size was 66 students.

The research instrument used to measure vocabulary mastery was a multiple-choice test. Research instruments are essential tools for collecting accurate and reliable data to answer research questions and test hypotheses (Sugiyono, 2022). Referring to Thornbury (2002), multiple-choice tests are commonly used to assess vocabulary knowledge because they are efficient and objective. The vocabulary test consisted of 40 items covering word classes (verbs, adjectives, nouns, and adverbs) and word meaning (synonyms and antonyms). Each correct answer was awarded one point, while incorrect answers received zero points, with the maximum score being 100 (Arikunto, 2010).

Vocabulary mastery in this study was conceptually defined as students' ability to recognize, understand, and use words appropriately in various English communication contexts. Operationally, vocabulary mastery was measured using students' test scores obtained from the post-test. The test results were calculated using a scoring formula proposed by Arikunto (2010), ensuring objectivity and consistency in assessment.

Before being used in the main study, the instrument underwent validity and reliability testing. Validity refers to the extent to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Sugiyono, 2022). The validity of the vocabulary test items was examined using the point biserial correlation formula, with the criteria that items were considered valid if the obtained correlation coefficient exceeded the *r*-table value (Arikunto, 2006). Expert judgment was also employed to ensure content validity.

Reliability testing was conducted using the Kuder–Richardson Formula 20 (KR-20) to determine the consistency of the instrument (Arikunto, 2010). An instrument was considered reliable if the reliability coefficient was higher than the *r*-table value, indicating that the test would yield consistent results when administered repeatedly.

Data collection was carried out through pre-tests and post-tests administered to both the experimental and control groups. The pre-test aimed to identify students' initial vocabulary mastery and ensure the equivalence of both groups before treatment. After the treatment phase, the post-test was conducted to measure improvements in vocabulary mastery and evaluate the effectiveness of the gamification strategy. Each test session lasted 45 minutes.

Data analysis involved several statistical procedures. First, a normality test using the Lilliefors test was conducted to determine whether the data were normally distributed (Sudjana, 2005). Second, a homogeneity test using the F-test was applied to examine whether the variances of the two groups were equal (Sugiyono,

2022). Finally, a hypothesis test using an independent samples t-test was employed to determine whether there was a significant difference in vocabulary mastery between the experimental and control groups (Sugiyono, 2022).

The hypotheses tested in this study were:

H₀ (null hypothesis): There is no significant influence of the gamification strategy on students' English vocabulary mastery.

H_a (alternative hypothesis): There is a significant influence of the gamification strategy on students' English vocabulary mastery.

The decision to accept or reject the hypotheses was based on the comparison between the calculated t-value and the t-table value at a significance level of 0.05. Through these procedures, the study aimed to provide empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of gamification as a learning strategy to improve English vocabulary mastery among ninth-grade students.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before conducting the main research, the researcher carried out a try-out test to examine the validity and reliability of the vocabulary mastery instrument. The try-out was conducted on Thursday, 17 July 2025, involving 35 ninth-grade students at MTsN 1 North Lampung. The instrument used was a multiple-choice vocabulary test consisting of 60 items with four answer options, and students were given 45 minutes to complete the test. The try-out stage is essential in quantitative experimental research to ensure that the instrument measures the intended construct accurately and consistently (Sugiyono, 2022).

After the try-out data were collected, the researcher proceeded to the treatment stage, which consisted of six meetings in total. The first meeting in both the experimental and control groups was devoted to administering the pre-test to measure students' initial vocabulary mastery. The experimental group then received vocabulary instruction using a gamification-based learning strategy, while the control group was taught using conventional teaching methods without gamification. At the final meeting, a post-test was administered to both groups. The pre-test and post-test results were analyzed and compared to identify differences in students' vocabulary mastery after the treatment.

Validity of the Instrument

The validity of the vocabulary mastery instrument was examined using the point biserial correlation formula. Validity refers to the extent to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Sugiyono, 2022). An item was considered valid if the value of observed was greater than the t-table at the specified significance level (Arikunto, 2006). Based on the analysis results, out of 60 items tested, 48 items met the validity criteria, while 12 items were found to be invalid and were therefore excluded from the research instrument.

The valid items represented all indicators of vocabulary mastery assessed in this study, including verbs, adjectives, nouns, adverbs, synonyms, and antonyms. Although several items were eliminated, the remaining valid items sufficiently covered all aspects of vocabulary mastery intended to be measured. This indicates that the

instrument possessed adequate content validity and was appropriate for use in the main study (Arikunto, 2010).

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the vocabulary mastery test was calculated using the Kuder–Richardson Formula 20 (KR-20). Reliability refers to the consistency of an instrument in measuring the same construct across different occasions (Arikunto, 2010). The instrument was considered reliable if the value of $r_{observed}$ exceeded the r_{table} at a 5% significance level with $n = 35$.

The calculation results showed that the $r_{observed}$ value was 0.937, while the r_{table} value was 0.334. Since $r_{observed} > r_{table}$, the instrument was categorized as highly reliable. This result indicates that the vocabulary mastery test was consistent and trustworthy for measuring students' vocabulary mastery in both the pre-test and post-test stages.

Pre-test Results

The pre-test was conducted on 20 August for the experimental group and on 21 August for the control group at MTsN 2 North Lampung. The results showed that the lowest score in the experimental class was 31, while the highest score was 71. In the control class, the lowest score was 33, and the highest score reached 85. These results indicate that both groups had relatively low vocabulary mastery before receiving treatment.

Normality and Homogeneity of Pre-test Data

To ensure that the data met statistical assumptions, normality and homogeneity tests were conducted. The normality test was carried out using the Lilliefors test. The results showed that the

$L_{observed}$ values for both the experimental and control classes were smaller than the L_{table} value (0.154). Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted, indicating that the pre-test data from both groups were normally distributed (Sudjana, 2005).

Furthermore, the homogeneity test was conducted using the F-test to determine whether the variances of the two groups were equal. The results showed that $F_{observed}$ (1.518) was smaller than F_{table} (3.991), meaning that the data were homogeneous. This homogeneity indicates that both groups had similar variance and were comparable for further analysis (Sugiyono, 2022).

T-test of Pre-test

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between the pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups. The results showed that $t_{observed}$ (0.002) was smaller than t_{table} (1.998) at a 5% significance level. This indicates that there was no significant difference in vocabulary mastery between the two groups before treatment. Therefore, both groups were considered to have equivalent initial abilities, which strengthens the validity of the experimental results (Sugiyono, 2022).

Learning Process

The learning process in this study consisted of six sessions: one pre-test session, one post-test session, and four instructional sessions. Each instructional session lasted 2×40 minutes and included opening activities, core learning activities, and closing activities. The experimental class received instruction using a gamification-based learning strategy, while the control class was taught using conventional lecture-based methods.

In the experimental class, gamification elements such as levels, quizzes, points, badges, challenges, and leaderboards were integrated into vocabulary learning, particularly in descriptive text materials. These elements were designed to increase students' engagement, motivation, and active participation in learning activities. Students were encouraged to analyze texts, identify new vocabulary, write descriptive texts, and collaborate in groups while earning points and rewards. Such learning activities align with the principles of gamification, which emphasize motivation, competition, and meaningful learning experiences (Jusuf, 2016).

In contrast, the control class followed conventional teaching procedures, including teacher explanations, reading activities, guided practice, and individual assignments. Although the learning objectives were the same, the absence of gamification elements resulted in a more teacher-centered learning environment.

Overall, this structured research process ensured that the data collected were valid, reliable, and statistically sound. The comparison between the experimental and control groups provided a strong basis for examining the effectiveness of gamification as a strategy for improving students' English vocabulary mastery.

Discussion

The results of the study showed that the gamification strategy had a significant influence gamification strategy towards English vocabulary mastery of ninth-grade students at MTsN 2 North Lampung. The increase in average scores in the experimental class indicated that students

were more interested and motivated to learn when learning was packaged with game elements such as points, badges, levels, and leaderboards.

The gamification strategy created a more lively, competitive, and enjoyable learning environment. Students appeared more active in answering questions, completing challenges, and interacting during the learning process. This active engagement directly impacted students' ability to remember and understand new vocabulary. This aligns with research by Jaiswal (2024), which found that gamification can significantly increase retention and learning motivation.

Furthermore, the use of leaderboards and badges encouraged students to achieve higher scores because they could see their learning progress in real time. The reward principle in gamification also helped reinforce positive behavior and encouraged students to continue learning.

In contrast, students in the control class using conventional methods showed lower progress. This could be due to the monotonous nature of the learning process, which led to a lack of student motivation. The significant difference in results between the two groups indicates that gamification successfully created a more effective learning environment than traditional learning.

Overall, the results of this study support the theory that gamification can increase student motivation, focus, and engagement, thus directly impacting English vocabulary mastery. These findings align with several previous studies, such as those by Cuello et al. (2023), Rahmawati et

al. (2023), and Laura & Manuel (2024), which all demonstrated the effectiveness of gamification in improving learning outcomes, particularly language skills.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the implementation of the gamification strategy had a significant positive influence on the English vocabulary mastery of ninth-grade students at MTsN 2 North Lampung. Students who were taught using gamification showed better vocabulary mastery compared to those who learned through conventional lecture-based methods. This indicates that gamification is more effective in facilitating vocabulary learning.

The gamification strategy created an interactive, enjoyable, and student-centered learning environment. By incorporating game elements such as challenges, points, and rewards, students became more motivated, actively engaged, and confident in learning English. These elements helped students understand and retain new vocabulary more easily while also fostering a positive attitude toward the learning process. Thus, gamification not only improved students' cognitive achievement

but also supported their affective development, particularly motivation and engagement.

Based on these conclusions, several suggestions can be proposed. English teachers are encouraged to integrate gamification strategies into vocabulary instruction to enhance student motivation and learning effectiveness. Students are advised to actively participate in gamified learning activities and continue practicing vocabulary independently using digital learning applications. Future researchers are recommended to conduct similar studies with larger samples, different educational levels, or other language skills to further explore the effectiveness of gamification in English language learning.

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