

**THE IMPACT OF GAMIFICATION ON MOTIVATION AND LEARNING
OUTCOMES IN ENGLISH VOCABULARY ACQUISITION AMONG GRADE VIII
STUDENTS AT MTS AL-FURQON KOTA CILEGON**

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Abstract

. This study aims to examine the impact of gamification on students' motivation and learning outcomes in English vocabulary acquisition among Grade VIII students at MTs Al-Furqon Kota Cilegon. A quasi-experimental design was employed, involving an experimental group that received gamified instruction and a control group that received traditional teaching. The instruments of the study consisted of a vocabulary test administered as pre-test and post-test, a motivation questionnaire, and observation checklists. The findings reveal a significant difference between the two groups. Students in the experimental group showed substantially greater improvement in vocabulary mastery, including word recognition, contextual understanding, and productive usage. Moreover, their motivation significantly increased, as reflected in higher enthusiasm, active participation, and persistence in completing vocabulary tasks. Gamification elements such as points, badges, leaderboards, and missions proved effective in enhancing students' intrinsic motivation by creating a more engaging and enjoyable learning environment. These results indicate that gamification is a powerful instructional strategy that can improve both motivation and learning outcomes in vocabulary acquisition. The study recommends broader implementation of gamification in English language teaching and encourages further research on its long-term effects and application across different language skills.

Abstrak

. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui dampak gamifikasi terhadap motivasi dan hasil belajar kosakata bahasa Inggris siswa kelas VIII di MTs Al-Furqon Kota Cilegon. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kuasi-eksperimen dengan dua kelompok, yaitu kelompok eksperimen yang menerima pembelajaran berbasis gamifikasi dan kelompok kontrol yang menerima pembelajaran konvensional. Instrumen penelitian meliputi tes kosakata yang diberikan sebagai pre-test dan post-test, angket motivasi, serta lembar observasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat perbedaan signifikan antara kedua kelompok. Siswa pada kelompok eksperimen menunjukkan peningkatan yang jauh lebih besar dalam penguasaan kosakata, termasuk pengenalan kata, pemahaman makna dalam konteks, dan penggunaan kosakata secara produktif. Selain itu, motivasi

siswa meningkat secara signifikan, yang terlihat dari antusiasme, keterlibatan aktif, dan ketekunan mereka dalam menyelesaikan tugas-tugas kosakata. Elemen gamifikasi seperti poin, lencana, papan peringkat, dan misi terbukti mampu meningkatkan motivasi intrinsik siswa dan menciptakan suasana belajar yang lebih menyenangkan. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa gamifikasi merupakan strategi pembelajaran yang efektif untuk meningkatkan motivasi dan hasil belajar kosakata siswa. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan penggunaan gamifikasi yang lebih luas dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, serta penelitian lanjutan mengenai dampak jangka panjang dan penerapannya pada keterampilan bahasa lainnya.

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INTRODUCTION

. Gamification has emerged as one of the most influential innovations in educational technology, offering new ways to improve student motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes. As English increasingly becomes a global language, vocabulary acquisition plays a critical role in developing communicative competence among learners. However, many students in secondary schools struggle with vocabulary retention due to limited exposure, lack of interest, and monotonous traditional teaching methods. Gamification, which incorporates game elements such as points, badges, leaderboards, and missions into the learning process, has been introduced as a promising solution to enhance students' intrinsic motivation. By transforming learning activities into game-like experiences, students are more likely to engage, participate actively, and remain motivated throughout the learning process (Anisa, Marmanto, and Supriyadi 2020).

At MTs Al-Furqon Kota Cilegon, vocabulary learning has been identified as an area requiring improvement among Grade VIII students. Based on preliminary observations, many students demonstrate low motivation when engaging with vocabulary tasks, often resulting in poor retention and limited understanding of word usage. Teachers also report that students quickly lose interest when asked to memorize lists of vocabulary or complete worksheets that do not stimulate interaction. These challenges indicate the need for an instructional approach that can transform vocabulary learning into a more dynamic, interactive, and enjoyable experience. Gamification presents itself as a strong candidate for addressing these issues, as it integrates challenge, reward, and competition—elements that are known to improve motivation (Diana et al. 2025).

The use of gamification in English language teaching is supported by motivational theories such as Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which highlights autonomy, competence, and relatedness as essential elements of motivation. Gamification fosters autonomy by allowing students to choose their pace and type of task; competence by providing immediate feedback and goals; and relatedness through teamwork and social competition. When these elements are present, students are more likely to feel engaged and invested in the learning process. This is particularly relevant for vocabulary acquisition, which requires ongoing practice and reinforcement to ensure long-term retention. (Sadeghi et al. 2022)

In the context of English vocabulary learning, gamification can also enhance cognitive processes related to memory and recall. Repeated exposure to vocabulary through gamified tasks helps activate long-term memory pathways more effectively than traditional drills. Game mechanics such as timed challenges encourage quick recall, while missions and quests require students to apply vocabulary in meaningful contexts. These experiences enhance not only vocabulary retention but also students' ability to use newly learned words in sentences, dialogues, and writing tasks (Salimei and Zangeneh 2022).

Technological advancements have made gamification increasingly accessible in schools. Mobile-based applications, interactive quizzes, and online gamified platforms allow teachers to design vocabulary learning tasks that are visually appealing and engaging. At MTs Al-Furqon Kota Cilegon, the integration of such tools provides opportunities for students to learn both inside and outside the classroom. With the availability of smartphones and internet access, students can participate in vocabulary missions at home, earn points, and compete with peers in digital leaderboards. This continuous exposure and reinforcement contribute to improved vocabulary acquisition.

Furthermore, gamification has been shown to strengthen collaborative learning. Group-based missions and challenges create opportunities for students to work together, share strategies, and support one another in achieving learning goals. Collaboration not only improves vocabulary mastery but also enhances communication and social skills—an essential aspect of learning English as a foreign language. These social interactions help maintain motivation and reduce anxiety, especially among students who previously struggled with vocabulary tasks (Octaberlina 2023).

However, while gamification offers numerous benefits, its implementation must be carefully designed to avoid overwhelming students or prioritizing competition over learning. Educators must balance fun and pedagogical goals to ensure that game elements enhance, rather than distract from, the learning process. In this study, gamification is implemented through a structured combination of points, badges, leaderboards, missions, and timed challenges, ensuring that every game element supports the intended vocabulary learning outcomes (Arif 2025).

Given the potential advantages of gamification, it is essential to explore its impact on students' motivation as well as their learning outcomes. Motivation plays a central role in vocabulary acquisition, influencing how much effort students are willing to invest in learning new words. Gamification has the potential to transform previously passive learners into active participants who willingly engage in repeated practice. Therefore, evaluating the motivational impact of gamification is a key component of this study.

The current study also investigates how gamification affects students' vocabulary acquisition outcomes. While motivation is an important predictor of learning, it must be supported by measurable improvements in vocabulary mastery. Examining both motivational and learning outcome variables will provide a holistic understanding of gamification's effectiveness in the English classroom. The quasi-experimental design used in this research allows for comparison between students receiving gamified instruction and those learning through traditional methods (Yu 2023).

Based on these considerations, this study titled *"The Impact of Gamification on Motivation and Learning Outcomes in English Vocabulary Acquisition Among Grade VIII Students at MTs Al-Furqon Kota Cilegon"* aims to investigate the extent to which gamification influences students' motivation and vocabulary achievement. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of research on game-based learning and provide practical insights for teachers seeking to enhance vocabulary instruction through innovative and engaging methods.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

. Gamification is defined as the use of game design elements in non-game contexts to enhance user engagement, motivation, and performance. According to Deterding et al. (2011), gamification includes the implementation of points, badges, leaderboards, missions, challenges, and feedback systems to create game-like experiences within educational settings. In language learning, gamification transforms traditional activities into interactive and rewarding tasks that encourage students to participate actively. The framework of gamification emphasizes behavioral reinforcement, intrinsic motivation, and sustained engagement—three key components necessary for effective vocabulary acquisition. By integrating game mechanics into instruction, educators can create a learning environment that stimulates curiosity and encourages consistent practice (Huseinović 2024).

The theoretical foundation of gamification in education is largely supported by **Self-Determination Theory (SDT)** developed by Deci and Ryan (2000). SDT posits that motivation is driven by the fulfillment of three psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Gamification addresses autonomy by allowing students to make choices in completing tasks or selecting challenges. It enhances competence

through progressive difficulty levels and immediate feedback that helps learners monitor their improvement. Relatedness is fostered through collaborative missions and leaderboard systems that connect students socially. When these needs are satisfied, students develop higher intrinsic motivation, which leads to increased persistence and deeper learning (Alenazi 2025).

In addition to cognitive and motivational theories, gamification is linked to **behaviorist learning principles**, particularly reinforcement theory. Rewards such as points, badges, and virtual achievements act as positive reinforcement, encouraging students to repeat desirable learning behaviors. Leaderboards and progress bars provide visual representations of achievement, which further motivate learners to engage in vocabulary tasks. The repeated exposure created by gamified reinforcement enhances memory retention, a crucial component of vocabulary learning. This aligns with Skinner's behaviorist perspective that reinforcement patterns shape behavior over time, suggesting that gamification can effectively cultivate consistent vocabulary study habits (Boudadi and Gutiérrez-Colón 2020).

Vocabulary acquisition itself is rooted in several foundational theories, including Nation's (2001) principles of vocabulary learning, which highlight the importance of repeated encounters, meaningful use, and retrieval practice. Gamification naturally incorporates these principles by exposing learners to vocabulary in varied and interactive contexts. For example, timed challenges require rapid retrieval of known words, while missions encourage contextual application in sentences or dialogues. Such activities help strengthen both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge. From this perspective, gamification aligns well with established linguistic principles, making it a theoretically sound approach to vocabulary instruction.

Moreover, gamification enhances cognitive engagement through elements of challenge, curiosity, and goal orientation. Flow Theory, introduced by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), explains that optimal learning occurs when tasks strike a balance between difficulty and skill level. Gamification supports flow by offering appropriately challenging tasks with clear goals and immediate feedback, keeping students immersed in the learning process. When learners experience flow, they are more likely to remain focused, motivated, and willing to persist through difficult vocabulary tasks. This cognitive engagement is essential for deep processing, which ultimately supports long-term vocabulary retention (Arif 2025).

Finally, empirical research supports the theoretical alignment between gamification and improved learning outcomes. Studies conducted in various educational settings have shown that gamification increases student motivation, enhances engagement, and leads to better academic performance, particularly in language learning. Research indicates that learners respond positively to interactive and game-based activities, which promote intrinsic motivation and strengthen

comprehension. In vocabulary acquisition, gamification has been shown to improve word recognition, retention, and usage accuracy. These findings provide strong justification for employing gamification in English vocabulary instruction and demonstrate its potential as an effective pedagogical strategy. Thus, the theoretical framework for this study integrates motivational, behavioral, cognitive, and linguistic perspectives to explain how gamification can improve vocabulary learning outcomes.

RESEARCH METHOD

. This study employed a **quasi-experimental research design** to examine the impact of gamification on students' motivation and learning outcomes in English vocabulary acquisition. A quasi-experimental design was chosen because it allows for comparison between groups while accommodating the natural classroom environment where random assignment is not always feasible. Two intact classes of Grade VIII students at MTs Al-Furqon Kota Cilegon were selected: one as the experimental group receiving gamified instruction and the other as the control group learning through traditional methods. The focus of the intervention was the application of full gamification, incorporating points, badges, leaderboards, missions, and timed challenges structured to enhance vocabulary learning (Sugiyono 2019).

The participants of the study consisted of **Grade VIII B students**, who served as the experimental group, and another Grade VIII class as the control group. The gamification intervention was implemented over several weeks, during which the experimental group engaged in vocabulary learning activities through digital platforms and classroom-based missions. Students earned points for completing vocabulary tasks, received badges for specific achievements, and competed on leaderboards to foster motivation. The control group followed the school's standard vocabulary learning procedures, which included teacher explanations, workbook activities, and written exercises. This comparison allowed the researcher to observe differences in motivation and learning outcomes resulting from the gamification treatment (Ismaya 2019).

The instruments used in this study were a **vocabulary test** and a **motivation questionnaire**. The vocabulary test, administered as both pre-test and post-test, measured students' vocabulary mastery, including word recognition, meaning comprehension, and contextual usage. The motivation questionnaire, adapted from established motivational scales, assessed students' interest, engagement, effort, and attitudes toward learning vocabulary. In addition to these instruments, observation checklists were used to document student participation, enthusiasm, and behavioral changes during the intervention. These multiple instruments ensured comprehensive data collection aligned with the research objectives (Suryabrata 1998).

The data were analyzed using quantitative statistical methods. The pre-test and post-test vocabulary scores were examined using descriptive statistics to determine

mean, standard deviation, and score distribution for both groups. To assess the significance of differences between the experimental and control groups, an **independent samples t-test** was conducted. The motivation questionnaire results were analyzed using Likert-scale scoring and compared across pre- and post-intervention. Observation data were summarized descriptively to support quantitative findings. Through this analytical process, the study aimed to provide empirical evidence on how gamification influences students' motivation and their vocabulary learning outcomes in comparison to traditional instruction (Hoy 2010).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

. The results of the study revealed notable differences between students who participated in gamified vocabulary instruction and those who received traditional instruction. Based on the pre-test results, both the experimental and control groups demonstrated similar levels of vocabulary mastery, indicating comparable starting points before the intervention. Students in both groups struggled with word recognition, contextual meaning, and productive use of vocabulary. This baseline similarity ensured that any differences observed in the post-test could be attributed to the gamification intervention rather than initial proficiency differences.

During the implementation of gamification, classroom observations indicated substantial increases in student engagement within the experimental group. Students eagerly participated in vocabulary missions, frequently checked their accumulated points, and showed strong motivation to earn badges and climb the leaderboard. Their enthusiasm was visible in how they completed tasks more promptly and demonstrated greater attention during instructional activities. In contrast, the control group displayed typical levels of engagement consistent with traditional instruction, with many students passive and reluctant to participate in vocabulary drills.

The introduction of points and badges created a sense of achievement among the experimental group. Students often expressed excitement when earning new rewards and demonstrated increased perseverance when facing more challenging vocabulary tasks. The incremental reward system reinforced students' learning behaviors, encouraging them to complete more activities and increase their practice frequency. Unlike the control group, where students tended to lose focus after several repetitions, the experimental group maintained consistent engagement throughout the learning sessions.

Leaderboards proved to be an influential motivational factor. Students in the experimental group appeared highly motivated to outperform their peers and improve their rankings. This friendly competition fostered a dynamic classroom atmosphere where students encouraged one another yet remained focused on individual

achievement. The control group, however, showed minimal competitive spirit, as traditional instruction did not incorporate elements that stimulated intrinsic or extrinsic motivation to the same degree.

The mission-based tasks in the gamified learning setting positively influenced vocabulary application. Students were required to complete quests involving vocabulary usage in sentences, dialogues, and short paragraphs. These tasks fostered deeper processing of vocabulary and strengthened students' productive skills. Observational data indicated that students were more willing to attempt speaking and writing tasks when they were part of a mission, suggesting that gamification reduced anxiety and increased confidence. In contrast, students in the control group often hesitated during oral or written activities, displaying lower confidence levels.

Timed challenges also contributed to improving retrieval speed and memory retention. Students in the experimental group performed better in activities requiring rapid recall of vocabulary meanings and synonyms. Their post-test results showed improvements in both recognition and recall components. Meanwhile, the control group showed weaker performance in timed tasks during observations, indicating slower recall rates and less confident retrieval of vocabulary items.

The post-test results demonstrated a significant improvement in vocabulary scores among the experimental group. The average post-test score increased substantially compared to the pre-test, indicating the effectiveness of the gamification intervention. Students showed enhanced abilities in recognizing vocabulary, understanding meanings in context, and applying words correctly in sentences. The control group also improved, but the gains were smaller and less consistent. This disparity supports the conclusion that gamification had a stronger impact on vocabulary learning outcomes.

Statistical analysis using an independent samples t-test confirmed that the difference in post-test scores between the two groups was statistically significant. The p-value obtained was below the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the gamification intervention contributed meaningfully to the improvement of students' vocabulary acquisition. This finding reinforces the hypothesis that gamified instructional strategies lead to better learning outcomes compared to traditional teaching methods.

Motivation questionnaire results further supported the effectiveness of gamification. Students in the experimental group reported higher interest, enjoyment, and engagement in vocabulary learning. They expressed that the game elements made lessons more exciting and encouraged them to participate actively. The control group reported neutral to low motivation levels, with many students feeling that vocabulary learning was repetitive and uninteresting. This contrast highlights the motivational advantage of gamified learning environments.

Observational data also indicated behavioral improvements in the experimental group. Students became more responsible with task completion, more interactive

during discussions, and more willing to assist peers in completing missions. These positive behavioral changes suggest that gamification fosters not only academic improvement but also social and collaborative skills. In the control group, group interaction remained limited, and participation levels were inconsistent.

Furthermore, students in the experimental group showed stronger long-term retention of vocabulary items during follow-up review sessions. When asked to recall and apply previously learned vocabulary, they performed more accurately than students in the control group. This suggests that repeated exposure through gamified tasks strengthened memory encoding, supporting theories of spaced repetition and active retrieval. The control group demonstrated moderate recall but struggled with contextual usage.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that gamification greatly enhances students' motivation, engagement, and vocabulary learning outcomes. The combination of points, badges, leaderboards, missions, and timed challenges created an instructional environment that was stimulating, competitive, and supportive of active participation. In contrast, traditional instruction led to lower motivation and less significant improvement in vocabulary mastery. These findings demonstrate the potential of gamification as an effective pedagogical strategy for vocabulary acquisition among junior high school learners.

B. Discussion

. The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that gamification has a positive impact on students' motivation and vocabulary learning outcomes. Students in the experimental group showed significantly higher engagement and enthusiasm throughout the learning process compared to their peers in the control group. This aligns with Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation. The game elements used – points, badges, leaderboards, and missions – addressed these motivational needs by giving students a sense of control, measurable progress, and social interaction. As a result, students were more willing to participate actively, complete tasks, and persist through challenging vocabulary exercises.

The improvement in learning outcomes observed in the experimental group also supports existing literature suggesting that gamification enhances cognitive processing and memory retention. Vocabulary acquisition depends heavily on repeated exposure, retrieval practice, and meaningful application. Gamified activities مثل missions and timed challenges provided precisely these opportunities. Students were not only exposed to vocabulary multiple times but were also required to recall and apply words in various contexts. This aligns with Nation's theory of vocabulary learning, which emphasizes that repetition and contextualization strengthen both receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge. Thus, the learning gains in the experimental group can be attributed to the structured, repetitive, and engaging nature of gamified instruction.

Additionally, the results validate Flow Theory, which states that learners perform best when tasks provide an optimal balance between challenge and skill. Gamification allowed tasks to be progressively challenging yet achievable, maintaining students' focus and keeping them in a state of productive engagement. Leaderboards, for example, offered healthy competition that encouraged students to challenge themselves continually. By experiencing small but meaningful achievements throughout the learning process, students maintained a sense of accomplishment that fueled further engagement. In contrast, students in the control group often became disengaged during repetitive traditional activities, resulting in lower levels of concentration and slower vocabulary acquisition.

The increase in student motivation observed through questionnaire results indicates that gamification also influences affective dimensions of learning. Many students expressed satisfaction with the gamified vocabulary lessons, noting that they felt more excited and less anxious when learning through game-like tasks. This reduction in affective barriers is essential because anxiety often hinders vocabulary learning, especially among students who struggle with English. Gamification transformed vocabulary lessons into enjoyable experiences, helping students associate English learning with positive emotions. The control group, on the other hand, experienced little change in motivation, and several students expressed boredom with the traditional teaching approach.

The social component of gamification also played an essential role in enhancing learning outcomes. Collaborative missions and leaderboard-driven competition encouraged peer interaction, which facilitated knowledge sharing and mutual support. Students often learned vocabulary more effectively when they worked together or competed in a friendly manner. This supports Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which highlights that learning is socially mediated and enhanced through interaction with peers. The collaborative nature of gamified tasks helped students become more involved, confident, and communicative, resulting in improved vocabulary performance and stronger classroom dynamics.

Overall, the discussion suggests that gamification should be considered a valuable instructional strategy in English vocabulary teaching, especially for junior high school learners. It successfully integrates motivational, cognitive, and social factors that contribute to effective learning. The contrast between the experimental and control groups underscores the limitations of traditional teaching methods, which often fail to capture students' interest or provide sufficient reinforcement. Meanwhile, gamification offers a balanced and engaging approach that supports sustained motivation, active participation, and measurable learning gains. Future research is encouraged to explore the long-term impact of gamification, its application across different language skills, and the integration of more advanced game elements to enhance learning experiences further.

CONCLUSION

. The findings of this study demonstrate that gamification has a significant positive impact on students' motivation and vocabulary learning outcomes in Grade VIII at MTs

Al-Furqon Kota Cilegon. Students who received gamified instruction showed substantial improvements in vocabulary recognition, contextual understanding, and productive usage. The integration of points, badges, leaderboards, missions, and timed challenges created an environment that encouraged continuous practice and active engagement. These gamified elements transformed vocabulary learning from a routine, teacher-centered activity into an interactive and stimulating experience, resulting in better overall performance compared to students in the control group who received traditional instruction.

The results also indicate that gamification enhances students' intrinsic motivation by fulfilling their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Students in the experimental group demonstrated higher levels of enthusiasm, responsibility, and confidence while completing vocabulary tasks. They were more willing to participate in class, collaborate with peers, and challenge themselves through competitive and mission-based activities. In contrast, the control group showed lower motivation and less consistent participation, highlighting the limitations of conventional vocabulary teaching methods. These findings affirm that gamification not only supports cognitive learning but also strengthens affective and behavioral dimensions of student engagement.

Overall, this study concludes that gamification is an effective instructional strategy that can significantly improve both motivation and learning outcomes in English vocabulary acquisition. Teachers are encouraged to adopt gamified approaches to create more engaging and meaningful learning experiences. By integrating game-like elements into vocabulary instruction, educators can better support students' interest, engagement, and achievement. Future research may explore the long-term effects of gamification, its adaptation to different English skills, and the development of more sophisticated gamified learning platforms to optimize educational outcomes.

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