Transforming EFL Students' Narrative Writing Through Gamification

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Abstract

Current EFL pedagogy lies in the limited use of innovative techniques like gamification, which has the potential to significantly enhance students' narrative writing skills. This study investigates the effectiveness of gamification in improving EFL students' ability to write narrative texts, grounded in motivational and engagement theories. Employing a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design, data were collected from two groups of students: a control group using conventional methods and an experimental group utilizing gamification elements such as points, badges, and challenges. The findings reveal that students exposed to gamification demonstrated superior narrative writing skills compared to the control group. These results suggest that integrating gamification in EFL writing instruction can substantially boost student motivation and engagement, leading to improved narrative writing performance.

Keywords: Gamification, Writing Narrative Texts, EFL Students, English Learning, Learning Motivation.

A. INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization, various sectors, including education, have experienced significant transformations. This shift has made English an essential tool for communication, particularly in non-native English-speaking countries like Indonesia, where the emphasis on mastering English has surged. As Kalogiannakis and Papadakis (2020) note, the technological revolution in education has unlocked new opportunities, especially in mobile learning, which caters to the diverse needs of students. The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) further enhances education by offering personalized and adaptive learning experiences that address individual learner needs, enabling more efficient knowledge acquisition.

One particular area that has seen innovation is gamification, an approach that applies game mechanics to non-game contexts like education. (H. Bicen and S. Kocakoyun, 2018) argue that gamification significantly enhances student engagement, as it incorporates game elements such as competition, progression, and rewards. In educational settings, gamification promotes student participation and motivation, aligning with its success in business industries where similar techniques are used to retain clients.

At SMKN 1 Jatirejo, students, particularly in the Multimedia Department, struggled with English writing due to a lack of ideas, fear of writing, and difficulty in organizing and structuring their thoughts. Writing is an especially demanding skill, with students facing issues in both generating content and maintaining motivation. Dicheva et al. (2015) provide a gamification framework that could help mitigate these issues, emphasizing the importance of understanding the target audience and defining clear learning objectives.

The researcher proposed using gamified texts with folklore themes to address these challenges. This method not only integrates cognitive development but also leverages local culture, in this case, Indonesian folklore, as a thematic foundation. According to Ismail (2017), using local folklore as part of interactive reading programs helps increase student vocabulary and engagement, particularly for EFL learners. Similarly, Kuning (2018) asserts that folklore contributes to character education, particularly in instilling a love for the homeland, making it an ideal thematic tool for gamification in education.

Gamification's success in enhancing reading skills has been documented, such as in research by Cahyaningati and Lestari (2018), who found that the integration of gamified texts led to significant improvements in reading comprehension among engineering students. This research, however, focuses on the use of gamification to enhance writing skills, particularly narrative writing, among EFL students. Writing narrative texts involves mastering specific structures—orientation, complication, resolution, and sometimes re-orientation—all of which can be reinforced through gamified learning methods that foster creativity and motivation.

The effectiveness of gamification in education, particularly in enhancing EFL learners' engagement and motivation, explains that interactive gamified environments can improve not only engagement but also cognitive learning outcomes. Similarly, Saifulloh et al., (2023) highlight the potential of digital media to enhance writing skills, emphasizing that gamification can transform a typically solitary activity into a dynamic, interactive experience that fosters collaboration and feedback.

This study aims to explore the use of gamification in teaching narrative writing to EFL students, specifically by incorporating Indonesian folklore as a cultural touchstone. By drawing from both local and global educational trends, this research seeks to contribute to the ongoing discussion on innovative teaching methods that

increase student engagement, enhance motivation, and improve writing proficiency among EFL learners.

B. THEORETICAL REVIEW

The theoretical framework of this research delves into the interconnected concepts of gamification, writing, narrative texts, and folklore, which are crucial for understanding how to improve students' writing skills, particularly in narrative writing. Writing is a vital tool for conveying thoughts, exchanging opinions, and delivering information. Writing encompasses both mental and physical efforts to structure thoughts into cohesive paragraphs, making it easier for readers to comprehend the message. The five essential elements of writing, namely content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics, serve as the foundation for producing clear and coherent texts. Different types of writing such as narrative, descriptive, and expository cater to diverse purposes, each involving specific processes like pre-writing, drafting, and revising. In this context, narrative writing stands out as a creative form of expression, playing a pivotal role in language learning.

Narrative texts are at the core of this study, often characterized as fictional, imaginative stories that include fairytales, folklore, and animal tales. The generic structure of a narrative text consists of an orientation, complications, and a resolution, which are essential for building a coherent storyline (Shinoda, 2008). Folktales, as a type of narrative, offer rich cultural insights and serve as an excellent resource for expanding vocabulary and honing writing skills. These stories, which include cumulative, beast, and magic tales, have long been passed down through generations and offer valuable moral lessons (Norton, 1983). The use of folktales in English Language Teaching (ELT) is particularly effective because they not only introduce students to new vocabulary but also reduce anxiety, creating a more interactive and engaging learning environment (Ismail, 2017). Folktales thus provide learners with a stimulating platform for developing their narrative writing capabilities.

Gamification is increasingly being recognized as a powerful tool for enhancing student engagement and motivation, particularly in writing. By incorporating game-like elements such as points, badges, and levels into writing tasks, educators can create a more dynamic and enjoyable learning experience (Dicheva et al., 2015). Gamification texts, which blend written content with multimedia elements like images and videos, offer a more immersive learning environment (Callow & Zammit, 2012). Tools such as Wordwall enable students to create interactive stories, allowing them to practice narrative writing in a fun, engaging way. As (H. Bicen and S. Kocakoyun, 2018) argue, the use of gamification strategies in education can significantly enhance learning outcomes, as students are more motivated to participate and complete tasks when rewards and interactive elements are involved. Furthermore, gamification helps foster creativity, improve comprehension, and enhance overall student performance in writing activities (Cahyani, 2016).

A comparison between an experimental group, which employs this innovative approach, and a control group, which relies on traditional methods, allows for a detailed analysis of its effectiveness. By utilizing pretests, posttests, and questionnaires to gather data on student performance and engagement, this research aims to determine whether gamified folktales can significantly enhance narrative writing skills (M. Kalogiannakis

and S. Papadakis, 2020). Based on this framework, the hypothesis suggests that integrating folktales with gamification in writing activities will result in improved student outcomes, aligning with the findings of (M. El Tantawi, J. Alhumaid, 2018), who highlight the benefits of gamified learning in developing academic writing skills.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

The research adopts a quantitative approach, specifically utilizing a quasi-experimental design to evaluate the impact of teaching narrative text through gamification using folktales. This methodology was chosen due to field limitations preventing random assignment, necessitating the use of purposive sampling for selecting two classes with similar characteristics (Saifulloh & Anam, 2022). Both classes underwent a pretest, treatment, and posttest, with the experimental class receiving additional gamification-based instruction. This approach aligns to assess the feasibility and effectiveness of gamified learning in enhancing students' writing skills (Sugiyono, n.d.);(Ibrahim, n.d.).

1. Participants

This research focused on the tenth-grade students of SMK Pertiwi in the 2024/2025 academic year, with a total population of 504 students across various majors. The sample, selected using convenience sampling, comprised 72 students from the DKV major, divided into an experimental group and a control group. Class X-DKV2 served as the control group and was taught using conventional methods, while Class X-DKV2, the experimental group, received instruction through gamification. This sampling method was chosen based on the availability and characteristics of the students, aligning with Sanusi's (2014) definition of convenience sampling, where respondents are selected based on chance and specific criteria. The gender distribution in the sample included 39 men and 29 women.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest Control	34	25	64	46.38	9.589
Posttest Control	34	73	85	79.29	3.148
Pretest Experiment	34	47	67	57.03	5.659
Posttest Experiment	34	90	100	96.06	2.335
Valid N (listwise)	34				

(Source: by researcher data)

2. Instrument

First, researchers used SPSS version 29 to determine the effectiveness of Edu Canvas, the second tool used by researchers is a questionnaire that has been proven valid and reliable. The questionnaire contained 20 questions scored on a 4-point Likert

response scale ranging from 4 (strongly agree), 3 (agree), 2 (disagree), and 1 (strongly disagree). It is known that all 34 students in the pre-experimental class chose Lot Number 3. This shows that most students generally agree with the statement. The positive perception of effectiveness and enhance in learning is seen from the use of gamification, because it increases the motivation and involvement of students in the teaching and learning process.

3. Instruction

Research on classroom experiments and control of narrative text learning using folklore was conducted on adolescents aged 15-17 years in SMKN 1 Jatirejo. In this study, 2 classes were taken: Class X-DKV1 as an experimental class with 34 students and Class X-DKV2 as a control class with 34 students. According to the study sample, there were a total of 68 students. Research on the experimental class and control class each conducted for 6 x 45 minutes in 4 meetings and conducted 2 tests, namely Pre-Test and Post-Test. The implementation time of learning in the experimental and control classes can be seen in the table below.

Table 2. 2-month instruction-based process

Class	Meeting	Description	Time
X-DKV1 (Experimental Class)	1	Pre-Test	06 May 2024
		Treatment 1	06 May 2024
	2	Treatment 2	10 May 2024
	3	Treatment 3	13 May 2024
		Treatment 4	14 May 2024
	4	Post-Test	20 May 2024
X-DKV2 (Control Class)	1	Pre-Test	24 May 2024
		Treatment 1	24 May 2024
	2	Treatment 2	26 May 2024
	3	Treatment 3	27 May 2024
		Treatment 4	01 June 2024
	4	Post-Test	02 June 2024

Source: by researcher data

Table 3 Treatment Activity of Experimental Class

Meeting	Activity
1	• Teacher gives question Pre-Test to students • Teacher reminding the narrative text material that studentshave learned in junior high school • The teacher explains the material presented in Gamification media related to the definition and social function of narrative-text
2	• Teacher asks students related definitions and functions they • learned in the first meeting
3	• The teacher explains and makes several statements related to language features and generic structure • Teachers and students pay attention to examples of narrativetexts, especially folktales with the title *"Malin Kundang"* • The teacher and students read and interpret the example of thefolktale *"Malin Kundang"* so that the story is simpler for students to understand • The teacher allows students to ask questions about the material and examples of narrative texts, especially folktale • The teacher answers some questions from students • The teacher gives 10 evaluation questions, and the teacherchooses students randomly to answer • Students gain additional knowledge regarding vocabulary andtense
4	• The teacher gives Post-Test questions to students

Source: by researcher data

Table 4. Treatment Activity of Control Class

Meeting	Activity
1	• Teacher gives question Pre-Test to students • Teacher reminding the narrative text material that students have learned in junior high school • The teacher explains the conventional material related to the definition and social function of narrative text
2	• Teacher asks students about related definitions and functions they learned in the first meeting • The teacher explains and makes several statements related to language features and generic structure
3	• Teachers and students pay attention to examples of narrative texts, especially folktales with the title *"Malin Kundang"* • The teacher and students read and interpret the example of the folktale *"Malin Kundang"* so that the story is easier for students tounderstand • The teacher allows students to ask questions about the material and examples of narrative texts, especially folktale • The teacher answers some questions from students • The teacher gives 10 evaluation questions and the teacher chooses students randomly to answer • Students gain additional knowledge regarding vocabulary andtense
4	• The teacher gives Post-Test questions to students

Source: by researcher data

4. Data analysis

SPSS version 29 is used for the purpose of analyzing data In this research. For this purpose, first the researcher looks for the average value of the test results and then looks for the gained score to find out how educational games affect students' descriptive writing skills. Scores are evaluated before and after treatment. Second, a normality test is carried out to determine whether the data is normal. Data is considered normal if the test value exceeds 0.05. Third, the researcher conducts a t-test to determine whether there is a significant difference between the two variables, namely before and after the educational game treatment. Fourth, the researcher uses a statistical hypothesis to answer Ha and Ho, and also to compare the t-test and t-table after obtaining the t-test, the hypothesis is tested with a significance level of 5% (0.05). Finally, the researcher uses validity and reliability to analyze the results of the students' questionnaires.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the Independent Sample T-test reveal that teaching narrative text using folktales through gamification media significantly strengthens students' writing abilities. This conclusion is supported by the Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.001, which is less than the significance level of 0.05, indicating that the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (Hα) is accepted. The mean difference between the experimental class and the control class was 16.765, with a confidence interval of 15.423 to 18.107, suggesting a notable improvement in the experimental group's performance. Furthermore, the t-count value of 24.941, which is much greater than the t-table value of 1.999, reinforces the rejection of the null hypothesis. Consequently, it can be concluded that utilizing gamification media to teach narrative text using folktales has a statistically significant positive impact on students' writing abilities.

Table 5. results of the Independent sample T-test

Independent Samples Test

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | | |
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance One-Sided p	Significance Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Upper
hasil	Equal variances assumed	5.422	.023	24.941	66	<,001	<,001	16.765	.672	15.423	18.107
	Equal variances not assumed			24.941	60.869	<,001	<,001	16.765	.672	15.421	18.109

Source: by researcher data

E. CONCLUSIONS

A study conducted at SMK 1 Jatirejo in Class X-DKV1 (experimental class) and Class X-DKV2 (control class) explored the effectiveness of teaching narrative texts using folklore through gamification. The experimental class showed a significant increase in post-test scores, with an average pre-test score of 57.03 and a post-test score of 96.06. In comparison, the control class had an average pre-test score of 46.38 and a post-test score of 79.29.

This suggests that gamification effectively enhances students' ability to write narrative texts using folklore. The data analysis supported these findings, with a t-test showing that the t-count (24.941) was significantly greater than the t-table value (1.999)

at a significance level of 0.025. The Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000 further confirmed the significance, leading to the acceptance of Hα. Additionally, the questionnaire used in the study was validated and found to be both reliable and consistent. Overall, the study concluded that using gamification to teach narrative texts significantly improved students' writing skills.

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