

The Use Of Game-Based Learning In Enriching The Arabic Vocabulary Of Religious Secondary School Students In Malaysia

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Abstract

Game-Based Learning (GBL) is an educational approach that uses games as the basis of an interactive medium to increase student motivation and engagement in an immersive way. In general, GBL is divided into two main forms, namely digital-based games such as social media applications and Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based platforms, and physical games such as crossword puzzles and flashcards. Traditional methods based on memorization and repetition are becoming less relevant because they have the potential to affect student motivation and engagement. In addition, the issue of students' lack of interest in Arabic due to factors other than native speakers has become a point of difficulty for Arabic language teachers. Arabic language teachers also face difficulties in helping students remember and understand words, causing students to be at an unsatisfactory level. Therefore, this study aims to explore the challenges of lower secondary students towards the use of AI-based GBL in Arabic vocabulary learning, in addition to identifying their needs and perceptions of this approach. This study used a phenomenological qualitative design with face-to-face interview techniques, structured observation through test questions, small group discussions, and document analysis. Data were analyzed thematically to produce a comprehensive picture of the students' experiences. The target sample respondents consisted of Form 2 and Form 3 students at Sekolah Menengah Agama Negeri (SMAN) Perak. The study findings GBL in enriching Arabic vocabulary which contributes to strengthening language literacy through the use of AI technology. The use of GBL has many benefits and advantages that can attract students' interest in learning Arabic. Although the GBL application has negative sides, the advantages and positive sides are seen to be higher, especially in helping Arabic learning among lower secondary students.

Keywords: Game-Based Learning; Artificial Intelligence; Arabic Vocabulary; Innovation; Challenges

INTRODUCTION

Language as a communication tool and a bridge to connect is changing in the digital era through Game-Based Learning (GBL) applications that create an interactive and immersive environment. The GBL approach in increasing the mastery of various languages encourages active use, critical thinking, and cultural engagement has revolutionized traditional learning into a dynamic student-centered learning experience.

Game-based learning or the term 'Game-Based Learning' is a learning method that uses games as learning content. Chiao et al. (2024) stated that game-based learning in PdP (Teaching and Learning) refers to an educational strategy that uses games to attract students' interest, increase motivation, and improve skills such as problem solving and communication, especially in nursing education, fostering effective learning experiences and professional development. In addition, Hafeez (2022) also stated the definition of GBL as an advanced educational strategy that fully involves students in the learning process, replacing traditional methods. Thus, GBL is an access to fun and alternative learning methods to achieve learning objectives using game models. The application of the GBL model in the current era is increasingly widespread in several countries and is believed to benefit students. For example, in Tang's (2020) study, Game-Based Learning (GBL) in the context of Taiwanese children's learning involves the use of computers and video games to achieve educational outcomes, balancing various subjects while engaging students in interactive and immersive experiences that enhance their choices and learning outcomes.

The use of the GBL method has also begun to be applied in Arabic language learning by several schools and institutions. A study by Hasibuan et al., (2024), which used the game Truth or Dare with Spin the Wheel, was proven to be able to significantly improve Arabic language learning with increased student engagement, participation and confidence, a 40% increase in participation and a positive impact on better peer and teacher interaction. Based on this data, the test of the effectiveness of GBL in Arabic language learning is clearly proven when students become more confident and active in learning sessions in line with increasing participation among teachers and students. In addition, Game-Based Learning in Arabic language education improves student achievement. According to Hasibuan et al., (2024), this is proven in the State Religious Secondary School (MAN) 2 Bukit Tinggi where more than 75% of students scored above the minimum proficiency standard, despite facing challenges in classroom management using the specially designed GBL module.

The selection of the State Religious Secondary School (SMAN) Perak was carried out because there has been no study conducted on this institution, especially in the use of GBL for learning Arabic. Furthermore, this institution uses the Ministry of Education (KPM) syllabus which is similar to Government schools. However, even so, traditional methods are often applied in PdP making teaching sessions less satisfactory. In addition, there are some students who are unable to achieve the minimum level of mastery in examinations which causes concern among parents and teachers, especially in this subject, which is due to the Arabic subject being considered difficult and the mentality not being fun.

Therefore, this study will identify the GBL method in learning Arabic, especially for junior secondary students. This study will also measure the appropriate GBL approach for junior secondary students in this subject. Next, this study will analyze the effectiveness of the GBL method in the Ministry of Education (KPM) Arabic language learning syllabus for junior secondary students. At the end of the study, the researcher estimated the results of the study to be effective and efficient to help teachers implement the GBL approach in Arabic language subjects for students. This is also an efficient and suitable alternative step, not to mention combined with the application of artificial intelligence (AI) and high-impact technology. Thus, diversity in teaching can give new

life that is more attractive with increased involvement of all students because of the compatibility of tastes for their generation.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach based on the Document Analysis model to examine students' perceptions of the implementation of Game-Based Learning (GBL) in Arabic language learning. The selection of a qualitative design is supported by the view of Creswell (2002) who emphasizes that qualitative research allows for a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied and produces rich data and various perspectives, in line with the view of Merriam (1998) that this method allows researchers to examine issues in real contexts. A total of nine Form Two and Form Three lower secondary students from Sekolah Menengah Agama Negeri (SMAN) Perak were selected as respondents through purposive sampling.

Data were collected through an online questionnaire using Google Forms within 48 hours, since geographical distance constraints did not allow for face-to-face interviews. Data analysis was carried out through thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke's six phases to identify themes related to motivation, challenges, and vocabulary mastery. All respondent information was kept confidential, and the implementation of this study fully complied with research ethics. The question instrument in the study was based on the study objectives and research questions as follows:

Table 1. The Study Objectives And Research Questions

| Research Objectives (RO) | Research Questions (RQ) | Related Google Form Questions | Justification |
|---|--|-------------------------------|---|
| To identify the effectiveness of the use of Game-Based Learning (GBL) in Arabic language learning among lower secondary students at SMAN Perak. | What factors influence the effectiveness of the use of Game-Based Learning (GBL) in Arabic language learning among lower secondary students at SMAN Perak? | Question 4, Question 6 | These questions assess the actual effects of GBL on students' learning experiences, including motivation, comprehension, vocabulary retention, and enjoyment. It answers the extent to which GBL is effective and the contributing factors. |
| To analyse the suitable GBL methods used by teachers during teaching and learning (PdP) sessions in Arabic language classes. | How is GBL implemented by teachers during teaching and learning (PdP) sessions in Arabic language classes for lower secondary students at SMAN Perak? | Question 2, Question 5 | These questions identify the types of games or applications used, how students experience them, as well as their suggestions on how teachers can improve the implementation of GBL. |
| To measure the impact on Arabic language academic development among lower secondary students at SMAN Perak. | To what extent is GBL able to impact the academic development of Arabic language among lower secondary students at SMAN Perak? | Question 1, Question 3 | These questions assess students' cognitive impact, including vocabulary mastery, comprehension, learning interest, and learning outcomes. |

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study were obtained based on the structure of the questions divided according to the study objectives and research questions. The data that was recorded verbatim or word for word was verified by repeating the answers according to the themes that were set based on the study objectives and referring to the research questions by lecturers who were identified as knowing about this study.

Table 2. The Study Data That Was Analyzed Using Thematic Analysis

| Main Theme | Subtheme | Example Excerpts / Short Narratives (From Data) | Interpretation / Research Explanation |
|---|---|---|--|
| Effectiveness Of GBL On Vocabulary Learning | Improvement In Word Retention Active Engagement In Teaching And Learning Sessions | “Game-Based Methods Help Me Remember Words More Quickly.” “I Prefer Quiz Activities Because They Are Not Boring.” | GBL Increases Students’ Motivation And Engagement While Strengthening Vocabulary Retention Through Interactive Activities Such As Quizizz And Kahoot. |
| Types And Forms Of Games Used | Use Of Digital Applications (Quizizz, Wordwall, Chatgpt) Physical Games (Role-Playing, Poison Box Game) | “We Use Kahoot And Wordwall In Class.” “It Would Be Better If There Were Physical Activities Like The Poison Box Game.” | Students Prefer A Combination Of Digital And Non-Digital Games. The Variation In GBL Forms Increases Students’ Interest And Adapts To Their Learning Styles. |
| Challenges In Implementing GBL | Technical Issues And Internet Access Students’ Vocabulary Weaknesses Teachers’ Lack Of Skills In Implementing GBL | “Sometimes The Internet Is Slow.” “I Do Not Understand The Words In The Questions.” | Technical And Pedagogical Factors Are The Main Barriers To The Effectiveness Of GBL. Teachers Need Specific Training, And Students Require Basic Vocabulary Support. |
| Advantages Of GBL Compared To Traditional Methods | Elements Of Enjoyment And Graphic Visuals Reduction Of Boredom And Drowsiness | “Games Are More Interesting Than Memorisation.” “In The Afternoon, I Do Not Feel Sleepy When Playing Quizzes.” | Gamification Elements Such As Scores, Colours, And Peer Interaction Increase Students’ Attention And Motivation During Teaching And Learning Sessions. |
| Students’ Suggestions For Improving GBL | Combination Of Digital And Physical Methods Collaborative Activities (Role-Playing, Gallery Walk) | “It Would Be Good If The Teacher Made Group Games.” “It Is Fun If We Can Act Out Arabic Dialogues.” | Students Suggested A More Collaborative And Contextual GBL Approach. This Highlights The Need For Student-Centred Learning In Arabic Language Teaching And Learning. |
| Students’ Level Of Vocabulary Mastery | 6.1 Advanced Students (Know Derived Words Such As زيارة, نجاح) 6.2 Intermediate Students (Know Basic Verbs) 6.3 Weak Students (Spelling/Pronunciation Errors) | “I Remember The Words Eat And Sit.” “I Wrote Football But Spelled It Incorrectly.” | Students’ Vocabulary Mastery Varies According To Their Background. GBL Has The Potential To Help Weaker Students If Accompanied By Systematic Teacher Guidance. |

A total of 9 respondents filled out the questionnaire within 48 hours. All respondents were from two (2) and form three (3) students of the Perak State Religious Secondary School (SMAN). These students were students who followed the Standard Secondary School Curriculum (KSSM) and took the Arabic Language subject. A total of 3 Form Two (2) students and six (6) Form Three (3) students answered this question form.

What Game Method Helps You Understand And Remember Arabic Vocabulary Better?

Seven students admitted that the GBL method helped them remember Arabic vocabulary while two students were unsure. This is because some students had never followed Arabic language learning through the GBL method. The uncertainty of these students can also be divided into two main narratives, namely:

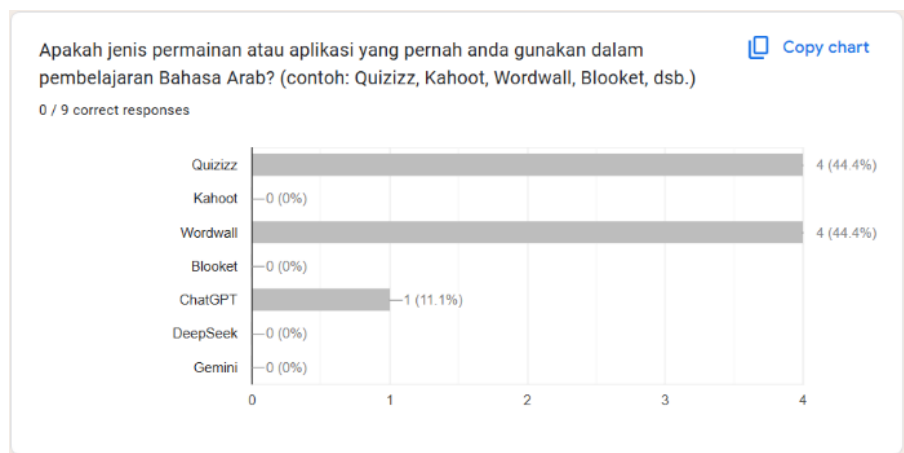
1. No experience; this factor is admitted to occur among students because they have no experience in the classroom through the GBL method. Teachers do not apply this learning method because they are not interested. In addition, teachers also consider this method difficult to apply compared to the more efficient 'lecturing' or 'chalk and talk' method. If seen in the knowledge of Arabic language teaching methods, this method is a classic learning method, namely at-Tariqah at-Taqlidiyyah (Traditional Method).
2. Learning objectives not achieved; a few teachers have applied the GBL method in the classroom but have not achieved the objectives - students do not understand and the teaching session is not successful. This causes this method to be seen as ineffective and teachers fail in organizing teaching strategies.



What Types Of Games Or Applications Have You Used In Learning Arabic?

The majority of students have used GBL applications in their learning because all students have used Kahoot, Wordwall and ChatGPT applications. However, these applications are all in the form of Digital Game-Based Learning (DGBL) such as Quizizz and Wordwall. Meanwhile, ChatGPT is an AI-Assisted GBL (AI-GBL).

Figure 2. Types Of Games Or Applications Used In Learning Arabic



What Challenges Or Difficulties Do You Face When Using Games In Learning Arabic?

All respondents faced technical problems in using the GBL application. All these challenges can be divided into several categories:

1. Internet network problems; this problem is caused by unsatisfactory internet networks, especially in rural areas or villages. This can be attributed to the current situation of the Covid-19 pandemic which caused all teaching and learning to take place online. When the pandemic occurred, the widespread use of the GBL application was used through digital platforms such as Delima MOE and Google for Education.
2. Lack of vocabulary to understand the requirements of the questions; students did not master the vocabulary to understand the questions and understand the answer options. Students were only happy to see the game graphics and did not understand the learning content. This made the learning objectives not fully achieved by the subject teachers.

Figure 3. Challenges Using Games In Learning Arabic

Apakah cabaran atau kesukaran yang anda hadapi semasa menggunakan permainan dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Arab?

9 responses

| |
|---|
| Kosa kata |
| Sesetengah perkataan dalam soalan yang tidak faham |
| tidak pasti |
| Tidak faham soalan |
| Masalah Internet dan laman web tidak berfungsi dengan baik. |
| tidak faham maksud |
| Internet yang slow |
| bila tak tahu jawapan |
| Senang lupa |

What Are The Advantages Of Game-Based Learning Compared To Regular Methods Such As Memorization Or Written Exercises?

Figure 4. The Advantages Of Game-Based Learning

| |
|---|
| Pada pendapat anda, apakah kelebihan pembelajaran berasaskan permainan (<i>Game-Based Learning</i>) berbanding kaedah biasa seperti hafalan atau latihan bertulis? |
| 9 responses |
| Game lagi seronok berbanding dengan tulis |
| Lebih santai |
| mengaktifkan murid di dalam kelas |
| Mempelajari daripada kesilapan Dan berazam untuk tidak melakukan kesalahan yang sama |
| Pada pendapat saya, antara kelebihan Game-Based Learning ialah merangsang minat pelajar terhadap Bahasa Arab melalui bunyi dan warna yang cerah didalam permainan dalam talian. |
| Dapat menarik minat murid |
| Otak lebih aktif membuatkan otak lebih mudah mengingat kosa kata bahasa arab yang ditunjukkan oleh guru |
| murid dapat memahami dan menghafal dengan lebih lama |

The students identified advantages from a psychological point of view such as attractive graphic colors and the attraction of interest to the GBL application. In addition, students also thought that the GBL application also made them more active in PdP sessions, especially at certain times such as the afternoon and afternoon which made the majority of students weak and sleepy.

What Types Of Games Or Activities Do You Recommend To Make Arabic Learning More Interesting And Easy To Understand?

Figure 5. Games Or Activities Makes Arabic Learning More Interesting And Easy To Understand

Apakah jenis permainan atau aktiviti yang anda cadangkan supaya pembelajaran Bahasa Arab menjadi lebih menarik dan mudah difahami?

9 responses

- Kuiz
- Permainan dalam talian
- berlakon menggunakan bahasa arab
- Dapat point yang boleh dikumpul
- Teka-teki Bahasa Arab
- pilih perkataan
- Lakonan, gallery walk
- membuat tasrif
- Kotak yg dibagi secara rawak kpd pelajar pada masa yg sama muzik dimainkan, apabila muzik berhenti pelajar yg pegang kotak akan jwab

Among the suggestions of students to attract their interest in learning Arabic is to use various physical mediums. For example, acting and 21st century learning such as gallery walk. Students also mentioned the poison box game which is categorized as Non-Digital GBL. In addition, quizzes and using online game applications are also students' choices.

The students' level is quite weak and is divided into three categories:

1. Students who are knowledgeable and have language skills
2. Some students can write some derived words (Masdar) such as نجاح ، زيارة
3. Students who are knowledgeable and have poor vocabulary
4. Students write verb words such as go, sit, eat and sleep - meaning that students understand that all words are verbs (fiil) but do not remember the vocabulary in Arabic that has been learned through the GBL application.
5. Students who are knowledgeable and have poor language skills
6. Some students have the knowledge to write Arabic words such as football (كرة القدم) but do not master the correct spelling skills due to the incorrect pronunciation of makhraj, which causes writing errors.

CONCLUSION

The use of GBL has many benefits and advantages that can attract students' interest in learning Arabic. However, teachers must act as facilitators in helping students so that learning objectives are achieved well. To achieve the aspirations of students who

are able to achieve excellent grades in language proficiency, a teacher must have creative and innovative abilities. Therefore, the use of GBL in learning Arabic is a systematic and efficient step, especially in today's education era which involves the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and online learning. Although the GBL application has negative sides, the advantages and positive sides are seen to be higher, especially in helping Arabic learning among lower secondary students. Therefore, this method must be implemented widely to achieve the aspirations of Islamic education in Malaysia which has international standards.

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