

## Leveling Up English Writing Skill: The Role of Gamification in Language Education

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### ABSTRACT

*Integrating game aspects into non-gaming environments, or "gamification," has become a potent technique in education that can make conventional teaching methods more engaging. Gamification has shown promise in the field of language education for improving a variety of skills, including writing. This study aimed to know whether the use of the gamification teaching method has a significant effect on the students' writing skills and their attitudes toward the method. This study used a pre-experimental method with a one-group pre-test and post-test design. A writing test was used to determine the students' writing skills before and after using the gamification teaching method. Meanwhile, a questionnaire was used to determine the students' attitudes toward the method. The result of this study shows that the mean score of the pre-test was 52.5714, and the mean score of the post-test was 70.2875. The result of the questionnaire also indicates that the use of the gamification teaching method helps students write descriptive texts and engages them in the learning process. It can be inferred that students' writing skills have improved, and they exhibit a highly positive attitude when taught using the gamification teaching method.*

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### 1. Introduction

In this fast-paced era of globalization, writing has become a fundamental skill that plays a pivotal role in the field of education, serving as a cornerstone for effective communication, critical thinking, and academic success (Harishree & Mekala, 2020). It is a crucial tool for students to articulate their ideas, opinions, and knowledge (Handayani & Aminatun, 2020). Writing proficiency not only supports academic growth but also fosters students' development as thinkers and individuals, equipping them with vital communication skills needed in the information age (Teng et al., 2020; Sari & Putri, 2019).

Despite its importance, writing is a challenging skill to master, particularly when learning in a foreign language (Knight et al., 2020; Elahi Shirvan et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2019). Students often struggle with organizing paragraphs and using correct grammar. They make numerous errors in their writing, including issues with grammar, word choice, coherence, structure, and limited vocabulary (Nur, 2021). Moreover, writing requires creativity and critical thinking, skills that do not come easily to everyone (Bean & Melzer, 2021). The process of composing coherent written pieces involves multiple stages—brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revising, and editing—each with its own challenges, such as organizing thoughts and refining language (Baker, 2020; Wang & Xie, 2022; Aswad et al., 2019).

In Indonesia, educators emphasize the importance of writing proficiency as it is a fundamental aspect of effective communication in English. Writing enables students to express their thoughts, ideas, and experiences coherently, thereby fostering critical thinking and analytical skills (Susilo et al., 2021; Prihandoko et al., 2021; Yaumi et al., 2023). However, teaching writing in Indonesia presents significant challenges, particularly due to the language barrier (Marzulina et al., 2021). Many students, being non-native English speakers, struggle with the nuances of grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure, which often hinders their ability to express themselves effectively (Zacharias, 2003; Prasetyaningrum et al., 2021).

According to Ketut & Yani (2022), errors are found in the title, main sentence, sentence development, sentence structure, word choice, grammar, and mechanics when students describe people, animals, and operations. Students' disregard for their writing, on the other hand, accounts for the largest percentage of their errors. When it comes to technical writing in English, Indonesian students are still making a lot of mistakes (Liunokas, 2020). Therefore, it's critical

to identify common errors made by students in order to support them in developing better teaching and learning techniques for English and to enhance learning outcomes (Ratnaningsih & Azizah, 2019; Sujarwo et al., 2024). Additionally, Bouchâala & Ghaouar (2022) found that many learners struggle to develop their writing abilities due to inadequate vocabulary mastery. Limited vocabulary restricts their ability to convey thoughts precisely and creatively, leading to repetitive and simplistic language use. This deficiency not only affects the clarity and depth of their writing but also diminishes their confidence and motivation to engage in writing tasks (Ramzan et al., 2023; Hanafiah et al., 2022; Youngsun et al., 2024).

As EFL learners, students at UPTD SMPN Satap 9 Barru also face similar challenges, including a lack of vocabulary and difficulties in developing writing topics. Limited classroom time, insufficient materials, and low motivation exacerbate these issues. Creating an engaging and enjoyable environment is crucial for fostering a love for writing (Jobirovna, 2023). In this case, using the gamification teaching method is considered helpful in improving students' writing skills. Gamification, when used in education, creates a learning environment that is more like a game and gives students a more active role in their education (Bullard, 2016; Sukmawaty et al., 2022). In keeping with technological improvements, gamification can be applied to educational activities. Furthermore, features in games, such as challenges, can increase the fun and engagement of learning (Puspitasari & Arifin, 2023).

In light of this background, the researcher was interested in examining the effects of gamification as a teaching method on enhancing students' writing skills. Furthermore, this study aimed to answer the following research questions: 1) Does the gamification teaching method effectively enhance students' writing skills? 2) What are the students' attitudes towards using gamification as a teaching method to improve their writing skills?.

## **2. Methodology**

This study employed a quantitative method with a pre-experimental design. Quantitative research involves a systematic inquiry that focuses on measuring data and extrapolating results from a sample to the larger population. It uses statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques to collect and interpret numerical data (Mohajan, 2020). The pre-experimental design was chosen because at UPTD SMPN Satap 9 Barru, each grade level consists of only one class. This situation makes it impractical to implement more rigorous experimental designs that require multiple classes for random assignment and control groups. With only one class available per grade, the pre-experimental design, such as the one-group pretest-posttest model, allows for the practical examination of the effects of an intervention within the existing class structure.

Population encompasses the entire group of individuals, objects, or events that a researcher aims to study (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). The population is the complete set from which a sample may be drawn for a study. The population for this study comprised all students of UPTD SMPN Satap 9 Barru in the academic year 2023/2024. Employing a purposive sampling technique, the researcher selectively chose a sample from this population. Specifically, 28 students from the ninth grade were selected to participate in the study. The participants were selected because the ninth graders possess a higher level of maturity and cognitive development, which is crucial for the comprehension and engagement required in the study. Additionally, as the most senior students in the school, they have the most extensive experience with the school curriculum and environment, making them better suited for understanding and responding to the intervention.

In collecting the data, the researcher used a writing test as the instrument to assess students' proficiency in writing English descriptive texts. Heaton (1988) asserts that writing tests offer students an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to perform specific tasks in the language. To assess students' achievements in writing, testing their writing skills is the most effective method. The test was designed based on several indicators, including content, organization, vocabulary, mechanics (like punctuation and spelling), and grammar. The writing test was conducted twice, as a pretest and a posttest, each lasting for 60 minutes. For each test, the researcher provided four topics, which were my self, my best friend, my favorite animal, and my favorite thing. Each selected topic should be written in about 150-200 words.

The study involved a total of six meetings for data collection purposes. The first meeting served as the pretest to measure the students' prior writing skills. The subsequent four meetings were dedicated to the treatment phase, during which the researcher used some games from Wordwall, a web-based application. The final meeting was reserved for the posttest to evaluate the students' writing improvements. The results of the pretest and posttest were compared to measure the effectiveness of the gamification method. During the posttest meeting, students were also given a questionnaire to assess their attitudes toward the utilization of the gamification teaching method. This combination of

methods allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of both writing skills and students' perceptions of the use of gamification in teaching writing.

The researcher used an analytical writing scoring rubric that was modified from Weigle (2002) consist of content, organization, vocabulary and mechanic, and grammar to examine the data pertaining to the writing proficiency assessments of the students. The content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics are five areas this rubric looks at. In this study, the researcher combined mechanics and vocabulary. The analytical scoring criteria used to evaluate students' writing output is shown in the following table.

The following formula was used to obtain the students' pre-test and post-test scores.

$$\text{Score} = \frac{\text{the students' gained score}}{\text{total score}} \times 100$$

Sudjana (2020)

Next, students' scores obtained in the pretest and posttest are classified using the scoring rubric by Arikunto (2013) which ranges from very poor to excellent. After identifying the values of students' pretest and posttest scores, the researcher proceeded to analyze this information using quantitative analysis techniques through statistical methods. The researchers utilized the IBM SPSS Statistics 29 to analyze student data. This step is taken to assess whether there is a significant difference in students' writing abilities before and after being taught using the gamification teaching method. Thus, in analyzing the data from questionnaires, researcher utilized a Likert scale scoring system (Gay et al., 2012) consisting of 5 alternative answers ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The mean score rating of students' attitude was classified from highly negative to highly positive.

### 3. Result and Discussions

#### 3.1 Result

The results of this study are tied to descriptive analysis conducted using the SPSS statistical application, which the researcher employed to determine if there is a significant difference in students' writing abilities with the use of gamification teaching methods. Additionally, this section also delves into students' attitudes towards the methods utilized, obtained through questionnaire analysis.

The Normality test was employed to evaluate whether the data distribution adheres to a normal distribution, which is essential for many statistical analyses. This ensures the validity of the assumptions underlying parametric tests, enabling accurate interpretation and reliable conclusions in this study

The researcher used the Shapiro-Wilk Formula (SPSS 29) with the following hypotheses to determine if the data were normally distributed:

H0: The data have a normal distribution.

H1: The data do not follow a normal distribution.

The significance level was set at 0.05. According to the test results, if the p-value (Sig.) is greater than 0.05, we fail to reject H0, indicating that the data follows a normal distribution. The results are displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1. Normality Test**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Pretest students' writing skill	.122	28	.200*	.952	28	.227
Posttest students' writing skill	.127	28	.200*	.935	28	.084

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The results of the normality test indicate that the pre-test value was 0.227, whereas the post-test score was 0.084. Since both p-values are greater than 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis (H0), indicating that the data is normally distributed. This allows us to proceed with parametric tests, confident that the assumptions of these tests are met.

**Table 2. Paired Samples Statistics**

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest students' writing skill	52.5714	28	16.99331	3.21143
	Posttest students' writing skill	70.2857	28	11.66145	2.20381

Based on the Paired Samples Statistics Test, the pre-test mean score was found to be 52.5714, while the post-test mean score was 70.2875. The mean score of the post-test is noticeably higher than the pre-test, indicating a significant improvement in scores due to the treatment. This suggests that the utilization of gamification teaching methods effectively enhances students' writing skills.

**Table 3. Paired Samples Correlations**

		N	Correlation	Significance One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Pretest students' writing skill & Posttest students' writing skill	28	.927	<.001	<.001

The correlation coefficient of 0.927 indicates a very strong relationship between students' writing skills before and after the implementation of the gamification teaching methods. The significance value ( $p < 0.001$ ) further supports the hypothesis that there is a statistically significant improvement in students' writing abilities due to the gamification teaching method.

The magnitude of the correlation coefficient proposed by Sugiyono in Agustianti et al., (2022) serves as the foundation for determining the interpretation of the strength of the relationship, as follows:

**Table 4. Correlation Coefficients Guidelines**

Coefficients interval	Correlation Level
0.00-0.199	Very low
0.20-0.399	Low
0.40-0.599	Moderate
0.60-0.799	Strong
0.80-1.000	Very strong

The correlation coefficient values are interpreted as shown in Table 8. With a correlation value of 0.927, the results of this study fall into the "very strong" category, indicating that there is a very strong positive relationship between the use of gamification teaching method and the improvement of students' writing skills. This strong correlation underscores the effectiveness of gamification in enhancing students' learning outcomes.

**Table 5. Paired Samples Test**

Paired Differences		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			Significance		
Mean	Std. Deviation	Lower	Upper	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p

Pair 1	Pretest students' writing skill	-17.7142	7.56629	1.42989	-20.64818	-14.78039	-12.389	27	<.001	<.001
	Posttest students' writing skill									

According to the decision-making basis in the Paired Sample Test as outlined by Singgih Santosa (2014) cited in Aminuddin & Mulyadi (2020), the interpretation is as follows:

- a. If the Sig. (2-tailed) score is < 0.05, then Ha (alternative hypothesis) is accepted while H0 (null hypothesis) is rejected.
- b. If the Sig. (2-tailed) score is > 0.05, then Ha is rejected while H0 is accepted.

The Paired Sample T-Test results in table 9 reveal a mean difference of -17.71429 between the pre-test and post-test scores. The significance value ( $p < 0.001$ ) is less than 0.05, leading us to reject the null hypothesis (H0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (Ha). This confirms that the gamification teaching methods have a significant positive impact on students' writing skills.

**Table 6. The mean score of students' attitudes toward gamification teaching method**

Total Score	Total Sample	Mean score	Category
2385	28	85.18	Highly Positive

The questionnaire results also indicate that students have a highly positive attitude towards the use of gamification teaching methods, with a mean score of 85.18, as shown in Table 10. This further supports the conclusion that gamification not only enhances writing skills but also increases student engagement in the learning process.

### 3.2 Discussion

Through a study conducted with ninth-grade students at UPTD SMPN Satap 9 Barru, it was determined that the gamification teaching method significantly improved their writing skills. The post-test results demonstrated a notable improvement compared to the pre-test, indicating that gamification effectively supports students in practicing and enhancing their writing abilities. Specifically, games such as matching pairs, unjumble, complete the sentences, maze chase, open the box, and word search from Wordwall were instrumental in helping students acquire vocabulary, which is essential for constructing well-structured texts. Zou et al., (2021) also highlighted the positive impact of digital games on vocabulary development, supporting the findings of this study.

The interactive nature of these games made the learning experience more engaging, which in turn improved vocabulary retention and its application in writing tasks. This aligns with Mutholib et al., (2023) , who found that gamification facilitates enjoyable mastery of writing skills by addressing students' needs, interests, and motivations. Additionally, previous studies such as Bai et al., (2020) and Nadeem et al., (2023) have shown that gamification enhances educational outcomes by making learning more interactive and enjoyable, leading to better student engagement and improved performance. Similarly, Muhsin & Aziz (2021) observed that online gamification stimulates students' ability to express their ideas and compose well-structured texts, reinforcing the findings of this research.

The results also show that using gamification in learning can significantly level up student enthusiasm, as games are an integral part of students' lives today. Games are not just a source of entertainment but also play a crucial role in students' daily routines, influencing how they think and learn. Teachers can create an engaging and interactive learning environment by introducing game features such as points, badges, and challenges into the learning process. As stated by Nikmah (2020), this method not only enhances students' motivation to learn but also increases their engagement in educational activities. As demonstrated by this study and supported by previous research, gamification helps students remain focused, motivated, and dedicated to achieving their learning goals, especially in improving writing skills (Samosa et al., 2021).

The classroom atmosphere became livelier and more enjoyable as a result of the gamification method. Supporting this view, Yu et al., (2021) writes that students were more motivated to actively engage in learning activities,

fostering a positive and interactive learning environment. This increased participation and enthusiasm not only helped in vocabulary retention, but also fostered a collaborative learning experience. The use of games in the classroom enabled students to engage with the subject in an enjoyable and relevant way, resulting in better learning outcomes and a more positive attitude in writing (Cheung & Ng, 2021).

The results of the questionnaire further indicated that students held highly positive attitudes towards gamification method, suggesting that elements like points, badges, and challenges can create a more engaging and supportive learning environment. This finding is consistent with Rivera & Garden (2021), who found that gamification significantly influences learners' attitudes and engagement, ultimately contributing to better learning outcomes. Latifa (2020) also highlighted that the increased engagement in the classroom naturally led to higher student activeness during writing activities. Similarly, Navarro-Espinosa et al., (2022) noted that gamification not only enhances student motivation but also sustains their interest in learning activities over time.

Finally, the research of Faya Cerqueiro & Martín-Macho Harrison (2019) underscores the important role that gamification plays in promoting motivation, focus, and curiosity. They found that students who engage with game applications during their studies report higher levels of enjoyment, which suggests the advantages of gamification in the classroom. Their findings emphasize the need for teachers to set appropriate time constraints to maximize student perception and satisfaction during game-based learning. They conclude that gamification in English language learning improves motivation, engagement, performance, satisfaction, and interaction between students and teachers.

The finding of the current study, along with those previous research highlights that the strategic use of game elements in educational settings can lead to improved academic performance and a more enjoyable learning experience, reinforcing the findings of this study. With the use of online gamification, students could be encouraged to become more dynamic and take pleasure in writing assignments. Students enthusiastically participated in the writing assignments since the strategy had a major positive impact on their improved motivation.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The research findings and the given discussion highlight that students' writing skills are significantly improved when gamification is used as a teaching method. Poor writing skill are displayed by the students when it comes to write a descriptive text. Once the gamification teaching method is implemented, the situation has changed. A greater post-test score than the pre-test was discovered for the students. Students get more interested in the process of learning when they use the gamification teaching method, which can help them to improve their writing skill. Students' attitudes and their writing of descriptive texts are better than they were before the gamification teaching method was implemented.

The findings also highlight that traditional language classrooms can adapt by promoting immersive and student-centered learning opportunities. The gamification method can enhance the efficiency, enjoyment, and accessibility of English language learning. It allows for customized, self-paced learning that meets the needs of each student while maintaining high levels of motivation and engagement. Given that games provide a low-stress environment compared to traditional high-pressure exams, they can also serve as effective assessment tools for teachers to gauge students' proficiency in English learning.

To explore the potential of gamification in enhancing writing skills, the researcher proposes several practical suggestions. Firstly, integrate game elements that align closely with writing objectives, such as collaborative story-building exercises or interactive grammar challenges. Secondly, ensure clear instructional alignment between game activities and writing proficiency standards, fostering both engagement and skill development. Thirdly, provide constructive feedback within the game context to reinforce learning outcomes and encourage iterative improvement. Lastly, evaluate student motivation and learning outcomes through qualitative and quantitative measures, gauging both perceived enjoyment and measurable skill advancement. By carefully designing and implementing gamification strategies in writing instruction, educators can leverage technology and playfulness to cultivate students' writing competencies effectively.

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