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Gamification on Modern Challenges for Junior High School Teachers in Teaching English Speaking Skills

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ABSTRACT
This study aims to identify the modern challenges faced by junior high school teachers in teaching English speaking skills through the implementation of gamification as a method. The method used is qualitative research with a case study approach, focusing on the real experiences of teachers in the teaching context. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and supporting documentation, then analyzed thematically to uncover the obstacles and strategies applied by the teachers. The results show that teachers face several challenges such as limited technological devices, limited preparation time, and difficulties in maintaining students' interest consistently through gamification. Additionally, teachers must adjust gamification techniques to the diverse characteristics of students to make speaking learning more effective. This study contributes to the literature by providing an in-depth understanding of the practice of integrating gamification in English speaking instruction despite various obstacles, as well as highlighting specific strategies used by teachers to overcome them. Furthermore, the study offers recommendations to educational stakeholders to improve teacher training and resource provision to support the effectiveness of gamification as a tool in language learning.

Keywords: Gamification, Teachers Challenges, Speaking Skill, English Language

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INTRODUCTION
English speaking skills are increasingly vital for Junior High School students to navigate the complexities of today's globalized world. Advances in technology and digital communication have blurred international borders, making English proficiency essential not only for communication across diverse cultures but also as a gateway to global information and knowledge (Berry & Kowal, 2022). The ability to speak English fluently enhances students' self-confidence in academic settings such as classroom discussions and presentations, as well as in social interactions requiring cross-cultural communication (Krisdiana et al., 2018).

Mastering English speaking skills offers significant educational benefits by promoting active participation and enabling students to articulate ideas logically and persuasively. Proficiency facilitates access to English-language learning resources and opens opportunities for scholarships, exchange programs, and academic competitions, thereby enriching students' educational experiences. It also serves as a foundational skill for success in higher education and equips students to compete effectively in the global workforce, where international communication skills are increasingly demanded (Candraloka, 2019).

Despite these advantages, many Junior High School students face challenges such as low motivation to learn English, which undermines their language development and academic performance. This lack of motivation often stems from fear of mistakes, embarrassment, unsupportive learning

environments, monotonous teaching methods, and academic pressures. Crucially, a decline in intrinsic motivation—learning driven by internal interest rather than external rewards leads to passive student involvement, limiting the development of essential language skills (Berry & Kowal, 2022; Yulianti et al., 2020).

Addressing these challenges requires holistic strategies that create engaging, supportive, and interactive learning environments. Enriching teaching approaches with technology, language games, and project-based activities relevant to students' daily lives can enhance motivation and participation. Teachers must serve as facilitators who offer constructive feedback to build confidence, while family and community support bolster students' perseverance and morale (Krisdiana et al., 2018; Nugroho & Putri, 2021).

Gamification emerges as a transformative pedagogical approach that incorporates game elements—such as point systems, badges, leaderboards, and interactive challenges—into English learning to stimulate intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and engagement. It helps reduce psychological barriers like fear and boredom, promotes healthy competition and collaboration, and enhances language acquisition effectively. However, successful implementation depends on adequate technological resources, teacher training, and adaptation to diverse student needs to maximize outcomes and sustain long-term improvements in English speaking skills (Candraloka, 2019; Santoso & Dewi, 2022; Wibowo, 2023; Hakim & Faridah, 2024).

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design with a case study approach to investigate the modern challenges faced by junior high school teachers in teaching English speaking skills using gamification. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth and holistic understanding of teachers' experiences within their real-life contexts. Qualitative research aims to explore how individuals interpret and give meaning to their everyday experiences (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The case study approach was specifically selected to provide a comprehensive exploration of the complex phenomena experienced by teachers within a bounded system, such as a particular school or classroom (Yin, 2018; Stake, 1995). This approach enables the researcher to capture various aspects of teaching speaking skills using gamification, as well as the contextual, social, and pedagogical factors influencing teachers' practices (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

This study specifically focuses on the modern challenges faced by junior high school English teachers in applying gamification techniques to teach English speaking skills. The participants were two English teachers at MTSN 1 Probolinggo, purposively selected based on their active use of gamification in speaking lessons and differing levels of experience and familiarity with these methods. The selection process involved school recommendations and preliminary interviews to ensure their willingness and relevance as rich data sources (Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposive sampling with a small number of participants is an effective practice in qualitative research to gather in-depth and context-rich data on complex phenomena (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015).

The research instruments consist of three main techniques: interviews, observations, and documentation. The interviews used a semi-structured format, guided by a set of prepared open-ended questions, but with flexibility to probe further or adjust the order of questions during the conversation. This method aimed to gain deeper insights into teachers' perspectives on the challenges of using gamification and its impact on students' motivation to learn (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Observations were conducted to directly see the teaching practices and interactions between teachers and students in the context of gamified learning, while documentation was used to support and complement the data through official records and other evidence (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

FINDING

Data were collected through structured interviews with teachers at MTSN 1 PROBOLINGGO. The table below presents the data collected from these interviews. The table shows the interview questions and responses from each student and teacher interviewed.

Theme 1: The Teachers Challenges in Using Gamification to Motivate Junior High School Students in Learning Speaking Skills.

R1: "As a junior high school teacher, I feel that using gamification really helps boost students' enthusiasm for speaking English. However, the biggest challenge I face is the preparation time and the limited technological facilities in the school. Not all students have access to English language game applications, so sometimes the gamification activities do not run optimally."

R2: "In my opinion, gamification is indeed effective in making students more active in speaking. But the main challenge is managing the class and the students during game-based activities. Some students tend to focus more on the game itself rather than the learning goals, so teachers have to be extra careful in guiding them to ensure the learning stays on target for speaking skills."

Analysis

From the interviews, it is clear that junior high school teachers agree that gamification can motivate students to be more active in learning English speaking skills. However, there are two main challenges they face:

1. Limitations in facilities and preparation time: Teachers find it difficult to prepare gamification materials because the school's technology is inadequate and not all students have devices to play, so the implementation of gamification does not always run smoothly.
2. Class management and student focus: Sometimes students get too absorbed in the games, so teachers need to be more proactive in managing the class and keeping students focused on practicing English speaking.

Theme 2: The Teachers Strategies

(R1): "To overcome the challenges of limited preparation time and inadequate technology, I try to simplify the gamification materials by using low-tech or no-tech games that still engage students in practicing English speaking. I also encourage students to work in pairs or groups so they can support each other, especially those who don't have access to game applications at home."

(R2): "Managing class dynamics during game-based activities is definitely challenging. I address this by setting clear rules and learning goals before starting the games, and by monitoring the students closely during the activities. I often pause the game to remind students about the speaking objectives, and I try to balance fun with focus to keep them on track."

Analysis

In response to the challenges faced, teachers employ strategic approaches to maintain the effectiveness of gamification in teaching English speaking skills. These include:

1. Adapting gamification materials to available resources:

   Teachers design or select gamified activities that do not rely heavily on technology, utilizing simple games or peer collaboration to maximize student participation despite technological constraints.
2. Implementing structured classroom management techniques

   By establishing clear expectations, reinforcing learning goals throughout the game, and actively supervising

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, teachers face significant challenges when implementing gamification as a teaching strategy to improve English speaking skills. One of the main obstacles is the limited access to technology and preparation time. Not all schools have adequate technological resources, such as computers, software, or stable internet connections, which restricts teachers from using complex digital applications or games. This situation causes unequal access among students, so teachers need to find creative alternatives by using simple games that do not rely on advanced technology, such as role-playing, simulations, or board games. This requires teachers to be highly innovative and adaptable to ensure gamification remains effective despite limited resources.

Another major challenge lies in classroom management. Since gamification often involves competitive and enjoyable activities, teachers must maintain a balance so that students do not lose

sight of the main learning objectives. The fun and competitive nature of games can sometimes cause students to focus more on entertainment than on achieving English speaking competencies. Therefore, the teacher's role as both facilitator and classroom manager is crucial. Teachers need to set clear game rules, explain learning objectives clearly before and during the activities, and intervene appropriately when the class starts to lose focus on the learning goals. Effective management strategies like these help keep gamification activities balanced between fun and educational purposes, as highlighted in Nicholson's study.

Furthermore, to optimally address these challenges, support for teachers is essential. Teachers need specialized training that not only introduces the concept of gamification but also equips them with practical skills to apply game-based learning tailored to their school's conditions and students' characteristics. Besides training, providing gamification modules and hands-on guidance can help teachers design and manage interactive and engaging learning activities that remain focused. With adequate support, teachers can overcome technological limitations and classroom management difficulties, making gamification more than just a trending teaching method—it becomes an effective, sustainable approach that positively impacts students' English speaking skills.

Overall, the success of gamification highly depends on teachers' readiness and ability to face real challenges in the field. Through innovation, sound classroom management, and integrated support, teachers can maximize the potential of gamification as an enjoyable and meaningful strategy for developing students' English speaking skills.

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