

## INCREASING STUDENTS' MOTIVATION, SPEAKING PROFICIENCY, AND WILLINGNESS TO SPEAK THROUGH GAMIFIED LEARNING

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**Abstrak:** Kegiatan pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini adalah inisiasi dari adanya urgensi pentingnya kemampuan bahasa Inggris dan kurangnya motivasi siswa sekolah menengah untuk berkomunikasi menggunakan bahasa Inggris. Dengan menerapkan metode Gamified Learning, program ini bertujuan untuk memudahkan pelajar untuk berlatih menggunakan berbahasa Inggris dengan kegiatan atau aktifitas dalam bentuk permainan tradisional yang interaktif, menyenangkan, dan efektif, sehingga siswa termotivasi untuk berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris di berbagai situasi dan meningkatnya kemampuan berbicara dalam Bahasa Inggris. Dengan memadukan prinsip-prinsip desain permainan ke dalam proses pembelajaran, metode ini menawarkan pendekatan inovatif yang dapat memotivasi siswa untuk berkomunikasi menggunakan bahasa Inggris. Metode ini sekaligus dapat mendorong pembelajaran berkelanjutan dan menginspirasi guru untuk menerapkannya di kelas formal dan informal. Peserta pelatihan melibatkan 35 siswa di bukan kelas unggulan, dengan rentang kemampuan bahasa Inggris rendah hingga cukup baik. Siswa terlibat dalam aktifitas pembelajaran yang mengadaptasi elemen permainan yaitu *lucky box game*, *daily routine hidden game*, dan *passing me picture* dalam mempelajari materi *explaining daily routines*. Uji efektivitas komunikasi kegiatan ini diperoleh melalui survei, observasi, dan wawancara kepada siswa yang terlibat dalam kegiatan ini. Hasil pengabdian menunjukkan terdapat perbedaan sikap dan pandangan siswa terhadap pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, sebelum dan setelah pelaksanaan kegiatan. Hasil dari kegiatan ini memberikan wawasan tentang potensi gamified learning sebagai metode inovatif dalam meningkatkan motivasi belajar siswa sekolah menengah dalam berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggris dan meningkat kemampuan berbicara. Kegiatan dan evaluasinya dapat menjadi landasan untuk pengembangan lebih lanjut dalam pengajaran bahasa dan juga memberikan kontribusi pada pemahaman tentang penggunaan teknologi dan desain permainan dalam konteks pendidikan.

**Kata Kunci:** gamified learning, kemampuan komunikasi bahasa inggris, motivasi siswa

**Abstract:** This community service program was initiated in response to the urgent need for English language proficiency and the lack of motivation among secondary school students to use English in communication. By implementing Game-Based Learning, this program aims to provide students with opportunities to practice English through interactive, enjoyable, and effective traditional game-based activities. This method offers an innovative approach by integrating game design principles into learning to motivate students to communicate in English. This method can promote sustainable learning in students' speaking proficiency and inspire teachers to apply it in formal and informal classroom settings. This community service program involved 35 non-honours class students with English proficiency levels ranging from low to moderate. Students were engaged in gamified learning activities, which adopted game elements, namely *the lucky box game*, *the daily routine hidden game*, and *passing me a picture*. The effectiveness of the communication aspect of this activity was evaluated through questionnaire surveys, observations, and interviews with the participants involved in the training. The results show a noticeable shift in students' attitudes and perceptions toward learning English, which was observed before and after the implementation of the activity. Outcomes of this program provide insights into the potential of gamified learning as an innovative method to enhance students' interest and motivation in learning English at the secondary level. The activity and its evaluation may serve as a foundation for further development in language teaching and contribute to the broader understanding of technology and game design use in educational contexts.

**Keywords:** gamified learning, english communication skills, students' motivation

## Introduction

A lack of interest and motivation in learning significantly affects the success of the learning process, particularly in acquiring foreign languages. However, students' interest and motivation are often insufficiently addressed. Teachers may be reluctant to innovate, making students feel that their enthusiasm and motivation for learning English will not change. Teachers are often perceived as a key in managing learning activities (Rahmat & Fauzi, 2022). Conversely, students with strong interest, motivation, and English proficiency are frequently not given adequate opportunities to explore their potential further or are insufficiently encouraged to reach higher performance levels. As a result, English continues to be viewed as a rigid and complex subject.

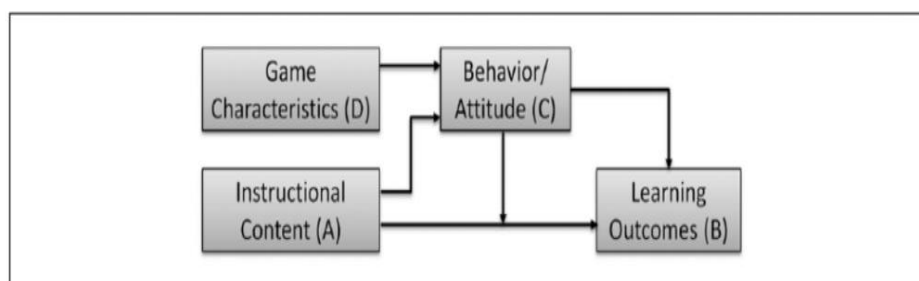
Numerous studies have reported positive outcomes from applying the gamified learning method. This method has proven significantly more effective and impactful in fostering interest and enhancing motivation than traditional teaching methods. Students tend to retain information more quickly, delivering knowledge more efficiently (Kapp, 2012). Moreover, gamified learning has been found to help students overcome anxiety and fear of failure, which are common barriers in the English language learning process (Khosiyat, 2023). This community service activity, grounded in the principles of gamified learning, was designed to create engaging and enjoyable learning experiences by incorporating interactive and innovative game elements. The initiative aims to boost students' interest in learning and foster essential skills such as problem-solving, creativity, and collaboration.

Gamification has increasingly enhanced motivation, engagement, and willingness to communicate (WTC) among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Afifah and Priyana (2024) reported that both students and teachers perceive gamification as beneficial in increasing learner involvement and enthusiasm in classroom activities. Similarly, Aminah et al. (2024) emphasised its role in sustaining motivation and improving retention in digital EFL classrooms. Studies such as Anisa et al. (2020) and Tsai (2024) have highlighted that gamification contributes positively to students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, fostering a more engaging learning atmosphere. In particular, gamified elements like points, levels, and badges stimulate competitive and cooperative dynamics, which enhance participation and communication. Gamification is using game mechanics, design, and technology to build engagement in learning and motivate learners to achieve instructional goals. In the context of English language learning, gamification aims to support effective language acquisition. Gamified learning is a contemporary and increasingly popular approach in education today, offering a variety of benefits. Furthermore, research by Gusta et al. (2024) and Hardianti (2024) confirms that incorporating gamification into grammar instruction increases learners' interest and classroom interaction, reinforcing both linguistic and social competencies. Camacho-Sánchez et al. (2022) found that digital game-based learning improved students' academic performance and deepened their motivation and emotional engagement.

The benefits of gamification are also evident in willingness to communicate (WTC), a critical factor for language acquisition. Taghizadeh et al. (2025) demonstrated that gamification, alongside differentiated instruction, significantly increased students' willingness to speak and

interact in English. This finding is corroborated by Naviantara et al. (2024), who noted marked improvements in learner confidence and communicative competence through regular exposure to gamified tasks. Several other studies (e.g., Kharizmi et al., 2024; Nurfadilah et al., 2025) have shown that vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, and classroom engagement are consistently enhanced through well-structured gamified interventions, especially when supported by digital tools and ICT-based platforms. In conclusion, the literature strongly supports the integration of gamification in EFL learning as an effective method to increase student motivation, participation, and willingness to communicate. These findings provide a robust theoretical foundation for implementing gamified learning strategies in the context of English instruction at a senior high school in Bengkulu City.

The theoretical framework proposed by Landers (2015) shows that gamification can influence students' attitudes and behaviours toward learning, such as motivation, engagement, goal orientation, attention, and persistence. This framework provides opportunities for students to participate actively through psychological changes. It keeps students motivated to practice through instructional content, which can lead to learning outcomes. Regarding psychological and behavioural outcomes, Hellín et al. (2023) observed that gamified environments promote persistence, reduce learning anxiety, and develop a growth mindset, particularly important for language learners who struggle with performance-related fears (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Gamified Learning Theory by Landers (2015)

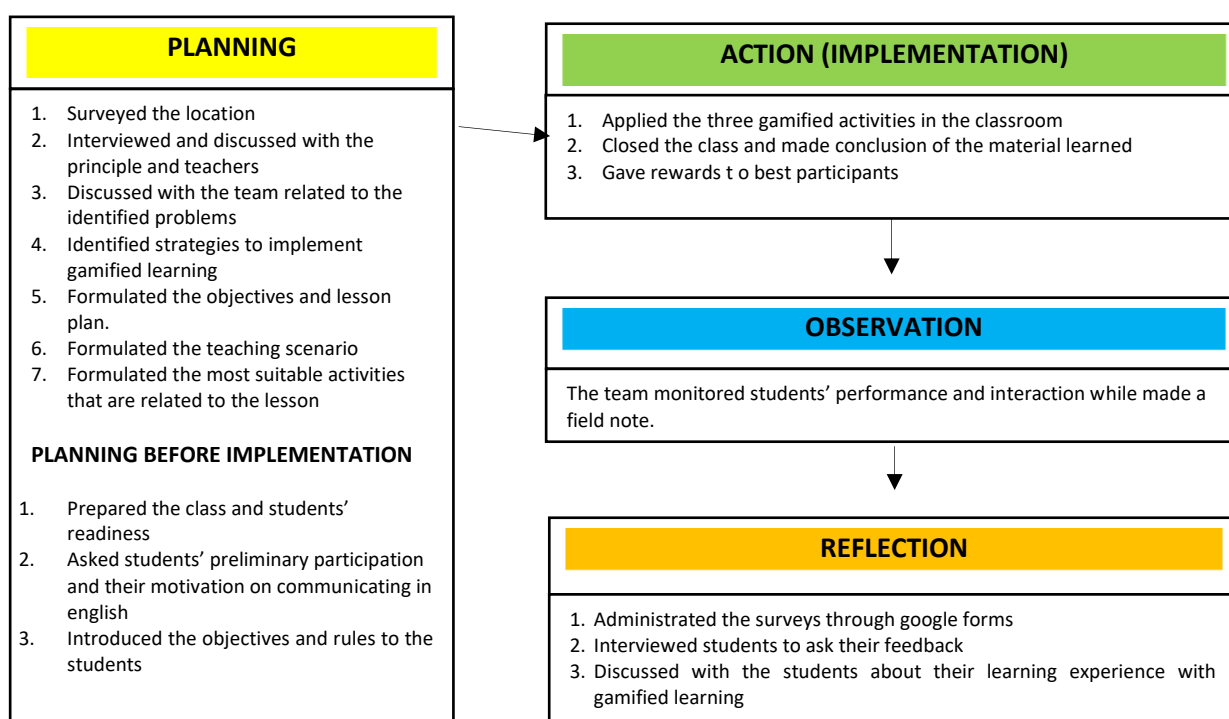
According to Huang and Soman (2013), gamification has five key steps to ensure that games are effectively integrated into the learning process and to assist teachers in implementing game-based patterns efficiently. The first step is to understand the target audience and context, which includes considering diverse characteristics such as age, skill level, learning abilities, and the setting—when and where the games will occur. The second step involves formulating and defining the specific learning objectives. The third step is to design the stages and sequence of the learning process. These steps help teachers or instructors to align the learning objectives with the overall instructional flow. The fourth step involves preparing the necessary resources, including materials and content required for the activity. Finally, the fifth step is to implement the plan and apply the core elements of gamification.

This community service activity aims to facilitate students in practising their English skills through game-based learning activities (gamified learning), which are expected to foster sustained interest and motivation in learning English. Additionally, the activity seeks to inspire English teachers in Bengkulu City who accompany students during the program to adopt

gamified learning methods in their classroom instruction. The educational benefit of this initiative lies in creating a learning environment that inspires and motivates students to grow. The activity is an opportunity for the organizers to contribute by applying their knowledge and skills while fulfilling their responsibility to uphold the tri dharma of higher education.

## Methods

This community service program adopts the framework of Participatory Action Research (PAR) as its methodological foundation, with 35 participants involved. PAR is a collaborative research approach that emphasises the involvement of participants throughout the entire process of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection (Baum et al., 2006). In this context, both students and English teachers play an active role in the intervention, not merely as recipients, but as contributors who engage in and provide feedback on the learning process. The project was designed to respond to real challenges students face, namely low motivation and anxiety in English learning, by introducing gamified learning as an innovative and interactive approach. This design aligns with the action component of PAR, where meaningful interventions are applied in practical settings. Throughout the training, a cycle of planning (briefing sessions and goal setting), action (implementation of the three designed games), observation (monitoring student performance and interaction), and reflection (via surveys to participants) was conducted. The roadmap of this community service is presented below in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** The roadmap of the community service program on gamified learning

Before the community service was conducted, the team surveyed the location (a senior high school in the townside area whose neighborhood is mostly low-class to middle-class communities. The team made an appointment with the principal and teachers at that school to

discuss the problems arising among the students, especially in English classes. Then the problems identified were the decreased motivation of students in learning English, and the teachers struggled to find effective ways to motivate students to be more proactive and involved in the English classroom. Therefore, the team came out with the idea of bringing out the gamified learning to solve such problems, considering students' interests in playing and competing. Afterwards, the team discussed the topic or material that would be presented to students through gamified learning. The discussion results also included the arrangement of teaching scenarios and the activities that suit the principles of gamified learning. On the implementation day, the team prepared the students by asking the class teachers who were less likely to be motivated to learn English. It was hard at first to get all students to enter the class, even though one of the team members listened to some of the students' complaints that they hated English class and felt reluctant to join the training.

At the opening of the class, the team asked students to introduce themselves. It took minutes to wait for students' participation until only one student raised her hand and came forward to perform as instructed. After that, the class was asked about their motivation to learn English; some yelled that they hated English as it was difficult to learn. The team tried to encourage the students and insisted that their participation in this training was worth their time. The goals of the training and rules during the implementation were also informed.

### **Action (Implementation)**

Three gamified activities were chosen to be applied in the training. The details of the activities are explained below.

- a. Lucky Box Game is a group-based activity designed to enhance learners' pronunciation skills and understanding of parts of speech. The game's mechanism involves each group choosing one out of twenty boxes containing an action verb (verb vocabulary). Students must pronounce every word selected correctly until it is accurate and clearly understood. Once the pronunciation is deemed correct, the group must construct a grammatically correct English sentence using the chosen verb. The group must ensure appropriate pronunciation and sentence structure. If the sentence is correct, the selected box is opened to reveal the points earned.
- b. Daily Routine Hidden Pictures Game is an English-language group activity that develops speaking and listening skills. In this game, participants or group representatives open boxes containing clues related to hidden images. The number of boxes each group can open is determined by the points they earned in the previous game (Lucky Box Game). For every two points accumulated, a group earns one chance to open a box. During their turn, the group discusses guessing the English phrase or sentence that accurately represents the hidden image. Groups that provide the correct answer are awarded three points.
- c. Passing Me the Picture is an activity designed to stimulate students' communication in English. In this game, students pass around a picture while music is playing. When the music stops, the student holding the picture is required to describe the image in English.

Awards and punishment are also given to the groups with the highest and lowest scores,

respectively. The award consists of stationery supplies as prizes, while the punishment is presented as a game called *"Imitate the Pose."* In this game, group members with the lowest score must imitate a pose displayed on the screen via an LCD projector.

## Results and Discussions

### Observation

The other team members observed the participants' performance and class situation during the treatment. The observation included the participants' involvement, shown by their enthusiasm and participation in some of the activities. In the end, the dynamic results show how enthusiasm and participation numbers shifted from fewer to more. Table 1 shows the results of the observation.

**Table 1.** Observation Results

Class Activity	Students' Enthusiasm			Involvement through Participation			Note
	High	Low	Absence	High	Low	Absence	
Self-Introduction			√		√		Only one student participated
Lucky Box Games		√			√		Most of the students were still figuring out the rules and how things worked
Daily Routine Hidden Pictures Game	√			√			The class was lively, and all group members seemed more enthusiastic and raised their hands (they could not wait to be called) even though they had been informed that everyone had their turn. Some students even revealed their good pronunciation and ability to speak in English.
Pass Me the Picture Game	√			√			Everyone seemed motivated to win. Moreover, they were encouraged to speak English. Some students revealed their good pronunciation and ability to speak in English

The shifts from less interested to more interested are obvious. At first, the team thought only one student or only a few could speak English, but from the activities, the other students' language proficiency was revealed through their involvement in the activities, which pushed them to produce English words and even sentences.

### Reflections

In the reflection phase, the team administered questionnaire surveys to evaluate the participants' experiences. After completing the training program, the evaluation was conducted by distributing questionnaires to all participants. The questionnaires were distributed online via Google Forms, with items adapted and modified from the Attitude and Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). Additionally, observations were made during the activities to assess the students' performance and abilities while engaging in each game. Interview sessions were conducted to explore the participants' perceived benefits of the program to further enhance the data. Most

participants (75%) were female, and 41.7% reported feeling that their English proficiency was lacking.

The team also interviewed participants regarding the training. Most expressed enthusiasm, with one participant describing the experience as "*sangat menyenangkan dan seru*" (enjoyable and fun). All participants were willing to engage in future English learning sessions involving gamified activities. Following the training, students completed questionnaires via Google Forms. Thirty-five students responded to 10 questions regarding their willingness to communicate in English in similar situations.

**Table 2.** Willingness to Communicate (WTC) After the Training was Conducted

No.	Indicators	Yes	No	Maybe
	<i>Are you willing to speak English when....</i>	63%	37%	10%
1	When given the chance to speak freely in English			
2	When given the chance to speak with classmates in English	27%	27%	27%
3	When discussed in groups in English	80%	10%	20%
4	When being asked to do a presentation in English	23%	15%	62%
5	When taking turns. Your friends go first.	30%	25%	45%
6	When talking to strangers in English	57%	33%	10%
7	When talking to English speakers, but not natives on social media	48%	25%	27%
8	When talking to native speakers of English on	42%	23%	35%
9	social media			
	When talking to native speakers of English	44%	15%	41%
10	When talking to other users while playing games	34%	20%	46%

Table 2 illustrates a high willingness to communicate in English in Situation 1 (when given the opportunity to speak freely in English) and Situation 3 (when engaging in group discussions in English). This result may suggest that participants perceived speaking freely and conversing within a group of peers as less intimidating. Although not all situations exhibited the highest percentage of improvement, the participants demonstrated a notable increase in their motivation and interest in speaking English compared to the period before the training. According to the observation results and questionnaire answers, students' willingness to communicate (WTC) in English increased significantly after the training. This finding is consistent with recent research showing how gamified learning environments can lower anxiety and increase student engagement in language classes (Kim et al., 2020; Chen & Hwang, 2020).

Table 2 demonstrates that students felt most at ease speaking English in group discussions (80%) and when allowed to speak freely (63%). It is not surprising, as collaborative learning has been proven effective in increasing students' motivation, as found by Tamrin and Yanti (2019). This result is also aligned with Anisa et al. (2020) and Tsai (2024), who showed the increase of students' intrinsic motivation in applying gamified learning. Other benefits identified support the results of Wang & Derakhshan's (2021) study on low-stakes, peer-based speaking environments, which greatly increase the confidence and preparedness of EFL learners to speak. Such circumstances promote a feeling of belonging and lessen the anxiety associated with receiving a poor grade, frequently preventing people from participating orally. Additionally, students who participated in gamified activities like Pass Me the Picture and Hidden Pictures



produced more spontaneous language and showed more enthusiasm. This finding supports the previous research highlighting how game-based learning improves students' independence, vocabulary, and speaking fluency, particularly when games are incorporated into group learning (Li & Yang, 2021).



**Figure 3.** Gamified learning activity with students as participants

The increase in participants' willingness suggests a growing sense of agency and linguistic self-confidence, even though WTC was still moderate or low in higher-pressure scenarios like presentations or speaking to native speakers. Such shifts demonstrate how interactive classroom formats can gradually alter students' attitudes toward language acquisition (Mahmoodi & Mozaffari, 2023). Most participants in the post-training interviews characterised the experience as "fun" and "motivating," highlighting the crucial role that positive emotional experiences play in boosting motivation. According to recent research in positive psychology in language instruction, emotional safety, engagement, and enjoyment are essential components of long-term language use (Wang & Derakhshan, 2021).

In conclusion, when gamified instruction and participatory learning were combined, learners' internal motivation and confidence to use English improved along with their observable behaviours. These results highlight the importance of creating interactive, emotionally compelling, learner-centred language programs.

## Conclusion

Based on the results of the community service activities conducted, it can be concluded that English language learning through the gamified learning method has the potential to enhance students' motivation and willingness to communicate (WTC) in learning English. Gamified learning should be implemented more frequently in English instruction for students at Senior High Schools. This approach is expected to improve students' learning motivation and willingness to communicate in English and enhance the quality of English language instruction at the school.



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