# Game-based Learning Material in English

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The English language, with its complex grammar rules and extensive vocabulary, poses a considerable challenge for learners, particularly those acquiring it as a second language. For Filipino students, this challenge is further compounded by a limited vocabulary, which often becomes a major barrier to achieving proficiency. Such constraints hinder their ability to read, write, listen, and speak effectively in English, thereby underscoring the urgent need for innovative and effective learning strategies.

One promising approach is game-based learning, which has been widely applied across grade levels to enhance engagement and improve specific learning outcomes. Educational games provide meaningful opportunities for learners to understand course content more deeply while actively participating in the learning process. Prodigy (2021) highlights that game-based learning leverages the motivational features of games to shape learning outcomes, while Alotaibi (2024) demonstrates that students exhibit improved comprehension and participation when exposed to educational games. Similarly, Pratama and Setyaningrum (2018) present evidence that such games significantly enhance learning performance. This approach has further developed into gamification, wherein learners earn points, receive rewards, and

climb leaderboards, making the learning experience both challenging and rewarding.

Despite these advancements, many schools continue to face persistent challenges in addressing learners' reading and comprehension skills. Students' written outputs and performance tasks in English often fall below expected standards, commonly exhibiting grammatical errors, poor sentence construction, and difficulty in writing coherent paragraphs with minimal mistakes. Furthermore, routine-based lessons tend to disengage students, who often lose interest quickly. In contrast, learners show greater motivation and participation when lessons incorporate dynamic and interactive strategies such as group activities, quiz bees, and educational games.

## Gamification in Education

Gamification has emerged as a widely studied instructional strategy across educational settings, drawing increasing attention from researchers in recent years (Pratama & Setyaningrum, 2018; Yildirim, 2017). Defined as the application of game elements and mechanics in non-game contexts, gamification integrates points, badges, rewards, leaderboards, and levels into classroom instruction to enhance motivation, engagement, and achievement (Deterding et al., 2011; Nah et al., 2014; Rachels & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2018). While game-based learning typically involves students playing or creating full games, gamification refers to embedding selected game elements into learning tasks to enrich traditional instruction. This distinction underscores gamification's versatility, as it can complement rather than replace established pedagogical approaches.

Research highlights gamification's potential to improve learner engagement, motivation, and performance across diverse subjects. Nah et al. (2014) identify essential elements points, levels, challenges, and progress indicators that foster sustained attention and enjoyment. Similarly, Bartle's

(1996) classification of gamer types (achievers, explorers, socializers, and killers) provides insight into how different students may respond to gamified tasks, emphasizing the importance of tailoring design to learner profiles. Empirical findings generally support gamification's benefits: studies have reported increased participation, persistence, and comprehension among students exposed to gamified activities (Zahedi et al., 2021; Alotaibi, 2024; Arufe-Giráldez et al., 2022).

Despite promising outcomes, research also reveals mixed findings. Hanus and Fox (2015) observed declines in intrinsic motivation and performance when gamification was poorly designed, while Bai et al. (2020) noted that competitive elements such as leaderboards may discourage lower-performing students. Similarly, excessive or poorly aligned rewards risk shifting student focus from meaningful learning to extrinsic incentives. These concerns highlight the necessity of aligning gamification mechanics with instructional objectives, managing cognitive load, and ensuring inclusivity. Scholars therefore recommend hybrid approaches, where gamification complements traditional instruction rather than replacing it, to maximize both engagement and deep learning (Fithriani, 2021).

The application of gamification in language education, particularly vocabulary acquisition, has gained considerable attention in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Research indicates that gamified tools provide repeated exposure, contextualized practice, and immediate feedback, thereby improving retention and learner autonomy. Ekin and Kaya (2020) demonstrated that vocabulary games significantly enhanced EFL students' word recall, while Purgina et al. (2020) found that gamified apps increased motivation and sustained participation in vocabulary learning. Moreover, Al-Maroof et al. (2020) reported that gamification promoted collaborative learning and reduced anxiety, making it especially beneficial in language classrooms where affective factors often hinder progress.

Taken together, the literature affirms gamification's promise as an instructional innovation that enhances engagement and learning outcomes when thoughtfully designed. While limitations such as potential overemphasis on rewards or competitive stress must be addressed, evidence suggests that gamification is particularly effective in vocabulary instruction, where repetition and contextual application are crucial. A balanced approach that combines gamified strategies with traditional methods appears most effective in sustaining both learner motivation and long-term language development.

## Let Us Play: An Innovative Learning Approach To Learning English Vocabulary

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of gamified learning as an innovative pedagogical strategy for enhancing vocabulary acquisition. Specifically, it examines how the integration of game-based elements into English lessons influences students' vocabulary proficiency and fosters greater engagement in the learning process.

*Methodology*

This study employed a quasi-experimental design to examine the causal relationship between gamified learning and vocabulary acquisition. Unlike true experimental designs, quasi-experiments do not rely on random assignment but instead group participants according to specific criteria.

The research was conducted in a public high school in the District of Libacao, Philippines, with Grade 8 learners as respondents. Groupings were formed based on the students' final English grades from the previous school year. Learners with comparable performance levels were matched and then proportionally assigned to the control and experimental groups, each consisting of 15 students. To measure vocabulary proficiency, a researcher-made English

Proficiency Test was developed, drawing from a standardized vocabulary and proficiency test. The instrument comprised 50 multiple-choice items aligned with the Grade 8 English curriculum. Two parallel forms were created for the pre-test and post-test, and subject experts validated the items to ensure content accuracy and reliability.

Prior to implementation, the necessary permissions were obtained from school and division officials. Both groups first took the pre-test, after which the experimental group underwent an eight-week intervention consisting of gamified vocabulary lessons. Games were designed and adapted by the researcher to align with lesson competencies while accommodating contextual constraints such as limited internet connectivity and students' restricted access to mobile devices. Structured lesson plans were prepared to facilitate the integration of vocabulary games. Following the intervention, a post-test was administered to both groups.

Data were analyzed using the Mean Percentage Score (MPS) to determine learners' proficiency levels and the t-test to assess the significance of differences between the control and experimental groups.

*Findings*

Table 1 presents the pre-test performance of both groups. In the control group, which was taught using the conventional method, most learners obtained scores within the average range (18–32). Specifically, seven students reached the satisfactory proficiency level, while eight fell within the weak proficiency range (9–17). The group's overall mean score was 18, corresponding to a satisfactory proficiency level. These findings suggest that prior to the intervention, learners generally exhibited only average proficiency in English vocabulary.

**Table 1**

*Pre-test score of learners in English vocabulary*

| Score | Description | Interpretation | F | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Conventional Approach** | | | | |
| 18-32 | Average | Satisfactory Proficiency | 7 | 46.67 |
| 9-17 | Low | Weak Proficiency | 8 | 53.33 |
| Overall Mean: 18.00 (Satisfactory Proficiency) | | | | |
| **Gamified Approach** | | | | |
| 18-32 | Average | Satisfactory Proficiency | 7 | 46.67 |
| 9-17 | Low | Weak Proficiency | 7 | 46.67 |
| 3-8 | Very Low | Poor Proficiency | 1 | 6.67 |
| Overall Mean: 18.00 (Satisfactory Proficiency) | | | | |

On the other hand, the pre-test results of the experimental group, which was taught using a gamified approach, indicate that seven learners scored within the satisfactory proficiency range (18–32), another seven fell within the weak proficiency range (9–17), and one performed at the very weak level (0–8). The group's overall mean score of 16.07 was interpreted as weak proficiency, suggesting that learners initially possessed low English vocabulary skills. This finding aligns with Afzal's (2019) observation that students with limited vocabulary knowledge tend to perform poorly in language-related courses.

The post-test results of both groups are presented in Table 2. In the control group, taught through the conventional method, learners obtained an overall mean score of 32.00, corresponding to satisfactory proficiency. Within this group, seven students scored between 33–42, advancing toward good proficiency, while the remaining eight stayed within the satisfactory range (18–32). The 15-point increase in the mean score from pre-test to post-test demonstrates that the conventional method contributed to improving learners' vocabulary skills.

**Table 2**

*Post-test score of learners in English vocabulary*

| Score | Description | Interpretation | F | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Conventional Approach** | | | | |
| 33-42 | Moving Towards Mastery | Good Proficiency | 7 | 46.67 |
| 18-32 | Average | Satisfactory Proficiency | 8 | 53.33 |
| Over-all Mean: 32.00 (Satisfactory Proficiency) | | | | |
| **Gamified Approach** | | | | |
| 33-42 | Moving Towards Mastery | Good Proficiency | 15 | 100 |
| Over-all Mean: 37.6 (Good Proficiency) | | | | |

Under the gamified approach, all 15 respondents scored within the range of 33–42, corresponding to good proficiency. The group attained an overall mean score of 37.6, likewise interpreted as good proficiency. These results provide strong evidence of the effectiveness of gamification in enhancing learners' English vocabulary skills. The findings are consistent with Li and Liu (2022), who emphasized that gamified strategies not only improve vocabulary acquisition but also enhance learner satisfaction, promote enjoyment in the learning process, and significantly increase the participation of introverted students.

Table 3 presents a comparison of the pre-test and post-test results in English vocabulary between learners taught using the conventional method and those exposed to gamified instruction.

**Table 3**

*Difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of learners in English vocabulary*

| Intervention | Score | t-value | p-value | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Pre-Test** | | | |
| Conventional Method | 18.00 (Satisfactory Proficiency) | -0.98 | 0.34 | Accept Ho |
| Gamified Approach | 16.07 (Weak Proficiency) | | | |
| | **Post-Test** | | | |
| Conventional Method | 32.00 (Satisfactory Proficiency) | 3.94 | 0.00* | Reject Ho |
| Gamified Approach | 37.60 (Good Proficiency) | | | |

**- Highly Significant at 1% alpha level

In terms of the pre-test scores, the computed t-value was -0.98 with a p-value of 0.34, which is greater than the 0.05 significance level. This result indicates no significant difference between the control and experimental groups prior to the intervention, suggesting that both groups were initially comparable in their English vocabulary proficiency. In contrast, the post-test analysis revealed a statistically significant difference between the two approaches. The p-value of 0.00, which falls below the 0.05 threshold, confirms that learners exposed to gamified instruction achieved significantly higher scores compared to those taught using the conventional method.

These findings affirm the effectiveness of gamification in enhancing vocabulary acquisition. Yu (2023) supports this result, reporting that gamified English vocabulary learning significantly improves learning outcomes, motivation, and student satisfaction compared to non-gamified approaches. Similarly, the study of Kijpoonphol and Phumchanin (2018) revealed that although students expressed greater satisfaction with traditional methods, the gamified group obtained higher post-test scores, particularly in learning phrasal verbs. This suggests that gamified instruction not only improves academic performance but also provides learners with a more engaging and effective learning experience.

**Table 4**

*Difference between the conventional method and gamified approach*

| Test | Score | t-value | p-value | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Conventional Method** | | | | |
| Pre-test | 18.00 (Satisfactory Proficiency) | -7.18185 | <0.00001* | Reject Ho |
| Post-test | 32.00 (Satisfactory Proficiency) | | | |
| **Gamified Approach** | | | | |
| Pre-test | 16.07 (Weak Proficiency) | -14.7341 | <0.0001** | Reject Ho |
| Post-test | 37.60 (Good Proficiency) | | | |

**- Highly Significant at 1% alpha level

Based on the computed p-values of the pre-test and post-test scores, Table 4 reveals a highly significant difference in the English vocabulary performance of Grade 8 learners under both the conventional and gamified approaches. For the conventional method, the p-value of 0.00001, which is less than the 0.05 significance level at the 1% alpha level, indicates a significant improvement between the pre-test and post-test scores. This demonstrates that conventional teaching remains effective in enhancing English vocabulary skills. It suggests that when properly implemented, traditional instructional methods can still produce positive learning outcomes. Similarly, learners exposed to the gamified approach also showed a highly significant improvement, as indicated by the p-value of 0.00001. This underscores the effectiveness of gamification in promoting vocabulary development. While both approaches proved beneficial, the gamified method yielded greater gains in performance, suggesting that integrating game-based elements may further enhance the effectiveness of vocabulary instruction.

*Recommendations*

It is recommended that educators incorporate gamified strategies into English vocabulary instruction to foster higher levels of engagement and motivation among learners. Practical applications may include interactive activities such as language games, quizzes, and digital platforms that encourage active participation while reinforcing vocabulary acquisition. At the policy level, the Department of Education may consider revising the English curriculum to embed gamification as a complementary instructional approach. This could involve the development of instructional resources, training programs, and digital materials that equip teachers with the necessary tools and competencies to effectively implement gamified strategies. Moreover, curriculum design should extend beyond traditional

classroom practices and promote innovation, providing educators with the flexibility to adopt learner-centered methodologies that not only enhance vocabulary learning but also improve overall academic outcomes.

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