



GAME-BASED LEARNING: TEACHERS AND LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES TO ENHANCE VOCABULARY AND COMPREHENSION SKILLS AS BASES FOR TRAINING WORKSHOP

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ABSTRACT

This study determined the experiences of teachers and learners in using game-based learning to enhance vocabulary and comprehension skills as bases for a training workshop. Findings revealed that the experiences of teachers for enhancing vocabulary skills were: learners became motivated, encouraged friendly competition and collaboration while learners' experiences were engaged and enjoyed interactive learning, and improved vocabulary acquisition. For enhancing comprehension skills, teachers' experiences were: make the lesson fun and engaging and develop critical thinking while learners' experiences were better understanding of lessons and increased interest and participation. Teachers' challenges in vocabulary were time-consuming and poor internet connection while learners' challenges were time constraints and limited resources. For enhancing comprehension skills, teachers' challenges were crafting suitable instructional materials and keeping learning focused while learners' challenges were time constraints and technology issues. A training workshop was proposed as a result of the study.

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Keywords: *Game-Based Learning, Vocabulary Skills, Comprehension Skills, Training Workshop*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of educational technology has transformed classroom instruction, thereby making learner-centered approaches increasingly essential for literacy development. Traditional methods are no longer sufficient to fully engage today's learners, who are accustomed to digital and interactive environments. In response, educators are exploring innovative strategies to make learning more meaningful, motivating, and effective. Within language education, Game-Based Learning (GBL) has gained significant traction as an effective method for boosting reading skills and vocabulary retention. This is especially true in environments where maintaining student interest is a challenge. By weaving educational material into a framework of competition, rewards, and teamwork, GBL transforms traditional lessons into immersive experiences that are as entertaining as they are informative. By turning vocabulary and reading activities into interactive tasks, Game-Based Learning motivates learners, encourages active participation, and supports retention of information. Furthermore, this approach allows students to navigate intricate linguistic ideas within a framework that balances organization with play. By doing so, it fosters a more profound grasp of the material and encourages the growth of higher-order thinking skills, specifically the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information. For teachers, GBL offers a means to connect lessons

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with students' real-world experiences and interests, thereby making instruction more relatable and accessible.

Current research underscores the success of Game-Based Learning in bolstering both reading comprehension and vocabulary mastery. Specifically, digital game-integrated methods have been found to surpass conventional teaching styles in improving word retention and recall, while simultaneously driving higher levels of student motivation (Zou, Huang, & Xie, 2021; Su, Chiew, & Yunus, 2021). Likewise, research on gamified reading activities demonstrates that game-enhanced tasks can improve comprehension performance and sustain learners' attention by providing interactive, low-pressure environments that make complex texts easier to understand (Wang, Harun, & Yuan, 2024; Qiao, Chu, Shen, & Yeung, 2022). Additionally, teachers often face difficulties in managing student behavior during gameplay and ensuring that games are aligned with learning objectives. Time-consuming preparation, lack of instructional materials, and insufficient training in game-based strategies are commonly reported barriers that can limit GBL's potential impact (Dahalan, Alias, & Shaharom, 2024; Jaramillo-Mediavilla, et al., 2024).

Given both the potential and the challenges associated with GBL, it is crucial to explore the actual experiences of those using it in classroom settings. Understanding teachers' and learners' perspectives can reveal how GBL affects vocabulary and comprehension instruction, highlight obstacles, and identify strategies to overcome them. Moreover, such exploration can provide insights into the professional development needs of teachers, particularly regarding the design and implementation of engaging, effective game-based lessons.

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This study explored teachers' and learners' experiences in using game-based learning for teaching vocabulary and comprehension skills to inform improvements in instructional practices, classroom strategies, and teacher training.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter details the research methodology, design, and participants, along with the sampling techniques, data collection procedures, instruments, and analytical methods employed. The study aimed to investigate the firsthand experiences of both educators and students regarding the application of game-based learning for the development of vocabulary and comprehension skills.

Research Method

To identify and interpret the perspectives of educators and students regarding game-based instruction for vocabulary and comprehension, this study employed a descriptive research methodology featuring a custom-developed in-depth interview guide. Descriptive research is appropriate for studies that seek to describe a situation or phenomenon accurately and systematically. According to McCombes (2023), descriptive research answers questions related to what, where, when, and how a phenomenon occurs and may investigate one or more variables depending on the study's purpose.

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Research Design

The study utilized a qualitative research design centered on a phenomenological approach to investigate the firsthand, lived experiences of both educators and students when using Game-Based Learning (GBL) to improve language acquisition and understanding. Phenomenology was chosen because it captures authentic voices and provides rich insights into the meaning-making processes of participants in real classroom contexts (Camacho-Sánchez, Rillo-Albert, & Lavega-Burgués, 2022; Özer Şanal, 2023).

Sampling Design

Purposive sampling was recommended in qualitative research whenever the objective involved gathering rich, detailed, and significant data from individuals who had firsthand experience with the phenomenon being studied (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2021).

Consequently, this study utilized purposive sampling to identify and select educators and students who had directly participated in the implementation of Game-Based Learning (GBL). The learner participants were enrolled under the teacher participants and were chosen because they had prior experience and insights into the use of GBL in vocabulary and comprehension instruction. This ensured the depth, relevance, and validity of the data collected.

Participants in the Study

The study involved four (4) Junior High School English teachers and eight (8) purposively selected learners from a public secondary school in the Division of Iloilo City.

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In order to achieve fairness and confidentiality, the participants were assigned as Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12.

Research Instrument

Information was gathered through a custom-developed, in-depth interview guide featuring questions specifically crafted to prompt comprehensive answers from the participants. To guarantee the instrument's credibility and suitability, it underwent a validation process by a panel of experts in the fields of English, research methodology, and educational measurement.

The researcher-made in-depth interview guide included six (6) questions on teachers and learners' experiences, challenges encountered, and coping strategies in using game-based learning to enhance vocabulary and comprehension skills.

Validity of the Research Instrument

Validity is essential in qualitative inquiry because it safeguards the meaningfulness and relevance of the data (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim 2021). The tool precisely evaluated the intended variables and effectively captured the specific constructs being investigated.

To ensure the validity of the custom-developed interview guide, the initial draft was submitted to the research adviser for critical review and necessary adjustments. Following the integration of those recommendations, the instrument was then provided to a panel of experts for a formal assessment of its content and face validity. All comments, suggestions, and

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corrections provided by the validators were carefully considered and integrated to improve the clarity and relevance of the in-depth interview guide items.

Data-Gathering Procedure

The study commenced once the researcher received approval from the expert panel and secured formal authorization from essential figures, such as the Graduate School dean, the school principal, and the participants themselves. After obtaining these permissions, the researcher collaborated with the respondents to schedule the data collection process.

During this phase, the researcher clarified the study's objectives and protocols before securing informed consent. Once agreement was reached, the participants were provided with the validated questionnaire and afforded ample time to offer candid, unrestricted responses. Finally, the completed forms were gathered and returned to the researcher to be organized for subsequent analysis.

Data Analyses

The researcher analyzed and interpreted the data using a thematic analysis approach, which allowed for the identification and comprehensive discussion of emergent themes.

Thematic analysis was deemed appropriate for this qualitative study as it enabled the examination of patterns, similarities, and variations within the dataset, organizing them into meaningful themes that directly addressed the research questions (Nowell, et al., 2021). For this investigation, the data were analyzed using the six-phase framework developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2021).

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The process began with familiarization, during which the researcher immersed themselves in the dataset through repeated reading and note-taking to gain a profound understanding of the content. The second step is coding, which involves systematically identifying and labeling meaningful features of the data. This is followed by generating initial themes, where codes are collated into broader patterns of meaning. The fourth step, reviewing themes, requires checking the coherence of themes against both the coded extracts and the dataset as a whole. Next, defining and naming themes involves refining and clearly articulating each theme to capture its analytic essence. Finally, the phase of writing up weaves together the analytic narratives with illustrative data extracts to present a coherent and compelling account.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research was conducted to investigate the experiences, hurdles, and adaptive mechanisms of both educators and students when utilizing game-based learning to improve language proficiency and understanding. These insights subsequently formed the foundation for the development of a training workshop.

The study involved a total of twelve (12) participants, which included four (4) secondary English educators and eight (8) students selected from a secondary institution within the Division of Iloilo City.

To collect the required information, a custom-developed in-depth interview guide was employed. This instrument underwent a rigorous content validation process and was deemed

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both valid and suitable for the investigation. Furthermore, the gathered responses were evaluated through the application of thematic analysis.

The investigation yielded the following results:

As regards the teachers' experiences in using game-based learning to enhance vocabulary skills, they found that learners became motivated, encouraged collaboration and friendly competition, showed better retention, and helped learners stay focused; for learners, engaged and enjoyed interactive learning, improved vocabulary acquisition. For comprehension skills, teachers' experiences were: make the lesson fun and engaging, develop critical thinking, learners become engaged and focused, and improve comprehension skills; for learners, better understanding of lesson, increased interest and participation, and enhanced communication.

The challenges encountered by teachers in using game-based learning to enhance vocabulary skills were time-consuming, poor internet connection, and presence of non-readers; for learners' challenges, time constraints, limited resources, and focus on the game instead of learning. Regarding the challenges in using game-based learning to enhance comprehension skills, teachers reported crafting suitable instructional materials, keeping learners focused, and unstable connectivity; for learners, time constraints and technology issues.

To manage these challenges in enhancing vocabulary skills, teachers employed coping strategies such as reusing existing instructional materials, collaborating with co-teachers, and

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gathering ready-made templates and game formats. Learners addressed these challenges by asking help from teachers and friends. For comprehension skills, teachers managed challenges by setting clear rules and expectations and looking for downloadable apps. Learners, on the other hand, addressed these challenges through time management and practice reading passages using context to get the meaning.

Drawing from the results of the investigation, a training workshop plan was developed to address the use of game-based learning as a means of improving vocabulary and comprehension skills.

Conclusion

The use of game-based learning (GBL) to enhance vocabulary and comprehension skills offers opportunities when implemented in the classroom. Teachers' experiences indicate that GBL not only motivates learners but also encourages collaboration, friendly competition, and sustained attention, thereby leading to improved retention of vocabulary and more engaging comprehension activities. Learners' perspectives confirm that interactive, game-based approaches foster enjoyment, participation, and deeper understanding of the lesson.

However, the implementation of GBL is not without challenges. Teachers face difficulties such as time-consuming preparation, poor internet connectivity, and the presence of non-readers, while learners face time constraints, limited resources, and distractions from focusing too much on the game rather than on the learning objectives. For comprehension

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skills, crafting suitable instructional materials and maintaining learner focus present additional hurdles.

The coping strategies identified in the study underscore the importance of adaptability and resourcefulness. Teachers address the challenges by reusing materials, collaborating with colleagues, and using ready-made templates or downloadable applications. Learners overcome these difficulties by seeking guidance from teachers and peers, managing their time effectively, and practicing reading through contextual strategies. These strategies highlight the value of continuous professional development, peer support, and accessible learning resources in ensuring the successful integration of GBL.

The proposed workshop provides a platform for teachers to gain hands-on experience with GBL, create effective lesson exemplars, and integrate both digital and offline strategies. This approach can empower teachers and enhance learners' vocabulary and comprehension skills to improve overall learning outcomes.

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