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Gamified Learning and Digital Media for Vocabulary Practice at Hidayatul Insan Junior High School

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ABSTRACT

Seventh-grade students at Hidayatul Insan Junior High School experienced difficulties understanding and using basic English vocabulary, particularly expressions related to Likes and Dislikes. This community service program aimed to support vocabulary practice and encourage active classroom participation through gamified learning and digital media. The program involved 30 students and was implemented through preparation, classroom activities, and evaluation. PowerPoint presentations and educational videos were combined with True or False games, Fast Answer Challenge, and collaborative tasks. Data were collected through classroom observations, documentation, and field notes to evaluate student participation, interaction, and vocabulary use. The observations indicated positive student responses, active participation in gamified activities, and opportunities for peer collaboration. However, some students continued to experience difficulties recalling vocabulary and constructing simple sentences independently. The program demonstrated a practical approach to integrating digital media and gamification into vocabulary instruction at the partner school. Nevertheless, improvements in vocabulary mastery and long-term retention could not be established from the available evidence. Further implementation should incorporate repeated practice, individual formative assessment, and follow-up evaluation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is an essential component of English language learning because it enables students to understand information, express ideas, and communicate effectively. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, adequate vocabulary knowledge supports the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. However, vocabulary learning can be challenging for junior high school students, particularly when

they have limited opportunities to practice new words in meaningful contexts. Nation [1] emphasized that vocabulary development requires repeated exposure, meaningful use, and opportunities to apply words in different learning situations. Therefore, vocabulary instruction should provide students with opportunities to understand and practice vocabulary through engaging and contextualized activities.

Vocabulary learning difficulties were also identified among seventh-grade students at Hidayatul Insan Junior High School, the partner institution involved in this community service program. Based on preliminary classroom observations described in the original manuscript, several students experienced difficulties in understanding basic English vocabulary and using familiar expressions during classroom communication. These difficulties were particularly relevant to vocabulary related to personal preferences, including expressions of likes and dislikes. Students required instructional support to recognize word meanings, construct simple sentences, and participate in classroom interactions. These conditions indicated the need for learning activities that could provide accessible vocabulary explanations and encourage students to practice English more actively.

One approach to addressing these difficulties is the integration of gamified learning into vocabulary instruction. Gamified learning incorporates game elements, such as points, rewards, challenges, and friendly competition, into educational activities to encourage learner participation. Sailer and Homner [2] explained that gamification can support students' motivation and engagement in learning. Similarly, Pratiwi et al. [3] reported positive outcomes associated with gamified vocabulary instruction. Through interactive activities, students can practice recognizing vocabulary, responding to questions, and using target expressions while participating in a more engaging classroom environment [4], [5]. These characteristics make gamified learning relevant to vocabulary instruction for junior high school students who require additional opportunities for active practice [6].

In addition to gamified learning, digital media can support vocabulary instruction by providing visual and contextual learning materials. PowerPoint presentations allow teachers to introduce vocabulary through images, examples, and simple explanations, while educational videos demonstrate how words and expressions are used in meaningful situations. Hsu and Chang [7] discussed the contribution of digital media to vocabulary learning, while Zhang et al. [8] highlighted the potential of technology-supported learning environments to encourage student engagement. Combining visual materials with interactive classroom activities may help students understand vocabulary meanings and participate more actively in learning tasks [9].

Previous studies have discussed the benefits of gamification and digital media for language learning [4]–[9]. However, the application of these approaches in a community service program should be based on the specific needs of the partner institution. At Hidayatul Insan Junior High School, the identified difficulties in vocabulary understanding and independent language use provided the basis for implementing instructional activities that combined digital media with gamified vocabulary practice. The program focused on the topic of *Likes and Dislikes*, which was selected because it is closely related to students' daily experiences and allows them to practice simple expressions of personal preferences. The activities included vocabulary presentations, educational videos, *True or False* games, *Fast Answer Challenge*, and collaborative learning tasks.

The community service program was designed by aligning learning objectives, teaching materials, instructional media, classroom activities, and evaluation procedures. This alignment was intended to ensure that each activity supported the vocabulary learning needs of the participating students. Rather than introducing technology as a separate

learning component, the program integrated digital media and gamified activities into a structured instructional sequence. The approach emphasized opportunities for vocabulary recognition, contextual understanding, sentence construction, and classroom interaction.

Based on these considerations, the community service program aimed to: (1) facilitate seventh-grade students' understanding and practice of vocabulary related to *Likes and Dislikes* through gamified learning and digital media; (2) encourage students' active participation and collaboration during vocabulary learning activities; and (3) identify students' responses and difficulties during implementation as a basis for improving subsequent vocabulary instruction. The program was expected to provide practical learning experiences for students and offer an instructional approach that could be adapted by the partner school to support more interactive English vocabulary teaching.

2. IMPLEMENTATION METHODS

The community service program was conducted at Hidayatul Insan Junior High School, involving 30 seventh-grade students in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. The program focused on supporting students' vocabulary learning through gamified activities and digital media, particularly on the topic of *Likes and Dislikes*. The activities were organized to address students' difficulties in understanding and using basic English vocabulary while encouraging active participation in classroom learning.

The program adopted an interactive instructional approach consisting of preparation, classroom implementation, and evaluation. PowerPoint presentations and educational videos were integrated with gamified activities to provide contextual vocabulary input and opportunities for practice. Students participated in individual, pair-work, and group activities, while classroom observations, documentation, and field notes were used to record their responses and learning experiences.

2.1 Preparation and Instructional Design

The preparation stage involved organizing learning objectives, teaching materials, instructional media, classroom activities, and assessment procedures. The learning objectives were designed to help students recognize vocabulary related to personal preferences, understand word meanings in context, construct simple sentences, and participate in classroom interactions.

The teaching materials focused on expressions related to *Likes and Dislikes*, including *like, love, dislike,* and *hate*. These expressions were presented through familiar examples reflecting students' daily experiences. PowerPoint slides containing vocabulary items, visual illustrations, and example sentences were prepared to support vocabulary introduction. Educational videos were also selected to demonstrate vocabulary use in contextual situations.

Gamified learning activities were organized to reinforce vocabulary recognition, comprehension, and application. The activities included *True or False*, *Fast Answer Challenge*, and collaborative vocabulary tasks. Game elements, including points, rewards, verbal praise, and friendly competition, were incorporated to encourage student participation.

2.2 Implementation Stages

The classroom activities were implemented in three stages: pre-activity, whilst-activity, and post-activity.

During the pre-activity stage, the teacher began with greetings, classroom preparation, and an ice-breaking activity. Students were encouraged to share simple

information about their hobbies and preferences to activate prior knowledge. The teacher then introduced the topic, explained the learning objectives, and provided an overview of the planned activities.

During the whilst-activity stage, the teacher introduced the target vocabulary using PowerPoint presentations supported by visual illustrations and example sentences. Students practiced pronunciation and discussed word meanings before watching an educational video related to *Likes and Dislikes*. The video provided examples of vocabulary use in contextual situations.

Following the vocabulary presentation, students participated in gamified learning activities. In the *True or False* game, students identified whether statements related to the lesson topic were correct. The *Fast Answer Challenge* encouraged students to recall vocabulary and respond quickly to questions. Pair-work and group challenges provided opportunities to match words with pictures, construct simple sentences, and practice vocabulary collaboratively. Points, rewards, and friendly competition were used to maintain participation throughout the activities.

During the post-activity stage, students reviewed the vocabulary they had learned and reflected on their learning experiences. The teacher provided feedback on vocabulary use, classroom participation, and task performance. A short evaluation activity was conducted to assess students' understanding of the target vocabulary.

2.3 Data Collection and Evaluation

Data were collected through classroom observations, documentation, and field notes during the implementation of the program. Observations focused on students' participation, responses to gamified activities, peer interaction, and difficulties encountered during vocabulary practice. Documentation and field notes were used to record relevant classroom activities and learning experiences.

The evaluation focused on three aspects: (1) students' participation and engagement during vocabulary learning activities, (2) their responses and collaboration during individual and group tasks, and (3) their ability to recognize and use target vocabulary during classroom practice. Students' difficulties in recalling word meanings and constructing simple sentences were also considered when identifying areas requiring further instructional support.

The collected information was used to describe the implementation process and evaluate students' immediate responses to the activities. The evaluation emphasized classroom participation, interaction, and observed vocabulary use rather than measuring long-term vocabulary improvement.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Implementation Results and Evaluation

The community service program was implemented with 30 seventh-grade students at Hidayatul Insan Junior High School. The activities integrated digital media and gamified learning to support vocabulary practice on the topic of *Likes and Dislikes*. The implementation results are presented in relation to the program objectives, focusing on vocabulary learning activities, student participation and collaboration, and difficulties identified during classroom evaluation.

a) Vocabulary Learning Through Digital Media

PowerPoint presentations and educational videos were used to introduce and reinforce vocabulary related to personal preferences. The presentation materials included target words, visual illustrations, and simple sentences that connected the vocabulary with familiar situations. The educational videos provided additional examples of how expressions of likes and dislikes could be used in everyday communication.

During the learning activities, students were introduced to the expressions *like, love, dislike,* and *hate* and practiced their use through guided classroom tasks. The combination of visual materials, contextual examples, and teacher explanations provided several opportunities for students to encounter and practice the target vocabulary.

The use of digital media supported the delivery of vocabulary materials in a more varied format than verbal explanation alone. However, the available classroom documentation did not provide sufficient evidence to determine the extent to which digital media independently improved students' vocabulary mastery.

b) Student Participation in Gamified Activities

Gamified activities were incorporated into vocabulary practice through *True or False*, *Fast Answer Challenge*, and collaborative learning tasks. These activities provided opportunities for students to respond to vocabulary questions, identify correct expressions, and practice using words in simple contexts.

Classroom observations described positive student responses during the gamified activities. Students participated in answering questions and completing tasks, while the use of points, rewards, and friendly competition contributed to an interactive classroom atmosphere.

The *True or False* activity provided opportunities for students to recognize vocabulary meanings and evaluate simple statements. The *Fast Answer Challenge* encouraged students to recall vocabulary within a limited response period. These activities created additional opportunities for students to practice the target expressions beyond the initial vocabulary presentation.

Although students showed enthusiasm during the activities, their participation should not be interpreted as direct evidence of improved vocabulary mastery. The observations primarily documented students' immediate responses and involvement during the program.

c) Collaboration and Classroom Interaction

Pair-work and group challenges encouraged students to communicate with classmates while completing vocabulary tasks. Students worked together to identify vocabulary meanings, match words with relevant contexts, and construct simple sentences related to personal preferences.

The collaborative activities provided opportunities for students to exchange answers, discuss vocabulary choices, and support one another during task completion. These interactions were consistent with the program's objective of encouraging active participation and collaboration in vocabulary learning.

However, the classroom observations did not include a structured assessment of individual communication skills or collaboration quality. Therefore, the results indicate that opportunities for peer interaction were provided, rather than demonstrating measurable improvements in students' collaborative abilities.

d) Difficulties Identified During Vocabulary Practice

Despite the positive classroom responses, several students continued to experience difficulties in recalling vocabulary and using target expressions independently. These difficulties became apparent when students were required to respond without immediate guidance or construct simple sentences using the vocabulary introduced during the activities.

The observations suggest that participation in gamified activities did not necessarily indicate that students had fully understood or retained the vocabulary. Some students still required additional explanations, examples, or assistance when completing vocabulary tasks.

These findings highlight the importance of providing sufficient guided practice and reinforcement, particularly for students who are not yet confident in using basic English expressions. They also indicate that interactive activities should be accompanied by opportunities for independent vocabulary use.

e) Evaluation of Program Implementation

The evaluation was based on classroom observations, documentation, and field notes collected during the activities. The evaluation considered students' participation, responses to gamified tasks, collaboration, and difficulties in recognizing or using the target vocabulary.

Overall, the implementation demonstrated that gamified activities and digital media could be incorporated into a structured vocabulary learning session. Positive student responses and classroom participation were observed, while difficulties in independent vocabulary recall and sentence construction remained.

The available evaluation evidence was limited to observations during the program. Consequently, the results cannot establish the effectiveness of the intervention in improving vocabulary achievement or long-term retention. Further assessment would be required to determine whether students' vocabulary knowledge improved after participating in the activities.

3.2 Discussion

The implementation of gamified learning and digital media at Hidayatul Insan Junior High School provided practical insights into supporting vocabulary instruction through interactive classroom activities. The discussion focuses on the contribution of the implemented activities to the partner school's instructional needs, the relationship between student engagement and vocabulary learning, and the implications for future implementation.

a) The Contribution of Gamified Learning to Classroom Engagement

The positive responses observed during gamified activities suggest that incorporating challenges, points, and rewards can help create opportunities for active classroom participation. This observation is consistent with Sailer and Homner's findings [2], which indicate that gamification can support motivation and engagement in educational settings.

In the present program, students were encouraged to participate through activities that required immediate responses and collaborative problem-solving. The game-based format offered a practical alternative to vocabulary instruction based primarily on teacher explanation and repetition [3], [5], [6].

Nevertheless, student enthusiasm should be distinguished from vocabulary achievement. While gamification may encourage students to participate, additional instructional support is necessary to ensure that students can understand, remember, and independently use the target vocabulary [1], [9].

b) The Role of Digital Media in Supporting Vocabulary Practice

PowerPoint presentations and educational videos provided visual and contextual support during vocabulary instruction. These media allowed students to encounter vocabulary through written words, illustrations, examples, and audiovisual materials.

The integration of digital media was consistent with the broader use of technology-supported learning resources in language education [4], [5], [7], [8]. In the context of this community service program, digital media functioned primarily as instructional support rather than as a separate intervention.

The implementation also showed the importance of combining digital resources with direct practice. Presenting vocabulary through slides or videos alone does not guarantee that students can use the words independently. Therefore, digital media should be followed by guided exercises, interactive tasks, and opportunities for students to apply vocabulary in meaningful communication [1], [10].

c) Benefits for the Partner School and Implications for Practice

The program provided students with opportunities to practice basic English vocabulary through a combination of digital materials, games, and collaborative activities. It also demonstrated an instructional sequence that the partner school could consider adapting for similar vocabulary topics.

The main practical contribution of the program was the integration of vocabulary presentation, interactive practice, and classroom evaluation within a single learning sequence. This approach offers a reference for organizing vocabulary instruction that encourages participation while remaining focused on specific language-learning objectives [10], [11].

However, the available documentation does not establish whether teachers at the partner school subsequently adopted the approach or whether the activities produced sustained changes in classroom instruction. Such outcomes would require additional information from the school or follow-up activities.

d) Limitations and Recommendations for Future Implementation

The program evaluation relied on classroom observations, documentation, and field notes. These sources were useful for describing the implementation process and identifying students' immediate responses, but they did not provide quantitative evidence of vocabulary improvement.

The continued difficulties observed in independent vocabulary recall and sentence construction suggest that future activities should provide more opportunities for individual practice, repeated vocabulary exposure, and formative feedback [1].

Future implementation could also incorporate a simple vocabulary assessment before and after the activities, individual sentence-construction tasks, and a follow-up review to examine vocabulary retention. These measures would help the partner school evaluate learning progress more systematically.

Overall, the program illustrates how gamified learning and digital media can be integrated into vocabulary instruction as a practical response to classroom learning needs. Its contribution lies in the implementation of interactive learning activities and the

identification of areas requiring further instructional support, rather than in demonstrating a statistically measured improvement in vocabulary mastery.

4. CONCLUSION

The community service program at Hidayatul Insan Junior High School integrated gamified learning and digital media into English vocabulary instruction for 30 seventh-grade students. Through PowerPoint presentations, educational videos, and interactive activities, students were provided with opportunities to recognize, practice, and use vocabulary related to *Likes and Dislikes*. Classroom observations indicated positive student responses, active participation, and opportunities for peer collaboration during the activities. However, some students continued to experience difficulties in recalling vocabulary and constructing simple sentences independently.

The program provided a practical example of how digital media and gamified activities can be combined to support interactive vocabulary instruction at the partner school. Nevertheless, the evaluation was limited to classroom observations, documentation, and field notes; therefore, improvements in vocabulary mastery and long-term retention could not be established. Future implementation should include repeated vocabulary practice, individual formative assessment, and follow-up evaluation. Continued collaboration with the partner school is also recommended to support the adaptation and sustained use of these instructional activities.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Nur Lutfiah, Siti Fatimah Purmasari, Cahaya Ningrum, Zaitun Qamariah, Hesty Widiastuty, and Sabarun contributed to the community service program and manuscript preparation according to their respective responsibilities. Individual contributions to program planning, instructional material development, activity implementation, observation and evaluation, data interpretation, and manuscript writing and revision should be specified and confirmed by the authors. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and agreed to be accountable for its content.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no financial or non-financial conflicts of interest that could have influenced the implementation of the community service program, the interpretation of its outcomes, or the preparation of this manuscript.

DECLARATION OF AI USE

The authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) to assist with language editing, improving the clarity and organization of the manuscript, and refining its academic presentation. All AI-assisted content was reviewed and verified by the authors against the original community service activities and supporting documentation. The authors take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the manuscript.

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