

Chapter 5

Using Games in the Classroom to Boost Motivation Among ESL Students

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses how game-based learning motivates Malaysian ESL students. The mixed-method research employed questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with students and teachers. Students were in favour of the game-based lessons, suggesting that game-based learning might solve motivational issues. However, several obstacles prevented teachers from delivering a game-based lesson. The study stresses the need of motivation in ESL classes since disengaged students may hinder learning. To promote learning, teachers must inspire and meet student needs. The findings suggest that game-based learning may motivate and engage students, but educators must be flexible to overcome its challenges. This research helps educators,

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policymakers, and administrators improve ESL education and student motivation.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of technology has revolutionised English Language instructions in the twenty-first century, particularly in the context of English as a second language (ESL) acquisition (Ahmed et al., 2022) as well as for professional development (Akhter, 2022). According to Galloway and Rose (2021), the fact that English is one of the language disciplines taught in schools all over the world is evidence of the relevance of the language in society. In the same vein, English is the medium of instruction in schools, educational institutions, and workplaces in Malaysia and other countries where English is not the native language of the people (Anak Yunus & Hua, 2021; Aziz & Kashinathan, 2021;). English is considered the language of knowledge and is vital for accessing global information, enhancing skills, and facilitating communication among people from diverse linguistic backgrounds (Ali, 2022). Its importance is evident as it is a core subject in schools worldwide. It is also gazetted as the medium of instruction in many non-native English-speaking countries, including Malaysia. However, teaching English in such countries is challenging when students lack motivation in their academic pursuit. Studies have shown that students' reluctance to learn English can hinder the teaching process, manifesting as lack of participation (Ahmad, 2021). Digital games, brought about by the emergence of technology, have evolved from mere entertainment tools to becoming effective learning methods, known as digital game-based learning (Adnan et al., 2020; Mukaromah et al., 2019). This game-based approach to learning has significantly impacted ESL instructions. Research has shown that integrating technology, specifically digital games, into English language teaching is becoming increasingly important for second and foreign language acquisition (Munisa & Mohinur, 2024; Yaacob et al., 2022; Yaacob & Yunus, 2019).

Motivation is crucial in influencing students' behaviour, attitudes and language performance. This research explores using game-based learning to boost motivation in ESL classrooms. Motivation is a crucial factor in influencing behaviour, attitudes, and language performance (Hussain et al., 2020). The challenges of teaching English in a non-native country are well-documented, particularly when students lack motivation to learn the language (Yuzulia, 2021). Game-based learning enhances conceptual understanding, motivation, and provides an engaging learning experience. This research aims to investigate the use of game-based learning as a strategy to boost students' motivation in ESL classrooms. Game-based learning has been shown to not only improve conceptual comprehension but also enhance motivation to study and provide a fun and engaging learning experience (Byusa et al., 2022).

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