

GAME-BASED LEARNING IN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

Kalayo Hasibuan¹, Rosikhatul Fadilah², Satya Jannah³, Safna Khoiro Nabila⁴

English Education Departement, Faculty of Education and Teacher Training State
Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau^{1,2,3,4}

khalayohasibuan@gmail.com¹, rosikhatul27@gmail.com²,
satyajannah@gmail.com³, safnakhoironabila@gmail.com⁴

ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation of Game-Based Learning (GBL) in language instruction from an Islamic perspective through a qualitative library research approach. The study aims to synthesize previous findings regarding the effectiveness of GBL, the integration of Islamic values in language learning, and the challenges associated with its implementation. Data were collected from 23 selected studies published between 2020 and 2025 and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that GBL enhances learners' motivation, engagement, communication skills, vocabulary development, and language achievement while reducing learning anxiety. The review also reveals that the integration of Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, respect, and discipline contributes to learners' moral and spiritual development. Furthermore, the analysis identifies several implementation challenges, including technological limitations, teacher readiness, assessment issues, and the need for culturally appropriate learning materials. The study highlights the importance of integrating language learning objectives, game-based instructional strategies, and Islamic values to support holistic learner development. Therefore, GBL can be considered an effective pedagogical approach that promotes linguistic, social, moral, and spiritual growth in contemporary educational settings

Keywords: *Game-Based Learning; Language Instruction; Islamic Perspective; Islamic Values; English Language Learning.*

A. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of technology in the twenty-first century has significantly influenced various aspects of education, particularly language instruction. Teachers are increasingly expected to create interactive, student-centered learning environments that encourage

learners' active participation and engagement. One instructional approach that has gained considerable attention is Game-Based Learning (GBL). Game-Based Learning integrates educational content with game elements to create meaningful, enjoyable, and interactive

learning experiences. Various digital platforms such as Duolingo, Kahoot!, Quizizz, Quizlet, and Wordwall have been widely utilized to support language learning activities and improve learner engagement (Abd Hamid et al., 2024).

However, despite the increasing integration of technology into educational settings, many teachers continue to rely on conventional teaching methods, including lecturing, memorization, and teacher-centered instruction. These approaches often make students passive participants in the learning process, resulting in decreased motivation, engagement, and language performance. Consequently, students frequently encounter difficulties in developing vocabulary mastery, speaking proficiency, grammar understanding, and communication skills. Therefore, innovative instructional approaches are required to create more engaging, interactive, and effective language learning environments.

One approach that has shown significant potential in addressing these challenges is Game-Based Learning. Previous studies have

demonstrated that GBL positively influences learners' motivation, engagement, participation, and academic achievement. Zulkefli and Jamil (2024) argued that game-based learning supports important educational principles such as cooperative learning, self-reflection, individualized learning, and active participation. Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2022) found that learners who participated in game-based learning activities exhibited higher motivation and lower anxiety levels compared to those taught through traditional instructional methods. Furthermore, Krystalli et al. (2024) reported that gamification and serious games contribute positively to learner engagement, communicative competence, collaboration, and autonomous learning. These findings suggest that game-based learning supports not only cognitive development but also affective, social, and behavioral dimensions of learning.

The application of Game-Based Learning in language instruction has also received increasing attention among researchers and educators. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

contexts, educational games have been widely used to improve vocabulary acquisition, speaking ability, communication skills, and learner confidence. Hasibuan et al. (2023) found that word-card games significantly enhanced students' vocabulary mastery and communication skills while promoting active participation and collaboration. Likewise, Hasibuan et al. (2024) reported that playing-card games integrated with Islamic perspectives improved vocabulary retention, communication competence, and learner engagement. Similar findings were reported by Jaafar and Yusoff (2022), who demonstrated that gamification modules improved academic achievement and motivation in Arabic language learning. Hasanah (2024) also found that Quizizz created enjoyable learning environments that increased students' motivation and reduced learning anxiety. Collectively, these studies indicate that game-based learning can effectively support language development while fostering meaningful and engaging learning experiences.

From an Islamic perspective, education is not solely concerned with

intellectual development but also emphasizes moral, ethical, and spiritual growth. Islamic education seeks to develop individuals who possess not only knowledge and skills but also strong character and religious values. Several scholars have argued that language learning should integrate Islamic values to strengthen students' moral awareness, ethical behavior, and Islamic identity. Subkan et al. (2025) emphasized that English language instruction in Islamic educational institutions should promote values such as honesty (shiddiq), responsibility (amanah), communication (tabligh), and intelligence (fathanah). Similarly, Astuti et al. (2024) suggested that Islamic values should be incorporated into instructional materials, classroom activities, assessments, and teacher-student interactions. Through such integration, language learning can function not only as an academic activity but also as a medium for character formation and spiritual development.

The integration of Islamic values into Game-Based Learning has emerged as an important area of educational research. Previous

studies suggest that educational games can facilitate the development of moral and ethical values alongside academic achievement. Audu and Asino (2024) explained that educational games provide experiential learning opportunities through which students can develop honesty, cooperation, responsibility, creativity, and ethical decision-making skills. Furthermore, Rusdiani et al. (2025) found that Islamic digital games contributed to the development of positive values such as honesty, responsibility, politeness, and devotion among young learners. Shari et al. (2024) also reported that educational games focusing on Islamic teachings improved learners' motivation, concentration, and understanding of fundamental Islamic concepts. These findings indicate that integrating Islamic values into game-based learning can contribute to holistic educational outcomes encompassing cognitive, affective, social, moral, and spiritual dimensions.

Although previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of Game-Based Learning and highlighted the importance of Islamic

values in education, most studies have examined these topics separately. Existing research tends to focus either on the effectiveness of game-based learning in improving language achievement or on the integration of Islamic values in educational settings. Limited attention has been given to synthesizing these perspectives to explore how Islamic values can be systematically integrated into game-based language instruction, what educational benefits can be achieved, and what challenges remain in implementation.

Therefore, this study aims to critically analyze and synthesize existing literature regarding Game-Based Learning in language instruction from an Islamic perspective. The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive synthesis of previous findings, identification of research gaps, examination of pedagogical implications, and proposal of a conceptual framework for integrating Islamic values into game-based language learning. Through this analysis, the study seeks to contribute to the development of holistic language education that promotes linguistic competence while

simultaneously fostering students' moral, ethical, and spiritual development.

B. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design using library research as main methodological approach. The study focused on systematically reviewing and critically analysing existing literature concerning game-based learning, language teaching, Islamic educational perspectives, and the incorporation of Islamic values within game-based learning contexts. The purpose of this approach was to develop a comprehensive and theoretically grounded understanding of how game-based learning (GBL) can be integrated with Islamic educational principles to enhance learners' language proficiency as well as character development.

The literature was collected from several academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus-indexed journals, DOAJ, and ERIC. The inclusion criteria consisted of: (1) studies discussing game-based learning, gamification, language instruction, Islamic education, or the integration of Islamic values in

education; (2) publications between 2020 and 2025; (3) peer-reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings; and (4) articles published in English or Indonesian.

Articles that were not relevant to the research focus, duplicated publications, opinion papers, and non-academic sources were excluded from the analysis. Initially, 67 articles were identified. After the screening process based on relevance and inclusion criteria, 23 articles were selected for in-depth analysis.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis involved three stages: data reduction, thematic categorization, and interpretation. The themes identified included: (1) the effectiveness of game-based learning in language instruction, (2) the integration of Islamic values into game-based learning, (3) pedagogical benefits, and (4) implementation challenges in Islamic educational contexts.

C. RESULT & DISCUSSION

The Importance of Game-Based Learning in Language Instruction

The reviewed studies consistently indicate that Game-Based Learning (GBL) has a positive impact on language instruction. Across different educational contexts, GBL was found to increase students' motivation, engagement, participation, and language achievement. The findings suggest that learners become more actively involved in the learning process when instructional activities are presented through games and gamified learning environments.

Several studies revealed that game-based activities contribute significantly to vocabulary acquisition, speaking performance, communication skills, and learner confidence. Ahmed et al. (2022) reported that students who participated in game-based learning experienced higher levels of motivation and lower levels of anxiety compared to those taught through conventional methods. Similarly, Jaafar and Yusoff (2022) found that gamification positively influenced students' academic achievement and motivation in Arabic language learning. These findings indicate that educational games create supportive learning environments that encourage

students to participate more actively in language learning activities.

Another important finding concerns learner interaction and communication. Hasibuan et al. (2023) demonstrated that word-card games enhanced students' vocabulary mastery while simultaneously improving communication skills and classroom interaction. Likewise, Krystalli et al. (2024) highlighted that serious games and gamification contribute to communicative competence, collaboration, and autonomous learning. This suggests that game-based learning promotes meaningful language use by allowing learners to interact, negotiate meaning, and practice language skills in authentic and enjoyable contexts.

The findings also indicate that game-based learning supports not only cognitive development but also affective and social dimensions of learning. Students tend to experience less anxiety, greater confidence, and stronger engagement when learning activities are presented in game formats. Therefore, GBL can be considered an effective pedagogical approach for creating interactive,

student-centered, and meaningful language learning environments.

Integration of Islamic Values in Game-Based Learning

The findings reveal that the integration of Islamic values into game-based learning contributes to both academic achievement and character development. Unlike conventional instructional approaches that primarily focus on cognitive outcomes, game-based learning integrated with Islamic values promotes holistic learner development encompassing intellectual, moral, social, and spiritual dimensions.

Several studies identified honesty, responsibility, cooperation, respect, discipline, and tolerance as the Islamic values most frequently incorporated into educational games. Audu and Asino (2024) explained that educational games provide opportunities for students to practice ethical decision-making, teamwork, and responsible behavior through experiential learning activities. Similarly, Rusdiani et al. (2025) found that Islamic digital games helped learners develop positive values such

as honesty, politeness, responsibility, and devotion.

The reviewed studies also demonstrate that Islamic values can be integrated into game-based language learning through instructional materials, game content, classroom interaction, and collaborative activities. Hasibuan et al. (2024) reported that language-learning games integrated with Islamic perspectives improved vocabulary mastery while simultaneously promoting cooperation and ethical communication. These findings suggest that language learning and character education can be implemented simultaneously through carefully designed game-based activities.

Furthermore, the integration of Islamic values strengthens students' Islamic identity and cultural awareness. Educational games containing Islamic stories, moral messages, Qur'anic references, and examples from Muslim scholars provide meaningful learning experiences that connect language instruction with students' religious and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, game-based learning can function not

only as a language learning strategy but also as a medium for Islamic character formation.

Challenges of Implementing Game-Based Learning in Language Instruction

Despite its numerous benefits, the reviewed studies identified several challenges related to the implementation of game-based learning. One of the most frequently reported challenges is the limited availability of technological infrastructure. Many educational institutions still lack sufficient internet access, digital devices, and technological resources needed to support game-based instruction effectively.

Teacher readiness also emerged as a significant challenge. Several studies indicated that many teachers have limited experience in designing, implementing, and evaluating game-based learning activities. Consequently, educational games are sometimes used merely as entertaining activities rather than as purposeful instructional tools. This finding highlights the importance of professional development programs

that equip teachers with the necessary pedagogical and technological competencies.

Another challenge concerns the integration of Islamic values into educational games. While many games successfully improve learner motivation and engagement, not all educational games are culturally or religiously appropriate for Islamic educational contexts. Teachers must therefore carefully evaluate and adapt learning materials to ensure that they align with Islamic principles and educational objectives.

In addition, assessment remains a challenge in game-based learning environments. Traditional assessment methods may not adequately capture the diverse learning outcomes generated through game-based activities, including communication skills, collaboration, ethical behavior, and character development. Consequently, more comprehensive assessment approaches are needed to evaluate both academic and non-academic learning outcomes.

Cross-Study Analysis and Research Gaps

A cross-study analysis reveals that most previous studies consistently reported positive effects of game-based learning on motivation, engagement, and language achievement. However, significant differences can be observed regarding the approaches used to integrate Islamic values into educational activities. Some studies focused on Islamic-themed instructional materials, while others emphasized digital Islamic games, storytelling, or value-based classroom interaction.

The analysis also reveals that most existing studies primarily examine cognitive and motivational outcomes. Comparatively fewer studies investigate the long-term impact of game-based learning on students' moral development, character formation, and spiritual growth. This indicates a significant research gap concerning the measurement of affective and spiritual outcomes in Islamic game-based language instruction.

Furthermore, limited attention has been given to developing comprehensive pedagogical frameworks that systematically integrate language learning

objectives, game mechanics, and Islamic values. Therefore, future research should focus on developing practical implementation models that can guide teachers in designing effective game-based language learning activities grounded in Islamic educational principles.

Theoretical Implications

The findings suggest that Game-Based Learning should not be viewed solely as a technological innovation or motivational strategy. Rather, it can be conceptualized as a holistic pedagogical approach capable of integrating cognitive, affective, behavioral, social, and spiritual dimensions of learning. The integration of Islamic values further strengthens this perspective by positioning language learning as both an academic and character-building process.

This study contributes to the growing literature on Islamic pedagogy by proposing that game-based language learning can serve as an effective medium for promoting language proficiency while simultaneously fostering ethical awareness, positive behavior, and

spiritual development. Consequently, future educational practices should consider integrating instructional innovation with value-based education to support holistic learner development.

D. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that game-based learning (GBL) integrated with Islamic values is a relevant and effective pedagogical approach for language instruction in Islamic educational contexts. The reviewed literature indicates that GBL enhances learners' motivation, engagement, communicative competence, and language achievement while simultaneously reducing anxiety and fostering more active and student-centred participation in the learning process. In addition, the integration of Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, respect, and discipline strengthens not only linguistic development but also students' moral and spiritual formation, thereby supporting the concept of holistic education that integrates intellectual, emotional, social, ethical, and spiritual dimensions. Despite its potential, the

implementation of GBL in Islamic language learning contexts is still influenced by several challenges, including limited technological infrastructure, varying levels of teacher readiness, time constraints, learner diversity, cultural suitability of learning materials, and assessment complexities. Nevertheless, these challenges can be addressed through systematic planning, professional development, and the careful adaptation of value-based and technology-supported instructional practices.

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