

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Motivation is a key concept in various fields of psychology, including education, as it serves as the driving force behind individual actions (Jansen, 2022). In the context of language learning, motivation involves effort, the desire to achieve goals, and a positive attitude toward the learning process (Irkinovich, 2021). Motivation helps students initiate learning, maintain enthusiasm, face challenges, and learn effectively to achieve optimal outcomes (Bosch & Spinath, 2023). Furthermore, motivation is considered a crucial factor in achieving educational success, encouraging students to engage actively, overcome obstacles, and enhance their skills and knowledge (Jarrah et al., 2025). Without motivation, learners tend to put in less effort, adopt negative attitudes, and struggle with learning progress (T Soto et al., 2025). With motivation, the learning experience becomes more meaningful, fulfills students' psychological needs, and increases the effectiveness of learning (Schweder & Raufelder, 2024).

Many previous studies have discussed the issue of motivation in learning English. Prior research focusing on motivation in English language learning has shown that motivation plays a central role in learning success. Soto et al. (2025) noted that in Ecuador, motivation is the main factor influencing English learning outcomes, with studies identifying

various elements that affect student motivation. In addition, Irkinovich (2021) emphasized the importance of information technology, interactive tasks, and interaction with native speakers in enhancing students' motivation at non-language universities. Meanwhile, Igwe and Ligaya (2025) found that effective teacher leadership can strengthen student motivation, which in turn improves their performance in English (Soto et al., 2025; Irkinovich, 2021; Igwe & Ligaya, 2025).

Other studies have focused on the types and components of motivation that influence English language learning. Teng and Wu (2024) indicated that language learning motivation is closely related to students' use of metacognitive strategies and self-confidence. Their study revealed that motivation serves as a key factor that strengthens learning strategies, contributing to English language learning progress. Meanwhile, Tai and Zhao (2024) found that motivation, learning strategy use, and the medium-of-instruction policy in secondary schools play an important role in students' English proficiency achievement. Abdullah (2024) also discovered that both internal and external factors influence students' motivation to learn English, with integrative and instrumental motivation playing distinct roles in the learning process (Teng & Wu, 2024; Tai & Zhao, 2024; Abdullah, 2024).

The impact of motivation on English learning outcomes and sustainability has also been widely studied. Meşe and Sevilen (2021) revealed that motivation significantly affects

students' performance and learning experiences, with factors such as social interaction and content relevance playing important roles. Research by Kirkpatrick et al. (2024) showed that students' personal attitudes toward English affect their motivation to learn, providing insights for teachers to design more engaging lessons. On the other hand, Huseinović (2024) demonstrated that gamification in English learning can enhance students' motivation and academic achievement, reinforcing the importance of innovative elements in improving language learning success (Meşe & Sevilen, 2021; Kirkpatrick et al., 2024; Huseinović, 2024).

Many previous studies have discussed the role of motivation in English language learning; however, most of these studies focus on motivational factors related to learning at the university level or in higher formal education settings (Soto et al., 2025; Irkinovich, 2021; Igwe & Ligaya, 2025). Research conducted at the elementary education level is more limited, particularly those involving English learning through innovative approaches. Therefore, there is a gap in the literature regarding the influence of game-based learning approaches on students' motivation in learning English at the elementary school level.

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of motivation in the English learning process (Teng & Wu, 2024; Tai & Zhao, 2024; Abdullah, 2024). This study expands the understanding of motivation by investigating the impact of

game-based learning in the context of elementary education. Game-based learning has been proven effective in increasing student engagement, yet there is a lack of research exploring how it affects students' motivation to learn English at the primary school level. Therefore, this research seeks to address this gap through a case study at SD Islam Al-Azhar 51 Kota Bengkulu.

The use of game-based learning in English instruction not only enhances motivation but also enriches students' learning experiences in a fun and interactive way. Research by Huseinović (2024) has shown that gamification elements can improve students' academic achievement. With this more innovative approach, students are expected to feel more interested and engaged in the learning process, which in turn contributes to better learning outcomes. Thus, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how game elements can be integrated into English language teaching to enhance student motivation.

This study aims to examine the influence of game-based learning on students' motivation in learning English at SD Islam Al-Azhar 51 Kota Bengkulu. It seeks to identify how game-based learning can create a fun and interactive learning environment, which in turn can enhance students' motivation to learn English. The main focus of this study is to explore how the use of games in learning activities can affect students' levels of engagement in English learning activities.

To identify the actual conditions related to student motivation in learning English at SD Islam Al Azhar 51 Kota Bengkulu, the researcher conducted preliminary research through observation (see Appendix 2 for the observation grid) and interviews (see Appendix 1 for the interview grid) on May 28, 2025. The observation results showed that students' initial enthusiasm was relatively low, with several appearing bored at the start of the lesson. Student interest was only piqued during engaging activities, while many remained passive during routine instruction. Furthermore, interaction among students and with the teacher was limited, as most students merely followed instructions and rarely asked questions or expressed opinions. Some students were also observed to lose focus easily, especially when the material was perceived as difficult or monotonous (see Appendix 4 for the observation results).

Meanwhile, the interview results with students reinforced and provided context to the observational findings. Students expressed that traditional methods such as prolonged lecturing, excessive writing tasks, and lengthy lessons were the primary sources of their boredom and lack of motivation. Conversely, they reported feeling happy, enthusiastic, and more understanding of the material when learning involved games, interactive activities, and collaboration with friends. Specific activities like word guessing games, singing, role playing, and using visual aids were frequently mentioned as their most enjoyable and effective learning experiences (see Appendix 3

for the interview results). This clear preference for playful and interactive learning highlights a significant gap between the current teaching methods and the students' desired learning environment.

This research holds significant urgency as it addresses a critical gap in the application of game based learning to enhance motivation in English language acquisition at the primary school level. While motivation is universally acknowledged as a key driver of success in language learning, pedagogical approaches in many elementary classrooms often still rely on conventional methods that fail to consistently engage young learners. The preliminary research at SD Islam Al Azhar 51 Kota Bengkulu clearly demonstrates this disconnect, revealing that students become demotivated by passive, lecture based instruction but are highly enthusiastic about interactive, game like activities.

Therefore, this study is important for developing a more innovative, engaging, and effective teaching strategy that aligns with the needs and preferences of young learners. The results are expected not only to provide concrete strategies for increasing student motivation but also to contribute to the broader field of language pedagogy by demonstrating the practical application and benefits of game based learning in an elementary school context.

B. Identification of the Problem

Based on the background and preliminary research results, the problems identified in this study are as follows:

1. The conventional teaching methods in English language learning rely heavily on teacher-centered approaches, leading to student boredom and lack of motivation.
2. Students demonstrate low initial enthusiasm and passive engagement during English lessons, particularly in traditional lecture-based instruction.
3. There is limited student interaction and participation in classroom activities, with minimal questioning or expression of opinions from learners.
4. Students easily lose focus during lessons, especially when encountering difficult material or non-interactive teaching methods.
5. A significant gap exists between current teaching methodologies and students' preferred learning styles, which favor game-based and interactive activities.

C. Limitation of the Problem

To maintain the focus of the research and avoid overly broad discussion, this study is limited to:

1. The research subjects are fifth-grade students of SD Islam Al Azhar 51 Kota Bengkulu.

2. The methodological focus is on implementing a game-based learning approach to enhance student motivation in English language learning.
3. The types of games implemented are limited to feasible, educational classroom activities such as word-guessing games, role-playing, and sing-alongs, as preferred by the students.
4. The aspects of motivation measured are limited to observable behavioral indicators, namely student enthusiasm, active participation, and sustained focus during learning activities.
5. The scope of the research focuses on the application of game-based learning as a pedagogical tool to create a more engaging and interactive classroom environment, without an in-depth investigation into other factors affecting motivation such as parental support or the broader curriculum.

D. Research Questions

Based on the background described above, the problems in this study are formulated into the following two research questions:

1. How does the implementation of game-based learning influence students' motivation in learning English among fifth-grade students at SD Islam Al-Azhar 51 Kota Bengkulu?

2. What are the factors that influence the level of student engagement in English learning through a game-based learning approach among fifth-grade students at SD Islam Al-Azhar 51 Kota Bengkulu?

E. The Purposes of the Research

Based on the research questions above, the objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the impact of the implementation of game-based learning on students' motivation in learning English and explore the factors influencing it among fifth-grade students at SD Islam Al-Azhar 51 Kota Bengkulu.
2. To provide insights into the factors that influence the level of student engagement in English learning through a game-based learning approach among fifth-grade students at SD Islam Al-Azhar 51 Kota Bengkulu.

F. The Significance of the Research

This study makes a significant contribution to the development of English language learning theory by examining the implementation of game-based learning. Theoretically, this research enriches the literature on the relationship between motivation and innovative teaching methods at the elementary school level. By identifying the factors that influence student motivation, this study provides new insights into motivation theory, particularly in the context of foreign language learning. Additionally, this study offers a fresh perspective on the

integration of technology in education, especially in enhancing student engagement and learning achievements. Therefore, the findings of this study can serve as a reference for the future development of educational theory.

This research also provides practical benefits for teachers in designing more effective and engaging teaching strategies. By understanding the impact of game-based learning on student motivation, teachers can integrate game elements that suit the needs and characteristics of their students. This can enhance student engagement in English learning, ultimately potentially improving their learning outcomes. Furthermore, this study offers insights into the importance of creating an interactive and enjoyable learning environment, which not only boosts student motivation but also helps build language skills more effectively.

From a curriculum development perspective, this study contributes to policymakers and curriculum developers in designing teaching materials that are more relevant and aligned with students' needs. The findings of this study can assist in designing an English curriculum based on innovative approaches, such as game-based learning, which can stimulate students' interest in learning. Furthermore, this study provides an understanding of the importance of flexibility in selecting teaching methods to support the diversity of students' learning styles. Thus, the benefits of this research can enrich the

development of a more adaptive curriculum that responds to technological advancements and current learning trends.

G. Operational Definitions of Key Terms

In this study, several key terminologies will be used to support the understanding of the concepts discussed, including Game-Based Learning and English Motivation, which are explained as follows:

1. Game-based learning refers to the use of game elements, such as challenges, points, and levels, in the learning process to enhance student engagement, motivation, and understanding of the subject matter.
2. English motivation is the internal and external drive that influences students to learn English, including their interest, desire to communicate, as well as academic and personal goals that motivate them in their learning.

