

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF USING BLOOKET AS A GAMIFIED LEARNING TOOL TO ENHANCE VOCABULARY AND READING COMPREHENSION IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract: Education and technology have gone hand in hand in various aspects, including in the process of learning English. Blooket is one of gamified learning tool that usually used by teachers as one of the learning media which uses technology. It provides alternative ways to learn vocabulary and reading comprehension. This research aims to provides the students' perceptions related to the effectiveness of Blooket, since it remains an urge to be provided to support the teaching and learning process. A qualitative approach is used by interviewing six second-years senior high school students in one of public school in Yogyakarta. The data is analysed use thematic analysis to provide clear and comprehensive result. The research finds that Blooket allows students to have better engagement and increase their motivation especially in learning vocabulary. Moreover, students feel that through Blooket as game-based learning, the learning process becomes more interactive. On the other hand, Blooket is found not really support students' reading comprehension. This finding is a note for teachers and future researcher whether there are some factors that make Blooket does not work in certain class or not. This current research is expected to fill the knowledge gap related to the senior high school students' perception in using Blooket as gamified learning tool in learning vocabulary and reading.

Keywords: Blooket; digital learning; gamification; reading comprehension; vocabulary

INTRODUCTION

English learning in senior high schools develops four main skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. These skills build communication ability, but reading often becomes the main focus in academic settings. It helps students gain information, expand vocabulary, and understand language structures. Grabe and Stoller (2011) define reading as a complex process involving word recognition, syntax, background knowledge, and meaning construction. Strong reading skills support writing and speaking (Aprilianti & Sukarno, 2025; Noprianto & Rahman, 2021) and are essential in EFL settings, where most materials are text-based (Hidayatulloh & Sugirin, 2022). Vocabulary plays a key role in this process, as it strongly affects comprehension. Nation (2022) and Schmitt (2020) explain that sufficient vocabulary supports all language skills, while limited vocabulary reduces understanding. Similarly, Zhang and Zhang (2019) and Nation and Webb (2017) found that vocabulary development enhances reading comprehension. Nation (2001) defines vocabulary mastery as the ability to understand and use words accurately in context, and Perfetti (2007) emphasizes that skilled readers access word meanings quickly and accurately.

Previous studies have confirmed the crucial role of vocabulary in reading comprehension. Zhang and Reynolds (2021) found a strong correlation between vocabulary mastery and students' ability to understand academic texts. Similarly, Kusumaningrum et al. (2020) reported that students with broader vocabulary knowledge showed better inference and text interpretation skills. Mokhtari et al. (2022) also noted that systematic and contextualized vocabulary learning enhances literacy, especially in understanding complex discourse. These studies suggest that vocabulary mastery is a key predictor of reading success and should be prioritized in reading instruction at the secondary level.

To improve students' reading and vocabulary skills, teachers often use games to make learning engaging, a method called gamification. It uses points, badges, challenges, leaderboards, and rewards to increase motivation and participation (Deterding et al., 2011). In English teaching, gamification reduces boredom by creating competition, focus, and feedback that support learning (Hamari et al., 2014). Based on Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, motivation grows when students feel challenged, autonomous, and recognized. Liu et al. (2020) found that gamified classes improve engagement and retention compared to traditional ones. However, vocabulary learning often remains conventional, using word lists, memorization, translation, and drills without context. These methods help recognition but not vocabulary use in communication. Alqahtani (2015) noted that such approaches are boring and fail to involve students. Lack of innovation in teaching media causes students to lose interest, showing the need for more interactive and contextual learning methods.

Recent studies show that gamification effectively improves learning outcomes in EFL contexts. Manzano-León et al. (2021) found that digital gamification boosts students' motivation, social interaction, and understanding of language materials such as vocabulary and grammar. It also creates an active, collaborative, and enjoyable learning environment. In vocabulary and reading instruction, gamification meets both cognitive and affective learning needs. One popular platform is Blooket, which engages students through interactive quizzes in various game modes like Tower Defense and Gold Quest. Its point system, real-time competition, and appealing visuals foster a fun and competitive atmosphere (Chiu & Lin, 2021).

Several studies have explored the use of Blooket in English learning. Rahayu and Suhartono (2022) found that it improved students' technical vocabulary and reading comprehension. Zhang and Reynolds (2021) noted that familiar, contextual vocabulary supports reading inference, while Lin et al. (2020) showed that interactive games like Blooket increased EFL students' reading comprehension by up to 25% compared to traditional methods. Further, gamification, which applies game elements such as points, challenges, and rewards to learning, has become increasingly popular in language teaching. Blooket, an interactive quiz platform,

makes lessons more engaging through various game modes. Studies by Muhid et al. (2023) and Jannah and Purwaningsih (2022) found that it enhanced student motivation, participation, and vocabulary retention through repetition, challenge, and healthy competition.

At the school where this study was conducted, English teachers had used Blooket in several lessons as an alternative to traditional methods to reduce students' boredom with memorization and lectures. However, no qualitative evaluation had been done to understand how students perceive its effectiveness, particularly in vocabulary learning and reading comprehension. Therefore, this study aimed to explore students' perceptions of using Blooket as a vocabulary learning tool in high school English classes and how this experience contributes to their reading comprehension. Using a qualitative approach, the study sought to capture students' views in depth by addressing two main research questions:

- 1) How do students perceive the use of Blooket as a vocabulary learning media in English class?
- 2) How do students interpret the effect of using Blooket on their comprehension in reading English texts?

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design to explore students' perceptions of using Blooket as a gamified medium for learning English vocabulary and its impact on reading comprehension. As Yin (2018) explains, case studies are suitable for examining real-life phenomena in depth, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are unclear. The participants were grade XI students from a public high school in Yogyakarta who had used Blooket in English classes. Using purposive sampling, 4–6 students were selected based on their active participation, engagement during lessons, and willingness to share their perspectives through interviews.

The main instrument in this study was a semi-structured interview guideline which has been developed based on the two main focuses of the study, namely (1) students' perceptions of the use of Blooket in vocabulary learning, and (2) the meaning of the learning experience to their comprehension in reading English texts. The interview guide contains open-ended questions that allow for in-depth exploration, as well as probing questions to elicit richer details. All interviews will be recorded (with the participants' permission), then transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data collection was conducted through individualized face-to-face interviews between the researcher and each participant, lasting ± 30 minutes per student. The location of the interview was a classroom to ensure comfort and privacy. Data was also supported by field notes to record non-verbal expressions, gestures or context that emerged during the interviews. Further, the data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006). The process began

with familiarization, where the researcher repeatedly read the interview transcripts and noted initial ideas. Then, initial coding was done by identifying and labeling meaningful data segments, which were later grouped into broader themes. Each theme was defined and named clearly before reporting the findings through thematic narratives supported by participants' quotes. To ensure validity and credibility, the researcher used triangulation with field notes, member checking, and peer debriefing to minimize subjectivity.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Result

This research produced six main themes that describe students' perceptions of the use of Blooket in learning English vocabulary and reading comprehension. Each theme would be explained students' responses as how they perceive and interpret the use of Blooket as learning media in enhancing their vocabulary and reading skills.

Gamification as a Driver of Engagement

One key finding showed that Blooket's gamification elements boosted student engagement in learning English vocabulary. Features like real-time competition, appealing visuals, and varied game modes made students more enthusiastic and focused. Participants said the leaderboard and competitive atmosphere kept them motivated, unlike traditional rote memorization, which they found monotonous.

"I appreciate the teacher uses this platform. It is really fun, not boring. I think, my vocabulary already better. I hope I have better score later, since I have already used Blooket." (P1.T1)

"I feel challenged, I want to win, so that I study before the class start." (P4.T1)

"It is really fun, I get excited when playing because I can immediately see who can answer the fastest." (P6.T1)

Students' answers indicate that through Blooket, the learning atmosphere becomes more fun and challenging. Their sense of competitiveness can be activated and it shows as positive effect as the students also present their enthusiasm in joining the games. In conclusion, the gamification as a driver of engagement is proven as students perceive that it is beneficial for their learning English process.

Blooket Supports Vocabulary Mastery

The repetition of content through the game mode in Blooket provides an effective learning experience in introducing, repeating and internalizing new vocabulary. Some participants stated that they were able to remember words faster because they were used to seeing the words appear repeatedly in the game. The visualization and context of game-based

quizzes make the memorization process more natural than the manual memorization method. As the following participant said.

"Because I can see the word repeated over and over again. The way it plays makes me remember longer." (P1.T2)

Other participants emphasized:

"I kept seeing the same word pop up, and I didn't even realize I had memorized it until I won the round." (P6.T2)

"It is like listening to music, may be. Because, when I listen to music, unexpectedly, I could remember the lyric without memorize it. So, it is very useful, especially in learning vocabulary." (P2.T2)

This proves that the structure of Blooket's game design contributes to build vocabulary retention among students by engaging them in frequent and repeated exposure to key vocabulary items. In other words, Blooket provides students with learning strategy that suits the students' needs and wants. In this research, it also benefits students as they assume that it helps them to increase the vocabulary mastery.

Barriers in Process and Cognition

While many students found Blooket helpful, some struggled with its fast pace and competitive pressure. Those with lower proficiency or reading speed felt left behind and anxious, as limited time made it difficult to process information effectively.

"Sometimes, I feel that using Blooket is not helpful, especially when my friends can answer, but I cannot. It also makes me ashamed." (P3.T3)

"Yes, it is too fast, sometimes. Like I cannot follow the game's flow." (P4.T3)

Students' cognitive skills also play an important role in this case. Students with high level proficiency level will not complaint about the time allocation or the game's rules and stuffs, but students with low proficiency level may get difficulties in finishing the activity and follow the others friends. This indicates that, Blooket is also needs to be adjusted based on students' proficiency and cognitive level.

Limited Effects on Reading Comprehension

In reading comprehension, the use of Blooket surprisingly does not affect positively. Students mentioned that they often know the meaning of words in isolation, but struggle to interpret the meaning of the sentence or paragraph as a whole. Students know the meaning for the vocabulary appeared, but they could not understand the text which make them also could not answer the questions or retell what they have read.

"It helps with the words, but I still have a hard time understanding the full text." (P3.T4)

"I cannot understand the text, it is too difficult for me. I can say, I can translate the words, but it takes time, right?" (P4.T4)

This shows that the increasement in vocabulary mastery will not be directly followed by an increasement in inferential and interpretative skills in reading texts. Some students still struggle in understanding and interpreting the meaning or the aims from the text.

Needs for Additional Learning Strategies

Some students suggested that integrated learning is needed when they want to improve their English skills. It is not enough by only use Blooket, it needs to be integrated or added with other activities, such as discussion, reflection, and contextual exercises.

"If after playing, we discuss the words, I can understand better." (P5.T5)

"I can remember it easily and forget it easily too, so I need the teacher to review it again." (P2.T5)

"If I can suggest, may be, we can do something like peer review, discussion, or conventional quiz after we play the game." (P6.T5)

This shows the need to combine digital media with reflection and contextual learning. Students felt games alone were not enough and suggested follow-up tasks like making sentences or discussing meanings to build deeper understanding.

Appreciation and Recommendation from Students

Most participants expressed overall satisfaction with Blooket and recommend as it can be sustained to be used as one of the activities in learning English. They consider it as more enjoyable alternative to traditional vocabulary learning activities. However, their recommendations were also nuanced some emphasized that not all students enjoy the same type of learning, and that the competitive aspect might not suit everyone. This stated by a participant below.

"Yes, I really recommend it. It makes learning fun and I feel like I learned more without getting bored." (P1.T6)

"I love competition, so it will be good for the students like me. We can learn a lot by using Blooket." (P6.T6)

"I will recommend it, as long as there is no personal score that would be given to students. Because I am too slow, so I think I will not get any score. It is not fair." (P3.T6)

These insights show that students value digital tools like Blooket but highlight the need to adapt them to different learning needs and proficiency levels. Teachers should consider students' abilities and cognitive levels when using Blooket, especially for assessing vocabulary and reading skills.

Discussion

The findings show that Blooket enhances student engagement and vocabulary learning but has limited influence on reading comprehension. This supports Perfetti et al. (2007), who explain that comprehension requires the integration of vocabulary, syntax, and inference, which

remain difficult even for students with good lexical knowledge. Students' enthusiasm demonstrates the motivational power of gamification, as Blooket's leaderboards, visuals, and competition fostered enjoyment and focus. This aligns with Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, emphasizing that challenge and recognition enhance intrinsic motivation. In addition, vocabulary improvement occurred through repetition and visualization, confirming Nation (2022) and Schmitt (2020) that frequent exposure and engagement support long-term retention.

However, the lexical improvement did not directly translate into better reading comprehension. Many students still struggled to construct meaning at the sentence or paragraph level, showing that vocabulary growth alone does not ensure deeper text understanding. This supports Grabe and Stoller's (2011) view that reading comprehension requires the integration of vocabulary, syntax, and background knowledge. As students could identify word meanings but failed to interpret text coherence, it suggests that Blooket strengthens micro-level language skills but not macro-level processing. The study also found variation in how students responded to Blooket based on proficiency levels. Some lower-achieving students felt anxious due to time pressure and competition, echoing Hamari et al.'s (2014) caution that poorly designed gamification may disadvantage learners who need more processing time. Therefore, inclusive game design and adaptive pacing are essential to maintain a supportive learning atmosphere.

Furthermore, students' suggestions for follow-up discussions and reflections indicate that gamification should not stand alone. They preferred combining Blooket with contextual and interactive tasks such as peer discussions, sentence-building, or short comprehension exercises. This aligns with Liu et al. (2020), who argue that blended approaches integrating digital tools with reflective learning maximize the cognitive and affective benefits of gamification.

CONCLUSION

The rapid growth of digital technology has greatly influenced education, including how vocabulary and reading are taught in English classrooms. In the past, vocabulary learning relied on rote memorization and textbook exercises. With the rise of gamification platforms like Blooket, learning has become more interactive, engaging, and fun through play, competition, and repetition. This study examined students' perceptions of using Blooket for vocabulary learning and its impact on reading comprehension. The findings showed that Blooket increased student engagement and supported vocabulary mastery through its game-based features. Students found it enjoyable, motivating, and effective for memorizing new words. However, its impact on reading comprehension was limited, as the platform mainly focused on word recognition rather than deeper contextual understanding.

Given the study's limited participants and scope, the results may not represent all learners. Future research should involve broader samples and contexts for more generalizable findings. Despite these limitations, the study offers insights for English teachers who wish to use gamified tools like Blooket. While effective for boosting motivation and vocabulary learning, Blooket should be complemented with other strategies to fully develop reading comprehension.

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