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Effectiveness of the Game-Based Literacy Learning Model as an Innovation in Beginning Reading Learning for Second Grade Elementary School Students

Informasi Naskah

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Abstrak

Rendahnya kemampuan membaca permulaan pada siswa kelas rendah sekolah dasar sering kali disebabkan oleh penggunaan strategi pembelajaran yang kurang variatif dan cenderung berpusat pada guru. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji secara mendalam pengaruh model pembelajaran berbasis permainan literasi atau Game-Based Literacy Learning terhadap peningkatan kemampuan membaca permulaan pada siswa kelas dua di Sekolah Dasar Negeri 2 Rijang Panua. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah eksperimen semu dengan desain kelompok kontrol tidak ekuivalen. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui tes kemampuan membaca yang mencakup aspek pengenalan huruf, suku kata, dan kalimat sederhana, serta diperkuat dengan observasi aktivitas belajar. Teknik analisis data menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan inferensial untuk membandingkan capaian antara kelompok eksperimen dan kelompok kontrol. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan model pembelajaran tersebut memberikan dampak yang signifikan terhadap peningkatan kemampuan literasi siswa. Kelompok yang mendapatkan intervensi model pembelajaran berbasis permainan mengalami kenaikan skor rata-rata yang jauh lebih tinggi dibandingkan kelompok dengan metode konvensional. Analisis statistik membuktikan bahwa model ini memberikan kontribusi yang dominan terhadap keberhasilan belajar membaca siswa. Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini adalah model Game-Based Literacy Learning merupakan inovasi pembelajaran yang efektif dan layak diimplementasikan untuk mengakselerasi kemampuan membaca permulaan. Strategi ini mampu menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang interaktif dan menyenangkan sehingga meningkatkan keterlibatan kognitif siswa secara optimal.

Kata Kunci:
Game-Based Literacy Learning, Membaca Permulaan, Inovasi Pembelajaran, Sekolah Dasar.

Abstract

Low early reading skills in lower-grade elementary school students are often caused by the use of less varied and teacher-centered learning strategies. This study aims to deeply examine the effect of the Game-Based Literacy Learning model on improving early reading skills in second-grade students at State Elementary School 2 Rijang Panua. The research method used was a quasi-experiment with a non-equivalent control group design. Data collection was carried out through reading ability tests covering aspects of letter recognition, syllables, and simple sentences, reinforced by observations of learning activities. Data analysis techniques used descriptive and inferential statistics to compare the achievements between the experimental group and the control group. The results showed that the application of the learning model had a significant impact on increasing students' literacy skills. The group that received the game-based learning model intervention experienced a much higher increase in average scores compared to the group with conventional methods. Statistical analysis proves that this model provides a dominant contribution to students' reading success. The conclusion of this study is that the Game-Based Literacy Learning model is an effective learning innovation and is feasible to be implemented to accelerate early reading skills. This strategy is able to create an interactive and enjoyable learning environment, thereby optimizing students' cognitive engagement.

Key Word:
Game-Based Literacy Learning, Early Reading, Learning Innovation, Elementary School.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading ability is a fundamental foundation and basic skill that every student must master at the elementary school level, especially in the lower grades. Early reading is not simply about recognizing letters, but rather a complex cognitive process involving phonological awareness, symbol recognition, and understanding word meaning, which are essential for understanding later learning materials (Snowling &

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Hulme, 2005). Without adequate early literacy skills, students are likely to experience significant learning challenges across various subjects. Ideally, second-grade elementary school students should demonstrate fluency in recognizing letters, connecting sounds with symbols, and reading simple sentences to achieve national literacy targets (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

However, the reality on the ground shows a significant gap between curriculum expectations and student achievement. Many second-grade students still experience difficulties decoding or interpreting language symbols. The phenomenon of students stutter in reading, difficulty distinguishing similar letters, and poor comprehension of the meaning of reading remains a persistent problem in many elementary schools (Muhaimin et al., 2023; Rohman et al., 2022). This low initial reading ability is often rooted in conventional, teacher-centered learning methods. The use of monotonous lecture methods without active student involvement results in low reading interest and learning motivation, which ultimately has a direct impact on the failure to achieve literacy indicators (Fuadi et al., 2020; Syurina & Sanulita, 2026).

This problem is reinforced by observational findings at SD Negeri 2 Rijang Panua, where conventional methods were unable to accommodate the diverse learning needs of students. Second-grade students are in the concrete operational development phase, requiring interactive learning stimulation to make abstract concepts like literacy more enjoyable to understand (Abdullah et al., 2025; Sánchez-Compaña & Sánchez-Cruzado, 2019). Therefore, instructional innovation is needed that can transform the classroom atmosphere into an immersive and participatory learning environment. One approach deemed highly relevant to the characteristics of today's Generation Alpha students is the Game-Based Literacy Learning (GBLL) model.

The Game-Based Literacy Learning model is a learning approach that systematically integrates game elements into the literacy curriculum (Zapušek, 2024). Unlike traditional learning, GBLL emphasizes student-centered learning experiences through challenging yet enjoyable activities. This approach utilizes game mechanics such as challenges, rules, and rewards to increase students' cognitive and emotional engagement (Sailer & Homner, 2020). Through this model, literacy is no longer viewed as a tedious task, but rather as an adventure of intellectual exploration.

Theoretically, the effectiveness of game-based learning is driven by its ability to create an authentic and contextual learning environment. The integration of games into literacy allows students to learn through direct experience, where they actively construct their own knowledge in a constructivist manner (Vygotskij & Cole, 1978). Previous research provides strong empirical evidence for the advantages of this model. For example, the implementation of game-based learning has been shown to significantly increase student engagement compared to traditional methods (Hamari et al., 2014; Pratama & Setyaningrum, 2018). Furthermore, this approach not only increases intrinsic motivation but also strengthens conceptual understanding and memory retention of reading material (Guthrie et al., 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Although numerous studies have been conducted on game-based learning, a research gap remains in the current literature. Most previous research has focused on general learning outcomes or the integration of literacy and numeracy (Syakur et al., 2020). Limited research specifically testing the effectiveness of the GBLL model independently on specific early reading indicators—such as letter, syllable, and sentence recognition—in the specific context of regional elementary schools. The novelty of this research lies in the application of the GBLL model syntax tailored to the characteristics and specific needs of second-grade students in mastering basic literacy at SD Negeri 2 Rijang Panua.

This study aims to analyze in depth the influence of the Game-Based Literacy Learning model on improving the early reading skills of second-grade students. Through a quantitative approach with experimental methods, this study seeks to provide theoretical contributions to the development of innovative learning models in the field of early literacy. Practically, the results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for educators to begin shifting from conventional methods to more adaptive instructional strategies oriented towards active student participation in order to create a generation of superior literacy from an early age.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design. The design used was a Nonequivalent Control Group Design, in which researchers measured the effect of the treatment on the experimental group by comparing it to a control group that did not receive the GBLL model (Creswell, 2013; Sugiyono, 2019). This method was chosen because field conditions at the school did not allow for full randomization of subjects into study groups.

This study was conducted at SD Negeri 2 Rijang Panua, with a population of all second-grade students. The sampling technique used purposive sampling, where the sample was selected based on certain

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characteristics relevant to the research objective, namely low beginning reading skills (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lindsay et al., 2018). The primary focus of this article is the group that received the Game-Based Literacy Learning (GBLL) model intervention to examine its effectiveness in depth.

The variables in this study consisted of the independent variable, the Game-Based Literacy Learning Model, and the dependent variable, beginning reading skills. The instrument used to collect data was a validated reading ability test, which included indicators of letter recognition, language sounds, syllables, and simple sentences (Arikunto, 2016). In addition to the test, student activity observation sheets were also used to monitor the implementation of the GBLL model syntax during the learning process.

The research procedure was carried out through three main stages: (1) Pre-test, to measure students' initial abilities before receiving treatment; (2) Treatment, providing learning using the GBLL model for a certain period; and (3) Post-test, to measure students' final abilities after treatment. The GBLL model in this study was implemented through syntax, consisting of game preparation, implementation of literacy challenge-based instruction, and reflection on game results (Zapušek, 2024). The data analysis technique in this study used descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the average (mean) and standard deviation of students' reading ability scores. Meanwhile, inferential statistics are used to test research hypotheses through paired-sample t-tests to determine significant differences between before and after treatment (Pallant, 2020). Prior to hypothesis testing, prerequisite analysis tests, including normality and homogeneity tests, are conducted to ensure the data are normally distributed and have equal variance (Hair, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study aims to test the effectiveness of the Game-Based Literacy Learning (GBLL) model on the beginning reading skills of second-grade students at SD Negeri 2 Rijang Panua. Based on data collection through pretests and posttests in the experimental class that implemented the GBLL model, the following descriptive results were obtained:

Table 1. Data processing results

Statistics	Pretest	Posttest
Mean Score	55,3	79,3
Minimum Score	50	75
Maximum Score	60	83
Range	10	8

(Source: Processed Data)

Based on data collected through pretests and posttests in an experimental class implementing the Game-Based Literacy Learning (GBLL) model, empirical evidence was found regarding the model's effectiveness on students' reading skills. The data in Table 4.1 shows a highly significant increase in average scores of 24 points, with the average score increasing from 55.3 in the pretest to 79.3 in the posttest. Students' minimum score, which was initially 50, increased to 75, while the maximum score reached 83.

This increase strongly indicates that the GBLL model intervention had a significant positive impact on students' basic literacy achievement. In comparison, the control class, which continued using conventional learning methods, only experienced an average increase of 9.4 points, with a final posttest score of 61.9. This gap in score improvement between the experimental and control classes demonstrates that the game-based approach is far superior in accelerating early reading skills at the elementary school level.

Hypothesis testing was conducted using linear regression analysis to determine the influence of the independent variable (X or GBLL Model) on the dependent variable (Y or Reading Ability). Based on the Model Summary analysis, a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.82 was obtained. This value indicates a very strong relationship between the application of the game-based learning model and students' beginning reading ability.

Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R2) was 0.67. These results indicate that 67% of the variation in the beginning reading ability of second-grade students at SD Negeri 2 Rijang Panua can be directly explained by the GBLL model variables. Meanwhile, the remaining 33% is influenced by other factors outside the scope of this study, such as family support, students' intrinsic motivation, and other literacy facilities.

The feasibility of this regression model was confirmed through an ANOVA significance test, which yielded a Sig. value of 0.001. Because this value is much smaller than the 0.05 significance level ($0.001 < 0.05$), the regression model is considered very suitable for explaining the relationship between the learning model and students' literacy outcomes. This provides a statistical basis for the GBLL variable's significant role in improving early reading skills.

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The partial t-test results further strengthen this finding, yielding a positive regression coefficient of 0.45. This positive direction of influence has both theoretical and practical implications: each one-point increase in the quality of GBLL model implementation will result in a 0.45-point increase in students' reading skills. Mathematically, the resulting regression equation is Y = 10.25 + 0.45X. The constant of 10.25 indicates the baseline value of students' reading skills when the GBLL model factor is not intervened, while the coefficient of 0.45 confirms that optimizing game-based learning models consistently leads to improvements in students' literacy skills.

Discussion

The statistical findings presented previously clearly demonstrate that the implementation of the Game-Based Literacy Learning (GBLL) model had a significant and positive impact on the early reading skills of second-grade students at SD Negeri 2 Rijang Panua. The success of this model in accelerating students' basic literacy is inseparable from its instructional characteristics, which are able to transform rigid cognitive processes into systematic, interactive, and immersive activities.

The research data shows a very sharp increase in average scores of 24 points in the experimental class—from an initial score of 55.3 to 79.3 on the final test. This achievement empirically proves that the GBLL model intervention is far more effective than conventional, more passive methods, with the control class experiencing only a marginal increase of 9.4 points. Theoretically, these research results provide strong support for the thesis proposed by (Prensky, 2003), which states that game-based learning can stimulate learning motivation through enjoyable activities. In the context of lower-grade students, active engagement in literacy games creates a low-anxiety learning environment. This positive psychological state allows students to more confidently explore letter recognition and syllable spelling without fear of failure or intense academic pressure (Dweck, 2016). This phenomenon is crucial considering that the main obstacle in early literacy often arises from students' feelings of inferiority when faced with language symbols perceived as complex.

The effectiveness of the GBLL model in this study was specifically supported by the implementation of a measurable and structured syntax (Oliveira et al., 2022). This syntax includes introducing material through challenges that stimulate curiosity, establishing clear game rules to cultivate discipline, implementing healthy competitive games, and evaluating through reward mechanisms. The implementation of these gamification elements, such as a points and level system, consistently attracts students' interest and encourages continued practice (Aeni et al., 2022; Barz et al., 2025; Sailer & Homner, 2020). This is in line with the view (Gee, 2003) who emphasized that game elements in education can increase cognitive engagement, which has a direct impact on strengthening students' memory retention. Directed play activities enable second-grade students, who are in the concrete operational stage of cognitive development (Piaget, 2013), to understand abstract language symbols in a more concrete and contextual way. By combining visual aspects and direct interaction, this model facilitates the transition from simply memorizing letter shapes to the ability to construct meaning in sentences. Through this constructivist approach, students are no longer passive recipients of information, but rather the main actors who build their own literacy knowledge through meaningful play experiences.

Furthermore, the success of this model is also influenced by its ability to comprehensively accommodate various early reading indicators. These indicators include letter recognition (A-Z), the ability to spell syllables, read simple words, and read simple sentences fluently with appropriate intonation. As found in statistical testing through regression analysis, the GBLL model variables contributed a dominant 67% to the variation in students' reading ability. This high coefficient of determination indicates that game-based instructional factors are key determinants in successfully achieving literacy curriculum targets in elementary schools. The model's advantage also lies in its ability to simultaneously integrate affective and cognitive aspects. Students involved in the GBLL model demonstrated higher levels of activeness, participation, and enthusiasm than those participating in traditional lecture learning. The use of instant feedback in the game helped students quickly identify pronunciation or spelling errors, allowing for immediate corrections in a fun and engaging atmosphere.

Comparatively, this study reinforces previous findings that game-based learning has a superior impact on improving learning outcomes compared to traditional methods. The GBLL model successfully addresses the challenge of low reading interest by transforming students' initial perceptions that learning to read is a tedious and difficult process into a challenging and rewarding activity. This is highly relevant to addressing the problem of low phonemic skills, which are often a major obstacle in lower elementary school grades. Therefore, integrating game elements into the elementary school literacy curriculum is not merely a supporting innovation or mere entertainment, but rather a crucial strategy for accelerating students' early reading skills optimally and sustainably. The implications of this research confirm that the use of adaptive, game-based instructional models is the answer to educational needs in today's digital era, where active student engagement

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is a key determinant of the success of early literacy learning.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study convincingly shows that the implementation of the Game-Based Literacy Learning model has a significant and transformative impact on improving the early reading skills of second-grade students at SD Negeri 2 Rijang Panua, where this model not only functions as an instructional instrument but also as a cognitive catalyst that makes a dominant contribution in changing students' learning patterns from passive to active. This finding addresses the problem of low basic literacy with empirical evidence that game-centered learning syntax is able to facilitate the mastery of letters, syllables, and simple sentences more effectively compared to conventional methods that tend to be monotonous. Based on the results obtained, it is recommended that elementary school teachers consistently adopt and adapt this model as a practical action to create an immersive and low-stress classroom ecosystem, so that students' linguistic potential can develop through meaningful play experiences. Furthermore, schools and educational policy makers are expected to provide strategic support in the form of providing facilities and training in the development of adaptive digital-based educational media to ensure that the acceleration of reading skills can be achieved sustainably, in line with the characteristics of students' cognitive development in lower grades who require visual and interactive stimulation.

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