



DIGITAL GAME-BASED LEARNING IN EFL CLASSROOM: STUDENT'S PERCEPTION

PEMBELAJARAN BERBASIS PERMAINAN DIGITAL DI KELAS EFL: PERSEPSI SISWA

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Abstrak

Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL) masih menghadapi kesulitan dalam menciptakan pembelajaran yang menarik dan melibatkan siswa secara aktif. Digital Game-Based Learning menjadi salah satu pendekatan yang mengintegrasikan permainan digital untuk mendukung pembelajaran melalui elemen audio dan visual. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji persepsi siswa terhadap penerapan Digital Game-Based Learning dalam pembelajaran EFL, khususnya pada aspek persepsi auditori dan visual. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Subjek penelitian terdiri dari lima siswa yang dipilih melalui purposive sampling dan mengikuti pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris menggunakan Digital Game-Based Learning. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi serta menginterpretasikan tema yang muncul dari respons siswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan Digital Game-Based Learning memberikan pengalaman belajar yang positif, dengan persepsi siswa yang mencakup dua aspek utama, yaitu persepsi auditori dan visual. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Digital Game-Based Learning membantu siswa memahami informasi bahasa Inggris melalui stimulus audio dan visual. Unsur aturan, tujuan, interaksi, tantangan, dan umpan balik meningkatkan perhatian serta keaktifan siswa. Secara auditori, game membantu siswa fokus dan mengingat informasi lisan, sedangkan secara visual membantu mengenali dan memahami informasi melalui gambar. Digital Game-Based Learning mendukung pengalaman belajar yang menyenangkan serta keterlibatan siswa melalui persepsi auditori dan visual.

Kata Kunci: *Digital Game-Based Learning, EFL Classroom, Student's Perception*

Abstract

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction still faces challenges in creating engaging lessons that actively involve students. Digital Game-Based Learning is an approach that integrates digital games to support learning through audio and visual elements. This study aims to examine student perceptions regarding the implementation of Digital Game-Based Learning in EFL instruction, specifically focusing on auditory and visual aspects. This study employs a qualitative method using a case study approach. The participants consisted of five students selected via purposive sampling who engaged in English lessons utilizing Digital Game-Based Learning. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify and interpret themes emerging from student responses. The findings indicate that the implementation of Digital Game-Based Learning provides a positive learning experience, with student perceptions encompassing two key aspects: auditory and visual perception. The results demonstrate that Digital Game-Based Learning helps students comprehend English language information through audio and visual stimuli. Elements such as rules, goals, interaction, challenges, and



feedback enhance student attention and active participation. From an auditory perspective, games assist students in focusing on and retaining spoken information, while visually, they aid in recognizing and understanding information through images. Digital Game-Based Learning fosters an enjoyable learning experience and promotes student engagement through auditory and visual perception.

Keywords: Digital Game-Based Learning, EFL Classroom, Student's Perception

PENDAHULUAN

In this era of globalization, English has become a crucial skill because it serves as a universal language in various fields such as education, technology, communication, and the workplace. Learning a language like English in this era of globalization is crucial (Pertiwi et al., 2021). Therefore, English teaching should not only focus on mastering grammar and vocabulary but also create learning experiences that encourage students to actively participate, think critically, and use the language in real-life situations. To achieve these goals, it is necessary to select teaching methods that are appropriate to students' characteristics and needs, so that the learning process is more efficient and can optimally increase student engagement.

English learning requires learning activities that encourage students to actively participate and create meaningful learning experiences. Therefore, it is recommended to choose learning methods that are appropriate to the needs and characteristics of students. This method combines game elements into the learning process to increase students' enthusiasm, activeness, and thinking skills (Melani & Syamsuyurnita, 2026). Home English Course is one institution that has implemented this learning method in English classes. Although Game-Based Learning has been implemented, it is still unknown how students perceive its use during the learning process. Because students are the main participants in learning activities, understanding their perceptions is important to gain a deeper understanding of how they experience the implementation of Digital Game-Based Learning.

Prensky (2001) introduces a new learning concept digital game-based learning which integrates digital game elements with curriculum content. Furthermore, Prensky (2001) describes the key characteristics of digital game-based learning as a combination of interactive entertainment and serious education through digital games. According to Anastasiadis et al. (2018), digital game-based learning is a learner centered method that utilizes digital games to support the achievement of educational goals, such as the teaching and learning process. Therefore, this method is a relevant option in teaching English as a foreign language. By incorporating game elements into the learning process, students not only receive material but are also invited to collaborate, communicate, solve problems, and be actively involved throughout the learning activities.

Learning English not only aims to help students master vocabulary and grammar, but also develops their ability to communicate effectively. To achieve this learning goal, teachers need to create a learning environment that encourages students to actively participate and remain engaged throughout the learning process. However, English learning can become less effective when students lose interest or feel unmotivated during class activities. This game also provides an opportunity for teachers to incorporate game elements into the learning atmosphere (Pratiwi & Musfiroh, 2014). Therefore, teachers are encouraged to use learning methods that are interactive, fun, and capable of actively involving students. It is hoped that choosing the right teaching method can support students in understanding the learning material while creating a positive learning



experience.

Game-Based Learning is an approach that integrates games into the learning process to achieve specific learning objectives, rather than simply providing entertainment. Through game elements such as challenges, rules, feedback, and rewards, students are encouraged to actively participate in learning. According to Anastasiadis et al. (2018), digital games provide exciting experiences, an interactive learning atmosphere, and activities that involve collaboration. This approach is considered suitable for English language learning because it provides opportunities for students to practice language skills in a more interactive and meaningful learning environment. By combining educational content with game activities, game-based learning is expected to create a fun learning experience and support students' learning process. This approach places students at the center of learning by using electronic or digital games to support their learning process (Prasetya et al. 2013). Although Game-Based Learning offers various potential benefits in English language learning, its successful implementation cannot be determined solely by the learning method itself.

Student perception also plays a crucial role because it influences how students interpret and respond to their learning experiences. According to Robbins (2003), perception is the process by which individuals organize and interpret sensory impressions to give meaning to their environment. This suggests that each student may perceive a learning experience differently, even if they follow the same learning process. These differences are influenced by various factors, such as previous learning experiences, expectations about learning, motivation, and individual characteristics. Perception influences attitudes, and attitudes determine behavior (Nisa et al., 2023). In the context of English language learning, student perception is crucial because it can describe how they understand, feel, and evaluate the learning experiences they receive during the learning process. Students' perceptions can also provide information about aspects of learning they find interesting, helpful, or challenging in achieving learning objectives. Therefore, exploring students' perceptions of the implementation of Game-Based Learning is crucial for gaining a deeper understanding of their learning experiences and how they evaluate the use of games in English learning at Home English Course.

Understanding students' perceptions of Digital Game-Based Learning is crucial because they are the primary participants who directly experience the learning process. Their perceptions can provide valuable information about how they respond to the implementation of Digital Game-Based Learning, including aspects they consider beneficial, enjoyable, or challenging during English learning. Students who view this learning method positively may feel more engaged and motivated to participate in class activities, while students with different perceptions may experience barriers that affect their participation. These differences in perception can then influence a person's behavior, which is either visible or overt (Jayanti & Arista, 2019). Therefore, exploring students' perceptions can help teachers evaluate the implementation of Game-Based Learning and identify aspects that need to be maintained or improved to create a more effective English learning experience.

Several previous studies have shown that Game-Based Learning has been an effective approach in English as a Foreign Language classes. Research conducted by Orak (2025) found that EFL students generally had positive perceptions of English language education integrated with



gamification. Students reported that the use of gamification increased their engagement, motivation, classroom atmosphere, and comprehension, suggesting that integrating game elements into English instruction can create a more enjoyable and meaningful learning experience. Similarly, Jihan and Maharsi (2024) reported that students viewed Game-Based Learning positively because it increased motivation, classroom engagement, learning outcomes, and adaptability in learning English. This study also emphasized that Game-Based Learning is not only a learning tool but also an instructional approach capable of creating a more interactive learning environment. In addition, a study by Fauziah Fatimah Azzahra (2025) discussed perceptions of the use of Game-Based Learning in improving vocabulary mastery, and wanted to understand its influence on motivation, interaction, and learning effectiveness.

Although previous studies consistently report that students generally hold positive perceptions of Game-Based Learning in EFL classrooms, research gap remain. Therefore, qualitative research is needed to explore students' perceptions of Digital Game-Based Learning more comprehensively by involving a diverse range of participants with varied learning experiences. Addressing this gap, this study aims to explore students' auditory and visual perceptions of Digital Game-Based Learning in EFL classrooms through semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. By involving students with diverse levels of participation and experience, this study seeks to provide deeper understanding of how Game-Based Learning influences students' learning experiences in English language classrooms.

Based on research gaps identified in previous studies, this research aims to explore students' perceptions regarding the implementation of Digital Game-Based Learning in English instruction at the Home English Course. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the study seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of students' experiences, opinions, and interpretations concerning the use of Digital Game-Based Learning during the learning process. The findings are expected to enrich the existing literature on Digital Game-Based Learning particularly within the context of English language courses and provide valuable insights for educators to evaluate and enhance the implementation of this method, thereby creating a more meaningful and engaging English learning experience.

METODE PENELITIAN

The research method employed in this study is a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is closely linked to real world contexts and utilizes various methods such as observation, interviews, and personal notes to understand reality. This method enables researchers to view the world from multiple perspectives and transform reality into descriptive data in the form of text, images, or recordings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study aims to explore students' perceptions and experiences regarding game-based English language learning. A case study approach is adopted for this research. The research process involves evolving questions and data collection procedures, typically conducted in a participant centered setting. Data analysis is performed inductively, moving from specific details to general themes, with the researcher interpreting the meaning of the data.

Case study research is a type of qualitative methodology that analyzes a particular case within a current, real life context or environment. Case study research begins by identifying a specific case to be described and analyzed. For example, the case could be an individual, a group of people, a decision-making process, or a specific event (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach



collects detailed and in-depth data through various sources of information, such as observations, interviews, audiovisual materials, documents, and reports. The final result is a descriptive overview of the case and the themes that emerge from it. According to Yin (2014 as cited in Septiana et al., 2021), this approach is suitable when the boundaries between phenomenon and reality are unclear or blurred.

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

Student Auditory Perception

Based on the data analysis conducted by the researcher at the Home English Course center, students' perspectives on digital game-based learning regarding auditory aspects indicate that the use of digital games in EFL instruction facilitates the process of grasping and comprehending English information through listening. According to Chang & Hwang (2019), game-based learning is a form of educational interaction that integrates subject matter and educational content into digital games. This perspective is evident in several auditory skills, including sound awareness, the ability to distinguish sounds, auditory memory, the ability to recall sequences of verbally conveyed information, and the combination of sound elements. The researcher's findings regarding auditory skills demonstrate that sound elements in digital games serve not merely as components of the game itself but also as stimuli that encourage students to attend to, distinguish, recall, and process English sounds. This aligns with the view expressed by (Anastasiadis et al. 2018) that digital games provide an engaging experience, an interactive learning atmosphere, and activities that foster collaboration.

Based on the data analysis, students demonstrated a higher level of awareness regarding English sounds when learning through digital games. Some students reported that the game's audio helped them focus more intently on the English words they heard as noted by (Ningsih, 2023), this method can serve as a transformative learning approach. These findings indicate that the audio elements in digital games can act as a draw, directing students' attention toward English information presented in audio form. This aligns with the views of (Prasetya et al. 2013), who suggest that in game-based learning, students can grasp theories or concepts related to a problem while simultaneously sharpening their focus on that problem. From the perspective of perception theory, stimuli received through the senses become part of the perception formation process when an individual pays attention to and processes them as (Walgito, 2003) explains, perception begins with sensing the individual reception of stimuli via the senses, also known as the sensory process. However, the sequence does not end there the stimuli are processed further, leading to the subsequent stage of perception. Therefore, perception cannot be separated from sensing, as sensing serves as the initial stage of perception.

The students' attention to sound in digital games reflects their perceptual experience of the English sounds they encountered. Data analysis revealed that students demonstrated an awareness of English sounds while learning through digital games. Some students indicated that the game's audio helped them focus more on the English words they heard a view shared by participants P2, P4, and P5 while participants P1 and P3 noted that attending to the audio or text first allowed them to concentrate better. This aligns with (Fajarina 2017), who found that using games in instruction can encourage students to be more active and interactive in the classroom. The research findings indicate that students paid attention to English sounds during the digital game activities. These findings relate to the study by (Hwang et al. 2016), which developed game-based learning activities



to support English listening and speaking skills; that study showed that most students held positive perceptions of mobile-supported learning activities. This focus arose because students did not merely look at the images or text within the game but also needed to listen to the audio to comprehend the information being conveyed, demonstrating that audio elements in digital games can serve as a compelling feature that heightens students' attention to English sounds.

Regarding the indicator of the ability to distinguish sounds, research results show that students utilize their listening skills to differentiate between English sounds or words presented within the game. Findings associated with this indicator include confusion in distinguishing words, ease of understanding the material, confusion caused by complex rules, varying difficulty levels in word discrimination, adherence to in-game writing rules, the need to understand and translate questions before answering, improved listening accuracy, maintaining focus while listening, and understanding the game's objectives. Students must pay attention to sound distinctions to determine their answers or follow the provided instructions. Participants (P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5) reported that the ability to distinguish sounds was helpful this aligns with the Digital Game-Based Learning principles of rules and goals. These conditions demonstrate that in-game activities encourage students to listen more attentively a finding consistent with (Melani & Syamsuyurnita, 2026), who note that integrating game elements into the learning process can boost student enthusiasm, engagement, and critical thinking skills, when students have the opportunity to listen to sounds repeatedly and receive feedback on their answers, they can determine whether they have correctly understood the sounds or are still making errors. Thus, the interactive elements and feedback mechanisms inherent in Digital Game-Based Learning can assist students in the process of distinguishing English sounds.

Regarding the auditory memory indicator linked to the interactive principle, research results indicate that games assist students in recalling information received aurally. The findings reveal that helping each other understand the material, discussing and collaborating to find answers, facilitating learning through discussion, discussing to comprehend the material, and interacting to expand vocabulary. Information such as word sounds, instructions, or pronunciations presented within the game must be remembered by students to complete subsequent activities. Sound repetition during gameplay also provides students with opportunities to hear and recall previously received information. This demonstrates that learning activities packaged as games can provide experiences that help students retain auditory information during English language learning; as noted by (Charlier et al. 2012), game-based learning involves using games to support and enhance the processes of teaching, learning, or evaluating student understanding. Regarding the indicator of recalling the sequence of verbally conveyed information linked to the outcomes and feedback principle research results show that students must recall aural information in the correct order to follow the game's activities. Instructions delivered in stages require students to pay attention to the information they hear and remember the sequence. This indicates that game elements can encourage students to focus more closely on verbal information, aligning with the view expressed by (Hermawan, 2024) game-based learning goes beyond merely creating activities for students; it involves designing learning rules that gradually introduce new concepts and help students achieve final learning objectives, with specific goals to achieve within the game, students are motivated to recall the information they have heard so they can respond appropriately and advance to the next stage.



In the combination of sound elements indicator associated with the adaptive principle, the results of the study indicate that students gain experience in connecting or combining sounds to understand English words. The findings obtained are seeking help when facing difficulties, seeking assistance from teachers and friends, needing time to adapt, difficulty understanding the game at the hard level, increased precision required at the hard level. Through in-game activities, students not only listen to sounds separately, but also try to connect the sounds so they can recognize or understand a word. Feedback given after students answer can help them determine whether the combination of sounds is correct. Thus, interaction and feedback in the game can provide opportunities for students to improve their understanding of the relationship between sounds and words in English. This is in line with what (Hamadneh et al. 2025) said that gamification can be defined as the application of thinking methods and game elements to meet learning needs by utilizing games in delivering lesson materials.

Student Visual Perception

Based on the data analysis, visual perception in this study relates to students' ability to receive, attend to, distinguish, and recognize information presented visually during game-based learning activities. Interview results indicate that the images, shapes, object positions, colors, and visual elements within the game help students comprehend the information provided and determine the appropriate answers. The use of visual elements makes it easier for students to connect English language material with the images or objects they see. Furthermore, game objectives, rules, interactions, and feedback encourage students to pay closer attention to visual elements in order to complete in-game tasks. This aligns with the findings of (Winatha & Setiawan, 2020), who state that game-based learning is a creative instructional approach that fosters active student participation in problem-solving activities. Thus, the use of Digital Game-Based Learning not only provides a learning experience involving sound but also leverages visual information as an integral part of the process by which students understand and learn English.

Regarding the spatial relationships indicator, the research results indicate that students utilize information about the positions of and relationships between objects within the game to comprehend the assigned tasks. The game's visual display helps students identify the location of items and the relationships between objects, as well as select the specific object that matches the instructions. These findings demonstrate that ease of understanding the material, recognizing the position and shape of objects, learning from past mistakes, building upon existing understanding, and drawing inspiration from the surrounding environment. Presenting information visually can assist students in understanding concepts that might be difficult to grasp through verbal explanations alone. In the context of Digital Game-Based Learning, game objectives and rules also encourage students to pay closer attention to object positioning, as accuracy in identifying locations can influence both their success and their enthusiasm for completing the game; this aligns with the findings of (Anjani et al. 2016), who noted that game-based learning plays a significant role in boosting students' learning enthusiasm.

Regarding the visual discrimination indicator, the results show that students are able to use visual information to distinguish between different images or objects. Students must pay attention to differences in shape, size, color, and other characteristics of the objects displayed in the game in order to determine the correct answer. The findings indicate that collaborating to identify images,



distinguish between them based on facts, understanding the relationship between images, surrounding objects identifying object positions and shapes, allocating tasks within the team, selecting the correct images, sharing understanding with friends, precision through game rules, variations in question types between teams, verifying the match between objects and images, the activity offers students the opportunity to actively observe and compare visual information. Driven by the need to achieve specific goals, students are encouraged to examine each image closely in order to select the object that corresponds to the game's instructions or questions. As noted by (Al-Azawi et al. 2016), this type of activity fosters an understanding of game-based learning, an approach proven to enhance student motivation and engagement in the foreign language learning process.

Regarding the shape and background discrimination indicator, research results show that students utilize visual skills to distinguish the primary object from the background within the game interface. The findings indicate that recognizing images based on visual characteristics, examining differences between images, observing images in detail, distinguishing between images based on details, identifying shapes and colors, distinguishing between images based on color and shape, observing details of shapes and angles, exercising precision in distinguishing between images, observing images one by one, examining the shapes of images individually, the presence of images featuring various shapes and backgrounds helps students focus their attention on the objects relevant to the task. Students must identify relevant objects despite the presence of other surrounding visual information. This demonstrates that the game's visual interface can train students to focus on important information while ignoring details unrelated to the task at hand as noted by (Sigiro et al. 2025), game elements such as challenges, competition, and active engagement help enhance students' understanding and retention of the material being taught.

Regarding the visual closure indicator, research findings indicate that students are able to recognize or infer an object even when the presented visual information is incomplete. The findings obtained are discussion to identify the image, seeking assistance in recognizing the image, seeking help to understand the image, collaboration in interpreting the image, discussion regarding visual features, peer support in completing the quiz, observing the image from various angles, discussion to clarify observations, recognizing the image through visible parts, collaboration in identifying parts of the image. During game-based activities, students must utilize the available visual elements to identify the specific image or object. This process encourages students to focus on particular characteristics of an object and connect them with their existing knowledge. This aligns with the view that game-based learning creates an exciting atmosphere that boosts student enthusiasm, thereby increasing motivation, fostering active engagement in the learning process, and encouraging creative thinking (Astuti et al., 2017), with the game's objectives and feedback on the answers provided, students can determine whether their identifications are correct. Consequently, the visual activities within the game offer an experience that encourages students to be more active in recognizing the information displayed.

Regarding the object recognition indicator, the research findings indicate that students utilize visual information to recognize and identify images or objects displayed within the game. The presented images assist students in linking English words or information to the objects they recognize. This facilitates a better understanding of the meaning of the vocabulary or material, as linguistic information is reinforced by visual representations. Furthermore, the feedback provided



within the game enables students to determine whether their selected objects are correct. Thus, the use of visual representations in Digital Game-Based Learning aids students in recognizing objects while simultaneously connecting visual information to English language learning. This aligns with the view of (Nisa et al. 2023) that understanding one's surroundings requires the engagement of the five senses, which subsequently generates an interpretation based on information captured and received by sensory receptors. Overall, the research results demonstrate that the use of Digital Game-Based Learning provides an experience that supports students' visual perception in the context of English language learning.

KESIMPULAN

Based on the findings of the study on *Digital Game-Based Learning in EFL Classrooms: Students' Perceptions*, it can be concluded that digital game-based learning supports students' perception of English information through both auditory and visual experiences. In terms of auditory perception, students were able to distinguish sounds and words they heard, recall orally delivered information, understand word meanings through explanations and audio, and combine sound elements to recognize and comprehend English words. The use of audio features in digital games, such as voice instructions, pronunciation, repetition, and feedback, encouraged students to pay closer attention to the information presented and provided repeated opportunities to listen to English. These activities also helped students develop their vocabulary and understand English learning materials through a more interactive learning experience. Therefore, digital game-based learning facilitates students' auditory perception by allowing them to listen to, distinguish, recall, and understand English information presented through audio elements in digital games.

In terms of visual perception, the findings show that digital game-based learning also supports students in receiving and comprehending English information through visual elements. Students demonstrated the ability to recognize objects, distinguish images and shapes, understand the position of objects, differentiate objects from their backgrounds, and identify images even when they were only partially displayed. The use of visual elements in digital games helped students associate English vocabulary with the objects they observed. Furthermore, challenges, rules, goals, interactions, and feedback encouraged students to pay greater attention to visual information and carefully observe differences between images in order to determine appropriate answers. Thus, digital game-based learning provides students with an interactive learning experience that supports visual perception by enabling them to observe, recognize, distinguish, and comprehend English information through images and other visual displays presented in the games.

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