



Lusia Pebriyani Silaban^{1*}, Leonita M.E. Manihuruk², Basar Lolo Siahaan³, Irene Adryani Nababan⁴

1,2,3 Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar

E-mail: llusi4030@gmail.com, manihuruknita@gmail.com, lolosiahaan89@gmail.com, ireneppbiuhnp@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of using Baamboozle media in improving students' reading comprehension at the ninth grade of SMP Negeri 5 Pematangsiantar. Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill in English learning; however, many students still face difficulties in identifying main ideas, supporting details, and interpreting descriptive texts. Traditional teaching methods that rely heavily on textbooks have not been sufficient to meet the minimum mastery criteria. Therefore, interactive learning media such as Baamboozle are expected to enhance students' motivation, engagement, and comprehension. This research employed a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test in two groups. The population consisted of 193 ninth-grade students, and purposive sampling was used to select two classes: IX-2 as the experimental class taught with Baamboozle, and IX-1 as the control class taught with conventional methods. A reading comprehension test consisting of 25 multiple-choice items was used as the research instrument. Data were analyzed using SPSS 24 through normality test, homogeneity test, paired sample t-test, independent sample t-test, and effect size measurement. The results showed a significant improvement in the experimental class compared to the control class. The mean score in the experimental group increased from 48.00 (pre-test) to 86.67 (post-test), indicating an 80.56% improvement, while the control group showed much lower progress. Statistical analysis confirmed that the use of Baamboozle had a significant effect on students' reading comprehension (p < 0.05), with a strong effect size. In conclusion, Baamboozle media is proven effective in enhancing students' reading comprehension, particularly in understanding descriptive texts. It creates a more interactive, enjoyable, and motivating learning environment compared to conventional methods. The study suggests that teachers integrate game-based learning platforms like Baamboozle into English reading instruction to improve students' learning outcomes.

Keywords: Baamboozle media, reading comprehension, descriptive text, gamification, English learning

INTRODUCTION

English is recognized as a global language that plays a crucial role in international communication across various fields such as education, science, technology, media, and business. Its widespread use by both native and non-native speakers makes it an essential medium of cross-cultural interaction (Crystal, 2003). In the field of education, English serves not only as a subject to be learned but also as a medium of instruction at different academic levels. Harmer (2007) emphasizes that English is important not only for its linguistic value but also for its function in developing students' cognitive and communicative skills to meet the demands of the 21st century. In acquiring English as a foreign language, there are four essential skills that students must master, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these, reading plays a central role, as it provides access to knowledge and information through various written sources such as textbooks, academic articles, and scientific literature. Reading is a complex cognitive process that requires more than decoding words. It involves recognizing text structures, connecting new information with prior knowledge, and constructing meaning from the text (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). Thus, reading comprehension is a fundamental skill that not only improves students' academic achievement but also contributes to the development of other language skills such as writing and speaking.

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Reading comprehension itself is defined as the process of actively constructing meaning from written texts through critical thinking, interpretation, and interaction with the content (Snow, 2002). Effective reading comprehension requires the ability to identify main ideas, understand supporting details, make inferences, and integrate information across different parts of the text. Strong comprehension skills enable students to apply their knowledge in broader contexts, engage in problem-solving, and express their ideas clearly both orally and in writing. Despite its importance, many students still face difficulties in mastering reading comprehension. In practice, students often struggle to identify the main idea, recognize text organization, or make connections between paragraphs. These challenges are particularly evident when dealing with descriptive texts, which require not only recognition of details but also the ability to interpret descriptive language and visualize the object being described. Based on the researcher's teaching internship at SMP Negeri 5 Pematangsiantar, it was observed that many students had difficulties in identifying specific information, distinguishing between main ideas and supporting details, and recognizing the structure of descriptive texts. Some students tended to read too quickly, overlooking important information, which hindered their overall understanding.

The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) curriculum in Indonesia emphasizes strengthening literacy and critical thinking skills, including reading comprehension. Students are expected to analyze, interpret, and critically evaluate texts. However, the results show that the learning outcomes have not yet met the expected standard. While the minimum mastery criterion (KKM) for reading comprehension is set at 75, many students only achieve an average score of around 60. This gap is largely due to the lack of interactive and engaging media used in reading instruction, as teachers often rely on conventional methods such as textbooks and summaries, which are less effective in fostering student motivation and comprehension. To address these issues, innovative and technology-based media are needed to create more interactive and enjoyable learning experiences. One promising alternative is Baamboozle, an online game-based learning platform that allows teachers to design interactive quizzes and activities. As a gamification tool, Baamboozle can transform traditional learning into an engaging and competitive environment, which encourages active participation and sustained focus. According to Garcia and Gallardo (2020), Baamboozle increases students' motivation and engagement through gamified elements, making the learning process more enjoyable and effective. Similarly, Kusuma and Lestari (2020) highlight that Baamboozle helps students practice reading comprehension by focusing on identifying main ideas and supporting details through visual and interactive activities.

Previous studies also support the effectiveness of Baamboozle in language learning. Research findings indicate that it not only improves comprehension skills but also enhances vocabulary retention, grammar mastery, and overall student engagement. The use of Baamboozle provides immediate feedback, reduces learning anxiety, and creates a positive classroom atmosphere, all of which contribute to better learning outcomes. Therefore, in response to the challenges faced by students in reading comprehension and the need for innovative teaching strategies, this study investigates the effectiveness of Baamboozle as a learning medium in teaching reading. Specifically, it focuses on improving students' comprehension of descriptive texts at the ninth grade of SMP Negeri 5 Pematangsiantar. Based on these considerations, the researcher conducted a study entitled: "The Effectiveness of Baamboozle Media on Students' Reading Comprehension at Grade IX of SMP Negeri 5 Pematangsiantar."

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading

Reading is much more than just skill-it's a doorway to endless possibilities. Through reading, we do not just learn facts; we learn how to think, dream, and grow. It broadens our understanding and deepens awareness of the world around us, allowing us to explore new ideas and cultures beyond our immediate experience. In school, reading is the foundation that supports every subject because almost all knowledge comes from written words. When we become good readers, we empower ourselves to succeed not only in scool but throughout life.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is fundamental skill for learning English. It entails more than simply reading words one by one. To comprehend a text, readers must think crtically and interpret meanings, connect ideas, and relate information to their own knowledge. This process allows readers to completely comprehend the author's message, which is essential for effective communication and learning. Recognizing this complexity helps us to have a better understanding of what reading comprehension really means.

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Reading Comprehension Levels

Reading comprehension is more than just identifying words and sentences; it also involves analyzing, connecting and creating meaning from the information presented in a text. It is an essential ability that helps pupils comprehend material in all academic areas. Students may find it difficult to understand important ideas, follow directions, or participate in critical thinking exercises if they lack sufficient reading comprehension. Therefore, developing great reading comprehension skills is crucial for academic achievement. According to Roe, Smith and Kolodziej (2018), reading comprehension involves multiples levels of understanding that reflect the cognitive processes use by students when interacting with a text. These levels include literal, interpretative, critical and creative comprehension. Each level represents a different degree of depth in comprehension, ranging from basic understanding to higher-order thinking.

Descriptive Text

Descriptive text is a form of English composition intended to depict a specific object, individual, location, animal, or entity in a precise and vivid manner. This text aims to provide clear, specific, and sensory details to enable the reader to visualize the described object. Knapp and Watkins (2005) stated that descriptive text "addresses the attributes of individuals, locations, and objects," and is designed to assist the reader in constructing a mental representation of the subject through sensory details and rich vocabulary. This includes the utilization of visual, aural, tactile, and emotional components to elicit imagery.

Learning Media

Learning media refers to anything that aids in the communication of information during the learning process, with the primary purpose of raising students' attention, interest, thoughts, and feelings to achieve learning objectives effectively and efficiently. Media plays a vital role as a bridge between the material presented by the teacher and students as information recipients. When used appropriately, the use of learning media has the potential to make the process of learning more engaging and need less repetition allowing students to become more involved and driven to learn. As explained by Ibrahim et al. (2022), learning media helps teachers deliver material more easily, enabling students to better understand the lesson content. Additionally, Nisya et al. (2024) emphasize that learning media can stimulate both cognitive and affective aspects of students, meaning it not only helps students think critically but also ignites their curiosity and enthusiasm for learning.

Baambozle

Baambozle is a game-oriented educational platform shown on a digital screen, categorizing it within motion visual media. It features interactive tests with dynamic components that alter in real time, effectively engaging students' attention and maintaining their active participation. Baambozle utilizes dynamic images and facilitates direct student interaction via the screen, making learning engaging, demanding, and motivating for students through the use of moving visual media.

Previous Related Studies

Previous related studies are expected to serve as a theoretical foundation and contextual framework for the current research. First, a study by Elvy and Rani (2023), titled "The Effectiveness of Using Baamboozle Game to Improve Students' Grammar Mastery at SMAN 1 Kandis", explored the impact of game-based learning on students' grammatical competence. Although the study primarily focused on grammar, the researchers noted that Baamboozle's engaging and interactive features helped students grasp complex sentence structures more effectively. This improvement in grammar knowledge contributed indirectly to students' reading comprehension, as understanding sentence patterns is fundamental to interpreting texts accurately.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test in two groups: an experimental class taught using Baamboozle media and a control class taught using conventional methods. The purpose was to measure the effectiveness of Baamboozle in improving students' reading comprehension.

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Setting of the Research

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 5 Pematangsiantar during the academic year 2025/2026.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of all ninth-grade students, totaling 193 students across seven classes. Using purposive sampling, two classes were chosen:

- IX-2 as the experimental class (30 students).
- IX-1 as the control class (30 students).

Research Variables

Independent Variable (X): Use of Baamboozle media.

Dependent Variable (Y): Students' reading comprehension.

Research Instrument

The instrument used was a reading comprehension test consisting of 25 multiple-choice items focusing on descriptive texts. The test was administered as both pre-test and post-test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Students' Reading Comprehension Through Baamboozle

Researcher measured student's baseline reading comprehension abilities using a pre-test before the treatment. The results show that most students are still at a low level, with 47% categorized as "very poor." This indicates that many students' have difficulty identifying main ideas and comprehending vocabulary in descriptive text. The implementation of Baamboozle media in the experimental class makes the learning process more enjoyable, competitive, and engaging. Students are more motivated and interested in the activities, which encouraged them to read the book and participate in discussions. Through this process, their ability to identify the main ideas, recognize supporting details, and understand vocabulary improved significantly. The post-test results confirmed this progress. The majority of students' achieve higher levels of comprehension, with 40% categorized as "very good," 13% as "excellent," and 47% as "good." Importantly, no students remain in the "poor" or "very poor" categories. This shift shows that the use of Baamboozle media has an impact in enhancing students' reading comprehension and contributes to a more consistent and improved performance across the class.

b. Students' Reading Comprehension using Conventional Method

The outcomes through the conventional method (control class) indicate that the improvement is relatively limited. The avarage score increases from 48.53 in the pre-test to 64.00 in the post-test, with an overall improvement percentage of only 31.88%. Although there is progress, the achievement remains concentrated in the middle and lower categories. In the pre-test, most students are at the lower levels: 14 students (47%) belong to the extremely poor category, 6 students (20%) into poor, 4 students (13%) into fair, and 4 students (13%) into fairly good. Only 2 students (7%) reach the good category, while none achieve very good or excellent. After the post-test, there is a slight shift upward, but the progress is modest. Nine students (30%) reach the good category, 5 students (17%) are in fairly good, and 7 students (23%) remain in fair. Meanwhile, 6 students (20%) are still in poor, and 3 students (10%) remain in very poor. Importantly, none of the students achieve very good or excellent levels, this suggests that conventional method is less effective in enhancing student comprehension to a superior level of performance. Overall, these findings indicate that while the conventional method helps students remain in the lower categories, and only a small number are able to move into the good category. This demonstrates that the conventional method provides limited effectiveness compared to more engaging approaches such as Baamboozle.

c. Comparison of Students' Reading Comprehension Using Baamboozle and Conventional Method

Comparison of reading proficiency among students in the experimental class using Baamboozle and the control class employing conventional method demonstrates a clear contrast in effectiveness, which is further supported by the mean pre-test and post-test scores. In the control class, students' average pre-test score of 48.53 increased to 64.00 in the post-test, reflecting a modest improvement of 31.88%. This indicates that although conventional teaching methods do contribute to some level of progress, the overall development is limited, and most students remain within the lower to middle achievement categories. Specifically, even after the post-test, only a small number of students reached the "good" category, while none attained "very good" or "excellent" levels,

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showing the constraints of traditional methods in maximizing students' reading comprehension. In contrast, the experimental class that applies Baamboozle demonstrates a dramatic improvement, with the average pre-test score of 48.00 rising to 86.67 in the post-test, a remarkable increase of 80.56%. This substantial gain reflects not only the effectiveness of Baamboozle in improving comprehension but the teacher's capacity to establish an engaging, interactive, and competitive learning environment is crucial for actively motivating students'. The post-test results show that the majority of students reach higher achievement levels, with 40% classified as "very good," 13% as "excellent," and 47% as "good," and none remaining in the "poor" or "very poor" categories. The findings suggest that Baamboozle effectively supports students in mastering vocabulary, identifying main ideas, and strengthening overall comprehension skills, which aligns with previous research highlighting the positive impact of gamified learning tools. In relation to the research problem, "Does the use of Baamboozle media affect the students' reading comprehension of grade IX at SMP Negeri 5 Pematangsiantar?", the findings of this research indicate that the utilization of Baamboozle media exerts a significant and positive impact.

DISCUSSION

This research shows that Baamboozle media significantly enhances the reading comprehension of ninthgrade students at SMP Negeri 5 Pematangsiantar. The findings confirm that students in the experimental class, who are taught using Baamboozle, achieve a much higher level of improvement compared to students in the control class who aree taught through conventional method. The improvement in the experimental class can be attributed to the interactive and gamified nature of Baamboozle. As a game-based learning platform, Baamboozle successfully establishing an enjoyable and interactive educational setting. Students are not only motivated to participate actively in the lesson, but they are also encouraged to pay closer attention to the reading materials. According to Garcia and Gallardo (2020), gamification elements such as points, competition, and immediate feedback can enhance students' motivation and attention during the learning process. This theoretical perspective aligns with the present study, where students' in the experimental group demonstrated substantial improvement, as reflected in their higher post-test scores. In contrast, students in the control class also showed progress, but their improvement was not as significant. The conventional teaching method, which mainly relied on reading texts and discussion, lacked the interactive elements needed to fully engage students. This condition supports the statement of Muriani et al. (2023), who emphasized that conventional methods tend to be monotonous and less effective in fostering students' motivation. Without an engaging medium, students' are more likely to remain passive, which limited their comprehension improvement.

The statistical analysis confirms these findings, paired sample t-test reveales significant changes between pre-test and post-test scores in both groups, although the experimental group showed much more improvement. Furthermore, the independent sample t-test and ANOVA indicated that the experimental class post-test scores were considerably higher than those of the control class. This means that the use of Baamboozle had a measurable impact beyond what could be achieved through conventional instruction. The effectiveness of Baamboozle can also be explained by its ability to provide immediate feedback. During the game, students were able to see whether their answers were correct or incorrect, which helped them recognize their mistakes and learn in real time. This aligns with Rizal and Rosiyanti (2024), who stated that immediate feedback in game-based learning fosters better comprehension and reduces students' learning anxiety. This research showed that the use of Baamboozle increased students' comprehension and boosted their confidence in responding to questions, as reflected in the shift of score classifications from "Poor" and "Very Poor" to "Good," "Very Good," and even "Excellent."

CONCLUSION

Prior to presenting the conclusions, it is necessary to provide a concise summary of the research findings. The primary objective of this research is to investigate the effect of Baamboozle media on the reading comprehension of grade IX students' at SMPN 5 Pematangsiantar. Data are obtained from two groups: the experimental class, which receives instruction through Baamboozle, and the control class, which is taught using a conventional method. The data are analyzed through descriptive statistics, score improvement percentages, normality and homogeneity tests, paired and independent t-tests, as well as effect size calculations. The results indicate that the experimental class achieves higher scores, demonstrates greater improvement, and exhibits more consistent learning outcomes compared to the control class. On the basis of these findings and the results of the data analysis, several conclusions are formulated as follows:

a. Students in grade IX at SMPN 5 Pematangsiantar greatly enhance their reading comprehension through the utilization of Baamboozle media.

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- b. The experimental class, which receives treatment using Baamboozle, shows a remarkable increase in their mean scores from 48.00 in the pre-test to 86.67 in the post-test, reflecting an improvement of 80.56%. Most students move to higher achievement levels, with 40% classified as "very good," 13% as "excellent," and 47% as "good," while none remain in the lower categories.
- c. In contrast, the control class taught using conventional method shows a smaller improvement. The mean score increases from 48.53 in the pre-test to 64.00 in the post-test, an improvement of only 31.88%. Many students' remain in the lower to middle categories, and none reach the "very good" or "excellent" levels. This shows that conventional teaching methods have limited effectiveness in improving reading comprehension.
- d. Looking at both classes side by side shows that Baamboozle media is better at helping students understand what they read than conventional method.
- e. The gamified, interactive, and competitive nature of Baamboozle increases students' engagement, motivation, vocabulary mastery, and ability to identify main ideas, leading to more consistent and significant learning outcomes.
- f. The paired sample t-test and independent sample t-test confirm that the differences between pre-test and post-test scores in both classes are statistically significant. Additionally, the effect size calculation (Cohen's d = 0.85) indicates that using Baamboozle has a moderate and meaningful effect on students' reading comprehension of grade IX at SMP Negeri 5 Pematangsiantar.

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