

The Application of Game-Based Learning “Hunt for Directions” to encourage student’s Interest in Learning Descriptive Texts

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Abstrak

The low level of students’ interest in learning descriptive texts highlights the urgency of adopting innovative learning media to support language learning engagement. This study aims to measure the effectiveness of using the educational game “Hunt for Directions” to encourage learners’ interest in learning descriptive texts. This study attempts to address this issue through the application of innovative methods. A descriptive quantitative approach was employed, focusing on a single variable: students’ interest in learning. The subjects consisted of 32 seventh-grade students at MTs Negeri 4 Surabaya. Primary data were collected through questionnaires distributed to students after they received an intervention using the “Hunt for Directions” game during the learning process. The results show a significant increase in students’ average scores of learning interest. This increase was evident not only overall but also in specific key dimensions, such as enthusiasm, intrinsic motivation, and learners’ excitement when studying linguistic features and descriptive text structures. These findings indicate that educational games can serve as an effective medium for addressing the issue of low learning interest in language teaching. The results further show that the implementation of this game effectively enhanced students’ interest in learning, with the majority of students (approximately 96.875%) demonstrating a high level of attention and interest in descriptive texts after the intervention, particularly in terms of intrinsic motivation and understanding of text structure. In conclusion, the “Hunt for Directions” game proves to be an effective and promising strategy for increasing students’ interest in learning descriptive texts.

Keywords: *Hunt for Directions, Game-Based Learning, Descriptive Text, Learning Interest*

Pendahuluan

Comprehensive English communication skills play an essential role in preparing the younger generation to face the dynamics of increasingly complex global challenges. English learning serves not only as a tool for understanding a foreign language but also as a medium for fostering students’ critical, innovative, and creative thinking abilities (Sumaiya et al., 2022; Windi et al, 2022). One of the key text types that supports the development of language skills is descriptive text, which trains students’ observation abilities, expands their vocabulary, and helps them visualize objects, places, or characters clearly and engagingly (Ain et al, 2025). This textual mastery is vital as it supports productive competencies, particularly writing. However, field observations indicate that junior high school students’ interest in learning descriptive texts remains low (Wati et al, 2020; Lodong et al, 2023). This low interest is reflected in their passive participation during the learning process, suggesting the presence of both motivational and cognitive barriers (Septianingsih et al., 2025).

Difficulties in understanding the generic structure of descriptive texts often become a major factor contributing to students’ declining enthusiasm in writing activities. Students’ inability to

identify specific linguistic features and structural components makes learning feel abstract and less meaningful, ultimately hindering the achievement of language learning objectives. This condition limits students' ability to express ideas creatively and accurately (Yilmaz et al, 2023). Perceptions of difficulty further affect their learning psychology and reduce their engagement in classroom activities. Learning practices that lack engaging and contextual elements intensify these challenges, making it necessary to adopt instructional strategies that transform abstract linguistic concepts into concrete and enjoyable learning experiences (Ke et al., 2016). These fundamental barriers in mastering the language comprehensively can reduce students' confidence and negatively impact their writing performance (Dirgayasa et al., 2023). Thus, an in-depth analysis focusing on students' learning experiences is urgently needed to restore engagement and strengthen essential skills required for English language proficiency (Liu et al., 2022).

Challenges related to descriptive text mastery are not unique to the Indonesian educational context; rather, they represent a global issue highlighted across various international studies. In Turkey, for instance, declining student motivation in learning foreign languages has been attributed to the use of ineffective teaching methods, resulting in a lack of interest and unwillingness to learn (Yilmaz et al, 2023; Eltahir et al., 2021). A similar situation occurs in Japan, where substantial governmental investment in English learning does not necessarily translate into increased student motivation, prompting the need for further exploration (Ishida et al., 2024). Writing difficulties are commonly experienced by English learners around the world, particularly by non-native speakers. Limited vocabulary and lack of understanding of proper word structure often hinder students' ability to express ideas effectively in written form (Moybeka et al., 2023).

These challenges demonstrate that low motivation and poor language performance are not isolated issues but rather transnational concerns that require innovative and adaptive pedagogical approaches (Govender et al, 2021; Ahmed et al., 2022; Wu, 2018). Educational challenges of this structural nature require creative and transformative responses that can demonstrate that the decline in Indonesian students' interest is not a localized or isolated failure (Wulandari et al, 2023). Conventional teaching methods must be surpassed by testing innovative student-centered interventions capable of breaking cycles of disengagement and improving learners' specific skills such as descriptive writing. One promising approach is game-based learning (GBL), which offers enjoyable and interactive learning experiences (Siahaan et al., 2025).

Although various studies have examined innovative pedagogical practices, research on the implementation of GBL still contains substantial gaps, particularly within English language education (Adipat et al., 2021). Most existing research focuses on general improvements in motivation and language skills within conventional school settings (Khairani et al., 2025). Consequently, studies specifically analyzing the use of GBL to enhance interest in descriptive text learning remain limited, especially in Madrasah Tsanawiyah environments, which possess unique instructional characteristics (Deci et al., 2017; Rabu et al, 2017; Irwansyah et al, 2021). Moreover, research that closely examines students' perspectives on their experiences using specific educational games, such as "Hunt for Directions," is still relatively scarce (Gallegos et al., 2017; Izzah et al., 2025). The lack of empirical evidence directly linking GBL to the mastery of targeted skills such as descriptive writing combined with the absence of research conducted in distinctive educational settings such as Madrasah Tsanawiyah, highlights a significant gap in the literature. Thus, this study is strategically positioned to fill this gap by providing detailed and context-specific findings (Tamam et al, 2023). Through an intensive investigation of the

effectiveness of the “Hunt for Directions” game and an analysis of qualitative shifts in students’ learning interest, this study aims to contribute focused insights that extend beyond general claims surrounding GBL (Tobar-Muñoz et al., 2017). Such a targeted approach is essential for developing practical and reliable pedagogical models for educators seeking to address low student motivation in text-specific English classes. Based on the identified background problems, this study aims to analyze the effectiveness of implementing the GBL “Hunt for Directions” activity to increase Madrasah Tsanawiyah students’ interest in learning descriptive texts. Specifically, it examines the extent to which this educational game influences students’ interest, enjoyment, and level of active participation (Andrew et al., 2018). Student learning interest as the dependent variable was measured through questionnaires administered to the participants.

Given the specific characteristics of “Hunt for Directions,” the findings of this study cannot be generalized to all forms of GBL or other educational contexts. The focus is limited to Madrasah Tsanawiyah students, whose learning environment has not been widely explored in GBL research. The findings are expected to offer practical and reliable pedagogical recommendations for English teachers, particularly those working in Islamic educational settings, by demonstrating the usefulness of low-cost yet highly engaging learning tools. By documenting observable changes in students’ behaviors and perceptions, this study seeks to make a unique contribution to the body of knowledge on motivational strategies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, highlighting the importance of contextual instructional interventions.

This study offers three key contributions to the existing body of knowledge. First, it provides one of the few empirical investigations that specifically measure students’ interest in learning descriptive texts through the use of a targeted educational game “Hunt for Directions” rather than relying on general GBL applications. Second, it introduces context-specific evidence from Madrasah Tsanawiyah, an educational setting that remains underrepresented in GBL research, particularly in relation to text-based English learning. Third, this study uniquely integrates measurements of interest, enjoyment, and active participation to produce a more comprehensive understanding of how GBL influences learner engagement in descriptive writing. These contributions establish a novel perspective that extends beyond conventional studies, offering practical insights for educators seeking innovative and culturally responsive strategies for improving student motivation in EFL classrooms.

Metode

This study employed a quantitative descriptive design aimed at producing a systematic, detailed, and accurate portrayal of students’ learning interest after their engagement in the Game-Based Learning (GBL) activity “Hunt for Directions.” The quantitative descriptive approach was considered appropriate because the primary objective of the research was not to examine causal relationships or conduct group comparisons, but to generate an empirical depiction of a single variable namely, students’ learning interest once the instructional intervention had been administered. Through this design, the study sought to capture the natural variation in students’ responses arising directly from their learning experience, enabling the researcher to document the extent to which the GBL activity stimulated changes in attention, enjoyment, and intrinsic motivation. To strengthen the conceptual foundation of the study, the relationship between the independent variable (the implementation of GBL “Hunt for Directions”) and the dependent variable (students’ learning interest in descriptive text) is visually presented in Figure 1, which outlines the flow of influence underlying the research framework:



Figure 1. Research Framework of the Effect of Game-Based Learning “Hunt for Directions” on Students’ Learning Interest in Descriptive Text

The population in this study comprised all seventh-grade students enrolled at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri 4 Surabaya during the 2024 academic year. The entire population consisted of six parallel classes, labeled VII-A through VII-F. From this population, the researcher selected a sample of 32 students from class VII-F using a purposive sampling technique. This technique was employed due to specific pedagogical considerations recommended by the English teacher, who identified class VII-F as a suitable group for implementing innovative instructional strategies. The selection was further justified by the class's schedule compatibility and its relatively homogeneous English proficiency level, ensuring that the intervention could be conducted intensively and systematically. The inclusion of all students within the selected class allowed the research to obtain comprehensive post-intervention data from a single intact group, aligning with the descriptive objective of the study.

The research utilized a one-group post-test-only design, which examines participants exclusively after exposure to the learning treatment. This design was appropriate because the study aimed to capture the immediate effects of the GBL activity without the need for a control group. The research procedure progressed through three structured stages. The preparation stage included developing the learning instruments, validating the items of the questionnaire, and designing the operational mechanics of the GBL “Hunt for Directions” activity. In the implementation stage, students engaged in the game during their English class, where they practiced descriptive text competencies through interactive, movement-based tasks embedded in the game structure. Following the implementation, the data collection stage required students to complete a structured learning interest questionnaire, allowing the researcher to obtain direct affective, motivational, and cognitive feedback from participants immediately after the activity concluded.

To measure students' learning interest (Variable Y), the study employed a Likert-scale questionnaire with response options ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was constructed based on three core dimensions of learning interest: attention, enjoyment, and intrinsic motivation. These dimensions were operationalized into specific indicators that reflected observable behaviors and psychological responses during learning. Prior to its use, the instrument underwent a series of measurement quality assessments, including expert-based content validation, empirical validity testing using the Product Moment correlation, and reliability testing employing Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Only items that met the validity and reliability standards particularly an alpha value above 0.70 were retained for data collection. The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. The analytical procedure began with data tabulation, followed by the calculation of frequency distributions and percentages to present the pattern of students' responses across items.

These descriptive outputs allowed the researcher to identify dominant trends and variations in students' learning interest. Subsequently, mean scores and standard deviations were calculated to obtain a more comprehensive numerical representation of students' overall learning interest following the GBL intervention. To interpret these results meaningfully, the researcher referred to predetermined score classification criteria, enabling the categorization of

students' learning interest levels into qualitative descriptors such as low, moderate, or high. Through this systematic analytical process, the study was able to assess the extent to which the "Hunt for Directions" GBL activity contributed positively to students' engagement and motivation in learning descriptive texts.

Hasil

This study aimed to describe the level of students' learning interest after participating in the Game-Based Learning (GBL) activity "Hunt for Directions" during descriptive text instruction. Learning interest was assessed through three dimensions attention, enjoyment, and intrinsic motivation using a validated Likert-scale questionnaire administered immediately after the intervention. The descriptive statistical analysis included frequency distribution, percentages, mean scores, and categorization based on predetermined interpretation criteria

Table 1. Distribution of Students' Attention to Descriptive Text

Answer Options	Number of Answer	Percentage
Strongly Agree	20	62,5%
Agree	11	41,375%
Disagree	1	3,125%
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	32	100%

Based on the results of the distribution table of the scattered questionnaires, it is known that the answers "strongly agree" amounted to 20 with a percentage of 62.5%. The answer "agree" amounted to 11 with a percentage of 34.375%, the answer 'disagree' amounted to 1 with a percentage of 3.125% and the answer "strongly disagree" amounted to 0 with a percentage of 0.

Table 2. Students' Interest Level in Understanding Descriptive Texts

Answer Options	Number of Answer	Percentage
Strongly Agree	23	71,875%
Agree	8	25%
Disagree	1	3,125%
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	32	100%

Based on the results of the distribution table of the scattered questionnaires, it is known that the answers "strongly agree" amounted to 23 with a percentage of 71.875%. The answer "agree" amounted to 8 with a percentage of 25%, the answer 'disagree' amounted to 1 with a percentage of 3.125% and the answer "strongly disagree" amounted to 0 with a percentage of 0.

Table 3. Perceived Ease of Comprehension of Descriptive Text

Answer Options	Number of Answer	Percentage
Strongly Agree	20	62,5%
Agree	10	31,25%
Disagree	2	6,25%
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	32	100%

Based on the results of the distribution table of the scattered questionnaires, it is known that the answers "strongly agree" amounted to 20 with a percentage of 62.5%. The answer "agree" amounted to 10 with a percentage of 31.25%, the answer 'disagree' amounted to 2 with a percentage of 6.25% and the answer "strongly disagree" amounted to 0 with a percentage of 0.

Pembahasan

This discussion section provides an extensive and in-depth examination of the research findings related to the implementation of the Game-Based Learning (GBL) model "Hunt for Directions" and its impact on Madrasah Tsanawiyah students' interest in learning descriptive texts. The results clearly demonstrate that the integration of educational games into the instructional process substantially enhances students' attention, motivation, and active engagement during learning activities (Daulay et al, 2021). The findings further indicate that students not only experienced a heightened sense of enjoyment throughout the activity but also demonstrated better comprehension of the linguistic structure and content features of descriptive texts. This suggests that learning through an interactive medium such as GBL facilitates simultaneous affective and cognitive engagement—an essential foundation for achieving meaningful and sustainable learning outcomes in language education.

Quantitative analysis revealed that a significant proportion of students, approximately 96.875%, showed a high level of attentiveness during the game-based sessions, and an equivalent percentage expressed strong interest in reading and understanding descriptive texts. In addition, around 93.75% of participants perceived the overall learning experience as easier to follow and more enjoyable than traditional classroom approaches (Irfan et al., 2024). These findings indicate that Hunt for Directions effectively stimulates students' intrinsic motivation and transforms the learning environment into a more dynamic, interactive, and student-centered space. The notable increase in interest and comprehension suggests that GBL can successfully address common obstacles in traditional learning, such as student disengagement, limited participation, and passive interaction with textual materials (Fakhruddin et al, 2020; Pagampa et al., 2023; Breien et al, 2021).

The heightened levels of enjoyment and interest observed among students can be attributed to specific pedagogical characteristics embedded within the Hunt for Directions model. The game incorporates adventure-based and quest-oriented features that create an immersive and participatory learning atmosphere (Rosnaningsih et al., 2025). Instead of functioning as passive recipients of information, students become active explorers who construct understanding through investigative missions. These missions involve searching for yellow paper clues embedded with segments of descriptive text, a process designed to spark curiosity and stimulate cognitive engagement. The dynamic, goal-directed nature of the game serves to reduce boredom, enhance sustained concentration, and promote deeper attention to detailed textual elements (Boudadi et al, 2020; Hafidz Zaid, 2020).

Furthermore, embedding real-world contextualization within the game design enables students to experience authentic language use in meaningful scenarios. Each clue corresponds to real-life situations, enabling learners to connect linguistic theory with practical usage and effectively bridging the gap between abstract grammatical concepts and real communicative practice (Meccawy et al., 2023). Such contextualized learning promotes active meaning-making, enhances the memorability of the learning process, and supports the long-term retention of linguistic concepts.

Personal meaning-making is a central principle of GBL because it empowers learners to construct knowledge that is personally relevant and meaningful to them (Sipayung et al., 2021). Through solving clues and completing tasks, students become emotionally invested in the learning experience, thereby strengthening intrinsic motivation. The sense of achievement derived from completing a mission or decoding a clue contributes to increased learning interest,

reinforcing the notion that meaningful learning occurs when emotional involvement and cognitive processing work in harmony (Alwasilah et al, 2023; Situmorang et al., 2017).

The results of this study align with a broad array of prior research that highlights the strong pedagogical potential of game-based learning in educational settings. Previous studies have established that educational games foster deep cognitive engagement by prompting learners to think critically, make strategic decisions, and engage in collaborative problem-solving. Additionally, well-designed educational games have been shown to stimulate curiosity, provide immediate feedback, and encourage learners to take responsibility for their own learning. The instant feedback mechanism available during gameplay functions as an effective form of self-assessment, allowing students to identify errors, refine their strategies, and make informed decisions without experiencing the pressure commonly associated with formal assessment environments (Rohmah et al, 2024). From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this research can be explained through the framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which posits that intrinsic motivation flourishes when individuals' basic psychological needs competence, autonomy, and relatedness are satisfied. Within the context of Hunt for Directions, students develop competence through interpreting clues, autonomy through selecting strategies and determining movement pathways, and relatedness through collaboration with peers. The fulfillment of these needs transforms learning from an externally imposed obligation into an intrinsically motivated and enjoyable pursuit (Muawiyah, 2023; Huwaiddah et al., 2025).

In addition to SDT, the findings also correspond with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that learners actively construct knowledge through meaningful experiences and social interaction. The Hunt for Directions activity embodies this perspective by placing students in learning situations that require them to draw upon prior knowledge, negotiate meaning collaboratively, and apply linguistic concepts to solve problems. Through hands-on participation, students internalize grammar structures and vocabulary more effectively than through memorization-based methods (Nhan et al., 2025; Rohma et al., 2024). This constructivist dimension of GBL therefore promotes deeper understanding and higher-order thinking skills, making the learning process more reflective and analytically rich. Beyond theoretical contributions, the findings hold practical implications for educators, curriculum designers, and language practitioners.

The successful implementation of Hunt for Directions highlights that language learning can be designed to be both enjoyable and academically rigorous by prioritizing student engagement and active participation. Teachers can adapt the model for various text genres such as narrative, recount, or procedural texts to promote creativity, collaboration, and contextualized learning. Moreover, integrating culturally relevant content and real-life contexts into the game can increase the responsiveness of learning materials to students' socio-cultural backgrounds, thereby supporting more inclusive and equitable learning environments (Adnan, 2022).

Overall, the results of this study contribute to the expanding body of literature supporting the integration of game-based learning into contemporary language education. The Hunt for Directions model not only enhances students' learning interest but also improves their motivation, comprehension, autonomy, and overall engagement. It provides a pedagogically sustainable and innovative solution to the ongoing challenges of low participation and passive learning in language classrooms. Thus, the findings of this research not only offer strong empirical evidence of the model's effectiveness but also reinforce the theoretical foundations of game-based learning as a transformative instructional approach within the landscape of modern language education.

Kesimpulan

This study demonstrates that the implementation of the Game-Based Learning (GBL) model "Hunt for Directions" is effective in enhancing students' learning interest, attention, and overall engagement in descriptive text lessons at Madrasah Tsanawiyah. The integration of game elements such as adventure, exploration, and collaborative problem-solving successfully creates a dynamic learning atmosphere that encourages students to participate more actively in classroom activities. The quantitative findings further reinforce this conclusion, showing that more than 90% of students expressed positive responses across key indicators of learning interest, including enthusiasm, sustained attention, and intrinsic motivation. These results indicate that the GBL activity not only supports a more enjoyable and interactive learning experience but also facilitates students' comprehension of the structural and linguistic features of descriptive texts, thereby contributing to improved affective and cognitive engagement.

The findings of this research affirm that innovative pedagogical approaches incorporating game-based components can serve as effective alternative strategies for fostering students' motivation and improving learning outcomes, particularly in language learning contexts. This approach provides meaningful opportunities for students to collaborate, communicate, and think creatively throughout the learning process, aligning well with contemporary educational demands that prioritize active and student-centered learning. Despite these promising findings, the study acknowledges certain limitations, including its relatively small sample size and the specific institutional context in which it was conducted, which may constrain broader generalizations. Accordingly, future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse participant groups, examine the application of the model across varied educational levels, and employ mixed-method research designs to generate a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of Game-Based Learning on students' language abilities and classroom engagement.

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