CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, the significance of the study, the scope of the study, the definition of key terms, and also the outline of the study.

1.1. Background of the Study

In 2019, the Indonesian government took a significant step towards educational reform through the introduction of Merdeka Belajar. This initiative was prompted by the persistent issue of low learning outcomes within Indonesian education, a concern predating the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic (Pritchett & Beatty, 2015; Randall et al., 2022; Spink et al., 2022). Specifically addressing English language education, the *Merdeka Belajar* program in Indonesia aims to enhance English language learning by bolstering proficiency standards, refining teacher training, fostering innovative teaching methods, advocating language immersion, and upgrading resources and infrastructure (Mendikbudristek, 2022). By establishing new benchmarks, elevating teacher training and resources, and encouraging innovative pedagogical approaches, the program strives to ensure that Indonesian students are equipped with the necessary competencies to thrive in the global economy (Mendikbudristek, 2022).

As proposed by *Merdeka Belajar,* among the other changes, teachers are expected to provide innovative teaching in their classroom. This is important as providing innovative teaching practice helps the students to become more engaged and motivated, leading to improved learning outcomes (Amponsah, Kwesi & Ernest, 2019; Anderson, 2008; Chan, 2016; Dearn *et al.*, 2010; Guthrie, Anderson, Alao, & Rinehart,

1999; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2014). Innovative teaching practices can take many forms, including the use of technology, project-based learning, and collaborative learning activities. These approaches are designed to encourage students to take an active role in their own learning, promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills (Acar & Tuncdogan, 2019; Alvarez-Bell, Wirtz & Bian, 2017; Bryson & Hand, 2007; Rees-Lewis et al., 2019). In addition, innovative teaching practices can help to make learning more fun and enjoyable for students, which can help to reduce dropout rates and improve overall student attendance (Avila, 2015; Dudeney & Hockly, 2007; Harmer, 2008; Lee & Choi, 2011).

One of the proponent teaching methods to support a more dynamic and engaging learning environment that supports the needs of all learners is the use of gamification (Nicholson, 2015). Gamification is the application of game elements, such as point systems, rewards, and competition, to non-game contexts, such as education (Alsawaier, 2018; Deterding et al., 2011; Educause, 2011; Goethe, 2019; Kapp, 2012; Sillaots, 2012). In the context of education, gamification can be used to promote engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes by making learning more interactive and fun (Collins & Halverson, 2010; Gee, 2004; Gee, 2007; Haas, 2012; Haas *et al.*, 2021; Walsh, 2010). By incorporating game elements into the learning experience, teachers can also help to create a sense of competition and collaboration among students, which can further enhance engagement and motivation (Burguillo, 2010; Ding, Guan, &Yu, 2017; Julian & Perry, 1967; Malone & Lepper, 1987; Moore, Toth & Marzano, 2017; Nemerow, 1996).

In addition, gamification can help to personalize learning by allowing students to progress at their own pace and providing feedback that is tailored to their individual needs (Nicholson, 2015). Additionally, the implementation of gamification in a pedagogical environment provides a remedy for many students who are alienated by conventional instructional approaches (Cronk, 2012; Deterding, 2012; Goethe, 2019;

Stott & Neustaedter, 2013). Beyond all of these positive results, gamification encourages active student participation and engagement in the learning process, leading to positive and significant learning outcomes (Bai et al., 2020; Gressick & Langston; 2017; Sakai & Shiota, 2016; Selirowangi, 2018).

Furthermore, gamification serves a dual purpose: it not only catalyzes changes in learners' attitudes and behaviors but also enhances existing teaching approaches (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017; Koivisto & Hamari, 2019; Landers, 2014; Hernández, Mena, & Ornelas, 2016). This concept centers around the idea that learning can be made more engaging and effective by incorporating elements that capture students' interest and involvement by using strategies inspired by games to make learning more enjoyable and appealing. Instead of viewing learning as a dull task, gamification helps the students to see learning as an exciting journey filled with challenges and rewards. Moreover, gamification seeks to fine-tune students' behaviors. This means motivating them to actively participate, persistently strive, and wholeheartedly engage in their learning journey. Therefore, these ideas underscore the potential of gamification to make learning more fun, engaging, and participatory, ultimately leading to better outcomes.

When we consider the possibilities that gamification brings to the realm of teaching, it becomes evident that its integration should be thoughtfully applied to address the specific learning goals of the English subject. One key focus within English education is the mastery of texts, as highlighted in the recent guidelines set by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Mendikbudristek, 2022). This emphasis on text mastery is deeply rooted in the current Indonesian curriculum, where the ability to understand, generate, and reproduce texts in English is regarded as exceptionally crucial. Scholars such as Brown & Smiley (1978) and Lobron & Selman (2007) underline the significance of this skill, asserting that a strong command over English texts is not only vital for academic achievement

but also essential for success in professional contexts. Within this framework, gamification emerges as a constructive tool that can effectively complement traditional teaching methods because by combining gamification principles into English instruction, teachers can create engaging learning experiences that promote active participation, interaction, and skill development.

Among other text types, descriptive text is one of the most commonly used in academic and professional contexts, as it is used to describe people, places, objects, and events in a clear and concise manner (Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks, & Yallop, 2000; Derewianka, 1990; Gerot & Wignel, 1994; Knapp & Watkins, 2005). Therefore, it is crucial for students to master the skills of reading, analyzing, and writing descriptive texts in English, as these skills can help them to communicate effectively in a wide range of settings (Stevens & Bean, 2007). However, teaching descriptive text can be challenging, as it requires students to understand and apply specific language features, such as adjectives, adverbs, and sensory language, in order to create vivid and engaging descriptions. This is where gamification can be particularly effective, as it can provide students with a fun and interactive way to practice and develop these skills, while also enhancing their motivation and engagement.

Therefore, to harness the full potential of gamification, it is crucial to integrate it with an appropriate teaching approach that forms its instructional foundation. In this context, Genre-based Pedagogy emerges as a particularly suitable approach for teaching texts. As advocated by Fairclough (1995), Feez and Joyce (2002), Hammond and Macken-Horarik (1999), Hyland (2002), and Macken-Horarik (2002), this approach focuses on encouraging students to dissect and create texts within specific genres, fostering a deeper understanding of their purpose, audience, and linguistic characteristics. In this sense, when Genre-based Pedagogy is combined with gamification, a powerful and dynamic learning environment is generated in which gamification adds an engaging layer that drives students to actively participate in genre-

based activities. This interactive approach not only enhances language skills but also nurtures students' autonomy. By employing gamified elements, teachers can implant a sense of excitement and relevance into genre analysis and text production.

In recent years, research has prominently highlighted the compelling benefits of integrating gamification into the realm of language learning. Specifically, studies conducted by Homer, Hew, & Tan (2018), Purgina, Mozgovoy, & Blake (2020), Rachels & Rockinson-Szapkiw (2017), Sun & Hsieh (2018), and Tsai (2018) have collectively demonstrated the substantial positive impact of gamification on language learners' motivation. Additionally, the introduction of gamification elements within language learning environments has been associated with a discernible increase in learners' levels of motivation by tapping into learners' intrinsic desire for achievement, recognition, and a sense of accomplishment. Furthermore, the incorporation of gamification serves to establish a strong connection between learners and the language content. The element of challenge and the opportunity to earn rewards stimulate learners to invest more effort and time into language acquisition activities. Therefore, these studies underscore that this heightened engagement not only fosters a dynamic learning atmosphere but also reinforces learners' dedication to consistently improve their language skills.

Given the outlined reasoning that achieving proficiency in descriptive text is both crucial and challenging, this study seeks to delve into a comprehensive exploration of the integration of gamification, particularly through the concept of escape room, within the context of Genre-based Approach. By focusing on this unique combination, the study seeks to shed light on how gamification can effectively contribute to enhancing students' ability to master descriptive text.

1.2.   Research Questions

In order for this research to be able to answer the proposed aim, which is how the integration of gamification into genre-based pedagogy can support Indonesian junior high school English teachers in teaching descriptive text, two research questions are proposed:

- How does the integration of gamification into genre-based pedagogy support students' learning of descriptive text?
- What linguistic evidence characterizes students' development of descriptive text as a result of their learning experience?

1.3.   Objectives of the Study

Following the research questions imposed above, thus, the objectives of the present study are:

- To investigate how the integration of gamification into genre-based pedagogy might support students' learning text development, and
- To investigate the linguistic evidence that characterizes students' development of their descriptive text writing in each cycle of genre-based pedagogy.

1.4.   Significances of the Study

It is hoped that at the end of this research, the present study will bring several benefits such as:

- **Theoretically**

It is hoped that this study can contribute to the theoretical understanding by examining how gamification principles can be effectively integrated into genre-based pedagogy. By exploring the intersection of these two influential educational approaches, this study seeks to uncover the synergies and insights that can enhance educational gamification

research. Additionally, this study also hopes to not only deepen the theoretical knowledge of this integration but also provide a framework to guide future researchers in exploring the exciting realm of educational gamification.

Furthermore, this study seeks to uncover the effects of integrating gamification into genre pedagogy, particularly in the context of teaching descriptive texts. By examining the theoretical foundations, this study aims to unveil the relationships between gamified elements and their influence on student engagement, motivation, and the achievement of learning objectives within this specific instructional setting.

- **Practically**

In terms of practical significance, the study hopes to provide practical insights into how gamification elements can be effectively integrated into genre pedagogy to enhance student engagement and motivation in learning descriptive texts. Additionally, this study also hopes to offer practical strategies and recommendations for teachers to make their lessons more interactive, immersive, and enjoyable.

Moreover, this study hopes to inform teachers about effective instructional approaches and techniques for integrating gamification elements into genre pedagogy and also to provide practical guidelines on designing gamified learning activities, selecting appropriate game mechanics, and incorporating feedback and assessment mechanisms to optimize the learning experience.

- **Professionally**

In terms of professional significance, the present study hopes to highlight the need for teachers' awareness on the potential of implementing gamification strategies in their genre-based pedagogy. Additionally, this study hopes to encourage teachers to explore innovative approaches in their teaching practices by integrating gamification elements into genre pedagogy as it can foster a culture of experimentation and creativity in the classroom, leading to more engaging and effective instructional practices.

Moreover, by integrating gamification into genre pedagogy, the present study has shown the potential to improve student outcomes in terms of descriptive writing skills and overall engagement in the learning process which in turn, can contribute to students' academic success and long-term educational achievements.

1.5.　Scope of the Study

According to Simon and Goes (2013), scope of the study refers to the boundaries within which the study will operate. As for the present study, the scope will revolve around the integration of gamification into genre-based pedagogy for teaching descriptive text, and also to investigate the linguistic evidence that characterizes students' development of their descriptive text writing in each cycle of genre-based pedagogy in order to find out the potential of integrating gamification into genre-based pedagogy for teaching descriptive text in EFL context, especially Indonesia.

1.6.　Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding on some theoretical terms used in the present study, this section will comprehensively delve into the definition on those terms:

1. Genre-Based Pedagogy

   Genre-based pedagogy, in this study, refers to the approach used for teaching and learning that is organized around the genres of literature which consists of four stages namely Building Knowledge of the Field, Modeling of the Text, Joint Construction of the Text, and Independent Construction of the Text (Derewianka & Jones, 2016; Rose, 1991; Rose & Martin, 2012). This approach is used as the framework for teaching language that focuses on different types of texts or genres by studying the language features, structure, and communicative purposes of different genres (Hyland, 2007; Rose & Martin, 2012).

2. <u>Gamification</u>

Gamification refers to the application of game-thinking and game mechanics as the method of teaching by providing game-like activities such as puzzles, challenges, and quests with the lesson objectives as the center of attention (Kapp, 2012; Marczewski, 2015). When using this method, teachers can also incentivize students upon completing tasks, learning new skills, and adopting new behaviors to further motivate them (McGonigal, 2011; Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011).

3. <u>Escape Room</u>

An escape room refers to a teaching technique under the umbrella of gamification where the activities will revolve around the students solving a series of puzzles and riddles using clues, hints, and strategies to escape a supposed "locked" room door before time runs out whilst prompting their critical thinking, collaboration, problem-solving, and communication skills (Nicholson, 2015; Pivec, 2018, Breakout EDU, 2021).

4. <u>Descriptive Text</u>

In this study, descriptive text refers to a text, both in written and spoken language, that describes and provides information about the topic of discussion such as persons, objects, or places to paint a vivid and imaginative picture in the reader's or listener's mind (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010; Halliday & Matthissen, 2014; Harmer, 2015; Hyland, 2019).

5. <u>Linguistic Development</u>

In the context of the present study, Linguistic Development refers to the progress and growth of linguistic abilities or skills in the descriptive text writings created by students as they advance through the various stages of the GBP. Linguistic development encompasses the acquisition and refinement of language-related competencies such as vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and coherence in writing. It involves the gradual improvement and sophistication of language use, including

the ability to convey ideas effectively, organize thoughts logically, and express oneself clearly and appropriately in written form (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Dixon-Krauss, 2012; Rose & Martin, 2012).

6. "Integrating" Gamification into Genre Based Pedagogy

In the context of "Integrating Gamification into Genre-Based Pedagogy," the term "integrating" refers to the process of incorporating or combining gamification principles, strategies, or elements into the practice of genre-based pedagogy. The term "integrating" in this context suggests that the study revolves around the combination or incorporation of gamification elements and strategies within the framework of genre-based pedagogy.

1.7. Organization of the Thesis Paper

In presenting this research paper, this outline will constitute several chapters:

Chapter I is the Introduction chapter. The chapter discusses the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, the significances of the study, the scope of the study, definition of key terms, and outline of the thesis paper.

Chapter II is the Literature Review chapter. The chapter presents some literature related to the study for building the context of the study.

Chapter III is the Research Methodology chapter. The chapter discusses the method and research design which is used for the present study, the research context and participants, data collection techniques, instruments which will be used, and the data analysis of this study.

Chapter IV is the Findings and Discussion chapter. The chapter provides the description of the findings of the study and also provides the interpretation and discussion of the findings obtained to seek a comprehensive analysis of the results, and to critically evaluate the findings while also comparing them with existing literature and theories.

Chapter V is the Conclusion, Implication, and Recommendations chapter. This chapter serves as the culmination of this research paper, providing a comprehensive synthesis of the findings, their implications, and recommendations for future action.

1.8. Concluding Remarks

This section has provided detailed information of this introduction chapter, and it serves as a comprehensive and cohesive foundation for the research study. It sets the background of the study, establishes the research questions and objectives, highlights the significance, defines key terms, and provides a clear structure for the thesis paper. By addressing these elements, the chapter ensures that readers have a solid understanding of the study's background, purpose, and direction.