IDEAS

Improving English Writing Achievement Using Game-Based Learning at the 11th Grade Students at State Islamic Senior High School Jombang

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Abstract

This classroom action research aims to improve 11th-grade students' writing achievement through the application of game-based learning (GBL). The research was conducted at State Islamic Senior High School from February to March 2025 and was implemented in one cycle consisting of six meetings. Before the intervention, only 65% of students reached the "Good" to "Excellent" categories in writing analytical exposition texts. The acting activities were carried out across six meetings. In the first meeting, students used *Quizizz* to practice writing exposition texts. The second meeting introduced vocabulary practice through *Gimkit*. In the third meeting, students collaboratively learned to write exposition texts and practiced vocabulary by *filling in blanks* in *Gimkit*, with the teacher guiding the process. The fourth meeting focused on building understanding among classmates through *talk-to-talk* activities, concluded by the researcher's reflections. The fifth meeting was an individual writing assessment to measure students' analytical exposition writing skills. The sixth meeting used the game-based *Uno Flip* activity to observe students' engagement. The findings show an improvement in writing performance after implementing game-based learning: 6 students (20%) reached the "Excellent" category, 18 students (60%) were in "Good," 4 students (13.3%) were in "Fair," and only 2 students (6.7%) remained in "Poor." Overall, 80% of students achieved "Good" to "Excellent," an increase from the 65% baseline. However, this study is limited by its single-cycle design and focus on one text genre. In conclusion, game-based learning has proven effective in improving writing performance and offers a fun, creative, and student-centered approach to English learning.

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Introduction

Writing in English is a crucial skill for students at *State Islamic Senior High School*, supporting both their academic success and future professional opportunities. However, many students face considerable challenges in expressing their ideas clearly and coherently in written form. Initial classroom observations showed that only 65% of students reached the "Good" to "Excellent" categories when writing analytical exposition texts. Their texts often lacked proper organization, used limited vocabulary, and demonstrated weak cohesion and coherence across paragraphs.

These challenges are further compounded by packed dormitory schedules, which limits students' opportunities to compose, revise, and reflect on the writing they have learned at school, so that they cannot focus too much on lessons at school but must focus on activities in the dormitory, as well as by the use of monotonous, teacher-centered methods that reduce motivation and participation. Traditional approaches frequently emphasize grammar drills and structured writing tasks, which may cause students to view writing as tedious and anxiety-inducing, slowing the improvement of their writing performance.

Recent studies have provided evidence that integrating Game-Based Learning (GBL) can help address these issues. Organized thematically, previous research highlights three key areas such as motivation, vocabulary, and text types. For motivation, Pratiwi (2021) demonstrated that using *Kahoot*! increased students' engagement and writing accuracy. In terms of vocabulary, Kusumawati (2022) found that *Gimkit* enriched students' vocabulary, while Alfitri (2025) showed that using TikTok supported vocabulary mastery among Generation Z learners. Regarding text types and organization, Setiawan and Dewi (2020) found that *Quizizz* helped students produce more coherent and creative texts, and Rahmawati (2019) combined game-based activities with group discussions to improve descriptive writing.

However, most of these studies focused on descriptive or narrative texts and did not address analytical exposition texts, which require students to develop logical arguments with strong cohesion and coherence. Moreover, earlier research often used only one GBL platform, rather than combining multiple tools within a systematic teaching cycle.

To strengthen the theoretical foundation, this study draws on constructivist theory and socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasize that learning is an active, socially mediated process where students build knowledge through interaction and reflection. An analytical exposition text itself is an argumentative text structured around a thesis, supporting arguments, and a conclusion, aiming to persuade readers logically.

Based on this identified gap, the present study aims to answer two research

questions: (1) How does Game-Based Learning improve the English writing achievement of 11th-grade students at *State Islamic Senior High School*? and (2) Which specific aspects of writing such as structure, vocabulary, and coherence show the most improvement following the implementation of GBL? The novelty of this study lies in integrating several GBL platforms (*Quizizz, Gimkit, and Uno Flip*) within a Classroom Action Research design to improve students' analytical exposition writing in the specific context of an Islamic senior high school.

Method

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design following Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), which consists of four stages: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The study was conducted from February to March 2025 at *State Islamic Senior High School* and was completed before this article was written, clarifying that this is a report of completed research rather than an ongoing study.

Participants consisted of 30 eleventh-grade students who were purposively selected because they represented the typical writing challenges found at the school. Interview participants were chosen to reflect varying levels of engagement: highly engaged, moderately engaged, and less engaged students, in order to capture a broader range of perspectives.

Data were collected through classroom observations, students' written products, and semi-structured interviews. The researcher acted as both facilitator and observer, which could introduce potential bias; this was mitigated through the use of structured observation checklists and cross-validation with another English teacher. Writing assessments used a rubric aligned with the KKTP (Criteria for Achieving Learning Objectives), covering content, cohesion, vocabulary, and coherence. To ensure inter-rater reliability, students' writing products were independently reviewed by the researcher and an additional English teacher; discrepancies were discussed until consensus was reached.

The success criterion, set at a minimum of 75% of students achieving the "Good" or "Excellent" categories, was determined based on the school's KKTP standards, reflecting the expected curriculum achievement level. Ethical considerations were addressed by obtaining formal permission from the school administration, informing students about the research objectives, and ensuring data anonymity and confidentiality. Data analysis primarily employed qualitative thematic analysis of observation notes and interview transcripts, supported by descriptive statistics (percentages of students in each achievement category).

This methodological design enabled the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of how GBL supports the development of students' writing performance in the *Madrasah Aliyah* context. To evaluate the research results, an assessment rubric was used that aligns with the KKTP, which addressed writing ability through the following criteria:

Table 1: Writing Performance Rubrics

Learning Objectives	Criteria	Achievement			
		Poor 0 - 25	Fair 0 - 25	Good 0 - 25	Excellent 0 - 25
Able to write using Exposition Text	Content	Able to write an exposition text and consisting of goal.	Able to write an exposition text and consisting of goal.	Able to write an exposition text and consisting of goal.	Able to write an exposition text and consisting of goal.
	Cohesion	The sentences and the paragraph are not unity and not based on the topic	The sentences and paragraph are not unity yet but it is based on the topic.	Some sentences are unity and based on the topic.	The sentences are unity and based on the topic.
	Vocabulary	The vocabulary used does not match the topic and there are many spelling errors.	There are many spelling errors.	There are some minor spelling errors.	The vocabulary used is appropriate for the topic with correct spelling.

Coherence	The sentences are not coherent	The sentences are coherent but lack the use of pronouns, repetition, and conjunctions.	The sentences are coherent but sometimes using pronouns, repetition, and conjunctions.	The sentences are coherent using pronouns, repetition, and conjunctions.

The students are categorized as having passed if they obtain a total score of 79 – 100 which is included in the category of "good" or "excellent" based on the predetermined indicators.

Table 2: Assessment technique and score conversion

Total Score (0–100)	Category	Performance Description
93 – 100	Excellent	Students are able to write with mostly error-free, ideas well developed, clear organization.
86 – 92	Good	Students are able to write quite well even though there are Some minor errors that do not affect meaning, fairly clear organization.
79 – 85	Fair	Students still need to improve several important aspects, Frequent errors in grammar or vocabulary, ideas less developed.
0 - 78	Poor	Students have difficulty in most of the criteria and need intensive guidance. Many errors, ideas unclear, lacks organization

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Planning

☐ Obtaining permission from the school.

☐ Designing teaching instruments (lesson plans and *RPP*).

☐ Preparing materials and vocabulary glossary.

☐ Developing observation checklists and KKTP.

☐ Determining the criteria for success.

☐ Scheduling the meetings.

☐ Selecting game-based learning tools (*Quizizz* and *Gimkit*).

☐ Preparing final writing assignments.

Acting

☐ Engaging students in learning activities using game-based learning methods.

☐ Practicing writing analytical exposition paragraphs.

☐ Reinforcing vocabulary through interactive games (*Quizizz* and *Gimkit*).

☐ Completing the final writing assignment.

Reflecting

☐ Analysing students' writing results based on KKTP.

☐ Reviewing data from observation checklists and test instruments on students' participation.

☐ Concluding whether the criteria for success have been achieved, and determining the need for the next cycle.

Observing

☐ Observing students' participation and engagement during learning activities.

☐ Using observation checklists to record students' writing progress.

Success

☐ After Classifying, analysing, selecting, and systematically organizing the data from observation and students' participation when learning English in the class.

☐ From those instruments got the conclusion that the criteria of success were achieved.
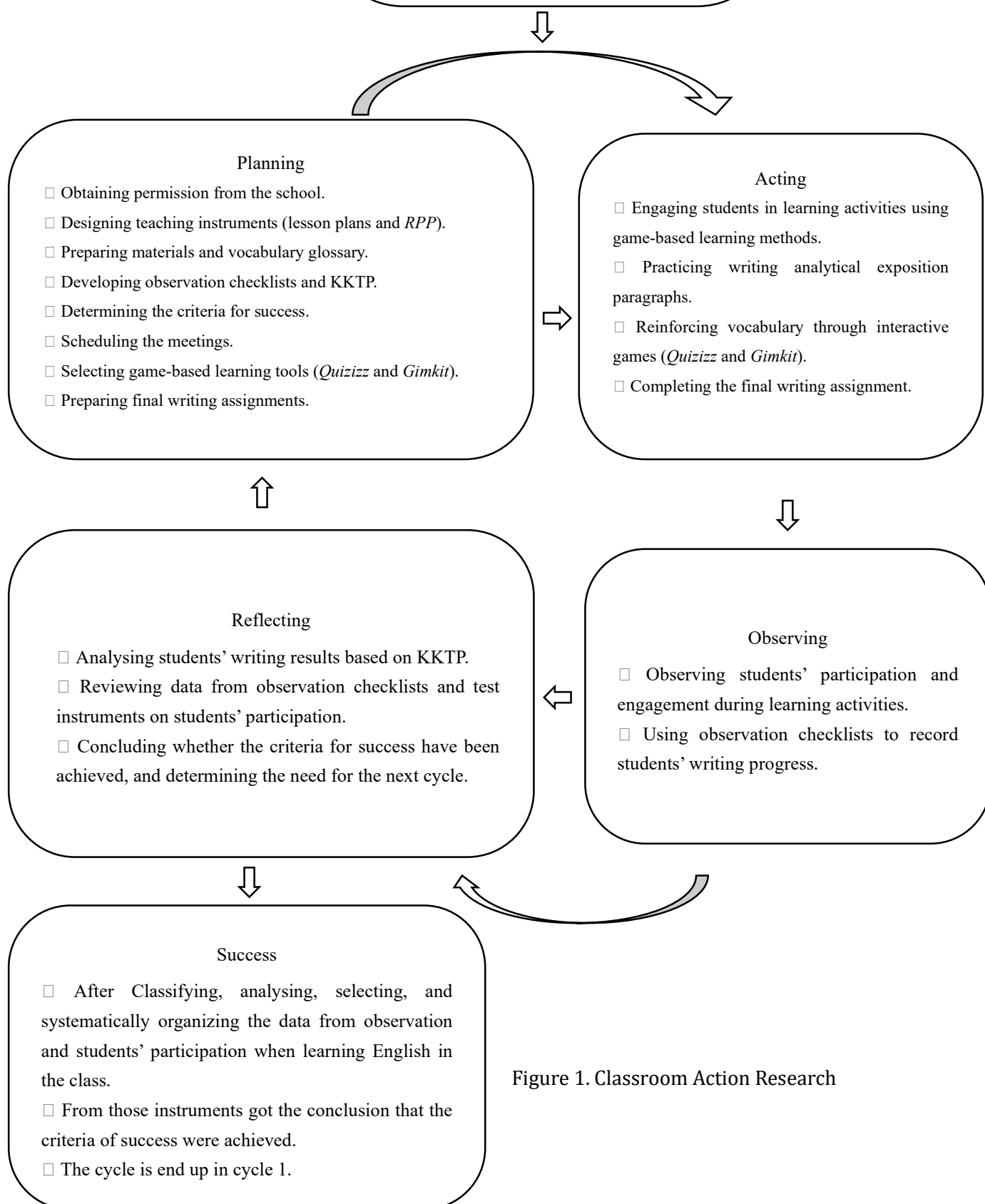
☐ The cycle is end up in cycle 1.

Figure 1. Classroom Action Research

1.   Planning Phase

The planning started from February, 5 2025. It was recognized to arrange the plan to do the actions with the schedules as follows:

1.   On the first of February 2025, the researcher obtains a permission from the school where the researcher take place.

2.   Formulating Learning Objectives and Meeting Schedule:
   a.   Determining the number of meetings and the schedule for implementing class actions for 1 month plus 2 weeks.
   b.   Designing a teaching module using an activity-based approach integrated with digital media

3.   Selecting and Developing Learning Materials:
   a.   Selecting relevant learning materials using game-based learning that are in accordance with students' writing achievement.
   b.   Designing worksheets, final assignments, and instructional content using game-based learning, which function as interactive quiz tools to increase student engagement during learning.

4.   Uploading Materials and Student Activities to game-based learning:
   a.   Posting learning materials, task guidelines, and students' work on game-based learning.
   b.   Organizing writing skills activities.

5.   Defining Success Criteria for the Action and also Based on Students' Priority Knowledge:
   a.   At least 75% of students reach the *good* or *excellent* category in the KKTP for writing achievement.

6.   Designing the Writing Skill Assessment Instrument:
   a.   Designing a final writing assessment to evaluate students' writing skills improvement.
   b.   Including criteria such as content, cohesion, vocabulary, and coherence.

Some materials use game-based learning media and some others are designed by researcher. The materials are delivered by playing games from game-based learning. Meanwhile, students' writing activities are carried out through offline paper media. The media is used to increase students' participation, collaboration, and writing achievement.

2.   Acting phase

The acting phase involves implementing the Game Based Learning method over a period of four weeks. Students are divided into a group (if necessary) to complete writing tasks related to predetermined themes, using games designed to enhance their writing skills.
   a.   Engaging students in learning activities using game-based learning methods

Students actively participated in classroom activities that combined learning

and play.

b. Practicing writing analytical exposition paragraphs

Students wrote paragraphs guided by the teacher, based on the learning materials and class discussions.

c. Reinforcing vocabulary through interactive games

Quizizz and *Gimkit* were used to practice vocabulary and concepts relevant to the writing tasks.

Through these activities, students were encouraged to apply their writing skills in a fun and interactive environment, increasing motivation and reducing anxiety.

3. Observing phase

Observation was the primary method used to collect data during this classroom action research, aiming to document students' behaviors, engagement, and interaction patterns while using Game-Based Learning. The researcher applied participatory observation, directly joining classroom activities to gain authentic insights into students' learning behaviors.

The focus of observation included students' motivation, discipline, collaboration, and participation. Data were collected during meetings on February 5, 12, 19, and 26, 2025, using a structured observation sheet. Active engagement was defined as at least 75% of students demonstrating positive behaviors according to established indicators.

To enrich the data, semi-structured interviews were conducted on march 26, 2025, with students of varying engagement levels. The interviews explored their experiences, perceived benefits, challenges, and motivation when using Game-Based Learning. Combining observations and interviews provided a comprehensive, student-centered evaluation aligned with reflective and participatory principles of classroom research.

4. Reflecting phase

The reflection stage is carried out after analyzing the results of classroom action observations and students' writing performance. This stage aims to determine whether the research should be continued to the next cycle and to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions implemented during the meeting. In addition, reflection serves as an important tool to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching strategies implemented as like:

a. Analyzing students' writing results based on KKTP: The researcher examined students' final assignments and in-class writing tasks to measure progress.

b. Reviewing observation checklists and test results: Data on students' participation and engagement were analyzed to understand how game-based learning influenced classroom dynamics.

c. Concluding whether success criteria were met: The researcher

evaluated whether at least 75% of students achieved scores in the "Good" to "Excellent" categories, and if the intervention should be continued or adjusted for a second cycle.

d. Classifying, analyzing, and systematically organizing data: Data from observation checklists and students' writing scores were categorized to identify patterns and trends.

e. Interpreting the effectiveness of game-based learning: The researcher concluded that game-based learning successfully improved students' English writing skills by providing an engaging, student-centered environment.

This process demonstrated the value of interactive tools like *Quizizz* and *Gimkit* in supporting students' writing skill development, especially in exposition texts. Reflection ensured that conclusions were evidence-based and guided next steps.

Results

This study aimed to improve the English writing achievement of 11th-grade students at *State Islamic Senior High School* through the implementation of Game-Based Learning (GBL) in a single cycle consisting of six meetings. The research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design. Data were collected through classroom observations, writing assignments, semi-structured interviews, and field notes, then analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively to capture the impact of GBL on students' writing skills.

Before the implementation of Game-Based Learning (GBL), only 65% of students achieved "Good" to "Excellent" scores in writing analytical exposition texts, based on pre-cycle assessment data. After the intervention, this percentage increased to 80%, representing a 15% improvement. Detailed analysis of students' writing products, observation notes, and interview transcripts revealed improvements in three main aspects: text structure, vocabulary, and coherence.

1. Text structure
    Students produced more organized texts with clearer thesis statements and logically sequenced arguments. For instance, in the pre-cycle, Student A wrote: *"Social media is fun and popular because people like it."* After the intervention, the same student revised it into: *"Social media has become popular because it offers entertainment, supports communication, and provides instant access to news."* This change demonstrates a clearer thesis and more elaborated supporting arguments.

2. Vocabulary
    Students began to use more varied and topic-related vocabulary. Student B, during the interview, mentioned: *"The games helped me remember words faster and use them in my writing."* Observation

notes also showed that students increasingly used academic terms like "argument," "persuade," "evidence," and "thesis."

3. Coherence

   The use of logical connectors such as "therefore," "in addition," and "however" became more consistent and accurate. For example, Student C initially wrote short, disconnected sentences but later connected them smoothly using appropriate linking words.

In the first meeting, *Quizizz* helped students review the structure of analytical exposition texts in a fun and competitive way. Observation notes showed increased student involvement, with previously passive students beginning to ask questions and participate in discussions. The second meeting focused on vocabulary enrichment using *Gimkit* through the Vocabulary Race game. This activity pushed students to recognize and apply new vocabulary more quickly and contextually, resulting in richer and more varied writing. These findings align with Deci and Ryan's (2000) theory of intrinsic motivation, which highlights that enjoyable learning experiences can boost engagement and retention.

During the third meeting, students participated in collaborative writing activities combined with a fill-in-the-blanks task using *Gimkit*. The students' texts demonstrated improved use of transition words and clearer paragraph structure, making their writing more cohesive and logically connected. This collaborative approach supports Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in cognitive development.

The fourth meeting included a reflective talk-to-talk session designed to create a more supportive classroom environment, indirectly encouraging students to be more confident in writing activities. In the fifth meeting, an individual assessment measured students' ability to compose analytical exposition texts. The results were as follows: 6 students (20%) achieved an "Excellent" score, 18 students (60%) scored in the "Good" category, 4 students (13.3%) were categorized as "Fair," and 2 students (6.7%) fell into the "Poor" category. Overall, 80% of students reached "Good" to "Excellent" levels, surpassing the targeted success criteria of 75%.

Regarding the 2 students (6.7%) who are still in the "Poor" category, observation and interview notes indicate persistent language anxiety and limited vocabulary knowledge and a lack of interest in English subjects, thus hindering the improvement of their abilities even though they have actively participated.
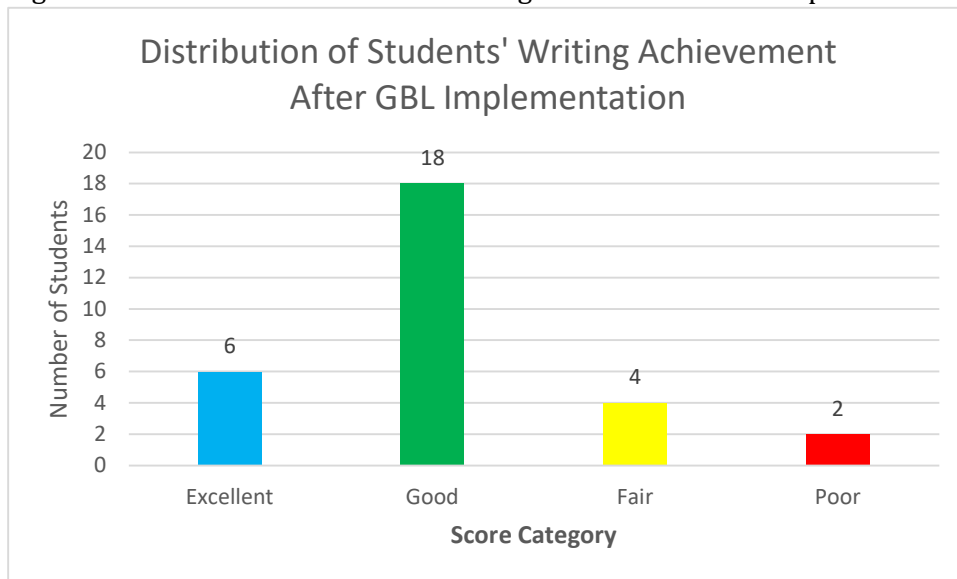
Quantitative data:

The final distribution of students' writing performance after GBL implementation is shown below:

Table 3. Summary of Students' Writing Ability after GBL Implementation

Score Category	Number of Students	Percentage
Excellent	6	20%
Good	18	60%
Fair	4	13.3%
Poor	2	6.7%
Total	**30**	**100%**

Figure 2. Distribution of Students' Writing Achievement after Implementation

Students' perceptions (interview quotes):

"I was nervous before, but with the games, I felt relaxed and got more ideas." (Student D)
"Gimkit helped me to memorize new words and use them in writing." (Student E)
"Uno Flip made the class more fun, and we could share our thoughts." (Student F)

These results highlight that integrating multiple GBL platforms *Quizizz, Gimkit*, and *Uno Flip* not only helped students increase their writing scores but also supported improvement in specific writing aspects, especially text structure and coherence. A deeper interpretation of why these improvements occurred and their pedagogical implications is discussed in the next section.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that implementing Game-Based Learning (GBL) success improved students' English writing ability, particularly in producing analytical exposition texts. At the end of the action cycle, 80% of students reached at least the "Good" category, with 20% achieving "Excellent." This notable progress reflects the effectiveness of GBL in transforming a traditionally

teacher-centered writing class into a more interactive and student-centered environment.

The improvement can be attributed to several observed factors. First, the use of *Quizizz* and *Gimkit* created an engaging and competitive atmosphere that encouraged active participation. These platforms included vocabulary quizzes and *fill-in-the-blank* exercises, helping students internalize new words and expressions. This aligns with Setiawan and Dewi (2020), who noted increased text coherence through Quizizz, and Kusumawati (2022), who found that *Gimkit* supported idea organization.

Second, combining group-based and individual tasks provided space for collaboration and independent practice. For example, during the third meeting, students worked together to draft analytical exposition texts, guided by Gimkit activities to refine arguments. Observation notes showed that students who previously hesitated became more willing to contribute, deepening their understanding of text structure (thesis, supporting arguments, conclusion). Third, repetition in GBL tasks reinforced vocabulary and coherence. As students encountered target words multiple times, they used them more accurately. Rahmawati (2019) similarly found that game-based tasks improved descriptive writing.

The *Uno Flip* activity added fun and unpredictability, which sustained engagement until the end. Observation data revealed that students discussed argument flow and paragraph transitions, leading to smoother coherence. Despite not using inferential statistics, descriptive data and qualitative observations consistently show improvement: better-organized texts, stronger arguments, and richer vocabulary. The novelty of this study lies in integrating multiple GBL platforms *Quizizz*, *Gimkit*, and *Uno Flip* within a single classroom action research cycle focused on analytical exposition texts.

Unlike most previous studies that used only one platform and focused mainly on narrative or descriptive texts, this approach addressed multiple aspects of writing: vocabulary, text organization, and coherence. Nevertheless, several limitations must be acknowledged. The study included only one cycle, making it difficult to judge the sustainability of these improvements over time. The absence of a control group means other factors could have influenced results. The researcher also acted as teacher, which might introduce bias, although mitigated through checklists and inter-rater reliability.

Additionally, while most students improved, two students (6.7%) remained in the "Poor" category, likely due to persistent language anxiety and limited vocabulary and a lack of interest in English subjects, thus hindering the improvement of their abilities even though they have actively participated. This shows that Game-Based Learning (GBL), while effective for most, may need to be combined with targeted interventions for struggling learners.

From a practical perspective, implementing GBL requires stable internet, teacher training to design engaging tasks, and in some cases, subscription fees for

premium features. However, a cost-benefit view suggests these are offset by gains in motivation and writing quality, especially if extended over multiple cycles. The context of a Madrasah Aliyah, where students balance academic learning with dormitory and religious activities, adds further complexity. Yet the study shows that GBL can adapt to such contexts, making writing classes more appealing despite limited time.

Finally, although GBL proved especially effective in improving structure and coherence, vocabulary gains, though present, were smaller. This suggests combining GBL with explicit vocabulary teaching may be beneficial. Overall, this discussion supports the view that GBL, when carefully planned and integrated, can significantly enhance writing performance, particularly for complex text genres like analytical exposition. In addition to the observed improvements, several methodological considerations should be noted for future studies. This study did not include a control or comparison group, which limits the ability to isolate the effect of GBL alone. Future research could include a control group and apply statistical tests to measure significance more precisely.

Extending the intervention period beyond a single cycle might also help assess the sustainability of improvements and capture more gradual changes in writing performance. Including detailed pre- and post-intervention writing samples could provide richer qualitative insights into how students' texts evolve. Ethical and practical considerations were also identified. Although formal consent was obtained and student privacy protected, future studies should continue to ensure anonymity and address potential technology access issues, especially in schools where stable internet is limited.

Teachers implementing GBL may require training to design balanced activities and to avoid over-reliance on digital tools that could overshadow core writing instruction. Future research directions could explore long-term retention of writing improvements and compare different combinations of GBL platforms. Investigating the approach with other text genres, such as narrative or argumentative essays, would help evaluate its versatility. Further studies might also examine the cost-effectiveness of using multiple platforms and analyse cultural or institutional factors unique to Islamic senior high schools that could affect the effectiveness of GBL.

Conclusion

This study investigated the use of Game-Based Learning (GBL) to improve the English writing achievement of 11th-grade students at *State Islamic Senior High School*, focusing on analytical exposition texts. By integrating multiple platforms *Quizizz, Gimkit, and Uno Flip* within a Classroom Action Research cycle, the findings showed that students' writing ability improved significantly 20% of students reached the "Excellent" category, while 60% achieved the "Good" category. Specific improvements were noted in text organization, vocabulary richness, and coherence.

The success of GBL in this context can be attributed to its ability to create an

engaging and interactive learning environment, where students practiced and reinforced writing skills collaboratively and competitively. These findings align with previous research supporting the motivational and cognitive benefits of GBL.

However, the study has certain limitations. It focused only on one text genre (analytical exposition) and was conducted in a single classroom context. The research did not use statistical tests to generalize findings to broader populations; instead, it relied on descriptive analysis and qualitative observations. Therefore, caution should be taken in extending these results beyond similar educational settings.

Suggestions

Based on the findings and limitations, several suggestions can be proposed for future research and practice. Future studies could explore the application of GBL to other writing genres, such as narrative or discussion texts, or combine it with explicit instruction in grammar and editing to address technical writing issues. Researchers could also apply GBL in different school contexts or grade levels to examine its broader applicability and effectiveness.

For classroom practice, English teachers are encouraged to integrate multiple GBL tools into their writing instruction, not only to improve students' writing achievement but also to maintain their motivation and active participation. Careful planning of GBL activities to align with learning objectives remains essential to achieve balanced improvement in both language structure and creativity.

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