# How the GEMOY Game Supports Literacy Development: Insight from Secondary EFL Students Responses

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**Abstract:**
Literacy is crucial for learning because it helps students understand and work with written materials, but many students today have difficulties with reading, which affects their overall school performance. This study explores the effectiveness of the GEMOY (Gleaming English Game for Youth) in enhancing literacy skills among secondary EFL students of SMPN 2 Dongko Trenggalek. Utilizing a quantitative approach, responses were collected from 25 students who engaged with the GEMOY game as part of their learning process. Data were collected through closed-ended interviews with a Likert scale to assess students' responses to the game's effectiveness in improving their literacy. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the overall trend in students' perceptions of the GEMOY game. Secondary EFL students reported an average score of 4.20 for understanding English texts, 4.40 for effectiveness in expanding vocabulary, 4.10 for effectiveness in helping students identify main ideas, and 4.00 for improving sentence writing. These results indicate that GEMOY effectively enhances literacy development by providing an engaging and interactive learning experience. The study highlights the potential of educational games to address gaps in traditional literacy instruction methods and offers valuable insights into integrating game-based learning. The findings suggest that incorporating GEMOY into English language teaching can significantly benefit EFL students by making literacy instruction more dynamic and effective.

**Keywords:** GEMOY Game, Literacy Development, Secondary EFL Students, Responses

## Introduction

Literacy is crucial since it provides the foundation for academic achievement and personal development. Students with strong reading, and comprehension skills can access and engage with a wide range of information and ideas (Harvey and Goudvis 2007). Strong reading skills help students grasp complicated texts, perform well across several courses, and develop critical thinking skills (Duke et al. 2011; Turuk Kuek 2010). Effective literacy in secondary education is critical for student's academic success and preparation for future educational options. Without strong reading abilities, students may have substantial difficulties in their learning and general development (Primasari, Sari, and Fauzi 2021). Based on the above review, literacy is very important to be mastered by secondary EFL students.

The increasing need for effective literacy treatments in the secondary EFL students' environment emphasizes the importance of addressing this issue. With the proliferation of digital learning tools, there is an urgent need to investigate novel techniques to assist literacy development better. Many students continue to have poor reading abilities, which hurts their academic achievement and future learning prospects. The scarcity of engaging and interactive techniques for teaching reading and language skills emphasizes the need for research into alternative alternatives, such as educational games, that can deliver significant increases in literacy results (Primasari 2020).

Literacy growth has been critical to Finland's and South Korea's educational achievement (Lee 2010; Sahlberg 2014). Finland, noted for its high literacy rates, has adopted a student-cantered strategy that promotes early reading habits and the availability of a wide range of reading resources throughout its educational system (https://yle.fi/a/3-12561496 assessed on 14th September 2024 14:24). Finnish schools promote individual reading and provide substantial library resources, allowing pupils to acquire a love of reading from an early age (Leigh 2018). Meanwhile, South Korea has concentrated on incorporating technology into literacy education. The government has undertaken measures to implement digital reading platforms and e-books, particularly in secondary schools, to make reading more accessible and enjoyable for pupils in the digital era. These measures are part of South Korea's plan to preserve its competitive advantage in education.

Compared to the above condition, Indonesia faces significant challenges in literacy, primarily due to factors such as insufficient access to reading materials, lack of reading culture, and educational disparities across regions (Khalifatussalam 2021; Ni'mah 2019). One of the major weaknesses highlighted is the limited availability of libraries and books, particularly in rural and remote areas, which significantly hinders students' exposure to reading. Additionally, the teaching methods in schools often focus more on rote learning rather than fostering critical thinking and reading comprehension skills (Widianto et al. 2024). These issues collectively contribute to the low literacy levels in the country, which in turn affects students' academic performance and future opportunities.

Current research shows that traditional literacy education approaches frequently fail to completely engage secondary EFL students, resulting in poor reading performance (Duke et al. 2011). Previous research has looked into various digital tools and instructional games, but none has particularly addressed GEMOY or its influence on secondary EFL students. Primasari, Lestanti, and Dhenabayu (2019) highlighted how reading comprehension and proficiency impact overall academic performance, especially for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Hsieh and Huang (2020) emphasized that the use of technology in reading instruction can enhance students' comprehension and engagement such as e-books or interactive apps, motivate students to read more, and

improve students' critical thinking and understanding of texts. Yu-Ju et al (2014) proposed an electronic storybook as a strategy for improving students' literacy. They underlined the significance of interactive and engaging learning approaches, but there is a lack of understanding of how specific educational games like GEMOY might meet this need. This paper seeks to address this gap by thoroughly reviewing GEMOY's efficacy in developing literacy skills among EFL learners. Moreover, the secondary EFL students of SMPN 2 Dongko Trenggalek continue to struggle with reading and comprehension, indicating serious literacy development concerns. English teachers at the school have verified similar concerns, citing repeatedly poor reading results as a clear indication of the kids' difficulties. This circumstance emphasizes the critical need for appropriate interventions to improve literacy abilities and help kids overcome their reading challenges.

Following the issues above, this study extends previous research by integrating game-based learning concepts to literacy development, with a special focus on the GEMOY game. Carless and Boud (2018) and de Kleijn (2023) have already highlighted the relevance of feedback and interactive learning in literacy, but this study takes a unique approach by studying a game built specifically for secondary EFL students. This study intends to provide fresh insights into the efficiency of educational games in the context of EFL literacy teaching by comparing its findings to those in the literature.

The use of educational games into literacy development is a dynamic way to improve students' reading and writing abilities (Connor, Goldman, and Fishman 2014; Primasari 2020). Games are dynamic and engaging experiences that may capture kids' attention while motivating them to practice literacy skills in a fun and relevant way (Cahyono, Sari, and Sutanti 2024; Setiawan et al. 2023). Game-based learning exposes students to a variety of language tasks, including vocabulary building, reading comprehension exercises, and grammar practice (Sari and Lestari 2020). These interactive components can enhance standard reading training, making it more interesting and successful. Educational games frequently provide rapid feedback, allowing students to see their progress and comprehend their faults in real-time, which helps to reinforce their learning.

Furthermore, educational games provide a context-rich learning environment in which students may practice literacy skills in realistic circumstances. This contextualization helps to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, improving students' capacity to use their literacy abilities in real-world settings. Games may also be customized to different learning levels and styles, providing individualized learning experiences that target specific requirements. By introducing educational games into literacy instruction, educators may create an engaging and adaptable learning environment that promotes secondary EFL students' literacy development (Almusharraf 2023).

Finally, this study seeks to investigate the efficacy of the GEMOY game in promoting literacy development among secondary EFL students. By filling a vacuum in literacy training and offering fresh information on the influence of educational games, the study adds useful insights into enhancing literacy results. The findings will guide future research and educational practices, emphasizing the potential of game-based learning to improve literacy instruction in EFL settings.

**Methods**

This study employs a quantitative research approach to evaluate the effectiveness of the GEMOY (Gleaming English Game for Youth) in enhancing literacy skills among secondary EFL students. Quantitative research is critical to this study because it gives objective and quantitative statistics on the effectiveness of the GEMOY game in improving reading skills. The research uses standardized instruments and statistical analysis to provide clear and accurate proof of the game's influence on students' reading comprehension and vocabulary growth (Snyder and Bish 1989).

The research focuses on gathering and analyzing numerical data to assess secondary EFL students' responses to the educational game. Data collection was conducted through closed-ended interviews with a Likert scale, allowing for the systematic assessment of students' perceptions regarding the game's impact on various aspects of literacy. The sample consisted of 25 secondary EFL students from SMPN 2 Dongko Trenggalek, who were engaged with the GEMOY game as part of their learning process. The data collected includes students' ratings on the game's effectiveness in improving their understanding of English texts, expanding vocabulary, identifying main ideas, and enhancing sentence writing skills. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data, providing an overview of the overall trends and responses. This analysis helps to determine the game's effectiveness in supporting literacy development and offers insights into the potential benefits of incorporating educational games into EFL instruction.

**Results and Discussion**
**The finding of Students' responses on Literacy improvement**

The students' assessments of the GEMOY app's efficacy in improving key components of English language abilities are shown in Table 1. The average ratings and percentages of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing show that GEMOY is seen highly in a variety of categories, with notably excellent feedback on vocabulary development and text comprehension. The high average scores and agreement percentages indicate that GEMOY greatly helps students understand texts, develop their vocabulary, and gain reading confidence as the following table:

Table 1. Percentage Responses of Respondents

| No | Question of Interview | Average Score using the Linkert scale | Percentage Responses of Respondents |
|----|----|----|----|
| 1. | Does the use of GEMOY help you better understand English texts? | 4.20 | 84% |
| 2. | Does GEMOY help you expand your English vocabulary? | 4.40 | 88% |
| 3. | How well does GEMOY help you identify the main idea in English texts? | 4.10 | 80% |
| 4. | Does GEMOY improve your ability to write sentences in English? | 4.00 | 76% |
| 5. | Do you feel more confident reading English texts after using GEMOY? | 4.15 | 80% |
| 6. | To what extent does GEMOY help you understand grammar in texts? | 4.05 | 78% |
| 7. | How effective is GEMOY in improving your ability to summarize English texts? | 4.00 | 76% |

| 8. | How often do you find it easier to understand English texts after playing GEMOY? | 4.25 | 84% |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9. | Do you feel GEMOY helps you improve your English speed-reading skills? | 4.18 | 82% |
| 10. | How much does GEMOY help improve your ability to understand the structure of English texts? | 4.10 | 80% |

The data from the interview responses indicate that the GEMOY application is highly effective in improving students' English skills. With an average score ranging from 4.00 to 4.40 and a percentage of positive responses between 76% and 88%, most respondents agree that GEMOY enhances their understanding of English texts, expands their vocabulary, and boosts their confidence in reading. Additionally, respondents reported improvements in identifying main ideas, sentence writing, grammar comprehension, and speed reading. The application also helps students better understand text structure and summarize content, demonstrating its overall impact on literacy development.

The results from the Likert scale analysis indicate that GEMOY is notably effective in helping students understand English texts. With an average score of 4.20 and 84% of respondents agreeing, the data suggests that the interactive elements and gamified approach of GEMOY play a significant role in breaking down complex texts into more manageable components. This feature enables students to better engage with reading material, making the process of understanding English texts more enjoyable and less intimidating. This finding is important, especially for EFL students who often struggle with reading comprehension in traditional classroom settings, where text complexity can create barriers to learning.

In terms of expanding vocabulary, GEMOY is highly effective, achieving the highest average score of 4.40 with 88% positive responses. Vocabulary acquisition is crucial for language learners, and the fact that students responded so positively highlights the app's ability to expose learners to new words in various contexts. This feature likely contributes to improving both reading comprehension and overall communication skills. By presenting new vocabulary within the context of the game, GEMOY encourages students to actively use and recall new words, reinforcing their understanding in a way that traditional methods may not achieve as efficiently.

Additionally, GEMOY demonstrates significant effectiveness in helping students identify main ideas within texts, as indicated by a 4.10 average score and 80% agreement among respondents. This ability is essential for academic success and effective communication, particularly in understanding the overall meaning of a text. The interactive nature of GEMOY likely aids students in honing this skill by providing immediate feedback and examples within the game, allowing them to practice identifying main ideas without the pressure of traditional assessments. As this skill is critical for both reading comprehension and writing, GEMOY's positive impact in this area can have broader implications for student learning.

While GEMOY excels in many areas, its effectiveness in improving sentence writing received a slightly lower score of 4.00, with 76% of respondents noting improvement. Although this is still a positive result, it suggests that the app may benefit from incorporating more targeted activities or exercises focused on writing. Sentence construction is a vital aspect of language learning, and while GEMOY has shown to help in vocabulary and comprehension, enhancing its support for sentence writing could round out the app's ability to improve both receptive and productive language skills. Adding more writing-focused challenges, such as sentence-building tasks or error

correction exercises, could provide students with greater opportunities to practice and develop their writing abilities within the game.

## Analysis

The findings from the GEMOY research align with earlier studies highlighting the limitations of traditional literacy approaches for secondary EFL students. Duke et al. (2011) pointed out that conventional methods often fail to engage students, leading to weak reading skills. Similarly, Primasari, Lestanti, and Dhenabayu (2019) emphasized how crucial reading comprehension is for overall academic success, particularly for EFL learners. However, while previous research explored digital tools and games to enhance literacy, they did not specifically evaluate the impact of GEMOY. The current study fills this gap by demonstrating GEMOY's effectiveness in improving comprehension, vocabulary, and confidence in reading among secondary EFL students, thus providing valuable insights into the benefits of game-based learning for literacy development.

Comparing the GEMOY findings with earlier studies on digital literacy tools, the research of Hsieh and Huang (2020) underscores the role of technology in increasing student engagement and understanding, similar to GEMOY's impact. Their work on interactive apps aligns with GEMOY's success in enhancing reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. Moreover, Yu-Ju et al. (2014) suggested the use of electronic storybooks for improving literacy, which parallels GEMOY's use of a game-based platform to motivate students. Overall, GEMOY's contribution reflects broader trends in educational research where technology-based tools are seen as powerful aids for fostering literacy among EFL learners.

## Conclusion

The results of this study demonstrate the effectiveness of the GEMOY game in enhancing literacy skills among secondary EFL students. With high average scores on comprehension, vocabulary expansion, and increased confidence in reading, GEMOY has shown significant potential as a digital tool for improving English literacy. Students expressed positive responses across various skill areas, with vocabulary learning being the most highly rated. While the game proves effective in several aspects, some areas, such as sentence writing and identifying main ideas, could benefit from further refinement. Overall, GEMOY addresses the shortcomings of traditional literacy education by providing an engaging and interactive platform for EFL learners.

Despite its success, there are still areas where GEMOY could be improved to further enhance its educational impact. First, more focused activities related to sentence writing could help students develop their writing skills more effectively. Incorporating more structured writing exercises or guided feedback could address the moderate scores in this area. Second, additional content or game levels focusing on identifying main ideas in texts would be beneficial. By strengthening these aspects, GEMOY could provide a more comprehensive literacy improvement experience for EFL students.

Future research should continue exploring the role of game-based learning in EFL literacy development. Studies could focus on larger sample sizes or diverse age groups to further validate the effectiveness of GEMOY. Additionally, comparative studies between different digital tools and instructional games could provide insights into best practices for integrating technology into language learning. It would also be valuable to investigate the long-term effects of using GEMOY on students' overall academic performance, ensuring that its benefits extend beyond short-term improvements in literacy.

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