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*Ushering in the Age of Endemic*

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**EXTENDED ABSTRACTS BOOK**



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## GAMIFICATION IN LEARNING: THE READING ESCAPE ROOM

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### ABSTRACT

There are students that face difficulties in understanding reading skills through a conventional teaching method. This is due to the conventional teaching method that lacks engaging activities for the students. As a result, the inadequacy of classroom activities has caused students to be unable to learn collaboratively among themselves. Thus, The Reading Escape Room is developed to (1) boost students' learning interests, (2) increase students' engagement in learning English reading skills, (3) enhance students' understanding of the lessons taught, and (4) encourage students to take risks and practise problem-solving skills. The concept of 'Escape Room' to teach English reading skills is a fresh idea and one of the earliest to be introduced. It develops students' thinking skills in solving problems and at the same time stimulates students' learning engagement and embraces the role of Gamification in Education. A quantitative study was carried out to 212 students of ESL classrooms. The findings revealed that the majority of the students has a positive overall opinion on the educational escape room with 96.2% ranging from good to very good and 99.5% students recommended this game to be played by other students even if it was not for the grade. It clearly brings benefits to the students as it improves their understanding of the subject matter, attracts students' interest in learning through the interactive interface of the game, and encourages teamwork skills among students. The Reading Escape Room game bears high commercial potential as it promotes a fun, interactive, and engaging educational tool to learn reading skills and can be utilised in higher institutions and schools as it offers an interactive and creative online learning tool.

**Keywords:** *Escape room, gamification, reading skills*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Reading skills can be considered as a cognitive skill that is as crucial as other language skills. It involves a complex process as readers need to use their eyes to see, analyse and detect letters and symbols while their brain works to understand words and sentences by comparing and contrasting, sorting, classifying, solving, and synthesizing. At the same time, learners' interest and motivation, grammar knowledge and personal experiences also play a huge role in determining students' success in comprehending a particular reading text. Such aim can be achieved by focussing on the importance of adopting an effective teaching method in teaching reading skills. According to Atkins et al. (1996) as cited in Mulatu and Regassa (2022), one of the major reasons that influences students' reading is the ineffective way of teaching reading. Language teachers must understand the complexity of the reading process as there are several factors that must be considered. Gerry et al. (2012) emphasized a few elements in teaching reading and one of them is the necessity to ensure learners' enjoyment and motivation in

reading. It is identified as a key aspect of teaching reading class. The feeling of enjoyment and happiness can be achieved with the right teaching approach.

Gamification is generally known as ‘the use of game design elements in non-game contexts’ (Deterding et al., 2011). The application of gamification in teaching and learning has begun to gain interest among language educators, especially the use of escape rooms in educational settings. According to Nicholson (2015), escape room is defined as a game which requires its players to discover clues, solve puzzles and accomplish tasks in one or more rooms to achieve a specific target, that is to escape from the room, in a specific time given. It has been proven that the use of escape rooms in classrooms has sparked many advantages among students including teamwork skill, creative thinking, and communication (Pan et al., 2017). This is because educational escape rooms lead learners to be actively involved in the lesson. They need to engage in experiential learning to accomplish meaningful tasks and think creatively to achieve them.

Thus, the reading escape room is designed specifically as a learning aid in English reading skills classrooms to foster students’ interest and engagement as well as to increase students’ understanding in the subject matter.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

Two hundred and twelve students from a public university participated in this study. They were all part two students who were taking Integrated Language Skill II (ELC151), an English course specifically for learning reading skills. They were from three faculties: (1) Faculty of Accountancy, (2) Faculty of Applied Sciences, and (3) Faculty of Computer and Mathematical Science. The game was carried out in physical class. In the ELC151 English course, students were taught general reading strategies every week which were Contextual clues, Structure of a passage, Reference words, Paraphrasing, True or False and Fact and Opinion. The reading escape room game was given to the students a week after the lesson as supplementary material and was aimed to revise previous lessons with the students.

Students had to answer 8 clues in each reading escape room which covered two chapters. After they managed to crack the code and ‘escape’ from the room, they had to answer a short survey on their opinion of the game they played earlier. At the end of the semester, they were asked to complete a questionnaire based on their overall perceptions of reading escape rooms.

The questionnaire was adapted from López-Pernas et al. (2019). It was divided into two parts: (A) Demographic background and (B) Students’ perceptions on the reading escape room. In part A, students were asked on their gender and faculty. For part B, there were 23 items in which 1 item followed the scale from (1) Very poor to (5) Very good, 20 items followed a 5-point Likert scale based on the following responses: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Neutral, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree and the other 2 items were Yes or No answer.

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were tabulated and analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 22.

### 3. CONCLUSION

The ideology of this escape room is to give the students different scenarios in learning reading skills. This is to offer an innovative learning experience which is different from the traditional teaching and learning process. During this current situation of the educational system, it is crucial to design active learning experiences for the students. The escape room sought to provide a new environment for the students with the intention of enhancing their participation in the classroom, simulating a real case scenario to take risks, to solve problems, boosting their understanding with interactive resources, and to attract their interest to the lesson simultaneously. The main purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions of the students towards the introduction of the escape room as a game-based learning. Based on the findings, the students perceived the Reading Escape Room as a pleasant and exciting game-based learning that should be implemented in reading lessons not only for grading purposes but also for interactive teaching approach. In general, we recommend using the escape room as a new avenue to create collaborative teaching and learning opportunities which is both effective and engaging.

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