

INTEGRATING GAMIFIED HISTORICAL MEDIA AND CRITICAL THINKING TO ENHANCE HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING IN LAMPUNG ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract: This study investigates the effects of gamified historical media and critical thinking skills on the historical understanding of elementary school students in Lampung, Indonesia. In line with the national *Merdeka Belajar* initiative and the demand for 21st-century competencies, the research addresses ongoing challenges in history instruction, where rote memorization and teacher-centered delivery remain common. A 2×2 factorial experimental design was applied with 60 fifth-grade students, selected through cluster random sampling from two public elementary schools in Bandar Lampung. Participants were categorized by critical thinking level (high or low) and type of instructional media (gamified interactive or conventional). Data were collected using two validated instruments: a critical thinking test adapted for elementary learners (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.84$) and a historical understanding test assessing factual recall, chronological sequencing, cause-and-effect reasoning, and perspective recognition (KR-20 = 0.89). Two-way ANOVA results indicated significant main effects for both media type ($p < .001$) and critical thinking level ($p < .001$). Students in the gamified media groups and those with higher critical thinking scores achieved better outcomes. A significant interaction effect ($p = 0.004$) showed that combining gamified historical media with high critical thinking skills produced the greatest gains in historical understanding. These findings underscore the value of integrating engaging, participatory media with explicit cognitive skill development. The study recommends incorporating locally relevant Lampung historical narratives into gamified resources to strengthen both cultural identity and historical reasoning in primary education.

Keywords: gamified historical media, critical thinking, historical understanding

INTRODUCTION

The ability to think critically about historical context is an essential skill for preparing students to become informed, reflective, and responsible citizens in the 21st century. Beyond simple fact memorization, students must be able to analyze historical events, draw connections between past and present, and evaluate diverse sources of information in order to form reasoned judgments. In elementary education, history serves as a vital foundation for shaping civic identity, fostering appreciation for cultural heritage, and promoting global awareness. Through history lessons, students develop key competencies such as chronological reasoning, recognizing cause-effect relationships, and interpreting multiple perspectives, all of which are crucial for their intellectual growth and social participation (López-Fernández et al., 2022; Vera & Alvé, 2023).

Despite its importance, history education in many Indonesian classrooms, including those in Lampung, continues to rely heavily on traditional, teacher-centered delivery and rote memorization of textbook content (Agustina et al., 2023; Djono, 2022). Lessons are often designed to emphasize factual recall for examinations rather than encouraging deeper engagement with historical issues. Such practices risk presenting history as a fixed and static sequence of events rather than a dynamic, interpretive process that invites students to investigate, reason, and reflect on the complexity of the past (Shavab et al., 2021). When students are not encouraged to question sources,

explore multiple viewpoints, or draw meaningful connections to contemporary realities, they may fail to see the relevance of history in their lives.

Addressing these limitations requires the implementation of instructional approaches that actively involve learners, stimulate curiosity, and foster higher-order thinking skills. By shifting toward student-centered methods and inquiry-based pedagogy, history education can become a platform for developing critical thinking, creativity, and a deeper understanding of cultural and civic life.

The national Merdeka Belajar curriculum reform represents a significant paradigm shift in Indonesian education, emphasizing competency-based and student-centered learning that moves beyond rote memorization toward meaningful understanding. At its core, this reform prioritizes inquiry, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking as essential skills for preparing students to thrive in an increasingly complex and globalized society (Hadi et al., 2023). In the context of history education, this policy direction provides both a strong framework and a sense of urgency for transforming history lessons from static content delivery into dynamic, inquiry-driven experiences that actively engage learners. Rather than viewing history as a collection of facts to be memorized, the new approach encourages students to ask questions, investigate sources, and construct interpretations based on evidence.

One promising strategy that aligns with this vision is the integration of interactive and gamified historical media. Gamification incorporates game-like features such as points, badges, challenges, narrative simulations, and interactive visuals to capture student interest and sustain motivation (Angelelli et al., 2023; López-Fernández et al., 2022). In history education, these tools can immerse students in meaningful learning scenarios for example, allowing them to role-play as historical figures, make decisions at critical moments, and witness the consequences of those decisions. When designed with clear pedagogical intent, gamified media can move beyond superficial engagement by encouraging students to critically analyze historical evidence, evaluate multiple perspectives, and reflect on cause-effect relationships (Albright & Serrano, 2023; Rammos & Bratitsis, 2018). In doing so, gamified instruction not only makes history more enjoyable but also supports the development of higher-order thinking skills, enabling students to approach historical problems with curiosity, reasoning, and empathy.)

Emerging evidence increasingly supports the argument that gamification can play a vital role in developing students' higher-order thinking skills. When designed thoughtfully, gamified learning environments encourage learners to engage actively with content, take intellectual risks, and reflect on their choices and outcomes. For example, Angelelli et al. (2023) found that when gamification was combined with reflective prompts, students demonstrated significant gains in analytical and evaluative capacities two key dimensions of critical thinking. In the context of history education, such approaches provide students with opportunities to do more than memorize facts. Instead, they can interact with historical timelines, explore multiple perspectives, and simulate decision-making processes faced by historical figures. These activities allow learners to visualize complex cause-effect relationships and better understand the interplay of social, political, and cultural factors that shape historical events (Moseikina et al., 2022; Shavab et al., 2021).

Critical thinking itself is widely regarded as a cornerstone of historical literacy. It is often defined as purposeful, self-regulated judgment that involves interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference (Vera & Alvé, 2023). Within the history classroom, critical thinking enables students to interrogate the credibility of sources, compare and contrast competing narratives, and connect past events to present-day issues. Developing these skills prepares students not only to understand history but also to engage with contemporary debates in an informed and reasoned manner. Research has consistently shown that embedding critical thinking tasks such as error analysis, inquiry-based activities, and historical thinking exercises into history lessons significantly improves students' ability to evaluate evidence and construct coherent, well-reasoned interpretations (López-Fernández et al., 2022). Thus, combining gamification with explicit critical thinking instruction offers a powerful pedagogical strategy for cultivating deeper historical understanding and fostering lifelong intellectual curiosity.

Despite the well-documented benefits of gamified instruction (Albright & Serrano, 2023) and critical thinking oriented pedagogy (López-Fernández et al., 2022), there remains a notable gap in research exploring their combined effects, particularly within the context of Southeast Asian primary education. Most existing studies have focused on either gamification or critical thinking as isolated interventions, with relatively few examining how the two might complement one another to produce synergistic outcomes in students' historical understanding. This gap is particularly relevant for Indonesian classrooms, where educational reforms encourage innovative teaching approaches but implementation often lags behind policy goals.

In Lampung, access to digital learning tools has been gradually improving, supported by national efforts to integrate technology into teaching and learning. Nonetheless, such tools remain underutilized in history lessons, which frequently continue to rely on lecture-based instruction and factual recall. This creates an opportunity to experiment with interactive and gamified historical media designed not merely to entertain but to engage students cognitively. When combined with explicit critical thinking instruction, these interventions can encourage learners to examine evidence, evaluate competing interpretations, and construct reasoned conclusions.

A further strength of this approach lies in its potential to integrate locally relevant narratives, such as the story of Radin Inten II, a national hero from Lampung. Embedding regional history within interactive media strengthens

students' sense of cultural identity while simultaneously sharpening their analytical skills.

To address this gap, the present study investigates the effects of gamified historical media and critical thinking levels on fifth-grade students' historical understanding. Specifically, it examines: (1) whether gamified interactive media improve historical understanding compared to conventional methods, (2) whether students with higher critical thinking skills perform better than those with lower skills, and (3) whether there is an interaction effect between media type and critical thinking level. By situating the research in Lampung's educational context and grounding it in both theory and empirical evidence, this study aims to advance innovative and culturally responsive practices in Indonesian history education.

METHODS

This study employed a 2×2 factorial experimental design to investigate the effects of instructional media type gamified interactive media versus conventional methods and critical thinking level high versus low on fifth-grade students' historical understanding. A factorial design was chosen because it allows for the analysis of both the main effects of each independent variable and the interaction effects between them. This approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of whether the combination of gamified media and critical thinking level produces unique learning outcomes. The use of a factorial design is widely considered a robust method for exploring causal relationships in educational research, as it improves internal validity and enhances the interpretability of findings (Ary et al., 2019; Cohen et al., 2018).

The participants in this study were 60 fifth-grade students recruited from two public elementary schools in Bandar Lampung, Indonesia. These schools were purposefully selected based on their comparable demographic characteristics, similar technological facilities, and teacher readiness to implement the intervention. This careful selection helped to control for external factors that might influence students' learning outcomes, thereby allowing a clearer attribution of any observed differences to the instructional interventions.

A cluster random sampling technique was used, with intact classes randomly assigned to the treatment conditions. This sampling method was deemed practical and appropriate for school-based research, as it avoids the disruption that might occur if individual students were reassigned across classes while still ensuring randomization (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Etikan & Bala, 2017). Following the sampling procedure, students were randomly distributed into four groups, each consisting of fifteen participants. These groups represented the four experimental conditions: gamified media with high critical thinking level, conventional media with high critical thinking level, gamified media with low critical thinking level, and conventional media with low critical thinking level. This balanced distribution enabled meaningful comparisons and provided sufficient statistical power for examining both main and interaction effects. The factorial design of the study is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Experimental Design

Group	Media Type	Critical Thinking Level	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
A1B1	Gamified Media	High Critical Thinking	O1	X ₁	O2
A1B2	Gamified Media	Low Critical Thinking	O3	X ₂	O4
A2B1	Conventional Media	High Critical Thinking	O5	X ₃	O6
A2B2	Conventional Media	Low Critical Thinking	O7	X ₄	O8

Notes:

A1: Gamified historical media

A2: Conventional media

B1: High critical thinking

B2: Low critical thinking

O1–O8: Pre-test and post-test for each subgroup

X₁–X₄: Treatments corresponding to each combination of media type and critical thinking level

Two main instruments were employed to measure the key variables in this study: a critical thinking test and a historical understanding test. The critical thinking test was adapted from the well-established Ennis Weir Critical Thinking Essay Test and was carefully modified to suit the developmental stage and language proficiency of elementary school students. The adapted version comprised 20 items, combining multiple-choice questions with short-response tasks, to capture a comprehensive profile of students' critical thinking abilities. The items assessed four core dimensions of critical thinking: interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference. These dimensions were selected because they reflect the cognitive processes most relevant to historical inquiry and decision-making. To categorize students into levels of critical thinking, the median-split method was applied. This procedure divided participants into two groups those with high critical thinking skills and those with low skills based on the median score of the test. The use of a median split is common in experimental research because it provides a clear,

standardized criterion for group assignment, facilitating meaningful comparisons across experimental conditions. The reliability of the test was found to be strong, with a Cronbach's α coefficient of 0.84, surpassing the recommended 0.70 threshold for educational measurement instruments and indicating a high degree of internal consistency (Dunn et al., 2014; Taber, 2018).

The historical understanding test was developed in close alignment with the Indonesian elementary history curriculum to ensure content validity and contextual relevance. The instrument included multiple-choice and short-answer items designed to measure a broad range of historical skills, including factual recall, chronological sequencing, cause-and-effect reasoning, perspective-taking, and interpretation of civic values. This ensured that the test not only assessed rote knowledge but also higher-order thinking skills that are essential for developing historical literacy.

The historical understanding test consisted of 25 items in both multiple-choice and short-answer formats, carefully designed to capture multiple dimensions of students' historical literacy. These dimensions included factual recall, chronological sequencing, cause-and-effect reasoning, recognition of multiple perspectives, and interpretation of civic values, ensuring that the instrument went beyond mere rote learning and addressed higher-order cognitive processes. To establish content validity, the test was reviewed by a panel of three history education specialists who examined each item for clarity, relevance, and alignment with national curriculum objectives. Feedback from this expert panel was incorporated to refine wording and improve the representativeness of items. A pilot test was subsequently administered to 40 students who were not part of the main research sample, allowing for item analysis and reliability testing. The resulting KR-20 coefficient of 0.89 indicated excellent internal consistency, confirming that the test was both reliable and appropriate for measuring students' historical understanding (Endacott & Brooks, 2018).

The instructional treatments differed primarily in media format but maintained equivalence in content coverage, instructional time, and learning objectives. The gamified historical media consisted of custom-developed digital modules focusing on the topic "Indonesia's Independence Struggle." These modules incorporated interactive timelines, animated narratives, decision-making simulations, and guided reflection prompts designed to promote analytical engagement. Game-based elements such as points, levels, and immediate feedback were integrated to sustain motivation and encourage active participation (Albright & Serrano, 2023; Angelelli et al., 2023). By contrast, the conventional media utilized standard history textbooks, teacher explanations, and blackboard illustrations, following a lecture-discussion format.

The intervention was implemented over three weeks, with two 80-minute sessions per week for a total of six sessions. The procedure began with the administration of the critical thinking test, followed by the assigned instructional treatment according to group assignment, and concluded with the administration of the historical understanding post-test. This sequence ensured that the effects of the instructional media and critical thinking level could be measured accurately and compared across groups.

Data were analyzed using a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine the effects of the two independent variables media type (gamified interactive media versus conventional media) and critical thinking level (high versus low) on students' historical understanding scores. This statistical procedure was selected because it enables the simultaneous assessment of two main effects as well as the interaction effect between the independent variables, providing a more nuanced understanding of how the variables influence learning outcomes (Lakens, 2022). Where statistically significant differences were detected, Tukey's HSD post hoc tests were conducted to identify which specific group means differed from one another. These post hoc comparisons ensured that observed differences were interpreted accurately and supported by robust statistical evidence. All analyses were carried out using SPSS version 26, with the significance level set at $p < 0.05$, following conventional standards for educational research.

Throughout the study, ethical considerations were rigorously observed to protect the rights and welfare of participants. Written parental consent and student assent were obtained prior to data collection, and approval from school authorities was secured. The research adhered to the ethical principles outlined by the British Educational Research Association (2018) and followed recommendations regarding informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation (Resnik & Elliott, 2016). Data were anonymized prior to analysis to ensure privacy and integrity.

To illustrate the structure of the study, the overall research design was organized to represent the relationship between the independent variables, the dependent variable, and the data collection process. This conceptual framework provided a clear guide for implementing the intervention and ensured that both main effects and interaction effects could be systematically examined, thus supporting the study's internal validity and reliability of findings. The research flow is illustrated in Figure 1.

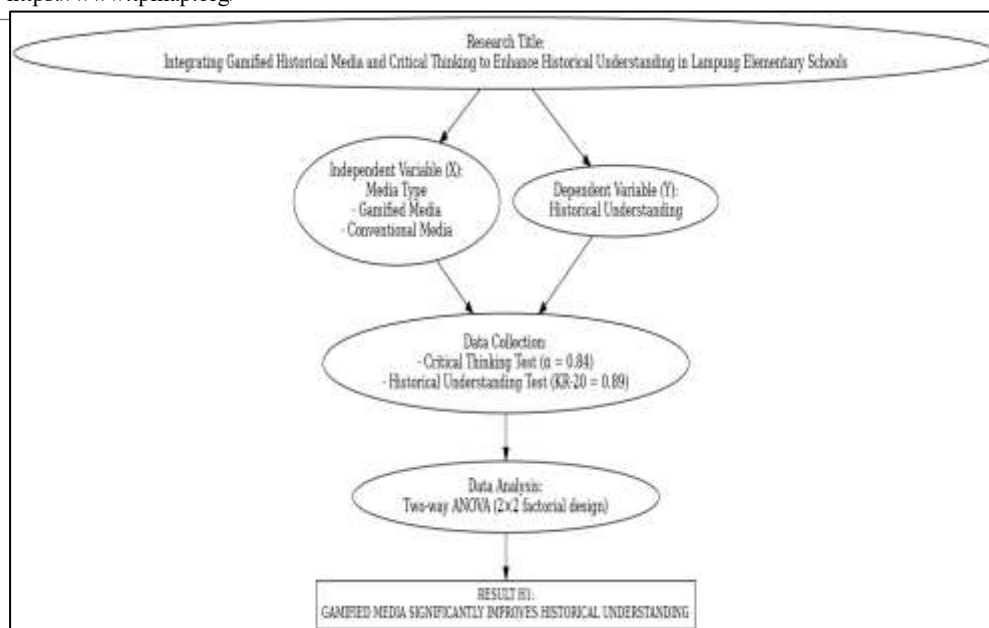


Figure 1. Research Flow Diagram

The flow diagram above summarizes the methodological framework, from defining the research variables to collecting and analyzing data, culminating in the interpretation of results against the study's hypotheses. This structured approach ensured methodological rigor, alignment with the research objectives, and clarity in evaluating the effects of gamified historical media and critical thinking on students' historical understanding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data analyzed in this study were obtained from measurement instruments that possessed well-established validity and reliability, ensuring that the findings were based on sound and trustworthy evidence. The critical thinking test was subjected to a rigorous process of content validation, beginning with an expert review conducted by three specialists in history education and educational assessment. These experts examined the items for clarity, appropriateness for elementary-level learners, and alignment with the constructs of interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference. Their feedback was used to refine the test items, enhancing its relevance and comprehensibility for the target population. Psychometric analysis further demonstrated that the test exhibited high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's α coefficient of 0.84, which surpasses the widely accepted minimum reliability standard of 0.70 for research in education and social sciences (Dunn et al., 2014; Taber, 2018). This result suggests that the test items functioned cohesively to measure the same underlying construct.

Similarly, the historical understanding test was carefully designed to reflect the competencies specified in the Indonesian elementary history curriculum, thereby ensuring strong curricular alignment. Content validity was confirmed through expert judgment, and a pilot test was administered to 40 students who were not part of the main research sample. The pilot data were analyzed to assess item difficulty, discrimination indices, and reliability. The instrument yielded a KR-20 reliability coefficient of 0.89, which indicates excellent internal consistency and suggests that the items reliably measured the construct of historical understanding across its multiple dimensions (Endacott & Brooks, 2018).

Taken together, these psychometric properties confirm that the data collected from both instruments provide a valid and reliable basis for interpretation. Consequently, the conclusions drawn from the analyses can be considered robust and generalizable within the scope of the study's population and design.

To provide a clear overview of the learning outcomes, Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for all four groups in the 2×2 factorial design. The table reports the mean scores and standard deviations of students' historical understanding across the different combinations of instructional media type and critical thinking level. These descriptive results provide an initial picture of how students in the gamified media groups performed compared to those in the conventional media groups, as well as how students with higher critical thinking skills outperformed those with lower skills. This overview establishes the basis for subsequent inferential analyses..

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Group	N	Mean Score	Std. Dev.
A1B1	15	85.40	4.32

Group	N	Mean Score	Std. Dev.
A2B1	15	76.33	5.10
A1B2	15	72.25	6.11
A2B2	15	66.50	5.89

Based on the results presented in Table 2, a clear pattern emerges regarding the relationship between instructional media type, critical thinking level, and students' historical understanding scores. Students in the gamified historical media with high critical thinking skills group (A1B1) achieved the highest mean score ($M = 85.40$, $SD = 4.32$), indicating that when students with strong critical thinking abilities are provided with interactive and engaging learning media, their capacity to interpret, analyze, and evaluate historical information is significantly enhanced. This result supports the idea that gamified media can create a cognitively stimulating environment that encourages learners to apply higher-order thinking skills to historical problems (Albright & Serrano, 2023; Angelelli et al., 2023).

The second-highest performance was observed in the conventional media with high critical thinking skills group (A2B1), which obtained a mean score of 76.33. While lower than their counterparts in the gamified group, these results still demonstrate that students with higher critical thinking skills tend to achieve better outcomes regardless of media type, suggesting that critical thinking ability is a strong predictor of historical understanding (López-Fernández et al., 2022; Vera & Alvé, 2023).

Interestingly, students with low critical thinking skills in the gamified media group (A1B2) outperformed those in the conventional media group (A2B2), with mean scores of 72.25 and 66.50, respectively. This finding suggests that gamified media may help compensate, at least partially, for lower critical thinking ability by providing interactive scaffolds, visual cues, and motivational elements that support learning (Moseikina et al., 2022; Shavab et al., 2021).

Overall, this descriptive pattern points to the potential dual influence of both instructional media type and critical thinking level on students' historical understanding, providing a strong rationale for the use of factorial ANOVA to formally test the significance of these differences. To statistically test these differences, a two-way ANOVA was conducted (Table 3).

Table 3. Two-Way ANOVA Results

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Media (A)	812.13	1	812.13	18.76	<.001
Critical Thinking (B)	941.85	1	941.85	21.76	<.001
Interaction (A × B)	402.50	1	402.50	9.28	0.004
Error	2410.67	56	43.05		
Total	4566.15	59			

The ANOVA results indicate significant main effects for media type ($F = 18.76$, $p < .001$) and critical thinking level ($F = 21.76$, $p < .001$), as well as a significant interaction effect between the two variables ($F = 9.28$, $p = .004$). These findings confirm that the differences observed in Table 2 are statistically meaningful and not due to random variation.

Post hoc Tukey HSD comparisons further revealed that:

- A1B1 outperformed A2B1 by 9.07 points ($p < .01$)
- A1B1 outperformed A1B2 by 13.15 points ($p < .01$)
- A1B2 outperformed A2B2 by 5.75 points ($p < .05$)

The interaction plot in Figure 2 visually confirms these findings, showing that the benefits of gamified media were most pronounced for students with high critical thinking skills, while gains for those with lower critical thinking skills were present but smaller.

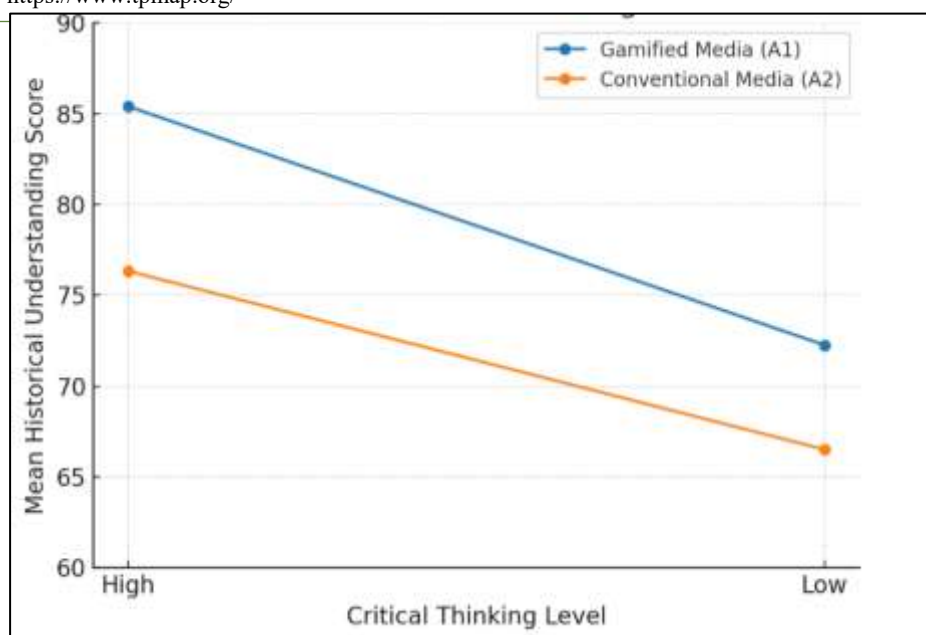


Figure 2. Interaction Effect of Media Type and Critical Thinking on Historical Understanding

From a validity standpoint, the robustness of these results is strengthened by the psychometric quality of the instruments used in this study. The critical thinking test demonstrated a Cronbach's α of 0.84, and the historical understanding test achieved a KR-20 coefficient of 0.89, both of which surpass the widely accepted benchmark of 0.70 for reliability in educational research (Lakens, 2022). Furthermore, content validity was rigorously established through expert review by history education specialists, ensuring that each instrument was aligned with curriculum objectives and consistently measured the intended constructs. These methodological steps provide confidence that the observed outcomes are not artifacts of measurement error but reflect genuine differences in learning performance.

The statistically significant main effect of media type provides empirical support for previous studies showing that gamified and interactive historical media can enhance student engagement, facilitate deeper conceptual understanding, and foster analytical thinking (Angelelli et al., 2023; Cook et al., 2023; Mayer, 2017; Ulu-Aslan & Baş, 2023). The incorporation of features such as interactive timelines, animated visualizations, role-play simulations, and embedded reflection prompts encourages students to actively process historical information rather than passively memorize facts. This finding aligns with multimedia learning theory, which emphasizes that dual-channel processing integrating visual and verbal information supports more robust mental model construction and leads to higher retention and transfer of knowledge.

Moreover, studies have demonstrated that the inclusion of interactive narratives and visual-spatial scaffolds allows students to engage in perspective-taking and causal reasoning, key components of historical thinking (Miguel-Revilla et al., 2021; Moseikina et al., 2022). The interaction effect observed in this study suggests that gamified media particularly benefits students with higher critical thinking skills, as these learners are better positioned to exploit the cognitive affordances of interactive environments to build nuanced interpretations of historical events. [Click or tap here to enter text..](#)

Similarly, the main effect of critical thinking aligns with earlier findings that students with stronger reasoning skills are more capable of evaluating historical evidence, synthesizing perspectives, and forming coherent interpretations (López-García, 2023; Vera & Alvé, 2023). Our results extend this by demonstrating that such skills amplify the benefits of gamified environments, as supported by (R. V. Taranilla et al., 2022) who observed that virtual and gamified experiences enhance analytical engagement particularly in cognitively prepared learners. The significant interaction effect suggests that the benefits of gamified media are maximized when students possess strong critical thinking skills. This implies that while gamification can enhance engagement for all learners, its potential for fostering historical understanding is best realized when combined with deliberate cognitive skill development. For lower critical thinking students, gamified media still provided an advantage over conventional methods, but the gains were more modest, indicating the need for additional scaffolding and guided reflection prompts.

Overall, the findings indicate that integrating gamified historical media with critical thinking instruction can be a powerful strategy for improving historical understanding in elementary schools. This approach aligns with the competency-based, student-centered vision of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum (Agustina et al., 2023; Djono, 2022) and offers a pathway for fostering both subject mastery and higher-order thinking skills in young learners.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that integrating gamified historical media with critical thinking instruction is a powerful and effective pedagogical approach for improving elementary students' historical understanding. Findings from the 2 × 2 factorial experiment demonstrated clear and consistent patterns. Students who engaged with gamified media significantly outperformed those taught using conventional, teacher-centered methods. Furthermore, students classified as having higher critical thinking skills consistently achieved superior outcomes, reinforcing the well-established view that critical thinking ability is a strong predictor of success in tasks requiring historical reasoning (López-Fernández et al., 2022; Vera & Alvé, 2023).

The presence of a statistically significant interaction effect provides especially meaningful insight. Results indicated that gamified media produced the most substantial benefits for students who already possessed high levels of critical thinking ability. These learners were able to take full advantage of the interactive features, such as timelines, simulations, and decision-making scenarios, to analyze evidence, interpret events, and connect historical phenomena in more complex ways. This finding is consistent with multimedia learning theory, which posits that learners with strong cognitive strategies are better positioned to benefit from environments that require active processing and dual-channel information integration (Mayer, 2017).

Importantly, the results also suggest that gamified media benefit students with lower critical thinking levels, albeit to a slightly lesser degree. Learners in the gamified media low critical thinking group still performed better than their peers in the conventional media low critical thinking group, demonstrating that gamification can act as a scaffold that supports comprehension and engagement even for students who may struggle with more abstract reasoning. The motivational affordances of gamified elements such as points, levels, and immediate feedback likely contributed to sustaining attention and encouraging participation, which are crucial for students who might otherwise disengage from traditional history lessons (Angelelli et al., 2023; Ulu-Aslan & Baş, 2023).

Within the framework of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum and the educational context of Lampung, these findings carry significant practical implications. They underscore the need for educators to go beyond the transmission of factual information and to adopt technology-enhanced approaches that actively involve students in inquiry and reflection. Embedding local historical narratives, such as the story of Radin Inten II, within gamified modules not only deepens students' connection to their cultural heritage but also provides opportunities for them to practice analytical reasoning in a meaningful, contextually relevant way.

Ultimately, this dual emphasis on engaging, interactive media and explicit critical thinking development transforms history instruction from rote memorization into an active, inquiry-based learning experience. Such an approach is aligned with 21st-century education goals, preparing students to become informed, reflective citizens who are capable of understanding the past, interpreting the present, and contributing thoughtfully to the future. By integrating gamified media and critical thinking instruction, teachers can foster both cognitive growth and civic identity, ensuring that history education remains relevant, impactful, and empowering for diverse groups of learners.

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