

## The effects of Using Games in Teaching and Learning English Grammar to EFL Learners

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**Abstract:** This study aimed at exploring the effects of using games in teaching/learning English grammar on students' perceptions and attitudes.. The sample of the study was distributed on 50 Saudi male students majoring in English. The Data was collected from learners through a pre-test and a post-test conducted at the end of the grammar course. The results of the study indicated that students have a favorable perception towards games use in their grammar classroom. The study also revealed that students benefit from using games in increasing their interest and motivation to use English to interact with, and get feedback from classmates and teachers.

**Keywords:** English grammar, EFL, game, technology.

## تأثير استخدام الألعاب في تعليم وتعلم قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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**الملخص:** هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تقصي مدى تأثير استخدام الألعاب في تعليم وتعلم قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية على فهم وسلوك الطلاب. واستخدمت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي، وتمثلت الأداة في استبانة وزعت على عينة من 50 طالباً سعودياً يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية. جمعت البيانات من المتعلمين على مرحلتين: اختبار قبل وبعد الدرس في نهاية الحصص الدراسية من دروس القواعد. بينت نتائج الدراسة أن لدى الطلاب تصوراً إيجابياً نحو استخدام الألعاب أثناء تعلم قواعد اللغة في الفصول الدراسية. كما بينت الدراسة استفادة الطلاب من استخدام الألعاب في زيادة اهتمامهم وتحفيزهم لممارسة اللغة الإنجليزية ولمعرفة آراء كل من زملائهم والمعلمين.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، لعبة، تقنية.

## CHAPTER I

### Introduction:

The advent of the Internet and the wide spread of technology in our life create new opportunities for language learning and teaching. Researchers and practitioners now realize the important role that computers play in learning and teaching English as a second or foreign language and look for effective ways to integrate them into various types of English language courses. With teaching through technology becoming increasingly integrated into teaching methodologies, educators strive to ensure these methods are in fact enhancing student learning.

Nowadays, the integration of technology into the foreign language teaching becomes popular. As more and more technological advances with their resources become available, it is necessary that teachers become aware of how those advances might be used to enhance foreign language teaching and learning. As Chapelle (2001: 1) states,

"As we enter the 21st century , everyday language use is so tied to technology that learning language through technology becomes a fact of life with important implications for all applied linguists, particularly for those concerned with facets of second language acquisition".

Grammar teaching has often been regarded as a structure based, formal activity. After the integration of several sources and techniques, which are mainly based on communicative activities, the teaching of grammar gained a new insight. In the teaching of grammar, technique-resource combinations are often modified to structure-discourse match and if well developed, they can be used effectively for all phases of a grammar lesson. In order to make a grammar lesson effective, beneficial, and interesting a teacher should use some well-developed and fascinating techniques in the classroom. In the present paper, the examples of such integrated sources and techniques are the games.

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem:

Although there are already existing studies and reviews on the use of games as an educational tool, further studies are still needed to be done especially with respect to the use of games in the second or foreign language learning classroom. This is because as a computer-based resource, the use of games as a teaching and learning tool is relatively new and it has only of late been gaining popularity.

### 1.2. Research Questions:

This project aims to investigate how games help students in learning English grammar , and their attitudes toward using them. More specifically, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1- Is there any significant improvement in the students' performance in the post grammar test regarding the mastering verb tenses and verb To Be?

- 2- Are there any significant differences between the two groups in the post-tests in relation to the treatment?

## CHAPTER II

### 2-Methodology:

Methodology refers to the way in which information is found or the way something is done. Methodology here includes the setting and context, participants, the methods, techniques and procedures which are used to collect and analyze the study.

#### 2.1. Setting and Context:

This study describes a comparison between two groups of students in the second and third secondary level of studying English language in Muzhera Secondary School in Gizan in the first semester of the academic year 2013/2014. The experimental group studied through games in E-learning language laboratory. The control group studied through traditional method in a classroom by a blackboard and a marker.

#### 3.2. Participants:

The participants consisted of two groups. The experimental group consisted of 25 students who study via games and the control group consisted of 25 students who study via traditional method. Total number of respondents were 50 males aged 17 to 19.

#### 2.3. Instrument of the Study:

##### Validity and Reliability:

The main instrument of the study is a pre-test and a post-test. The test consisted multiple questions. Its content is based on verb tenses and verb To Be .

Reliability Statistics	
Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
50	0.710

A test was conducted for the experimental and control groups. It was given to three professors of linguistics in the field at Jazan university to check its suitability to the aims of the course, content, and clarity of instructions. The test originally consisted of 55 items, but it was modified to suit the study. They suggested deleting five items as they were not necessary. Their comments and suggestions were considered by the researcher. They also approved of the test scope, organization and variety of questions. The test was several times field-tested. The items of the test were reduced to 50 items. The content of the

test becomes reflect the course objective. The internal consistency of Cronbach's alpha reliability for the test instrument was determined to be 0.71 which is found to be significant, statistically accepted and this is proved that the test reached a high reliability.

A short survey was provided as another instrument to gather information about the students' experiences in using the internet and their attitudes and perceptions towards online technology. The survey consisted of 5 items, it was clear and asked students to write and to circle the choice about how felt about the statement. A pilot study was conducted to check the statement of the survey were suitable.

#### 2.4. Procedures:

At the beginning of the first class in the first week, the researcher gave the survey to the experimental group, and depending on the information gathered, He incorporated an online synchronous approach for teaching grammar for the above EFL teaching setting. In the second period, the researcher gave all students the pre-test.

In the second week, students of the control group who studied via traditional method, was divided into cooperative groups so that weak students might benefit from their classmates. Students studied verb to be and the present simple and present continuous tenses. In the third week, students learned past simple and past continuous tenses. In the fourth week, students learned how to make negative form in the present and past tenses.

In the fifth one, students of the control group were taught how they make questions with revision for the previous parts and practice answering questions similar to the questions of pre-test and post-test.

On the other hand, students of the experimental group learned how to engage to the games at the beginning of the first period . They were given an introductory lesson about how they play games at [www.eslgamesworld.com](http://www.eslgamesworld.com). In the second week, students became familiar with the use of online high technology in learning English. the instructor used E-learning language laboratory and created WhatsApp group using by mobiles. For four weeks, students watched videos and opened other links to get extra supplement in teaching verb To Be and verb tenses through audios, playing games and so on. students learned through E-learning language laboratory and WhatsApp messenger about present simple, present continuous, past simple, past continuous and verb To Be in affirmative sentences during videos and games uploaded in the computers and mobiles. Students learned how to make negative form in these tenses. Making questions were added through links, audios, videos and games.

Finally, after each lesson, questions and activities were written and students played games individually at [www.eslgamesworld.com](http://www.eslgamesworld.com) website. The feedback was given to students by the instructor and other English teachers. In the final week, all the students answered the post-test individually.

## 2.5. Analysis:

After collecting the data from the pre-test and the post-test, the researcher analyzed them by using SPSS software package through Tests of Between-Subjects Effects.

The study had one independent variable: method of teaching, using games or traditional. There was also one dependent variable, achievement of the study subjects 'verb to be and verb tenses'.

The description of the properties of the variables included in the study, means and standard deviations and, Tests of Between-Subjects Effects would be made to find if there were any differences between the results of the experimental and control groups using SPSS.

## CHAPTER III

### The Results:

This study investigated the effects of using games on the students grammar performance in terms of using and mastering verb tenses and verb To Be . The scores obtained by the participants in the pre- and post-tests were compared. The results obtained are presented in accordance to the research questions, beginning with the first research question and the further analysis for the rest of the questions.

In order to answer the first research question, (Will there be a significant improvement in the students' performance in the post grammar test regarding the mastering of verb tenses and verb To Be?); descriptive analysis and Tests of Between-Subjects Effects were used. The aim is to investigate any statistically significant differences in results in the post-test compared with those of the pre-test for both groups.

**Table (1) Between Subjects Factors**

Group	Value Label	N
1.00	Control	25
2.00	Experimental	25

**Table (2) Descriptive Statistics Dependent Variable: post**

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Control	29.4800	7.29794	25
Experimental	37.5600	4.89966	25
Total	33.5200	7.38238	50

Table 2 shows that the result of the post-test indicated that the members of the experimental group achieved better scores in the test (mean scores = 37.56) than their counterparts in the control group did ( mean scores = 29.48).

Table (3) Tests of Between-Subjects Effects Dependent Variable: post

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Corrected Model	826.341 <sup>a</sup>	2	413.171	10.530	.000
Intercept	3807.738	1	3807.738	97.045	.000
Pre	10.261	1	10.261	.262	.611
Group	558.134	1	558.134	14.225	.000
Error	1844.139	47	39.237		
Total	5885.000	50			
Corrected Total	2670.480	49			

R Squared = .309 (Adjusted R Squared = .280)

Table 3 shows that F value of (14.225) was obtained to be significant at the level  $p < 0.00$ . There are significant differences between the two performances in favor of the post-test scores of the experimental group. The strongly significant differences occurring in the students' posttest grammar performance support the claim that using games can improve students' grammar performance. The result will be discussed next in relation to the literature.

### CHAPTER III

#### Discussion:

This chapter discusses the answer of the questions of the study which are:

- 1- Are there a significant improvement in the students' performance in the post grammar test regarding the mastering verb tenses and verb To Be?
- 2- Are there any significant differences between the two groups in the post-tests in relation to the treatment?

In aiming to investigate the effects of using games on the students' grammar performance, the study first asked whether or not there would be a significant improvement in the students' performance in the post grammar test regarding the mastering verb tenses and verb To Be. As discussed above, the margin of the mean scores between the mean scores in the pre-test and the post-test is higher in the experimental group than in the control group suggesting that it is related to the treatment, as the Tests of Between-Subjects Effects revealed. It is important to note that the study was conducted at the end of the term and this might be the reason for the significant results in both groups.

The study asked whether or not there **were** any significant differences between the two groups in the post-tests in relation to the treatment. Findings suggest that there were significant differences between the experimental and control groups in favor of experimental group in the post test (Table 3). These findings are in line with **the** previous research suggesting **that** games are effective **tool** as they create

motivations, lower **their** stress and give language learners the opportunity for real communication. (Rinvoluci & Davis (1995); Jacobs & Kline Liu (1996); Richard Amato 1996; Cobin 1997; Quinn 2005; Ridel 2008; Mohammad and Amin 2009).

In agreement with Hansen (1994), Harmer (1998) Clark Aldrich (2005) and who found that games are highly motivated and entertaining, and they can give shy learners more opportunity to express their feeling and opinions, this study shows that learning through games helped all students in using and mastering English grammar. The activities in a game get all the students to move around, activate their mental capacities and stimulate neural networks, thus motivating learners in learning and retention. At that time, students who are shy also attended the activities with fun, forgo their shyness and feeling of fear. It can be clearly seen that games can capture students' attention and participation. Thus, they can motivate students to want to learn more. Moreover, they can transform a boring class into a challenging one.

It is expected that the margins of differences would be larger between the control group and the experimental group if the students were more advanced. The students participating in this study were level 2 below intermediate and are, therefore, only expected to describe aspects of their life in simple terms. It would be expected, however, that a study involving level 3 or 4 upper-intermediate students would result in the margin being higher because they are expected to master verb tenses and verb to be. Students at this level should understand the sequence of tenses. The communicative learning environment inherent in the games would more greatly benefit these advanced students as they are better prepared to use their language skill in an autonomous environment. It is expected ,As found by Spade, N. and P.M. Lightbown (2006) and Nguyen (2005), that a learning environment communication is one aspect of the games that works to improve grammar mastering.

Further, games add interest to what students might not find interesting. Sustaining interest can mean sustaining effort. (Thiagarajan, 1998; Wright, Betteridge & Buckby, 2005).

They had an access to extra facilities and skill like listening via watching videos, reading articles and comments and entertainment via games which were found to be helpful for them.

As a result, games can increase learners' achievement, which means the learners' test scores, ability of communication, some skill knowledge of vocabulary, or other language skills can improve, these are in harmony with the studies about using games in language teaching (Wierus 1994; Duong 2008; Zdybiewska 1994; Riedel 2008; Lungo 2009).

In light of the literature which provides concrete evidence that games promote students' interaction and improve students' language acquisition, Kennedy (2010) suggests that teachers learn to understand how students today engage with the world around them. Web connected students who regularly interact with online applications that encourage students to participate in the activity since naturally want to beat other teams, apart from having fun, students learn at the same time. As discussed

by Nguyen (2005).The use of games in E-learning language laboratory opened new prospects for the students for doing extra activities outside the classroom at any time.

## CHAPTER V

### Implications and Recommendation

As both the control group and experimental group demonstrated improvements in their performance, further research conducted at the beginning of the semester would help to differentiate the benefits gained from games and those from a semester of study using traditional methods. Additionally, as students completed the study three weeks prior to final exam, there was most likely already a high level of competence in preparation for these tests.

Future research using games with higher level students who are able to understand the sequence of tenses with the games would be useful in developing a more comprehensive understanding of the benefits that can be gained from this style of language learning. Although the competence of secondary students was sufficient to make determinations regarding the effect of using games on English grammar.

Another research suggesting is to look closely into the learners' language production in terms of using and mastering. This research focused on students' using and mastering in grammar performance. Greater understanding of other aspects of English language form and function in relation to acquisition via the games will help fine tune not only the games application itself but also how the teacher uses the application in relation to other class activities. While the games has proven to be an effective tool in supporting student competition, motivation, and English language learning, more research is needed to fully understand the complete spectrum of strength and inherent in the use of games in the EFL learners.

### Recommendations Regarding English Teachers:

- 1- Provide schools with computers and technology in English teaching and learning, so teachers can keep up with new developments in the field.
- 2- Provide in-service training for teachers. The academic part of the training should be held inside the society, to gain experience and involvement with native English speakers.
- 3- Work on activities that can enhance their motivation in learning English.
- 4- Ask students to use online games, they can master grammar and other English skills by playing games on the computer or mobile devices.
- 5- Use short and feature-length videos is an engaging way to work on skills. Videos help to expose students to the use of natural English.
- 6- Create a video and publishing and sharing it with audience (either on You Tube or on a school website/blog), it can be another powerful way of engaging students in a language.



### **Recommendations Regarding Ministry of Education:**

- 1- Provide schools with English teaching laboratories. Technology can be a great asset in ESL classrooms, offering authentic writing activities and endless resources on grammar instructions, lesson plans and other central topics.
- 2- Create educational applications on Android, iPads and tablets, for practicing English skills and mastering grammar, application like Grammar Up allow students to test their knowledge on specific topics (verbs, prepositions, etc.). the applications also keep track of students' progress and allow them to skip questions by shaking the tablet. These applications should be related to the textbooks and the activities to help students achieve more in English.
- 3- Insure prompt delivery of teaching aids to school, especially those in villages.
- 4- Create website in every educational district, to upload useful links and free educational' applications for teachers and students.

### **Recommendations Regarding curriculum designers:**

- 1- Expand the workbook by adding additional activities to help students practice, review, and learn speaking, reading, and writing and master English grammar.
- 2- Lessons, topics, and the information in the textbooks and workbooks should be more coherent and logically sequenced.
- 3- Improve the method of teaching English should be emphasized. Both qualitative and experimental research designs should be used to determine a method that is a most suitable for students and cultures.
- 4- Provide lessons with suitable links and ask teachers and students to visit them.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **Conclusion**

The finding of the project showed that games have an effect on the processes of teaching and learning the verb tenses and verb to be. Students have a facility that provides a chance for self-learning and peer to peer teaching, which helps them to be more independent on time and place.

Students can use the games not only in the classroom under the control of the teacher, but they are also able to utilize them anywhere or anytime outside the classroom.

It has also become possible for students to use variety of games applications and activities to enhance other skill like reading, writing and listening. Students seem to be more at home with images and videos than text. Students also encourage and motivate to learn continuously.

Finally, it can be concluded that students' performance in learning the verb tenses and verb to be improves a lot through using games compared with the traditional procedures, techniques, activities, and methods used by EFL teachers.

### Limitations of the Study:

This study is limited to a small sample size during one semester and only in two classes at Muzhera Secondary school in Jazan district . All students who participated were male. Therefore, the results can only be generalized with care.

Majority of studies used games as a tool in language learning/teaching in general, and in EFL grammar in particular. This is due to a range of potential applications of games such as delivery of learning and posting materials, the provision of mentoring to students, collaboration, adding comments, and essentially its journal form. Moreover, games include photo, audio, video, and hyperlinks which give students a chance to practice different language skills in a real learning environment. Therefore, further research needs to focus on the influence of games in learning/teaching reading, listening, writing, vocabulary and even speaking.

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