

# **The Effects of Using Language Games in the Classroom on ESL Learners' Acquisition of English Grammar**

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## **Abstract**

Boosting grammar repertoire enables successful communication. Learning grammar is challenging, requiring constant, conscious effort. This research specifically explores the use of games to facilitate grammar acquisition. This study addresses the following questions: 1) What is the effect of language games towards the affective factors in the process of learning grammar? 2) Does the use of language games improve students' grammatical competency in language assessment?

An experiment was conducted for a semester (4 months) on approximately 70 students from Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah who were taking the English grammar course. The researcher taught 2 classes of students. Each group consisted of around 35 students. For the experimental group, the classroom activities emphasized games. The researcher conducted 14 sessions of various types of games such as physical, searching, educational card, question, board, online and simulation games to practice each grammar topic learnt. To gauge information on affective factors, students were administered questionnaires that consists 12 close-ended questions. The classes in the control group emphasized less on games. The design of the test instruments adapted the model of Aptis test by British Council. Results of the quantitative methods were analysed statistically using mean scores and T-test.

The results of the study revealed that students in the experimental group obtained higher scores. This is because games possess multiple benefits which accelerate language learning. 1) They are interactive and learner – centred. 2) They create positive mood, emotions and attitude( affective factors). 3) They cater to various types of learning styles and encourage subconscious learning.

**Keywords** : grammar acquisition, language games

## **1. Introduction**

### *1.1 Background*

Malaysian students have studied English as a second language from the time they were in primary school. However, many of them cannot use it effectively and still make grammatical errors when they speak or write in English. Similar observations were found by a research in Pakistan. Inadequate knowledge of sentence structures and vocabulary is considered as the leading problems in learning the

language (Perveen, Asif & Mehmood, 2016). Finding ways to facilitate teaching grammar and making it more attractive to the learners could be one of the ways to aim at overcoming the problem.

Grammar plays a crucial role in the fluency of spoken and written communication be it in daily interactions or academic setting. This is because grammar is one of the core elements of language aptitude. It reflects how proficiently one produces the language in speaking and writing. Mackay and Mountford (1978), presented that in order to communicate effectively in English, students need to have a good foundation in grammar (as cited in Eskandari, Khonmohammad & Komeijanifarahani, 2014).

Unfortunately, learning grammar is often considered a laborious and monotonous process. The traditional Grammar Translation Method, which is still used in some learning institutions make learners get bored and lose interest in the learning process. It is teacher-centred and gives less opportunity for students to communicate in English.

Celce-Murcia stresses that “grammar should never be taught as an end in itself but always with reference to meaning, social factors, or discourse – or a combination of these factors (Celce Murcia, 1991)”(Eskandari, Khonmohammad & Komeijanifarahani, 2014, p. 460). Larsen-Freeman (2001) supports this view and argues that grammar is not only a set of rules, but is also combined with meaning and use as a whole. In this regard, it is not useful to see grammar as “a discrete set of meaningless decontextualized, static structures” or “prescriptive rules about linguistic form (Larsen-Freeman, 2001)” (Eskandari et al, 2014, p. 460.) It is a misconception to view grammar just a set of absolute rules. Rather, grammar should be seen as having three dimensions: forms, meaning, and use as a whole. According to Larsen-Freeman (2001) in order to acquire a language, the students in language classrooms must master all these three dimensions (cited in Eskandari et al, 2014).

Teachers need to teach grammar in variety of ways to allow students to accurately and clearly express their ideas in English. Teaching English has some improvement recently in the light of student-centred approach. Students are encouraged to be actively involved in the learning process and become committed to improving their English so that they can use grammatical structures accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately.

Various approaches have been introduced in helping second language learners develop and learn grammar, i.e. reading books, newspapers, playing games, watching foreign cartoons or films with subtitles, listening to foreign music, etc. Games or game-like activities have been applied broadly in instructing English, especially in teaching grammar. The advantages of games in teaching grammar have been detailed in several previous studies. Furthermore, there are many articles which supply adequate games and activities that can be considered when instructing grammar.

### *1.2 Statement of the Problem*

A statement that is most often heard in discussions about second language learning classes is that if students are laughing, playing a game and having fun, they are not really learning. In other words, they are just wasting time. This is not always true. Whether games enhance learning or waste time depends on how they are conducted.

If teachers are not open to using a variety of methods and stick to the traditional method, the lack of motivation to learn grammar and the lack of ability to grasp grammar rules will remain in learners. This will not be beneficial for their progress. One’s proficiency in productive skills is usually judged by the

grammar. The use of correct grammar plays a central part in language use. Therefore, grammar lessons need to be given special attention.

Teachers need to be careful in choosing and using games. According to Khan (1996), teachers need to consider which games are suitable, when to use them, how to link them up with the syllabus, textbook or program objectives and how the games will benefit students in different ways. Therefore, successful games must be clear, well- designed, well-organized, and fun (cited in Cam & Tran, 2017).

### *1.3 Significance of Study*

The study is informative for new teachers who will be familiarized with English language teaching (ELT) classroom strategies and innovate a variety of game based activities according to the needs of their students. They can ensure effective classroom management as well as improve students' motivation level in an otherwise tedious learning process. Authorities in learning institutions can give support to teachers to enable them to conduct games by funding the necessary teaching materials and facilities. Course leaders can incorporate language games in the English curriculum.

### *1.4 Objectives of Study*

1. To study the effect of language games towards the affective factors in the process of learning grammar.
2. To determine the effect of language games on students' grammatical competency in language assessments.

### *1.5 Research Questions*

1. What is the effect of language games towards the affective factors in the process of learning grammar?
2. Does the use of language games improve students' grammatical competency in language assessments?

### *1.6 Hypothesis*

**H0** – Language games do not have any effect on students' grammatical competency in assessments.

**H1** – Language games improve the performance of the class as a whole in assessments on grammar.

## **2. Review of Related Literature**

### *2.1 Definition of Language Games*

There are a lot of definitions about what a game is. One of the classic definitions is that it is “a variant of a play that depends on sticking to strict rules and achieving a determined outcome (Okoń, 1992)”(Gruss, 2016, p.84). Nicolson and Williams (1975) suggest the game as a form of teaching, which may be used in circumstances where ordinary approaches are not well tolerated or received. Salopek (1999) gave a definition which suits the context of education- a structural activity which ends in learning (cited in Gruss, 2016).

### *2.2 Game Categories*

Toth (1995) made a distinction between competitive and cooperative games. In a competitive game, players or teams race or compete with one another to be the first to reach the goal while in a cooperative game, players or teams work together towards a common goal. The emphasis in the games is on successful communication rather than accurate language. Competitive games can get some students interested and maintain their focus. A player progresses through the game and ultimately wins due to his or her understanding of grammatical concepts. Co-operative games, which revolve around working together towards reaching a specific goal without any emphasis on winning or losing, is an excellent way to foster teamwork.

There are numerous games but they all boil down to the following categories:

### *2.2.1 Searching games*

This category includes games like: “Find someone who” where students have to move around the classroom and mingle to find students who fulfil the characteristics or have done the things listed. They would have to practise question forms in the target language in order to get the necessary information. Students are given a grid. The task is to fill in all the cells in the grid with the names of classmates who fit the descriptions, e.g. someone who is a vegetarian or someone who plays the piano. Students circulate, ask and answer questions to complete their own grid and help classmates complete theirs.

Scavenger hunt games are especially fitting in the language classroom because the clues can be written in the target language, which forces the participants and their team members to read and listen to instructions in the target language, accomplish the tasks required to demonstrate comprehension and use the necessary structure in the process.

### *2.2.2 Physical games*

Some games involve physical movements to cater to kinaesthetic learners. Some examples are charades, “win, lose or draw” and board races. In a charade, a single person acts out a word or phrase in order, followed by the whole phrase together, while the rest of the group guesses (Wikipedia,2017.) The person who acts is not allowed to speak. He or she can only mime. “Win,lose or draw,” adapted from a popular TV show is similar to charade the sense that words are not allowed to be used. The only difference is that the students have to draw instead of mime. Board race is an activity to keep learners active. In this game, the teacher will draw two tables with columns. For example, to learn comparative forms of adjectives, the table will have a list of adjectives in the first column. The second and third columns will be left blank for students to fill : a column for the ‘-er’ form and another one for the ‘more’ form. Students from each team race to the board to write the adjectives in the correct column. It is an alternative to asking students to memorize the forms of adjectives.

### *2.2.3 Puzzles*

Word games are especially good for language teaching. Included are crossword puzzles, word searches, sentence maze and jumbled up sentences. These help to build vocabulary and practise sentence structures in a fun way.

### *2.2.4 Story games*

An excellent example is a continuous chain story in which the teacher or the first students begins the story and each of the other students add a different segment or part to the story. It can be done orally or

through writing. This game fits into the teaching of tenses because the story needs to be told using the right tenses in the target language.

### *2.2.5 Question games*

A popular type of questioning games is one that involves guessing such as riddles and “20-questions.” In “20-questions,” one person thinks of a famous person, place, or thing. The other participants can ask 20 affirmative (yes/no) questions to find clues in order to guess who or what the person is thinking of. General knowledge questions following the “Who wants to be a millionaire” or “Jeopardy” concept can also be used for students to practice question forms, especially informative questions.

### *2.2.6 Miscallaneous*

Other games which have not been explained above are educational card games based on assembling cards, disclosing, exchanging, sorting and matching them. In an information gap activity, one or more students have information that the others need to complete a task. It encourages learners to interact with one another using the target language to exchange information. Simulation, board games problem-solving, online and multimedia games can also be used. The possibilities are almost endless and teachers are only bound by the limits of their own creativity.

### *2.3 Advantages of Games*

Woodward (1997) says that grammar explanation can be enlivened by a variety of language games. Games are student-focused activities requiring active involvement of learners. In Crookal’s (1990) opinion, learners and teachers change their roles and relations through games and learners are encouraged to take more control of their learning process. As a result, games provide learners with a chance to direct their own learning (Eskandari, 2014.) Furthermore, language games deliver and stimulate an added dimension to language learning (cited in Pathan, 2014). Research by Uberman (1998) has shown that children learn and develop the fastest when they are at play. According to (Agoestyowati,2007), the use of games in a learning environment will not only change the dynamic of the class, but it will also rejuvenate students and help the brain learn more effectively (cited in Pathan,2014). Among other abilities, games help develop students’ motor skills, social capacities, memory and creativity. Therefore, it is desired that teachers should think how to teach grammar through enjoyable activities.

Language games are not mere time fillers or ice-breakers. The following are some advantages of games:

1. According to Dornyei (2001), games have proven to create a comfortable and stress free atmosphere for the second language learners (cited in Eskandari et al, 2014).
2. Games have a great pedagogical value and can be a springboard for group work. In a class which is based on teaching through playing games, there are different types of interactions such as teacher-learner, learner-teacher, and learner-learner interaction (Eskandari et al, 2014). This helps to build up interpersonal relations among students. Hence, students’ social and emotional development may be encouraged in the light of such positive collaboration and companionship.
3. From an instructional view point, creating a meaningful context for language use is another advantage that games present. Meanwhile, Cross(2000) states that by using games, teachers can create contexts which enable subconscious learning because during the games, learners’

attention is on the message, not on the grammatical rules. Therefore, when they completely focus on a game as an activity, students acquire language in the same way that they acquire their mother tongue, that is, without being aware of it (cited in Pathan, 2014).

4. Games provide good opportunities for students to use target language in real life contexts. Moreover, games are often designed within certain real life situations (Cam & Tran, 2017.)
5. Grammar is often taught as a separate skill. With games, learners can integrate with other skills. Teachers can use games to engage students in implementing the target language within all skills like speaking, reading, listening and writing.
6. McCallum (1980) suggests that a properly introduced game is one of the highest motivating techniques (cited in Eskandari, 2014). Avedon (2002) further argues that students get very absorbed in the competitive aspects of games; therefore, they try harder at games than other lessons (cited in Eskandari et al, 2014). It has been indicated that language learning performed in a playful atmosphere resulted not only in stimulating students' motivation but also making them feel confident and create their positive attitudes to second language learning (Cam & Tran, 2017).

Widodo (2006) emphasizes that by using games, students can be more active, autonomous, and energetic. They can learn about the environment, the world they are living in, and be engaged in the teaching-learning process. We can teach all skills and components through playing games, which is based on a learner-centered approach. Meanwhile, when we are teaching, we have to pay attention to the meaningfulness, appropriateness and the level of the learners as games are neither just for filling time nor killing time (cited in Eskandari, 2014).

The benefits of using games are evident from previous studies. However, there are no clear answers to the following questions which this study attempts to address:

1. How much time should be allocated for games in a learning period?
2. Is learning with games alone sufficient for students who will otherwise not be willing to make a conscious effort to learn with other methods?
3. How should games be conducted for learning to be effective?
4. What type of games are suitable for language learning?

### **3. Methodology**

#### *3.1 The Study*

##### *3.1.1 Description of the Context*

This study took place at Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah, which is located in Kuala Kangsar. There were thirty five students in each grammar class. The instruction was for 3 hours a week spread out over 14 weeks. There were 2 sessions a week, a 2 hour period and a 1 hour period. The participants in both groups were taught by the same the researcher. Following 14 weeks of treatment via employing games, the post-test was administered. The results of both pre and post-tests were analyzed and compared.

##### *3.1.2 Design*

The design of this study was a quasi-experimental design, as random selection of the participants was not possible. The study used purposive sampling where the researcher chose 2 groups of English classes. Of the two groups, one was assigned to an experimental group while the other one in the control group. The experimental group experienced 14 sessions of grammar treatment via game-based instruction (1 session a week in the semester) controlled by the researcher and performed by the members of the group, while the learners in the control group did not experience a purely game-based instruction. The participants' development in the grammatical knowledge was considered as the dependent variable, and the game-based instruction was considered as the independent variable. The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods.

### *3.1.3 Participants*

The participants of the study were 70 students studying at Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah, Kuala Kangsar. Each group of the 2 classes selected, consisted of 35 students. The experimental group, on the other hand, received treatment based on working with different games for teaching grammar while the classes in the control group did not emphasize on games. The teacher used various types of typical communicative and interactive activities such as role-plays and conversation practice instead of restricting to games alone. The classes in the experimental group, on the other hand, were purely game-based. When a pre-test was given to compare the level of the students, it was found that both groups were of similar proficiency. The classes contained students of mixed ability. In each group, very few students scored highly in the pre-test while the majority got average scores. A number of students got low scores. It was hoped that the introduction of games could reduce the number of students who failed.

### *3.2 Instrumentation*

In order to carry out this study, a pre-test was given to gauge the students' knowledge before the lessons commenced and a post-test after the experiment was employed. The tests consist of 40 multiple choice items on main grammar topics such as tenses, subject –verb-agreement and others. To gauge information on affective factors, students were administered questionnaires that consists 12 close-ended Likert scale questions. Questionnaires were also given to some of the English teachers to find out their views on the impact of using language games on the acquisition of syntax and grammatical structures. The teachers' questionnaires consists 14 Likert scale questions.

### *3.3 Procedure*

The experiment commenced after conducting the pre-test for both groups. Learners in both the groups received the same materials, followed the same syllabus, underwent about the same time of teaching sessions and were taught by the same teacher to minimize the external variables. The grammar topics were both implicitly and explicitly taught throughout the course and explicit grammar experiences were also touched upon in the lessons presented. Both the control and the experimental groups worked with dialogues, covered the short texts given in the book, discussed the new points in the class, participated in the question and answer sessions, individual and group writing developments, and developed conversations based on the new topics given. Students in both groups worked on grammar exercises in their course book as well. The students in the experimental group worked with games one session per week. The various games presented were thematically related to the grammatical topics selected and taught (for details, please refer to Table 1.)

Table 1. Games used to teach the grammar topics

GAME	TOPICS
Word games or puzzles	Parts of speech (nouns,verbs,adjectives, adverbs)
Charade	Verbs and Adverbs
Amazing Race/Scavenger Hunt	Prepositions Adjectives
Board race	Comparative and superlative adjectives 5 verb forms
Card games	Simple Present Present Continuous
Story game	Simple Past Tense
Board games	Past Continuous Future Tense
Sentence jumble	Basic sentence pattern Conjunctions
Jeopardy/Who wants to be a Millionaire	Various topics
Simulation	Various topics
Online games	Various topics

The learners' participation in the classroom activities were taken into consideration and the teacher presented each and every learner with the feedback required via correction, restatement, and the like to emphasize learner's miss-production.

After a few sessions with games, students in the experimental group were given questionnaires to get feedback on their experience. A few students were interviewed to get more details of their feedback. Throughout the sessions, the researcher took the opportunity to conduct unstructured observation of the students' activities and took notes in her journal. The data from the interview and unstructured observation were analyzed qualitatively. Once the major grammar topics in the syllabus had been covered and the teacher felt that the students were ready to take a test, a post-test was given. The design of the test instruments adapted the model of Aptis test by British Council. Results of the quantitative methods were analysed statistically using mean scores, T-test and chi-square.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Students' Survey

Table 2. Responses from the students' survey

Learning grammar via language games	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neither 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
1. makes lessons fun and enjoyable.	0%	0%	0%	57.57%	42.24%
2. motivates me to learn and participate in the class activities.	0%	3.03%	0%	51.52%	45.45%
3. keeps me alert and engages my attention.	0%	3.03%	3.03%	66.67%	24.24%
4. increases positive feelings (comfortable, confident, happy, excited, etc.)	0%	0%	9.09%	63.64	27.27%
5. minimizes negative feelings (stress, anxiety, nervousness, boredom, etc).	0%	3.03%	27.27%	57.57%	12.12%
6. gives opportunity to apply the grammar rules learned for practical communication.	0%	0%	9.09%	60.61%	30.30%
7. enables me to learn, understand and practice grammar better.	0%	0%	9.09%	45.45%	45.45%
8. provides a positive classroom atmosphere.	0%	0%	12.12%	54.54%	33.33%
9. strengthens relationship with my classmates through pair-work and group activities.	0%	3.03%	9.09%	33.33%	51.52%
10. is a waste of class time.	33.33%	42.42%	18.18%	6.06%	0%
11. is not suitable or appropriate for adult learners in higher learning institution.	36.36%	33.33%	18.18%	3.03%	9.09%
12. can distract students from learning.	36.36%	33.33%	18.18%	12.12%	0%

From the survey results, it is undeniable that learners find language games fun and enjoyable. A vast majority of the students agreed that games evoke positive feelings in them. They increase their motivation, engagement in the lessons and as they are involved, they have positive emotions such as happiness, comfort and excitement. They have a more positive attitude when they feel more confident. Other non-learning benefits agreed by the majority of the respondents were that they provide a positive classroom atmosphere and strengthen the relationship among classmates. A vast majority of the respondents found that games also have learning benefits in which they give opportunity to apply the grammar rules learned for practical communication and enable students to learn, understand and practice grammar better. Majority of the respondents disagree with the negative statements regarding games, which are a waste of time, unsuitable for adult learners and can distract students from learning.

## 4.2 Teachers' Survey

Table 3. Responses from the teachers' survey

Teaching and learning via language games	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neither 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
1. makes lessons fun and enjoyable for both the students and the teacher.	0%	0%	14.29%	14.29%	71.43%
2. is full of pedagogical value.	0%	0%	14.29%	85.71%	0%
3. should be given a special role in a language teaching programme.	0%	0%	14.29%	85.71%	0%
4. presents many opportunities for learners to show their skills in many language areas.	0%	14.29%	0%	71.43%	14.29%
5. gives opportunities to use the target language for practical communication.	0%	0%	14.29%	57.14%	28.57%
6. enables students to learn, understand and practice the topics and skills taught better.	0%	14.29%	14.29%	42.86%	28.57%
7. provides a positive classroom atmosphere for the teacher and students.	0%	0%	14.29%	71.43%	14.29%
8. strengthens the relationship among the students and also between the students and the instructor.	0%	0%	14.29%	71.43%	14.29%
9. improves the students' performance in assessments.	0%	14.29%	28.57%	57.14%	0%
10. cannot determine or have an effect on the students' knowledge and skills.	0%	57.14%	14.29%	28.57%	0%
11. is too time consuming and is a waste of class time.	0%	28.57%	42.86%	28.57%	0%
12. is not suitable or appropriate for adult learners in higher learning institution.	0%	71.43%	28.57%	0%	0%
13. can distract students attention during instruction.	0%	14.29%	57.14%	28.57%	0%
14. is difficult to be implemented for every topic taught.	0%	14.29%	28.57%	42.86%	14.29%

A vast majority of the teachers agreed that teaching and learning via language games is full of pedagogical value, should be given a special role in a language teaching programme and strengthens the relationship among the learners and the relationship between the teacher and students. However, almost half of the respondents (42%) did not give a positive response to the statement that games improve students' performance in assessments. 28.57% of them are not sure whether games have an effect on students' performance while 14% disagreed. The other 58% agreed that games improve students' performance. Teachers do not have similar experiences with games probably due to factors not known to the researcher. From the teachers' experience, it cannot be safely concluded that games have an effect on students' performance but a common view from the survey of students and teachers is that games surely have many non-linguistic benefits.

### *4.3 Interview*

The interviewees have long learned with language games since school days. Among the type of games conducted were questioning games and communicative games such as forums. The respondents said that games have learning benefits to increase knowledge and build vocabulary. Games are meant to minimize anxiety. However, opposite to what was expected, the respondents said that although games are enjoyable, shy students do not feel comfortable participating in games especially in a large class where they have to communicate in front of many people. In response to the question of whether games can be distracting, the respondents said it depends on the type of games and how the games were conducted. They said that it is better for the teachers to concentrate on a few of the most important and relevant games for the class. Too many games can make students lose focus. In response to the question of whether games were suitable for adult learners, it depends on the types of games. Not all games are appropriate for all age groups. Different age groups require different topics, materials, and modes of games. Children, for example, benefit most from games which require physical movements. Games which are meant for children may be too simple and awkward for adults. Adults need games that require them to use higher cognitive skills.

### *4.4 Observation*

It could be observed that students enjoyed themselves in the class when they were playing games. Games provided a way of repeating the structures in a less mechanical and tiring way. However, teachers need to address students who switch to speaking their first language. If not monitored properly, games can defeat the purpose, which is to make students communicate in the target language. Although students were taught explicitly in the presentation and drilling stage of the grammar lessons, when it came to application through games, there were students who did not apply the grammar rules learned and still made mistakes. The teacher should draw attention to the grammatical mistakes and provide feedback on common mistakes at the end of the activities. The researcher feels that the games conducted must have relevant follow up activities in the form of oral presentation or written work so that students do not just have fun in class but also retain the knowledge they gained.

#### 4.5 Performance in Assessment

The progress of the groups were measured in two ways. One was based on the difference in the test scores between the pre-test and post-test and the other one was the difference in the rate of failures.

Table 4. Test scores of the control group

Control Group				
Subject	Score 1	Score 2	X-Y	(X-Y) <sup>2</sup>
1.	13.5	15	-1.5	2.25
2.	14.5	16	-1.5	2.25
3.	15.5	16	-0.5	0.62
4.	10	12	-2	4
5.	12.5	14	-1.5	2.25
6.	7	8	-1	1
7.	12.5	14	-1.5	2.25
8.	12.5	13.5	-1	1
9.	7	9	-2	4
10.	12	14	-2	4
11.	10.5	12.5	-2	4
12.	9	11	-2	4
13.	10	12	-2	4
14.	11.5	13	-1.5	2.25
15.	11	12	-1	1
16.	11.5	12	-0.5	0.62
17.	10	11	-1	1
18.	8	10	-2	4
19.	9	11	-2	4
20.	10.5	12	-1.5	2.25
21.	6.5	8	-1.5	2.25
22.	8	9	-1	1
23.	15.5	16	-0.5	0.62
24.	7.5	9	-1.5	2.25
25.	8	10	-2	4
26.	10	10	0	0
27.	10	11	-1	1
28.	10	12	-2	4
29.	11.5	10	1.5	2.25
30.	10	9	1	1
31.	8	6	2	4
32.	7.5	6	1.5	2.25
<b>SUM:</b>			<b>-33.5</b>	<b>75.36</b>

Table 5. Test scores of the experimental group

Experimental group				
Subject	Score 1	Score 2	X-Y	(X-Y) <sup>2</sup>
1	12	13	1-	1
2	9.5	10	-1.5	2.25
3	11	11	0	0
4	13	15	-2	4
5	11	14	-3	9
6	11.5	11	0.5	0.25
7	12.5	15	-1.5	2.25
8	9.5	9.5	0	0
9	11.5	12	-0.5	0.25
10	12.5	14	-1.5	2.25
11	11.5	13	-1.5	2.25
12	12	14	-2	4
13	9	10.5	-1.5	2.25
14	13.5	15	-1.5	2.25
15	9.5	10	0.5	0.25
16	9.5	11	-1.5	2.25
17	13.5	15	-1.5	2.25
18	11.5	13	-1.5	2.25
19	13.5	15	-1.5	2.25
20	11	12.5	-1.5	2.25
21	13	15	-2	4
22	11	13	-2	4
23	10	12	-2	4
24	12.5	14.5	-2	4
25	10.5	12	-1.5	2.25
26	13.5	15.5	-2	4
27	12.5	14	-1.5	2.25
28	12.5	10.5	2	4
29	9	10	-1	1
30	10	11	-1	1
31	12.5	14.5	-2	4
32	10.5	12	-1.5	2.25
SUM:			-39.5	79.25

Tables 4 and 5 show the scores of the students in tests. Both groups showed progress in their performance. However, the scores of the students in the experimental group were slightly higher. For the control group, the T-test calculation showed a sum of -33.5 (75.36) in the measurement of the progress from the pre-test to post-test scores while the experimental group showed a sum of -39.5 (79.25).

Table 6. Numbers of passes and failures in tests

	Pass	Fail	Row Totals
Control	24 (27.50) [0.45]	8 (4.50) [2.72]	32
Experimental	31 (27.50) [0.45]	1 (4.50) [2.72]	32
<i>Column Totals</i>	55	9	64 (Grand Total)

Based on the scores of the experimental group, a chi-square calculation was done to determine if there is a difference in the rate of failures in the post-tests. It was found that the experimental group had a much lower rate of failures in the post-test compared to the control group (Please refer to Table 6). Within the experimental group, it could be seen that the rate of failures in the post-test was much lower than the pre-test. The chi-square statistics as shown in Table 6 is 6.3354. The  $p$ -value is .011835. The result is significant at  $p < .05$ . These figures conclude that implementing language games reduces the failure rates. Games seem to help the weaker students improve. The  $H_0$  mentioned earlier is rejected while  $H_1$  is accepted.

### 5. Limitations of Study

The findings of this study cannot be safely generalized to other settings because the study focused on students at Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah. The sample may not completely represent the population of Malaysian university students. Besides, these findings were from only one teacher. It is not certain if there would have been similar findings if the experiment was conducted with other groups of students under other teachers. As noticed in the teachers' survey response, different teachers have different experience regarding the performance of students as a result of using language games. In terms of the instrument, the study measured the progress of students grammatical proficiency with merely a paper and pencil type of assessment. This research can be developed further in future by adding other forms of assessments such as oral presentation and written work.

### 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Games as activities for teaching grammar are already well explored, so their potential is in fact, well-known. Games are widespread and appreciated by learners of all ages. Teachers should exploit the use of games for making their teaching easy, interesting, learner-centred and motivational. However, it is still important to explore various possibilities and see personally how students react to a particular game, what they might like about it and what particular challenges might emerge on the way. Each learner is different. This is why the effectiveness of games varies from one student to the other. If games are to bring desired results, they must correspond to either the student's proficiency level, or age. The important point, therefore, is how to choose games, align them to the learners' abilities and making them useful language learning instruments.

Language games do not function as time fillers or killers. The success of meaningful and appropriate games is attributed to the following multiple factors which influence the positive experience or success of language learning:

- 1) It is a learner-centred approach that encourages discovery learning.
- 2) It increases motivation.
- 3) It provides a conducive environment for language learning. A language class full of relevant language games is stress free and reduces learning anxiety, which hinders learning.
- 4) It is interactive. In a class which is based on teaching through playing games, there are different types of interactions such as teacher-learner, learner-teacher, and learner-learner interaction.
- 5) It caters to various types of learners-auditory, visual and kinaesthetic learners.

It is for these reasons that in this study, students who had their lessons with language games got higher scores in tests than students who did not learn with games. Although the study emphasizes using language games, it stresses that games are effective to supplement learning to provide a variety, not to completely replace all other methods and be given the main role in class since every method has its advantages. This study just suggests it is better to learn with some games than to not learn with any games at all.

Teachers can allocate at least a third of the weekly class times for games as a diversion from the regular methods. In curriculum design, language games can be verbalized as part of the syllabus, curriculum or language programme to ensure that all teachers conduct them rather than leave it to the initiatives of some. Teachers who are not familiar with games or not used to conducting games can be trained. The higher authorities of a learning institution can support the teachers by allocating a budget for the relevant facilities and teaching materials.

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