The Effectiveness of Using Educational Games in Teaching Vocabulary and Grammar to Primary Stage Pupils

By:

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Abstract:

This research aimed to find out the effectiveness of using educational games in teaching vocabulary and grammar for 6th year primary school pupils. For this purpose, two intact groups were selected and assigned to an experimental group and a control one, twelve pupils in each group, from Complex Quran Memorization School (Primary School) in Gezan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the first term 2018-2019. The researcher used a quasi- experimental design. The researcher used the communicative approach and educational games to teach vocabulary and grammar for the experimental group, whereas the control group received regular instruction by using the communicative approach only. The researcher prepared vocabulary and grammar test. Pupils in both groups were pre-tested using the vocabulary and grammar test. After that, the researcher used the educational games for teaching the experimental group, while the control group received regular instruction. Finally, the same vocabulary and grammar test was posttested on both groups. The data obtained were statistically analyzed. Findings indicated that the experimental group exceeded the control group in vocabulary and grammar posttest. Thus, the educational games proved to have a large effectiveness in teaching 6th year primary school pupils' vocabulary and grammar.

<u>Keywords</u>: Educational games, vocabulary, grammar, primary stage pupils.

Introduction:

Nowadays, English language represents the dominant language in the world; it is the international language that is spoken worldwide. People can never know how to share the same concepts, anticipations, approvals and so forth, if there is no apparent language comprehension. Therefore, language comprehension has become an important measurement for what it means to be as an individual. People without language could still communicate, but they could not influence one another.

English has become the worldwide second language for all the nations around the world. This increasing importance in learning English led people to design and apply new techniques in teaching. Especially everyone realized that it is vital for children to start learning language at a very early age. Teacher should follow different ways while engaging with lessons for children.

Vocabulary is the one component that merges all the four language skills which are listening, reading, speaking and writing together. Therefore, it is crucial for learner of English to know a sufficient amount of words and how to use them. In fact, English teachers have found out that the more vocabulary that the students know the better their performance in English will be. Young learners learn way better when the lesson is more fun, interesting and interactive. Their senses need to be stimulated for them to be able to learn effectively. Thus, a lot of researchers have mentioned that the use of educational games will in so many ways help young learners to master a language in this case, English. Hadfield (1997; Quoted in Deesri, 2002, p.1) shows games as "an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun." Language games will help them focus and attract their interest and attention towards that particular lesson.

Pradeep (2013) also indicated that teachers should not neglect teaching grammar because it is very important. If students are proficient in grammar, they can speak English more correctly. However, Denham (1992) asserted the reality that teachers use the Grammar Translation Method approach (GTM) in teaching. However, it is famous for being teacher-centered not

student centered, it does not give students opportunity to contact in English. That's why teachers have to use various ways to teach grammar to let students express their ideas perfectly and obviously in English.

Any curricula differ and develop according to student-centered teaching approach, this requires using various approaches, strategies, and techniques responding to the approach of constructivism and requiring good share of students in the process of learning. The educational games are one of the approaches which is suitable to this teaching. Thus, the researcher has to perform this study to find out the effectiveness of educational games in teaching the English language in general and vocabulary and grammar in particular at the primary stage.

Statement of the problem

Out of the researcher's experience as a teacher of EFL, it has been noticed that 6th year primary school pupils encounter difficulties in vocabulary and grammar skills. Such lack of vocabulary and grammar skills may be due to the method of teaching vocabulary and grammar regular teachers use in the vocabulary and grammar classroom.

Vocabulary and grammar are a foundation for language competency. However, acquiring a huge amount of words and grammar from a totally different language from our mother tongue is quite challenging especially for young learners. English teachers find it hard to get pupils to remember the required words and grammar. More often than not, pupils are able to memorize the words and rules of grammar taught during the lesson but forget them all over again the next day. The traditional way of presenting the words for instance, by listing them down or even by showing pictures on flash cards are not always effective. So, English teachers are constantly thinking and searching for the most suitable way to overcome this problem.

Hence, the notion of using games in young learner language learning classroom is put forward. This is due to the fact that children love games and by incorporating those in the lesson might help them not forget the vocabulary or grammar.

Questions of the Research

The Research problem could be stated in the following main question:

• What is the effectiveness of using educational games in teaching vocabulary and grammar to primary stage pupils?

Under this main question the following sub questions are set:

- 1. Are educational games effective in teaching vocabulary for fifth year primary school pupils?
- 2. Are educational games effective in teaching grammar for fifth year primary school pupils?

Aim of the Research:

The aim of this research is to identify the effectiveness of using educational games in teaching vocabulary and grammar for primary stage pupils.

Significance of the Research:

The present research might help:

- 1. **Pupils** as games are able to promote healthy competition among pupils in the classroom. They also help in creating a non— threatening learning environment. They also provide the chances for pupils to use and practice the language in usefully and meaningfully.
- 2. **Teachers** as games provide English teachers with a better perception in using various language games in their classroom. They are also so effective that teachers are more motivated to use language games as a tool to improve their pupils' linguistic abilities.

- 3. **Curriculum designers** as they direct their attention to educational games to incorporate some of the methods, techniques and activities based on them.
- 4. **Researchers** as they provide them with new avenues of research in educational games and how they can be used to teach pupils/students at the various stages of education.

Delimitations of the Research

The present research was delimited to:

- 1. A group of 6th year primary school pupils (N=24) from Complex Quran Memorization School (Primary School) in Gazan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
 - 2. Some vocabulary and grammar skills.
 - 3. The first semester of the academic year 2018–2019.

Instruments and Materials of the

Research:

- 1. A checklist of vocabulary and grammar skills.
- A vocabulary and grammar pre posttest.
- A teacher's guide.

Procedures of the Study:

To answer the questions of the study, the researcher followed the following procedures:

- 1. Reviewing the previous literature and studies in the field of EFL vocabulary and grammar skills and the educational games approach literature.
- 2. Preparing a list of vocabulary and grammar skills required for the 6th year primary school pupils.
 - 3. Preparing the vocabulary and grammar skills test(s).

- 4. Presenting vocabulary and grammar skills and the tests to a panel of jurors for validation.
- 5. Preparing the principles, criteria and guidelines for the educational games approach.
 - 6. Selecting control and experimental groups 12 pupils each.
 - 7. Pre testing for both groups control and experimental
- 8. Administering the educational games approach on the experimental group.
 - 9. Traditional teaching method for the control group
 - 10. Post intervention testing for both groups.
- 11. Comparing both the pre and post testing results of the study sample.
 - 12. Analyzing the results statistically.
 - 13. Interpreting the results and discussing them.
- 14. Drawing conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

Definition of Terms:

Educational Games:

It is clear that, educational games have no fixed definition. For instance, Royle (2008, p12) states that educational games "are games designed with specific curriculum objectives in mind. Prensky (2011) defined educational games as interactive plays by which students can learn problem solving, goals, rules, adaptation and interaction, they are like a story. They can provide learners with enjoyment, passionate involvement, structure, motivation, gratification, adrenaline, creativity, social interaction and emotion.

The researcher defined educational game as an activity which students can play, learn and commmunicate with each other's in a useful way.

Vocabulary: Ur (1996: 60) stated that, we can define vocabulary as the words we aquire in the foreign language. The researcher defined vocabulary as the words students learn in a foreign language.

Grammar: There are various definitions about grammar. Some of them: describe it as the structure of a language and the way in which words and phrases are combined to produce sentences in the language (Richards, Platte and Weber, 1985); another definition might be: grammar is a combination of structures that show how words are set together to form meaning within a language.

The researcher defined grammar as 'the way words are put together to make correct sentences.

Chapter Two: Literature review

Vocabulary

Teaching:

Vocabulary:

It is obvious that, vocabulary has become an important learning objective by itself. McCarthy (1990:2) asserted that "Vocabulary is the biggest component of any language. If you do not know enough vocabulary you will not be able to express yourself adequately".

Thornburry (2002:13) also explained that "Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed". Allen (1983) added that "Students who do not learn grammar along with vocabulary will not be able to use the language for communication". This indicates that vocabulary and grammar are important in language teaching and communication.

Using Games to Teach Vocabulary: Hadfield (1998:4) asserted that, "A game is or activity with rules, a goal, and element of fun, which is divided into two kinds; competitive games, in which players or teams race to be the first to reach the goal, and cooperative games, in which players or teams work together towards a common goal". Games are activities in which children are engaged naturally and universally. They are played for pleasure. Children enjoy competing with each other during playing games. While playing games, children do not concentrate on the language involved in doing so.

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Benefits of Games in Teaching Grammar: Some researchers assert the great value of games in teaching grammar. Iudewig (2007) said that, "Games and problem-solving activities... have a purpose beyond the production of correct speech, and are examples of the most preferable communicative activities". It is clear that, students are more motivated and willing to take part in games than they are with performing various exercises. The authors also added that, when students are taught with grammar games, they enhance knowledge and apply them in their learning

Additionally, Ersoz (2000) indicated that, students are highly motivated and amused when they use games. Students were very excited,

He added that, "using games and activities raise the competition and cooperation in the classroom." Games also let students use the target language meaningfully in a real-life context.

Griva, Semoglou and Geladari (2010, p. 3704) stated that, using games helps students promote, motivate and improve their comprehension of the subject. "It has been showed that, when teachers perform language learning in a "playful" atmosphere, it increases the motivation and confidence of students. According to Schunna (2010), Teachers, need to use games carefully. "Teachers need to think about which games to use, when to use them, how to connect them up with the course, textbook or syllable and how will students make best use of different games in different ways". Therefore, the teacher must design and organize successful games well. He should make them clear, and funny.

Function of Games in the Field of Grammar: There are many functions of games in the language classroom. Teachers can introduce new materials, certain themes and learnt language items by using carefully planned gameactivities. Moreover, they help to change the roles we play in classrooms traditionally. For example, the students are provided with a series of pictures who to make up a story that depict the events.

We should put into considerations that, games 'make the procuration of the foreign language easy rather than its learning' yolageldili (2011) indicated

that, students and teachers could interact and co-operate during language game-activities. So, McCarthy (1991) states one way to help this process, is using pair work and group work. Thus, students are working at the same time and are less probably to be bored.

Furthermore, group work can decrease the domination of the teacher and so provides students with more control over their learning.

Advantages of Games: Games have a remarkable power to involve our attention to all around us. Main pillars of psychology inform us that, motivation is necessary to do anything so often, by so many on its own. There are all kinds of exciting theories there is something rewarding about games and that something is very powerful which makes games motivating, Games are fun and fun is motivating. In addition to the food and the shelter fun is one of the main of life people will call for. We will carry out something fun many times, just to have the experience.

It is a fact that, most people involve willingly in difficult and even tiring tasks if those tasks are in the status of a game. This is the reason why teachers take school skills and wrap them up in some fun to use the strength of games for learning. Ludewig& Swan (2007: xi) indicated that, each game is a chance to bring fun to practice the skill in a way that raises the "fun quotient" and supports the desire to involve in the game many times.

Games and simulations permit students to experience life-like situation in which there is a social interaction and observable outcome. Games contribute more to the development of social process than the acquisition of information or basic learning context.

There are many advantages of using games in the classroom:

- They enable learners to communicate and interact.
- They provide a meaningful situation for language use.
- Games do not only help the learners to experience language, but they also help them study it.

There are also some other reasons why teachers should prefer using games in their lesson

- 1. The student seeks to solve problems in which he is intimately involved.
 - 2. They are motivating and challenging.
- 3. The student is satisfied when he senses a new insight as new ideas and concepts are formulated.
 - 4. Games allow students to practice the various skills of language.
- 5. The student is placing a more realistic environment than in any other form of learning.
- 6. They enable students to communicate and interact with each other's.
- 7. A full range of audio-visual media can be used to create realistic simulated environments. Audio tape, films, television and other media offer opportunities to capture and distribute useful stimuli.
 - 8. A high degree of interest is generated through realistic participants.
 - 9. Games provide meaningful situations to use the language.

Limitations of Games:

- 1. Games often distort the social situation they are attempting to stimulate. In an attempt to simplify the social context students, gain false confidence.
- 2. Since games are fabricated by people, the assumptions of game's designer often distort reality.
- 3. Most games require only a few people to play. Should the same game be played by several groups? Should one game rotate throughout the class from time to time?

Types of Games: We can categorize games in some ways. First, we can categorized them as:

- 1. Based on observation.
- 2. Based on interpretation.
- 3. Based on individual/group interaction.

- 4. Pencil and paper games.
- 5. Card games.
- 6. Board games.

Another way of categorizing them is to say there are two types of games that are competitive games, and cooperative games.

We can also say that there are two types of games which are linguistic games and communicative games. In linguistic games, accuracy is the goal of the game, i.e. introducing a correct structure. Communicative games, however, are activities which have no linguistic goal or aim. To complete the task successfully, students will engage in carrying out of a task such as completing a chart, drawing in a way on a map, or finding two suitable pictures, rather than correcting the production of a structure.

Reviewing the literature:

The researchers reviewed the available literature consistent to the topic of the study. They found out that too many studies have been carried out. The studies have shown some light on the advantages of using games in learning. All these studies strongly agreed to the use of games as they overcome the usual routine of language class. It has been said that games are ice breaks and energizers that can force interaction without depending on book. The researcher is encouraged to perform this study due to what has been said about using games in learning. Through the review of literature, the researchers picked out some of these studies which are introduced as follows:

Theoretical

Studies:

There are many studies that dealt with educational games such as Quinn (2011) students become more involved and committed to complete the game, Serious games encourage students to participate actively in finding out new ideas, data and solutions to problems.

Prensky (2011) advocated the way that asserted the role of games as a shape of fun which provides learners with fun and enjoyment.

Schuna (2010) asserted that playing educational games increases student's self- esteem.

Macedonia (2005) argues if learning a foreign language is theoretical or practical. She found out that the process of learning FL is practical (i.e. practicalism is a product of practicing). Language games are proceduralising a foreign language of the methods which are used in a targeted way.

Kamra, (2010) found out that, using games is a perfect way to teach English in the classroom. Using games is a good way to get the best results in the classroom. It increases students' motivation.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Research Design:

This study used a quasi- experimental design, where two intact groups from pupils were assigned randomly to two groups, experimental and control 12 pupils each. The experimental group used the educational games in developing their vocabulary and grammar skills. While the control group used the traditional method. A pre-test and an equivalent post-test were given to the two groups before and after the intervention.

Participants of the Research:

24 pupils of the 6th year of primary stage pupils participated in the research. They were enrolled in Complex Quran Memorization School (Primary School) in Gezan, The kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The participants' ages ranged between ten to eleven years old. The researcher taught the experimental group via using the educational games, while another teacher taught the control group via regular instruction.

Evaluation Instruments:

At first a pre-test is used to measure the knowledge of the students in vocabulary and grammar. The test consists of twenty multiple choice questions.

Not only the control but also the experimental group have been examined by this multiple-choice test.

After the pre-test was applied to these groups. The control group was taught by communicative approach without any games. On the other hand, the experimental group was taught by communicative approach but with games. By doing this we could measure the possible difference which may occur after using games or not using games as a teaching tool. After this, the post-test has been applied to both groups and the results have been analyzed by t-test.

Chapter Four:

The Analysis and Interpretation of the Experimental Study

In this part, both the results of pre-tests and post-tests are analyzed in comparing the control and experimental group.

Test score SD Ρ Groups Ν Test Preaverage value value test Out of 20 **Experimental** 12 11,84 4,33 1.96 0,405 Control 12 10,04 3,82

Table (1): Group Statistics of Pre-test

Table (1) shows the pre-test results. By using the t-test before the research, the comparison of the parts of the levels of the two groups has been tested. As a result of the pre-tests the mean of control group is 10.04 while the experimenter's mean is 11.84.

Also, the 't' value is just 1, 96 which has been proved us there is no difference between the levels of the two groups as P value was higher than the significance value of 0.05 According to all of these results, there is no statistically significant difference between these groups. The calculated values show us the pretest results which were taken by each group are very similar and this also proves that the group levels of grammar and vocabulary are close or almost the same.

Table (2): Group Statistics of Post-test

Pre- test	Groups	N	Average score of 20	Std. Deviation	т	Р
	Experimental	12	16,7	3,48	3,11	0,003
	Control	12	11,3	3,88		

Table (2) shows the post-test results of the experimental and control group students. The mean of control group is 11, 3 whereas the mean of experimental group is 16, 7. At the beginning pre-test results are so closer but when we look at the results of the post- test, this situation has been changed in the favor of the experimental group. On the other hand, when we think that there are twenty questions, the highest score of the students are expected to have is twenty, both of the groups pre-test results were similar whereas post-test results of the experimental group have been increased after the experiment in comparison to the control group with a statistically significant result as test value = 3.11 and P value =0.003 which is less than the significance level of 0.05.

Table (3): Group Statistics of Results

	Groups	N	Pre-test		Post-test		_	Р
Pre-			Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd	•	
test			score	Su	score	Su		
	Experimental	12	11,84	4,33	16,7	3,48	3,11	0,003
	Control	12	10,04	3,82	11,3	3,88		

^{*}p<.001

When we look over the table, While the mean of pre-test (X

=11,84) and posttest (X = 16.7) of the experimental group students have a difference of five points, the mean of pre-test (X = 10.04) and post-test (X = 10.04)

=11,3) of the control group students have a difference of one point.

The comparison has been made between the results of the two groups pre and post-tests. In table (3), we can see the score attained from the test results of the students. This outcome scores have been calculated by subtracting the result points of each student's pre-test from the post- test scores.

The 't' value applied to describe if the difference is statistically significant or not. The value which has been found by the comparing the results of the pre and post-tests (t=3, 11, p<.005) shows a statistical significant difference in favor of the experimental group.

This results in that the using of the games during the teaching period is more effective than not using them.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Summary and Findings:

This study aimed to find out the effectiveness of educational games in teaching vocabulary and grammar for primary stage pupils. For this purpose of this study, the two 6th grade groups in Complex Quran Memorization School (Primary School) were selected. The control group(12 pupils) was taught by the communicative approach but without any games. On the other hand, The experimental group (12 pupils) were taught by communicative approach but by using games wherever applicable.

There is a saying "Tell me.... and I forget. Show me... and I remember. Involve me... and I understand!" This is just a fact. If we just using classical methods which depend on just telling the subject, the learning process will not be so enjoyable, motivated and permanent. After probably one month, the students probably will forget nearly all of the things the teacher has taught. If as English language teachers we use visual materials during the courses, the students will remember easily. But if we use more effective ways to teach English vocabulary and grammar, the students not only remember but also understand what has been taught. If a student memorizes something like a

parrot, he is going to forget it. Because it is meaningless to him. It makes no sense to him. Whereas if he involves in the teaching and learning process, he is going to understand the subject. How can we involve our students in teaching and learning process? The answer of this question is so easy: "just using language games as an educational tool in our classrooms.

There are a lot of factors which effect success and desire of a learner. One of them is motivation. Games are so motivational. So, by using games, our students not only involve the lesson, but also they are motivated. By involving in the games, students learn consciously and also unconsciously. They both learn and acquire the subject. Because they exposure the language. They use the language into the context to communicate. This is so important. By using Communicative Approach in our classrooms, we give opportunities to our students to concentrate on their own learning process via an understanding of their own styles of learning and via the development of appropriate strategies for autonomous learning. The Communicative Approach in language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. Whenever possible "authentic language" which means language as it is used in a real context should be introduced. One of the ways to apply it in our classrooms is teaching English through games.

Although this study has been carried out at Complex Quran Memorization School (Primary School), this method may be applied to other students who are in other primary schools. Finally, using educational games when needed during the teaching process help the students to take a more active place in the class environment. They enjoy the lesson, they involve in the lesson, and therefore, they both learn and acquire the subject more easily and permanently.

Findings of the current study might be due to the following:

First: Setting goals is one of the stages in the educational games approach teaching. The introductory session familiarized pupils with the goals and objectives of the educational games approach.

Second: The use of the educational games approach promotes the development of vocabulary and grammar skills in a secure learning environment that was designed to provide a low effective filter.

Third: The educational games approach provides a framework for instruction in which lessons were designed and adapted to meet the individual linguistic needs and stages of language development.

Fourth: The educational games approach tends to generate a climate that is non-threatening to the learners. Learners also can overcome their fears of inaccurate vocabulary and grammar and engage in learning environment under lower risk circumstances.

Fifth: The researchers used varied and interesting activities relevant to the pupils in order to engage them in these activities. These activities included (3-2-1 activity, Note Comparison/Sharing, The Fish Bowl, Write-pair-share, Debates, Minute Papers, Three-Step Interview, Think-Pair-Share, Round robin, Group investigation, Jigsaw)

Sixth: The activities in the educational games approach arouse pupil's interest and help them to engage more in learning process as a result, learning becomes more meaningful.

Seventh: The researcher used verbal persuasion feedback in the form of positive statement before, while and after performing the activities to help them gain confidence in their abilities.

Eighth: Acquiring a second language is a process that requires going through several stages. Language was acquired through meaningful content that focused on partner and team learning. It occurred when learners comprehend the message they received, also known as comprehensible input.

Ninth: The teacher is effective because he engages the students in learning by utilizing an active learning environment. The active learning teacher encourages the pupils to participate in classroom activities. The teacher motivates the pupils to collaborate and inter act with each other in a low affective classroom.

Conclusion:

From the results explained, it can be suggested that in applying educational games approach in their teaching, teachers must have a good preparation. They firstly must get a good knowledge about what educational games is, how it is implemented, what difficulties commonly take place in educational games and how to deal with them. Besides, as it is applied, teachers need to permanently reflect and revise the steps and activities applied. Meanwhile, the schools are recommended to be prepared with the means required for the application of educational games model. The facilities that should be provided are computers and excellent access of Internet. Finally, future researchers should investigate more in resolving the learning materials used. Besides, the similar study with different groups of learners and contexts is needed in order to give wider perspective of the implementation of educational games in EFL scopes.

To conclude, educational games approach proved to be effective in developing 6th year primary school pupils' vocabulary and grammar skills. This result was indicated by the significant improvement among pupils on the vocabulary and grammar skills. This result may be attributed to different factors: the individual and cooperative learning opportunities, pupils positive attitude towards the educational games approach and the supportive role of the researcher.

Recommendatio

ns:

Based on the previous results, the following recommendations could be presented:

- 1. It is necessary to devote more time in English language teaching to teaching vocabulary and grammar skills.
- 2. There should more emphasis on the educational games approach in teaching English courses especially to primary school pupils.

- 3. Primary school pupils should be given the opportunity to participate in activities which foster their motivation for learning vocabulary and grammar skills.
- 4. The educational games approach should be utilized for treating EFL vocabulary and grammar difficulties which primary stage pupils encounter during vocabulary and grammar.
- 5. Teachers should emphasize the development of the pupils' vocabulary and grammar skills in early educational stages in order to develop throughout following stages to prevent any possible vocabulary and grammar difficulties the pupils may face.
- 6. Pupils should be provided with authentic and real learning situations that might help in developing their vocabulary and grammar skills.

Suggestions for Further Research:

In view of the findings of the present study, following suggestions were recommended to be later investigated:

- 1. Further research is needed to investigate the effect of the flipped classroom approach for developing other EFL reading comprehension skills and writing skills.
- 2. Further research is needed to investigate the effectiveness of using the educational games approach on teaching speaking in English.
- 3. Further research is needed to investigate the effectiveness of using the educational games approach on teaching listening in English.
- 4. Further research is needed to investigate the use of the educational games approach to develop EFL language skills among prep school pupils.
- 5. Further research is also needed to investigate the effectiveness of using the educational games approach on various EFL vocabulary and grammar skills at various educational stages.

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