



THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LANGUAGE GAMES IN TEACHING TENSES

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Abstract: English plays a crucial role as a global language, making its effective teaching and learning essential. Grammar, as the structural foundation of any language, is a key component in mastering English, yet it often presents challenges for learners. Among grammatical aspects, tenses are particularly significant, as they help convey the timing and nature of actions accurately. However, traditional methods of teaching tenses, which rely heavily on memorization and rule-based instruction, can make learning dull and ineffective. This study explores the effectiveness of language games as an interactive and engaging approach to teaching tenses. By incorporating communicative and game-based methods, students can develop a deeper understanding of tense structures in a more enjoyable and meaningful way, enhancing both their accuracy and confidence in using English.

Keywords: teaching grammar, tenses, game-based learning, student engagement, interactive teaching strategies

Аннотация: Английский язык играет важную роль как глобальный язык, что делает его эффективное обучение и изучение необходимым. Грамматика, являясь структурной основой любого языка, является ключевым компонентом в освоении английского, однако она часто вызывает трудности у учащихся. Среди грамматических аспектов особенно важны времена, так как они помогают точно передавать время и характер действий. Однако традиционные методы обучения временам, основанные на запоминании и изучении правил, могут сделать процесс обучения скучным и неэффективным. В данном исследовании рассматривается эффективность языковых игр как интерактивного и увлекательного подхода к обучению временам. Использование коммуникативных и игровых методов позволяет учащимся глубже понять структуру времен в более увлекательной и значимой форме, повышая как их точность, так и уверенность в использовании английского языка.

Ключевые слова: преподавание грамматики, времена, игровое обучение, вовлеченность студентов, интерактивные методы преподавания.



INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, it is widely accepted that English is essential, serving as a global language. The English language is becoming an increasingly important aspect of nearly every field, such as education, tourism, IT, and economics, engineering, health and humanities. Therefore, teaching and learning the language effectively has a crucial role and sometimes, this is an arduous situation which requires careful selection and application of a suitable method in the classroom. Regardless of the approach utilized, it seems that foreign language learners (FL) often have a strong interest in studying grammar concepts, especially tenses. Frequently, they request their teacher to explain the most important and fundamental grammar rules for better understanding and simplifying the complex structures of target language[3].

Formal grammar teaching methods are applied in many schools, where students are mainly taught various rules and structures. However, increasing students' interest in grammar is a crucial task for teachers. According to Ismail, "Grammar, which consists of tenses, is an integral part of language and forms its fundamental structure." [1] English grammar primarily consists of tenses and verbs.

Grammar is the foundation of language, yet many learners struggle with mastering tenses. Some believe tenses are naturally difficult due to their complexity, while others argue that ineffective teaching methods make learning harder. Traditional grammar lessons often focus on memorization, which can be dull and ineffective. Instead, learners should practice tenses in real-life contexts to improve retention and understanding.

Research shows that young children learn best through engaging activities. Using games in grammar lessons makes learning interactive and enjoyable, helping students absorb tense structures naturally[4]. Many educators agree that storytelling, visual aids, and conversations reinforce tenses better than memorization. Some experts suggest that fluency should be prioritized over grammatical accuracy in early stages to build confidence.

By making tense instruction more interactive and practical, teachers can help students use grammar correctly and naturally, ensuring long-term success in language learning.

Tenses

Tense comes from the Old French word "Tens", meaning time, and the Latin word "Tempus", which also means time. It indicates when an action occurs—past, present, or future. In addition to time, tenses also express aspect, which shows whether an action is completed, ongoing, or habitual. For example, in the sentence "He is making a cake" the tense is present, and the aspect is progressive.

Many learners struggle with tenses, as seen in studies on Thai students, where researchers found that tense is one of the most difficult aspects of English grammar



to acquire. Misunderstanding happens when learners confuse time with aspect, leading to errors. As Frederickson [2] explains, students often associate specific verb tenses with certain time frames, which can result in mistakes.

Tenses are essential for clear communication. Halliday [2] argues that mastering tenses helps learners improve their overall English proficiency. Some researchers suggest that English teachers should focus more on grammar instruction rather than literature, providing students with more practice and real-life examples to develop their skills. Additionally, research by Kohlmyr [3] shows that learners frequently misuse the future tense, often replacing it with the present tense.

To improve tense usage, teachers should emphasize practice, real-world application, and clear explanations of time and aspect. Understanding tenses correctly allows learners to communicate more accurately and confidently in English.

METHODS

This study employed a **mixed-method approach** (qualitative and quantitative) to compare the effectiveness of **traditional methods** and **language games** in teaching past tenses. The research was conducted at **School No. 15 in Angren, Tashkent region**, involving two sixth-grade classes (**6-"A" and 6-"V"**), each consisting of **12 students**. Both groups followed the same curriculum and used identical textbooks to ensure consistency. However, **6-"A"** was taught using **traditional methods**, while **6-"V"** learned through **interactive language games**.

During the **second quarter of the academic year**, multiple lessons were dedicated to teaching the **past tense**. In **6-"A"**, the topic was taught using a **blackboard and chalk**, followed by textbook exercises and written drills. In contrast, **6-"V"** was first introduced to the topic through a **video clip** and then engaged in various grammar games. One such game, **"Tenses"**, involved students rolling cubes with time prepositions and selecting word cards to form **past-tense sentences**. This interactive approach allowed students to construct meaningful sentences in a playful manner.

Additionally, the **past simple tense** was taught in **7-"A"** in December, where students faced difficulties in memorizing **irregular verbs**. To reinforce learning, the **"Domino" game** was introduced. The **14 students** were first taught the topic traditionally and then played the game in the following lesson. They were divided into **two groups of seven**, each receiving a shuffled set of **domino sheets** containing **pairs of irregular verbs**. The goal was to **arrange the verbs in the correct sequence within 20 minutes**, starting with **"go" → "went"** and continuing in a chain until reaching **"Finish"**.

To assess the impact of these teaching methods, **pre-tests and post-tests** were conducted to measure students' understanding of the past tense. Additionally,



classroom observations were made to evaluate engagement levels, and **student feedback surveys** provided insights into their learning experiences. The effectiveness of each method was analyzed based on **accuracy improvement, participation levels, and retention rates over four weeks.**

RESULTS

The results of the study revealed a significant difference in **student engagement, accuracy, and retention** between the two teaching methods. In 6-"A", where **traditional methods** were used, students showed **moderate improvement** in their understanding of past tenses. Before the lessons, only **3 students** scored the highest mark (5) on the pre-test. After the lessons, this number increased to **5 students**, while the rest showed only slight progress. Classroom observations indicated that students often **lost interest**, and their engagement levels remained **low to moderate** throughout the lessons.

In contrast, 6-"V", which used **language games**, demonstrated **higher participation and enthusiasm**. Before the lessons, **4 students** scored a 5, but after using interactive methods, this number **doubled to 8 students**. Additionally, students retained the material better, as follow-up assessments conducted four weeks later showed a **22% higher retention rate** than in 6-"A". The interactive nature of the games helped them **grasp concepts more naturally** and **apply grammar rules in context**, reducing rote memorization.

Similarly, in 7-"A", where the **"Domino" game** was used to reinforce **irregular verbs**, students displayed **enhanced recall and faster recognition of verb forms**. Before the activity, their exam results showed a **71% understanding of irregular verbs**, which **increased to 80%** after implementing the game. The game encouraged **teamwork and logical thinking**, making learning more **engaging and effective**.

These findings align with **Adeng & Shah (2012)**, who argue that grammar instruction **based too heavily on memorization and rules** can lead to a loss of motivation, whereas **game-based learning fosters engagement and better retention**[3]. This study supports their view, demonstrating that **interactive activities can significantly enhance grammar learning outcomes compared to conventional teaching methods.**

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the effectiveness of language games in teaching grammar, particularly in fostering engagement and improving retention. Traditional methods, which rely heavily on memorization and repetitive exercises, often fail to sustain students' motivation. In contrast, interactive activities create a dynamic learning environment where students actively participate, making the learning process more enjoyable and meaningful.



One of the key **advantages** of language games is that they provide a **low-stress setting**, allowing students to practice grammar without the fear of making mistakes. Games such as "**Tenses**" and "**Domino**" encouraged students to apply grammar rules in a practical way, reinforcing their understanding through hands-on experiences. Research suggests that **students learn more effectively when they engage in meaningful communication rather than simply memorizing rules**[3]. By integrating grammar into interactive activities, students were able to see its relevance in real-life contexts, which increased their willingness to participate.

However, implementing game-based learning also comes with **challenges**. One significant issue was **the varying levels of English proficiency among students**. Some learners, especially those with a weak foundation in English, struggled to keep up with the fast-paced nature of games. Without a solid understanding of basic grammar, they found it difficult to construct sentences accurately and often relied on guesswork rather than applying learned rules. Additionally, some **less active or shy students** hesitated to participate fully, preferring to observe rather than engage, which limited their opportunities for practice.

Another difficulty was **classroom management**, as interactive activities sometimes led to excessive excitement, making it harder to maintain focus. Some students became overly competitive, focusing more on winning the game rather than learning the grammatical structures correctly. Additionally, **time constraints** posed a challenge, as game-based lessons required careful preparation and organization to ensure that learning objectives were met within the limited class period.

To address these challenges, teachers should receive **training on balancing interactive and structured learning approaches**, ensuring that all students—regardless of their proficiency level—benefit from language games. Gradual integration of game-based activities, along with clear instructions and scaffolding for weaker students, can help maximize the effectiveness of this method. Encouraging teamwork and peer support can also aid less confident students in actively participating without fear of making mistakes.

Despite these challenges, the study confirms that **game-based learning fosters a positive attitude toward language acquisition**, making grammar lessons more engaging and effective. By adapting teaching strategies to accommodate diverse learning needs, educators can create a more inclusive and motivating environment for students to develop their English skills.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that language games are an effective way to teach tenses, making lessons more engaging and improving students' understanding. Unlike traditional methods focused on memorization, games encourage active participation



and help learners grasp grammar in a meaningful way. Although challenges like different skill levels and classroom management exist, the benefits outweigh the difficulties. With proper planning, teachers can use games to create a more interactive and supportive learning environment. Overall, language games make learning grammar more enjoyable and effective, helping students build confidence and use English more naturally.

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