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Effectiveness of Game-based Language Teaching in Young Learners' Classes in the KRI: Students' Achievements and Teachers' Perceptions

Khozga Harbi Ameen[1], Javad Gholami[2*]

[1]PhD Candidate, Department of English, Urmia University, Urmia, Iran
khozgaharbi@gmail.com
[2]Professor, Department of English, Urmia University, Urmia, Iran

Corresponding Author: Javad Gholami Email: j.gholami@urmia.ac.ir

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Abstract: This study investigated the impact of game-based language teaching on students' vocabulary and grammar acquisition while also analyzing teachers' perceptions of this instructional approach in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Recognizing the transformative potential of games in enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes, the research employs a mixed-methods approach. The data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests, as well as teacher interviews to assess both student progress and educators' perceptions of game-based language learning. A total of 74 elementary-level students (aged 12-14) in grade 6 participated in the study, which examined the impacts of game-based language teaching on grammar and vocabulary learning also 20 of various ages and educational backgrounds participated in the qualitative component which involved interviews with them using 15 structured questions learn more about their experiences with GBL. Bingo and Pictionary are two examples of educational games that were used to improve learning results and student engagement. The findings indicate that game-based activities significantly improve young learners' vocabulary retention and grammar acquisition, participation, and overall motivation. Challenges such as classroom management and resource limitations were identified despite the advantages. The study underscores the necessity for ongoing professional development for educators to effectively integrate game-based strategies into their teaching practices. Ultimately, the research advocates for the continued use of game-based learning as a valuable tool in language education, fostering a dynamic and interactive learning environment.

Keywords: Game-based learning, EFL teachers, young learners, Language acquisition, Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Introduction

Games have been used in classrooms for years, and studies have shown that they are effective at improving student learning. The use of games in the classroom can inspire learning by making subjects come alive. If you look at the studies that have been done on games, you'll see that different researchers have defined games in different ways. According to Aarseth (2014), "Games are the facilitators that structure player behavior and whose main goal is enjoyment," but Kinzie and Joseph (2008) described a game as "an immersive, voluntary and fun activity in which a challenging goal is pursued according to the agreed rules". Games may be categorized

based on a variety of factors. Games can be classified into different types based on factors like the age range they are intended for (infant age games, early childhood games, children's games, youth games, adult games), the developmental area they target (cognitive games, physical games, language games, social games, games based on self-care skills), and the characteristics of the environment where they are played (indoor games, outdoor games). Games may be played across many genres at once thanks to the transdisciplinary approach, depending on a number of criteria. For instance, imitation play may be categorized as both free and sociable activities for kids. Despite the lack of definite guidelines defining the various kinds of games, games might be categorized in this way (Bardak, 2018). It is well-recognized that games play an important part in the lives of all living species, not just humans. Games, which serve a variety of objectives for people of all ages, provide important contributions to people's education and personal growth. In this regard, it was necessary to incorporate games into the curriculum as both an instructional and entertaining tool (Malta, 2010). The game is a genuine instructional instrument and has an important role in educational science. However, other countries that place a high value on formal education do not include it in their educational systems because they do not view it as a constructive activity (Aral, 2010).

Garris, Ahlers, and Driskell (2002) created the Game-Based Learning Model, which emphasizes how people learn through playing. The input, process, and output components of the game-based learning paradigm are present. The input is made up of instructional materials and game characteristics, while the process element is the game cycle and the output is the learning results. In the course of the game cycle, there is a blurring of the instructional materials and gaming elements in the input. The player's action starts the game cycle. As a result of the player's activity, feedback is sent to them during the game cycle. In this manner, the player starts to understand the rules of the game and adjust to them. The player must conduct the inquiry procedure in accordance with the game cycle to arrive at the outputs. The person adapts and applies what they learn in the game to their actual life during the inquiry process. Learning outcomes are obtained by those who can effectively complete the inquiry process (Garris, Ahlers, & Driskell, 2002). In game-based learning settings, people make new discoveries in light of what they already know in order to achieve learning objectives. In this process, people layer new information over old information to create new and distinct solutions by comparing their past knowledge with their new knowledge.

Games have a specific role in every foreign language teaching program since they improve foreign language acquisition, especially for young learners. This is true even though some English teachers view language games as time-wasters or classroom tricks for amusement. English language teaching and learning have become considerably more difficult for instructors and students with the advent of communicative language instruction, just as every new technology presents difficulties for its users.

In addition to offering entertainment and relaxation, games also encourage students to utilize their language in a creative and communicative way, which has become significantly essential for English language learners and teachers. In a similar vein, it may be inferred that games are a natural part of the life of young learners because the phrase "young learners" is defined as including children between the ages of about 5 and 12 (Rixon, 1999).

In conclusion, games have a significant educational value and provide language teachers a number of benefits when utilized in foreign language lessons. According to a review of studies on language games, games have a significant role in many aspects of foreign language teaching and learning. The primary topics covered in the literature include utilizing games to teach grammar to young learners (Nedomová, 2007; Bekiri, 2003; Hong, 2002), picking which game to employ, and considerations to take into consideration when choosing games (Nedomová, 2007; Rixon, 1991; McCallum, 1980). Choosing the right moment to use games (Lee, 1979; Rinvolucri, 1990); the teacher's role in using games to teach grammar to young learners; teacher preparation

(McCallum, 1980); the teacher's role as a facilitator (Celce-Murcia, 1979); class organization (McCallum, 1980; Lee, 1979); learner participation (McCallum, 1980; Lee, 1979); and the effectiveness of using games in teaching grammar to young learners (Amato, 1988). Games are a natural part of young learners' lives, thus it goes without saying that they are the best educational activities for them. According to Nedomová (2007, p. 17), "young learners are not able to pay their attention for more than 10-20 minutes and after that they start to be bored and tired." They begin to lose interest and drive when grammar instruction is overly focused on memorizing rules. Teachers are aware that because children learn best by doing, they like being physically active. They are also innovative and creative, learning without even realizing it. Young learners also draw on their prior knowledge, skills, and talents, which aids in the teacher's presentation of new material by allowing kids to practice the new material on top of what they already know (Nedomová, 2007). Therefore, employing games in grammar instruction is the greatest approach to channel this ability. According to Bekiri (2003), when a class incorporates a game, the game offers the teacher an opportunity to effectively aid students in acquiring new forms and lexis. A basic game is typically more successful since young learners find it challenging to comprehend a big list of rules. The game shouldn't be overly complicated. Similar to how young learners want to be the focus of attention, games can also give praise and encouragement. In addition to all of this, it is important to keep in mind that games should be as brief as possible since, as was already noted, young learners can only pay attention to games for a short period of time.

The current study aims to investigate how games affect young English learners and the degree to which they could foster sincere dialogue in a basic EFL classroom. More importantly, using games will hone the vocabulary knowledge of schoolchildren. It has an invaluable impact on teaching and the interface among students to feast their eyes on games, and it may immediately affect their moral opinion. This is then to be a good conducive environment for learning the English language.

Method

The research employs a mixed-methods design to assess the effectiveness of game-based language teaching in EFL classrooms for young learners in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). This approach integrates both qualitative and quantitative data, addressing the complexity of the educational environment.

The quantitative phase employs a quasi-experimental approach, comprising a pre-test (Appendix A), a treatment phase utilizing game-based language teaching, and a post-test (Appendix B) to assess vocabulary and grammatical structure outcomes.

Participants

This study was conducted with two types of participants, namely EFL learners and teachers, for its quantitative and qualitative phases, respectively. Learner participants were Grade 6 students from two chosen elementary schools in the Binaslawa district, Erbil, KRI. Their age ranges varied from 12 to 14. Two classes were selected from each school; one had game-based language instruction as the observational group and the other had traditional instruction as the control group. Seventy-four students were included in the entire sample. Twenty teachers (10 male and 10 female) from various schools participated in interviews to learn more about their opinions of GBLT. Most teachers had a bachelor's degree, three had a master's, and one had a diploma. Many acknowledged the potential of game-based language instruction but expressed little formal training in it. *"I haven't received specific training on this approach, but I try to incorporate simple games to make lessons enjoyable,"* one teacher noted. The L1 experience of the teachers affected their opinions on the use of games in language acquisition. People whose first language was Kurdish thought games could help them connect with

English more easily.
Table 1 presents the distribution of participants in the study based on gender.

Table 1
Frequency of participants by gender

	Frequency	Percentage
Male	39	52.7
Female	35	47.3
Total	74	100

A total of 74 students were included, with 39 males (52.7%) and 35 females (47.3%). This distribution provides insight into the gender composition of the sample, which is essential for understanding the context of the findings and their potential.
The results presented in Table (2)provide a comprehensive overview of the test scores for both the control and experimental groups, highlighting the impact of the interventions applied during the study.

Instrument
A mixed-methods strategy was used to gather data, including both quantitative and qualitative tools. Over the course of 12 weeks, two groups of Grade 6 students were given a pre-test and a post-test for the quantitative portion. The post-test was administered at the conclusion of the intervention to gauge the students' development following exposure to game-based language instruction, whereas the pre-test was administered at the start of the study to gauge the students' starting vocabulary and grammar knowledge.
For the qualitative phase, a semi-structured interviews were conducted with English language teachers to gaine insights into their perceptions and experiences regarding game- base instruction. Teachers' expertise, educational background, familiarity with teaching young learners, and opinions on GBLT were all examined through 15 interview questions (Appendix C).

Procedure

A pre-test was given before the start of the treatment to evaluate both groups' prior vocabulary and grammar competence. For 12 weeks, the experimental group received instruction in language using game-based methods, while the control group adhered to a regular curriculum devoid of game-based exercises. The activities were designed to improve vocabulary and reinforce grammar rules in a fun way.

To assess each group's development following the intervention, the post-test comprised questions that reflected the same concepts and grammatical constructions as the pre-test to guarantee uniformity in assessing students' grammar and vocabulary. Statistical techniques were applied to the quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test to ascertain the efficacy of game-based language instruction. In order to learn more about how teachers interpret game-based language instruction and how it affects students' learning experiences, qualitative data were also gathered through teacher interviews.
The efficacy of game-based language teaching was assessed by statistically analyzing the quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test. Additionally, teacher interviews were used to gather qualitative data in order to comprehend how game-based language instruction is perceived and how it affects students' learning

experiences.

A thematic analysis of their answers, backed up by interview quotes, is presented in the ensuing subsections. The participants have five to twenty years of teaching experience. One female teacher said, "*I've seen that games help my students engage more actively, especially when learning vocabulary*," indicating that they were typically more receptive to game-based teaching approaches. A balance between traditional methods and games is necessary, according to some male teachers, who stated: *"While games are useful, I believe they should not replace structured grammar instruction*".

An ANCOVA test was conducted to examine the effect of independent variables on a dependent variable while controlling for the influence of confounding variables. To perform this test, several conditions must first be confirmed.

The descriptive statistics encompass measures such as means, medians, standard deviations, and ranges, offering a clear overview of the data distribution and central tendencies. These statistics serve as a preliminary step in understanding the characteristics of the sample and the overall trends observed in the data. We aim to create a solid foundation for the subsequent inferential analysis by presenting these descriptive reports. Following the descriptive analysis, we will present the results of the inferential statistics, specifically focusing on the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). ANCOVA is a powerful statistical technique that allows us to examine the differences between group means while controlling for one or more covariates that may influence the dependent variable. This method is particularly useful in our study, as it enables us to account for potential confounding variables that could skew the results if left unexamined. The application of ANCOVA will help us determine whether the differences observed among the groups are statistically significant, providing insight into the impact of the independent variables on the dependent outcomes. By controlling for covariates, we can isolate the effects of the primary independent variables, leading to more accurate and reliable conclusions.

Findings

The interviews highlighted several key themes regarding the incorporation of game-based language teaching. Most teachers reported using games regularly, often integrating them into nearly every lesson to maintain student engagement. For instance, one teacher emphasized the importance of games in enhancing student motivation, stating, *"I try to include at least one game in each class because it keeps the students engaged and makes learning fun."* This sentiment was echoed by many, who recognized that games provide context for vocabulary and grammar, facilitating better retention and active participation. While many teachers embraced game-based activities, challenges such as time constraints and curriculum demands were prevalent. Some educators expressed the need for careful selection of games to ensure they align with educational objectives, highlighting a critical approach to game-based teaching. Overall, the incorporation of games is prevalent, with teachers acknowledging their role in creating dynamic and interactive learning environments. The interviews revealed a diverse array of games employed by EFL teachers, including traditional board games, role-playing activities, and digital platforms. Traditional games like Scrabble and Bingo were favored for their simplicity and adaptability, while role-playing games provided opportunities for real-life language use, enhancing speaking and listening skills. Teachers overwhelmingly preferred game-based language teaching over traditional methods, citing increased student engagement and improved learning outcomes. Many noted that games foster collaboration, communication, and problem-solving skills, which are essential for young learners. The adaptability of games to different learning styles was also emphasized, allowing educators to cater to the diverse needs of their students. While most educators favored game-based approaches, some acknowledged the importance of traditional methods for foundational skills. This suggests a blended approach that combines both

strategies may be the most effective for young learners. The primary benefits of game-based language teaching identified by teachers included increased engagement, enhanced retention of language concepts, and the development of communication skills. Games create a low-pressure environment where students can practice language without fear of making mistakes, fostering confidence and reducing anxiety. Additionally, the collaborative nature of games promotes social interactions, building relationships among students.

Several challenges were noted despite the advantages, including classroom management issues, time constraints, and resource limitations. Teachers expressed concerns about balancing game-based activities with curriculum requirements and highlighted the need for effective classroom management strategies to maintain focus during games. Teachers employed various methods to assess the effectiveness of game-based language teaching, including observational assessments, informal quizzes, and self-assessment. These strategies provided insights into student progress and engagement, reinforcing the value of game-based learning in language acquisition. Game-based language teaching significantly enhances student motivation and engagement. Teachers observed that games make learning enjoyable, encouraging active participation and fostering a sense of ownership over the learning process. The immediate feedback provided by games also motivates students to improve and engage deeply with the content. The interviews indicated notable differences in learning outcomes between game-based and traditional methods. Students exhibited better retention of language concepts, improved speaking and listening skills, and increased motivation when learning through games. The collaborative and inclusive nature of game-based activities was found to enhance learning experiences.

The teachers emphasized the need for professional development opportunities focused on game-based learning strategies, access to high-quality educational games, and collaboration among educators. Aligning game-based activities with curriculum standards and developing assessment tools specifically for game-based learning were also highlighted as essential for effective implementation. Educators stressed the importance of selecting games that directly support specific learning objectives, using them as supplementary activities to reinforce lessons. By aligning games with curriculum goals, teachers can enhance the relevance and effectiveness of game-based learning. Overall, students displayed positive attitudes towards game-based language teaching, with many expressing enjoyment and increased motivation. While individual preferences varied, the general trend indicated that game-based learning fosters a supportive and engaging classroom environment. Effective management strategies were crucial for maintaining positive classroom dynamics during game-based activities. Teachers emphasized the importance of setting clear rules, using positive reinforcement, and actively monitoring student interactions to ensure a productive learning environment.

In this section, we delve into the statistical analysis of the test results following a comprehensive review of the interviews conducted during the research. The primary aim of this analysis is to provide a detailed understanding of the data collected and to derive meaningful insights that can support the findings of the study. The interviews served as a qualitative foundation for our research, revealing various perspectives and experiences that informed our quantitative measures. By combining qualitative insights with quantitative data, we aim to present a holistic view of the phenomena under investigation. After the interviews were thoroughly analyzed, we proceeded to conduct statistical tests to assess the relationships and differences among the variables of interest. This step is crucial, as it allows us to validate the findings from the qualitative phase with robust statistical evidence. The tests performed will include descriptive statistics, which provide a summary of the data, and inferential statistics, which help us make generalizations about the population based on our sample.

Table 2

Test Results by Control and Experimental Groups

Group	Test	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control	Pre-test	36	6	17	9.97	2.952
	Posttest	36	2	17	9.75	4.038
Experiment	Pre-test	38	4	18	9.79	3.618
	Posttest	38	5	20	11.79	3.843

In the control group, which consisted of 36 participants, the mean pre-test score was 9.97, indicating a moderate level of performance before any intervention. The scores ranged from a minimum of 6 to a maximum of 17, with a standard deviation of 2.952, suggesting that the scores were fairly consistent among participants. However, after the intervention, the mean post-test score for the control group decreased to 9.75. This decline indicates that the control group did not benefit from any treatment, and in fact, their performance worsened, as evidenced by a higher standard deviation of 4.038, which suggests greater variability in scores. This could be attributed to various factors, such as test anxiety or other external influences affecting performance.

In contrast, the experimental group had 38 participants and started with a mean pre-test score of 9.79, which is slightly lower than the control group's pre-test mean. The scores in this group ranged from a minimum of 4 to a maximum of 18, with a standard deviation of 3.618, indicating some variability in scores. Following the intervention, the experimental group showed a significant improvement in their mean post-test score, which rose to 11.79. This increase suggests that the intervention had a positive effect on the participants' performance. The standard deviation in this group was 3.843, remaining similar to that of the pre-test, indicating that while there was improvement, the variability in scores was consistent. The comparison between the groups reveals that the experimental group demonstrated a positive change in scores, while the control group experienced a decrease. This stark contrast highlights the effectiveness of the intervention applied to the experimental group. Inferential analysis would be necessary to substantiate these findings further to determine if the differences observed are statistically significant.

First, the normality of the data was checked to ensure that the distribution of scores across different groups is normal. Next, the homogeneity of variances (equality of variances) were confirmed to show that the variance of scores in different groups is similar. After that, the reliability of the measurement instrument was assessed using the KR21 method to ensure that the testing tool is valid and stable. Then, the homogeneity of regression slopes is examined to confirm that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables is the same across different groups. Finally, the linearity of the correlation between the variables must be confirmed to ensure that the relationship between the variables is linear. The results of these steps will be presented, with the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test shown in table (3).

Table 3

Results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

Test	Sig.	df	Statistic
Pre-test	.228	74	**.134**
Posttest	.060	74	**.101**

The results from Table 3 present the findings of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which assesses the normality of the distributions for both the pre-test and post-test scores. For the pre-test, the statistic value is 0.134 with 74 degrees of freedom (df) and a significance level (Sig.) of 0.228. This p-value is greater than the commonly

accepted alpha level of 0.05, indicating that we fail to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, we can conclude that the distribution of pre-test scores is normal. For the post-test, the statistic value is 0.101, also with 74 degrees of freedom, and a significance level of 0.060. Similar to the pre-test, this p-value is greater than 0.05, leading us to fail to reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that the distribution of post-test scores is also normal. Levene's test was used to assess the homogeneity of variances, and the results are presented in Table 4 based on the means.

Table 4

Levene's Test for Homogeneity of Variances

Test	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Pre-test	2.491	1	72	**.119**
Posttest	0.042	1	72	**.839**

For the pre-test, the Levene statistic obtained is 2.491 with 1 degree of freedom for the first group and 72 degrees for the second group, reporting a significance level of 0.119. This significance level is greater than 0.05, indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variances is met at this stage. In the post-test, the Levene statistic is 0.042, with the same degrees of freedom, and a significance level of 0.839. This also indicates the confirmation of homogeneity of variances, as the significance level exceeds 0.05. Overall, the results of the homogeneity of variances test for both the pre-test and post-test confirm that the variances of scores in different groups are similar. To assess reliability, the Kuder-Richardson method was employed, as presented below:

$$r = \frac{n}{n-1}\left(1 - \frac{\sum pq}{S^2}\right) = \frac{23}{23-1}\left(1 - \frac{25}{100}\right) = 0.7875$$

A reliability coefficient between 0.70 and 0.90 is considered acceptable. Given that the value of 0.7875 is above 0.70, it can be concluded that the measurement tool has adequate reliability. The results in Table 5 provide insights into the homogeneity of regression slopes for the variables analyzed. The table includes several sources of variance, their corresponding sums of squares, degrees of freedom, mean squares, F-values, and significance levels.

Table 5

Results of the Homogeneity of Regression Slopes Test

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	440.600a	2	220.300	1.461	.350
Intercept	145.312	1	145.312	12.177	.001
Gro * Prt	440.600	2	220.300	1.461	.350
Error	847.251	71	11.933		
Total	9155.000	74			
Corrected Total	1287.851	73			

For the corrected model, the Type III Sum of Squares is 440.600, with 2 degrees of freedom. The Mean Square is 220.300, and the F-value is 1.461, accompanied by a significance level of 0.350. This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the slopes of the regression lines across the groups. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, suggesting that the regression slopes are homogeneous.

In terms of the intercept, the Type III Sum of Squares is 145.312, with 1 degree of freedom. The Mean Square is 145.312, and the F-value is 12.177, with a significance level 0.001. This shows a significant effect on the dependent variable, indicating that the intercept considerably impacts the outcome variable being studied. The interaction between the group and pre-test (Gro * Prt) shows a Type III Sum of Squares of 440.600, with 2 degrees of freedom, a Mean Square of 220.300, an F-value of 1.461, and a significance level of 0.350. This reinforces the finding that there is no significant interaction effect, further confirming the homogeneity of regression slopes. The error term has a Type III Sum of Squares of 847.251, with 71 degrees of freedom, representing the residual variance in the model. The total Type III Sum of Squares is 9155.000, with 74 degrees of freedom, indicating the total variance in the dataset. The corrected total has a Type III Sum of Squares of 1287.851, with 73 degrees of freedom, representing the total variance adjusted for the model.

In summary, the results indicate that the corrected model does not demonstrate a significant difference in regression slopes across groups, as shown by the non-significant p-value (0.350). The intercept significantly affects the dependent variable, indicating its crucial role in the regression model. The interaction between group and pre-test scores confirms the homogeneity of slopes, as evidenced by the similar F-value and significance level. The table (6) presents the results of the ANCOVA analysis examining the relationship between the dependent variable (homogeneous variable) and the independent variables (Prt and Gro).

Table 6

Results of the Correlation Test between the Dependent Variable and Independent Variables

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	476.309	2	238.154	20.836	.000
Intercept	123.838	1	123.838	10.834	.155
Prt	305.523	1	305.523	26.729	.000
Gro	183.658	1	183.658	16.068	.000
Error	811.543	71	11.430		
Total	9155.000	74			
Corrected Total	1287.851	73			

The corrected model indicates a significant overall effect on the dependent variable, with a Type III Sum of Squares of 476.309. The degrees of freedom for the model is 2, leading to a Mean Square of 238.154. The F-value for the corrected model is 20.836, which is highly significant with a p-value of less than 0.001. This suggests that at least one of the independent variables significantly contributes to explaining the variance in the dependent variable. Focusing on the individual independent variables, the variable Prt demonstrates a strong and significant effect on the dependent variable. It has a Type III Sum of Squares of 305.523 and a corresponding F-value of 26.729, which is also significant with a p-value of less than 0.001. This indicates that variations in Prt are closely associated with changes in the dependent variable, highlighting its importance in the model.

Similarly, the variable Gro also shows a significant effect on the dependent variable, with a Type III Sum of Squares of 183.658 and an F-value of 16.068. The significance level for Gro is again less than 0.001, reinforcing the conclusion that this variable plays a crucial role in influencing the dependent variable. Conversely, the intercept of the model has a Sum of Squares of 123.838 and an F-value of 10.834, but it is not statistically significant, as indicated by a p-value of 0.155. This suggests that the intercept does not contribute meaningfully to the model, and thus, its inclusion may not be necessary for explaining the variance in the dependent variable.

The error term is reported with a Sum of Squares of 811.543 and 71 degrees of freedom, indicating the variability in the dependent variable that the model does not explain. The total Sum of Squares for the dependent variable is 9155.000, with a corrected total of 1287.851.

In summary, the results of this analysis indicate that both independent variables, Prt and Gro, have a statistically significant impact on the dependent variable. The findings suggest that changes in these independent variables are associated with corresponding changes in the dependent variable, while the intercept does not have a significant effect. This analysis provides valuable insights into the relationships between the variables and highlights the importance of Prt and Gro in understanding the dynamics of the dependent variable.

Discussion

The incorporation of game-based language teaching among EFL teachers has become a prevalent and effective strategy for enhancing student engagement in language learning. Many educators regularly integrate games into their lessons, highlighting the dual benefits of making learning enjoyable while significantly improving student retention and participation, particularly in vocabulary and grammar lessons. This discussion synthesizes the findings from the interviews with EFL teachers, contextualizing them within existing literature and identifying both the benefits and challenges associated with game-based learning. The results indicate that game-based language teaching enhances student engagement, which is a crucial factor in language acquisition. Games inherently make learning enjoyable, capturing students' attention and motivating them to participate actively. The interactive nature of games promotes a dynamic learning environment where students can practice language skills, enhancing their speaking and listening abilities. Immediate feedback provided by games allows students to identify their strengths and areas for improvement, which is vital for effective language acquisition. Furthermore, games cater to various learning styles, making language learning more accessible to a broader range of students. The positive classroom environment fostered by the fun and competitive nature of games can reduce anxiety, allowing students to experiment with language without the fear of making mistakes. This finding is consistent with research by Sailer et al. (2020), which emphasizes the role of engagement in improving vocabulary retention and grammar application. Despite the numerous benefits, teachers also face significant challenges in implementing game-based language teaching. Classroom management issues, time constraints, and resource limitations often hinder the effectiveness of game-based activities. Some educators reserve games for specific occasions due to these pressures, which can limit the frequency and depth of game-based learning experiences.

Additionally, while the majority of teachers express a strong preference for game-based approaches over traditional methods, the need for adequate resources and professional development opportunities remains a critical barrier. Gunter et al. (2021) highlight that teachers often struggle with the practical aspects of integrating games into their curricula, which can diminish the potential benefits of game-based learning. The findings from this study align closely with research conducted by Gee (2020) and Hwang and Chang (2011), which underscores the effectiveness of game-based learning in promoting language skills through immersive experiences and active participation. Furthermore, López-Pérez et al. (2019) found that students engaged in game-based activities exhibited higher motivation levels, correlating with improved academic performance. These studies support the notion that game-based language teaching not only enhances engagement but also leads to better retention and application of language concepts.

To assess the effectiveness of game-based teaching, educators employ a combination of observational assessments, informal quizzes, self-assessments, and performance-based evaluations. This multifaceted approach allows teachers to gauge student interactions and language use during games while providing

immediate feedback opportunities. Research by Hamari et al. (2016) reinforces the positive impact of game-based learning on student motivation and engagement, noting that students become more enthusiastic and actively participate in their learning.

Notably, the study indicates significant differences in learning outcomes between game-based teaching and traditional methods, including enhanced retention of language concepts, improved speaking and listening skills, and increased motivation leading to better academic performance. These findings are supported by Gee (2017), who highlights that game-based learning significantly improves students' ability to retain information and apply language skills in real-world contexts. Looking ahead, teachers suggest enhancing game-based language teaching by integrating technology, introducing a wider variety of games, and incorporating student feedback to refine activities. Research by Hamari et al. (2016) supports this notion, emphasizing that game-based learning increases student motivation and engagement, which correlates with improved performance. However, the study also reveals challenges that teachers face when incorporating game-based activities into their lessons. Classroom management issues, time constraints, and resource limitations can hinder the effectiveness of these activities. Tharp and Gallimore (1988) noted that while interactive methods are beneficial, they must be carefully structured to avoid chaos in the classroom. This highlights the importance of proper planning and management when implementing game-based learning strategies. Integrating technology can further enrich the game-based learning experience and make it more accessible, as indicated by Wang et al. (2021).

The integration of game-based language teaching among EFL teachers has emerged as a prominent strategy to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. The findings from this study indicate that game-based activities not only make learning enjoyable but also significantly improve retention and participation, particularly in vocabulary and grammar lessons. This conclusion synthesizes the study's results, highlighting the alignment with existing literature, the benefits and challenges of game-based learning, and the implications for teaching practices. One of the primary reasons for the prevalence of game-based language teaching is the enhanced engagement it fosters. Games capture students' attention and motivate them to participate actively, aligning with Dörnyei’s (2001) assertion that motivation is crucial in language learning. The interactive nature of games promotes a dynamic learning environment where students can practice language skills in a low-pressure setting, leading to better retention of concepts compared to traditional rote memorization methods. Moreover, game-based activities facilitate immediate feedback, allowing students to understand their strengths and areas for improvement. This aspect is crucial for language acquisition, as immediate feedback encourages students to adjust their strategies and enhances their learning process.

The diversity of games employed by teachers plays a significant role in their effectiveness. Educators utilize a range of games, including traditional board games, role-playing, digital platforms, and team-based activities. Each type serves specific educational purposes, catering to different learning styles and promoting collaboration among students. Research by Hwang and Chang (2011) supports this, demonstrating that game-based learning can significantly improve student engagement and motivation. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the need for professional development opportunities focused on game-based learning strategies. Ongoing training and support are essential for teachers to effectively implement game-based approaches in their classrooms, as highlighted by Koehler et al. (2020). Professional development can equip teachers with the necessary skills and resources to integrate games meaningfully into their curricula, ultimately enhancing student outcomes. While the benefits of game-based language teaching are substantial, potential drawbacks must be acknowledged. Some students may become distracted during gameplay, negatively impacting their learning outcomes. Additionally, some students might become bored with educational games, highlighting the need for variety and innovation in game selection. Teachers must be mindful of these challenges and continuously seek ways to keep students

engaged and motivated. The assessment of the effectiveness of game-based teaching involves a multifaceted approach, allowing teachers to gauge language use and progress effectively. The positive impact of game-based learning on student motivation and engagement is evident; students are more enthusiastic and actively participate, receiving immediate feedback that drives improvement.

Conclusion

The main focus of this study was the effectiveness of game-based language teaching (GBLT) in teaching vocabulary and grammar to young learners, which also looked at teachers' opinions of the practice. Although the majority of educators recognized the benefits of GBLT for engagement, many encountered obstacles such as curricular limitations, problems with classroom management, and a lack of official training. Game-based methods were commonly believed to be more suited for learning vocabulary, whereas a more structured approach was needed for teaching grammar. Overall, the results show that teacher preparation and strategic game integration are essential to optimize the use of games in language instruction. GBLT can be improved as a tool for improving the language learning of young learners by tackling these issues. Notable differences in learning outcomes between game-based teaching and traditional methods include enhanced retention of language concepts and increased motivation leading to better academic performance. The study advocates for the continued use of game-based strategies in language education, which contribute to a more interactive and enjoyable learning environment.

Looking ahead, teachers suggest enhancing game-based language teaching by integrating technology, introducing a wider variety of games, and incorporating student feedback to refine activities. The integration of technology can further enrich the game-based learning experience and make it more accessible. In summary, the findings affirm the positive impact of game-based language teaching on student performance. By integrating games into the curriculum, educators can create an engaging and effective learning environment that fosters both language proficiency and essential life skills. The study underscores the need for careful implementation, ongoing professional development, and a focus on classroom management to maximize the benefits of game-based learning. Ultimately, game-based language teaching is recognized as an effective approach that significantly contributes to the engagement and learning outcomes of young learners.

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Appendix A: Pre-Test

Vocabulary Section: Choose the correct word that best completes each sentence.

1. I have a pet _____. a) cat b) chair c) book
2. The sun rises in the _____. a) sky b) ocean c) forest
3. Can you pass me the _____? a) apple b) table c) car
4. Birds have _____. a) fins b) wings c) wheels
5. My favorite color is _____. a) banana b) blue c) house
6. A _____ is a large body of water. a) mountain b) river c) tree
7. Please pass me the _____. a) pen b) juice c) hat
8. The _____ is a flying insect that makes honey. a) bee b) snake c) lion
9. I like to eat _____ for breakfast. a) pizza b) cereal c) toast
10. The _____ is a type of flower. a) chair b) rose c) car

Grammar Section: Choose the correct answer for each grammar question.

1. She _____ to school every day. a) go b) goes c) going
2. They _____ playing in the park now. a) is b) are c) am
3. My brother _____ football on Saturdays. a) play b) plays c) playing
4. The cat _____ on the mat. a) sit b) sits c) sitting
5. We _____ to the zoo last weekend. a) go b) goes c) went
6. She _____ to the music in her room. a) listen b) listens c) listening
7. They _____ to the beach last summer. a) go b) goes c) went
8. My sister and I _____ to the park every weekend. a) go b) goes c) going
9. The dog _____ in the garden every morning. a) play b) plays c) playing
10. We _____ a movie at the cinema last night. a) watch b) watches c) watched

Appendix B: Post-Test

Vocabulary Section: Choose the correct word that best completes each sentence.

1. The _____ is a big, yellow fruit. a) apple b) banana c) chair
2. Birds use their _____ to fly. a) fins b) wings c) wheels
3. I like to read books in the _____. a) sky b) ocean c) forest
4. The _____ is a place where you can borrow books. a) school b) library c) park
5. She has a cute _____ as a pet.
6. The _____ is a large, wild cat.
7. We use a _____ to write with. a) lion b) dog c) snake a) dog b) lion c) bird a) pencil b) ball c book
8. The _____ is a yellow fruit with a peel. a) orange b) apple c) banana
9. A _____ is a flying insect that produces honey. a) bee b) spider c) ant
10. I like to eat _____ for lunch. a) sandwich b) cake c) ice cream

Grammar Section: Choose the correct answer for each grammar question.

1.They _____ playing football in the park now. a) is b) are c) am
2.My dad _____ to work by car every day. a) go b) goes c) going
3.The cat _____ on the wall. a) sit b) sits c) sitting
4.We _____ to the beach last summer. a) go b) goes c) went
5.She _____ her homework yesterday. a) finish b) finishes c) finished
6.They _____ to the party last night. a) go b) goes c) went
7.My sister _____ English every day. a) study b) studies c) studying
8.The dog _____ in the garden right now. a) play b) plays c) playing
9.We _____ a picnic in the park last weekend . a) have b) has c) had
10.She _____ to the music in her room every evening. a) listen b) listens c)listening

Appendix C: Interview Questions on EFL Teachers' Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Game-based Language Teaching in Young Learners' Classes in the KRI

I have decided to conduct a survey about (EFL Teachers' perceptions on the Effectiveness of Game-based Language Teaching in Young Learners' Classes in the KRI). All your information should be confidential. Your participation can determine the effectiveness of EFL teachers in using games. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your input is greatly appreciated.

Demographic information of the participants

Name of the school: ……..

Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐
Education level: Diploma ☐ B.A. ☐ M.A. ☐ PhD ☐
Age Group: 20-25 ☐ or over 30 ☐
Years of teaching experi ☐ 1-5 ☐ 11-15 ☐ over 15 ☐

Types of schools where you are teaching:

1. Public ☐ 2. Private ☐ 3. International ☐

Employment Status:
Tenure/full-time ☐ Adjunct/part-time ☐

1. How often do you incorporate game-based language teaching in your young learners' classes?
2. What types of games do you typically use in your language teaching activities?
3. Do you believe that game-based language teaching is more effective than traditional teaching methods for young learners? Why or why not?
4. In your opinion, what are the main benefits of using game-based language teaching in the classroom?
5. What challenges have you encountered when implementing game-based language teaching in your classes?

6. How do you assess the effectiveness of game-based language teaching in improving young learners' language skills?
7. Do you think game-based language teaching helps maintain students' motivation and engagement in the classroom? Please explain.
8. Have you noticed differences in students' learning outcomes when using game-based language teaching compared to traditional methods?
9. What support or resources would help enhance the implementation of game-based language teaching in your classes?
10. How do you integrate game-based language teaching with the curriculum and learning objectives?
11. What are the students' attitudes towards game-based language teaching? Do they enjoy it?
12. How do you manage classroom dynamics and behavior using game-based language teaching activities?
13. Do you believe that game-based language teaching promotes a positive classroom environment? Please elaborate.
14. What are your favorite game-based language teaching activities, and why are they effective?
15. In what ways do you think game-based language teaching can be further improved or expanded in young learners' classes?