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**IMPACT OF THE ENGLISH GRAMMAR STAR- ESL GAME ON
GRAMMAR ACQUISITION AMONG PAKISTANI ESL
LEARNERS: A CLASS ACTION RESEARCH STUDY**



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Abstract

Grammar is an important aspect of language learning for ESL learners, but it is quite challenging to teach and learn it, particularly using the traditional methods. This research uses a Computer-Assisted Language Learning perspective to facilitate grammar learning and practice. It explores the effectiveness of the English Grammar Star- ESL Game application for the grammar learning of the Pakistani ESL learners. The research was conducted using a classroom action research design. It was conducted in two cycles. The participants of this research were 30 female students of class 8 of FFCCG. The data were collected through class observations, tests and questionnaires. The quantitative and qualitative analysis methods were used to analyze the data. The results of the study show a significant improvement in the grammar performance of the students. According to the participants, the game-based learning method incorporated within the English Grammar Star-ESL Game was very engaging and a major factor in their enhanced participation. The participants also agreed with the usability of the website as a means of enabling them to understand difficult grammar rules and concepts.

Keywords: Grammar acquisition, Pakistani ESL Learners, CALL, Class Observations, Questionnaires, Tests, English Grammar Star- ESL Game application, Game- based Learning

Introduction

Grammar is more than just rules. It influences how concepts are expressed, hence, increasing clarity, accuracy, and coherence. While ESL students struggle through language learning, grammatical mastery is a building block towards fluency. Grammar is also regarded as an essential tool for sentence construction, enhancing clarity, and providing accuracy in communication, hence an essential component of language competence (Ghafar, 2024). Despite this, grammar instruction has never been an easy task, especially through the traditional methods. These tend to fail to activate students in substantial ways, causing most of them to feel disconnected or swamped by the intricateness of grammatical rules and principles (Yakupova, 2023). The successful grammar teaching connects with other critical language skills like speaking and writing also (Aghayeva, 2023). Without a good understanding of grammar, students cannot produce accurate and coherent language, thus affecting their overall communication skills.

However, technological tools have become increasingly popular to promote language learning. These tools provide adaptive and interactive lessons that help students to practice grammar in their own time and in a more personal setting. It has been suggested through studies that adding technology to language teaching facilitates individual learning styles and offers a more customized learning experience. Computer and Mobile assisted applications have gained widespread popularity for independent grammar learning (Afi Normawati, 2024), providing students with a convenient means of supporting what they are taught in class. The introduction of online platforms has also facilitated the process of self-learning grammar, allowing learners to practice grammar skills outside the classroom. One such innovation is the incorporation of game-based learning, which has been found to increase student motivation and participation. It focuses on incorporating grammar practice into games; thus, students can practice grammatical rules in a fun and risk-free setting. Research has shown that game-based learning apps and websites keep students motivated to practice and improve their grammar (Bikowski, 2018).

This research investigates the use of game-based learning through English Grammar Star- ESL Game application in improving students' grammar ability. It aims to provide insights into how this application can improve the teaching of grammar by making it more interesting, effective, and learner-centered.

Research Questions

- What is the effectiveness of English Grammar Star- ESL Game in improving the grammar of Pakistani ESL learners?
- How do learners experience the game-based learning strategies in the English Grammar Star- ESL Game?

Literature Review

Technology plays pivotal role in language acquisition, especially for ESL learners. The first technology- based learning method in connection with language learning is Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) that makes learning interactive, engaging, and accessible. CALL is an approach that incorporates technological tools such as computers, websites, and software within the language-learning process. As Joy L. Egbert (2006) gives the definition: "CALL means learners learning language in any context with, through, and around computer technologies". It is immensely effective in engaging students, offering avenues for practice, and giving feedback. Similarly, Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) refers to the use of mobile devices to facilitate language learning. It offers access to language content and interactive activities anytime, anywhere (Ally, 2009).

CALL and MALL are conveniences of the ESL learners, proven to advocate learning a language in an interactive environment accompanied by reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities that learners could practice independently at their own pace (Carol A. Chapelle, 2012). This is especially beneficial in grammar learning, which is basic in language learning and usually very difficult to teach and learn through traditional methods (Thornbury, 2008). In grammar instruction, it facilitates interaction and repeated practice to enable internalization of rules and structures (Reinders, 2011). Advancements in technology appear through the various computer-based platforms, for instance, the website, gamification and mobile application, which are increasingly for use in ESL classes to form understanding of the complex grammar rules. The immediacy of feedback includes offering a much more interesting experience compared to traditional rote memorization (Sahib Khatoon, 2023).

Among the technical tools available, one of the best practices has been game-based learning. The integration of games in education is a very old practice. It has long been known to augment motivation and produce positive learning results at the level of trainees (Gee, 2003). In the dynamic and interactive environment of games, students apply grammar concepts in an exciting but not threatening environment, which increases their participation and retention of the concepts they learn (Anderson, 2010). Research shows that game-based learning improves, particularly in student motivation, making learning more accessible to grasp more complex concepts as it gives immediate feedback to the learner, reinforcing learning and promoting collaboration (Surendeleg, 2017).

Grammar is the building block of any language. It creates the structural rules that show how words form phrases and sentences. For ESL learners, grammar acquisition is essential for successful communication and success in education. Most conventional methods of teaching grammar often utilize passive learning techniques, and make grammar rather a difficult subject. Using technology such as game-based learning has the potential to mitigate the problems of traditional grammar learning (Aratea, 2024). In Pakistan, English holds a significant place as a second language, especially in the education and professional contexts. However, many Pakistani ESL learners face difficulties in learning English grammar due to factors such as limited exposure to the language outside the classroom, insufficient teaching resources, and the reliance on traditional, and passive methods of instruction (Bangash, 2021). Research has shown that Pakistani students often struggle with the nuances

of English grammar, particularly with regard to complex sentence structures, tenses, and articles (Shaukat Ali, 2021). These challenges highlight the need for more effective, and interactive methods of grammar teaching and learning process that can enhance students' grammatical skills.

Classroom action research (CAR) approach helps to examine practical and contextualized issues in teaching and learning process. It involves active participation of teachers in this process through actual intervention in the study while at the same time observing the effect on students' learning outcomes. It is usually run in cycles, and each cycle consists of planning, action, observation, and reflection (McTaggart, 1988).

The current research is a step toward reinforcing a modern, technology-driven and interesting alternative to the traditional methods of teaching grammar to students. Besides that, this game-based learning, English Grammar Star- ESL Game will strengthen the existing literature on technology-enhanced language learning for ESL learners in Pakistan. Thus, the findings will pave ways for more interactive and stimulating learning methodology and environment that will benefit the future of language education not only in Pakistan but elsewhere. The other aim is to fill a few of the gaps in research related to under-researched areas of game-based learning and CALL/ MALL in the context of Pakistan, where evidence of the effectiveness of this technology for grammar teaching is little. It is also concerned with the real-life issues that Pakistani learners encounter while trying to integrate technology into their learning habits, thereby suggesting how these hurdles may be dealt with in the classroom.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, classroom action research design is used that focuses on planning, action, observation and reflection. This research design allowed for ongoing adjustments during the study and improving teaching learning practices in real time using the English Grammar Star- ESL Game. The research was conducted in two cycles; allowing for initial improvement in grammar learning and adjustments based on initial findings for better results.

Participants

The participants of the study were ESL learners as 30 female students of class 8 from FFCG. The students were selected on the basis of convenience sampling and they were informed about the study's purpose and their consent was obtained. The time frame of the study was three weeks. The participants' age was around 12- 14 years.

Instruments

The data were collected through class room observations, diagnostic test, Test Cycle I, Test Cycle II and questionnaires. The tests were adapted from (Green, 2006).

Procedure

The study was carried out in two cycles. Before these cycles, a diagnostic test was conducted to assess the students' initial understanding of grammar. In the first cycle, initial improvement in grammar learning was achieved using the English Grammar Star- ESL Game, and the results of the first cycle guided the second cycle to make some adjustments in order to enhance outcomes. The data were collected through classroom observations, tests, and questionnaires. The study was carried out over a period of three weeks.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methods. Tests scores and questionnaire responses were evaluated using descriptive statistics. Test scores were examined to identify the overall improvement in the students' grammar scores and questionnaires' responses were examined to determine the participants' perceptions and feedback about the English Grammar Star- ESL Game as a grammar learning platform. The class observations were evaluated using descriptive analysis.

Limitations

There are some limitations of this study. The sample of 30 female students (12- 14 yrs) is a small

group of participants; hence the results cannot be generalized to all ESL students worldwide. Moreover, the research was carried out in one college, which cannot represent the larger context of ESL teaching in Pakistan.

Findings and Discussion

The data results for the research consisted of three grammar- based tests. The first test (diagnostic test) was conducted before the intervention of English Grammar Star- ESL Game (Cycle I and II), the other two tests were conducted after the intervention of the application (Cycle I and II). All the three tests consisted of parts of speech.

The Results of the Grammar Tests

Diagnostic Test	Test Cycle 1	Test Cycle 2	Improvement
54.67%	75.11%	92.89%	17.78%

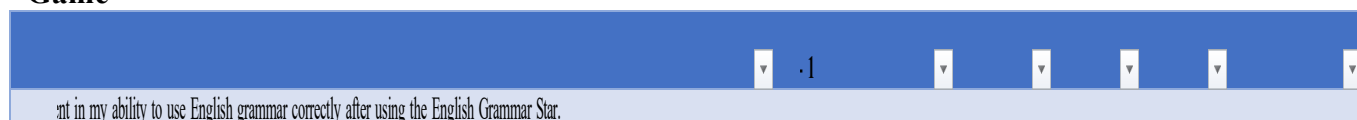
The data show the impact of the game- based application on the learning of English grammar by Pakistani ESL students. The diagnostic test results have shown the grammar skills of the participants as 54.67%. But the interventions of the English Grammar Star- ESL Game (Test Cycle I and Test Cycle II), improved the results gradually from 75.11% to 92.89%. The improvement of 17.78% indicates that the English Grammar Star- ESL Game has been effective in improving students' grammar abilities over time.

The diagnostic test at the start of the study was conducted to determine the students' initial grammar skills and awareness of parts of speech as the students have been taught it in traditional class room settings without the use of technological tools. The result of diagnostic test helped to understand students' strengths and weaknesses in understanding and practicing of parts of speech and the interventions of the English Grammar Star- ESL Game were made accordingly. It was also used as a reference to compare the effect of the English Grammar Star's game-like learning on student improvement.

During the Cycle I, students were introduced to English Grammar Star- ESL Game. They were taught parts of speech using grammar lessons and were engaged in interactive exercises and quizzes using English Grammar Star- ESL Game. It allowed them to learn and practice parts of speech with fun. The immediate feedback encouraged active participation. The students obtained 75.11% in Test Cycle I, which was less than predicted. From the data of class observations, it was observed that the students were experiencing the first phase of getting used to the English Grammar Star- ESL Game and its interactive elements. Students were moving from traditional methods of learning to learning through games, which also created initial challenges in adjusting. The competitive nature of the games had also affected their performance since students were not yet fully accustomed to the new learning platform. The time frame of one week for the intervention was also the reason that students could not show good performance.

Based on the analysis and reflection of Test Cycle I, adjustments were made. During Cycle II, the students were exposed to more focused practice, peer learning, collaboration and game based interactive activities of the application. The competitive- game based features and time frame increased to two weeks motivated students for maximum participation and learning. Test Cycle II showed the improvement in the results to 92.89 %. From the improvement of 17.78 %, it can be seen that all the students have shown an improvement and English Grammar Star- ESL Game is an effective platform to learn and teach Grammar.

The Students' Responses toward the Use of Game- based Learning English Grammar Star-ESL Game



ctions of grammar rules on the application easy to understand.					
ises provided on the application were challenging yet informative.					
teractive features (such as games and quizzes) kept me engaged.					
tion's layout and design user-friendly.					
arning method helped me retain grammar concepts better.					
complete the grammar exercises on the application.					
s an effective tool for understanding difficult grammar rules.					
d the English Grammar Star- ESL Game to other students for learning grammar.					
ied with the learning experience provided by the English Grammar Star- ESL Game app.					

The results from the data of questionnaires indicate that the English Grammar Star- ESL Game has been successful in building students' confidence in improving their grammatical skills, and motivating them through game based-interactive activities. The Agree and Strongly Agree percentages for most questions indicate that the application is a valid instrument in enhancing grammar mastery.

Conclusion

The study proves that English Grammar Star- ESL Game plays key role in enhancing the grammatical skills of Pakistani ESL learners. The current study was done in two cycles and showed an improvement of 17.78% in grammar performance. The game-based learning approach was very interactive and motivating, enhancing the confidence of the students in learning grammar and abilities. Despite initial difficulty in adjusting to the English Grammar Star- ESL Game, the second cycle has shown significant improvement in grammar learning. It indicates that game-based interactive teaching learning process is a strong method of developing grammar skills. This research highlights the advantage of using technological tools in ESL instruction and creating more active and effective learning experiences. It affirms that computer assisted language learning provides a dynamic, engaging and an effective alternative to traditional methods of teaching and

learning language and grammar. Future studies should involve a more extensive and diverse sample from various schools in different areas of Pakistan to increase generalizability of the results.

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