

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

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**ABSTRACT** : *Boosting grammar repertoire enables successful communication. Learning grammar is challenging, requiring constant, conscious effort. This research specifically explores the use of games to facilitate grammar acquisition. This study addresses the following questions: 1)What is the effect of language games towards the affective factors in the process of learning grammar? 2) Does the use of language games improve students' grammatical competency in language assessment? This study used both quantitative and qualitative methods. An experiment was conducted for a semester (4 months) on approximately 64 students from Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah who were taking the English grammar course. The researcher taught 2 classes of students. Each group consisted of around 32 students. For the experimental group, the classroom activities emphasized games. The researcher conducted 14 sessions of various types of games. To gauge information on affective factors, students were administered questionnaires that consists 12 close-ended questions. The classes in the control group emphasized less on games. Results of the quantitative methods were analysed statistically using mean scores and T-test. The results of the study revealed that students in the experimental group obtained higher scores. This is because games possess multiple benefits which accelerate language learning. 1) They are interactive and learner – centred. 2) They create positive mood, emotions and attitude( affective factors). 3) They cater to various types of learning styles and encourage subconscious learning.*

**KEYWORDS** - *Grammar Acquisition, Language Games*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

Mackay and Mountford (1978), presented that in order to communicate effectively in English, students need to have a good foundation in grammar (as cited in Eskandari, Khonmohammad & Komeijanifarahani, 2014). Many Malaysian students who have studied English as a second language since elementary school still make grammatical errors when they speak or write in English. Similar observations were found by a research in Pakistan. Inadequate knowledge of sentence structures and vocabulary is considered as the leading problems in learning the language (Perveen, Asif & Mehmood, 2016). Finding ways to facilitate grammar acquisition is one of the ways to aim at overcoming the problem.

A common debate regarding the approach to grammar is whether it should be taught explicitly or implicitly. Some experts are of the view that focus should be on communicative activities without paying conscious attention to grammar and ultimately grammar acquisition becomes incidental. Opponents argue that explicit instruction is still necessary for the irregular and complex rules which cannot be picked up naturally. Schmidt (2017) reported studies which found that explicit instruction was more effective for both simple and complex language features. In addition, explicit instruction led to both greater explicit and implicit knowledge and more effective in the long-term (as measured by delayed post- tests). Long (1983:359-382) reported that students who learned through rules are more advanced than those who learned with only communicative activities. Implicit instruction only showed a moderate effect for simple language features on free tasks. Explicit attention to language form does not exclude attention to meaning/communication/content. Furthermore, most of the research investigating the effects of instruction on second language learning indicates that it is better to have a combination of language-based and meaning-based instructions rather than an exclusive focus on either one as argued by proponents who favor one over the other.

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The studies mentioned prove that explicit instruction cannot be avoided completely. Unfortunately, learning grammar rules is often considered a laborious and monotonous process. Teachers need to teach grammar in variety of ways to allow students to accurately and clearly express their ideas in English. In the current practice of teaching English, students are encouraged to be actively involved in the learning process and become committed to improving their English so that they can use grammatical structures accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately.

Various approaches have been introduced in helping second language learners develop and learn grammar, i.e. reading books, newspapers, playing games, watching foreign cartoons or films with subtitles, listening to foreign music, etc. This study explores the use of language games. Grammar explanation can be enlivened by a variety of language games. Games provide a way of repeating the structures in a less mechanical and tiring way. Games or game-like activities have been applied broadly in instructing English, especially in teaching grammar. Furthermore, language games deliver and stimulate an added dimension to language learning (Pathan, 2014).

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

A statement that is most often heard in discussions about second language learning classes is that if students are laughing, playing a game and having fun, they are not really learning. In other words, they are just wasting time. Atkin (1991) expressed serious doubts about the effectiveness of using games in classrooms, claiming that play distracts children from learning. It is usually for leisure and fun outside the classroom, whereas learning is serious work. Teachers with similar beliefs need to be aware that playing games is an acceptable way of learning if done in a purposeful way. Whether games enhance learning or waste time depends on how they are conducted.

If teachers are not open to using a variety of methods and stick to the traditional method, the lack of motivation to learn grammar and the lack of ability to grasp grammar rules will remain in learners. This will not be beneficial for their progress. One's proficiency in productive skills is usually judged by grammar. The use of correct grammar plays a central part in language use. Therefore, grammar lessons need to be given special attention.

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

### 1.3 Significance of Study

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

### 1.4 Objectives of Study

1. To study the effect of language games towards the affective factors (emotions and attitudes, positive and negative) in the process of learning grammar.
2. To determine the effect of language games on students' grammatical competency in language assessments.

### 1.5 Research Questions

1. What is the effect of language games towards the affective factors(emotions and attitudes, positive and negative) in the process of learning grammar?
2. Does the use of language games improve students' grammatical competency in language assessments?

### 1.6 Hypothesis

- H<sub>0</sub>** – Language games do not have any effect on students' grammatical competency in assessments.  
**H<sub>1</sub>** – Language games improve the performance of the class as a whole in assessments on grammar.

## **2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### 2.1 Definition of Language Games

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

### 2.2 Game Categories

Toth (1995) made a distinction between competitive and cooperative games. In a competitive game, players or teams race or compete with one another to be the first to reach the goal while in a co-operative game, players or teams work together towards a common goal. The emphasis in the games is on successful communication rather than accurate language. Competitive games can get some students interested and maintain their focus. A player progresses through the game and ultimately wins due to his or her understanding of grammatical concepts. Co-operative games, which revolve around working together towards reaching a specific goal without any emphasis on winning or losing, is an excellent way to foster teamwork (cited in Gruss,2016.)

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

#### 2.2.1 Searching games

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

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

#### 2.2.2 Physical games

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

#### 2.2.3 Puzzles

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

#### 2.2.4 Story games

An excellent example is a continuous chain story in which the teacher or the first student begins the story and each of the other students add a different segment or part to the story. It can be done orally or through writing. This game fits into the teaching of tenses because the story needs to be told using the right tenses in the target language.

#### 2.2.5 Question games

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

#### 2.2.6 Miscallenous

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

There are many articles which supply adequate games and activities that can be considered when instructing grammar. However, there are no clear answers to the following questions which this study attempts to address. For games to have a favourable effect on the learning process and outcome:

1. How much time should be allocated for games in a learning period?
2. How should games be conducted for learning to be effective?
3. What types of games are suitable for language learning?

### **3.METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 The Study**

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

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

##### **3.1.2 Design**

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

##### **3.1.3 Participants**

The participants of the study were altogether 64 students studying at Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah, Kuala Kangsar. They were from 2 groups of classes, with each consisting 32 students. The experimental group received treatment based on working with different games for teaching grammar while the classes in the control group did not emphasize on games. The teacher used various types of typical communicative and interactive activities such as role-plays and conversation practice instead of restricting to games alone. The classes in the experimental group, on the other hand, were purely game-based. When a pre-test was given to compare the level of the students, it was found that both groups were of similar proficiency. The classes contained students of mixed ability. In each group, very few students scored highly in the pre-test while the majority got average scores. A number of students got low scores. It was hoped that the introduction of games could reduce the number of students who failed.

##### **3.2 Instrumentation**

In order to carry out this study, a pre-test was given to gauge the students' knowledge before the lessons commenced and a post-test after the experiment was employed. The tests consist of 40 multiple choice items on main grammar topics such as tenses, subject-verb-agreement and others. The design of the test instruments adapted the model of Aptis test by British Council. To gauge information on affective factors, students were administered questionnaires which are similar to an Attitude/Motivation test that consists 12 close-ended Likert scale questions. Questionnaires were also given to some of the English teachers to find out their views on the impact of using language games on the acquisition of syntax and grammatical structures. The teachers' questionnaires consists 14 Likert scale questions. The items in the surveys included questions on positive emotions such as happiness, excitement and confidence as well as negative emotions such as stress, anxiety and boredom. The questionnaires were adapted from AMTB (Attitude Motivation Test Battery). The results of the questionnaires were based on the participants' self-report.

##### **3.3 Procedure**

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

Table 1: Games used to teach the grammar topics

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

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

After a few sessions with games, students in the experimental group were given questionnaires to get feedback on their experience. An unstructured interview was conducted with a few students to supplement the survey. This provided the opportunity for having a more open-ended discussion to seek clarifications on their feelings, experiences and views on the subject which could otherwise not be done in the survey method. Throughout the sessions, the researcher took the opportunity to conduct unstructured observation of the students' reactions and behavior during the activities conducted and took notes in her journal. The observation concentrated on factors related to engagement, compliance and performance in tasks. The data from the interview and unstructured observation were analyzed qualitatively. Once the major grammar topics in the syllabus had been covered and the teacher felt that the students were ready to take a test, a post-test was given. Results of the quantitative methods were analysed statistically using mean scores, T-test and chi-square.

#### 4.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study addressed the research question posed earlier on the effects of games towards affective factors with multiple research methods on the participants involved. Many of the questions in the survey address the emotional states participants are in when they are involved in language games as well as their attitude towards them. The following pie charts illustrate the responses of the participants to the statements about language games in the survey.

##### 4.1.1 Students' Survey

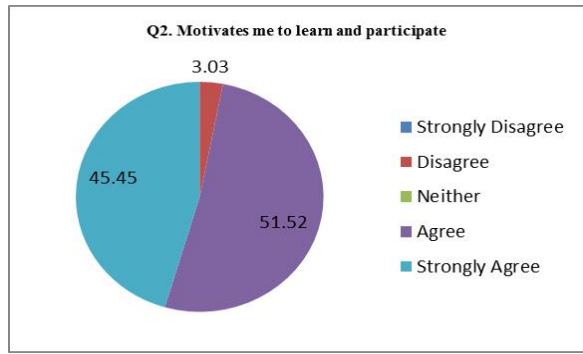


Chart 1

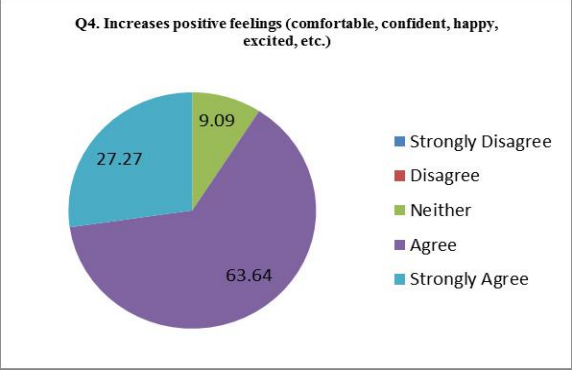


Chart 2

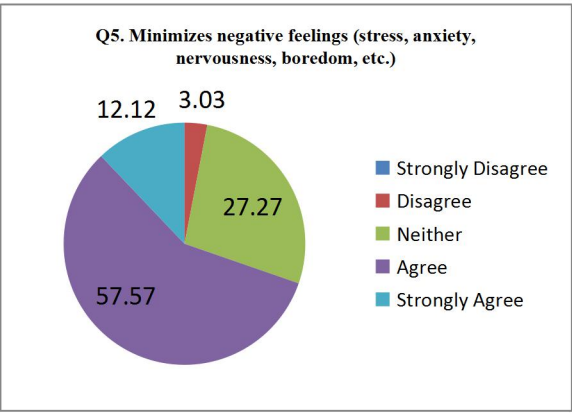


Chart 3

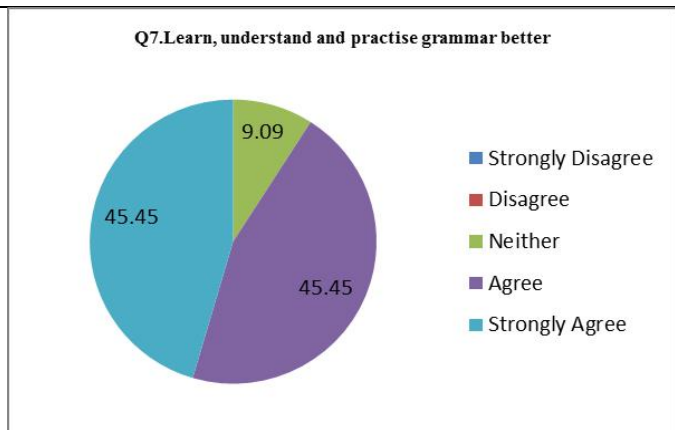


Chart 4

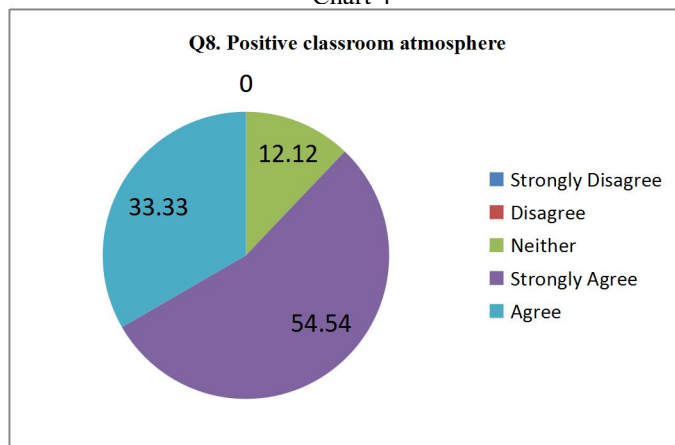


Chart 5

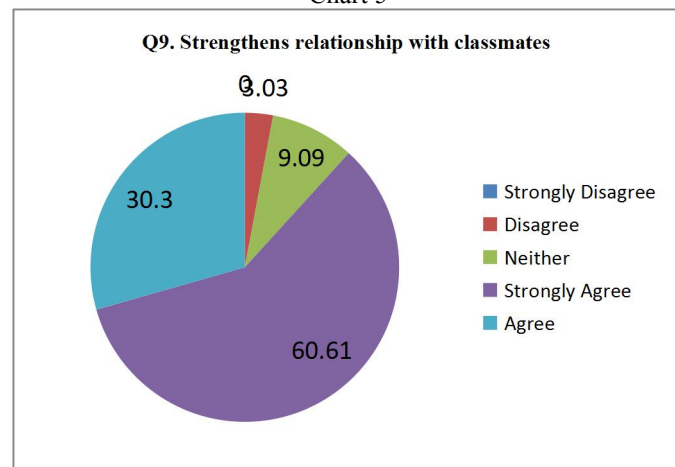


Chart 6

From the survey results, it is undeniable that learners find language games motivating (51.52% agree and 45.45% strongly agree). A vast majority of the students agreed that games evoke positive feelings in them (63.64% agree and 27.27% strongly agree). They increase their engagement in the lessons and as they are involved, they have positive emotions such as happiness, comfort and excitement. They have a more positive attitude when they feel more confident. For the majority of the participants, (57% who agree and 12.12% who strongly agree), games minimize negative feelings in the classroom such as stress, anxiety, nervousness and boredom. Other non-learning benefits agreed by the majority of the respondents were that they provide a positive classroom atmosphere and strengthen the relationship among classmates

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(Please refer to charts 5 and 6). A vast majority of the respondents found that games also have learning benefits in which they give opportunity to apply the grammar rules learned for practical communication and enable students to learn, understand and practice grammar better. These results show that games are beneficial in different ways which are important for a learner's development – emotional, cognitive and interpersonal. Majority of the respondents disagree with the negative statements regarding games, which are a waste of time, unsuitable for adult learners and can distract students from learning (for more details of the students' responses, please refer to Appendix 1).

4.1.2 Teachers' Survey

Surveys were given to the teachers to get the points of view of instructors who actually conduct the games.

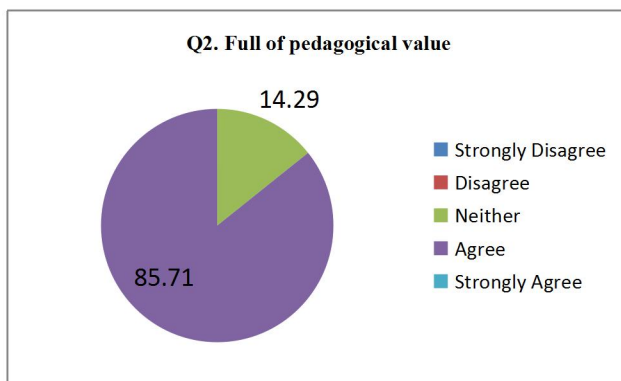


Chart 7

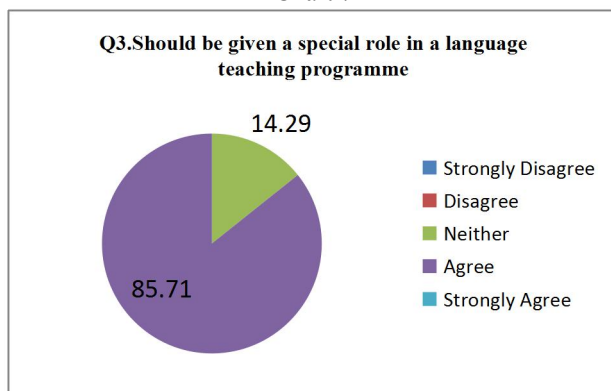


Chart 8

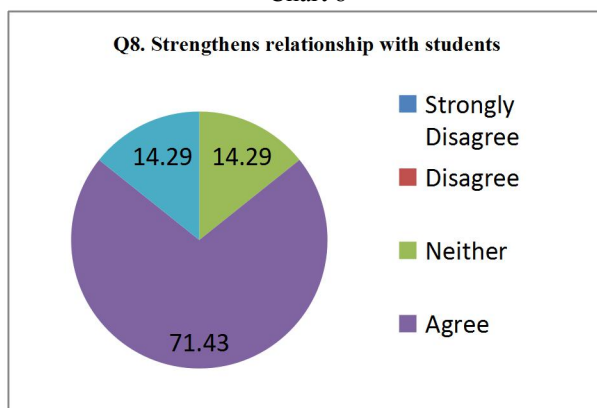


Chart 9



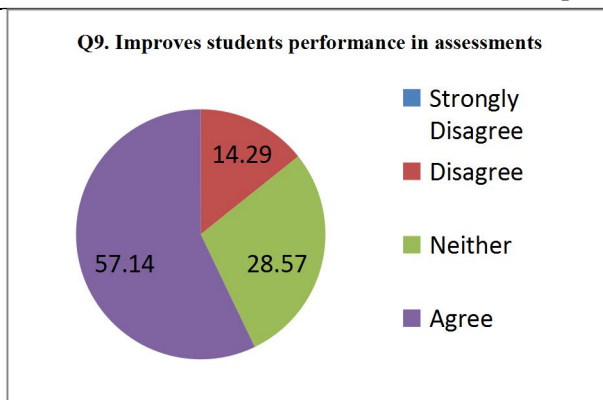


Chart 10

A vast majority of the teachers agreed that teaching and learning via language games is full of pedagogical value, should be given a special role in a language teaching programme and strengthens the relationship among the learners and the relationship between the teacher and students (Please refer to charts 7-9). However, almost half of the respondents (42%) did not give a positive response to the statement that games improve students' performance in assessments. 28.57% of them are not sure whether games have an effect on students' performance while 14% disagreed. The other 58% agreed that games improve students' performance. Teachers do not seem to have similar experiences with games. From the teachers' experience, it cannot be safely concluded that games have an effect on students' performance but a common view from the survey of students and teachers is that games surely have positive effects on affective factors which are essential for positive learning experience. For more details on the teachers' responses please refer to Appendix 2.

#### 4.3 Interview

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

#### 4.4 Observation

To ensure validity of the study a naturalistic observation was conducted to complement the survey which is based on the participants' self-report. From this additional method, the researcher could get first-hand information on students' response towards games. It could be seen that students were engaged when they were playing games. The researcher concluded this from some observable behaviours. Students showed emotional engagement when they were focused on the game-based activities. Behavioural engagement could be observed when students worked diligently, were persistent and did their best despite having challenge and successfully completed the language tasks on time using the required structures learned. However, teachers need to address students who switch to speaking their first language. If not monitored properly, games can defeat the purpose, which is to make students communicate in the target language. Although students were taught explicitly in the presentation and drilling stage of the grammar lessons, when it came to application through games, there were some students who did not apply the grammar rules learned and still made mistakes. The teacher should draw attention to the grammatical mistakes and provide feedback on common mistakes at the end of the activities. The researcher feels that the games conducted must have relevant follow up activities in the form of oral presentation or written work so that students do not just have fun in class but also retain the knowledge they gained.

From the researcher's experience conducting the class with games, it was found that games support what is called a learner/student - centred approach in teaching and learning. Learner-centred means focussing on the learner rather than the

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teacher (Collins Dictionary, 2019). A learner-centred approach requires students to be active, responsible participants in their own learning (Johnson, 2013). Learner-centered education uses interactive strategies to engage the students and develop their abilities. Through games, students end up learning through discovery rather than passively receive content from the teacher. Language games also cater to various types of learners-auditory, visual and kinaesthetic learners.

4.5 Performance in Assessment

To address the second research question, tests were given to find out the effect of games on performance in grammar. The progress of the groups were measured in two ways. One was based on the difference in the test scores between the pre-test and post-test and the other one was the difference in the rate of failures.

Table 2. Test scores of the control group

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

Table 3. Test scores of the experimental group

Experimental group

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

Tables 2 and 3 show the scores of the students in tests. Both groups showed progress in their performance. However, the scores of the students in the experimental group were slightly higher. For the control group, the T-test calculation showed a sum of -33.5 (75.36) in the measurement of the progress from the pre-test to post-test scores while the experimental group showed a sum of -39.5 (79.25).

Table 4. Numbers of passes and failures in tests

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

Based on the scores of the experimental group, a chi-square calculation was done to determine if there is a difference in the rate of failures in the post-tests. It was found that the experimental group had a much lower rate of failures in the post-test compared to the control group (Please refer to Table 4). Within the experimental group, it could be seen that the rate of failures in the post-test was much lower than the pre-test. The chi-square statistics as shown in Table 4 is 6.3354. The  $p$ -value is .011835. The result is significant at  $p < .05$ . These figures conclude that implementing language games reduces the failure rates. Games seem to help the weaker students improve. The H0 mentioned earlier is rejected while H1 is accepted.

#### 4.6 Significance of Games in Language Teaching

##### 4.6.1 Theories of successful second language acquisition

The findings of this study have proven the hypothesis that games improve performance in grammar. The effectiveness of language games as language learning tools is in line with the original discoveries or theories on factors that contribute to successful second language acquisition:

#### **The Affective Filter hypothesis**

In any aspect of education it is always important to create a safe, welcoming environment in which students can learn without being too self-conscious and have the courage to take risks of making mistakes. According to Krashen (1982), one obstacle that manifests itself during language acquisition is the affective filter. The affective filter in second language acquisition literature is a metaphorical 'screen' that prevents learning. This 'screen' refers to certain emotional variables that affect learning. This filter does not impact acquisition directly but rather, prevents input from reaching the language acquisition part of the brain. According to Krashen, the affective filter can be prompted by many different variables including anxiety, self-confidence, motivation and stress. This section of the paper will discuss some of them below:

#### Motivation

Motivation plays a significant role in successful second language learning, particularly in a classroom. According to Gardner (1985), for a learner to be motivated, he needs to have something to look forward to, a purpose related to the goal or objective. There must be something that the learner wishes to accomplish or gain and the target language is the vehicle to attain it. The learner makes use of strategies to aid in achieving the goal. A motivated learner expends effort, is persistent and attentive to the task at hand, has desires and aspirations, enjoys the activity, feels excited, experiences reinforcement from success and disappointment from failure (cited in Saranraj, 2016.)

McCallum (1980) suggests that a properly introduced game is one of the highest motivating techniques (cited in Eskandari, 2014). Deesri (2002) further argues that students get very absorbed in the competitive aspects of games; therefore, they try harder at games than other lessons (cited in Eskandari et al, 2014). It has been indicated that language learning performed in a playful atmosphere resulted not only in stimulating students' motivation but also making them feel confident and create their positive attitudes to second language learning (Cam & Tran, 2017).

#### Low anxiety level

Naiman, et al. (1978) demonstrates that learners with low levels of anxiety are more successful in learning second languages than learners with high levels of anxiety. Krashen(1982) considers anxiety as a potent deterrent to second language achievement. Learners who are more relaxed in the second language learning context will be more successful than those who are anxious. According to Dornyei (2001), games have proven to create a comfortable and stress free atmosphere for the second language learners (cited in Eskandari et al, 2014).

#### *Subconscious learning*

Krashen made a distinction between acquisition and learning. For Krashen these two terms are mutually exclusive. In his words,

*“Language acquisition is a subconscious process; language acquirers are not usually aware of the fact they are acquiring language, but are only aware of the fact that they are using the language for communication” (Krashen, 1982, p.10)*

Elsewhere, Krashen states that acquisition closely resembles the way a young child comes to master its first language.

Learning, on the other hand, is described as

*“conscious knowledge of a second language, knowing the rules, being aware of them, and being able to talk about them” (Krashen, 1978).*

Learning, therefore, relates very specifically to explicit grammatical knowledge and to activities, such as the memorization of vocabulary lists and rules of grammar.

Krashen makes the huge claim that learners only become proficient at a language through acquisition, not through learning. Learning can only allow a student to monitor their utterances or utterances they hear as being correct. Acquisition is unconscious and will occur naturally if the input is meaningful.

From a teaching and learning view point, creating a meaningful context for language use is another advantage that games present. By using games, teachers can create contexts which enable subconscious learning because during the games, learners' attention is on the message, not on the grammatical rules. Therefore, when they completely focus on a game as an activity, students acquire language in the same way that they acquire their mother tongue, that is, without being aware of it (Pathan, 2014).

#### Frequent interaction

The Interaction Hypothesis (or IH, for short), is a theoretical account of second-language acquisition (SLA), which believes that *“language is developed through interaction and negotiation of meaning”* (Ghaemi & Salehi, 2014; p. 25). The IH sits in line with a socio-interactionist approach, which emphasizes the influence of the environment in which a learner is engaged. Therefore, as emphasized by Krashen (1985: 694), teaching should be complied with interesting communicative activities.

Games have a great pedagogical value and can be a springboard for group work. In a class which is based on teaching through playing games, there are different types of interactions such as teacher-learner, learner-teacher, and learner-learner interaction (Eskandari et al, 2014). This helps to build up interpersonal relations among students. Hence, students' social and emotional development may be encouraged in the light of such positive collaboration and companionship

#### Learner-centred method

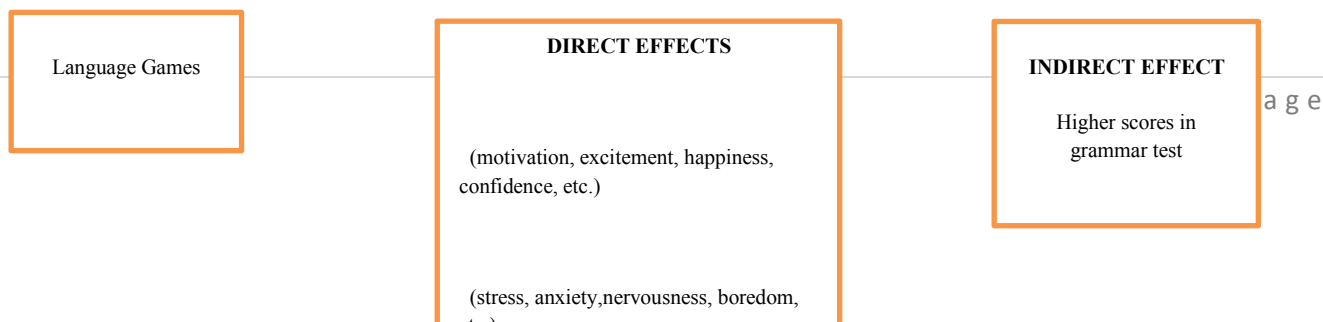
A lot of language teaching literatures have given much emphasis on learner-centred teaching and learning. The learner-centred method as opposed to teacher-centred method gives more benefits for students. A study by Dano-Hinosolango and Vedula-Dinagsao (2014) found that learner-centred teaching had a highly significant impact on students' learning outcome. It developed students' learning skills and strategies.

Games are student-focused activities requiring active involvement of learners. In Crookal's (1990) opinion, learners and teachers change their roles and relations through games and learners are encouraged to take more control of their learning process. As a result, games provide learners with a chance to direct their own learning (Eskandari, 2014.)

#### 4.6.2 Games and cognitive development

Research by Uberman (1998) has shown that children learn and develop the fastest when they are at play. The use of games in a learning environment will not only change the dynamic of the class, but it will also rejuvenate students and help the brain learn more effectively (Pathan, 2014). Among other abilities, games help develop students' motor skills, social capacities, memory and creativity. Therefore, it is desired that teachers should think how to teach grammar through enjoyable activities.

The following diagram summarizes the stages of this study beginning from the treatment, to the various effects of the treatment towards the English grammar learning process which in turn results in higher test scores.



### **5. Limitations of Study**

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

### **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study has provided an insight on the pedagogical value of games in the classroom from the perspectives of a teacher and students from multiple research methods. This research explored the effect of language games on affective factors with Motivation and Attitude survey, interview and observation. It also studied their effect on the subjects' performance in grammar with grammar tests. The results of questionnaire, discussion from interview and experience from observation found that overall, students and teachers have positive feelings and attitude towards games. It is evident that games are in favour of learners in many ways. One, they increase the positive affective factors and minimize the negative ones. Apart from that, they provide conducive learning condition which is learner centred and interactive. This in turn leads to positive performance as could be seen from the results of the grammar test which shows that the scores of students in the experimental group is higher and the experimental group also has lower failure rate. However, the survey on teachers showed that not all teachers who conducted language games report that games improved their students' performance. This is probably because of the differences in how games are conducted by different teachers. For games to bring the desired result, they need to be carefully selected and modified to suit the learners' proficiency level, age and the course objectives. They must have meaningful learning purpose and meet learning objectives rather than just 'reduce boredom.' As they are

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conducted, the students' language use needs to be carefully monitored. Teachers need more knowledge, skills and training to conduct successful language games.

Having recognized the potential of games, it is worth considering them in an English learning programme. Teachers should exploit the use of games for making their teaching easy, interesting, learner-centred and motivational. Teachers can allocate at least a third of the weekly class times for games as a diversion from the regular methods. In curriculum design, language games can be verbalized as part of the syllabus, curriculum or language programme to ensure that all teachers conduct them rather than leave it to the initiatives of some. The higher authorities of a learning institution can support the teachers by allocating a budget for the relevant facilities and teaching materials.

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### APPENDICES

#### APPENDIX 1

Responses from the students' survey

Learning grammar via language games	<b>Strongly Disagree</b> <b>1</b>	<b>Disagree</b> <b>2</b>	<b>Neither</b> <b>3</b>	<b>Agree</b> <b>4</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b> <b>5</b>
1. makes lessons fun and enjoyable.	0%	0%	0%	57.57%	42.24%
2. motivates me to learn and participate in the class activities.	0%	3.03%	0%	51.52%	45.45%
3. keeps me alert and engages my attention.	0%	3.03%	3.03%	66.67%	24.24%
4. increases positive feelings (comfortable, confident, happy, excited, etc.)	0%	0%	9.09%	63.64	27.27%
5. minimizes negative feelings (stress, anxiety, nervousness, boredom, etc).	0%	3.03%	27.27%	57.57%	12.12%
6. gives opportunity to apply the grammar rules learned for practical	0%	0%	9.09%	60.61%	30.30%



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communication.					
7. enables me to learn, understand and practice grammar better.	0%	0%	9.09%	45.45%	45.45%
8. provides a positive classroom atmosphere.	0%	0%	12.12%	54.54%	33.33%
9. strengthens relationship with my classmates through pair-work and group activities.	0%	3.03%	9.09%	33.33%	51.52%
10. is a waste of class time.	33.33%	42.42%	18.18%	6.06%	0%
11. is not suitable or appropriate for adult learners in higher learning institution.	36.36%	33.33%	18.18%	3.03%	9.09%
12. can distract students from learning.	36.36%	33.33%	18.18%	12.12%	0%

APPENDIX 2

Responses from the teachers' survey

Teaching and learning via language games	<b>Strongly Disagree</b> <b>1</b>	<b>Disagree</b> <b>2</b>	<b>Neither</b> <b>3</b>	<b>Agree</b> <b>4</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b> <b>5</b>
1. makes lessons fun and enjoyable for both the students and the teacher.	0%	0%	14.29%	14.29%	71.43%
2. is full of pedagogical value.	0%	0%	14.29%	85.71%	0%
3. should be given a special role in a language teaching programme.	0%	0%	14.29%	85.71%	0%
4. presents many opportunities for learners to show their skills in many language areas.	0%	14.29%	0%	71.43%	14.29%
5. gives opportunities to use the target language for practical communication.	0%	0%	14.29%	57.14%	28.57%
6. enables students to learn, understand and practice the topics and skills taught better.	0%	14.29%	14.29%	42.86%	28.57%

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7. provides a positive classroom atmosphere for the teacher and students.	0%	0%	14.29%	71.43%	14.29%
8. strengthens the relationship among the students and also between the students and the instructor.	0%	0%	14.29%	71.43%	14.29%
9. improves the students' performance in assessments.	0%	14.29%	28.57%	57.14%	0%
10. cannot determine or have an effect on the students' knowledge and skills.	0%	57.14%	14.29%	28.57%	0%
11. is too time consuming and is a waste of class time.	0%	28.57%	42.86%	28.57%	0%
12. is not suitable or appropriate for adult learners in higher learning institution.	0%	71.43%	28.57%	0%	0%
13. can distract students attention during instruction.	0%	14.29%	57.14%	28.57%	0%
14. is difficult to be implemented for every topic taught.	0%	14.29%	28.57%	42.86%	14.29%