

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Grammar is a description of the rules governing sentence construction in a particular language (Tiana, Jimmi, & Lestari, 2023). Grammar determines how a language is used and helps people communicate effectively (Singh et al., 2022). Thus, grammar forms the foundation of our ability to express ourselves clearly (Shirav & Nagai, 2022). Grammar skills play an important role in speaking, writing, reading, and listening because of their nature as a stimulant for language (Kulaeva & Kulaev, 2023).

In the context of teaching English to children, grammar cannot be separated from language instruction. Language relies on grammar to function, and without language, grammar does not exist (Sacal & Potane, 2023). Therefore, the importance of grammar cannot be overlooked in English teaching and learning. Understanding and mastering grammar helps children construct correct sentences, avoid misunderstandings, and enhance their overall communication skills. Effective grammar teaching can accelerate the language learning process, providing a solid foundation for deeper and more sustainable mastery of English.

Previous research has largely focused on traditional teaching method-based approaches, exploring the effectiveness of communicative grammar teaching. These studies indicate that this approach results in better understanding, allowing students to learn grammar holistically by integrating form, meaning, and use (Enesi, Strati, & Trifoni, 2023). Traditional flashcards have also been identified as an effective alternative learning medium in the digital era, enhancing students' motivation and understanding in learning English (Octaviani & Soepriatmadji, 2024). However, the differences in effectiveness between traditional and technology-based methods in grammar learning show similar results (Kinet & Meunier, 2018). As an alternative, grammar teaching integrated with communicative practice has been proven to enhance language fluency (Abdushukurova, 2024).

Previous studies have focused on communicative-based approaches (Communicative Grammar Teaching) to explore the effectiveness of communicative grammar teaching methods in improving grammar knowledge, oral communication, and students' attitudes toward this method. The findings indicate a positive impact on students' grammar understanding and oral communication skills (Ho, 2014). Additionally, other research discusses the integration of traditional grammar teaching with communicative language

practices to enhance language fluency (Abdushukurova, 2024). This combination of approaches has proven effective in improving grammar understanding and student engagement in language learning.

Previous research has examined technology-based and digital media approaches in English language learning. Studies show that game-based learning can enhance students' motivation, engagement, and social interaction, as well as expand vocabulary and grammar comprehension. Digital games such as Quizizz and Kahoot! have proven effective in encouraging active student participation and facilitating enjoyable learning experiences (Rochmawan, 2023; Sari & Nurani, 2021). Furthermore, Digital Game-Based Learning (DGBL) supports critical thinking skills, knowledge transfer, and student creativity while fostering positive attitudes toward learning (Behnamnia et al., 2020). Research also reveals that games improve self-regulated learning (SRL) through metacognition and motivation, creating a conducive and student-centered learning environment (Mahayanti et al., 2020; Aratea & Pasubillo, 2024).

Grammar is a fundamental component of effective communication, as it helps learners improve their overall speaking, writing, listening, and reading skills. In line with this view, Abbas Zubair Malla and Neamat Majeed Abbo (2024) emphasize that “for many teachers, grammar is the

backbone of all language learning”. In English language learning for children, effective grammar instruction not only enables the formation of correct sentence structures but also supports the development of broader communication skills. However, research on grammar teaching approaches remains dominated by traditional and communicative methods. These approaches tend to emphasize understanding grammar through integration with communication practice, which has been proven to enhance language fluency and student engagement.

Although effective, these methods pay less attention to technology-based innovations that can offer a more engaging learning experience. Game-Based Learning (GBL) has emerged as a promising alternative approach with the potential to enhance students' motivation, social interaction, and language proficiency. However, the application of GBL in grammar learning for children remains underexplored, leaving a gap in this area of research. The novelty of this study lies in its effort to explore the effectiveness of GBL in improving grammar skills through interactive and enjoyable learning strategies, which have not been widely implemented in grammar instruction for young learners.

To understand the actual conditions of the teaching and learning process at SMPN MAUR, particularly in Grade VII 4, the researcher conducted a preliminary study on February

17, 2025, through interviews with the teacher and students, followed by an observation.

Observation results show that the teacher provided fairly clear instructions regarding grammar rules during the games. The teacher also integrated various types of games such as cards and board games into the learning process. The students demonstrated enthusiasm and interest while playing, and they were able to understand the grammar rules taught through the games. However, it was found that the teacher still faced challenges in managing the class when applying game-based learning, as the classroom atmosphere became noisier and less controlled. (found in Appendix 3).

In the interview with the teacher, it was revealed that grammar is considered an essential aspect that needs to be mastered from an early age so that students do not struggle in the next levels of education. The teacher usually applies the grammar translation method but has also implemented game-based learning. As a result, students showed greater interest and motivation in learning grammar through games. The teacher stated that games make grammar material easier for students to understand because it is more engaging and less monotonous. Nonetheless, the main challenge of this method is maintaining classroom order. To evaluate students' understanding, the teacher uses pre-tests and post-tests as indicators of improvement. The teacher suggested the need

for variety in the games to prevent boredom and strongly recommended the broader use of game-based learning as it has proven to enhance students' motivation and understanding of grammar. (found in Appendix 6).

Interviews with five students support these findings. Most students stated that they enjoyed learning grammar, especially when it involved games. They found it easier to understand grammar rules because the learning felt fun and not boring. Some students mentioned that the most challenging parts of grammar were tenses and the use of auxiliary verbs like *is*, *am*, and *are*. The games they enjoyed included word guessing, card-based quizzes, ball-throwing while answering questions, and group sentence-building games. Additionally, students felt more confident in using grammar after learning through games, and they suggested extending the playtime and varying the types of games to make learning more enjoyable and to support their understanding better. (found in Appendix 7).

The study titled "*Enhancing Grammar Proficiency Through Game Based Larning; A Study on English Foreign Language for Young Learners*" The study holds significant urgency of this research lies in the need to improve grammar proficiency among young EFL learners through engaging and effective learning methods. Grammar, as a fundamental component of English language acquisition, is often

perceived as difficult and monotonous by students, especially when taught using traditional methods. The preliminary data from classroom observations and interviews with both teachers and students reveal that while students find grammar important, they struggle with understanding concepts like tenses, auxiliary verbs, and sentence construction when taught conventionally.

However, the implementation of game-based learning (GBL) in grammar instruction has shown promising results. Observations indicate that students exhibit high levels of enthusiasm, interest, and better understanding when grammar rules are taught through games. Teachers also recognize the motivational aspect of GBL and note improvements in students' participation and comprehension. Nevertheless, challenges such as classroom management and the need for game variety suggest that this method requires further exploration and structured application.

Considering the limited use of game-based learning in grammar instruction at the junior high school level and the lack of in-depth studies in this area, this research is considered both timely and necessary. It aims to fill the gap between grammar instruction and learner engagement by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of GBL. The study is expected to contribute theoretically to the field of language pedagogy and practically to the development of

interactive teaching strategies that enhance students' grammar mastery and motivation to learn English.

B. Identification of the Problem

Based on the background described, the researcher identifies several key issues in the English learning process that need attention:

1. Low student understanding of grammar
2. Monotonous teaching methods
3. Lack of motivation and interest in learning grammar
4. Limited use of game-based learning methods
5. Challenges for teachers in classroom management during GBL
6. Need for varied grammar learning media
7. Lack of evidence-based research on GBL at the junior high school level

C. Limitation of the Problem

This study is limited to the implementation of game-based learning (GBL) as a method to enhance grammar proficiency among EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students at the junior high school level. Specifically, the research focuses on seventh-grade class 4 students at SMPN MAUR during the 2024/2025 academic year. The scope of grammar material in this study is confined to basic topics such as tenses, subject-verb agreement, and auxiliary verbs (is, am, are). The study solely examines students' responses,

motivation, and understanding of grammar influenced by the use of games in classroom instruction. It also includes teachers' perspectives regarding the effectiveness and challenges in implementing GBL in grammar learning. This study does not address other language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, or writing in depth. Moreover, it is limited to the use of offline (non-digital) games and does not include technology-based or online games, considering the classroom conditions and students' access to digital tools.

D. Research Questions

In this research, the researcher formulated the problem as follow: “ is the effective of the of using game based learning on student’s learning outcomes in understanding and applying grammar in the learning context at SMP N Maur?

E. The Purposes of the Reseach

Based on the research questions formulated, the objectives of this study are as follows: to know the effective of using game based learning on student’s learning outcomes in understanding and applying grammar in the learning context at SMP N Maur?

F. The Significants of the Research

Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the development of language learning theory, particularly in the context of the application of game-based learning. By analyzing young students' experiences in improving grammar

skills through this approach, this study can enrich the understanding of effective ways to teach grammar in a fun and interactive manner. The results of this research could also strengthen theories related to contextual learning and constructivism, which emphasize the active role of students in constructing their own knowledge through meaningful learning experiences.

Practically, this research provides direct benefits for language teaching at the school level, particularly in improving students' grammar skills. The findings of this study can be used by teachers to design and implement game-based learning that can increase student motivation and improve their learning outcomes. Additionally, this research can offer practical guidance on how games can be used as a tool to help students understand and apply grammar in the context of everyday learning, as well as strengthen social skills and cooperation among students.

G. Operational Definitions of Key Terms

In this study, there are several terms that need to be defined operationally to understand the concept of innovative grammar learning:

1. *Grammar skill* refers to an individual's ability to understand, master, and apply the rules of grammar in speaking and writing, including sentence structure, word

usage, and appropriate syntax in the context of communication.

2. *Game-Based Learning* is a learning approach that uses game elements to enhance student engagement, motivation, and understanding in the learning process.
3. *Young Learner* refers to young students, typically between the ages of 6 and 12, who are in the developmental stage of language and cognitive skills.

