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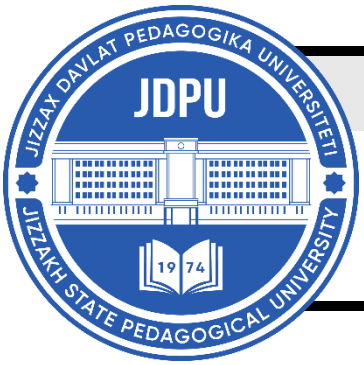

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IMPROVING 8th AND 9th GRADE ESOL LEARNERS' GRAMMAR SKILLS WITH GAMIFIED-LEARNING IN NAMANGAN

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ABOUT ARTICLE

Key words: Gamification, technology-enhanced learning, student engagement, Genially, Kahoot!, grammar acquisition, grammar skills, game-based learning platforms, gamification tools, technology-enhanced instruction.

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Abstract: This study explores the effectiveness of gamified learning in enhancing both 8th and 9th grade ESOL learners' grammar skills at Istiqbol Zamon Bolalari in Namangan, Uzbekistan. Traditional grammar instruction often struggles to maintain student engagement, limiting progress. This research examines whether gamification tools, specifically Genially and Kahoot!, offer a more interactive and effective approach.

A mixed-methods design was used over 8 weeks, incorporating qualitative and quantitative data. Pre- and post-tests assessed learners grammar skills, while interviews and surveys offered valuable perspectives on their experiences and viewpoints. Data were analyzed statistically to compare the results after 8 interventions of game-based learning platforms such as Genially and Kahoot! Results showed that the control group (8A and 9A), taught traditionally, improved up to 10%, while the experimental group (8B and 9B), using gamified learning, achieved a 24% increase. Statistical analysis confirmed that gamified learning enhances grammar acquisition to a larger extent, suggesting that technology-enhanced instruction fosters better learning outcomes.

INTRODUCTION.

"English is widely recognized as a crucial global language and often referred to as the language of knowledge. Many emphasize the necessity of English proficiency for gaining knowledge and personal growth, as a vast number of documents, websites, and digital platforms primarily use English to cater to an international audience. Learning English facilitates communication among individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Additionally, its inclusion as a core subject in educational institutions worldwide highlights its significance in modern society"

(Boyinbode, 2018).

Despite its importance, mastering English presents considerable challenges, particularly in grammar usage and linguistic competence (Rafiq, Hashim, Yunus, & Pazilah, 2019a; Yaccob & Yunus, 2019). Thus, it is essential to investigate how gamified learning can support students in enhancing their English skills.

Gamification has emerged as a powerful and engaging approach in education, particularly in the field of second language acquisition. Traditional methods of teaching grammar often rely on rote memorization and repetitive drills, which can lead to disinterest and reduced learning retention among students. Gamified learning environments offer students a sense of enjoyment and engagement while providing immediate feedback. By overcoming challenges, students experience a sense of achievement, which fosters motivation and perseverance in their learning journey (Bicen & Kocakoyun, 2018). Given these advantages, incorporating gamification into ESL instruction has the potential to enhance language acquisition and overall student engagement.

Today's students, often referred to as digital natives, are highly proficient in using technological devices, social media, and online gaming platforms (Rahmani, 2020). Having grown up surrounded by technology, they are naturally drawn to digital tools for entertainment and education (Hashim et al., 2019). Studies indicate that many students actively engage with mobile games due to their interactive and immersive nature (Rahmani, 2020; Anak Yunus & Hua, 2021). Interactive quizzes and gamified applications like Genially and Kahoot! can make the learning process more dynamic and engaging (Desnenko et al., 2021). Integrating game elements into lessons fosters enthusiasm and encourages active participation (Subhash & Cudney, 2018; Mee et al., 2020). Additionally, the interactive nature of games promotes teamwork, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas among students (Maasum et al., 2015). Through gamification, learners become more involved in discussions and develop deeper

engagement with the learning material (Ding et al., 2020). Importantly, cultivating students' anticipation for learning plays a key role in shaping their overall educational experience.

Given that grammar instruction is frequently perceived as monotonous and challenging, the incorporation of gamification offers an alternative method for making learning more enjoyable and efficient. This study examines the impact of gamified learning on both 8th and 9th -grade ESOL learners in Namangan, Uzbekistan, focusing on whether these digital tools can enhance grammatical accuracy, retention, and overall student engagement.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used a mixed-methods approach, incorporating surveys and interviews, a pre-test, eight intervention sessions, and a post-test. This study, which lasted 8 weeks, collected both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a well-founded understanding of the impact of game-based platforms on grammar acquisition.

In total, 40 school students ranging in age from 13 to 15, whose grammar skill levels varied from intermediate to elementary, participated in the study. The students were divided into two groups: control group and experimental one. Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from both students and their parents. Confidentiality was ensured by anonymizing the participants' identities, and the collected data were used strictly for research purposes.

Weekly quizzes were implemented to evaluate gradual progress, and feedback sessions were held to address challenges and refine learning strategies.

The research began with a pre-test to assess the initial grammar level of all participants. Over the course of eight intervention sessions spanning eight weeks, each group engaged in two instructional sessions per week, focusing on specific grammar structures. The lessons were interactive, incorporating gamified learning platforms like Genially and Kahoot! for the experimental group, while the control group followed traditional methods using textbooks and written exercises. A post-test was administered one week after the final intervention to measure grammar gains. Additionally, surveys and semi-structured interviews provided insights into student engagement, motivation, and perceptions of each instructional method.

Data from tests, questionnaires, and interviews were analyzed to determine the relative effectiveness of gamified learning. This study considered both quantitative improvements in test scores and qualitative experiences of students, offering a comprehensive understanding of how game-based learning influences grammar acquisition. The findings highlight the potential

of gamified strategies in ESOL instruction, advocating for an integrated approach that combines traditional methods with technology-enhanced learning to maximize student engagement and learning outcomes.

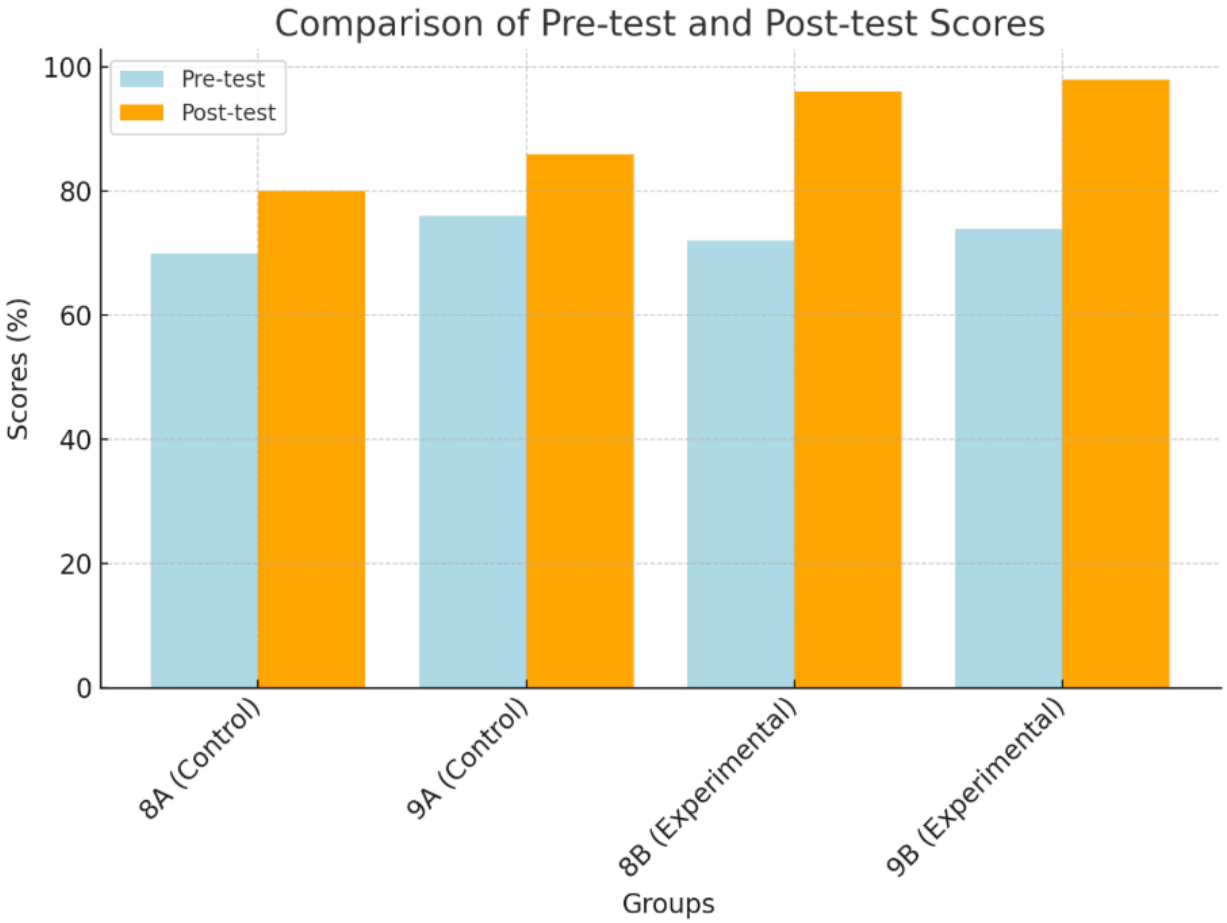
Participants:

Control Group (8A and 9A): 20 students who were taught using traditional grammar instruction methods from the teacher's book.

Experimental Group (8B and 9B): 20 students who were exposed to an additional set of online grammar-based games alongside traditional instruction.

RESULTS

This research examined the impact of gamified learning on ESOL learners' grammar skills. The collected data, represented in the bar chart, line graph, and table, provides a clear comparison between the traditional and gamified learning approaches in improving grammar proficiency among 8th and 9th-grade ESOL learners.



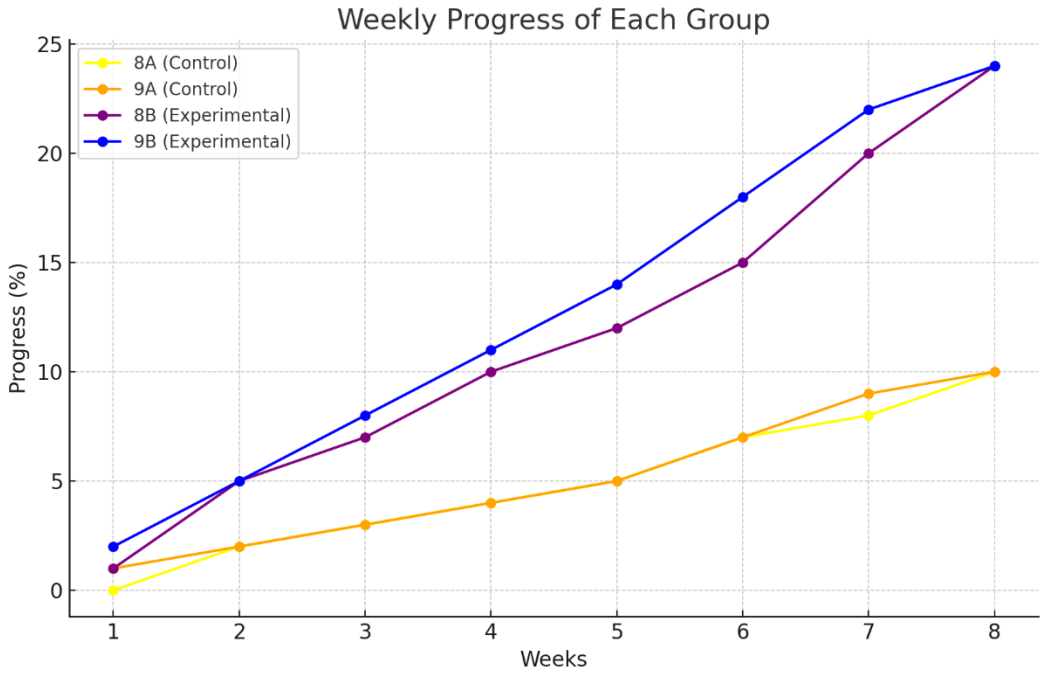
The bar chart illustrates the pre-test and post-test results for both control (8A, 9A) and experimental (8B, 9B) groups. Initially, the pre-test scores ranged from 70% to 76% across all groups, indicating similar starting proficiency levels. However, after the intervention, the experimental groups (8B and 9B) exhibited noticeably higher improvement rates (24% increase on average), with post-test scores reaching 96% and 98%, respectively. In contrast, the control groups (8A and 9A), which followed traditional methods, showed only a modest improvement of 10%, with post-test scores rising to 80% and 86%. These findings confirm that gamified learning strategies contributed to a greater enhancement of grammar skills compared to conventional instruction.

Table 1: Improvement in grammar acquisition in both controlled and experimental groups

Group	Pre-test (%)	Post-test (%)	Improvement (%)
8A (Control)	70	80	10
9A (Control)	76	86	10
8B (Experimental)	72	96	24
9B (Experimental)	74	98	24

The table summarizes the overall progress by directly comparing pre-test and post-test performance. While both groups improved, the experimental groups displayed a substantially higher percentage increase (24%) compared to the control groups (10%). This significant difference highlights the effectiveness of interactive, game-based learning in reinforcing grammar skills more efficiently than traditional instruction.

Weekly Trends in Grammar Acquisition



Analysis of the Weekly Progress Line Graph

The line graph illustrates the weekly progress of four groups—two control groups (8A and 9A) and two experimental groups (8B and 9B)—over an eight-week period. The results highlight the difference in grammar improvement between students taught through traditional methods and those exposed to gamified learning strategies.

Both experimental groups (8B and 9B) demonstrated a steady and significant increase in progress over time, reaching a 24% improvement by the eighth week. The control groups (8A and 9A), while also improving, showed a much slower rate of progress, with final improvements of around 10% by the end of the study. The gap between the experimental and control groups widened as the weeks progressed, indicating that gamified learning had a cumulative effect on grammar acquisition.

In the initial weeks, all groups displayed modest progress, with a similar starting point. However, by the fourth week, the experimental groups (8B and 9B) began to outpace the control groups (8A and 9A) significantly.

By week 6, the experimental groups had doubled the progress of the control groups. This suggests that gamified learning became increasingly effective over time, possibly as students adapted to the interactive format. The control groups' growth remained gradual, reinforcing the idea that traditional methods may not provide the same level of engagement or reinforcement as gamified activities.

• 8B vs. 9B (Experimental Groups). Both experimental groups followed a nearly identical trajectory, ending at the same 24% improvement by week 8. Slight variations in their weekly progress suggest minor differences in how each class responded to the gamified approach, but the overall effectiveness remained consistent.

• 8A vs. 9A (Control Groups) The control groups showed a similar pace of improvement, with 8A slightly outperforming 9A in the middle weeks. By the final weeks, their progress evened out, suggesting that traditional instruction provided limited differentiation between grade levels in terms of effectiveness.

Qualitative Insights

The qualitative data gathered through interviews, surveys, and classroom observations provide deeper insights into the impact of gamified learning on grammar acquisition. These findings complement the quantitative results, shedding light on engagement levels, cognitive processes, and learner motivation in both traditional and game-based instruction.

Gamified Learning: Engagement and Motivation

Students and educators emphasized the engaging nature of game-based platforms like Kahoot! and Genially. The interactive elements, such as immediate feedback, competition, and point-based rewards, contributed to sustained motivation. One teacher noted, "Students actively participated and anticipated each session, showing greater willingness to complete exercises." Learners also reported increased confidence in grammar application, as one participant stated, "It's easier to remember rules when I get instant feedback and can correct mistakes in a fun way."

However, while gamified learning boosted participation, some students experienced difficulty focusing on grammar rules beyond the game context. Observations revealed that highly competitive students were more engaged, whereas others sometimes prioritized speed over accuracy. This suggests the need for structured reinforcement activities alongside gamified exercises.

Traditional Instruction: Structured but Less Engaging

Teachers in the control groups valued traditional methods for their structured approach, ensuring systematic grammar instruction. However, students found it less stimulating, with one mentioning, "It feels repetitive, and I sometimes lose focus." Classroom observations showed that learners in traditional lessons participated less actively compared to those using gamified learning. Additionally, some students struggled with retaining concepts over time, highlighting the challenge of maintaining engagement in conventional teaching formats.

Comparative Findings: The Need for Balance

The qualitative data confirm that gamified learning enhances student engagement and motivation, leading to better grammar retention compared to traditional methods. However, the most effective learning outcomes may arise from a balanced approach, combining the structured reinforcement of traditional instruction with the interactive elements of gamification. This integrated method could ensure both engagement and long-term retention, making grammar learning more effective and enjoyable for ESOL learners.

Future research should explore how to optimize game-based tools to support deeper cognitive processing, ensuring that learners not only enjoy grammar practice but also internalize grammatical rules for practical application.

DISCUSSION

The combined results from all three visual representations strongly indicate that gamification positively influences grammar acquisition. The experimental groups consistently

outperformed the control groups, both in overall improvement (bar chart and table) and in steady weekly progress (line graph). The data suggest that incorporating interactive learning strategies fosters better retention, engagement, and long-term language skill development.

These results align with previous findings that gamification enhances student engagement and grammar skill (Wichadee & Pattanapichet, 2018). The competitive, interactive, and reward-based nature of online games fosters a more stimulating learning environment, increasing motivation and improving knowledge retention (Turan & Meral, 2017). These findings suggest that while traditional grammar instruction remains valuable, supplementing lessons with gamified learning strategies leads to greater student success.

The results were analyzed based on the research objective, which was to compare pre- and post-test scores. The upward trend in student performance confirms that the interventions were effective. The integration of online games in the learning process contributed to better grammar comprehension. Previous research by Perveen et al. (2013) similarly found that using games in education led to a notable increase in students' vocabulary acquisition. This improvement can be attributed to the motivating nature of gamified learning (Flores, 2015). Moreover, Ghavifekr and Rosdy (2015) suggest that students learn more effectively when exposed to technology-enhanced teaching methods that stimulate their interest. The study's findings align with this perspective, reinforcing that gamified learning is a beneficial instructional approach.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that gamified learning effectively enhances grammar proficiency in ESL learners by increasing motivation and engagement. Students in the gamified group outperformed those in traditional instruction, demonstrating higher retention and a more positive attitude toward grammar learning. Integrating online games fosters an interactive environment that boosts participation and confidence, making grammar acquisition more enjoyable and effective.

However, limitations include a small sample size, a short intervention period, and a narrow focus on grammar. Future research should explore gamification's long-term impact, its effectiveness across diverse student populations, and its role in developing other language skills, such as speaking and writing. Additionally, comparative studies on different digital tools and learner differences could provide deeper insights. Longitudinal research is needed to determine the sustainability of grammar improvements and optimize gamified learning's integration into ESL instruction for lasting academic benefits.

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