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Potential of games as a revision tool of grammar in EFL classes

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V Olomouci dne

Podpis 

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Abstract

There are various approaches to teach grammar as it is an undeniable aspect of any language acquisition. This thesis analyses the potential effectiveness of games as tool for grammar teaching and grammar revision. The theoretical part of the thesis describes various methods of grammar teaching, important elements and aspects of education and examines the role, and theoretical benefits of games in educational process. The empirical part presents findings of an experimental lesson that sought to analyse students' perception of a game specifically designed to be a grammar revision tool, and whether the theoretical benefits, introduced in the theoretical part, of incorporating games were reflected in a real-life application.

Key words

Grammar, games, teaching, benefits, students' participation, preparation, motivation, self-evaluation

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I. Introduction

Fostering students' motivation and participation through traditional teaching methods has become increasingly challenging. However, games show a great potential in improving teaching effectiveness. They not only enrich a lesson with a fun environment but also make students' work more effective. As educators continually seek innovative approaches to enhance grammar instruction, the incorporation of games emerges as a promising strategy. This bachelor' thesis explores the intersection of games and education, aiming to analyse whether games are well-received by students and their effectiveness in enhancing overall classroom cooperation and enjoyment. This exploration will highlight specific benefits that gamification brings to grammar revision lessons.

The first part of the thesis aims to explain the significance of grammar in any language acquisition and examines methods generally used in its teaching. Subsequently, the thesis delves into games, exploring their function, classification, and benefits.

The second part presents an experiment conducted in an elementary school, aiming to determine whether games are effective tools for teachers and whether they contributed to students' motivation, participation, and cooperation in real life. Additionally, if the game presented in the lesson helped to ignite self-evolution process of students. Findings of this experiment were analysed using a coding method and results are presented for each question of provided questionnaires, individually.

The last part contains conclusion of the findings.

II. Theoretical Part

1. Grammar

1.1. Approaches to teaching grammar

Thorbury (1999, p. 14) mentions a statement of Webbe who was one of the first authors who questioned the importance of teaching grammar. He argued that it is not essential to put an excessive attention to grammar since it is the part of a language that could be acquired unconsciously simply by its frequent exposure and repetition. He continued that grammar is naturally gained by reading, listening, and speaking. Thornbury (1999, p. 14) states that, “grammar rules are essential for the mastery of language”, and “the effects of grammar teaching... appear to be fragile”. However, the grammatical part of English language plays a significant role in its acquisition, and schools pay a lot of attention to it. While it may be acquired unconsciously the importance of introducing it properly to a non-native speaker remains. If the goal is to acquire a language, teaching grammar is crucial. “To teach grammar is very important and it plays a significant role in every English foreign language classroom. And through grammar, teacher aims to enable students to be able to make a progress in their linguistic competence” (Zubaydova, 2021, p. 372). Therefore, if the goal is for all students to reach the highest possible level of language competence, it is important for teachers to introduce all aspects of a language, including grammar. As has been mentioned, grammar can be acquired unconsciously, but the significance of its introduction and proper communication is undeniable.

1.2. Grammar teaching strategies

Grammar teaching strategies help teachers to effectively lead the way they interact with pupils. These strategies represent approaches teachers use to present new grammar concepts in the most comprehensible way. It is important for non-native learners to comprehend grammatical concepts on a high level so that they can communicate without any substantial errors. There is a wide range of grammar teaching strategies that can be implemented, and the choice depends on an individual teacher’s personality and effectiveness of the strategy.

Deductive & inductive

Zubaydova (2021, p. 372) said that there are two basic approaches to teaching grammar: inductive and deductive. Inductive approach works with examples and rules are deducted out of them. Deductive approach works with rules which are then applied on examples.

(Thornbury, 1999, p. 29) What advantages and disadvantages can we find in the usage of these two approaches? Generally, combination of both is well-accepted by EFL students.

a) Deductive

Deductive approach is often connected to grammar-transition. The explanation of grammar point is given at the beginning of a lesson (Thornbury, 1999, p. 29). This means that a teacher directs students' attention to the grammar first. The concept may be explained to students in their mother language achieving better understanding. It may seem like there is less of talking practice involved, when the grammar-transition happens in students' mother language but there is still plenty of room in lessons for further work on pronunciation and speaking.

That way teacher ensures that all students understand and can follow lessons' teaching objective and has also time for additional practice (Thornbury, 1999, p. 30). Thornbury (1999, p. 30) also mentioned that getting straight to the point regarding grammar help students to start immediately practicing through texts, games, and other forms. Major disadvantage of this approach is the capability of young learners to understand the grammar rules right away. "They may not be able to understand the rules involved" (Zubaydova, 2021, p. 373). Zubaydova (2021, p. 373) says that such approach may encourage a belief that learning a language is solely based on memorizing certain rules and structures.

b) Inductive

Inductive method is based on students' exposure to examples, their ability to detect certain patterns used in those examples and to help them acquire a presented grammar more naturally. This is basically the way one's first language is acquired (Thornbury, 1999, p. 49). Inductive approach may be seen as a natural way of learning a language, simply by observing its usage. Thornbury (1999, p. 49) mentioned that inductive approach is more about natural language acquisition and that the most natural path of acquiring a language does not typically involve a classroom. The inductive approach focusses more on a learner's attention and students are pushed into finding grammar patterns on their own, promoting active thinking. This way, it is easier for them to acquire certain grammar rule, then by listening to a teacher's presentation of the grammar structure and rules (Samanta, 2021, p. 353). Samanta also points out two disadvantages of inductive approach. Firstly, it may be more time consuming because the teacher must prepare many examples which would introduce the grammar part effectively. Secondly, students may require extra time to identify patterns, leaving limited room for revision at the end of the lesson.

Implicit & explicit

The combination of language theory with practice is crucial for learners to fully acquire grammar knowledge and to use it properly in day-to-day situations. “Conventionally, teachers implement both implicit and explicit teaching in ELF classrooms worldwide” (Talley and Hui-ling, 2014, p. 39). Explicit grammar learning is a process that is conscious and controlled. Zheng (2015, p. 556) refers to explicit approach as learning a language through memory and grammar analysis. As can be deduced, implicit grammar learning is unconscious. Talley and Hui-ling (2014, p. 39) see the implicit approach as an opportunity to learn without the necessity of full conscious awareness, allowing pupils to absorb knowledge through its direct exposure. Zheng (2015, p. 556) characterised explicit learning with purpose, consciously, controllability and learning. On the other hand, implicit learning as being automatic, stable, abstract, and anti-interference.

a) Explicit

In traditional education the explicit type of learning is the one commonly used. Explicit grammar teaching, with its focus on mastering grammar through the study of grammar rules, prioritizes the conscious understanding and control in the learning process (Zheng, 2015, p. 557). Talley and Hui-ling (2014, p. 39) mention that during explicit learning students must pay attention to rules and make conscious effort to learn. “Explicit learning can involve activities such as teaching memorization techniques, hypothesis formation, or testing” (Talley and Hui-ling, 2014, p. 39). Zheng (2015, p. 557) states a common problem where a teacher is more concerned about teaching grammatical rules and neglects the importance of practical application on examples. Therefore, if the teacher uses only this approach, it can harm students’ communication competence.

b) Implicit

In contrast, the implicit approach directs its focus on situations when a student can naturally acquire a grammar rule simply by participating and being exposed to examples (Zheng, 2015, p. 557). During implicit learning a student may notice something that he was not aware of before and naturally acquire it (Talley and Hui-ling, 2014, p. 39). Talley and Hui-ling (2014, p. 39) refer to this style as “students having an intuitive knowledge yet lacking the ability to explain it to others.” Obtaining a language this way is the most natural way of learning, and is considered unconscious, abstract, and automatic. Zheng (2015, p. 558) says that implicit teaching can provide better interaction between teacher and students and overall atmosphere of a classroom can be improved. The implicit teaching not only allows students to acquire a language unconsciously but also helps to improve the overall lesson’s atmosphere,

making acquisition of the language a more pleasant activity that students may return to willingly.

Grammar acquisition through reading

Rhalmi (2010) mentions numerous advantages of using texts for grammar teaching. Firstly, texts can illustrate how grammatical structures are used in communication therefore are a great source of authenticity in a language. Secondly, vocabulary and grammatical structures are obtained unconsciously and automatically. Finally, students are more likely to memorize grammatical structures and vocabulary through reading, as it engages more senses and enhancing their focus on comprehending the overall text. Rhalmi (2010) also highlights the necessity of the text displaying a real communication. Reading texts which display a real-life communication helps learners to memorize patterns more effectively and makes the usage in real life situations automatic. Teachers can use this approach to enhance students' focus through tasks like underlining certain grammatical structures and discovering patterns in the text. There are many types of text-based exercises that can be used such as matching, multiple-choice questions, gap filling, putting words in brackets in the correct form, transforming sentences, and others. We can see these tasks in FCE examination and other even more advanced type of examinations that are designed to evaluate a non-native speaker's language competence. Texts exercises are meant to enhance students' focus.

Grammar acquisition through writing

Another way of revising and obtaining grammatical patterns in a less unconscious, and creative way is through writing. After presenting a correct usage of certain grammar structure teachers can ask students to write a short text using present, past, future tenses, or their combination. This is also a great way a teacher can establish whether pupils understand a grammatical structure correctly. Based on article from (Writing Prompts), an emphasis is placed on a grammar acquisition over grammar learning. It means that this approach helps students to acquire a language more naturally by expressing themselves and being engaged, than by drilling patterns on unrelated examples. Observations indicate that memorizing grammar rules may not be as effective, and students tend to comprehend new structures better when presented in a more engaging way (Writing Prompts). It incorporates more of a creative thinking process in learners and makes them comprehend structures easily and more effectively. According to Thornbury (1999, p. 72), using texts as grammar teaching strategy has at least two advantages. Firstly, text assignments help students better understand the

practical usage of grammar. Secondly, students will be able to produce more than just isolated sentences which will help them achieve a functional command of second language.

Interactive approach

Interactive approach is a good way of leading a class. Learners are engaged with games or discussions, and it is easier for them to comprehend grammatical structures, because overall activity and participation of the class gets more intense. “Interactive teaching allows such kind of teaching in which students show active involvement in the learning process to absorb maximum amount of information” (Digital Classroom). Senthamarai (2018, p. S36) mentions multiple activities that can be considered as the interactive approach such as brainstorming; think, pair and share; buzz session, incident press and Q&A session. Senthamarai (2018, p. S36) continues with a comment that such activities can promote various interpersonal skills such as communication, negotiation, teamwork, leadership, and an appreciation of diverse perspectives. This method simply fills the classroom with fun and interactivity, which is good for students’ motivation and to encourage their overall active participation. Interactive teaching can offer an opportunity to make students active lesson’s participants, rather than having them as passive listeners (Digital Classroom). Leading a classroom, the same way repeatedly may eventually become boring, therefore it is a good idea to put a bit of fun aspect into them and try to ignite pupils’ interest and cooperation.

Games

Games are a great way to avoid boring repetition of lessons’ style and teaching approaches. Basically, they make education more fun for both educators and pupils. They can help to keep up students’ motivation, make them entertained and even more engaged. Games can be used not only for entertainment but also for revision of a discussed topic, achieving better understanding, and also to achieve desired objective of lessons. Thanks to them a language can be taught in a relaxing setting and in a way that can help students memorize grammar patterns along with their usage, more effectively. Nam and Ngoc (2022, p. 17) presents a few examples of why games can be helpful. For instance, students are learning a language without realizing it, and instructors find it more exciting to offer a language in a fun environment. Nam and Ngoc (2022, p. 17) mentions a statement of S. M. Silvers (1992), the author of the book *Games for the Classroom and English-Speaking Club*. Firstly, teachers often overlook the fact that the true learning may happen in a relaxed setting. Secondly, many teachers may perceive games just as time fillers. Games should not be used just as a time

filling activity, rather they should support objectives of a teacher. Using games in language classes can be helpful, but they must be employed thoughtfully.

1.3. Games

2.3.1. Function of games in education

Incorporating games into the classroom is a common practice nowadays. It brings along various benefits such as students' engagement, critical thinking improvement and social and emotional learning promotion (Hugoboom, 2022). In other words, games are not used only for learning but also for building an individual's character and social intelligence. Properly used games should also support teacher's objective of a class. The following part presents various advantages and functions of using games in education.

Activation of a student

When students have a difficulty paying attention due to a short attention span or after a long break, it is crucial for a teacher to regain their focus. Games are a great tool to achieve that. "Activities help provide additional sensory experiences that refocus a classroom" (Hugoboom, 2022). Arikan & Yolageldili (2011, p. 219) mention that games provide more enjoyable and relaxing settings. It is good for teachers because a lot of young learners may be anxious about expressing themselves using second language. "Games encourage students to use their language in a creative and communicative manner" (Arikan & Yolageldili, 2011, p. 210).

Motivation

Keeping pupils motivated is a difficult task that teachers must face on daily basis. If the teacher is always pushing young learners to use textbooks, write essays, and memorize vocabulary along with grammar, students can get bored quickly, and motivation and overall mood of the lesson will decelerate. Games help learning to be more entertaining and lesson objectives can be followed even with their active usage. Hugoboom (2022) states that presenting problems through games, rather than a textbook, reduces the likelihood of students becoming discouraged and overwhelmed. Arikan & Yolageldili (2011, p. 219) mention that games are a common part of any kid's life and is therefore easier to keep up motivation through them. "Learners are excited by competition because the question who will win or lose remains unanswered until the game is over" (Arikan & Yolageldili, 2011, p. 220). Games can simply fill the class with excitement and fun; therefore, they are a great tool of how to keep and raise students' enthusiasm towards education.

Other benefits

Games usage brings many other benefits such as self-esteem boost, memory workout, and problem-solving skill development (Massman, 2023). Having them implemented into lesson plans plays a crucial role in education, especially when working with younger individuals because of their short attention span and quickly decelerating motivation. Every teacher should practically incorporate games into his own teaching style. From a pedagogical point of view games have many great advantages for a teacher and are considered as the most suitable instructional activity for young learners, because they are a natural part of their life (Arikan & Yolageldili, 2011, p. 221). Arikan & Yolageldili (2011, p. 221) also mentions a statement by Nedomová, “young learners are not able to pay attention for more than 10-20 minutes and after that they start to be bored and tired”. Because teaching grammar is very dependent on certain patterns, rules, and memorization, it is useful to bring up games that will promote students’ learning by activating more of their senses. This way learning becomes less obvious and more natural.

2.3.2. Classification of games

There are many types of games that can improve students’ valuable skills. Teachers tend to implement games in their lesson plans to reach both students’ participation and their learning objectives. Falciani (2020) mentions 3 types of games that are commonly used to achieve an educational objective. Board games, which can be used to develop motor skills and problem-solving skills. Real life games, which are considered the most motivating type of game and students are provoked to participate with all their senses. This type can be often interconnected with role-playing, simulations, or drama. Lastly, he mentions digital games which provoke participation of students in a virtual space. Whitehill (2008) classifies games into indoor games (board games) and outdoor games (play activities). He further distinguishes table games into dice games, card games, word games, dexterity games and memory games.

2.3.3. Preparation of a game

There are several things to consider while choosing the right game for the right situation including purpose of the game, language level of participants, in which part of a lesson should the game be used, and others (Arikan & Yolageldili, 2011, p. 222). For a teacher it is crucial to think through all the variables of how, why, and when the game should be used because if it was just thrown into the classroom unthinkingly, it would probably lack any educational purpose.

Choice of a game

Teachers should consider which game will help them regain students' focus and help them follow objective of a lesson. Arikan & Yolageldili (2011, p. 221) say that it is important to decide what is the purpose of the game, because they should not be considered only as time fillers. A teacher should consider various factors such as students' age, number of students, and primarily the level of language, because "a game can become difficult when it is beyond the learners' level or it may become boring when it is too easy" (Arikan & Yolageldili, 2011, p. 222). Arikan & Yolageldili (2011, p. 222) continue suggesting that games enable social interaction and participation. Games are basically a great source of reinforcement of interaction with peers.

When to use games

Games should not take up the entire lesson. As was already mentioned, young students' have an average attention span of 10-20 minutes. Games should also last 10-20 minutes, so that there is time for both, presenting new grammar and fun grammar revision through games. They are mostly used at the end of a class when there is a spare time for revising of what has been discussed in the lesson (Arikan & Yolageldili, 2011, p. 222). It should not be an activity that a teacher uses when there is nothing better to do. They should be well incorporated in a lesson and used thoughtfully. Arikan & Yolageldili (2011, p. 222) mentions a view of Rinvolcuri (1990) regarding when to use games. He says that they can be used in any of these three stages:

- I. Before presenting a given structure. It is good to find out how much knowledge about the structure students have before presenting it.
- II. After grammar presentation. It aims to find out how much were students capable to comprehend.
- III. As a revision tool

2.3.4. A teacher's preparation of a game

Careful preparation is crucial. It is difficult to meet all the needs of students for them to enjoy the game and to have it used also in a teacher's advantage. A teacher should know exactly how the game is played and whether there is some equipment necessary to be prepared, since the equipment may not be available in the classroom (Arikan & Yolageldili, 2011, p. 222). It may also be important to introduce the game in a mother tongue since English rules may be difficult to comprehend, leading to better understanding (Arikan & Yolageldili, 2011, p. 222). As was mentioned multiple times, games should be targeted to

follow a class objective. It is not great for a teacher to use them just to fill the remaining time. Therefore, the pre-class thought process about its usage, is important. By having the whole class prepared, including games, a teacher can avoid all silent moments and can use the whole lesson effectively. It is useful, especially for younger teachers, to put some extra time into creating each lesson plan.

2. Instructional science

Instructional science, also known as the science of learning and instruction, is a discipline that focuses on studying and improving the educational process and its methodologies. It supports new educators in developing a better understanding of how to approach their own preparation, what areas to prioritize, and how to effectively lead classes and engage with students. Over the decades, instructional science gathered valuable data, that now equip teachers with tools and knowledge, helping them to establish educational objectives and effectively work with students.

2.1. Key competences of a student

Key competences are qualities that a student should develop and eventually undertake, to be fully capable of integration into the society, effective work, having an ability of improvement, solving problems, and other important qualities. “In today’s world, the word “competence” is widely used in human resources management. An individual’s work results and finally business success, depends on their knowledge and skills i.e., “competence” (Kumpikaite and Douba, 2010, p. 829). Kumpikaite and Douba (2010) mention that, as Europe shifted to knowledge-based economies, a framework “Key competences for lifelong learning” (2006) was introduced and competences are now provided through life-long learning. The framework laid down a total of 8 competences. Social civic competences, Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and expression, communication in mother language, communication in foreign languages, mathematical competence and basic competencies in science and technology, digital competence, learning to learn. Learning to learn is the competence that is strongly developed by the usage of games. Additionally, it develops critical thinking, cognitive flexibility, boosting creativity and problem solving (Massman, 2023).

2.1.1. How are games designed to develop the “learning to learn” competence?

Games are a great way to induce creativity and critical thinking necessary for problem-solving. Massman (2023) mentions that when kids are having fun, it promotes a relaxing state

of mind which creates specific neurons necessary for the brain to become a little bit more flexible. This flexibility's advantage is that children can find solutions, consider strategies, and answer to a specific problem more creatively, in comparison to them being in a less enjoyable state of mind. Game-based learning helps students to find innovative solutions to problems that are presented within the game and "the interactive nature of games also helps students to develop problem-solving strategies by allowing them to make decisions, face consequences, and adapt their approaches based on the outcomes" (Massman, 2021). There are many games that a teacher can include into lesson plans that directly promotes certain skills such as strategic planning, cooperation, critical thinking, and others. A teacher should think beforehand about whether the game's objective is to improve competences, to revise grammar, vocabulary, or their combination. Games should always be incorporated into a teacher's lesson plan thoughtfully and not to be just a time filling activity.

2.2. Preparation of a teacher

The preparation of a teacher plays a crucial role in the educational process. It can strongly influence overall continuity of topics presented in the class and lesson's fluency. If a teacher wants to keep up students' motivation and participation, he should pay a closer attention to it, so the preparation is done properly. Obst (2017, p. 80) presents 3 levels of teacher's preparation by S. Rys (1988). The first is the quick preparation where a teacher creates a lesson plan based on questions like "what to teach?" and "which teaching method to use?". Second is when the lesson is prepared based on time and subject interconnections. There is a better preparation involved, and the focus is more directed towards what has already been discussed, what teaching objectives should be achieved by the end of the lesson and what method should be used to achieve the objectives in the most effective way. Obst (2017, p. 80) mentions a statement of S. Rys (1988) who says, that this is generally the most used method in the educational process. The third method is way more time consuming, but the preparation is bulletproof. The whole preparation consists of several parts regarding teaching objectives, educational content, instructional based viewpoints of the content, other educational possibilities, organisation of the class and lesson plan. This all leads to a desired outcome of a teacher's thinking process and what all lessons should ideally look like.

Lesson plan

Lesson plans do not need to be complex or lengthy, but a plan for a certain class should be a follow up of a previous class. Teachers should manage to make education a seamlessly

flowing process (Mccutchen, 2019). There is not one way of creating the plan, but all lesson plans should have incorporated following points.

Teaching objectives

Every lesson should have clear teaching objectives to be achieved by its end, regarding what students should know or be able to do (Mccutchen, 2019). It is important for each lesson to have desired outcomes and not to be a waste of time. For example, students should develop specific knowledge about a certain subject that will be presented in the lesson, or the objective can be more directed towards developing students' values and their cognitive, psychometric, and affectionate knowledge.

In 1956, Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues created a framework consisting of six hierarchical levels, known as Bloom's Taxonomy (Obst, 2017, p. 49).

These levels are as follows:

Remembering: The ability to recall previously learned information. This involves recognizing, recalling, and recalling facts.

Understanding: Comprehending the meaning of certain information. This includes interpreting, summarizing, and explaining ideas.

Applying: The ability to use learned information in a new and different context. This involves using knowledge in practical situations.

Analysing: Breaking down information into parts and understanding their relationships. This includes identifying motives or causes and making inferences.

Evaluating: Making judgments about the value of ideas or materials. This involves assessing the quality of information or methods.

Creating: The highest level, where students can produce new or original work. This includes designing, composing, and generating new ideas.

A student cannot effectively focus on higher levels of this taxonomy without first achieving the preceding levels. Bloom's Taxonomy is used in education to classify learning objectives and skills into different levels of complexity. When creating a lesson plan, a teacher should align the teaching objectives with one of the mentioned levels in the Bloom's Taxonomy. Additionally, there are also taxonomies focusing on psychometric and affective objectives. The taxonomy of affective objectives has been created by Krathwohl and the taxonomy for psychometric objectives by Davey (Obst, 2017, p. 52-53).

Specific needs of students

Students need to know what to expect from the class. It is important to tell them what is going to be discussed and what objectives a teacher wants to achieve. It is crucial to keep an eye on each student through presenting and practicing a new concept because any learner can get discouraged and may need a bit of encouragement to keep up with the class. “Identifying these needs in your lesson plan will help you prepare.” (Mccutchen, 2019)

Preparing materials

While thinking about what to teach, a teacher should also consider how to teach it. Not regarding just methods, but also regarding teaching aids. Teachers have many teaching aids available to use in classes such as textbooks, projectors and a lot of new technology that is good to be incorporated in lessons (Mccutchen, 2019).

Students’ engagement

Keeping up pupils’ motivation and participation is a difficult task to do. But what is the point of having a grammar topic introduced without having a proper participation from both sides. Žák mentions (2012, p. 8/27) mentions Maňák who introduces several ways of activating students such as discussion, heuristic method, situational method, staging method, and instructional games. It is crucial that lessons are entertaining and new concepts are not just boringly presented. Also, it is favourable to have students as active participants, rather than passive listeners.

Teaching methods

Once the class objectives have been established, the specific needs of students have been considered, and all the necessary materials for presenting have been prepared, the next step is to thoughtfully choose a method that is the most eligible for the lesson that will promote students’ active participation and motivation. Žák (2012, p. 8/27) states that according to Maňák there are three types of teaching methods. Traditional methods, activation methods and complex methods. The choice of approach depends on a teacher’s specific teaching objectives, personality, personal style of teaching, and other variables.

Revision

Revision is a very important part of teaching grammar. Mccutchen (2019) says that there are Three main methods that can be used in order, to achieve proper revision and practice of a topic.

- Guided practice: Used to give students confidence with the new information by letting them to add their own inputs.

- Collaborative process: Has a form of a discussion with a classmate in pairs about these new concepts. A teacher listens to the conversation and can clarify some points if needed.
- Independent practice: It is each student's creative work, which can be based on worksheets or making them write a short essay.

End of the lesson

Mccutchen (2019) advises to bring up key concepts at the end of the lesson and to do a quick review of the discussed topic. Asking students whether they understand key concepts is a good idea and if there are any doubts, the teacher can prepare a short revision worksheet for the following lesson.

The lesson's evaluation

Self-evaluation helps teachers to get better over time. Asking questions such as whether given objectives were achieved, whether used methods were effective, and other questions, is an essential part for long-term improvement.

III. Empirical part

Implementing games can make lessons more engaging, create a more relaxed learning environment, and help students perceive education and knowledge more effectively. As discussed in the theoretical part, Hugoboom (2022) mentions that integrating games into lessons can reduce stress levels of learners. Many of them may be anxious about demonstrating their English skills, but games can change the atmosphere into being more relaxing. As Arikan (2011, p. 220) says, learners become excited about the game, participate actively, and strive to win the contest. During gameplay, learners can temporarily set aside the conventional learning aspects of education while being fully engaged in the competitive and enjoyable setting. It is said that strong emotions surrounding certain event, or activity can help to transfer memories into a long-term memory easier. If games and other fun activities were implemented into lessons more frequently and purposely, the longevity of memories created through these experiences can effectively justify the time invested into the planning process.

In the empirical part, I aimed to connect theoretical knowledge with real-life application by exploring students' perception of implementing games into education and comparing their reaction to a game-based lesson with traditional classes they are used to. An English teacher allowed me to hold one of her English lessons. I created a lesson plan including a game specifically designed to review English knowledge. The game focuses on testing students' capabilities of using wide range of grammar, and to help them highlight potential insufficiencies. This way a student can find out gaps in knowledge quickly, that can be focused on later. I will introduce the plan regarding teaching objectives, motivation, teaching method, and other elements in following sections. The exact lesson plan is included in the thesis as an Appendix A, and the game details are provided in Appendix B. The research outcomes were gathered through questionnaires filled out by participating students who evaluated their perception of the game and compared it with traditional teaching methods. Data analysis was conducted using the coding method, and the questionnaire is included as Appendix C.

In the subsequent chapters, the thesis will first introduce the methodology regarding research questions, used method, participants of the research, how data was collected and analysed, and then the thesis will describe the process of outcomes evaluation and answer the research questions.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research questions

My primary focus is to emphasize the benefits of the game for both parties – teachers and students, and to draw conclusions out of my observations and research outcomes regarding potential benefits of games in education. Additionally, I want to categorize various aspects of the game accordingly to previously established theoretical background and provide an understanding of its pedagogical significance.

Following research questions should provide valuable insights to the thesis aim.

- Question n.1: How do students perceive a use of a game in EFL lesson in comparison to other approaches? (My objective was to identify which method is better perceived by students.)
- Question n.2: Did students feel they participated more and experienced a higher level of involvement in the game-based lesson, in comparison to a usual class? (I aimed to collect information regarding the activation aspect of the game-based lessons, with the goal of determining whether a game can serve as an effective tool for grammar revision.)
- Question n.3: Did the game help students recognize what skills regarding English grammar they lack? (My goal was to investigate whether a well-incorporated revision game can ignite a self-evaluation process of a student.)
- Question n.4: How did students feel during the game-based lesson in comparison to their usual English lesson? (I aimed to explore the emotions that students felt during the game-based lesson and to assess whether they were more relaxed in a such class compared to a traditional teaching lesson.)

3.2. Data Collection

For this research I used a qualitative method of gathering data. To gather data, I distributed questionnaires, comprising of open-ended questions that sought to capture individual student's perception on the role of games in education. A common method of data collection in qualitative research is through interviews. However, conducting individual interviews with each student could be time-consuming, and interviewing the entire class may not yield as valuable insights as having students answered questionnaires individually. Consequently, I decided to distribute questionnaires to achieve the highest level of efficiency, while enabling diversity, quality, and quantity of responses. This approach ensured that each student had time to express their own thoughts regarding every question. The questionnaire

was designed to eliminate any stress associated with providing answers, as it was anonymous, and encouraged a potential diversity of responses.

The major thesis's aim is to analyse benefits of using games in education, and to see students' perception of that. The class I chose for this research was an ideal one because they usually do not play any games in their lessons since the teacher rather focuses on listening, speaking, and writing activities to work on a practical skills development. I went to observe this class as a part of my observation classes. The observation classes put me into a school to observe the educational process so that I could have fully grasped the process from the teacher's perspective. This observations helped me understand this teacher's perception of education. Since the 8th grade, the teacher focuses more on practical skills such as listening, reading, and speaking rather than playing games in lessons. Therefore, I was confident that the students' responses would offer valuable insights into the differences in their perception between the game-based approach of revision lessons and revision lesson styles that they are used to.

Participants

I chose to involve 9th-grade students as participants for this study. On the day of the research, there were 16 students present in the classroom comprising of 7 girls and 9 boys. At the school, English teaching is organized into three groups since the 5th grade, based on an individual student's level of proficiency. The class selected for the research represents the highest level of English in the school. Consequently, I decided to increase complexity of the game's tasks to challenge students, and to give them an opportunity to learn something extra. I decided to do so because this class is often a participant in English competitions across the Czech Republic, therefore, is expected to have a high level of English competence.

Data collection process

Students had around 15 minutes to answer the questionnaires.

Questionnaires included the following questions:

- i. What were your feelings during the game? Explain.
- ii. Should games be a usual teaching tool? Why? why not?
- iii. Have you recognised increased level of involvement and motivation during the game in comparison to usual class? Explain.
- iv. Did the game help you recognise your strengths and weaknesses regarding English grammar? Based on what? Try to explain on a specific example.
- v. Which part of the lesson...

- a. ...did you enjoy the most?
- b. ... did you enjoy the least?
- vi. Give me feedback regarding my performance, the whole lesson, the activity, and other.
Try to write few sentences. Thank you.

We played the game first, and after 30 minutes of playing I distributed the questionnaires. Answers were written by hand and in a Czech.

Data analysis strategy

For the data analysis I used coding strategy. “Coding in qualitative research is comprised of processes that enable collected data to be assembled, categorized, and thematically sorted.” (Williams and Moser, 2019, p. 45). Coding serves as an effective method to analyse a collection of data and establish a clear structure in the resources, helping others to comprehend the data connections to pre-stated research questions. This approach to data analysis helps to bring themes embedded in them to the surface and can be perceived as a key component of qualitative research (Williams and Moser, 2019, p. 45). A researcher can identify data throughout a research and establish relations between them. There are three types of coding. The first is open coding, the second is axial coding, and the last is selective coding. Open coding is sufficient for this bachelor thesis since it focuses primarily on “expressing data and phenomena in the form of concepts” (Williams and Moser, 2019, p. 48). I will go back and forth through my respondents’ answers of questionnaires and organise similar words and phrases into the broader categories and try to establish certain patterns that are repeating. Then I will categorize those patterns and establish answers to previously stated research questions. The participants are organised in the following way. Since there are 16 respondents, I marked them as R1-R16. In the subsequent sections of the thesis, I will talk about the whole experience of implementing the game in the lesson, extract insights and establish connections from participants’ answers to my research questions.

4. Research results

4.1. Beginning of the lesson and introduction to the game

At the beginning, I familiarized students with my teaching objective of the lesson. The objective was simply to revise overall grammar knowledge and to highlight potential pitfalls

so that each student knows where to focus attention after the lesson. I have to admit that at the start of the lesson there was a noticeable tension and a little bit of confusion among students. However as soon as I described the whole game and we started to play, the tension fell. Some respondents observed this occurrence and incorporated their perception of the initial moments into their responses in the questionnaires. For instance, R2, a student who typically has an assistant due to an attention disorder, mentioned that he struggled to maintain focus from the beginning since it was not a typical lesson. I observed that he did not exhibit a high level of participation in the game. R3 said “The lesson was initially confusing but eventually it was fun”. It was probably due to the fact that students are not accustomed to my description of activities and playing games in English classes. However, it all improved as we moved to the game. Respondent R5 found the whole lesson a bit frustrating due to her social anxiety. She said, “It was stressful, I do not like group activities, but the teacher’s attitude was good”. Since the game was a group activity, it was not an ideal activity for this participant. R15 mentioned initial confusion, but once the game started, he understood and enjoyed the whole class. Lastly, participant R16 was not thrilled with the announcement of the group game we were about to play. She said, “It was ok, but I do not like group activities. I would consider applying a pair or an individual game next time”. The rest of the participants understood the description well, and as a result, everything ran smoothly. This can be reflected by R7 answer, “I enjoyed the game. The lesson could have been longer. The game was intense, and full of action.” If I were to teach the same lesson again, I might consider making the game rules a bit easier to grasp or try to incorporate periodic checks to ensure everyone understands the description of an activity well.

4.2. Results

Research question 1:

How do students perceive a use of a game in EFL lesson in comparison to other approaches?

As was mentioned in the theoretical part, Arıkan (2011, p. 219) points out that games provide students with an opportunity to learn or revise knowledge in a more relaxed settings. Hugoboom (2022) highlights that presenting certain knowledge through games instead of textbooks reduces the likelihood of students getting bored and discouraged. This theoretical concept clearly manifested itself in practice. Responses to the question were generally in line

with my expectations. In most cases students expressed a preference for games over traditional teaching methods, nevertheless there were few exceptions. For instance, participant R2 expressed an opinion that games do not play a necessary role in education, and there is no need to use them. He said, “Games do not need to be incorporated into a lesson in my opinion.” Respondent R5 mentioned her preference of individual and pair games over group activities. It is an understandable statement regarding her social anxiety. Similarly, student R16 shared the same preference of a game style as student R5. A lot of answers included phrases such as, games should be part of the education, they help to make class more fun, it is better than looking into a workbook, an individual can learn more with the game usage, it can be motivating for students, they can bring life into lessons, and that games can help to revise knowledge in a more appealing way. This can be supported by statements from participants R6, and R3. To the question - whether games should be commonly used as a tool in lessons, R6 answers, “Yes, games can teach an individual more than reading activities in workbooks. They are fun and thanks to competition, we are trying to get better so that we can win.” Similarly, R3 says, “They should be a part of education for 100%. I can learn more by playing a game than by reading something in a textbook. Thanks to games we can revise knowledge more effectively.” What I did not expect was an opinion that games should not be used too often. R10 said, “Games are a great tool but should not be used overused. An individual can easily move his concentration from learning something new towards participating in a game. Therefore, less is learned” This statement brings up two valuable points. Firstly, it indicates that students may recognize the potential helpfulness of games but also understand that they cannot be overused. It raises the idea that students are aware that education is not just about having fun; rather, there should be balance. Secondly, it highlights the fact that games are a great tool for teachers and are warmly welcomed by students. Consequently, teachers should consider their implementation to liven up classes. If a game is used thoughtfully, it can not only support a teacher’s teaching objectives but serve as a helpful, fun tool to elevate classroom engagement. Respondents R11, and R9 expressed the opinion that this is how a lesson should be once in a while, which I believe is a good idea, especially for revision lessons. R11 said, “The whole lesson was conducted very well. I enjoyed it and this is what a lesson should look like occasionally.” R9 answered, “This is what a lesson should look like every Friday.”

Conclusion:

Many pupils showed excitement during the class, and their responses confirmed that games can be a great tool for teachers if they want to enrich their classes. 15 out of 16

respondents not only accept but welcome games in education and do like the idea of incorporating them more frequently. Such outcome strongly suggests that students of this class do prefer games as a revision tool. Given the fact that the game I used was specifically designed to be a revision game, I was able to witness the effectiveness of such activity being incorporated into revision classes.

Research question 2:

Did students feel they participated more and experienced a higher level of involvement in the game-based lesson, in comparison to a usual class?

I incorporated various elements into the lesson to enhance motivation and engagement.

- Firstly, I introduced a rule that allowed a team to spin the wheel of fortune when reaching 4 points, creating anticipation for an unknown prize. Students were really excited and showed a wide range of emotions. The variety of “prizes” in the wheel of fortune included options that could either benefit, damage, or have no impact on the spinning team. Options like +1 point, +2 points were helpful. Options like +1 point to the team on the right side/left side, or “nothing” were irrelevant to the team who was spinning the wheel but could help other teams. Options like -1 point and -2 points could cause damage to the wheel-spinning team. This variety of unknown results brought excitement and students were fighting for the opportunity to spin the wheel first if more than one team achieved 4 points in the same round.
- Secondly, I also supported the competitiveness by giving an additional point to the team which answered correctly as first. This modification of the point system not only added to the dynamics of the game but also ensured a smooth running of the game, as teams competed to answer a question first, preventing prolonged periods of time spent on a single question.
- Lastly, I have brought a prize for the winner. This naturally raised the excitement for the competition.

All of these small adjustments to the game contributed to the overall enjoyment, and competitiveness in the entire lesson. In the questionnaires I asked students whether they could have seen a difference in the level of involvement in the game-based lesson in comparison to a typical class. Several of the participants answered that the tasks in the game were too difficult and even though they wanted to participate more actively they did not know the

answer very often. R1, and R3 provided similar answers. R3 said, “I did participate but not too much. Even though tasks were sometimes challenging I managed to learn something what I did not know before the game.” The respondent R6 answered, “I suggest incorporating easier tasks since a lot of us do not have that advanced level of English yet, therefore, it prevented few classmates in their participation.” I was pleased to read this response. Even though some students did not recognize the benefits of slightly more challenging tasks than they are accustomed to, this was my intended goal. I created teams of 3-4 students, because of the higher difficulty of questions so that they can cooperate more and maybe spark a discussion regarding a task they were not certain about. This is exactly what happened. Many teams were discussing spelling of certain words, or how to create a question to a tricky answer. This can show how a well created game can increase level of involvement in a lesson and overall cooperation among students.

I asked students to evaluate the whole lesson. Respondent R10 specifically mentioned that while he is not usually overly active in lessons, he found himself more engaged and active in this particular one. His response was, “To be honest, I anticipated that I would just hang around since we were about to play a game, but the game captured my attention, and I participated with excitement.” The participant R8 wrote, “I participated at 100%, 10/10”. While most respondents enjoyed the lesson and actively participated, there were some exception. For instance, R2 was not active at all. It may have been especially because he thinks that games are an unnecessary part of education. Respondents R5 and R16, although they enjoyed the lesson, were less active. R5 reportedly suffers from social anxiety, and R16 prefers individual or pair games.

Conclusion:

13 out of 16 students demonstrated a high level of involvement and motivation. In my opinion, even respondents R5 and R16 would have participated more in the game, but it would need certain adjustments. A majority of the students acknowledge an increase in their level of involvement during the game. This implies that this game served as a helpful tool in sparking these pupils’ motivation and has further potential to bring life into classes to purposely avoid boring repetition.

Research question 3:

Did the game help students recognize what skills regarding English grammar they lack?

I have used a wide range of grammar tasks for the game. Tasks such as modifying sentences from one tense to another, creating questions, using pronouns properly in sentences, spelling, creating a correct sentence structure if its components were misplaced, and others were implemented. I aimed to conduct the grammar revision without a direct focus on one particular aspect but rather by incorporating a variety of grammar elements. If I had the opportunity to have multiple lessons with the class, I would consider dividing the grammar into more parts and focus on each aspect of the language individually.

Many students answered that their biggest problem was spelling. As we went through the game, and I reviewed many answers, I recognized the significance of the spelling issue, since I did not distribute a lot of points because of the problem. 9 of the respondents mentioned that their weakness is spelling. R10 said, "I recognised that I do not know how to spell certain words, but it is mostly because of my lack of knowledge, not the difficulty of the game." R5 wrote, "I found I have a problem spelling more difficult words, even though I use English all the time." At this point, I am questioning whether the game did not discourage kids more than it highlighted their issues. Then I came through R3's answer, "Thanks to the game, I recognised where I should improve." This answer showed me that education is also about each student's perception of mistakes. Students R11 and R3 mentioned that they realised their weaknesses but did not expand more on the answer. Respondents R2, and R8 said that the game did not help them find any of their strengths or weaknesses. Respondent R9 found that creating question to sentences is his weakness, and respondent R6 found a weakness in verbs conjugation.

Conclusion:

It seems evident that games can effectively highlight students' strengths and weaknesses. 14 out of 16 respondents indicated that the game helped them recognize their flaws. Students' responses suggest that their level of self-evaluation through the game can be elevated, especially if the game itself is designed in a way to enhance the self-evaluation process. This can support the idea that such activity can be a great tool for a grammar revision, since respondents of this research realized what they lack thanks to the game. As a result, it could be valuable for teachers to consider exploring the potential of incorporating games into their lessons, especially for the purpose of knowledge revision.

Research question 4:

How did students feel during the game-based lesson in comparison to their usual English lesson?

I can take into consideration the fact that the beginning of the lesson may have been slightly confusing since students were not used to my style of explanation and description of tasks. Some participants were not overly active, and only one explicitly mentioned that he did not enjoy the game, since he is not a big fan of games in education. R5 and R16 expressed that they would rather play an individual or a pair game, because R5 suffers from social anxiety and R16 just enjoys such type of games over a group game. The remaining 13 respondents indicated that they felt good during the whole game even though the tasks might have been a little too challenging. Many responses mentioned that the class was interesting and that I explained problematic tasks clearly and understandably. Additionally, several respondents expressed that they enjoyed this class more than other classes. For instance, ten of the respondents stated that they enjoyed the whole lesson and that I managed to create comfortable and relaxed atmosphere. It can be supported by the answer of R3, “I have to admit, this was one of the best English lessons I have ever witnessed. The atmosphere was good, and we cooperated well as a team. It was a pleasant lesson, and I would like to repeat it one day. I have learned something new, and I know where I should improve. I truly enjoyed that the lesson was not about looking into a book, but the learning was conducted through a fun activity.” Participant R7 also summarized as follows, “The game was well explained, atmosphere was perfect, and I truly enjoyed it. I would like to have more time for the game. I admit that the wheel of fortune was an interesting element that sparked our attention, it made the game even more engaging. The game helped me to revise my knowledge and was definitely useful.” R8 answer was interesting, “Every team plot against us. The atmosphere was good. Mrs. X should try to apply this approach as well.” In my opinion, one of the major challenges teachers face in education is to create a relaxed atmosphere. As these answers suggest, game-based lesson can easily improve a lesson’s environment, yet the teacher’s personality also contributes as a variable. Nevertheless, creating such an atmosphere is crucial. As was mentioned in the theoretical part Nam and Ngoc (2022, p.17) mentions a statement of Silvers (1992) who says that a lot of teachers do not pay attention that “true learning often occurs in a relaxed setting”. Silvers (1992) continues that by being in a relaxed setting pupils have the opportunity to apply specific knowledge that they have already been exposed to and have a chance to integrate it efficiently. Respondent R1 described the class as

good, funny, and enjoyable. Respondent R2, R5, and R16 did not find the lesson as enjoyable. R2, who has attention disorder, struggled with maintaining focus since he did not have an assistant during the lesson. As mentioned earlier, R5 deals with social anxiety, and R16, on the other hand, does not enjoy group activities.

Conclusion:

The game-based class resonated positively with students, as 13 out of 16 expressed favourable emotions when describing the overall experience. This feedback highlights the effectiveness of incorporating games, with the aim of elevating the overall perception of education.

4.3. Summary

The game-based educational approach has proven to be an effective teaching tool for teachers. The theoretical part described why games can serve as a valuable tool and what benefits they offer to both parties – teachers and students. In the empirical part, these theoretical concepts manifested exceptionally. I had an opportunity to witness these advantages while personally applying a game specifically designed for grammar revision, in the school. The students involved in this research as participants showcased all the anticipated benefits outlined in the theoretical part.

The game elevated their motivation, participation, cooperation, and self-evaluation. A majority of the students expressed positively charged emotions toward the entire game-based lesson. The primary thesis's aim was to analyse the potential of games as a grammar revision tool. The positive responses and enhanced participation observed in the students suggest that games are not only effective in revitalizing classes but also in improving pupils' motivation. Many responses indicated that students recognised their weaknesses, emphasizing the potential of the self-evaluation aspect of games as a tool for revision. Responses to the first research question regarding the students' perception of the game-based lesson showed that students of this class are inclined to using games in education more frequently. The second question's responses registered that majority of the students felt more motivated during the game-based lesson, compared to a traditional class. Third question was designed to gather information regarding a game's ability to ignite self-evaluation process. Responses indicate that the game highlighted where an individual student lacks and can improve. This fact can show games' potential in revision lessons. The fourth question's responses showed that a

game-based lesson can positively influence students' emotions and may help to achieve a better perception of education.

Please note that all outcomes were gathered from a smaller group of students; consequently, a results of a such study may vary in different settings. Additionally, as I am not yet a graduate of a faculty of education, I may lack the experiences necessary to recognize whether the students' excitement stemmed from the game itself or the novel situation of me leading a lesson.

As a result of this research, considering all the outcomes, I can confidently assert that games hold substantial potential to benefit both parties – teachers and students. It is worth for every educator to explore their implementation, especially into revision lessons, and to consider using them as a common teaching aid.

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Appendix A The lesson plan

Grammar wheel of fortune

- Introduction and start of the lesson (3 minutes): Start the class with a clear introduction into the game. Include specific aims that students should achieve by the end of the game.
- Divide class into 4 groups (1minute): Dividing the class into 4 groups. I prepared pieces of paper numbered from 1 to 4. Each student drew one before the lessons started. An unimportant waste of time of groups creating can be prevented this way. After my introduction of the game, students were able to organize themselves into groups based on the number they had drawn.
- The game (25 minutes): Playing the game based on rules explained in the introduction.
- Questionnaires (10-15 minutes): Distribute a questionnaire to each student and have them answer the provided questions.
- Collect questionnaires and end the lesson (1min): Collect questionnaires and thank students for participation.

Appendix B Preparation of the game

Materials

- Download a customizable wheel of fortune. Incorporate options such as one point, two point, point for the chosen team, one point for the team on the right, minus one point, minus two points and similar choices.
- Prepare a list of grammar tasks. Additionally, consider incorporating tasks that are not solely grammar-related such as spelling, riddles, and others. Come up with at least 20 – 30 tasks.

- Think of a point system. Good choice is to evaluate questions based on difficulty. For example, spelling can be for one point, riddles can be for two points, translating and more creative tasks can be for three points.

The game

- Divide the class into 4 groups.
- Regarding a point system, I personally counted points on the board. Once a team had achieved 4 points, they could have spined the wheel. The wheel offered either a reward or a deduction of points.
- I prepared over 20 questions, comprising a mic of grammar-related tasks such as spelling, riddles, and various other types. I also included a rule, that the answers were controlled either when all teams were finished or when the time for the task passed. Therefore, not only every question was evaluated based on its difficulty, but also measured by time. For example, the least time-consuming task such as spelling had a time limit of 45 seconds to be answered.

Rules

- I assign tasks either verbally, if it is a spelling task, or by writing it on a board, for tasks such as a translating a sentence into a different tense. When a group completes a question, they will raise their hand. Answers will be controlled by me, based on the order of completion. Those who finish the task more quickly will have the privilege of checking their answers first.
- I implemented a rule that the team completing the task correctly first would receive an extra point. Such rule was implemented to foster motivation, competitiveness, and overall fluency of the game. For instance, if the team “one” finished the task first, followed by team “two”, “four”, “three”, my evaluation would begin with the team “one”.
- I have also included a price for the winner to ensure even higher participation and motivation.

Appendix C the questionnaire

1. What were your emotions during the game? (beginning, introduction, through the game, end). Elaborate on your answer.

2. Should games be a usual teachers' tool, and should they use in lessons be more frequent? Elaborate on your answer.
3. What was your level of participation and involvement in the game-based lesson, in comparison to a traditional lesson? Elaborate on your answer.
4. Did the game help you recognize your strengths and weaknesses regarding English grammar? Elaborate on your answer.
5. Which part of the game did you enjoy the most and the less.
6. Give me a feedback regarding my leading of the lesson. (Atmosphere, explanations, and your overall view) Try to write a few sentences.