

Evaluating the impact of digital games on learning tenses: Learners' attitudes and pedagogical implications in ESL classrooms

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One of the most significant and debated issues in language education is the role of grammar instruction. The complexity of English grammar often demotivates the students from learning the language. Therefore, the educators should adopt innovative methods to teach grammar that also motivate and encourage the students. In Sri Lanka, there is a movement towards transforming the traditional paper-based education system and embracing innovative teaching strategies. Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate the learners' attitudes regarding the impact of using digital games such as Kahoot, Quizizz and Duolingo in learning simple past, simple present and simple future tenses to intermediate ESL learners. A purposive sample of 50 grade nine ESL students of *Maliyadeva* Girls College, Kurunegala participated in the study and during the first week of intervention the tenses were taught using paper-based methods. Further, during the second week of the intervention the tenses were taught for the participants using the digital games based on tenses. A qualitative approach research design was used to answer the research question as the data were collected utilizing semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews revealed two main perspectives among the participants. Firstly, the learners overwhelmingly endorsed the use of digital games, citing increased motivation, creation of a learner-friendly environment, enhanced language practice, and improved interpersonal relations. The participants expressed enjoyment and found digital games effective in engaging with grammatical concepts in a meaningful and enjoyable manner. Secondly, despite these benefits, challenges such as distractions and perceived time consumption were noted, highlighting potential drawbacks. Overall, the findings underscore the positive impact of digital games on ESL learners' engagement and proficiency in tenses, suggesting their potential as a valuable pedagogical tool in language education.

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