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**Enhancing Grade VIII Students' Use of Tenses through Gamifications and Peer Tutoring:
An Action Research Study at Autsho Central School**

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of gamifications and peer tutoring on grade VIII students' use of tenses. The sample consisted of 53 students (26 in control and 27 in experimental group). Tenses achievement test and interview were employed to gather the data. Independent-samples t-test were used to analyze the data. A t-test analysis for the pretests showed that there were no significant differences in students' use of tenses prior to the intervention for both the experimental and control groups ($p=0.88 >0.05$). However, the posttest result analysis indicated a significant difference between the groups in favor of the experimental group ($p=0.001 < 0.05$). Thus, it is commendable that teachers should design suitable materials and apply innovative approaches such gamifications and peer tutoring to teach tenses so as to meet the needs of learners.

Keywords: English grammar, tenses, peer tutoring, gamifications, achievement

Introduction

The teaching of grammar as an outstanding part of the language plays a central role in language learning and acquisition. Grammar is an important component to learn as it relates to four skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (Dendup, 2020, p. 86). Nunan (2003) defined grammar as “a set of rules specifying the correct ordering of words at the sentence level” (p. 8). In a traditional and simple view, it has been defined as “the rules by which words change their forms and are combined into sentences” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 705). Azar (2007, p. 5) stated that without grammar, “we only have individual words, sounds, pictures, and body expressions to communicate meaning, and grammar as an essential component of language learning is the wearing that creates the fabric.”

Dendup (2020) states that in Bhutan, English is learnt as a second language (ESL) and teaching grammar has been considered central to the teaching and learning of English language since the inception of western education. English grammar is taught in schools, colleges and universities for students at the various levels of the academic ladder to be able to communicate effectively; especially in written English. However, Dendup (2020) asserts that learning English is not easy for Bhutanese students as English is not their mother language. One of the difficulties that they generally face is the grammar or the language rules. Grammar was taught in bits and pieces using manuals, sight words, pictures, flashcards, drawings and real objects to teach grammatical items till class VI. From class VI till VIII, grammar was never taught separately, but in integration with English and other subjects. A few examples from the texts would be selected and sketchy explanation would be provided. From class IX to XII, grammar teaching further deteriorated, without any grammar textbooks (Gajmeer & Maxwell, 2009). The performance of Bhutanese students in English is relatively poor and this affected their overall academic result. Students tend to produce many grammatical errors while they write essays and in their other academic works. Further, grammar has proven to be a difficult component to grasp due to its inherent complexity (Tashi, 2018).

Games and peer tutoring are one of the stimulating classroom activities for young learners to learn a language in general and grammar in particular, as they are fun, engaging and motivating for the students to participate in classroom activities. Yu (2005) studied the effects of games on the acquisition of some grammatical features of German as a second language. She concluded that games as teaching-learning strategies were fun and created a non-threatening learning environment that encouraged interactions between students and teachers, enhanced communication and teamwork, encouraged active participation and enabled students to demonstrate and apply previously or newly acquired knowledge and skills. Palaming (2016) conducted a study in

Sultanate of Oman to examined peer-tutoring as an effective approach in teaching English grammar and found out that peer-tutoring greatly improved the performance of the students in the test. Further, peer-tutoring should be used as a strategy to enhance the collaborative learning of the students.

Further, Saricoban and Metin (2000) stated that through well-planned games, learners can practice and internalize vocabulary, grammar, and structure extensively. Therefore, this action research in particular sought to investigate the effectiveness of gamifications and peer tutoring in enhancing the tense competency of grade eight students in Bhutanese context.

Objectives

1. To examine the effectiveness of gamifications and peer tutoring in teaching-learning of tenses.
2. To study students' opinion about gamifications and peer tutoring strategies used in learning the use of tenses.

Reconnaissance

In order to execute this action research, I adopted the steps proposed by Maxwell (2003) which involved situational analysis, competence, and literature review. These three components provide an overview of the realities of the situations, competences of the people involved, and link it with the review of literature.

Situational Analysis

Grammar is one of the components of English that is taught to every language learner. It has an important role in understanding the English language. Without a good knowledge of grammar, students will have many difficulties in constructing sentences and expressing ideas for communication activities. Collin (2021) states that having good grammar helps one come across as more intelligent, educated, and professional. However, many Bhutanese students fail to obtain the required grammar competency owing to many factors. Tashi (2018) affirms that the students' errors are inevitable because of the complexity of the English language, or that learners are not aware of or inept in their knowledge of English grammatical rules, and the interference of the mother tongue. Further, Mosha (2014) claims that students' infrequent use of English language at school and home, large class size, teachers' responsibilities, poor conducive teaching and learning environment in the classrooms, limited home support environment and poverty were contributing factors responsible for deterioration of English language.

Similarly, during the 14 years of teaching experiences in different parts of Bhutan teaching various subjects such as English, social studies, value education and media studies, I have observed that majority of the students in eastern part of Bhutan relatively performed low in English language compared to other subjects. Alike, Tashi (2018) asserts that the performance of Bhutanese students

in English is relatively poor and this affects their overall academic result. Moreover, this issue has become more apparent and demands greater attention after teaching English to class eight students and having witnessed their midterm examination performance especially in grammar. If this issue is left unattended, I foresee bigger repercussions in the lives of students and teachers. A good knowledge of grammar helps learners to make sentences clear enough to understand. Azar (2007) asserts that “without grammar, we would have only individual words or sounds, pictures, and body expressions to communicate meaning. Grammar is the weaving that creates the fabric” (p.2). Further, Le Tourneau (2001) states that one’s knowledge of grammar is most helpful at the stages of revising and editing sentences because grammar is concerned with the units of sentences. Quagie (2011) emphasizes the importance of teaching English grammar in schools and colleges and points out that there is the need to intensify the teaching of English grammar in schools and colleges. Some studies have found out that constructivists approach to the teaching of grammar has led to significant improvement in the performance of learners. For instance, Khlid and Azeem (2012) in a study compared the teaching of grammar based on the constructivists approach to a teaching method that followed the traditional approach and found out that learners who were taught using the constructivists approach performed better on a test that was administered.

Thus, I felt the need to identify the problems of low performing students and conduct English remediation activities to enhance grammar competency in tenses.

Competence

I pursued Bachelor’s Degree in Education from Samtse College of Education in English and primary subjects. Later obtained Master’s Degree in Education from India. I had studied educational research module as a part of Master’s Degree course. Further, I also facilitated school and Dzongkhag level action research workshops. I have also publications both at national and international journals.

Grammar

Stern (2001) points out that the teaching of English started with the teaching of grammar rules. The teaching of grammar therefore occupies a central part in the teaching and learning of English as a Second Language. The teaching of grammar therefore forms the main focus of teaching English. For example, Flores (2010, p. ???) points out that “language teaching in the Philippine secondary education is synonymous to grammar” and “it is a common observation that in the elementary and secondary levels of the Philippine educational system, the teaching of grammar is the bulk of the instruction, if not the focus”.

Moreover, Le Tourneau (2001) states that one’s knowledge of grammar is most helpful at the

stages of revising and editing sentences because grammar is concerned with the units of sentences. Long (2007) argues that subject-verb agreement is a relevant grammatical skill for effective communication and standard written English.

Nedomova (2007, p.17) argues that “young learners are not able to pay their attention for more than 10-20 minutes and after that they start to be bored and tired.” Especially when grammar teaching is too dependent on rules and memorization, they start to lose their interest and motivation. Teachers know that young learners like being physically active as they learn by doing. Moreover, they are imaginative and creative and they learn without being aware of it. Besides, young learners use their previous experience, knowledge, several skills, and abilities which help the teacher present the new information by enabling children to practice the new knowledge on top of their previous knowledge (Nedomova, 2007).

The action research on “Improving the Use of Articles, Prepositions and Tense” of trainee teachers at Samtse College of Education, found answers to how was grammar was taught to students from class VI till XII. According to the report, grammar was taught in bits and pieces using manuals, sight words, pictures, flashcards, drawings and real objects to teach grammatical items till class VI. From class VI till VIII, grammar was never taught separately, but in integration with English and other subjects. A few examples from the texts would be selected and sketchy explanation would be provided. From class IX to XII, grammar teaching further deteriorated, without any grammar textbooks (Gajmeer & Maxwell, 2009). Futher, Pema (2020) asserts that English lessons were based on explanation of text, focussed on comprehension of text rather than teaching grammatical items. Similarly, the Centre for Educational Research & Development (2009) found that, there is no clear cut instruction given for grammar activities, and grammar is taught much less often in the higher classes, leaving vast areas uncovered. According to Pema (2009), it is stated that, a prescribed grammar for class XI and XII has not been developed leaving the learners lost and searching for subject materials.

Thus, it can be concluded that there was no particular approach to teaching grammar followed by the Bhutanese English teachers and most approaches were faulty and diverse. The teachers never taught grammar systematically, paying lesser attention to grammar.

Gamifications

Gaming is a characteristic of human nature; hence it can be claimed that the history of gaming goes back to the beginning of the history of human being (Demirbilek et. al., 2010). A lot of research has been done over the past decade to examine the role of games in learning English. The majority of these studies examined the effect of games on vocabulary learning and achievement, while a few examined the effects of games on grammar learning. For instance, Eskandari et al (2014)

investigated the effect of using games on the grammar of Iranian young learners of English. The results showed that the participants of the experimental group outperformed the control group significantly.

Al-Jarrah et al. (2019) state that “games help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful” (p. 14). Further, they claim that games can be interesting even to students who typically seem uninterested and who find second language learning boring.

Al-Jarrah et al. (2019) studied the application of games in grammar review lessons for eleventh graders of East Jerusalem. The study surveyed eight teachers and 225 students from three high schools and included an experimental project with 82 students during three months. The results showed a dramatic improvement in students’ grammatical knowledge, demonstrated in both written test scores and oral performance.

Rahmani (2020) confirmed that gamification is indeed beneficial for students in the English class. It appears to be the solution for an unsuccessful and passive learning environment as it is beneficial to assist teachers in creating a more exciting and meaningful learning experience for students. Further, Luu and Nguyen (2012) found games helpful in easing difficulties and making the teaching and learning experience more exciting.

Peer tutoring

Peer tutoring is a method of cooperative learning based on the creation of pairs of students with a lopsided relationship; that is, the tutor and tutee do not have equal academic ability but they share a common goal. This goal must be achieved through a relationship framework organised by the teacher. Peer tutoring is regarded as an excellent resource for facilitating the mastery of interpersonal competencies (Moreno & Duran, 2002). With peer tutoring, tutees may understand the subject matter better because there are more opportunities to respond, more time-on-task and practice with the academic content, and more accessible feedback (Bowman-Perrott et al. 2016; Mynard & Almarzouqi, 2006).

Sutresna and Wijayanti (2020) conducted a study to determine the effectiveness of peer tutoring learning in improving the academic and non-academic achievement of students of SMA Negeri 6 Yogyakarta and found out that learning through peer tutors is effective in improving student learning in class and has an impact on improving students' academic and non-academic achievement. Palaming (2016) conducted a study in Sultanate of Oman to investigate the effectiveness of peer tutoring in teaching English grammar to and established that Peer-tutoring greatly improved the performance of the students in the test. Further, he asserted that peer-tutoring should be used as a strategy to enhance the collaborative learning of the students.

Marwa and Said (2015) claim that peer tutoring has a strong positive impact on English self-

concept and peer tutoring programs benefit not only the tutees but also the tutors.

Based on the above literature, it can be concluded that games and peer tutoring have great pedagogical value and bring many benefits to language teachers when used in foreign language teaching. The review of the studies on language games and peer tutoring shows that they are crucial for teaching and learning foreign languages in a wide range of fields.

However, there is lack of research on the effect of gamifications and peer tutoring on teaching learning of tenses in the Bhutanese context. Therefore, this study attempted to use gamifications and peer tutoring to improve grade eight students' competency on tenses.

Overarching Research Question

Can gamifications and peer tutoring interventions help grade VIII students improve their use of tenses?

Sub Questions

1. What is the mean achievement score of students in the use of tenses before the intervention activities?
2. Do educational games and peer tutoring help in enhancing students' use of tense proficiency?
3. Are there any significant differences in the achievement of the use of tenses among class VIII students before and after intervention?

Methodology

The study adopted a quasi experimental research design. The pretest and posttest were administered to both the experimental and the control groups with an aim to make a comparative analysis on the students' learning of tenses before and after the implementation of intervention strategies. The pre-test and post-test were used to collect quantitative data in order to determine the learning of tenses, while interviews were conducted to collect students' views about the use of gamifications and peer tutoring in learning tenses.

Sample

This experimental action research involved grade VIII students (N=53) of Autsho Central School, Lhuentse whee I taught English. The class was divided into two groups (n= 26 in control group and n= 27 in experimental group) for the purpose of this action research on the implementation of gamifications and peer tutoring to help students learn and improve their use of tenses.

Research Instrument

In this study, two instruments were used to collect the data namely achievement tests (pre-test and post-test), and interviews. The teacher researcher used self-developed instruments both for achievement test and interview. The achievement test (pre-test) was conducted before the implementation of the interventions to establish the baseline knowledge of the students while the post-test was conducted to assess how much students have learned after the interventions. The interview was conducted to gather students' views and experiences about integration of gamifications and peer tutoring to learn tenses.

Reliability

To check the reliability of the achievement test, I conducted a pilot test with a different group in the same research school. The Kuder- Richardson formula (KR-20) was applied to find out the reliability coefficient of the subject achievement test. The result showed a score of 0.84, which was an indication that the test items were reliable. The **Kuder and Richardson Formula 20** is used to test the internal consistency of measurements with dichotomous choices. It is equivalent to performing the split-half methodology on all combinations of questions and is applicable when each question is either right or wrong. A correct question scores 1 and an incorrect question scores 0.

Data Analysis techniques

The pre and post data collected were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (22.0 version) software. The analytical approach used was t-test. A t test is a type of statistical test that is used to compare the means of two sample groups.

Baseline Data Analysis

The pretest and posttest were administered to both the experimental and the control groups with an aim to make a comparative analysis on the students' learning achievement in tenses before and after the implementation of intervention strategies. Pretest and posttest for both experimental and control groups were compared using t-tests as revealed below; Table 1 revealed that the pre-test mean score of control group and experimental group, indicating that there was no significant difference between the pre-test means of the two groups. Thus, the finding indicated that the two groups had equal learning abilities in tenses prior to the implementation of interventions.

Table 1 : Pretest mean scores of the Control and Experimental Groups

Test	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig (2 tailed)
Grammar	Control	26	39.42	11.78	-0.149	.883
	Experimental	27	40.21	8.77		

**Significant level at 0.05*

Implementation of Intervention Strategies

Interventions are the activities that researchers implement on an on-going basis in order to meet the objectives. There are many approaches or methods which can be adopted in remedial teaching and for this particular study following intervention strategies were implemented for five consecutive weeks.

Teaching basic tenses using games

Most of the basic tenses were taught using context and gamifications during the remedial classes. Moreover, practice opportunities were provided to students with meaningful mechanical and communicative drill activities to avoid rote learning. Varied games such as *storyboard game, name the tenses, let the character teach, listen and say, truth or lie and grid on the board* were used to teach various tenses at different occasions. The particular tenses game was conducted for an hour and the class met twice in a week. The above games were selected and implemented in the intervention phase to practice tenses such as present continuous, present perfect, past continuous, past perfect and future tenses and make lessons more lively, child friendly and to provide hands-on practices.

Learning tenses from Peer

Peer tutoring is an inexpensive option that can benefit everyone involved. It aids in the improvement of students' learning attitudes and foster more personalized learning experiences. The student with the best scores was paired with the student at the bottom of the scale. Pairing was effectively maintained throughout the intervention period. In the pair, one student acted as a tutee and the other as a tutor, swapping their roles in the middle of the session. I explained to the students how they would solve the tasks in pairs. Students were given a set of instructions to follow when working in pairs. The peer tutoring activity was done right after the gamifications to supplement students' learning of tenses such as present continuous, present perfect, past continuous, past perfect and future tenses for 30 minutes.

Post intervention data analysis

The posttest was conducted to compare if the implementations of remedial intervention strategies (Gamifications and peer tutoring) have a significant impact on students' learning of tenses as compared to the conventional lecture method. Table 2 disclosed that the post-test mean score of the control group and experimental group respectively. Thus, the result signifies that using educational games and peer tutoring in the process of teaching tenses can definitely improve students' learning

of tenses. The finding agreed with Rahmani (2020), who confirmed that gamifications is indeed beneficial for students in the English class. It appears to be the solution for an unsuccessful and passive learning environment as it is beneficial to assist teachers in creating a more exciting and meaningful learning experience for students.

Table 2 : Posttest mean scores of the Control and Experimental Group

Test	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig (2 tailed)
Grammar	Control	26	41.15	12.51	-4.022	.000
	Experimental	27	51.48	9.59		

**Significant level at 0.05*

Students' opinion about Gamifications and Peer tutoring

Students' views about remedial instructions were collected through interview after the intervention cycle. A total of 11 students participated in the interview from the experimental group. Following points are some of the common except;

Student 1: I personally feel that remedial lessons on English tenses was helpful. It helped me understand the basic tense topics in a fun ways.

Student 8: Tense lessons through games has helped me to understand difficult topics in easier ways. It has also built my confidence and I have learnt to trust my teachers and friends.

Student 13: This English remedial class has given me room to spend free time effectively and also gained confidence to share my doubts.

Student 15: Games and peer tutoring have assisted me to understand the tense lessons better and I could also help my friends after having explored beyond the classroom learning.

Student 17: I came to know that grammar lessons on tenses can be better understood through games rather [than] memorizing bundles of rules.

Student 21: I am self-motivated and ready to spend more time in learning English language in future.

Student 24: After attending the English remedial classes, I have learnt that peers can be our great teachers.

Discussions

The results of the present study justified that incorporation of educational games help students learn English tenses more effectively as they provide students with an authentic environment to learn and practice in stimulating ways. The results align with Hamzah and Dourado (2010) who claim that students who practiced grammar with games felt more motivated and enthusiastic in what

they were doing. They also suggested that the use of games in teaching and learning of grammar be actively promoted as a successful way of acquiring grammatical competence.

The findings also revealed that practicing of peer tutoring as one of the remedial instructions also assisted students in learning English tenses in an effective and friendly environment. The results of this study thus agreed with Sutresna and Wijayanti's (2020, p. 843) assertion that "learning through peer tutors is effective in improving students learning in class and has an impact on improving students' academic and non-academic achievement." Further, the study results also revealed that games and peer tutoring provided students platform to explore beyond the classroom learning, benefiting both the parties. This finding consented with Marwa and Said (2015), who claim that peer tutoring has a strong positive impact on English self-concept and peer tutoring programs benefit not only the tutees but also the tutors. In additional, students claimed that tense topics can be better understood through games rather memorizing bundles of rules as it created fun and motivated them. This finding is line with the study conducted by Rahmani (2020), who confirmed that gamifications is indeed beneficial for students in the English class. It appears to be the solution for an unsuccessful and passive learning environment as it is beneficial to assist teachers in creating a more exciting and meaningful learning experience for students. Thus, it is commendable that teachers should design suitable materials and apply some stimulating approaches such gamifications and peer tutoring to teach grammar lessons so as to meet the diverse needs of the learners.

Limitation

The findings of this action research are limited to only the grade eight students of Autsho Central School, Lhuentse. This study was carried out on a small scale and used limited participants within a short period. Therefore, its finding may not be used to generalize the impact of gamifications and peer tutoring in teaching tenses on a larger scale.

Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of gamifications and peer tutoring on grade VIII students' use of tenses using the pre-test-post-test research design. The data gathered from achievement test were analyzed using t-test. The results showed that the experimental group who were taught tenses using games and peer tutoring performed better than the control group. The activities designed in teaching tenses and delivered using the gamifications and peer tutoring have further excited the students to explore, engage and encouraged them to clarify their thoughts, correct their errors, and re-evaluate their existing preconceptions. Learners need to be involved in activities that allow them to understand the rules of English tenses so that they can apply them in sentence construction.

This action research concludes that gamifications and peer tutoring played a critical role in the teaching and learning process of tense lessons as they assisted to create a more engaging, and

encouraging learning atmosphere in teaching and learning grammar, making it easier for students to learn from their remedial experiences. In future, the studies could be conducted to investigate the effectiveness of gamifications and peer tutoring in teaching other grammar topics and other subjects to expand the findings and its generalizability.

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