

Sentence Auction: An Interactive Game to Increase Language Learners' Grammar Skills

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine the interaction between sentence auction methodology employed in English grammar classes and its influence on language learners' performance in a grammar test. The participant pool comprised 40 language learners, with a gender distribution of 16 males and 24 females. Utilizing an interactive game-based approach, the study evaluated students' learning through Pretest and Posttest results. Statistical analysis, employing T-Test, revealed a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores, with a P-value below 0.05. This suggests that the incorporation of sentence auction in grammar instruction significantly impacts language learners' outcomes. The descriptive results underscored the positive reception of the activity, emphasizing that students found it enjoyable, fostering increased participation in grammar classes. Additionally, qualitative data indicated that learners recognized the critical analysis, measurement, and learning strategy promotion facilitated by the intervention. The pedagogical implication of integrating game-based strategies in teaching grammar is evident, as it not only enhances academic performance but also cultivates a dynamic and engaging learning environment. Overall, this study sheds light on the efficacy of sentence auction as a pedagogical tool in English grammar instruction, contributing valuable insights to the field of language education.

Keywords: Sentence Auction, pretest, posttest, interactive games, grammar skills

INTRODUCTION

English language learning is a very challenging task especially for non-native users. For Filipinos, this difficulty has even been exacerbated because of the language's great differences when it comes to orthography, sentence construction patterns and more specifically for its very complicated grammar rules. Learning grammar is an effective tool in dealing with the English language. It is very essential in developing good communication skills. However, some students find it hard to understand the language itself and tend to get confused with constructing sentences, organizing ideas and following patterns. These dilemmas certainly lead to the extent where students got either bad performance or worst- a failing grade.

Contextually speaking, grammar is important because it is the heart of a language. Stern (2019) 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 (2010:99) 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". The importance of teaching grammar in schools and colleges has been emphasized by many language teachers. On the other hand, it is unfortunate to note that for Filipino language teachers, despite their discernment on the utmost significance of teaching grammar to language learners, they find it hard to gauge how grammar should be taught since there are so many confounding variables that can affect linguistic studies.

Noticeably, for weak students, learning the English grammar is even more daunting due to the complexity of grammar rules. Therefore, it is important that the right teaching approach is adopted so that grammar lessons can be effectively taught to the learners. For this reason, language games can serve as a way of teaching grammar, which can be incorporated as one of the activities in class. Language games are an invaluable tool as they offer the elements of fun and meaningfulness in language learning. They are also a means of motivating students to learn, as well as sustaining their interest and focus in the learning itself. When learning grammar is formatted into a game, it removes the monotony that seemingly relates to it. Instead, the game aspect comes to the forefront where students believe that they are playing a game. While engaging in the game, the teacher succeeds in getting them to learn without making them bored, hence, this could help reduce their anxiety levels. Krashen (1982) states that a learning situation that has a low affective filter can lessen anxiety and make the learners more comfortable. This encourages them to use language while playing the game, and thus, making learning more effective and meaningful (Littlewood, 2011).

With all the facts presented above, the researchers developed an interactive game named “Sentence Auction” to effectively teach grammar skills to language learners. The mechanics of this game is that, the language learners will be given the same amount money (play money) that they can use to bid for the sentences presented by the language teachers. The language learners would have to see it that the sentences they will be buying are grammatically correct. The auction will conclude once bidders run out of money. After, the language teacher will check the sentences, if the sentence bought is grammatically correct, the language students can have their money back, but, if the sentences are ill-formed, the money will remain to the teacher. At the end, the language learners who have the highest “returned money” will be the winner.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

The target participants of this study were 40 students of Monkayo College of Arts, Sciences and Technology (Mon CAST). These participants are currently enrolled in Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English program. Furthermore, in this action research, we use the purposive sampling. Purposive sampling refers to a group of non-probability sampling techniques in which units are selected because they have characteristics that you need in your sample. In other words, units are selected “on purpose” in purposive sampling.

Data Gathering Method

This action research utilized dual research methods; the Quantitative Research Method (research question 1), and Qualitative Research Method (research question 2). The data gathering methods for research question 1 were the pre-test and post-test. As for research question 2, the researchers made use of observations and interviews to the participants and the language teacher.

In the implementation of the intervention, first, we gave the participants a pre-test, a 25-item quiz- error analysis (grammar quiz) to identify their current grammatical proficiency level. After, we analyzed the results and identify as what grammar skills they need to focus more. Then, we implemented the intervention. Next, we gave the language learners a post-test to evaluate if there is progress in their grammar skills. Second, after the implementation of the intervention, we conducted an interview to the language learners and the language teacher relative to their experiences on the implemented intervention-Sentence Auction.

Data Analysis Plan

This study used dual method of qualitative research design. The data collected for research question 1 were analyzed using Mean and Independent T-test: Paired Samples.

Mean refers to the average that is used to derive the central tendency of the data in question. Mean, Morris, S.B. (2008), was the statistical treatment used to present the relationship of language learners’ score between the pre-test and post-test.

Independent T-Test: Paired Samples make inferences about the differences between two paired variables, such as the effect of one treatment on two behaviors. They can also help researchers estimate the amount of variation in one variable caused by variation in another variable.

On the other hand, the data collected for research question 2 were analyzed using Thematic analysis. According to Clarke and Braun (2017), thematic analysis is used for qualitative analytic method. It offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analyzing qualitative data. Description involves a detailed rendering of information about people, places or events in a setting. Thus, we, as the researchers, will categorize or make generalized themes from the same answers of the participants. We will look for those same answers of the participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part includes the discussion of results and reflection of the study. The data presented in this part follow the arrangement set in the Action Research Questions. Upon the implementation, the collected data and the results of the pre-test and post-test were evaluated and analyzed.

Research Question 1. What is the grammatical proficiency of language learners before and after the intervention implementation?

Table 1. Paired Sample t-Test

		T	Df	P	Mean Difference	SE Difference	Cohen's d
Pretest	Posttest	-4.817	39	<.001	-2.275	0.472	-0.762

Table 2: Descriptive Results

	N	Mean	SD	SE
Pretest	40	17.50	2.631	0.416
Posttest	40	19.77	3.134	0.495

The table 1 showed the scores of the language learners before and after the intervention. Out of 25-item grammar quiz, the test results of the assessment taken from the respondents' tests were summarized and it can be justified that there are significant findings as to the results of students' pretest and posttest since the P-Value is less than 0.05. Therefore, the intervention and the application of the sentence auction in teaching grammar has an utmost impact in getting the interest of the language learners. Furthermore, Table 2 descriptively elaborated that there is an increase of the grammatical proficiency of the language learners in catching the ideas of sentence and structure analysis applied in the assessments. It can be observed that the gleaned difference (2.27) from pretest to posttest has an indication that the integration of activities in teaching grammar is very helpful in assessing the level of proficiency of the language learners.

Research Question 2. How does Sentence Auction help language learners in improving their grammar skills?

Table 3. Essential Themes on the Effectiveness of the Intervention

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Makes Learning Fun and Enjoyable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activity integrated in teaching is interesting. • I enjoyed a lot with the activity.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We find it enjoyable. • It is fun and we found it as an interesting strategy. • We learn a lot from the activity. • We enjoyed at the same time we are learning. • It is indeed an enjoyable one.
<p>Promotes Critical Thinking</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes, the activity is tricky. • We have hard times to identify the correct and incorrect sentences. • We are very much challenged to identify the sentences. • We spent a lot of money in a wrong way and strategies. • It is very challenging to examine the entire sentence. • The given sentences were more focused to the structure itself.
<p>Encourages Learner's Participation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are able to participate at the same time, we are learning. • We become competitive but sometimes we got misunderstood the context. • We build communications with our team. • All of us were very competitive and wanted to buy as many as sentences we could. • The learners are able to participate in the class. • It helps to create compelling and effective learning activities.
<p>Measures Student's Grammar Skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are able to examine and realize that some sentences. • It also tests to have background knowledge about the topic. • The teacher serves as the tool to understand our capacity as language learners. • It measures the progress made. • The tests and strategy given by the teacher can reinforce learning about the grammar skills. • It will serve as a guide or framework for effective and meaningful instruction.
<p>Improves Grammar Skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It helps our understanding about the patterns of the subject-verb-agreement. • We have learned how to correct the structures and patterns of the given sentences. • This improves our English skills and understanding. • The time and effort to understanding the basic structure in sentence grammar is interesting. • The pedagogy is determining our skills and readiness for new topic. • It will serve as data to tell if truly attain my desired learning.

Based on the responses of the participants, it was revealed that through sentences auction **makes learning fun and enjoyable**. Jaaska et al., (2018) indicated that contextual game-based learning could increase students' interest and involvement, making learning more exciting and enjoyable. The participants shared:

The activity integrated in teaching is interesting. The teacher has his own styles and strategies which cater the needs and ideas of teaching grammar. I enjoyed a lot with the activity. We are able to participate at the same time, we are learning (IDISA01).

It is fun and we found it as an interesting strategy. We are able to participate in the group and we got learning from it. We build communications with our team. Some are very competitive and some were very confident even though they got wrong answers (IDISA09).

It was fun and enjoyable. However, the activity sometimes becomes annoying and tiring because the groups are enthusiastically competitive (IDISA10).

We learn a lot from the activity because aside from learning the topic we are enjoying the entire lesson (IDISA15).

We enjoyed at the same we are learning. We are able to give more efforts and focus to the lesson (IDISA21).

As to the responses of the participants, the activity integrated in this study **promotes critical thinking**. Majority of the participants are developing ideas of the discussed grammar topics since language learners are enjoying at the same time learning. On the other hand, Kusumoto (2018) discoursed that enhancing critical thinking through active learning is fundamental for twenty-first century success and essential for success in an academic context. Active learning and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) offer such a learning environment where learners enhance their cognitive skills and gain knowledge while they are learning content and language. The participants shared:

At first, we have hard times to identify what is correct and what is incorrect. We find it that some of the given sentences don't have errors. However, there are some words even punctuations made our decision wrong. Sometimes, we bought the sentence in a high price but in the end, we never thought that it was structurally incorrect (IDISA02).

It is a complicated game but along the way we enjoyed it. We are very much challenged to identify if where is correct and incorrect words in the sentence. We make strategies to spend our money so we can get the correct structured sentence. Sometimes we are able to use our critical thinker because you are competing with other intelligent individuals. sometimes, it will create misunderstanding because competitiveness is projected by the group members (IDISA04).

The activity is time consuming and somehow irrelevant to the topic. It kills the time that is why the real essence of teaching the lesson is not well discussed and emphasized. It more focuses on the activities not the lesson (IDISA17).

I could say that this is one of the most challenging activities that our teacher had integrated in our lesson. We are very much challenged since we need to examine the entire sentence. It is very tricky because some of the given sentences were somehow correct but some have errors in some ways. That is why we are focused to the structure itself and find the correct sentence (IDISA20).

I love that this approach or strategy supports the theory of constructivism wherein the students discover new ideas on their own with the guidance of their teacher. Additionally, the used of pre-test and posttest challenges the student to think critically or recall the particular lesson and then make their own response on the topic. This replenishes the student's understanding about the certain topic and learn new pieces of information through the teacher's rationalization (IDISA31).

This improves their grammar skills by identifying their weak points and measuring their progress. If you identify your weaknesses, you can focus on the areas where you struggle the most, and when you notice improvements, you will be motivated to keep learning and improving your grammar skills (IDISA27).

The findings of the study revealed that **encourages learner's participation** is what the implementation of the learning is actually bringing motivation to the language learner. For them it is better to enjoy the set mode of strategy. Using games in classroom improved level of student motivation to study a language. This implies that language teachers who commonly experience difficulties with students' apathy, disinterest, passivity and boredom during language classes could find a partial solution when games are an integrated part of teaching and learning (Alamdar, 2016). The participants shared:

I find it interesting. I hope there will be some activities to be integrated by Sir for us to more focused and time to time we will be prepared and got stars for our group (IDISA03).

Very fun and enjoy. Nawala ang amoang katulgon (We are not sleep) since you need to be vigilant to the given sentences if those are correct or wrong. Our team is very competitive but sometimes we got misunderstood the context and structure from the given sentences. We became gamblers, we spent a lot of money in a wrong way and strategies (IDISA05).

The activity helps us to examine the ambiguity of the structure. It is somehow difficult but we find it enjoyable. All of us were very competitive and wanted to buy as many as correct sentences they could. In the end, we are able to examine and realize that some are some sentences (IDISA11).

It is essential that we language learners were allowed to express our thoughts by scrutinizing the ideas and context of the given sentences. Grammar is not just about spelling or punctuation; it also allows us to construct sentences and write coherently. That is why I worked hard in our posttest in order to recover and improve my scores which I get from this activity (IDISA12).

I really like the activity it is very interactive and all of us were able to participate in the group activity. We got series of discussions as to how we set our decision in buying the correct form of sentences. We helped one another and became expressive in our communication. Sometimes, it will create chaos because some will say they are correct and others will say wrong, vice versa. (IDISA13).

We are encouraged to participant in group activities and have an attention to the topic. We need to have focus to the pretest and activities, so that we can have redemption in our posttest specially we have low score in the pre-test and group activity (IDISA18).

The activity is very helpful because it encourages the learners to participate in the class and gives as motivation to give time and effort to understanding the basic structure of sentence grammar (IDISA19).

The activity helps us, language learners, in improving our grammar skills through employing practice exercises. These exercises improve our grammatical performance and it helps to create compelling and effective learning activities. Moreover, having pretest and posttest, as a teaching method in class, helps us to be involved in more than passive listening since greater emphasis placed on developing student skills (IDISA24).

Incorporating enjoyable and interesting strategies in teaching English also **measures student's grammar skills**. As pointed out by Syafiqah & Yunus (2019), the use of interesting and suitable materials along with the various approaches when conducting language games during lessons helps to cater and measure learners' needs and interests on the subject-matter especially in learning grammar in context. Thus, language learning of appropriate and instructional material significantly contributed to the development of language learners in terms of grammar. The participants shared;

First and foremost, the pretest and posttest method inculcate the importance of examining prior knowledge before the discussion and ensuring if the desired learning outcomes have been achieved at the end of the lesson (IDISA30).

The activity helps a lot, specifically for the students. The pedagogy used by a teacher is determining our skills and readiness for the new course topic. It also tests us to see if we have background knowledge about the topic. Thus, we are able to fully comprehend the topic discussed by our teacher (IDISA22).

Every learner needs to be assessed. The assessment used by the teacher serves as the tool to understand our capacity as language learners. For me, as a language learner, it is very helpful since I can settle on the things or lessons, I feel weak or unknowledgeable (IDISA23).

Through the result of the pre-test, I was able to know what particular skills I should focus on, and easy to track the possible ways of immediate and effective learning. The process of learning is not truly fulfilled without the help of a post-test. My improvement is measured by it, and it will serve as data to tell if I truly attain my desired learning outcomes (IDISA32).

The sentence auction highlights the student's grammar weaknesses early on, allowing learners to target specific areas for improvement. It measures the progress made, providing tangible evidence of skill improvement. This approach allows language learners to focus their efforts effectively and monitor their grammatical skill development. It is indeed an enjoyable one (IDISA26).

The assessment tools were used to evaluate our knowledge and progress before and after a learning intervention. The tests and the strategy given by the teacher can reinforce learning about the grammar skills. These serve as a starting point, inspiring us to set some improvement goals while we are still in the learning process (IDISA28).

Grammar skill is a pivotal capability that one must possess, so through gaining information about their strengths and weaknesses, it will serve as a guide or framework for effective and meaningful instruction. Therefore, these tests are necessary for teaching Grammar for efficient teaching-learning process (IDISA35).

The student-related materials and strategies are **improving grammar skills** of the language learners. These are the core indicators to cater the interest of the learners in attending and projecting participation in class discussion. These also add color the variety of teaching methodology and approach in teaching English grammar. AlShareef (2015), it was necessary to develop students' thinking in English language lessons, and to improve their performance and cognitive skills by using constructive learning strategies which begin from the thinking that is a mainstay in the teaching of language. Jing-Jing shared his initial statement, as he commenced;

I could say it gives a big help because we are about to understand the patterns of the sentences. That is why in our posttest we are able to get high scores. We need to get and redeem our scores since we had low scores in the pretest (IDISA07).

Basically, it helps to our understanding about the patterns of the subject-verb-agreement. We should be critical analyst in such a way that we are examining the correct sentences. We don't want to commit mistakes because we are challenged and determined to be the winners of the game (IDI06).

We have learned how to correct the structures and patterns of the given sentences in one technique (IDISA07).

If language learners want to improve their English skills, they must start by learning the grammar rules and then practicing them until it becomes a habit. It is commendable that the teacher should add more activities so that we are able to have better class participation because we will become motivated if we see it enjoyable and interesting (IDISA14).

For me, I really like how Sir integrated activities to our lesson. We are challenged to answer the pretest, then the integrated activities, after is the posttest. By these assessments, we are able to learn the lessons and the topic about grammar (IDISA16).

It really helps us to easily apprehend the lessons about grammar. Grammar is a broad subject and sometimes complicated to discuss, but with the use of this kind of approach, we are able to understand the lessons easily and efficiently for it is a direct and coherent teaching strategy (IDISA25).

Pretests and posttests, on the other hand, also provide insight, motivation, and a structured approach to improving grammar skills by tailoring instruction to the needs and tracking our progress. Over time, this evaluation cycle develops our overall grammatical knowledge and language ability (IDISA34).

By having pretest, sentence auction, and posttest, learners will be able to correct, understand, and widen more their learning about their prior knowledge of a certain topic. For instance, if students don't know subject-verb

agreement in the pretest, they will be able to construct sentence following the subject-verb agreement in the posttest after, of course, intervened with class discussion and activity (IDISA29).

CONCLUSION

After the implementation of the intervention, which was the Sentence Auction, based on the quantitative and qualitative results, it was revealed that the intervention helps the language learners increase their engagement in grammar lesson. As to the responses of the respondents, it showed that there was an improvement in their scores during the implementation of the intervention.

Furthermore, the data gathered by the researchers also revealed that the benefit and the effectiveness of the intervention are evident. With the implementation of the game-based strategy, language learners cited new learning experiences in understanding and appreciation English grammar. It was found out that the learners were able to participate and exercise their understanding to the target lessons. Hence, it also showed that the intervention helped the language learners to improve their communication skills and get closer to their classmates.

When doing the activity, the language learners were able to have hands-on experiences. They were provided with active learning opportunities and actively participated to both the lessons and activities. In addition, this intervention has a big advantage because this does not only make an experiment but also discuss the importance of strategies in specific lessons.

Based on the results of the conducted assessments, observations and interviews, it was indicated that Game-Integrated Activities helped to improve participants' ability to detect grammatical errors, but less so when it comes to explaining or justifying them. The participants were receptive towards the idea of learning English sentence structures with the integration of pretest and posttest. These findings highlighted some implications for future considerations. There is a need to reconsider how English is learnt, taught and assessed, as well as how teachers ought to be equipped to address an increasingly multilingual ESL classroom adopted in Mon CAST.

In general, teaching grammar to students is never an easy endeavor. There is a need to use repertoire of strategies to effectively impart grammar lessons. Therefore, on the result of the intervention activity, sentence auction, there is significant improvement to the grammar analysis of language learners, since they were able to recall grammatical rules while doing the series of activities. They became conscious in writing their sentences, the syntax and semantics.

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