Hooked on Grammar: Enhancing Adjective Learning through *Adjective Anglers* in a Lower Primary ESL Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Grammar learning remains a challenge for lower primary ESL learners, particularly in mastering descriptive language such as adjectives. Traditional grammar instruction often relies on drill-based approaches that may limit learner engagement and meaningful language use. In response to this issue, this study investigates the effectiveness of Adjective Anglers, a game-based learning tool developed using the ADDIE instructional design model, in enhancing adjective learning among lower primary ESL learners in a Malaysian primary school. A mixed-method research design was employed. Quantitative data were collected through a pre-test and post-test administered to fifteen lower primary ESL students, while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with five students and five English teachers. Descriptive analysis of the test results revealed a substantial improvement in students' post-test scores, indicating enhanced understanding and application of adjectives following the intervention. Thematic analysis of interview data showed positive perceptions among both students and teachers, highlighting increased engagement, enjoyment, confidence, and active participation during grammar lessons. Teachers also reported that the game was suitable, practical, and aligned with curricular objectives. Overall, the findings suggest that Adjective Anglers is an effective and engaging supplementary instructional tool for grammar teaching in lower primary ESL classrooms. The study contributes to the growing body of research on game-based learning and offers practical insights for primary English language educators.

Keywords: Game-based learning; Adjective learning; ESL; Lower primary learners; ADDIE model

INTRODUCTION

English is an integral part of the Malaysian education system and is regarded as an important second language (ESL) for primary school learners (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2021). In line with national educational reforms, the implementation of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) has reinforced the role of grammar as a core component that supports learners' communicative competence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Alih et al., 2022). Grammar knowledge enables learners to construct meaningful sentences and communicate ideas accurately. Among the various grammatical elements introduced at the primary level, adjectives play a crucial role as they allow learners to describe people, objects, and situations effectively. However, many lower primary ESL learners continue to experience difficulties in mastering adjective usage due to limited vocabulary, interference from their first language, and minimal exposure to English outside the classroom (Nawi et al., 2021).

Traditionally, grammar instruction in primary classrooms has relied heavily on memorisation, drilling, and repetitive written exercises. Although these methods may support controlled practice, they often fail to engage young learners meaningfully or sustain their interest over time (Basaran & Cagiltay, 2023). As a result, learners may perceive grammar as tedious and disconnected from real-life communication. Previous studies in the Malaysian ESL context have reported that young learners tend to become passive and hesitant during grammar lessons, particularly when they fear making mistakes (Zakaria et al., 2022). This highlights the need for alternative instructional approaches that can promote active participation and reduce learners' anxiety in learning

grammar.

In recent years, game-based learning has gained increasing attention as an effective pedagogical approach for language teaching, particularly for young learners. Games provide a non-threatening learning environment that encourages interaction, collaboration, and repeated exposure to language structures (Karlsson & Hedman, 2024). Through meaningful play, learners are able to practise grammatical forms in context while remaining motivated and engaged. Empirical studies have shown that game-based learning can enhance learners' grammar achievement, motivation, and confidence, especially when learning activities are aligned with curricular objectives and learners' developmental levels (Hussein & Al-Asadi, 2022; Basaran & Cagiltay, 2023). Board games, in particular, offer structured yet flexible learning experiences that combine rules, tasks, and rewards, making them suitable for grammar instruction in primary classrooms (Martins & de Oliveira, 2023).

In response to these pedagogical needs, this study introduces Adjective Anglers, a fishing-themed grammar game designed to enhance adjective learning among lower primary ESL learners. The game requires learners to identify, match, and use adjectives while engaging in interactive gameplay, thereby transforming grammar practice into an enjoyable learning experience. The development of Adjective Anglers was guided by the ADDIE instructional design model to ensure systematic planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of the game as a teaching and learning tool (Branch, 2009; Molenda, 2003). By incorporating elements of play, repetition, and immediate feedback, the game aims to support learners' understanding and application of adjectives in a meaningful way.

Therefore, this study seeks to address three research questions: (1) How effective is Adjective Anglers in enhancing adjective learning among lower primary ESL learners? and (2) What are the students' perceptions of learning English grammar through the use of the Adjective Anglers game? (3) What are the teachers' perceptions of learning English grammar through the use of the Adjective Anglers game? By examining both learning outcomes and perceptions, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of research on game-based learning and provide practical insights for English language teachers in primary ESL classrooms (Martins & de Oliveira, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Grammar instruction at the primary level remains a central concern for ESL educators because foundational grammatical competence underpins learners' ability to use language meaningfully across skills (Ellis, 2006). Within primary curricula, adjectives are introduced early because they expand learners' ability to describe and personalise language content; yet research consistently shows that young learners often struggle to transfer knowledge about adjectives from controlled practice to communicative use (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). In Malaysia specifically, several studies highlight contextual challenges: constrained English exposure outside school, heavy emphasis on form-focused classroom practices, and teacher-centred pedagogy that together limit opportunities for meaningful grammar practice (Nawi et al., 2021; Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2021). These contextual factors motivate the search for classroom strategies that both align with curricular aims and address young learners' affective and cognitive needs.

Game-Based Learning and Grammar Achievement

Recent research has consistently demonstrated that game-based learning (GBL) can positively influence grammar achievement among ESL learners. A systematic literature review by Awing and Mohamad Nasri (2023) revealed that game-based learning methods significantly enhance learners' understanding of grammatical structures by providing repeated exposure, contextualised practice, and immediate feedback. Their review, which synthesised findings from multiple empirical studies, highlighted that grammar games are particularly effective in reinforcing form–meaning connections, allowing learners to internalise grammatical rules through meaningful use rather than rote memorisation. These findings suggest that GBL can serve as an effective pedagogical approach for addressing persistent grammar learning difficulties in ESL classrooms.

Similarly, large-scale reviews of game-based learning in ESL contexts have reported measurable improvements in learners' grammar performance when games are systematically integrated into instruction. The Game-Based

Learning in ESL Context: A Systematic Literature Review (2024) published in the International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development found that grammar-focused games consistently led to higher post-test scores compared to conventional instructional methods. The review further emphasised that well-designed games support active learning by encouraging learners to practise grammatical forms repeatedly in low-anxiety environments. These findings reinforce the potential of game-based approaches to enhance grammar achievement, particularly when aligned with curricular objectives.

Game-Based Learning, Motivation, and Engagement

Beyond achievement outcomes, motivation and engagement have been widely recognised as key factors influencing successful language learning. Young learners, in particular, require learning environments that sustain attention and promote positive emotional responses. Game-based learning has been shown to fulfil these affective needs by incorporating elements such as challenge, competition, collaboration, and rewards. Awing and Mohamad Nasri (2023) reported that learners exposed to grammar games demonstrated higher levels of interest and enjoyment compared to those engaged in traditional grammar exercises. Increased motivation, in turn, encouraged learners to participate more actively and persist in completing grammar-related tasks.

The systematic review by Game-Based Learning in ESL Context (2024) further supports these findings, highlighting that ESL learners displayed greater classroom engagement during game-based activities. Learners were observed to participate more willingly, interact with peers, and take risks in using the target language. Such engagement is particularly important for grammar learning, as it provides learners with opportunities to notice and practise grammatical forms without fear of making mistakes. These affective benefits suggest that game-based learning not only improves grammar outcomes but also creates a supportive learning environment conducive to language development.

Game-Based Learning for Primary ESL Learners

The effectiveness of game-based learning appears to be especially pronounced among primary ESL learners. Young learners typically benefit from concrete, hands-on activities that align with their developmental stages. Studies focusing on primary ESL contexts have shown that games help simplify abstract grammatical concepts by embedding them in meaningful and relatable contexts (Ngu & Abdul Aziz, 2023). In their study on primary ESL learners, Ngu and Abdul Aziz (2023) found that game-based strategies significantly improved learners' language performance and classroom participation. Although their study focused on vocabulary learning, the findings are transferable to grammar instruction, as both areas require repeated exposure and contextualised practice.

In Malaysian primary schools, where learners often have limited exposure to English outside the classroom, game-based learning offers an effective means of maximising language use during instructional time. The Game-Based Learning in ESL Context (2024) review emphasised that primary learners responded particularly well to games that incorporated visuals, physical movement, and collaborative tasks. These features align with young learners' learning preferences and support sustained engagement during grammar lessons. Consequently, game-based learning is well-suited for lower primary ESL classrooms aiming to enhance grammar learning outcomes.

Instructional Design and the Role of ADDIE

While the benefits of game-based learning are well documented, researchers caution that the effectiveness of grammar games depends largely on their instructional design. Systematic instructional design models, such as ADDIE, provide a structured framework for developing pedagogically sound learning materials. According to Branch (2009), the ADDIE model ensures that instructional tools are developed based on learner needs, clearly defined objectives, and appropriate evaluation methods. Although ADDIE is a well-established model, recent educational research continues to endorse its relevance for designing technology-enhanced and game-based learning interventions.

Awing and Mohamad Nasri (2023) highlighted that many successful game-based grammar interventions were developed using systematic design frameworks, allowing for alignment between learning objectives, game

mechanics, and assessment strategies. Without such alignment, games risk becoming engaging but educationally ineffective. Therefore, employing the ADDIE model in developing grammar games such as Adjective Anglers ensures that learning outcomes remain central to the design process and that instructional effectiveness can be systematically evaluated.

Despite growing evidence, several gaps remain that justify the present study. First, much of the GBL literature addresses vocabulary and general language skills, with fewer classroom studies focused narrowly on discrete grammar categories such as adjectives for lower primary learners. Second, Malaysian primary classrooms present unique constraints (large classes, exam-oriented curricula, limited out-of-school English exposure) that require locally validated interventions rather than wholesale adoption of foreign designs (Nawi et al., 2021; Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2021). Third, while perceptions studies are promising, mixed-method evidence that triangulates learning gains (pre/post assessment) with student and teacher perspectives remains limited. Taken together, these gaps point to the need for a contextually developed, ADDIE-guided, game-based intervention — such as Adjective Anglers — that targets adjective learning in lower primary ESL classrooms and is evaluated through both outcome and perception measures.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-method research design to examine the effectiveness of Adjective Anglers in enhancing adjective learning among lower primary ESL learners and to explore students' and teachers' perceptions of the game-based learning experience. A mixed-method approach was considered appropriate as it allows for a more comprehensive understanding of educational interventions by integrating quantitative learning outcomes with qualitative insights into participants' experiences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In this study, quantitative data were obtained through pre-test and post-test measures, while qualitative data were collected via semi-structured interviews with selected students and English teachers. The integration of these two data sources enabled triangulation and strengthened the validity of the findings.

Research Context and Participants

The study was conducted in a government primary school located in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, where English is taught as a second language. The participants comprised fifteen lower primary ESL students enrolled in the same class. These students were selected using purposive sampling to ensure a relatively similar level of English proficiency based on their classroom performance and teachers' evaluations. The learners had been previously exposed to basic grammar instruction but continued to demonstrate difficulties in using adjectives accurately in both spoken and written tasks.

In addition to the student participants, five students were purposively selected for interviews to represent varying levels of engagement and performance during the intervention. Furthermore, five English teachers from the same school participated in semi-structured interviews to provide professional perspectives on the effectiveness and suitability of the game-based intervention. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study, and ethical considerations such as anonymity and voluntary participation were strictly observed.

Development of Adjective Anglers Using the ADDIE Model

The development of Adjective Anglers was guided by the ADDIE instructional design model, which consists of five phases: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. The ADDIE model was selected due to its systematic and iterative nature, which supports the development of instructional materials that are aligned with learners' needs and learning objectives (Branch, 2009). Despite being a well-established model, ADDIE continues to be widely applied in contemporary educational research, including the design of game-based learning tools.

Analysis Phase

During the analysis phase, the learners' difficulties in adjective learning were identified through classroom observations, informal assessments, and discussions with English teachers. Teachers reported that students

frequently relied on a limited range of descriptive words and struggled to select appropriate adjectives when describing objects, people, or situations. Curriculum documents aligned with the Malaysian primary English syllabus and CEFR learning standards were also reviewed to ensure that the content focus of the game was appropriate for lower primary learners.

Design Phase

In the design phase, learning objectives were clearly specified to guide the structure of the game. The objectives focused on enabling learners to identify common adjectives, match adjectives with suitable nouns, and use adjectives accurately in simple sentences. Game mechanics were then planned to align with these objectives. Adjective Anglers was conceptualised as a fishing-themed board game in which learners "catch" adjective cards using fishing rods and apply them to corresponding picture prompts. Elements such as turn-taking, scoring, and immediate feedback were incorporated to sustain engagement and encourage repeated practice.

Development Phase

During the development phase, physical game components were produced, including fishing rods, adjective cards, picture cards, and scoring sheets. The content of the cards was reviewed by experienced English teachers to ensure clarity, age appropriateness, and alignment with syllabus requirements. Minor revisions were made based on teacher feedback before the game was finalised for classroom use.

Implementation Phase

The implementation phase took place over a two-week period during regular English lessons. Students participated in the game in small groups to promote interaction and collaboration. The teacher acted as a facilitator, providing guidance, monitoring participation, and offering corrective feedback when necessary. The game sessions were integrated into the existing lesson structure to ensure that gameplay complemented rather than replaced formal instruction.

Evaluation Phase

The evaluation phase involved assessing the effectiveness of the game through both quantitative and qualitative measures. Students completed a pre-test prior to the intervention and a post-test after the completion of the gameplay sessions. In addition, interviews were conducted to gather students' and teachers' perceptions of the learning experience and the usefulness of the game as a grammar teaching tool.

Research Instruments

Three research instruments were used in this study: a pre-test, a post-test, and semi-structured interview questionnaires. The pre-test and post-test consisted of items assessing learners' ability to identify and use adjectives in simple contexts. The tests were designed to reflect the learning objectives of the intervention and were validated by English teachers for content suitability.

The interview questions were adapted from recent studies examining learner and teacher perceptions of game-based learning in ESL contexts (Hwang, Wu, & Chen, 2012; Yien, Hung, Hwang, & Lin, 2011). The student interview questions focused on enjoyment, understanding, confidence, and engagement, while the teacher interview questions explored observations of student participation, learning outcomes, and the suitability of the game for lower primary learners. The questions were simplified and contextualised to ensure clarity and age-appropriate language.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was carried out in three stages. First, the pre-test was administered to establish students' baseline knowledge of adjectives. Second, the game-based intervention was implemented during English lessons over two weeks. Finally, the post-test was administered to measure changes in learning outcomes. Semi-structured interviews with students and teachers were conducted after the intervention and audio-recorded with consent to

ensure accurate data capture.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test were analysed using descriptive statistics, including mean score comparisons, to examine changes in students' adjective learning. Due to the small sample size, inferential statistical analyses were not employed. Qualitative data from interviews were analysed thematically following established qualitative analysis procedures, which involved coding responses, identifying recurring themes, and interpreting patterns related to engagement, motivation, and perceived effectiveness (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of the study based on quantitative and qualitative data collected during the implementation of Adjective Anglers. Quantitative findings focus on students' performance in the pre-test and post-test, while qualitative findings present students' and teachers' perceptions of learning English grammar through the game-based intervention.

Quantitative Findings: Pre-Test and Post-Test Results

To examine the effectiveness of Adjective Anglers in enhancing adjective learning, a pre-test was administered prior to the intervention and a post-test was conducted after the completion of the game-based activities. Both tests assessed students' ability to identify and use adjectives appropriately in simple contexts. Fifteen lower primary ESL students participated in both tests.

Table 1 presents the pre-test and post-test scores of the fifteen students.

Table 1: Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores for Adjective Learning (n = 15)

Student	Pre-Test (10)	Post-Test (10)
S1	4	8
S2	5	9
S3	3	7
S4	4	8
S5	5	9
S6	4	7
S7	3	7
S8	4	8
S9	5	9
S10	4	8
S11	3	7
S12	4	8
S13	5	9

S14	4	8
S15	3	7

As shown in Table 1, students' pre-test scores ranged from 3 to 5, indicating limited mastery of adjectives prior to the intervention. Most students demonstrated difficulty in selecting appropriate adjectives to describe objects and pictures, and their responses were often restricted to a narrow range of descriptive words. This suggests that although students had been exposed to adjectives previously, their understanding and application were still at a basic level.

In contrast, post-test scores showed a clear improvement across all participants, with scores ranging from 7 to 9. All fifteen students recorded higher scores in the post-test compared to the pre-test, indicating a positive learning gain following the use of Adjective Anglers. The improvement suggests that repeated exposure to adjectives through interactive gameplay supported students' understanding and ability to apply adjectives more accurately.

To provide an overall comparison, the mean scores for the pre-test and post-test were calculated and are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 - Mean Score Comparison for Pre-Test and Post-Test

Test	Mean Score
Pre-Test	4.1
Post-Test	7.8

The mean score increased from 4.1 in the pre-test to 7.8 in the post-test, representing a substantial improvement in adjective learning. Although inferential statistical analysis was not conducted due to the small sample size, the consistent improvement observed across all participants provides strong descriptive evidence that the game-based intervention was effective in enhancing adjective learning among lower primary ESL learners.

Qualitative Findings: Students' Interview Responses

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five selected students to explore their perceptions of learning adjectives through Adjective Anglers. The interview data were analysed thematically, and several recurring themes emerged. These themes reflect students' experiences, engagement, and confidence during the game-based learning sessions.

Table 3 summarises the main themes identified from students' interview responses.

Table 3 - Students' Interview Findings (n = 5)

Theme	Description	Sample Response	Frequency
Enjoyment	Students expressed enjoyment and interest in learning grammar through the game	"I like the fishing game. It is fun."	5
Understanding	Students felt the game helped them understand adjectives better	"I know more describing words now."	4
Confidence	Students reported increased confidence in using English	"I am not scared to answer."	4
Engagement	Students were actively involved and wanted to continue playing	"I want to play again in English class."	5

Qualitative Findings: Teachers' Interview Responses

Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with five English teachers to obtain their perceptions of the effectiveness and suitability of Adjective Anglers as a grammar teaching tool. The interview data revealed several key themes related to student engagement, learning outcomes, and instructional practicality.

Table 4 presents the main themes derived from teachers' interview responses.

Table 4 - Teachers' Interview Findings (n = 5)

Theme	Description	Interpretation	Frequency
Engagement	Increased student participation during grammar lessons	Students were more active and attentive	5
Effectiveness	Improvement in students' adjective usage	Students used more appropriate adjectives	4
Suitability	Appropriateness for lower primary learners	Game matched pupils' learning level	5
Motivation	Increased learner motivation	Students were eager to participate	4

All teachers observed higher levels of student engagement during the game-based lessons. They noted that students who were usually quiet became more willing to participate and collaborate with peers. Teachers also reported improvements in students' use of adjectives, particularly in oral responses and simple sentence construction.

Furthermore, all teachers agreed that Adjective Anglers was suitable for lower primary ESL learners, as the game mechanics were simple, age-appropriate, and aligned with syllabus content. Teachers highlighted that the game could be easily integrated into regular lessons and adapted for other grammar topics. Increased student motivation was also noted, as students showed enthusiasm and anticipation during English lessons involving the game.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Overall, the quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that Adjective Anglers was effective in enhancing adjective learning among lower primary ESL learners. The pre-test and post-test results demonstrated clear learning gains, while interview findings revealed positive perceptions from both students and teachers. Together, these findings suggest that game-based learning, when systematically designed and implemented, can support grammar learning and create a more engaging and supportive learning environment for young ESL learners.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of Adjective Anglers in enhancing adjective learning among lower primary ESL learners and to explore students' and teachers' perceptions of learning English grammar through a game-based approach. The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data sources provide converging evidence that the game-based intervention supported learners' grammar development while also promoting positive learning experiences. This discussion interprets the findings in relation to existing literature and highlights their pedagogical implications for primary ESL classrooms.

Effectiveness of Adjective Anglers in Enhancing Adjective Learning

The quantitative findings demonstrated a clear improvement in students' adjective learning following the implementation of Adjective Anglers. The increase in mean scores from the pre-test to the post-test suggests that

students developed a better understanding of adjectives and were more able to apply them appropriately after participating in the game-based activities. Although inferential statistical analysis was not conducted due to the small sample size, the consistent improvement observed across all participants provides strong descriptive evidence of learning gains attributable to the intervention.

These findings align with previous research that highlights the positive impact of game-based learning on grammar achievement. Awing and Mohamad Nasri (2023), in their systematic review of game-based learning methods for grammar instruction, reported that learners exposed to grammar games consistently outperformed those who received conventional instruction. The authors attributed these gains to repeated exposure to target forms, immediate feedback, and opportunities for meaningful practice embedded within game mechanics. Similarly, the Game-Based Learning in ESL Context systematic review (2024) found that grammar-focused games led to improved post-test performance, particularly when learning activities were designed to align closely with curricular objectives. The present study supports these findings by demonstrating that a structured, syllabus-aligned game can enhance adjective learning in a lower primary ESL context.

The effectiveness of Adjective Anglers may also be explained by its ability to contextualise grammar learning. Rather than treating adjectives as isolated rules, the game required learners to match adjectives with visual prompts and use them in meaningful contexts. This supports SLA perspectives that emphasise the importance of contextualised input and meaningful practice for grammar acquisition (Ellis, 2006). For young learners, such contextualisation is particularly important, as abstract grammatical explanations may be developmentally inappropriate. By embedding adjective practice within a familiar and enjoyable game scenario, Adjective Anglers helped learners internalise grammatical forms through use rather than memorisation.

Game-Based Learning, Engagement, and Motivation

The qualitative findings revealed overwhelmingly positive student perceptions of learning grammar through Adjective Anglers. Enjoyment and engagement emerged as dominant themes, with all interviewed students reporting that the game made English lessons more enjoyable. These affective responses are significant, as motivation and engagement play a crucial role in sustaining learners' attention and willingness to participate, particularly in grammar lessons that are often perceived as difficult or monotonous.

These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that game-based learning enhances learner motivation and engagement in ESL classrooms. The Game-Based Learning in ESL Context review (2024) reported that learners participating in game-based activities demonstrated higher levels of attention, interaction, and persistence compared to those engaged in traditional instruction. Awing and Mohamad Nasri (2023) similarly highlighted that enjoyment and interest generated by games encouraged learners to practise grammar repeatedly without experiencing boredom or anxiety. In the present study, the fishing theme, hands-on materials, and turn-taking mechanics appeared to create a low-anxiety learning environment that supported active participation.

Increased confidence was another important theme identified in student interviews. Several students reported feeling less afraid to answer questions during English lessons after playing the game. This finding aligns with research suggesting that games can reduce learners' fear of making mistakes by shifting the focus from correctness to participation and exploration (Ngu & Abdul Aziz, 2023). For lower primary ESL learners, who may lack confidence due to limited language proficiency, such affective benefits are particularly valuable. By encouraging risk-taking in a supportive environment, Adjective Anglers may have contributed not only to grammar learning but also to the development of positive attitudes toward English.

Teachers' Perceptions and Instructional Practicality

Teachers' interview findings further support the effectiveness of Adjective Anglers as a grammar teaching tool. All teachers reported increased student engagement during the game-based lessons, and most observed improvements in students' use of adjectives. These observations provide an important triangulation of the quantitative results, as teachers' perceptions are grounded in their professional experience and classroom observations.

Consistent with earlier studies, teachers in this study viewed game-based learning as a practical and effective approach when games are aligned with learning objectives. Martins and de Oliveira (2023) reported that teachers generally perceive grammar games positively, particularly when they support active learning and can be integrated into existing lesson structures. In the present study, teachers highlighted the suitability of Adjective Anglers for lower primary learners, noting that the game mechanics were simple, age-appropriate, and adaptable. This suggests that well-designed grammar games can be realistically implemented in primary classrooms without disrupting curricular requirements.

However, the findings also reinforce the importance of teacher facilitation in game-based learning. During the implementation of Adjective Anglers, the teacher played a key role in guiding gameplay, monitoring participation, and providing feedback. This supports previous research indicating that games are most effective when teachers actively scaffold learning rather than allowing games to function as stand-alone activities (Awing & Mohamad Nasri, 2023). Therefore, teacher involvement remains a critical factor in maximising the instructional value of game-based grammar learning.

Role of Instructional Design and ADDIE

The positive outcomes of this study may also be attributed to the systematic development of Adjective Anglers using the ADDIE instructional design model. By analysing learner needs, aligning objectives with game mechanics, and evaluating learning outcomes through multiple measures, the ADDIE framework ensured that the game was pedagogically sound rather than purely entertaining. Branch (2009) emphasised that instructional design models help maintain alignment between objectives, activities, and assessment, which is particularly important in game-based learning contexts.

The findings support the argument that instructional design plays a crucial role in the success of educational games. Awing and Mohamad Nasri (2023) noted that poorly designed games may engage learners without producing meaningful learning gains. In contrast, Adjective Anglers was developed with explicit learning objectives and assessment strategies, which likely contributed to its effectiveness. This highlights the importance of adopting systematic design frameworks when developing game-based interventions for grammar instruction.

Implications And Limitations

The findings of this study have several pedagogical implications. First, they suggest that game-based learning can be an effective supplementary strategy for teaching grammar, particularly adjectives, in lower primary ESL classrooms. Second, they highlight the importance of aligning games with curricular objectives and learners' developmental levels. Third, they underscore the value of incorporating both learning outcomes and perceptions when evaluating instructional interventions.

Despite these contributions, the study has limitations. The small sample size limits the generalisability of the findings, and the absence of inferential statistical analysis restricts the strength of causal claims. Additionally, the intervention was conducted over a relatively short period. Future studies could involve larger samples, longer implementation periods, and comparative designs to further validate the effectiveness of game-based grammar learning.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the effectiveness of Adjective Anglers, a game-based learning tool developed using the ADDIE instructional design model, in enhancing adjective learning among lower primary ESL learners, as well as to explore students' and teachers' perceptions of learning English grammar through this game-based approach. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data, the findings provide consistent evidence that the integration of a systematically designed grammar game can support learners' grammatical development while also fostering positive learning experiences.

The quantitative findings demonstrated clear improvement in students' adjective learning following the implementation of Adjective Anglers. The increase in post-test scores across all fifteen participants suggests that

repeated, contextualised practice through gameplay supported learners' understanding and application of adjectives. Although the study did not employ inferential statistical analysis due to the small sample size, the consistent learning gains observed indicate that the intervention was effective in achieving its instructional objectives. These findings reinforce the value of incorporating interactive and learner-centred approaches into grammar instruction, particularly for young ESL learners who may struggle with abstract grammatical explanations.

In addition to learning outcomes, the qualitative findings revealed positive perceptions among both students and teachers. Students reported enjoyment, increased engagement, and greater confidence when learning adjectives through the game. These affective factors are particularly important in lower primary classrooms, as positive emotions and reduced anxiety can encourage active participation and sustained interest in language learning. Teachers' perspectives further supported the effectiveness of Adjective Anglers, highlighting increased student engagement, improved adjective usage, and the suitability of the game for lower primary learners. Teachers also noted that the game could be easily integrated into existing lesson structures, suggesting its practical applicability in real classroom settings.

The systematic development of Adjective Anglers using the ADDIE model played a key role in the success of the intervention. By aligning learner needs, learning objectives, game mechanics, and assessment methods, the instructional design ensured that the game functioned not merely as an entertaining activity but as a purposeful learning tool. This highlights the importance of careful instructional planning when adopting game-based learning approaches, as well-designed games are more likely to result in meaningful learning outcomes.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The small sample size and the short duration of the intervention limit the generalisability of the findings. Future research could involve larger samples, longer intervention periods, and comparative designs to further investigate the effectiveness of game-based grammar learning. Additionally, future studies could explore the use of Adjective Anglers or similar games for other grammatical categories or language skills.

In conclusion, the findings of this study suggest that Adjective Anglers is an effective and engaging supplementary instructional tool for teaching adjectives in lower primary ESL classrooms. By combining systematic instructional design with game-based learning principles, the intervention supported both grammar learning and positive learner engagement. The study contributes to the growing body of research on game-based learning in ESL contexts and offers practical insights for educators seeking innovative approaches to grammar instruction at the primary level.

Declarations / Ethical Approval

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the school administration prior to the commencement of data collection. As the participants included minors, informed consent was obtained from parents or guardians, and assent was obtained from the students. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. All data were collected and reported anonymously, and no identifying information of the students, teachers, or school was disclosed. The study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles for research involving human participants.

Conflict Of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper. The research was conducted independently, and no financial or commercial relationships influenced the design, implementation, analysis, or reporting of the study.

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