INTERACTIVE SENTENCE-BUILDING GAMES AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR ENHANCING SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION SKILLS AMONG GRADE 7 LEARNERS

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Abstract:

This study investigated and confirmed the effectiveness of interactive sentence-building games in enhancing sentence construction skills among Grade 7 students, addressing the prevalent issue of grammatical errors in their writing. Employing a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design, students were divided into an experimental group that used interactive games and a control group that received traditional grammar lessons. Assessments made before and after the intervention measured improvements in grammar, sentence clarity, and overall writing quality. The findings revealed a significant difference in progress, with the experimental group demonstrating greater improvement compared to the control group. Statistical analysis validated the significant positive impact of the games on sentence construction skills. This demonstrates that interactive, game-based learning is more effective than traditional methods in fostering language development. The study strongly advocates for the integration of interactive game-based learning in middle school language education to significantly enhance sentence construction skills and promote deeper learning. By aligning with constructivist learning principles, these games enable students to actively construct knowledge through practical application. The findings support the inclusion of interactive games in educational programs to enhance language skills and cultivate a deeper understanding of sentence construction.

Keywords: game-based learning, sentence construction, grammar instruction, constructivist theory, language development

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1. Introduction

Effective communication relies heavily on writing skills, particularly the ability to construct sentences that clearly and logically express ideas. A strong command of sentence structure enables writers to craft varied, dynamic, and engaging texts. Without this mastery, students often struggle with simple sentence patterns, leading to repetitive or monotonous writing, and lack the proficiency to convey nuanced or sophisticated ideas through compound and complex sentences. This mastery necessitates a grasp of key grammatical elements, including subject-verb agreement, effective sentence length, and the correct use of conjunctions and punctuation.

Students worldwide face challenges in constructing grammatically sound and coherent sentences. These challenges often stem from limited vocabulary, inadequate grammar knowledge, and disengagement from traditional learning methods. Studies in Vietnam and Malaysia have highlighted these issues, with Vietnamese students struggling due to challenges in vocabulary, grammar, prior knowledge, and idea organization, and Malaysian students facing significant difficulties in developing writing skills. A study in Mozambique further identified factors such as insufficient knowledge, limited exposure to writing activities, and low motivation as contributors to inaccurate sentence structure. Compounding the problem, teachers often neglect sentence structure instruction, even when recognizing students' struggles, due to its absence in the official syllabus. This lack of focus, combined with low motivation and insufficient emphasis on accurate writing, significantly hinders students' ability to construct effective sentences. As Adamugy & Lurio University, Faculty of Social and Human Sciences (2021) emphasize, targeted interventions addressing foundational skills and student engagement are crucial to improve writing outcomes.

In the Philippines, students also encounter significant difficulties in constructing grammatically sound and coherent sentences. Research has identified common grammatical errors among Filipino tertiary students, including issues with word order, phrasing, redundancy, verb tense, and subject-verb agreement. A study at Cagayan State University revealed low English sentence construction ability among Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSE) Major in English students, with common errors including misspellings and subject-verb agreement issues. At the researchers' current teaching location, students exhibit a significant lack of understanding and application of basic sentence construction rules. Students frequently produce incomplete or fragmented sentences, struggle with subject-verb agreement, punctuation, and capitalization, and demonstrate a lack of awareness regarding proper punctuation usage, resulting in unclear and disjointed writing. These persistent issues necessitate focused interventions to improve students' understanding of sentence structure and the correct application of punctuation and capitalization.

1.1 Objective of the Study

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of interactive sentence-building games in enhancing sentence-construction skills among Grade 7 learners. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1) What is the mean gain score of students in the control group (students exposed to

traditional teaching methods)?
2) What is the mean gain score of students in the experimental group (students exposed to interactive sentence-building games)?
3) Is there a significant difference in the mean gain scores between the control and experimental groups?

2. Literature Review

Constructing grammatically correct and coherent sentences is fundamental to effective communication. In early language learning, students often face significant challenges in developing sentence construction skills due to limited exposure to sentence-building activities and the lack of engaging, interactive instructional methods. This literature review explores the importance of sentence construction, the theoretical foundations for using interactive strategies like sentence-building games, and the application of these methods to enhance sentence construction skills, particularly among Grade 7 learners.

2.1 Theoretical Lens
Research on constructivist approaches highlights their effectiveness in enhancing students' sentence construction and writing skills. Aprilianti (2024) examined how constructivist strategies, such as active learning and exploration, support primary students in developing writing proficiency, offering insights for educators. Lieven (2021) explored constructivist perspectives on first language acquisition, emphasizing how learners construct grammatical structures and sentence patterns through social-cognitive experiences and language exposure. Wu *et al.* (2023) investigated a flipped learning model incorporating constructivist principles, reading-writing connections, and intercultural exchanges, demonstrating improved EFL learners' writing performance and cultural awareness. These studies collectively reinforce the significance of constructivist pedagogy in fostering effective sentence construction and writing development among learners.

2.2 Traditional Teaching Methods vs. Interactive Sentence-Building Games
A review of selected studies highlights the effectiveness of interactive games compared to traditional teaching methods, demonstrating that interactive games improve the learning process by actively engaging students. Hafeez (2022) recommends incorporating interactive games into educational practices to increase student engagement and enhance the learning process. This approach not only creates a dynamic and supportive learning environment but also fosters a lifelong interest in language learning. By utilizing games, educators can transform traditional classrooms into vibrant learning communities, significantly enhancing students' language proficiency and academic success (Munawarah *et al.*, 2024). Furthermore, studies also show the effectiveness of collaborative language learning, particularly for improving writing proficiency in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Bhandari (2022) conducted a study that found collaborative language learning to be more effective than traditional methods in developing students' writing skills. Students in the experimental group made better progress

in writing than those in the control group, demonstrating the value of collaboration, critical thinking, and teamwork in learning. Collaborative learning not only boosts writing skills but also nurtures creative thinking and student involvement, offering a more engaging alternative to traditional instruction.

2.3 Effectiveness of Sentence-Building Games in Sentence Construction Skills

Research demonstrates the effectiveness of sentence-building games in enhancing sentence construction skills among ESL learners. Morthy and Abdul Aziz (2020) reviewed various language games and found that interactive activities, such as word cards and sentence-building exercises, significantly improve learners' ability to form correct sentence structures. Abdul Aziz and Morthy (2021) examined the use of a color-coded domino game, revealing that visual and interactive elements helped lower primary students better understand sentence structure and grammar. Similarly, Gozcu and Arikan (2020) explored the "Wheel of Grammar," a game that engaged learners in grammar-based sentence construction, leading to improved accuracy and engagement. According to Sermsook *et al.* (2020), the findings of their study provide further evidence supporting the effectiveness of games in the classroom, particularly in improving undergraduate students' writing skills. Their research suggests that game-based learning can be beneficial not only for language acquisition but also for broader teaching management strategies. These studies highlight the value of incorporating interactive and contextually relevant games to strengthen students' sentence-building skills. Additionally, in a study conducted by Singgaravi and Yamat (2022), results indicated that the pupils showed improvement in accurately writing S-V-O sentence structures through the help of gamification activities implemented by the teacher. This progress was attributed to the engaging learning environment, which made it easier and more enjoyable for them to grasp the S-V-O sentence structure effectively. Furthermore, a study suggests that incorporating games into language instruction significantly enhances students' ability to construct grammatically correct sentences. For instance, a systematic review by Abdullah and Yunus (2020) found that both digital and non-digital language games are effective tools for enhancing ESL learners' sentence construction by boosting their motivation in a fun learning atmosphere.

2.4 Literature Gaps

While existing studies highlight the effectiveness of interactive sentence-building games, several gaps remain. Most research primarily focuses on younger primary students or adult ESL learners, leaving middle school learners, particularly Grade 7 students, understudied. Additionally, while sentence-building games are widely acknowledged as beneficial, empirical studies comparing different types of classroom-based interactive games and their effectiveness in developing sentence construction skills are limited. Furthermore, few studies explore the long-term retention and transferability of these skills acquired through interactive methods. This study aims to address these gaps by investigating the impact of interactive sentence-building games on Grade 7 learners' sentence construction skills. By prioritizing classroom-based activities over traditional lecture methods, this research will provide valuable insights into how

educators can implement engaging, collaborative, and effective learning experiences to enhance language development, particularly in sentence construction, among middle school students.

3. Material and Methods

This section details the research design, participants, procedure, and data analysis methods employed in this study. It provides a comprehensive description of each component to ensure clarity and transparency in the research structure and conduct.

3.1 Research Design

This study utilized a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design with a quantitative approach to evaluate the effectiveness of interactive sentence-building games in enhancing sentence construction skills among Grade 7 learners. This quasi-experimental design was chosen due to the constraints of the school setting, which limited the ability to randomly assign students to groups. While random assignment is ideal, the pretest-posttest design allows for a straightforward assessment of an intervention's impact on study participants in a naturalistic setting (Stratton, 2019). This design involves selecting groups without random assignment, enabling researchers to observe the intervention's effects in a real-world educational environment. For example, Alruwaili (2022) employed a quasi-experimental design to assess the effectiveness of digital games in improving EFL learners' grammar skills, demonstrating its applicability in similar educational contexts.

This study employed a quasi-experimental design involving two groups of learners: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received instruction through a series of interactive sentence-building games, while the control group was taught using traditional methods without the integration of such games.

The interactive sentence-building games for the experimental group included the following activities:

- **Sentence Jumble** – Students were provided with sentence fragments (subjects, verbs, and objects) and worked collaboratively to arrange them into grammatically correct sentences. Each group posted their final sentences on the board for whole-class review and discussion.
- **The Missing Piece Game** – Each student was given a sentence fragment, such as a subject, verb, or object. Students interacted with their peers to identify and exchange the missing fragments required to complete their sentences. Once complete, each group organized the fragments into a correct sentence structure and presented their work to the class. The teacher provided feedback, focusing on grammar, sentence structure, and subject-verb agreement.
- **SVA Check** – Working in pairs, students were given sentences containing subject-verb agreement errors. They had ten minutes to identify and correct the mistakes. Selected pairs then presented their corrections to the class while others compared answers and provided alternative solutions.
- **Perfect Combination** – Students worked in small groups to form compound sentences

using given independent clauses and appropriate coordinating conjunctions. Groups posted their final sentences on the board for class review, and the teacher provided feedback on grammar, conjunction use, and sentence structure.

- **Sentence Building Race** – A representative from each group was given a sentence construction prompt (e.g., "Create a compound sentence about a hobby using 'but'"). After relaying the prompt, the group collaborated to construct a sentence as quickly and accurately as possible. Completed sentences were posted on the board, reviewed for correctness, and ranked based on speed and accuracy.

- **SVA Mastery Match** – The teacher displayed ten sentences containing subject-verb agreement errors on the board. Group members took turns correcting the sentences by rewriting them in proper form. The activity continued until all sentences were completed.

- **Punctuation and Capitalization Challenge** – Students, working in small groups, received three unpunctuated and uncapitalized sentences, along with envelopes containing cut-out punctuation marks and colored markers. They collaboratively identified capitalization needs and placed appropriate punctuation. Corrected sentences were posted and explained by volunteer groups.

- **Fix it to win it** – Teams took turns correcting sentences written entirely in lowercase and missing punctuation. One member at a time rewrote the sentence within two minutes. The teacher then revealed the correct sentence for comparison. Points were awarded for accuracy, and the team with the highest score received bonus points.

- **Picture to Sentence Challenge** – Teams were given a picture depicting a real-life issue in the Philippines and tasked with constructing five grammatically correct sentences based on the image. Sentences had to reflect the principles of subject-verb agreement, sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization. Completed sentences were shared with the class.

This game-based instructional approach aimed to enhance learners' sentence construction skills through collaborative, engaging activities. In contrast, the control group followed a traditional teaching approach, which included lectures, textbook-based exercises, and individual seatwork, without the use of interactive games.

Both groups completed a pretest prior to the intervention and a post-test afterward. Statistical analyses, including appropriate tests of significance, were conducted to compare the performance of the two groups and determine whether the interactive game-based intervention led to significant improvements in sentence construction skills.

3.2 Participants

The participants in this study were 217 Grade 7 students from schools affiliated with the researchers. Each section comprised more than 30 students, with three sections assigned to the experimental group and three to the control group.

The experimental group received instruction using interactive sentence-building games, while the control group was taught using traditional teaching methods. Participants were purposely selected to facilitate a balanced comparison between the two teaching approaches, enabling a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of interactive games in enhancing

students' sentence construction skills. This study employed purposive sampling, a non-probability approach where researchers select participants based on their judgment that they will provide data relevant to the study's objectives (Bisht, 2024). This method was deemed appropriate for this research as it allowed for the selection of participants who could offer the most relevant and meaningful data, ensuring a thorough evaluation of the teaching methods under investigation.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process was conducted in several phases to ensure a systematic and comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of interactive sentence-building games in enhancing sentence construction skills among Grade 7 learners.

The study began with the administration of a pretest to all participants in both the experimental and control groups. This pretest served as a baseline assessment, measuring students' grammar accuracy, sentence coherence, and overall writing proficiency. To ensure reliability, a validated and pilot-tested questionnaire was used for the assessment.

Following the pretest, the implementation phase commenced. The experimental group received instruction through interactive sentence-building games, which emphasized student collaboration, problem-solving, and contextualized language use to enhance sentence construction skills. In contrast, the control group followed traditional teaching methods, which focused on structured grammar exercises, direct instruction, and rule-based sentence formation. To ensure accuracy and consistency in the analysis, all lessons were recorded, providing documentation of the implementation process for further reference and evaluation. A detailed lesson plan guided the instructional delivery, ensuring uniformity across sessions.

After the intervention, a post-test was administered to both groups. This post-test contained the same questions as the pretest, though the items were randomized to prevent memorization bias. The purpose of the post-test was to assess improvements in sentence construction skills and determine whether the interactive sentence-building games resulted in measurable progress compared to the traditional teaching method.

3.4 Data Analysis

The pre-test and post-test each consisted of 30 items, and percentage scores were calculated to evaluate the learners' sentence construction skills. To compute the percentage, the raw score was divided by the total number of items and then multiplied by 100. This method enabled a standardized comparison of learners' performance. The range of scores was interpreted based on the guidelines provided by the Department of Education (D.O. No. 160, s. 2012).

Raw Score	Score Range (%)	Interpretation
29-30	96-100%	Mastered
26-28	86-95%	Closely Approximating Mastery
20-25	66-85%	Moving Towards Mastery
11-19	35-65%	Average
5-10	15-34%	Low
2-4	5-14%	Very Low
0-1	0-4%	Absolutely No Mastery

This scale guided the interpretation of both pretest and posttest results, allowing for the identification of any improvements in sentence construction skills among both the experimental group (exposed to interactive sentence-building games) and the control group (exposed to traditional instruction). Statistical analyses, such as an independent t-test, were used to assess if any significant differences existed between the two groups after the intervention.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Mean Gain Score of the Control Group

Groups	N	Pretest Mean (SD)	Posttest Mean (SD)	Mean Gain Score (SD)
Control Group	110	13.53 (5.14)	17.76 (4.66)	4.23 (5.37)

Table 1 shows control group test results with the classification of sample size (N), pretest mean, posttest mean, and mean gain score. Table 1 displays the mean gain scores of students in the control group who were subjected to traditional teaching methods. The pre-test results yielded a mean score of 13.53 with a standard deviation of 5.14. In contrast, the post-test results showed an increase to a mean score of 17.76 with a standard deviation of 4.66. The mean gain score was 4.23 (SD = 5.37), suggesting that, despite not being exposed to the intervention, students demonstrated an improvement in their test scores. In contrast, previous research has shown that game-based learning strategies are more effective than traditional methods, particularly in terms of increasing learner engagement and improving learning outcomes (Hafeez, 2022). Table 2 presents the results of the experimental group, which was exposed to the game-based learning intervention, further illustrating the significant improvement in their learning outcomes compared to the control group.

Table 2: Mean Gain Score of the Experimental Group

Groups	N	Pretest Mean (SD)	Posttest Mean (SD)	Mean Gain Score (SD)
Experimental Group	107	15.84 (4.44)	22.850 (3.82)	7.01 (3.95)

Table 2 shows the experimental group's test results with the classification of sample size (N), pretest mean, posttest mean, and mean gain score. Table 2 displays the mean gain scores of students in the experimental group who were subjected to the intervention of interactive sentence-building games. The pretest results yielded a mean score of 15.84 with a standard deviation of 4.44. In contrast, the post-test results showed an increase to a mean score of 22.85 with a standard deviation of 3.82. The mean gain score was 7.01 (SD = 3.95). This suggests that using the intervention to improve test scores in English, students demonstrated an improvement in their test scores. These results are consistent with the findings of Bhandari (2022), which showed that students in the experimental group, who engaged in collaborative learning activities, made greater progress in improving their writing skills compared to the control group.

Table 3: Significant Difference between the Mean Gain Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups

Groups	N	Mean Gain Scores	t	p	Interpretation	Decision
Experimental Group	107	7.01	4.34	<0.001	Significant	Reject the null
Control Group	110	4.23				

Table 3 shows the difference between the experimental group and control group with the classification of sample size (N), mean gain scores, t-value, p-value, interpretation, and decision.

To evaluate whether the difference in mean gain scores between the control and experimental groups was statistically significant, an independent sample t-test was conducted. The results, detailed in Table 3, show a t-value of 4.34 and a p-value of 0.001. As the p-value is below 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis, which posits no significant difference. This indicates that the sentence-building games in English had a significant effect on student learning outcomes.

Statistical analysis through an independent sample t-test further reinforced these findings. With a t-value of 4.34 and a p-value of less than 0.001, the results clearly indicate a significant difference between the two groups. The rejection of the null hypothesis, which posited no significant difference between the groups, confirms that the sentence-building games had a meaningful impact on the experimental group's learning outcomes. This reinforces the idea that interactive, game-based learning can offer tangible benefits, particularly in language education.

The results of this study highlight the positive effects of interactive sentence-building games on students' learning outcomes in English. Both the control and experimental groups showed improvement from pretest to posttest, but the experimental group, who were exposed to the intervention, demonstrated much larger gains. The control group, which continued with traditional teaching methods, had a mean gain score of 4.23, reflecting some natural improvement. However, the experimental group showed a more substantial mean gain of 7.01, nearly double that of the control group. This indicates that the interactive sentence-building games likely played a crucial role in enhancing students' performance, suggesting that such approaches can engage learners more effectively than traditional methods alone. This finding aligns with the study conducted by Morthy and Abdul Aziz (2020), which reviewed various language games and found that interactive sentence-building exercises significantly improve learners' ability to form correct sentence structures. Additionally, a 2023 study focused on the effects of interactive sentence-building games among Iranian ESL students. The study revealed that interactive games are powerful tools for improving student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes in the classroom (Ostovar-Namaghi *et al.*, 2023).

Furthermore, this finding supports constructivist theory, which emphasizes the active role of learners in constructing their own understanding through interactive, hands-on experiences. According to Piaget and Vygotsky, learners build knowledge through social interaction and engaging in meaningful tasks. Interactive sentence-building games align with this theory by offering opportunities for students to construct and manipulate sentence structures, thereby promoting deeper cognitive processing and language acquisition. Studies have demonstrated that such interactive approaches enhance learners' engagement and

cognitive development, further validating the effectiveness of these strategies in language education (Vygotsky, 1978).

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings, it's recommended that teachers use more interactive sentence-building games in their lessons to help students learn English more effectively. These games make learning more fun and help students understand sentence structure better. Policymakers and curriculum designers should consider integrating these types of interactive activities into official curriculum frameworks to enhance language education. School administrators should support teachers in incorporating these games into their classrooms by providing the necessary resources and training. Further research could look into how these games affect students' long-term language skills and fluency, as well as explore their applicability across diverse subjects, educational levels, and learning contexts.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of interactive sentence-building games on students' sentence construction skills compared to traditional teaching methods. The results demonstrated that students in the experimental group, who used the interactive games, showed significantly greater improvements in their sentence-building abilities than those in the control group. These findings suggest that interactive games are a more effective tool for enhancing language skills by actively engaging students and providing ample opportunities for practice. In line with existing research on interactive learning methods, the study underscores the value of incorporating such strategies into language education to promote deeper understanding and mastery of sentence construction.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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