

Students' Perceptions in Using GRAMMAR GAMBIT in Learning English Grammar

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ABSTRACT

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KEYWORDS:

Board game
GRAMMAR GAMBIT
English grammar
Diploma students
Language learning
Perceptions

CITATION:

Nurhafeza Mohd Akhir, Nasiha Nasrudin, & Muhammad Nasiruddin Aziz. (2025). Students' Perceptions in Using GRAMMAR GAMBIT in Learning English Grammar. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)*, 10(7), e003493. <https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v10i7.3493>

Many students report that they find it challenging to understand the material at higher education institutions through traditional teaching methods, particularly in the subject of English. Thus, this study presented a comprehensive study that investigated the perceptions of diploma students toward the *GRAMMAR GAMBIT* educational tool. The study employed a quantitative methodology for data collection and analysis, providing a well-rounded understanding of the game's impact on learning English grammar. The responses were collected through survey questionnaires from diploma students who have played the game. Fifteen specific criteria were employed as items within the questionnaire. It was divided into three sections: (1) Demographic background, (2) Feasibility using *GRAMMAR GAMBIT*, (3) Perspectives towards *GRAMMAR GAMBIT*. The results were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 27, to measure the mean, and standard deviation. Findings revealed that the participants responded positively which shows that the board game was well received by them. The insights gained from this study will be of particular interest to teachers, curriculum designers, and other academicians looking to develop game-based materials for their language classrooms, potentially leading to more effective and engaging language learning experiences.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature on gamified language learning by focusing on diploma students. This study uses Likert-scale perceptions. This study originates a new formula in combining gameplay with grammar instruction. The primary contribution of this paper is *GRAMMAR GAMBIT* enhances engagement, enjoyment, and teamwork in grammar learning.

1. Introduction

The English language is a universal language, and grammar is one of the many essential elements that influence the clarity of communication and relevance in the globalisation of education. Since teaching English as a second language (ESL) nowadays focuses more on language skills of reading, speaking, listening and writing than language knowledge, grammar lessons are popularly integrated into skill lessons or even ignored in EFL classes. Therefore, [Phuong et al. \(2017\)](#) claim that EFL teachers worldwide are seeking effective ways to help learners recall and use the grammar knowledge they have learned.

However, [Graphy \(2022\)](#) mentions that traditional teaching techniques are often characterised by the teacher's central role in shaping the learning environment and curriculum, as well as the use of rote learning and repetition for memorisation. In a similar vein, [Yaccob and Yunus \(2019\)](#) stressed that the traditional teaching and learning process, chalk-and-talk, has become outdated in lessons and in turn, would argue for more game-based approaches or lessons. They even added that it is undeniable the traditional learning method do help the students to remember the grammatical rules better. Unfortunately, the students were not able to use the rules in their daily communication. The reason behind this might be due to the traditional teaching method is known for its teacher-centered whereby the teacher is active while the learner is completely passive. In addition, traditional teaching method focuses on memorisation and mechanical learning.

Due to these circumstances, the traditional technique of learning in the classroom has been gradually replaced by interactive learning. The student asserts that the traditional method of higher learning institutions is challenging for them to comprehend the content, particularly in the English subject. The traditional teaching method do help the students memorise the grammatical forms. However, the students were not able to use these rules in communication. Thus, it can be said that the traditional method has some drawbacks. According to [Maranatha \(2023\)](#), higher institution students have been increasingly observed to enjoy playing games, which act as powerful stimulants, capturing, and maintaining their attention. However, she added that keeping students motivated and interested during the lesson is a remarkable challenge for the lecturers.

[Manokaran et al. \(2023\)](#) thus suggest that game-based grammar lessons could enhance learners' comprehension of grammar rules beyond just memorisation. They even added that gamification is an innovative teaching style that focuses on creating a dynamic and engaging learning environment. [Connolly \(2024\)](#) argue that gamification involves incorporating game aspects such as competition, interactive narratives, prizes, and challenges into non-game situations to promote engagement and motivation. In this study, the researcher will investigate the perceptions of undergraduate students in using GRAMMAR GAMBIT in learning English grammar.

Many students claim that it is difficult for them to understand academic content at higher education institutions when traditional teaching methods are employed, when it comes to the English language courses. This difficulty is even more noticeable among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, who often struggle to understand complex language structures and concepts presented in traditional classroom settings ([Phuong et al., 2017](#)). Furthermore, one of the most persistent challenges faced by educators is maintaining student engagement and motivation throughout English language lessons,

particularly when it comes to grammar instruction. It can be said that English grammar seems to be very difficult for ESL learners. [Phuong et al. \(2017\)](#) mention that many students feel bored with grammar lessons and do not want to spend time learning them. They also argued that teaching grammar in traditional ways cannot motivate students to learn. The authors argue that the traditional method of teaching grammar often characterised by memorisation and worksheet drills fails to stimulate learners' interest. As a result, grammar classes may become overwhelming and demotivating, especially when students do not see immediate, practical applications of what they are learning ([Larsen-Freeman, 2003](#)). Due to the teaching and learning contexts, grammar classes become too heavy for students. In addition, [Ellis \(2006\)](#) claims that grammar is often perceived as abstract and rule-heavy, thus it becomes a daunting subject for many ESL learners.

Thus, various strategies have been suggested to enhance the engagement of English as a Second Language (ESL) learners worldwide in grammar lessons. Research has shown that using interactive and learner-centered techniques can significantly improve motivation and comprehension of the second learners ([Kamran et al., 2023](#)). Among these, the incorporation of educational games, particularly board games, has received increasing attention. In addition, [Sasidharan and Eng \(2013\)](#) suggested one of the approaches includes using board games to help students recall and use grammar structures. In teaching grammar, board games can help learners practice grammar rules during a lesson, review some grammar structures by the end, or recall grammar knowledge after several grammar lessons ([Phuong & Le, 2023](#)). By transforming grammar into a playful and engaging activity, board games may reduce learner anxiety and encourage risk-taking in language use which are essential for language acquisition ([Wright et al., 2005](#)). Hence, this study investigated the perceptions of diploma students regarding the use of grammar-based board game, *GRAMMAR GAMBIT* in learning English grammar. The study aimed to contribute to the growing body of research on gamified language learning and explore whether *GRAMMAR GAMBIT* can effectively support grammar instruction in higher education.

1.1. Research Questions

- i. What is the level of usefulness of *GRAMMAR GAMBIT* in learning English grammar?
- ii. How do the students perceive using *GRAMMAR GAMBIT* as a tool in learning English grammar?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Issues In Learning Grammar in Classroom

To begin, grammar is present in all languages and is seen to be an essential component of all languages. According to previous research, ESL students in Asian schools struggle to write or build grammar properly, particularly regarding tenses ([Ien et al., 2017](#)). Keeping learners interested and motivated during a class is one of the toughest things instructors need to do. Apart from that, English grammar seems to be particularly challenging for ESL learners. According to [Phuong et al. \(2017\)](#), a lot of students claim they are bored with grammar lessons and do not want to spend time studying them. Additionally, they claimed that teaching grammar in traditional ways fails to inspire learners to learn. Grammar lessons therefore become too difficult for the students. Due to this, [Fauzi and Widiastuty \(2022\)](#) proposed that using board games as a teaching tool

might help students in remembering and applying grammatical concepts. According to [them](#), playing games in language classes encourages healthy competition among students and can teach them additional language elements. They added that games create real-time practice of language use, which helps students become more fluent and confident. To elaborate, [Phuong et al. \(2017\)](#) argued that based on previous studies, it can be said the use of board games is beneficial for adult learners in learning grammar. Majority of the studies revealed positives attitudes towards board games. Hence, [Manokaran et. al \(2023\)](#) concluded that the findings revealed majority of the participants performed better through games which present the positive impact of game-based grammar learning.

2.2. Grammar Gambit Board Game

According to [Aziz et. al \(2025\)](#), *GRAMMAR GAMBIT* is a language game that requires minimal supervision from educators and can be played in an enjoyable setting while providing a meaningful context for English grammar learning, motivating learners to engage in the process. Since grammar is best taught in context, the game includes the main story of Melor embarking on a space exploration. It incorporates gamification elements like rewards, penalties, and end goals, encouraging teamwork and communication skills when played in groups. The game also has the potential to be commercialised as a teaching tool for language learners of all ages, not just those studying English courses. It is suitable for anyone looking to improve their grammar skills. The game addresses six common grammatical errors among Malaysian users: singular and plural nouns, articles, prepositions, subject-verb agreement, verb tense, and adjectives. Since grammar learning is often seen as dull and demotivating ([Metom et. al, 2016](#)), addressing these six errors through a game is encouraged, as it allows the learning process to unfold in a deliberately fun environment.

2.3. Previous Studies

According to [Sitanggang et al. \(2023\)](#), in their study *"The Effect of Board Game on Students' Vocabulary and Grammar Mastery in Senior High School"*, they found that students consistently reported that board games made grammar learning more enjoyable, exciting, and stimulating, which led to higher levels of engagement and motivation compared to traditional teaching methods. This increased enthusiasm encouraged more active participation. Additionally, numerous studies have highlighted that students value how board games foster collaboration, communication, rule negotiation, and peer correction—factors that contribute to a more effective and interactive learning experience. Similarly, [Phuong et al. \(2017\)](#), in their research *"The Impact of Board Games on EFL Learners' Grammar Retention"*, found that board games are widely perceived as helpful in creating a relaxed and positive classroom atmosphere. This, in turn, reduces the anxiety typically associated with grammar instruction and promotes better learning outcomes. Furthermore, [Yolageldili and Arikan \(2011\)](#), in their study *"Effectiveness of Using Games in Teaching Grammar to Young Learners"*, concluded that games are effective tools for teaching and practising grammar. They noted that grammar learning becomes not only more enjoyable but also more lasting, as games offer learners a meaningful context in which to practise grammar communicatively.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Research design

This study's research design employed a quantitative approach, particularly the administration of a survey to investigate UiTM diploma students' perceptions of using *GRAMMAR GAMBIT* in learning English grammar. According to [Ary et al. \(2002\)](#), questions on people's beliefs, attitudes, traits, and behaviours are asked when using survey research. This study was done through the use of an adapted and adopted questionnaire from [Sasidharan and Eng \(2013\)](#). In order to measure students' perceptions, statistical procedures were used. The researcher looked at the mean and standard deviation.

3.2. Sampling

The researcher applied purposive sampling in this study. This approach allowed the researcher to choose participants based on specific criteria that are directly aligned with the objectives of the research. There were two selective criteria; (1) participants must have played the *GRAMMAR GAMBIT* and (2) participants must enrol in English for Communicative Competence II (LCC112). A total of 50 diploma students participated in this study.

3.3. Data collection

The study utilised a quantitative research approach. [Ary et al. \(2002\)](#) stated that survey research designs are procedures in quantitative research in which researchers conduct a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the population. Initially, a sample of 50 diploma students from English for Communicative Competence II (LCC112) at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) was chosen based on their availability and willingness to participate. The questionnaire was designed to assess the students' perceptions using *GRAMMAR GAMBIT* in learning English grammar. It was adapted and adopted from [Sasidharan and Eng \(2013\)](#). To ensure a comprehensive evaluation, fifteen specific criteria were employed as items within the questionnaire. It was divided into three sections: (1) Demographic background, (2) Feasibility using *GRAMMAR GAMBIT*, (3) Perspectives towards *GRAMMAR GAMBIT*. The (2) and (3) sections were presented to participants as a 5-point Likert scale, allowing them to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." To analyse the perceptions of the diploma students' in using *GRAMMAR GAMBIT* in learning English grammar, participants were requested to complete the questionnaire online through Google Forms. Since participation was not compulsory, the online form included a clause where students acknowledged their voluntary participation as including permission for their responses to be used for the proposed research. The participants were given the questionnaire once they had played the game (*GRAMMAR GAMBIT*) in class. They were facilitated by their instructors.

3.3.1. *GRAMMAR GAMBIT*

In the gameplay of *GRAMMAR GAMBIT*, the question cards are placed face down on the game board. The cards test the six grammar items namely, (i) tenses, (ii) singular/plural

nouns, (iii) articles, (iv) prepositions, (v) adjective/noun, and (vi) subject-verb agreement.

The cards are represented in different colours. Each item is tested using five different question cards. According to Tse (2014), these are the areas in which students commonly struggled. Altogether, there are 30 question cards, and they are shuffled before the game starts. This allows the students to be tested on different grammar items every time the question cards are drawn. Apart from the different colour codes, its immediate reinforcement is another interesting feature of the game. To illustrate, in cases where students or players mistakenly answer a question, the game master (the class instructor) needs to instantly provide feedback by pressing the buzzer and explanation provided in the question card. This does not only create a fun and engaging learning environment but also allows students to collaboratively discuss and learn together, as they play the game. The feature of immediate reinforcement reflects the aspects of (i) community collaboration and (ii) feedback from [Taspinar et al. 's \(2016\)](#) game mechanics.

3.3.2. How The Game Will Be Used

The game begins on Planet Earth and takes players on a space voyage to circle Planet X, located at the center of the board. The class instructor acts as the Game Master who oversees the players, also known as astronauts-to-be. The game requires four (4) or more players. Each player selects a token of a different colour to represent their spaceship. Players will move their tokens across the board based on dice rolls and game rules. A stack of question cards organised into categories will be used during the game. Players take turns rolling a six-sided dice to move their token along the board. If a player lands on a spot that requires answering a question (e.g., black hole, bonus round, runs out of fuel):

- The Game Master draws a question card from the relevant category.
- The Game Master reads the question along with three (3) answer options.
- The player is given a passage and question number to refer to.
- The player has 3 minutes to skim the passage and answer.
- If the player answers correctly, the Game Master presses the YES button.
- If incorrect, the Game Master presses the NO button.
- The bell rings when time is up.

If a player cannot answer within 3 minutes, they lose their turn and cannot move forward. If a player lands on a black hole, they must answer a question correctly to roll the dice on their next turn. If they fail, they remain stuck. If a player runs out of fuel, they skip their next turn. To continue the voyage, they must answer a question correctly in the following turn. Landing on a bonus round spot allows a player to answer a question. If answered correctly, they roll the dice again within the same turn and move forward. If a player lands on the "Start Over" spot, they must re-launch their journey from Planet Earth. If a player's spaceship is damaged by an asteroid, they must move their token backward as stated on the board. The first player to successfully complete the voyage and reach Planet X wins the game.

3.4. Data analysis

The questionnaire results were analysed through descriptive analysis using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 27, to measure the mean and standard deviation.

4. Results

There was a total of 50 respondents who participated in this study. Table 1 shows the number of genders in this study, which consists of 14 (28%) male respondents and 36 (72%) female respondents.

Table 1: Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Male	14	28.0	28.0
Female	36	72.0	72.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0

Based on the distribution of mean scores stated by Abu-Bakar et al. (2019), a score of 1.00–1.80 is considered very low, 1.81–2.60 is low, 2.61–3.40 is average, 3.41–4.20 is high, and 4.21–5.00 is very high. From Table 2, the total mean score for the usefulness of *GRAMMAR GAMBIT* was 4.03, which is considered a high-level category.

Table 2: Usefulness of GRAMMAR GAMBIT

Num	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	The game was enjoyable.	4.42	0.499
2	The length of time for playing the game was suitable.	4.00	0.000
3	The rules of the game were clear.	4.32	0.471
4	The questions asked were challenging.	2.76	0.431
5	The game keeps me alert.	4.00	0.000
6	The game encourages teamwork.	4.44	0.501
7	The game motivates me to learn English.	4.64	0.485
8	The game motivates me to use English.	4.00	0.000
9	The game requires the use of strategies to win.	3.68	0.471
	Total:	4.03	0.318

Most of the statements also received either high or very high ratings, although one statement received an average rating. Starting with the 7th statement (*The game motivates me to learn English*) received the highest mean score of 4.64, indicating a very high level of agreement. The 6th statement (*The game encourages teamwork*) followed closely with a mean score of 4.44, also at a very high level. In addition, the 1st statement (*The game was enjoyable*) had a mean score of 4.42, reflecting very high enjoyment. It proved that students had positive attitudes in using *GRAMMAR GAMBIT* to learn English grammar. The 3rd statement (*The rules of the game were clear*) had a mean score of 4.32, another very high score. Thus, it can be said that the rules have been written in a clear manner. The 2nd statement (*The length of time for playing the game was suitable*) and the 8th statement (*The game helps improve my grammar*) both had a mean score of 4.00, which falls under the high level. The 9th statement (*The game requires the use of strategies to win*) received a mean score of 3.68, also considered high. The 5th statement (*The game keeps me alert*) had a mean score of 4.00, indicating a high level of engagement. However, the 4th statement (*The questions asked were challenging*) received the lowest mean score of 2.76, which is considered an average level. This suggests that while the questions were not too difficult, they were still appropriate for the students' level.

The responses from the participants were based on five-point Likert scale survey questionnaires. Table 3 shows that *GRAMMAR GAMBIT* was positively received by the participants who played the game. Most of the responses are in the mean scores ranging from 3.00 to 4.00 which is considered as high level. In the 1st statement (*I took a long time to understand how to play the game.*) the mean score was 3.52 which is considered a high level. It proved that the students did not take a long time to understand the rules and the method of playing the game. For the 2nd statement (*I prefer to create our own questions to challenge other teams.*) had the average rating with the mean score 3.00. Besides that, based on the 3rd statement (*I like the interaction with other players during the game.*), it can be seen the mean score was 4.00 which is considered a high rating level. Thus, it can be said that the students did learn about communication while playing the game. In addition, for the 4th statement (*I am active during the game.*), it had a very high rating level with 4.30 mean score. Apart from that, 5th statement (*I enjoy moving around on the board.*) and 6th statement (*I get to know the solar system on the board.*) had the average mean score 4.28 and 4.24 which are considered as high-level mean scores.

Table 3: Perceivedness towards GRAMMAR GAMBIT

Num.	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I took a long time to understand how to play the game.	3.52	0.505
2	I prefer to create our own questions to challenge other teams.	3.00	0.000
3	I like the interaction with other players during the game.	4.00	0.000
4	I am active during the game.	4.30	0.463
5	I enjoy moving around on the board.	4.28	0.454
6	I get to know the solar system on the board.	4.24	0.431
Total:		3.89	0.308

4.1. Relationship between usefulness and perceives towards *GRAMMAR GAMBIT*

Based on Table 4, the p value is 0.04 which indicates that there is a significant relationship between usefulness and perceivedness of *GRAMMAR GAMBIT* among participants. It can be said that when there is a positive correlation, meaning as usefulness increases, the perceivedness tends to increase as well.

Table 4: Pearson correlation

	Pearson Correlation	Sig.	N
Usefulness	0.290	0.04	50
Perceivedness			

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was found that majority of the participants provided positive responses from the participants. Hence, it can be said that the board game was well received by the participants. This is aligned with [Phuong et al. \(2017\)](#) who said that board games are widely perceived as helpful in creating a relaxed and positive classroom atmosphere. Most importantly, from a research perspective, this study on

GRAMMAR GAMBIT applied the integration of board games in learning English grammar. Findings of this study highlight the importance of integrating fun in the learning of English grammar among students. *GRAMMAR GAMBIT* was invented to encourage students to learn English grammar. In addition, [Sitanggang et al. \(2023\)](#) also found that students consistently viewed board games as a more enjoyable, engaging, and stimulating way to learn grammar, resulting in increased motivation and participation compared to traditional teaching methods. In a like manner, [Wright et. al \(2005\)](#) stated that board games can help reduce learner anxiety and encourage risk-taking in language use when the instruction transforms grammar into a playful and more engaging activity. Equally important, implementing games in teaching and learning is an effective means to promote students' vocabulary acquisition because it helps students to learn words by acting or recognising objects in a natural way. Therefore, it can be concluded that playing games is effective in teaching English to students. *GRAMMAR GAMBIT* also cultivates student-centred learning which is rarely practiced in the Malaysian English Language classroom as pointed out in a study by [Noor et. al \(2012\)](#) that the teaching and learning of English in Malaysia is still heavily teacher centered. Thus, in order to realise the full potential of *GRAMMAR GAMBIT*, more research should be conducted to investigate the effectiveness of this game in various aspects of the teaching and learning of English.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The researchers used the research ethics provided by the Research Ethics Committee of Universiti Teknologi Mara (FBREC). All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee.

Acknowledgement

We express our sincere gratitude to the participants of this research, as their involvement was essential for the successful completion of this study. Their willingness to spend their time has been vital to the conclusions offered in this study.

Funding

This research received no funding.

Conflict of Interest

The authors affirmed that there is no conflict of interest in this article.

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