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Research Article

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The Influence of Using Teaching Strategy by Playing on The Improvement of Motivation and Achievements in Grammar In 3 Grade Pupils in Arabic School in The North County

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the impact of using a learning-by-playing strategy on enhancing motivation and improving achievement in grammar among third-grade pupils in an Arabic school in the Northern District of Israel. The research sample comprised eight pupils (six boys and two girls) with average academic performance, all receiving individual Arabic lessons within the "Ofek Hadash" reform plan. Employing an action research methodology, the researcher designed ten grammar lessons—covering topics such as parts of speech, pronouns, verb conjugation, demonstratives, relative pronouns, interrogatives, numbers, adjectives, and root extraction—delivered through structured educational games like flashcards, mazes, dominoes, snakes and ladders, and role-based activities. Data collection relied on a process portfolio of pupils' work and performance rubrics aligned with the National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation standards. Quantitative analysis revealed a substantial improvement in linguistic knowledge, with the overall mean score rising from 56.87% in the pre-test to 87.36% in the post-test, and an effect size of 2.0, indicating a strong positive impact. Qualitative findings showed increased engagement, enjoyment, and cooperative learning, as students expressed that games made grammar easier, more attractive, and more memorable. The study concluded that learning through play significantly enhanced both motivation and academic achievement in grammar, even for low-achieving students. Key recommendations included training Arabic language teachers in designing and implementing curriculum-linked educational games, expanding the use of play-based strategies to higher grades, observing pupils' play for deeper insights, and conducting further research with larger, more diverse samples. The researcher emphasized shifting teachers' roles toward facilitators and designers of active learning environments to foster meaningful, learner-centered education.

Keywords: Play-Based learning, Learning Motivation, Grammar Achievement, Third Grade, Active Learning.

Introduction

There is no doubt that the Arabic language serves as a common means of communication among the peoples of the Arab nation, embodying our collective aspirations and hopes. It is the language of the final divine message and the tongue of an eternal heavenly religion. Arabic stands as one of the enduring constants that has enriched other cultures without compromising its intrinsic authenticity or unique Arab identity. As a structured human language, Arabic is interconnected through its subsystems—phonetic, grammatical, morphological, and semantic—whose interrelated elements form the integrated linguistic system.

For a learner to master the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—adequate training in the application of grammatical rules is essential. Grammar occupies a pivotal position among the branches of the Arabic language; as Al-Joujou (2011) states, "Its status among linguistic sciences is akin to that of a constitution among modern laws; it is their foundation, from which they derive guidance and inspiration, and to which they return for the resolution of their major issues and detailed rulings. There is no linguistic science that can operate independently of grammar or dispense with its assistance."

The importance of studying grammar lies in its role as the lifeblood of the language, the core around which it revolves, and the fortified bastion indispensable for protecting the tongue from slips and errors (Al-Khafaji, & Al-saedi, 2025). It serves as the organizational framework governing the language's rules within a unified linguistic system and holds precedence among other branches of Arabic. Teaching grammatical rules aims to ensure mastery of the basic skills of Arabic, enabling their correct application in various contexts. Despite its significance, the problem of low academic achievement in Arabic in general, and in grammar in particular, has become a tangible and visible phenomenon (Bayoumi, 2005).

Given that grammatical structures and linguistic patterns are fundamental to effective communication, the correct teaching of grammar requires the adoption of modern methods and strategies—such as learning through play and educational activities that develop pupils' behavioral, cognitive, physical, and affective capacities, while simultaneously providing enjoyment and entertainment. These elements are integral to meaningful learning, as endorsed by contemporary curricula and recent studies in line with 21st-century educational demands (Abdulbaki, Khasawneh, & Tashtoush, 2025). The use of the play-based learning strategy in grammar entails utilizing educational tools and alternative, non-traditional methods involving purposeful and planned play activities (Albahuoth, 2023). These activities require mental or physical effort by learners and teachers alike to achieve targeted outcomes, guided by predefined content and assessment tools. This approach aims

to evaluate the success of the action plan in fostering linguistic knowledge, simplifying its core principles, and transforming abstract concepts into tangible, practical realities.

According to Nabhan (2008), this methodology, when applied to teaching the basic grammatical structures at the primary stage, supports learners' comprehension of meaning according to correct linguistic standards. Furthermore, numerous studies have unanimously indicated that addressing pupils' grammatical and syntactic weaknesses in writing—particularly at the third-grade level—necessitates the use of alternative teaching strategies. Among these is the strategy of play, employing intelligence games, flashcards, linguistic games, puzzles, riddles, crossword puzzles, dialogues, dramatization, role-playing, storytelling, puppet shows, and physical activities such as races, construction games, or poetry competitions (Eltahir, Alsalhi, Al-Qatawneh, AlQudah, & Jaradat, 2021). When tailored to the appropriate age group, such activities foster motivation for creativity, aligning with Chomsky's mental model theory within the framework of generative-constructivist linguistics across various languages (Asr, 1997).

1. Theoretical Background

1.1 The Arabic Language: Origins and Development

Arabic is one of the Semitic languages, which branched off from a common root that emerged in the same land. When the Semites left their cradle due to population growth, their original language began to diverge. This divergence increased as ties were severed, environments differed, and time passed, until each dialect became an independent language. It is said that Jewish scholars were the first to notice the connections and similarities among the Semitic languages during the Middle Ages. However, it was the European Orientalists who substantiated this relationship with textual evidence, thereby establishing it as a scientific fact beyond ambiguity or doubt.

Scholars trace the Semitic languages back to Aramaic, Canaanite, and Arabic, just as they trace the Aramaic languages to Latin, Greek, and Sanskrit. Aramaic is the source of Chaldean, Assyrian, and Syriac; Canaanite gave rise to Hebrew and Phoenician; Arabic encompasses the classical Muḍarī variety as well as various dialects spoken by tribes in Yemen and Abyssinia. The prevailing opinion is that Arabic is the closest of the three sources to the proto-language, because its isolation from the wider world preserved it from the kinds of development and change that affected others (al-Rāfiʿī, 1999).

Today, it is beyond the researcher's means to uncover the earliest stages of the Arabic language, as history only records it in its full vigor and maturity. The epigraphic inscriptions unearthed from the Arabian Peninsula are too few to provide substantial insight. Nevertheless, the occurrence of formative stages that unified the dialects and refined the vocabulary is well established by both rational and transmitted evidence. The Arabs were, by and large, illiterate; thus, it was only natural that variation would arise—through improvisation, differing contexts, and constant movement and interaction—resulting in phenomena such as synonymy and dialectal variation in substitution, vocalic alternation, morphological formation, and case marking (Ḥasan, 2011).

(Statement of the study's significance)

Of particular relevance to this research is the subject of Arabic grammar—its origins and its historical development—which will be addressed here in some detail.

1.1.1 Definition of Grammar

Some researchers hold that the term "grammar" (*naḥw*) was preceded by three terms: "Arabic," "speech," and "inflection" (*iʿrāb*). Others argue that it was preceded by five, adding "solecism" (*laḥn*) and "metaphor" (*majāz*) to the list. Dr. al-Dajani and al-Qawzi supported the precedence of the term "speech" by citing a narration in which Abū al-Aswad al-Duʾalī, upon hearing solecisms in the speech of non-Arabs, said: "These non-Arab clients have embraced Islam and become our brothers; let us teach them speech." However, Dr. al-Ḥalawānī contends that "speech" here refers to its linguistic sense alone, not its technical one.

He is criticized for asserting the linguistic sense without providing confirmatory evidence; mere possibility would suffice to undermine reliance on the narration to prove the technical meaning. As for the precedence of the term "inflection," al-Dajani and al-Qawzi cited a narration from ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb in which he used the term to mean grammar, saying: "Let Abū al-Aswad teach the people of Basra inflection" (al-Khuḍarī, 1978).

Ibn Jinnī defined grammar as:

"Following the patterns of Arab speech in its usage, including inflection and other features such as dualization, pluralization, diminutive forms, broken plurals, annexation, attribution, composition, and so on—so that those who are not native speakers may attain the eloquence of the Arabs, speak as they do, and be corrected in cases where they deviate from it" (al-Sulīṭī, 2002).

Majāwir defined it as:

"The codification of rules and generalizations that describe the structure of sentences and words in use, including those governing the final vowels of words, and the study of relationships among words in sentences and phrases; it serves as a guide to the ways in which thoughts are expressed" (Majāwir, 2000).

In *Lisān al-ʿArab*, Ibn Manẓūr notes that *naḥw* in the linguistic sense carries several meanings, the most important of which is "intention": *naḥawtu naḥwaka* ("I intended your intention"); *naḥawtu al-shayʾ* ("I headed toward it"). It may also mean "alteration": *naḥā al-shayʾ* ("he altered it"); "likeness": *rajulun naḥwaka* ("a man like you"); "quantity": *ʿindī naḥw alf* ("I have about a thousand"); "direction": *sirtu naḥw al-bayt* ("I went toward the house"); "type or category": *ʿalā sabʿat anḥāʾ* ("in seven kinds"); or "part": *akaltu naḥw al-samakah* ("I ate part of the fish") (al-Ḥadīdī, 2006). Wahbah and al-Muhandis (1984) add that grammatical structure refers to arranging words in a specific order in which each word serves a distinct function, such that if the order is disturbed, the intended meaning is compromised. ʿAlī Muṣṭafā (2002) defines grammatical rules as the laws that address syntactic function (*iʿrāb*), agreements and disagreements between sentence components, rules of connection, and the principles governing word order.

In pedagogical terms, grammar is defined as:

"The rules by which one knows the states of the final parts of words when they are combined in sentences—whether inflected or indeclinable—and, by observing these rules, the tongue is safeguarded from error in speech, and the pen is protected from slips in writing" (Ismāʿīl, 1995).

1.1.2 Objectives of Teaching Grammar

The teaching of grammar has specific aims and benefits that result from mastery. The perspective on its objectives has evolved, so that it is no longer limited to studying inflection and

its challenges, but now considers other important aspects such as syntactic positioning, internal relationships among sentence components, and other means related to speech and composition. It is thus used as a term referring to rules that guide learners, speakers, and writers toward what is correct and what is erroneous in their language use.

Accordingly, the view of grammar must not be confined to the study of word endings; it should also encompass sentence construction, the relationships among words in conveying meaning, and their role in communication (Shattāt, 2005).
Shattāt summarizes the objectives of teaching grammar as follows:

- Safeguarding the tongue from error and the pen from slips
- Developing sound linguistic habits
- Training students in keen observation, logical and orderly thinking, and the capacity for inference, judgment, and reasoning
- Enabling correct and rapid comprehension of meaning
- Sharpening the mind, refining taste, and enriching vocabulary
- Providing the ability to apply rules in varied linguistic situations
- Facilitating imitation of correct language models, since effective transfer of training occurs only when imitation is based on rules and principles that govern and regulate speech.

1.1.3 Importance of Teaching Grammar

The importance of grammar lies in the fact that acquiring language skills necessarily requires an understanding of its rules. These rules form the mechanism by which the language performs its functions according to its system. Without such knowledge, speakers cannot construct meaningful combinations of words. One specialist noted:
"If we were to teach a foreign student learning Arabic a set of vocabulary items without teaching any grammar, it would be extremely difficult for them to distinguish the meanings of sentences composed of those words, let alone produce a correct sentence from them."

Muslims have historically been keen on studying grammar as a means of preserving Classical Arabic and speaking it correctly and eloquently. This is evident in the Prophet's saying (peace be upon him): "May God have mercy on one who rectifies his tongue." Al-Jāḥiẓ, in *al-Bayān wa-al-Tabyīn*, relates that Yaʿqūb al-Sakhtiyānī would say: "Learn grammar, for it is an adornment to the lowly and its neglect a disgrace to the noble" (Abū Laban, 2011).

Grammar occupies, among the linguistic sciences, the same place that a constitution holds among modern laws—it is their foundation and supreme charter. Other linguistic sciences draw upon it, derive their spirit from it, and return to it for guidance. Without grammar, it is impossible to fully grasp the truths of linguistic sciences or penetrate their foundations. It is also essential for understanding the Qurʾān, the Hadith, and the principles of creed.
Ibn Khaldūn considered grammar the most important of the linguistic sciences, stating:
"The pillars of linguistic sciences are four: language, grammar, rhetoric, and literature. Of these, grammar is the foremost, for it reveals the principles of meaning through syntactic indication, distinguishing subject from object, and predicate from subject."

Mastery of grammar ensures correct speech and writing, instills sound linguistic habits, and enables deep engagement with the language's structure and beauty. Its importance is not limited to the functional performance of language, but extends to its literary dimension as a dynamic interplay of emotion, will, and intellect. Grammar, as the spirit of speech, is closely tied to meaning—it is the pathway to understanding and interpreting it.

1.1.4 Difficulties in Learning Grammar Rules

Grammar rules serve as a means to regulate speech, ensuring correctness in pronunciation and writing. Consequently, the time allocated to them in educational plans often exceeds that devoted to many other branches of the Arabic language, and teachers exert considerable effort in teaching them. Despite this, grammar remains one of the most complex pedagogical challenges, as it is a subject from which students often feel a strong aversion. They struggle to tolerate it, experiencing hardship in the process of learning. This situation has led to a near hostility towards the use of grammatical rules in speech; students become indifferent to them and often, this contributes to their overall dislike of the Arabic language. Such a phenomenon requires scientific investigation to identify its manifestations and underlying causes, so that it can be addressed based on sound educational principles.

Teachers frequently encounter common grammatical errors in students' written work and even more so in transfer and general examinations. If they were to analyze students' spoken language for mistakes, they would find it challenging to count them all. Field reports rarely fail to mention this phenomenon. If students were to choose between the branches of the Arabic language, the majority would likely avoid grammar. Explanations for this vary: some perceive the subject as dry, others find its rules difficult to understand, and still others feel incapable of applying them (Arabi, 2010).

The weakness in students' acquisition of grammatical and morphological rules and their perception of difficulty can be attributed to several factors: the curriculum content, the learner, the teaching methods and educational tools, the teacher, the linguistic environment, and other elements that contribute to these difficulties. Among these difficulties: those related to the curriculum content itself. Some educators argue that grammar and morphology are inherently challenging and dry in their rules, requiring complex cognitive processes such as comprehension, analysis, deduction, linking, balancing, and application, which demand mental effort that many students cannot manage. Suwailem and Al-Sanbiti (1965) observed that beginners in learning morphological rules, for example, encounter arduous difficulties in practical application and struggle to grasp their essence. Similarly, Sartawi and Abu Judah (2000) note that children may face issues such as incorrect segmentation, where a child fails to segment words acquired as wholes, making it difficult to identify their roots.

Further complicating grammar learning is the multiplicity of permissible grammatical forms for the same model, which aligns with Abd Al-Aal (n.d.), who states that the difficulty of grammar stems from the abundance of rules, permissible variations, and anomalies. Dhafir and Al-Hammadi (1984) add that excessive reliance on implied or local grammatical forms and the embellishment of speech with estimated pronouns is unnecessary. Additionally, the intrusion of various Arabic dialects with their differing grammatical characteristics has led

to divergent opinions on the same grammatical issue (Al-Rashidi & Salah, 1999).

Other difficulties arise from the curriculum design. The grammar and morphology curriculum contributes to students' weaknesses in these subjects due to reasons such as the excessive number of rules, poor selection of rules taught in schools, lack of connection between rules and real-life situations, and the failure to meet students' needs and interests. Moreover, the design and presentation of Arabic grammar textbooks affect students' engagement. If the textbooks are traditional, monotonous, poorly illustrated, and complicated in presenting examples, students are likely to avoid them (Zuqout, 1999).

Difficulties also stem from teaching methods and educational tools. Outdated and rigid teaching approaches in schools exacerbate learning challenges. Abd Al-Aal (n.d.) asserts that the difficulty or ease of learning grammar largely depends on teaching methods and the teacher's skill. Despite the widespread perception of grammar as difficult, students' disinterest and aversion often result from teachers' failure to adhere to effective pedagogical approaches. Samak (1979) argues that if rules are taught mechanically, without engaging students' interests and abilities, learners will struggle. Zuqout (1999) notes that a well-designed teaching method based on sound principles can mitigate these difficulties, making the material more accessible and engaging through clarity, variety, and humor. Effective methods facilitate students' mastery of grammar, enabling teachers to teach it under optimal educational conditions (Amer, 1992).

1.1.5 Methods of Teaching Grammar

Al-Zahrani, referencing grammatical literature and scientific sources, indicates that methods for teaching grammar can be categorized according to teacher and learner activity into three groups: methods based on teacher activity (e.g., lecture, analogical, and situational methods), methods based on both teacher and learner activity (e.g., inductive, modified, discovery, and discussion methods), and methods based on learner activity (e.g., problem-solving, role-playing, activity-based, educational modeling, and cooperative learning) (Al-Zahrani, 2008).

Methods based on teacher activity include the **lecture method**, in which the teacher delivers information and knowledge to students across all areas and provides assistance that may be difficult otherwise (Abu Al-Hija, 2001). The lecture method is widely used due to its simplicity and efficiency, allowing teachers to convey ideas and knowledge in a structured, calm environment, where students attentively listen (Al-Rubaie, 2006). Advantages include saving time for both teacher and learner, providing additional information, and clarifying textbook content (Yasin, 1974). However, drawbacks exist: it encourages passive learning, may not suit students' developmental levels, and focuses on lower-order cognitive skills such as knowledge, recall, and sometimes comprehension, without accommodating individual differences, potentially leaving weaker students behind (Druze, 2000).

The **analogical (Qiyas) method** is one of the oldest approaches, historically prominent in teaching grammar. It follows three steps: introducing the general rule, illustrating it with examples, and then applying it. It moves thought from general principles to specific cases. While this method dominated early 20th-century grammar teaching, critics like Al-Sayyid (1415 AH) argue that it promotes rote memorization, blind imitation, dependence on others, and weakens creativity. Difficulties arise when students are confronted with general rules without gradual introduction, leading to misapplication. This approach does not enrich knowledge but recycles it, relying heavily on verbal drills and logical challenges (Al-Khamash, 1429 AH).

The **situational method** involves teaching grammar within reading, literature, or memorization lessons, rather than as a separate subject. It focuses primarily on review and teaching single topics, allowing widespread practical application of rules to instill grammatical habits (Abu Shatat, 2005).

Methods involving both teacher and learner activity include the **inductive method**, where thought progresses from parts to whole, from specific cases to general rules through deduction. It presents multiple examples for students to discuss and extract rules themselves. Proponents believe this stimulates thinking and gradually guides students to generalizations (Khalafallah, 2002). The lesson structure often includes introduction, presentation, connection, rule extraction, and application. Critics, however, note that it can be slow, may rely on too few examples, and lacks a clear expressive purpose, potentially frustrating students (Shahata, 1996).

The Modified Method

The modified method emerged as an adaptation of previous teaching approaches, and hence it is called the "modified method." It involves teaching grammatical rules through connected texts rather than isolated sentences. Connected texts refer to a passage on a single topic or a literary text that students read and comprehend. Subsequently, attention is drawn to sentences within the text and their grammatical features, followed by the extraction of the relevant rule, and finally the application stage.

Arab curricula have adopted this method, as it emphasizes that the purpose of teaching grammar is to help learners refine their language and ensure linguistic accuracy in both style and expression. The path to achieving this goal is to teach grammar within the context of language itself, by selecting examples and exercises from literary texts that elevate students' linguistic style, enrich their culture, and expand their knowledge, while simultaneously clarifying grammatical rules. Moreover, the linguistic material chosen for explaining or applying the rules is linked to students' interests, needs, and activities at their developmental stage.

The advantages of this method include its effectiveness in achieving the intended objectives of grammar teaching, as it integrates rules with sentence structures and proper expression, reinforcing the language and its syntactic features. It primarily relies on practice derived from authentic language use across various practical contexts (Shahata, 1996). Khalifa (2003) notes several criticisms of this method, including that it may consume excessive class time on activities unrelated to the primary goal. Teachers often spend most of the period reading and analyzing texts with students, leaving limited time for direct grammar instruction. Additionally, some authors artificially craft texts to ensure the inclusion of necessary examples (Al-Khamash, 2008).

Cooperative Learning Method

Cooperative learning is a modern teaching strategy that organizes the classroom environment by dividing students into small, balanced groups, typically consisting of 4–6 students depending on class size and academic level. Students work collaboratively, engaging in integrated discussions related to the subject matter to achieve the objectives set by the teacher. Groups compete against each other while members cooperate internally. The teacher's role is limited to guidance, organization, providing feedback when necessary, and delivering reinforcement collectively. According to Al-Bahdal, this method has several advantages: it promotes active participation, transforms learning from a passive experience into an enjoyable, goal-oriented activity, enhances achievement, improves retention, encourages independent thinking and expression, fosters responsibility for one's own learning and that of peers, and stimulates intellectual, physical, and emotional engagement, rather than purely cognitive activity (Al-Bahdal, 2004).

Discussion Method

The discussion method is widely applied across various subjects when class sizes are reasonable, allowing all students to participate. Zuqout (1997) notes that this method is based on question-and-answer or dialogue, emphasizing discussion and debate. Although almost all teaching methods involve questioning, the discussion method specifically uses Q&A as the central approach to facilitate educational activities (Abu Shatat, 2005).

Learner-Centered Methods

Learner-centered approaches include several methods, such as the **problem-solving method**, which relies on students' self-directed activities through reading, writing, or expressing ideas. The teacher observes common errors among students, discusses them, and explains the causes, whether the rules were previously taught or currently being introduced (Al-Zahrani, 2008).

Problem-solving follows a structured cognitive sequence: identifying the problem, linking it to prior knowledge, proposing potential solutions (hypotheses), testing and selecting solutions, generalizing results, and transferring learning to new situations (Abu Riyash & Qutait, 2008).

Role-Playing Method

The role-playing method organizes educational material into dramatic scripts, transforming content into practical scenarios. Students enact roles after training, under the teacher's supervision, to convey key concepts and ideas (Haniya, 2008).

Discovery Method

According to Al-Saihi (1996), the discovery method requires active student participation to acquire knowledge with the teacher's scientific guidance. Also called free or guided discovery, this research-based learning promotes organized scientific thinking, experimentation, and creative problem-solving. Students can derive grammatical rules after engaging with diverse examples and syntactic evidence. Samak (1986) highlights the method's current relevance, as it allows learners to extract and apply rules in new contexts (Al-Zahrani, 2008).

Under discovery-based methods, **activity-based learning** engages students in collecting examples and texts relevant to a grammatical rule from reading books, class activities, newspapers, or free reading. These materials serve as the basis for discussion, leading to the extraction of the intended grammatical rule (Samak, 1979).

Educational Modeling Method

The educational model is a small learning unit based on self-directed learning. It contains specific objectives and structured learning experiences designed to help the learner achieve competencies according to prior mastery levels and individual learning pace. Definitions by Al-Tobji (1980), Fathi Al-Nimr (1985), and Al-Wakeel & Al-Mufti (1987) emphasize that educational modeling supports self-learning under teacher supervision, includes clear objectives, and offers students choices among activities. The model guides students through instructions, allowing them to select appropriate tasks. It is time-efficient, often completed in one or a few class periods.

Jamel (2003) identifies key characteristics of the model: accommodating individual differences through accurate diagnosis, providing alternative activities and methods, fostering learner autonomy and responsibility, ensuring learning objectives are clearly defined and sequential, and enabling immediate reinforcement through model-based feedback. Educational models also employ mastery-based learning, ensuring students achieve approximately 80% proficiency before progressing to new units, minimizing learning failure and enhancing overall mastery.

1.2 Learning through Play

Educational research has confirmed that children often communicate their thoughts and feelings through free role-playing and the use of dolls, blocks, colors, clay, and other materials. Play is considered an educational medium that significantly contributes to shaping the child's personality in its various dimensions. Thus, well-planned and organized educational games, under proper supervision, play an effective role in structuring learning. Studies have demonstrated the significant value of play in acquiring knowledge and skills if it is properly utilized and organized (Al-Masri, 2009).

1.2.1 Definition of Play

Several educators have addressed the concept of play from multiple perspectives. Al-Khawalda (2007) states that "play" is the verbal noun of the verb *to play* (la'iba), while a *game* refers to the type and structure of play, including its form, content, and components. Play is defined as an activity or a set of organized activities undertaken individually or collectively to achieve a specific purpose.

Al-Sharouni (2002) defines play as an activity performed by a child for the purpose of obtaining pleasure or enjoyment, regardless of the outcome. Play is always spontaneous, meaning that the child engages in it without external pressure or coercion. Faraj (2005) considers it an essential behavioral activity that plays a primary role in forming the individual's personality and occasionally reinforcing cultural heritage. It is a behavioral phenomenon observed in living organisms, particularly higher vertebrates, and especially humans.

Play is also considered the child's profession and function, being the preferred activity for the child. A child who plays is active and initiative-driven, which is a sign of healthy development. No developmental indicator, physically or psychologically, is more genuine than a child's initiative, reflecting an internal sense of confidence, security, and safety (Badeer, 2004: 104). This enhances motivation, which is defined as the level of

enthusiasm within an individual that directs behavior toward a particular goal. Motivation is often influenced by stimuli, whether internal or external, which generate enthusiasm. These stimuli activate latent energies within the individual, driving them toward specific behaviors. Developing an organized environment strengthens motivation and directs it toward organizational goals, which is the responsibility of management. Therefore, incentives must be combined in a way that balances human needs in achieving objectives (Atirah, 2011).

1.2.2 Learning through Play Method

Al-Ghamdi defines play as a guided activity performed by children to develop their behavioral, cognitive, physical, and emotional abilities while simultaneously achieving enjoyment and entertainment. The learning-through-play approach involves using play activities to acquire knowledge, introduce scientific concepts to children, and broaden their cognitive horizons. In other words, this approach consists of structured activities governed by rules that regulate the flow of play. Typically, two or more participants engage to achieve predefined objectives, incorporating elements of competition and chance, concluding with the success of one team (Al-Ghamdi, 2009).

1.2.3 Importance of Learning through Play

According to Mar'i, play has "a significant impact on a child's education and personality development, both cognitively and behaviorally, and enhances their social interaction with others. This effect stems from play being an educational tool that fosters interaction with the environment for learning and character development. Play also serves as an educational medium to convey concepts and facilitate comprehension of meanings. Furthermore, play can be a therapeutic tool used by educators to address certain issues, such as social isolation or aggression. Engaging children in cooperative play encourages positive behavior and prevents negative conduct. Using play as an educational medium helps consolidate information, as knowledge presented through play becomes memorable due to the combination of auditory, visual, and kinesthetic elements. Consequently, learning through play is more lasting than other forms of instruction" (Mar'i, 1998).

1.2.4 Educational Roles of Children's Play

Yassin emphasizes that play serves several educational roles. Play is an educational tool through which children interact with their environment, developing personalities that influence their behavior toward others. It enables children to understand meanings and concepts, allowing them to adapt to real-life situations. Moreover, play helps identify individual differences among children, facilitating teaching according to each child's abilities and potential. Play also promotes social personality development, reducing selfishness and fostering cooperation, strengthening relationships with others, and instilling ethical and social behavior standards (Yassin, 2006). Play is not only a tool for peer communication but also for interaction with adults, supporting the holistic development of children's personalities and fulfilling their curiosity, cognitive, psychological, and emotional needs. Play also functions therapeutically, revealing psychological, mental, and emotional disturbances and helping children restore balance while aiding educators in addressing behavioral challenges (Yassin, 2006).

1.2.5 Types of Play

Al-Ghareer and Al-Nawaisa (2010) classify play into several types: organized play, which follows rules and structured standards; group play, where two or more children engage in similar activities without assisting each other and without rules; individual play, performed alone; imaginative play, relying on a child's imagination; role-playing, where children imitate specific characters; traditional imitation, where children mimic parents' household tasks; constructive play, involving building and assembling, which develops motor skills and creativity; therapeutic play, aimed at children with psychological disturbances; and pretend play, common among children aged 4–6, fostering verbal, motor, cognitive, and creative development (Al-Hila, 2007; Al-Najahi, 2005).

1.2.6 Stages of Learning through Play

The stages of learning through play can be summarized in three main phases:

Preparation Phase: This includes familiarization with the game, materials, rules, usage procedures, duration, curriculum relevance, testing the game before class, arranging a suitable space, determining necessary time, and explaining rules and objectives to students (Al-Huwaidi, 2005).

Implementation Phase: This involves preparation and linking the game to students' prior experiences, giving learners the opportunity to achieve objectives, considering individual differences, conducting smooth discussions, analyzing outcomes, and finding strategies for winning (Najm, 2001; Al-Hila & Ghoneim, 2002; Ghazawi & Sabbareeni, 1999:1).

Evaluation Phase: The teacher and students assess the achievement of objectives, avoiding actions that demotivate learners (Al-Hila, 2003).

Follow-up Phase: The teacher monitors students' acquired experiences and provides additional games or activities to enrich learning and ensure skill mastery before transitioning to other experiences (Al-Huwaidi, 2005).

The teacher's role in applying learning-through-play includes reviewing available games, organizing groups and roles, offering timely guidance, enhancing the effectiveness of play, testing targeted educational games, and ensuring that the game rules are clear, simple, and appropriate for students' abilities and interests (Al-Sha'er, 2015).

1.2.7 Learning Grammar through Play

Numerous studies have examined learning through play. Examples include:

- Attallah (2003) conducted a study titled *"The Effect of a Proposed Linguistic Games Program to Address Reading Weakness in Third Grade Students"*, aiming to determine the impact of linguistic games on reading skills. The study divided students into an experimental group taught using the proposed program and a control group taught using traditional methods. Results showed statistically significant differences favoring the experimental group.
- Hassan (1999) studied the *"Effectiveness of Using Educational Games in Grammar Achievement for Fourth Grade Students"*, comparing experimental and control groups, concluding that educational games significantly enhanced grammar learning.
- Abu Jamous (1998) examined *"Linguistic Patterns in Arabic Textbooks for the First Three Grades in Jordan"* and students' mastery of these patterns. The study involved

465 students and found higher mastery of verbal sentences compared to nominal ones, with no gender effect.

- Khalil (2000) studied the *"Effectiveness of Learning through Play among First Grade Students"*, focusing on reading achievement using a semi-experimental design. The results indicated significant differences favoring students who learned via structured play.
- Mousa (2007) investigated *"The Role of Educational Games in Raising Academic Achievement for Second Grade Students in Arabic Language in Rafah Governorate"*, finding that games improved student achievement by 75%, and 90% of teachers used games as teaching aids.

In summary, increasing academic achievement and learning motivation is closely linked to the learning-through-play strategy. Academic achievement refers to the level of knowledge and performance attained through education, while motivation is the state that initiates behavior toward specific goals, such as studying to succeed (Wikipedia).

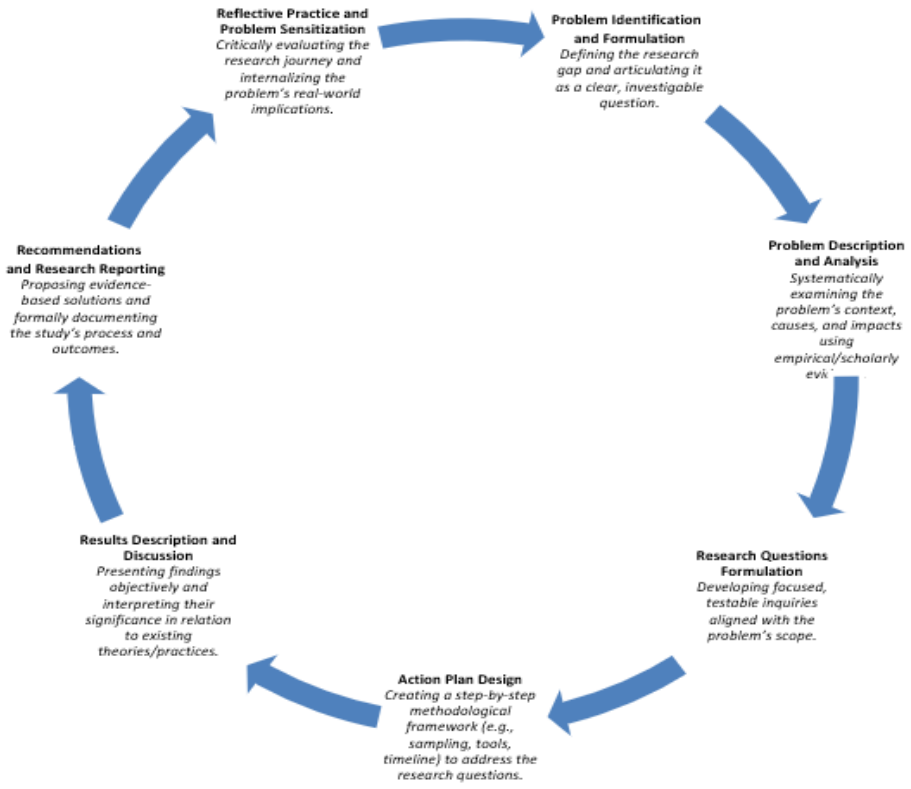
1.3 Action Research

Atwi (2011) defines action research as a type of applied scientific research that aims to apply various forms of knowledge, theories, and laws to improve reality through a well-planned strategy for problem-solving. Action research provides teachers with the opportunity to examine their own personal and individual teaching methods within the classroom.

Al-Fay et al. (2007) affirm that action research is a study conducted by an individual or a group for the purpose of solving a specific problem and obtaining certain information from specific sources. Moreover, it is considered a systematic method of inquiry and investigation carried out by a teacher, principal, counselor, or others, with the aim of collecting the necessary data and information about the teaching methods used in the school, the level of instruction, or students' academic achievement. Through these data, it is possible to bring about positive change in the school environment, enhance educational practices in general, improve learning outcomes among students, and refine the professional practices adopted in one's career (Al-Qala et al., 2006).

The stages of action research, as illustrated in Figure 1, include: reflecting upon and sensing the problem, identifying and formulating it, describing and analyzing it, formulating research questions, designing an action plan, describing and discussing the results, making recommendations, preparing the research report, and finally, reflecting upon a new problem or repeating the process (Abu Awad & Noufal, 2012, p. 4).

Figure 1: *Stages of Action Research*



According to Atwi (2011), action research is characterized by the fact that the problem arises from the researcher's own mind and heart, felt within the context of their work. After the teacher or other professional identifies the problem they face in their work environment, they seek solutions to it. The primary aim of action research is to improve the researcher's own professional practices rather than those of others, by applying knowledge to solve the problem. When the researcher identifies a problem they face, this gives them strong motivation and sustained drive to work toward solutions. Once the researcher reaches a resolution to the problem, this contributes to enhancing their performance, increasing their abilities, and boosting their motivation for greater productivity. In this type of research, the researcher typically does not struggle to access information sources or to define the research sample and population.

Accordingly, it can be said that action research is characterized by *practicality*, as it focuses on solving real-world problems in actual contexts, involving all relevant stakeholders—teachers, principals, students, and others. Such collaborative participation fosters a sense of empowerment and confidence, and also aids in interpretation, whereby meaning is constructed and reality is evaluated. However, despite its numerous advantages, action research has a limitation in that its findings cannot be generalized, as it addresses a specific problem or situation (Haider, 2004).

1. Ethical Issues in Action Research

Noufal and Abu Awad (2012, p. 51), along with Haider (2004), summarize the ethical issues related to action research as follows:

- **Prior informed consent to participate in the research:** Out of respect, participants must be fully informed about the research procedures and any potential risks involved, ensuring they have complete freedom to decide whether to participate.
- **Protection of participants' confidentiality:** The researcher must safeguard participants' personal data and identities, ensuring that the information remains strictly confidential and is not used for any purpose outside the scope of the research. This commitment should be explicitly stated and emphasized.
- **Participants' autonomy:** Students should not feel any implicit pressure to participate, and their decision not to participate must be fully respected, without any negative consequences.
- **Beneficence:** The researcher must work to maximize the benefits for participants and minimize any risks they may face during the research.
- **Justice:** No discrimination should occur among participants in the research (Haider, 2004).

Research Questions

The present study aims to examine the extent to which learning through play contributes to increasing motivation for learning and improving achievement in grammar among third-grade pupils during individual lessons.

Accordingly, the current study seeks to answer the following research question:

Does the use of a learning-through-play strategy enhance motivation for learning and increase achievement in grammar among third-grade pupils?

Research Methodology

2.1 Research Sample

The research sample consists of eight third-grade pupils (six boys and two girls) from one of the elementary schools in the city of Sakhnin. These pupils receive individual lessons in Arabic and demonstrate an average level of academic achievement. They were selected using a purposive sampling method.

The selection of the sample was based on the researcher's presence in the school as an Arabic language teacher in general, and as a teacher of individual Arabic lessons in particular, within the *Ofek Hadash* reform plan. Given that the study follows an action research methodology, this facilitated the implementation of the action plan, as the researcher herself carried out its application.

2.2 Research Methodology

This study investigates the extent to which the use of learning through play contributes to improving motivation for learning and increasing achievement in grammar among third-grade pupils. Therefore, the adopted research methodology is **action research**. Mills (2003) describes action research as a systematic inquiry conducted by the teacher-researcher to gather a variety of information and observations about their own teaching practices, instructional methods, and the extent of students' learning. Such information and experiences are collected with the aim of acquiring knowledge, developing reflective practice, bringing about positive changes in educational practices in general, and improving student outcomes in particular.

The **first stage** of the present action research involved assessing the third-grade pupils' mastery of grammar and its related skills through a *pre-test* designed to diagnose and identify the problem (see Appendix 1). This pre-test assessed the pupils' level of competence in basic grammar skills. The researcher selected ten grammar skills from the curriculum, distributed across five instructional units, with each unit covering two skills. These skills were taught through literary units and texts in accordance with curriculum requirements, which do not allocate grammar skills to a separate unit, but rather integrate them within language units covering different linguistic aspects.

A specific evaluation rubric was developed for each instructional unit delivered within its designated time frame. The rubric included standardized grading criteria for various aspects, and pupils were assessed in grammar and its related skills according to this rubric (see Appendix 2). The pre-test results indicated a clear weakness in third-grade-level grammar skills among the participants.

The **second stage** involved defining and formulating the research problem and research questions based on the pre-test results, as presented in the introduction and Chapter One of the study.

The **third stage** consisted of designing the action plan to address the identified problem in grammar and its skills, as highlighted by the pre-test findings.

2.3 The Action Plan

Instructional plans were prepared for ten grammar topics to be taught using the *learning-through-play* strategy, distributed across five grammar-focused instructional units. To ensure thorough and accurate preparation, the researcher consulted multiple sources and references discussing methods of teaching Arabic in general and grammar in particular, as well as best practices for presenting grammar content. All key criteria for assessing pupils' performance in grammar, both in terms of content and structure, were considered.

The sample consisted of eight pupils (six boys and two girls) from third-grade classes in one of the northern region's elementary schools, all receiving individual lessons in Arabic and selected through purposive sampling. The selection was again based on the researcher's position in the school as both a general Arabic language teacher and a teacher of individual lessons within the *Ofek Hadash* reform plan. The action plan involved selecting grammar skills from the Ministry of Education's curriculum and implementing them through the learning-through-play approach.

In preparing these units, the researcher took into account the requirements of the **2009 Arabic Language Curriculum** for the targeted age group (third grade), which specifies the following grammar content and skills: demonstrative pronouns, relative pronouns, interrogative tools, verb conjugation in past, present, and imperative forms with pronouns, parts of speech (noun, verb, particle), root extraction, number and counted noun, adjective and described noun, and pronouns.

Objectives of the Instructional Units

By delivering the ten grammar topics through the learning-through-play strategy, the instructional units aim to:

- Equip pupils with essential vocabulary and structures to expand their linguistic repertoire and use them in oral and written expression.
- Enable pupils to apply these skills across different language domains: speaking, correct reading, written expression, and linguistic accuracy through grammar skills learned.
- Train pupils to organize their ideas coherently, ensure logical connections between them, and achieve structural cohesion in their compositions.
- Guide pupils in proper formatting, including spacing between words, paragraphs, and titles, as well as overall text organization.
- Enhance pupils' motivation for learning and raise their achievement levels in grammar skills.

Content of the Instructional Units

The ten grammar topics were taught using learning-through-play activities, as outlined in **Table 1**. The instructional program consisted of two weekly lessons over a period of two and a half months.

The games used during instruction included:

- Flashcard game
- Maze game
- Root-finding game
- Domino game
- Snakes and Ladders game
- Word games
- Classification game
- Magnet board game
- Wooden sticks game
- Tree of Knowledge game

The instructional units were selected to be age-appropriate for third-grade pupils, in alignment with the skills specified in the Arabic Language Curriculum.

Table 1: *Educational Unit Plan.*

Unit No.	Suggested Title	Weeks of Implementation	Required Number of Lessons	Appendix
1	*This Morning is Not Divided* – covering: Parts of Speech (verb, noun) and categories of verbs and nouns	1–2	4	No. 3
2	*The Little Foal Crosses the River* – covering: Pronouns and verb conjugation with pronouns	3–4	4	No. 4
3	*The Olive Trees of My Country* – covering: Demonstrative pronouns and relative pronouns	5–6	4	No. 5
4	*The Pencil* – covering: Interrogative tools and nunation (tanwīn)	7–8	4	No. 6
5	*The Largest Library in the World* – covering: Adjective and described noun, number and counted noun	9–10	4	No. 7

2.4 Research Tool

After the third stage of designing and implementing the action plan, a **process portfolio** in grammar for third-grade pupils was used as a data collection tool. This portfolio includes all the pupils' work—educational games and worksheets—from all instructional units in order to answer the research question.

At the end of each instructional unit, the above-mentioned data (educational games and grammar skills) were collected to evaluate each pupil's grammar skills and to adjust the action plan according to the overall needs of the group and the specific needs of individuals. Grammar skills were evaluated using an **assessment rubric** developed by the researcher in collaboration with experts in the field of Arabic language, based on the standards of the National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation (*RAMA*, 2011) – see Appendix No. (2).

2.5 Data Processing and Analysis

The data in the present study were divided into two types: **quantitative data** and **qualitative data**.

In the quantitative section, each student's linguistic knowledge was assessed using the evaluation rubric (see Appendix No. 2). A numerical score (mean and standard deviation) was assigned to the components of linguistic knowledge mentioned above in each instructional unit, so as to present pupils' performance as a function of time.

The **effect size** was also calculated (a measure indicating change over time, especially relevant for small sample sizes such as in the present study within individual lessons). The formula for calculating effect size, which reflects differences between related groups, is as follows:

- Low effect size: ES = 0.20
- Medium effect size: ES = 0.50
- High effect size: ES = 0.80 and above

ES=Meane−MeancSDpooledES = \frac{Mean_e - Mean_c}{SD_{pooled}}ES=SDpooledMeane−Meanc

Where:

- *e* = post-test (Time 2)
- *c* = pre-test (Time 1)
- *pooled* = pooled standard deviation

The quantitative data were presented in tables showing the changes in pupils' linguistic knowledge over time (as a function of implementing the action plan), as well as in appropriate graphical charts.

In the qualitative section, the researcher used a **process portfolio**—defined in the theoretical literature as a purposeful collection of a learner's work (complete or in progress) that demonstrates effort, progress, and achievement in one or more areas. It presents various forms of assessment information: performance tasks, drafts, questionnaires, worksheets, exam results, and samples of notes recorded during assessment sessions.

A portfolio is not intended to include all of a learner's work; rather, it serves as a tool reflecting the collected works aligned with the defined objectives of the portfolio product. The works included can be used as evidence of the learner's knowledge, ability to apply knowledge, effort, and progress. This may also include unfinished works that can serve as evidence—for example: educational games, plans for experiments before implementation, etc. (Amador, 1999).

In the present study, as previously mentioned, the researcher employed a process portfolio based on the **evidence-based practice** approach. Evidence-based teaching and learning can be implemented with different target audiences (students and teachers). In the present study, the process was carried out with pupils under the researcher's guidance.

Evidence-based teaching and learning processes are **continuous and sequential reflective practices** through which the teacher (or instructor) and their pupils examine their work by collecting data on the teaching–learning process and on students' progress. Through this process, insights are drawn gradually, continuously, and thoughtfully—not superficially (Bollough & Pinnegar, 2004).

The data and information collected serve as **evidence** of the teaching–learning process, which can be presented as portfolios that represent the learner's knowledge and learning, and shared with colleagues. Ball, Cohen, and Ben-Beretz (2002) proposed using documentation of learning experiences in the classroom as a collaborative learning tool for teachers, enabling them to build shared professional knowledge.

Portfolios containing evidence of the teaching–learning process are powerful tools for reflective thinking and self-study, as they reveal visible aspects of teaching and learning and often uncover "hidden" aspects not immediately apparent to teachers themselves. Deep examination of this evidence can enhance teachers' work.

Research has shown that documenting teaching and learning processes influences teachers' knowledge (both content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge) and their attitudes toward the teaching–learning process itself (Smith & Neale, 2002). Studies examining teachers who prepared **evidence-based portfolios**—such as those required by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (*NBPTS*)—indicated a meaningful process in their professional development, which had a profound impact on their teaching practice (Attinello, Lare, & Waters, 2006; Cushman, 1999; Lustick & Sykes, 2006; NBPTS, 2001).

Term: "Evidence"

The term "evidence" refers to a set of exhibits collected by teachers during the implementation of the action plan in the classroom. These exhibits are accompanied by analysis, conclusions, and insights regarding the processes of teaching, learning, and assessment (Ball, Cohen & Ben-Beretz, 2002).

In the present study, the researcher collected evidence indicating the students' progress during the different grammar instructional units. When presenting this evidence in the results section, the included evidence will not feature the educational games due to technical constraints and the quality limitations of the images that could be captured for these games.

Results

Section One: Pre-test Results

The researcher administered a pre-test in grammar to assess the pupils' mastery of basic grammar skills. Based on the results, the research problem was derived, and an appropriate action plan was developed to address the pupils' needs. Accordingly, the following results emerged (see Table 1).

Table 1: *Means and Standard Deviations of the Structure and Form of Linguistic Knowledge in the Pre-test for Students (n=10)*

Student No.	Linguistic Knowledge (M)
1	54.0
2	69.0
3	64.0
4	45.0
5	69.0
6	54.0
7	65.0
8	35.0
Mean (M)	**56.87**
SD	**12.23**

The results of the pre-test in Table 1 above indicate low scores in linguistic knowledge, as reflected in the mean score of **M = 56.87, SD = 12.23**. To answer the research questions, the researcher presented the results as follows:

The means and standard deviations for each two consecutive instructional units were calculated, along with the effect size for the change between the first and second units. The results are as follows:

Table 2: *Means and Standard Deviations in the First and Second Units*

Student No.	Unit 1 (M)	Unit 2 (M)	Effect Size
1	81.82	90.91	
2	90.91	57.89	
3	90.91	63.16	
4	63.64	95	
5	81.82	100	
6	72.73	68.42	
7	72.30	94	
8	81.82	92	
Overall Mean (M)	**79.49**	**82.67**	**ES = 0.24**
SD	**9.45**	**16.62**	

Note: Effect Size for the structure of linguistic knowledge = ES.

The results in Table 2 above indicate an increase in the pupils' mean scores after learning the first and second units, as shown by the mean values and the effect size (**M1 = 79.49, SD = 9.45; M2 = 82.67, SD = 16.62; ES = 0.24**).

The researcher concludes that the pupils' average achievement improved noticeably between the first and second units, indicating that the teaching approach for verb forms in the first unit and *tanwīn* in the second unit yielded positive results in enhancing third-grade pupils' linguistic knowledge.

Figure 1: Change in Mean Linguistic Knowledge as a Function of Time (Unit 1 and Unit 2)

The graph in Figure 1 above illustrates a clear progression in the mean linguistic knowledge scores over time for pupils in Units 1 and 2. It is noteworthy that the improvement in pupils' average achievement was significant (**M1 = 79.49; M2 = 82.67**).

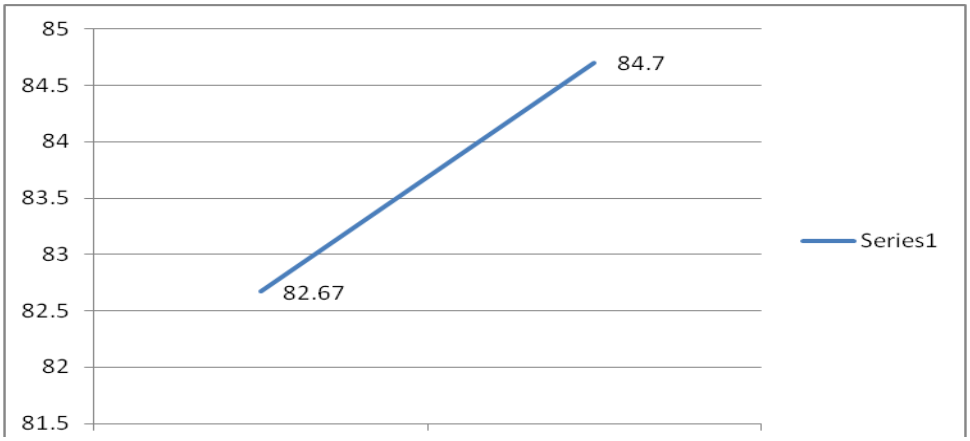
Table 3: *Means and Standard Deviations in the Second and Third Units.*

Student No.	Unit 2 (M)	Unit 3 (M)	Effect Size
1	90.91	100	
2	57.89	83.33	
3	63.16	100	
4	95	75.9	
5	100	83.33	
6	68.42	66.67	
7	94	68.4	
8	92	100	
Overall Mean (M)	**82.67**	**84.70**	**ES = 0.13**
SD	**16.62**	**14.01**	

The results in Table 3 above indicate an increase in the pupils' mean scores after learning the second and third units, as reflected in the mean values and the effect size (**M1 = 82.67, SD = 16.62; M2 = 84.70, SD = 14.01; ES = 0.13**).

The researcher concludes that pupils' average achievement improved noticeably between the second and third units, indicating that the play-based learning approach for *tanwīn* in the second unit and root structure in the third unit was particularly effective.

Chart No. 2: *Change in the Average Linguistic Knowledge as a Function of Time (Units Two and Three)*



The above Figure 2 illustrates a clear development in the average linguistic knowledge over time among the pupils in Units Two and Three. It is noteworthy that the improvement in the pupils' mean achievement was remarkable (M1 = 82.67, M2 = 84.7).

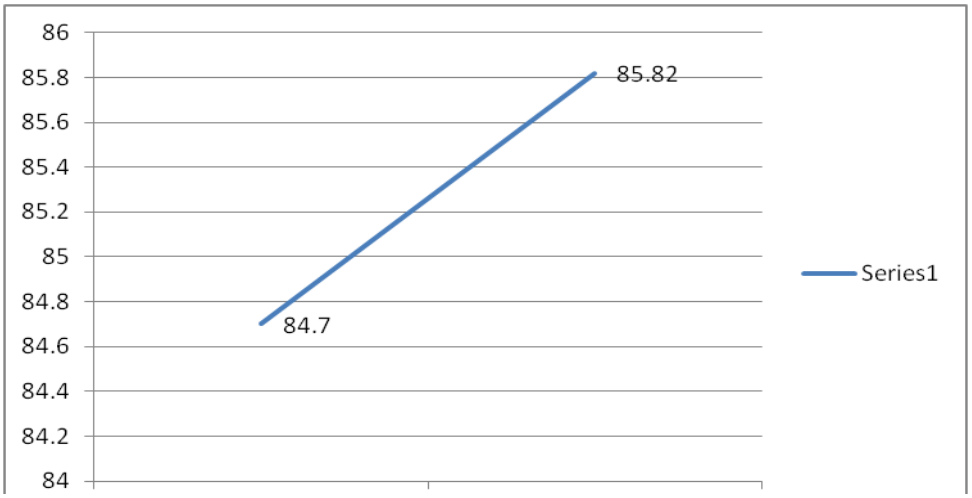
Table 4: Means and Standard Deviations in Units Three and Four.

Student No.	Unit Three (M)	Unit Four (M)	Effect Size
1	100.00	100.00	
2	83.33	94.12	
3	100.00	70.59	
4	75.90	100.00	
5	83.33	88.24	
6	66.67	64.71	
7	68.40	76.47	
8	100.00	92.40	
Overall Mean (M)	**84.70**	**85.82**	**ES = 0.08**
Standard Deviation (SD)	**14.01**	**13.55**	

The results in Table 4 above indicate an increase in the pupils' mean scores after learning Units Three and Four, as reflected by the means and the effect size (M1 = 84.70, SD = 14.01; M2 = 85.82, SD = 13.55; ES = 0.08).

The researcher affirms that the more time pupils are taught grammar using the play-based method, the greater their overall average achievement in the subject becomes. In fact, the pupils' mean achievement in Unit Three, which addressed the root, and Unit Four, which covered demonstrative pronouns, showed a notable improvement.

Figure 3: Change in the Average Linguistic Knowledge as a Function of Time (Units Three and Four).



The above Figure 3 illustrates a clear development in the average linguistic knowledge over time among the pupils in Units Three and Four. It is noteworthy that the improvement in the pupils' mean achievement was evident (M1 = 84.7, M2 = 85.82).

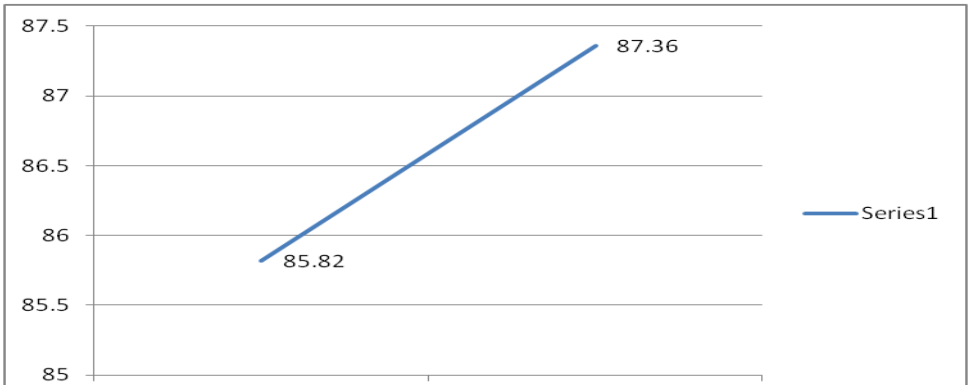
Table 5: *Means and Standard Deviations in Units Four and Five*

Student No.	Unit Four (M)	Unit Five (M)	Effect Size
1	100.00	87.50	
2	94.12	85.50	
3	70.59	87.80	
4	100.00	92.40	
5	88.24	80.49	
6	64.71	85.37	
7	76.47	85.50	
8	92.40	94.30	
Overall Mean (M)	**85.82**	**87.36**	**ES = 0.17**
Standard Deviation (SD)	**13.55**	**4.34**	

The results in Table 5 above indicate an increase in the pupils' mean scores after learning Units Four and Five, as reflected by the means and the effect size (M1 = 85.82, SD = 13.55; M2 = 87.36, SD = 4.34; ES = 0.17).

The researcher emphasizes that the more time pupils are taught grammar using the play-based approach, the greater their overall average achievement in the subject becomes. Indeed, the pupils' mean achievement in Unit Four, which addressed demonstrative pronouns, and Unit Five, which covered numbers and counted nouns, showed a noticeable improvement.

Figure 4: Change in the Average Linguistic Knowledge as a Function of Time (Units Four and Five)



The above Figure 4 shows a clear development in the average linguistic knowledge over time among the pupils in Units Four and Five. It is noteworthy that the improvement in the pupils' mean achievement was evident (M1 = 85.82, M2 = 87.36).

Table 6: Means and Standard Deviations in Units One and Five

Student No.	Unit One (M)	Unit Five (M)	Effect Size
1	81.82	87.50	
2	90.91	85.50	
3	90.91	87.80	
4	63.64	92.40	
5	81.82	80.49	
6	72.73	85.37	
7	72.30	85.50	
8	81.82	94.30	
Overall Mean (M)	**79.49**	**87.36**	**ES = 1.14**
Standard Deviation (SD)	**9.45**	**4.34**	

The results in Table 6 above highlight a very significant increase in the pupils' mean scores after learning Units One and Five, as evidenced by the means and the effect size (M1 = 79.49, SD = 9.45; M2 = 87.36, SD = 4.34; ES = 1.14).

The researcher affirms that learning through the play-based approach had a clear positive impact. Following the implementation of the action plan—from Unit One, which addressed the types of verbs, to Unit Five, which addressed numbers and counted nouns—the substantial difference in the mean scores is evident. This finding strongly indicates that the play-based learning method yielded positive results, encouraging the researcher to continue applying this approach in teaching other subjects through various innovative methods.

Figure 5: Change in the Average Linguistic Knowledge as a Function of Time (Units One and Five)

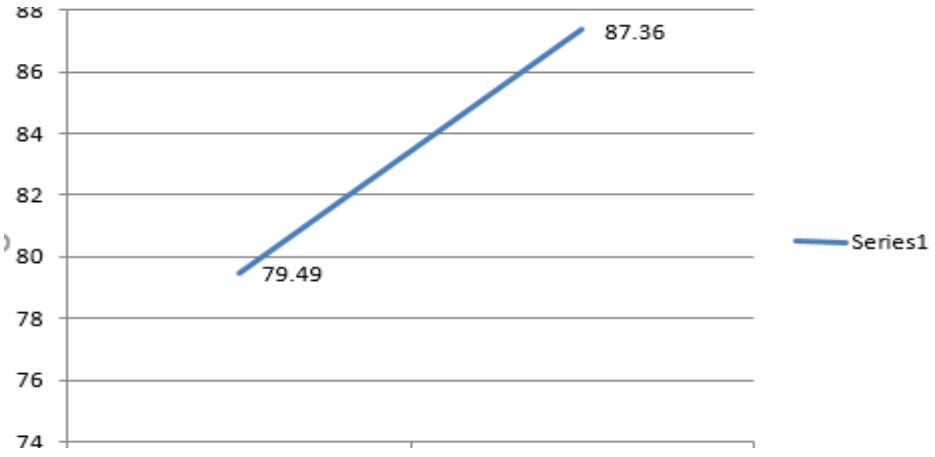
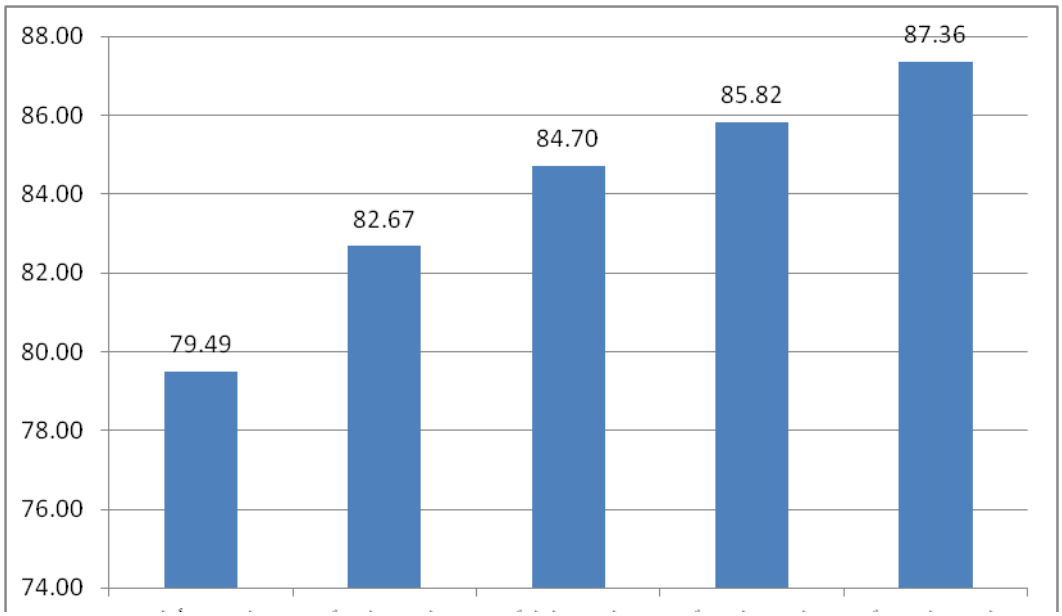


Figure 5 above illustrates a clear progression in the average linguistic knowledge as a function of time among the pupils between Unit 1 and Unit 5. It is noteworthy that the improvement in the pupils' average achievement was substantial, considering both the time gap and the development of the instructional method through the use of play (M1 = 79.49, M2 = 87.36).

Figure 6: Change in the average linguistic knowledge as a time-dependent variable (from Unit 1 to Unit 5).



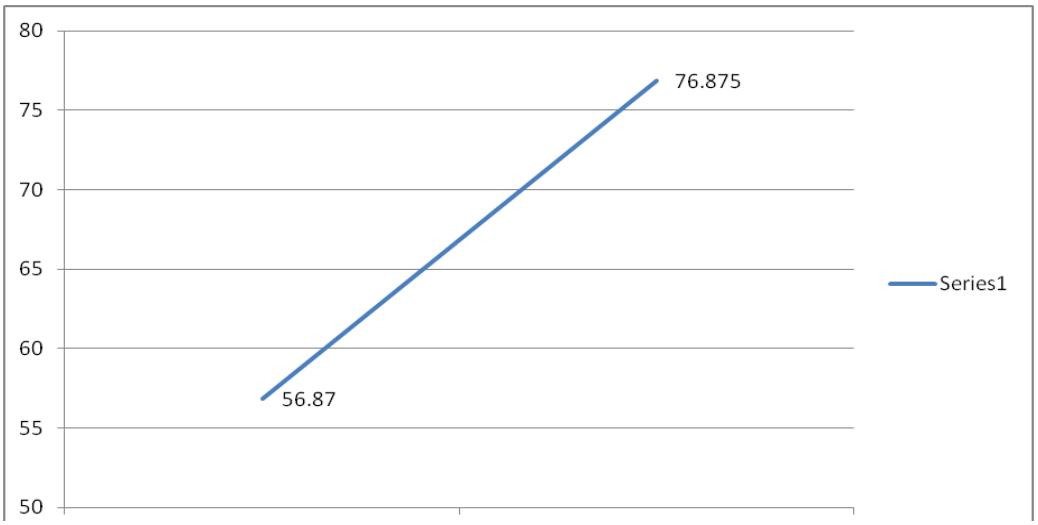
The results presented in Figure 6 above indicate a clear and significant development in pupils' average achievement after completing the five instructional units. The findings confirm the existence of evident and positive differences in the mean scores between each instructional unit, suggesting that teaching pupils through the play-based approach contributed to raising their achievement levels, particularly by enhancing the linguistic knowledge of third-grade pupils during individual lessons. This, in turn, reflects the effectiveness of the play-based learning approach and its success in achieving the intended objectives, as well as its ability to improve pupils' achievement levels, foster a positive attitude towards the subject, and enhance the retention of knowledge over a longer period. Furthermore, the program proved capable of elevating the performance of low-achieving pupils to match that of their peers.

Table 7. Means and standard deviations for the pre-test and post-test.

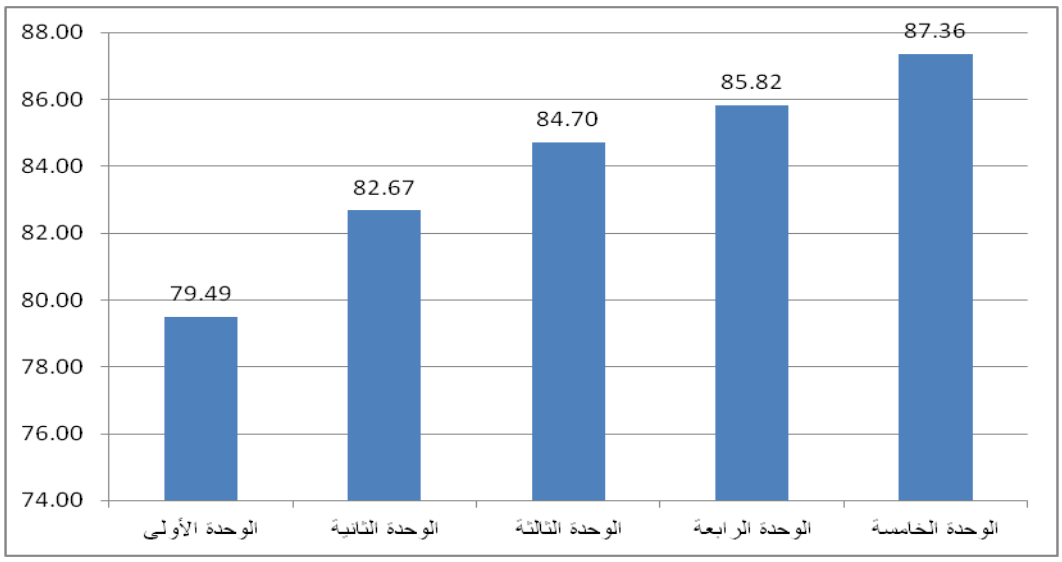
Student No.	**Pre-test Mean (M)**	**Post-test Mean (M) – Unit 1**	**Unit 2**	**Unit 3**	**Unit 4**	**Unit 5**	**Post-test Total Mean (M)**	**Effect Size (ES)**
1	54.0	81.82	87.5	100	100	87.5	84	
2	69.0	90.91	85.5	83.33	94.12	85.5	72	
3	64.0	90.91	87.8	100	70.59	87.8	82	
4	45.0	63.64	92.4	75.9	100	92.4	65	
5	69.0	81.82	80.49	83.33	88.24	80.49	86	
6	54.0	72.73	85.37	66.67	64.71	85.37	75	
7	65.0	72.30	85.5	68.4	76.47	85.5	79	
8	35.0	81.82	94.3	100	92.4	94.3	72	
Overall Mean (M)	**56.87**	**79.49**	**87.36**	**84.70**	**85.82**	**87.36**	**76.88**	**ES = 2.0**
Standard Deviation (SD)	**12.23**	**9.45**	**4.34**	**14.01**	**13.55**	**4.34**	**7.14**	

The data presented in Table 7 illustrate the mean scores for both the pre-test and the post-test for each student. A substantial difference is observed between the students' scores in the pre-test and the post-test. The table displays the scores obtained in each instructional unit, as well as the overall post-test score. For example, Student No. 1 had a pre-test mean score of **45.0**, whereas their post-test total mean score reached **84**. This indicates that the play-based learning strategy implemented by the researcher for this assessment yielded highly positive results. This is further supported by the **effect size (ES = 2.0)**, which represents a large effect, highlighting the significant impact of the play-based learning method—an approach to which the students responded remarkably well.

Figure 6. Change in the average achievement between the pre-test and the post-test.



Graph 7: The change in the mean linguistic knowledge as a function of time (from Unit One to Unit Five)



The results illustrated in Graph 7 above indicate a clear and significant improvement in the students' mean achievement after completing the five instructional units. The findings confirm the presence of distinct and positive differences in the mean scores between each instructional unit, which suggests that teaching the students through the play-based method contributed to enhancing both their academic achievement and overall performance, particularly in improving linguistic knowledge among third-grade pupils during individual sessions. This, in turn, strongly indicates the effectiveness of using the play-based learning approach and its success in achieving its intended objectives, as well as its ability to raise the academic level of third-grade students, improve their attitudes toward the subject, and reinforce and consolidate knowledge for a longer retention period. Furthermore, the program has been shown to have the capacity to elevate the performance level of low-achieving students to be on par with their peers.

Qualitative Section: Data Processing

This section includes data processing through the process file, which contains students' written reflections and evidence regarding linguistic skills and educational games they engaged with during the implementation of the play-based learning strategy across the planned instructional units. These units encompassed the following linguistic skills: demonstrative pronouns, relative pronouns, interrogative tools, verb conjugations in past, present, and imperative tenses (with pronouns), parts of speech (noun, verb, particle), root words, number and counted noun agreement, adjective–noun agreement, and pronouns.

The educational games implemented during the instructional units were: *Card Game*, *Maze Game*, *Root Identification Game*, *Domino Game*, *Snakes and Ladders Game*, *Classification Game*, *Magnet Board Game*, *Wooden Stick Game*, and *Tree of Knowledge Game*.

General Student Testimonials:

- "Educational games motivate me to learn and think."
- "Educational games help me fix and retain grammar information in my mind."
- "I love educational games because they increase competition and challenge."
- "Educational games teach me the subject in an attractive way through playing with friends in groups."
- "Educational games strengthen my relationships with my group members."

- "Educational games improve my communication with my friends and increase cooperation between us."
- "Educational games make me think about difficult questions in order to eventually win."
- "I learn without boredom and lose track of time."
- "I find myself through playing with friends."
- "I don't feel bored, and I find that I understand the subject well."

Students' Opinions About Specific Games:

- *Card Game – Demonstrative Pronouns*: "An engaging, attractive game with a competitive spirit between players. It relies on memory, and points are awarded to the winners who finish their cards first."
- *Maze Game – Classification (Parts of Speech)*: "A game that requires thinking, especially since it has various paths and multiple solutions. I feel that each time I complete a path, I overcome grammar difficulties and find the skills easier because it encourages classification of verbs and identification."
- *Root Identification Game – Root Words*: "A beautiful game through which I was able to understand the meaning of the root and the family of each root by placing word sources in their proper place."
- *Domino Game – Number and Counted Noun*: "An excellent group game, especially with the large domino pieces. I was able, along with my friends, to form many correct sentences matching numbers to counted nouns in a fun way."
- *Snakes and Ladders Game – Pronouns*: "A wonderful, large game like a carpet. It taught me pronouns through sentences and rolling the large dice. I feel that I now enjoy grammar and can answer without fear or hesitation."
- *Classification Game – Relative Pronouns*: "Through this game, I mastered relative pronouns and memorized them well. I hope educational games are used in all subjects."
- *Magnet Board Game – Adjective–Noun Agreement*: "A unique game. I never imagined that this magnetic board could help me understand adjective–noun agreement. Instead of using a pen to connect lines, we connect using magnets and match appropriately."
- *Wooden Stick Game – Interrogative Tools*: "A very fun game where we compete to create interrogative sentences using large popsicle sticks. I even made one at home."
- *Tree of Knowledge Game – Verb Conjugation by Tense with Action Pictures*: "I enjoyed this game very much and benefited from it, as we hung verbs in their correct places according to the pictures."

Based on the students' reflections, it is evident that tangible educational games capture students' attention and generate excitement because they address linguistic skills in an attractive way, stimulating their motivation through pictures, educational cards, and other tools. Each game was used in a way that deviated from the ordinary; the mere act of responding to the stimulus increased the students' motivation and interest in grammar and linguistic knowledge.

Furthermore, educational games foster competition to reach the end of the game in order to achieve results and win—serving as reinforcement that motivates students to continue engaging with their peers. During gameplay, students cooperate to solve questions, earn points, and advance, which enhances mental performance through processing the material, reviewing it, and verifying its accuracy.

Play-based learning also enhances interpersonal skills within player groups, strengthening social and personal relationships among participating students, as reflected in their collaborative performance. Moreover, it contributes to developing sensory–motor skills, as some games require standing and movement to use the necessary game elements.

This approach promotes personal and social relationships among students, who think together, consult each other, and help one another to reach a common goal—supporting the development of independent learning skills. It frees students from the constraints they may feel during traditional lessons, encouraging open discussion, exchange of ideas within groups, and strengthening of bonds.

Educational games keep the learner active and engaged while acquiring skills in a learning environment rich in stimulation, competition, reinforcement, and excitement. These games are designed to consider learners' abilities, enabling them to learn at a pace and difficulty level suitable for them. Such stimuli encourage learners to collaborate, share ideas, and pay attention to fine details, while stimulating imagination and fostering creativity to achieve higher scores and win the game.

Ultimately, this contributes to building social relationships among students, expanding knowledge horizons, and developing cognitive, emotional, and physical capacities. As indicated by previous research (Al-Hayla, 2005), games have the potential to improve and enhance learning outcomes.

Discussion of Findings and Recommendations

The present study aimed to examine the extent to which the use of a *learning-by-playing* strategy contributes to improving motivation and achievement in grammar among third-grade pupils in an Arabic school in the Northern District. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following research question:

Does the use of a learning-by-playing strategy contribute to improving motivation and achievement in grammar among third-grade pupils?

To address this question, the researcher employed both quantitative and qualitative analyses. In the quantitative aspect, tables and charts were presented to illustrate the development in linguistic knowledge in grammar. In the qualitative aspect, evidence of the development in linguistic knowledge was provided through samples of learning-by-playing activities and pupils' written work.

Main Research Question: *Does the use of a learning-by-playing strategy contribute to improving motivation and achievement in grammar among third-grade pupils?*

The study's findings indicated a positive effect of teaching grammar using the learning-by-playing strategy among third-grade pupils. The results revealed that whenever grammar was taught with the aid of this strategy, there was a marked improvement in pupils' linguistic knowledge, which in turn led to higher academic achievement in grammar.

This outcome is consistent with numerous studies related to the learning-by-playing strategy, including the works of Attallah (2003), Jamous (1998), Khalil (2000), Mousa (2007), Mansi (2003), Owais (2008), Awf (2010), Mahmoud (2001), Helmi (2003), Saadeh & Al-Sartawi (2003), Mansi (2002), Al-Tartouri (2008), Al-Ahmad (1981), Mustafa & Suleiman (1987), Cohen et al. (1989), and the BECTA (2001) report. The latter aligns

with the findings of the Learning and Teaching Scotland organization regarding the measurement of educational curricula and the analysis of games most effective in training the brain. They concluded that such approaches increase academic achievement and help pupils outperform peers who learned via traditional methods without modern active-learning strategies that foster meaningful learning. Collectively, these studies unanimously confirmed that using the learning-by-playing method leads to noticeable improvements in pupils' achievement levels and motivation toward meaningful learning.

As for interpreting these results, although learning in many schools remains largely traditional—both in content and in teachers' instructional styles—the researcher attributes the observed improvement to several factors. These include the Ministry of Education's strategic plan to enhance achievement in various core subjects (including mother tongue and other languages) through meaningful-learning approaches; increased pupil exposure in recent years to alternative methods based on project-based and active learning requiring participation in enriched educational environments (such as in science subjects); and the growing integration of technological tools, computer-based games, and digital books that foster active participation and meaningful engagement. These changes have contributed to improving linguistic skills, as part of a broader educational shift toward 21st-century learning skills.

The Ministry has also emphasized the adoption of alternative assessment methods—allocating approximately 30% to such approaches, including learning-by-playing. Implementing game-based activities according to planned guidelines has placed pupils at the center of the learning process, increasing their desire to learn in an organized manner. Despite the traditionally conservative learning culture within the Arab community in Israel, initiatives to introduce new programs, raise awareness, link them to core performance indicators, closely monitor progress through professional supervisory teams, and analyze outcomes using tools such as "RAMA" have gradually demonstrated tangible results in increasing both motivation and achievement.

From the researcher's perspective, based on teaching the research sample, a plausible explanation for these findings is that the learning-by-playing strategy helps pupils *learn how to learn*. Guiding, mentoring, and training pupils in how to improve their linguistic knowledge through an age-appropriate approach such as learning-by-playing proved effective, even though pupils may have outgrown spontaneous, unstructured play. The structured, sequential nature of the lessons clarified the relationships between various components, making the material both more engaging and easier to retain.

Through reviewing pupils' portfolios, the researcher observed that they interacted enthusiastically with the learning-by-playing approach, engaging with certain games progressively, according to the requirements of each topic. Thus, integrating games into the teaching process as a modern strategy contributed to increased engagement with the material. A substantial body of research supports the positive impact of this strategy. The combination of these factors contributed to improving academic achievement, as reflected in the rise in pupils' mean scores in linguistic knowledge across the five units—from 79.4% to 87.3%.

Research Limitations

- The present study was limited to the application of instructional units covering ten topics in linguistic knowledge, prepared sequentially and based on the Arabic language curriculum.
- The sample was limited to eight third-grade pupils in the school where the researcher teaches, all with average achievement levels, selected purposefully.
- The study was conducted during the first semester of the 2016/2017 academic year.
- The research relied on the use of the learning-by-playing strategy in applying the content of the instructional units and improving linguistic knowledge.

4.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends the following:

- Activate the educational role that promotes constructive active learning processes, ensuring meaningful interaction between the teacher and the pupil, and creating an engaging and stimulating learning environment.
- Work towards developing teachers into facilitators of the learning environment and designers of educational situations, rather than mere transmitters of information.
- Train Arabic language teachers in teaching grammar using the *learning-through-play* strategy, which in turn contributes to developing pupils' linguistic knowledge. The success of this strategy depends on the teacher's ability to design and prepare games that are directly linked to the content of the curriculum.
- Organize numerous in-service training programs and workshops for Arabic language teachers on the use of the learning-through-play strategy and on how to design educational games for various lessons.
- Employ and experiment with modern, stimulating teaching methods centered on the learner—methods that increase the learner's active role and enhance their motivation to learn. Pupils learn more effectively when they are part of the learning process, engaging both their feelings and thoughts, while moving away from traditional, rote-learning approaches. This helps shape pupils into independent learners capable of exploring and seeking knowledge, making their learning truly meaningful.
- Conduct further research in more than one school, expanding the research sample size.
- It is important for the teacher to observe pupils during play in order to record observations, identify their characteristics, and discover their interests and hobbies.
- The *learning-through-play* approach should not be limited to the primary stage but should also extend to middle school pupils, with each stage having its own characteristics and purposeful games suited to pupils' developmental levels.

4.3 Reflective Thinking Through her experience as an Arabic language teacher for third-grade pupils, the researcher observed a significant weakness in pupils' linguistic knowledge, despite the widespread availability of websites offering an abundance of worksheets, digital exercises, and diverse booklets designed to train pupils in grammar skills. Many Arabic language teachers rely on these as a means of preparing students in grammar.

In light of these observations, the researcher undertook a study of the problem and designed an action plan tailored to pupils' abilities, the curriculum, and the requirements of the syllabus. This involved preparing instructional units in linguistic knowledge—specifically ten grammar topics—and delivering them using the learning-through-play strategy to improve the logical structure and presentation of grammar to third-grade pupils.

The goal of using this method was to adopt modern teaching approaches, moving away from the traditional focus on memorization and rote recall without understanding. Instead, the approach aimed to break the monotony, open a window for curiosity, excitement, and enjoyment, and engage pupils' thinking so that they would become more active participants, willingly and intrinsically motivated to learn through meaningful involvement—aligned with Ministry of Education standards.

Numerous studies have confirmed that training pupils in standard language use, bridging the gap between classical Arabic and the vernacular, plays a significant role in enhancing linguistic knowledge. This required the researcher to dedicate extra time to prepare pupils in linguistic knowledge through preliminary units before applying the strategy—posing a challenge that prevented strict adherence to the planned timeline.

The researcher was also constrained by a limited timeframe, specifically the first semester of the academic year. With the possibility of extending the delivery of instructional units over a longer period, greater and broader improvement in linguistic knowledge could have been achieved, including training pupils in other aspects of linguistic knowledge and additional skills. Nonetheless, despite the time limitations, it can be concluded that the modern teaching method of learning through play opened new horizons for pupils in grammar and linguistic knowledge, encouraging active participation and contributing to significant progress as reflected in the statistical averages recorded between Unit 1 and Unit 5.

Upon reviewing various studies and sources, the researcher found no comprehensive reference on which to base the preparation of instructional units, despite the existence of many studies that address grammar instruction. This underscores that the issue of enriching curricula and preparing instructional units remains an open area of inquiry and a topic of discussion among teachers and specialists in Arabic language education, especially given the abundance of books on grammar teaching strategies aimed at improving pupils' grammar skills.

Despite the challenges faced, the researcher believes she has succeeded in improving pupils' linguistic knowledge and achievement. Today, she holds a prominent role in the educational process—both as an Arabic language teacher and as a language education supervisor at the Ministry of Education. Through the educational lectures she delivers, she strives for continuous professional growth, development, and innovation, staying fully informed of modern teaching techniques to transfer advanced knowledge to pupils effectively and positively.

Traditional teaching methods are no longer adequate for today's students, as schools stand on the threshold of a new era in which technology fully enters classrooms, laboratories, and learning spaces, becoming a tool in the hands of both teacher and learner. Teachers must be the creative force that sparks students' innovation, devising new methods of influence and designing strategies that generate solutions to current educational challenges—including building purposeful educational games and supervising targeted workshops that address grammar in an engaging way, placing the pupil at the center of the learning process. This active, inquiry-based, and meaningful learning approach has proven successful in advancing the learning process in Arabic language education in general, and in grammar and linguistic knowledge in particular.

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