

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents an in-depth explanation of the theories utilized for the study. The theories related to Grammar, Constructivism theory, Game-Based Learning, Board Game, and the study of relevant research.

1. Grammar

1.1 Description of Grammar

Grammar skills can be defined as the knowledge and ability to use types of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences based on the internal rules that form correct and meaningful structures (Ly, 2020). Grammar skills serve as a fundamental foundation in English language learning, as they govern how learners structure words and phrases into accurate expressions. Mastering grammar skills is important for students so they can communicate effectively in English, both in speaking and writing. These skills require students to place each grammatical element correctly in order to produce clear and meaningful sentences. According to León et al. (2024), grammar skills are essential for effective written and spoken communication since they involve the precise and appropriate use of terms, phrases, and sentences. In line with León et al., Yurko and Vorobel (2020) also stated that the ability to write, speak, and understand language depends greatly on proper grammar, as grammar is a key foundation of language proficiency. Without sufficient grammar skills, messages may become unclear and lead to misunderstanding.

The importance of grammar in communication is further highlighted by Rossiter (2021), who explained that although oral communication allows for clarification between speakers and listeners even with minimal grammatical mastery, written communication relies heavily on correct grammar, syntax,

vocabulary, and spelling to ensure that messages are clear, meaningful, and unambiguous. This indicates that grammar plays an important role in effective communication, especially in written communication where direct feedback is not available. Therefore, understanding the components of grammar skills is essential because they help learners communicate accurately and appropriately in different contexts.

Grammar skills encompass the mastery of various interrelated grammatical components—such as sentence structure, tenses, and the use of adjectives and verbs—that together form natural and meaningful expressions, with tenses being one of the crucial components that EFL learners must grasp, as emphasized by Listia and Febriyanti (2020). Correct sentence structure helps students express ideas more clearly, while proper use of tenses shows their ability to convey meaning accurately (Listia & Febriyanti, 2020). By mastering these components, students can reduce common grammatical errors and become more confident when communicating with others.

Furthermore, Strong grammar skills also help learners develop a better understanding of how language works. As a result, learners are able to construct sentences more accurately to express their ideas. In conclusion, grammar skills play an important role in supporting students' overall language competence by connecting grammatical knowledge with communication skills.

1.2 Challenges in Learning Grammar

According to Dörnyei (1994), some language learners could find grammar to be a boring and repetitive part of the learning process, and they might find it difficult to stay interested and focused in grammar classes, cited in Daskan (2023). This feeling is frequently caused by the way grammar is taught in the past, which involved memorization of individual rules and monotonous exercises that can seem separated from how language is used in everyday situations. As a result of monotonous teaching practices, many ESL learners view English grammar as difficult and intimidating (Zakaria et al., 2022). Learners are more likely to see

grammar as a burden than as a helpful instrument for efficient communication when there is no significant context or communicative relevance in the lesson. This situation can reduce learners' motivation to learn the language, especially for those who prefer communicative and interactive learning activities. Therefore, an effective learning approach is needed to help students better understand grammar lessons (Zakaria et al., 2022). For this reason, teachers need to apply more engaging teaching methods that allow students to understand and use grammar in an enjoyable way.

The use of interactive learning media and educational games can improve students' motivation and learning outcomes in grammar. The enjoyable elements of games encourage learners to practice the language more frequently, which can support their language development (Zakaria et al., 2022). Games motivate students to actively participate in the learning process and are well suited to student-centered learning. These learning media allow students to learn grammar in a fun and low-pressure environment, which makes the learning process more effective.

1.3 Principles of Teaching Grammar

According to Brown & Lee (2015), these are the principles of teaching grammar:

- a. Three dimensions of grammar: Teaching should emphasize form, meaning, and use equally.
- b. Lexicogrammatical approach: Present grammar through connections between vocabulary and structure.
- c. Communicative Practice: Give learners opportunities to use grammar in real communication.
- d. Input and output focus: Include activities for both comprehension and language production.
- e. Varied approaches: Apply deductive, inductive, or abductive methods based on learning goals and context.

- f. Incidental focus on form: Address grammar errors that arise during meaningful interaction.
- g. Corrective feedback: Use a balance of implicit and explicit feedback to support acquisition.
- h. Explicit and implicit instruction: Combine direct grammar lessons with integrated communicative practice as needed.
- i. Individual differences: Adapt teaching to students' learning styles and strategies through diverse activities and learner training.

These principles can be used in practice to integrate lesson plans. This can be achieved by setting learning objectives that address form, meaning, and use, as well as by providing input activities through texts, dialogues, or game-based materials followed by guided and communicative tasks. Teachers can address incidental errors and provide balanced feedback during these activities. Output activities such as writing, speaking, or playing board games allow students to actively practice and construct grammar structures. In addition, differentiated activities help accommodate students' different learning needs. Through this approach, learning materials and lesson plans align with effective grammar teaching principles and support meaningful grammar learning.

Furthermore, the grammar teaching principles of Brown and Lee (2015) have also been shown to be relevant in previous research. In their study on the use of Kahoot as a digital learning platform, Lestari and Sihombing (2022) applied the theory of principle-based teaching and demonstrated that such game-based media allows for the implementation of the form-meaning-use principle, balances input-output, encourages communication skills through competition and interaction, and provides immediate feedback along with correction and additional emphasis on form. These findings support the use of game-based media, including board games in this study, as an effective way to apply grammar teaching principles.

2. Constructivism

According to Piaget (1971), as cited in Chand (1995), constructivism enables people to improve their comprehension by systemically organizing, interpreting, and modifying experiences. Through this process, students actively reorganize their knowledge based on prior learning and classroom experiences. Constructivist theory provides an important foundation for learning approaches that emphasize students' active involvement. Piaget (1971) stated that knowledge gained through interaction is integrated into learners' existing knowledge structures. This means that students do not simply receive information, but actively process and relate new knowledge to prior experiences.

In addition to Piaget, Vygotsky (1978) created the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the difference between a student's current independent abilities and the potential level of progress that can be achieved with support from others, such as teachers or classmates, for their progress. This perspective argues that social relationships and cooperation are essential to achieving optimal learning. Applying constructivism requires a focus on learners and the creation of an environment that supports collaboration and interaction. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) was defined by Vygotsky long before the emergence of modern constructivism. The ZPD indicates the distance between a learner's progress, their actual progress, and the progress they could achieve with the help of others. This concept remains central to constructivist learning theory because it emphasizes the social nature of learning (Vygotsky, 1978).

Constructivism supports active and meaningful language learning through experience and social interaction. In grammar learning, constructivism emphasizes that learners construct their understanding of grammatical rules through active exploration and contextual use of language rather than passive memorization. Constructivist-based grammar learning methods not only provide theoretical rules but also provide students with opportunities to practice and discuss those rules to gain a better understanding. Saleem et al. (2021) stated that students are encouraged by constructivist learning to use practical techniques to learn, reflect, and discuss their work in class. Since constructivist learning focuses on engagement,

collaboration, and experiential activities, it naturally aligns with interactive methods such as game-based learning, which provides an enjoyable and motivating environment for students to practice grammar meaningfully.

Constructivist theory provides a strong foundation in this study to explain why the use of board games can improve students' grammar skills. Constructivism views students as active learners who develop language through collaboration, play, and problem-solving. Recent research findings support this connection. Constructivism-based learning of grammar, according to Tazeen and Kader (2024), enables students to participate creatively, take responsibility for their learning, and gain a deeper comprehension of subjects via practice and teamwork. Additionally, Zhao (2019) demonstrated that constructivist-based grammar instruction uses students' prior knowledge and experiences to facilitate comprehension rather than simply memorization. In this study, board game activities allowed students to practice grammar communicatively, interact with peers, receive immediate feedback, and use grammar in meaningful contexts.

3. Game-Based Learning

Game-based learning is a learning approach that utilizes game elements and mechanics to achieve educational goals. This method uses games not simply for entertainment; it's intended to help students understand the material, improve their skills, and increase their motivation to learn. Ling & Aziz (2022) stated that students can actively learn through repetition, failure, and goal achievement in an engaging and purposeful environment with game-based learning, which improves their comprehension in an enjoyable and effective way. With a more interactive and enjoyable atmosphere, game-based learning can result in a more immersive and meaningful learning experience for students. In line with Karakoç et al. (2022), stated that a game-based learning approach was chosen to focus student learning and improve the effectiveness of the teaching process.

One of the major advantages of game-based learning is its ability to increase student engagement. This is because games require students to actively participate

in various cognitive activities, such as problem-solving, decision-making, and reflection. Furthermore, because of the immediate in-game feedback system, students can quickly assess their performance and make corrections if necessary. Game-based learning can be an effective way to adapt to teacher and student preferences. In short, game-based learning increases student participation, coordination, and creativity (Adipat et al., 2021). Hartt et al. (2020) stated that game-based learning uses elements of gamefulness, game-based interactions, and game-like learning designs to encourage students to actively participate in classroom activities.

Game-based learning can enhance social and emotional learning in addition to cognitive aspects. Many games allow players to collaborate and interact with each other. Game-based learning gives students the opportunity to interact with each other, solve challenges, and share ideas and information (Adipat et al., 2021). As a result, this method not only enhances students' understanding of the subject matter but also helps them acquire the social skills necessary for real-life situations. Furthermore, Hartt et al. (2020) stated that game-based learning encourages deeper learning because it is a cyclical and iterative learning process involving feedback, motivation, and action.

According to Chen et al. (2018), game-based learning also enables students to explore challenging learning environments with specific learning objectives, helping them in their comprehension of concepts. This method can be viewed as a learning approach that explores game elements, both digital and non-digital, to help students acquire various skills and achieve specific learning outcomes (Anastasiadis et al., 2018).

Therefore, Game-Based Learning theory is an appropriate theory for using board games in grammar teaching because board games create an interactive environment and allow students to work together and learn actively. Game-based learning helps students master English language skills by utilizing game elements such as challenges, competition, and interaction (Hidayah et al., 2024; Garcia et al.,

2025). By playing board games, students not only gain a theoretical understanding of grammar rules but can also apply them in their own game contexts. As a result, grammar learning becomes more engaging, meaningful, and effective.

4. Board Game

4.1 Board Game Meaning

According to Bayeck (2020), Board games are games that are played directly between players, following established rules, and using various physical tools such as dice, game boards, cards, and tokens. Board games are a type of game that uses cards, dice, pawns, or tokens as tools and a board as the main medium. This game has rules and goals that the players want to achieve. This game combines elements of strategy, luck, and interaction between players. Some of these board games involve skills, cooperation, or even solving puzzles. As time goes by, board games have undergone many innovations and created various themes and game mechanisms that are increasingly interesting, from simple to complex. Examples of popular board games include Jenga, Bingo Board, Snakes and Ladders, Monopoly, Boogle, and others. Suardika (2020) stated that board games can actually be used in EYL (English for Young Learners) classes in Indonesia, such as Scrabble, Up-Words, Boggle, Jenga, and Scattergories.

In addition to being entertaining, board games also have many good educational benefits. Board games contain educational potential that can benefit students when used in a learning context (Bayeck, 2018). Many board games are made to train critical thinking skills, planning, and problem-solving. Cited in Bayeck (2018), Research shows that board games affect players' cognitive development and have the potential to enhance players' perception, memory, and thinking (Gobet, de Voogt, & Retschitzki, 2004). For example, games like Scrabble not only expand vocabulary, this game train strategic skills in choosing words that make the most profit for players. Monopoly teaches about economic concepts, money management, and investment. Jenga trains players' ability to make decisions quickly and carefully. Uno improves players' ability to think quickly and make

strategies in managing the cards they have. In addition, bingo can help improve concentration and pattern recognition skills, ideal for various ages and skill levels. Chong (2019) stated that board games encourage players to interact with each other, as well as help develop skills such as speaking, social skills, critical and strategic thinking, and negotiation skills.

Board games often involve competitive and collaborative skills that challenge players to think logically and consider the steps that will be taken by their opponents. With a variety of board games with different themes and difficulty levels, this game can be tailored to the interests and abilities of the players, making board games an effective tool for learning while having fun.

4.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Board Game

Board games are now used not only for entertainment but also in education as engaging and interactive learning tools. Students can be directly involved in the learning process through playful activities. This makes lessons easier to understand and remember. Furthermore, having a fun learning environment can encourage students to participate more actively. While board games have many benefits in supporting learning, they also need to be considered from various perspectives to be used effectively. Therefore, it is important to understand the role of board games in education, including their benefits and potential challenges when using them in the classroom.

Playing board games has been shown to improve language learning. Board games can boost students' engagement, confidence, motivation, and desire to interact in English (Syakur, 2020). Indari (2021) stated that board games provide students with rich learning experiences and connect lessons to real-world situations. It increase student motivation because they are fun and different from traditional learning. Teachers can use board games to encourage more active and positive student participation in class.

Here are the advantages and disadvantages of board games as a learning tool, as examined by Zsoldos-Marcis & Juhász (2020):

a. Advantages

- 1) Transforms learning into a joyful and fun activity.
- 2) Fosters collaborative learning among peers.
- 3) Encourages students to take a problem-solving approach in learning.
- 4) Promotes deep learning by arousing students' curiosity about a certain subject.
- 5) Helps the development of intrinsic motivation.
- 6) Contributes to the increase in the anxiety level of the class.
- 7) Contributes to a better comprehension of the course's subject.
- 8) Helps activate the problem.
- 9) Develops important competencies.
- 10) Develops responsibility.
- 11) Develops the decision-making competency.
- 12) Provides instant feedback from playmates.
- 13) Provides an opportunity to raise the status of marginalized children in the classroom.
- 14) Construct a link between the course material and social life.
- 15) Contributes to the integration of STEM disciplines.

b. Disadvantages

- 1) Time-consuming.
- 2) Class management problem.
- 3) Could create frustration or a feeling of failure.
- 4) It is difficult to pay attention to every student.
- 5) Not everybody likes it.
- 6) Difficulty of assessing learning.

These advantages are reinforced by the findings of Arfani and Sulistia (2019), who found that board games like "Snake and Ladder" are effective, easy to use, and fun for developing students' communication skills. This finding reinforces

these advantages. Furthermore, Sari (2019) found that the use of board games can reduce teacher-centered learning, increase student interest in learning, improve student retention, and increase student engagement. The results indicate that card games support students' cognitive, affective, and social development.

Most studies also found problems with incorporating board games into the classroom. According to Arfani and Sulistia (2019), in order for learning to start smoothly, teachers must properly prepare media, manage time, and thoroughly explain game rules. Additionally, Sari (2019) highlighted that board games are inefficient for big class sizes, require close monitoring by teachers, and have time constraints. Therefore, proper planning and appropriate classroom monitoring are crucial to optimize the advantages of board games as a teaching tool.

5. Teaching Grammar with Board Game as a Learning Tool

Teaching grammar is a crucial component of language learning, but it is often considered boring by students due to its rigid and theoretical nature. Therefore, several creative approaches have been developed to make grammar learning more engaging and effective, one of which is the use of board games. O'Neill & Holmes (2023) stated that board games are a great tool for enhancing knowledge retention and active learning. Board games are a tool used to engage students in the teaching and learning process. They encourage students to focus on learning without feeling pushed to do so (Sitanggang et al., 2023). Board games help students learn to apply grammatical principles in enjoyable situations to develop a conceptual understanding of them through these games. The learning process is made more meaningful and interesting by this method, which enables students to observe how language works in enjoyable, real-life scenarios. Students are more likely to remember the information and gain a greater understanding of the language when grammar is contextualized within entertaining activities.

Students interact with each other through board games, which are an essential part of constructivist learning. Students can talk, help each other, and correct grammatical errors directly during play. According to Syakur (2020),

Collaboration with a board game will encourage children to actively participate, communicate, and engage. In addition to improving individual understanding, this interaction fosters a sense of solidarity and group cooperation. Because games create a fun and competitive atmosphere, students may be more interested in actively participating in learning. Montufar and Carolina (2025) noted that board games give more advanced students the opportunity to help their peers who are struggling to understand grammar material and also establish a friendly atmosphere for learning.

In conclusion, board games are used in grammar learning to enhance students' language comprehension and social and emotional skills. By creating an interactive, fun, and inclusive learning environment, board games are an effective tool for encouraging students to become more active and confident in learning grammar.

6. Assessment of Teaching Grammar

Taken from the journal Lovrić (2024), according to Dikli (2003) and Ur (2012), assessment in language learning can be in the form of multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions, true-or-false tasks, gap-fills, and essays.

a. Multiple-Choice Questions

Multiple-choice questions are a type of question that provides several answer choices for a single question, and students are asked to choose the most appropriate one. They are considered effective for measuring conceptual understanding quickly and objectively because the assessment can be carried out automatically and consistently. However, Brown and Lee (2015) argue the significance of using multiple-choice questions while taking validity and authenticity into consideration so that exam outcomes appropriately reflect students' grammar abilities rather than only their opinion.

b. Short-Answer Questions

Short-answer questions are a type of assessment that assesses students' ability to remember, understand, and express information directly without answer choices. These questions require students to provide answers in the form of words, phrases, or short sentences. Compared to multiple-choice tests, this type of assessment allows teachers to see how well students understand grammar, which aligns with the principles of reliability and validity proposed by Brown and Lee (2015).

c. True or False Tasks

True or false questions are a type of question in which students are asked to check whether a statement is true or false. They are typically used to test basic understanding of a particular fact or concept in a short period of time. However, Brown and Lee (2015) advise that this kind of question is ineffective for measuring deep thinking abilities; in order to get more thorough results, assessment results should be combined with other kinds of assessments.

d. Gap-Fills

Gap-fills tasks are examples of paragraphs or sentences that contain blanks. Students are asked to fill in the blanks with appropriate words or phrases based on the context. This format is particularly useful for assessing grammar, vocabulary, and understanding of sentence structure. Because tasks like gap-fills require students to use grammar in contexts similar to real-life language use, Brown and Lee (2015) state that these tasks have a higher level of authenticity.

e. Essay

An essay is a type of task in which students are asked to provide answers through longer, more in-depth presentations. Students must demonstrate analytical skills, creativity, and logical organization of ideas. Critical thinking skills are often measured through essay questions. Because essays emphasize productive skills, especially writing, which better reflect students' real-world grammar abilities,

Brown and Lee (2015) included essays in the achievement-based assessment category.

Brown and Lee (2015) also suggest the use of alternative assessment methods, such as student learning journals—which include self-assessment, learning reflections, grammar discussions, and responses to readings—in addition to written assessment methods. Because they encourage students to reflect on their own learning process, these evaluations are considered more accurate and student-centered. Furthermore, Brown and Lee (2015) state that quality grammar assessments must meet the requirements of practicality, reliability, validity, and accuracy so that the assessment results truly support the learning process.

Each of the above methods of assessment is essential for assessing various facets of students' language proficiency. Teachers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' strengths and weaknesses by integrating various methods of assessment, which guarantees a fairer and efficient assessment of their grammar learning progress.

B. Study of the Relevant Research

Studies on the use of board games as a tool for learning English grammar are highly relevant to this study because they demonstrate how gamification can enhance student comprehension and engagement. Two important studies on this issue are Montufar and Carolina (2025) and Sitanggang et al. (2023). Using a quantitative and mixed-methods approach, both examined how the use of board games impacts grammar learning. This approach aligns with the mixed-methods design used in this study, namely a descriptive pretest-posttest and qualitative observation.

The first study by Montufar and Carolina (2025) measured increased student engagement, improved grammar comprehension, and overall learning experience. The study used a mixed methods design. This involved a pretest-posttest,

observation sheets, and an open-ended questionnaire. The results showed that the experimental group's grammar scores significantly improved compared to the control group when they received the board game intervention. The experimental group had a higher average score than the pretest group. Furthermore, the study showed that practical elements such as moving pieces and talking in groups encouraged cooperation, communication, and the direct use of grammar rules. Increased student motivation, enjoyment of learning, improved pronunciation, and sentence formation were benefits highlighted in student questionnaires. Montufar and Carolina (2025) emphasized that physical board games are superior to digital ones because they allow for social interaction, which is essential for language learning. However, this study acknowledged several limitations. These include a reliance on easily accessible samples and the need for further research on long-term impacts.

The second study by Sitanggang et al. (2023) used a quasi-experimental design with two sample classes, each with 20 students for the experimental and control groups. The analysis results showed a significant difference between the pretest and posttest in the experimental group, with t-values higher than those in the table (e.g., 4.174 for vocabulary and 3.6 for grammar at the 5% significance level). Data collection methods used included paired sample t-tests and independent t-tests. Students participating in the board game group showed increased interest in learning activities, improved grammar skills, and improved understanding of sentence structure and word usage. Rejecting the null hypothesis (H_0) and accepting the alternative hypothesis (H_a), Sitanggang et al. (2023) found that board games not only improved academic scores but also made the learning process more interactive and enjoyable. Limitations of this study include its focus on the high school level, which may not be appropriate for younger students.

Montufar and Carolina (2025) present mixed-methods evidence in young students, while Sitanggang et al. (2023) add a quantitative perspective in Indonesia, showing that student scores and engagement improved. However, there are gaps that these studies could address; neither study specifically targeted first-grade junior

high school students (aged 12–13), had a gender-homogeneous sample (19 of whom were female), and they emphasized manual descriptive analysis rather than in-depth qualitative observations of classroom dynamics. To address these differences, this study investigates how board games improve junior high school students' grammar skills through improved pretest-posttest scores and observations.