İNGİLİZ DİLİ EĞİTİMİNDE İLERİ ARAŞTIRMALAR

Editör: Dr.Öğr.Üyesi Nilüfer AYBİRDİ TANRIVERDİ

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İÇİNDEKİLER

EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PEER FEEDBACK:
A KEY TO WRITING DEVELOPMENT

Ins. Mehmet ŞANVERDİ[1]

1. INTRODUCTION

Hyland (2000) asserts that peer feedback serves as an effective educational strategy, empowering learners to take ownership of their learning process. Engaging with peer critiques provides students with valuable insights that can exceed conventional teacher feedback, while also fostering a promotive setting that reduces writing anxiety and enhances confidence. The reciprocal nature of peer review improves the revision process for both writers and reviewers, fostering a deeper comprehension of evaluative criteria and encouraging independence from reliance on instructors. Integrating peer feedback into educational practices enhances the writing experience and fosters the development of students as confident and capable writers. Conversely, she asserts that although peer review exercises are commonly employed by educators to improve student focus and engagement with texts, there is increasing apprehension about their efficacy. The author contends that excessive control of the peer feedback process by educators may result in a mechanical approach, inhibiting authentic communication and creativity among students. Enhancing the peer review experience may involve granting students increased autonomy in the feedback process, which could promote genuine dialogue and facilitate deeper learning.

Ekinci and Şanverdi (2021) emphasize that EFL students generally view contemporary instructional methods positively. Students find these approaches advantageous for achieving classroom success and improving vocabulary comprehension. Furthermore, the study suggests that contemporary methods contribute to a productive learning environment, supporting pronunciation development and motivating students to learn English in a dynamic and innovative manner. Nevertheless, the research also points out potential issues, such as students' unfamiliarity with the learning style, challenges posed by

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complex language, and increased stress levels. Despite these limitations, the overall influence of contemporary approaches on language learning is considered substantial. Hyland (2000) asserts that establishing an environment marked by transparent communication is crucial for effective feedback in educational environments. Educators must recognize the complex and often powerful imbalance that exist between teachers and students, with the goal of fostering a more collaborative feedback process. Facilitating active student engagement in learning and feedback processes enhances educational experience. Şanverdi (2021) highlight that incorporating modern instructional approaches into language teaching provides both educational and practical benefits. These approaches support autonomous learning by allowing learners to access materials and complete assignments independently, thereby encouraging self-regulation. Moreover, they increase learner engagement and motivation, particularly for those acquiring a second language. Another key advantage is the streamlined and consistent provision of feedback, which is vital for effective language learning. The use of contemporary tools ensures that feedback is delivered in a timely and organized manner, aiding the overall process of language acquisition.

Huisman et al. (2019) point out that comprehending students' educational beliefs, especially concerning peer feedback, is essential for improving their learning experiences and outcomes. Peer feedback is a significant factor affecting student engagement and performance in the learning process. Consequently, creating a thorough assessment of these beliefs is crucial for academic inquiry and practical implementation in higher education. This measure would facilitate the alignment and comparison of research findings across different contexts and offer educators insights for the effective design of peer-feedback practices. Enhancing the understanding of students' perceptions can result in more effective instructional methods and improved support for students in their educational experiences.

Huisman et al. (2019) indicate that the literature (see Li and Steckelberg, 2004; McGarr and Clifford, 2013; McCarthy, 2017; Nicol et al. 2014) suggests students typically possess a favorable perspective on peer feedback as an instructional approach. Their responses indicate a recognition of the importance of peer assessment and the value of peer feedback in enhancing their own learning experiences. This valuation underscores the advantages of integrating peer feedback into educational practices, as it promotes a collaborative learning environment and enables students to engage actively in their educational

experiences. Educators implementing peer-feedback strategies can utilize these insights to inform development. They also point out that fostering a classroom culture that prioritizes peer feedback is essential for enhancing student engagement and confidence in the assessment process. By understanding students' beliefs about their own and their peers' abilities to provide reliable feedback, educators can tailor their approaches to address any concerns and emphasize the value of peer feedback skills. This proactive strategy not only supports individual growth but also cultivates a collaborative learning environment that benefits all students.

Ghaneiarani et al. (2024) assert that Learning-Oriented Assessment (LOA) signifies a notable transformation in EFL writing instruction, emphasizing the learning process rather than conventional evaluations of linguistic competence (Babaii, 2019; Carless, 2006; Carless, 2015; Derakhshan & Ghiasvand, 2022; Ishikawa, 2018). They state that LOA places a high value on students' active participation in the evaluation process, encouraging introspection, self-evaluation, and teamwork via peer review since peer review, which has its roots in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, highlights the important role that social interaction plays in L2 development. LOA promotes a more engaging and supportive environment for students by highlighting the concurrent nature of feedback and learning. The three key elements of LOA—task, feedback, and evaluation—are essential; however, the ongoing debate about the effectiveness of various feedback types underscores the necessity for additional research. Educators must examine the nuances of LOA and evaluate how different feedback mechanisms can effectively enhance students' writing skills, thereby fostering more meaningful learning experiences. They also state that peer feedback is acknowledged for its potential to improve learning; however, its effectiveness is frequently compromised by factors such as the quality of the advice given (which may be wrong, unacceptable, or ineffective) and the timing of the feedback (which may be delivered too late or too early to be effective), as indicated by various studies in the literature (see Capstick, 2004; Carless, 2006; Khodi et al., 2021; Kim & Kim, 2021), indicating that various feedback methods do not provide uniform benefits, necessitating further research to identify which approaches most effectively enhance learning outcomes.

Ghaneiarani et al. (2024) review literature (Li et al., 2020; Wang and Chang, 2021) indicating that a rich social environment promotes learner interaction, thereby enhancing learning and development. Peer feedback is an

effective instructional method for improving learners' processes and outcomes; however, there has been inadequate focus on its impact on learning outcomes, especially regarding the development of writing skills. Shortly, peer feedback, a valuable instructional tool, has been underutilized in enhancing writing skills development, despite its potential to enhance learning processes and outcomes. Their study indicates that peer feedback can substantially improve writing development in EFL learners, particularly in contexts where personalized teacher feedback is restricted. Participants receiving peer feedback consistently demonstrated superior performance compared to those receiving teacher feedback. This underscores the significance of learner-centered methodologies in writing instruction for ongoing enhancement. Peer feedback presents potential drawbacks, including issues related to interpersonal relationships, validity, and prior experiences. Such factors may impede the efficacy of peer learning environments and dissuade students from engaging actively. Peer feedback has the potential to serve as a more effective approach than teacher feedback in facilitating the development of L2 writing skills, as it promotes collaborative learning environments and reciprocal learning processes.

Mamad and Vigh (2024) note that their systematic review of written feedback research in higher education, specifically in EFL/ESL and academic writing, reveals a significant transition towards a student-centered approach, prioritizing student perceptions over those of educators. This differs from conventional teacher-centered approaches, enabling students to interact with feedback from multiple sources to enhance their work. The review highlights a lack of studies addressing feedback practices from both teachers and students, as current research mainly investigates the correlation between teachers' perceptions and their practices, neglecting the student perspective. Furthermore, although certain studies have examined the perceptions and practices of feedback among teachers and students, empirical research on the dualities of written feedback (e.g., implicit vs. explicit, face-to-face vs. anonymous) and their effects on student proficiency and the advantages of peer feedback remain insufficient.

Thokwane (2011) examines the advantages and difficulties associated with peer feedback. It emphasizes that peer feedback facilitates collaboration among students, strengthens relationships, and advances learning through collective experiences. Peer learning enhances student effectiveness, fostering confidence and accountability in individual learning, while alleviating grading

responsibilities for educators. The author, however, identifies several potential challenges, including teachers' lack of familiarity with effective peer review methods, negative attitudes towards implementation, and students' difficulties and reluctance in offering constructive feedback. In summary, although peer feedback offers considerable benefits, its effective incorporation into ESL classes necessitates the resolution of these challenges.

Demir (2019) examines the role of peer feedback in student essay revisions in her master thesis, emphasizing the importance of sufficient time and feedback during the writing process. It highlights the necessity for increased support for students to successfully manage all phases of writing. The study indicates that pre-training in peer feedback is essential, as numerous students exhibit deficiencies in confidence and knowledge regarding this practice. Proper training enables students to concentrate on content and organization instead of solely on grammatical accuracy, resulting in enhanced peer feedback practices and diminished challenges in the feedback exchange process.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to examine the utilization of peer feedback in writing among prep EFL students. This study seeks to investigate EFL students' perceptions of the effectiveness of peer feedback practices and to collect their suggestions for improving these methods. This study employed a 15-item questionnaire to collect data from EFL students, aiming to investigate their peer feedback practices, the integration of peer feedback into their pieces of writing, and their perceptions of the effectiveness of these practices.

The students participate in a weekly 8-hour reading and writing class. In writing classes, students learn to compose organized academic paragraphs and essays, encompassing all necessary components. During the academic year, they utilize a reading-writing skills book published by a reputable company in their classes. At the end of each unit, students are assigned a writing task for that unit on a weekly basis. They compose their initial drafts. Students participate in in-class peer feedback sessions to obtain feedback on their first drafts. Each in-class peer feedback session commences with a random pairing of participants. During the peer feedback periods, students review their peers' drafts and provide both oral and written feedback utilizing the peer feedback checklists included at the very end of each unit. The assessment checklist includes criteria for content

and organization, word choice, sentence structure, and mechanics.

The EFL students participating in this study were selected through convenience sampling. According to the literature (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998), convenience sampling involves selecting participants based on their accessibility and the ease of data collection. This method was deemed appropriate for the present study as it enabled the researcher to assess the effectiveness of peer feedback practices from the perspectives of a diverse group of students.

Data was collected from EFL students via a survey designed to examine their perceptions, experiences, attitudes, and further insights. The survey was developed based on a comprehensive review of relevant literature (e.g., Harutyunyan & Poveda, 2018; Lin & Chien, 2009; Vickerman, 2009) and an analysis of the writing assessments conducted at the conclusion of each instructional unit. It consists of 15 items structured on a Likert-type scale, ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). The survey is divided into four sections: the first section includes four items aimed at evaluating EFL students' perceptions of peer feedback on writing proficiency; the second section contains four items focusing on their experiences with peer feedback; and the third section comprises five items designed to explore their attitudes toward peer feedback on writing. The fourth section comprises two items that address EFL students' perspectives on enhancements in writing skills.

3. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Following the survey design, the researchers conducted a pilot test with 14 EFL students from different classes to assess the survey's facial validity. Following the piloting phase, the researcher revised the questionnaire by modifying, rephrasing, clarifying, or eliminating items, as well as tailoring the format.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
,900	,905	15

Following the completion of the survey, the responses of the EFL students to 15 Likert-scale items were entered into SPSS 25 for analysis. The Likert scale ranged from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree), with 4 representing "agree," 3 indicating "neutral/unsure," and 2 signifying "disagree." A reliability analysis was conducted using the software to evaluate the consistency of the survey items. The results of this analysis are displayed in Table 1. Table 1 indicates that Cronbach's alpha demonstrated high reliability for the survey ($\alpha = 0.90$), suggesting that all items are suitable for recruitment. Descriptive statistics were conducted using SPSS 25 to analyze the survey results.

Table 1 presents the results of a reliability analysis for a 15-item scale, including Cronbach's Alpha values. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.900 indicates excellent internal consistency, signifying that the scale's items are highly cohesive and effectively measure the same underlying construct. Similarly, Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items, calculated as 0.905, reflects the scale's reliability when the items are standardized, such as through z-scores. The marginal increase in reliability (from 0.900 to 0.905) suggests that standardizing the data slightly enhances internal consistency but is not necessary for robust reliability.

The scale's 15 items contribute significantly to its overall reliability, as a greater number of relevant items generally strengthens reliability. The negligible difference between the raw and standardized Alpha values further confirms the scale's strong performance without the need for data standardization.

In summary, the scale demonstrates excellent reliability, as evidenced by the Cronbach's Alpha values, requiring no substantial revisions. Researchers can utilize this scale with confidence to assess the intended construct.

3.1. Descriptive Statistics of the Items

The questionnaire data were analyzed to explore EFL students' perceptions, experiences, attitudes, and additional perspectives concerning the impact of peer feedback on their writing proficiency. The survey comprises 15 items utilizing a 5-point Likert scale. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 25, and the results of the descriptive statistics derived from participants' survey responses are presented in Table 1.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Section 1 Items

Section 1: Perceptions of Peer Feedback on Writing Proficiency	Mean Score
1. Peer feedback has helped me improve my grammar accuracy in writing.	3,6
2. Feedback from my peers helps me better organize my ideas in writing.	3,5
3. Peer feedback provides valuable suggestions for improving the content of my writing.	3,56
4. My peers' feedback helps me use a wider range of vocabulary in my writing.	3,6

Section 1, aiming to enlighten the p*erceptions of the participants,* presents the mean scores for various aspects of peer feedback's role in improving writing skills. The highest-rated statements 1 and 4, *contributing to enhancing the grammar accuracy in writing* and *assistance in incorporating a broader range of vocabulary in writing,* both achieved a mean score of 3.6, reflecting a positive perception of peer feedback in enhancing these specific areas. Statement 3*, offering meaningful suggestions for refining the content of writing,* received a slightly lower mean score of 3.56, indicating that participants also value peer feedback for content improvement. Meanwhile, statement 2*,* supporting *participants in organizing their ideas more effectively in writing,* scored 3.5, suggesting a relatively less favorable perception of peer feedback's role in improving organizational aspects of writing. Overall, the findings suggest a generally positive view of peer feedback in fostering proficiency in writing, particularly in grammar and vocabulary, although its impact on idea organization appears to warrant further attention.

The mean scores across all items in this section are closely aligned, indicating that participants moderately agree on the beneficial effects of peer feedback on grammar, content structure, and vocabulary use. The minimal variability in the scores suggests a consistent perception of peer feedback as advantageous across different dimensions of writing.

In summary, the section highlights students' favorable perceptions of peer feedback as a tool for improving writing proficiency, particularly in grammar accuracy and vocabulary range. The top-rated statements reflect this

trend, though there remains room for enhancing its perceived effectiveness in organizing ideas within written work.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of the Section 2 Items

Section 2: Experiences with Peer Feedback on Writing Proficiency	Mean Score
5. Receiving feedback from my peers has improved my confidence in writing in English.	3,66
6. I often apply the feedback I receive from peers to improve my future writing assignments.	3,36
7. I find peer feedback useful in identifying mistakes I may not notice on my own.	3,8
8. My peers' feedback has helped me become more precise and clearer in my writing.	3,66

Section 2, titled "Experiences with Peer Feedback on Writing Proficiency," explores participants' perceptions of the impact of peer feedback on their writing skills. The findings reveal that peer feedback is particularly valued for its role in identifying errors, with the statement "I find peer feedback useful in identifying mistakes I may not notice on my own" receiving the highest mean score of 3.8. Additionally, statements such as "Receiving feedback from my peers has enhanced my confidence in writing in English" and "My peers' feedback has helped me become more precise and clearer in my writing," both scoring 3.66, highlight the positive influence of peer feedback on writing clarity and confidence. However, the lowest mean score of 3.36, attributed to the statement "I often apply the feedback I receive from peers to improve my future writing assignments," suggests that while participants recognize the value of feedback, its practical application to future tasks is less consistent. Overall, the results underscore a generally positive reception of peer feedback, particularly in fostering error recognition and writing accuracy, though further emphasis on its integration into subsequent assignments may enhance its effectiveness.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for the Section 3 Items

Section 3: Attitudes Toward Peer Feedback on Writing	Mean Score
9. I believe that peer feedback is an essential part of improving my writing skills.	3,66
10. Receiving peer feedback motivates me to improve my writing.	3,86
11. I find peer feedback sessions as valuable as teacher feedback sessions for improving my writing.	3,23
12. I believe that giving feedback to my peers also helps me improve my own writing.	3,66
13. Peer feedback has encouraged me to develop a more critical approach to my own writing.	3,73

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 4 provide an overview of participants' attitudes toward peer feedback in writing. The mean scores for each item reveal the following insights: Item 9 demonstrates a moderately high level of agreement, indicating that participants view peer feedback as a significant component of their writing development. Item 10, with the highest mean score, underscores the motivational impact of peer feedback, reflecting strong agreement among participants. Conversely, Item 11, which has the lowest mean score, suggests that while peer feedback is valued, it is not perceived as equally effective as teacher feedback in improving writing skills. The mean score for Item 12 highlights participants' recognition of the reciprocal benefits of providing feedback, which contributes to their own writing development. Similarly, the relatively high mean score for Item 13 suggests that peer feedback encourages critical thinking, enabling participants to engage in deeper reflection on their writing.

Ekinci and Ekinci (2024) emphasize that attitude is a key determinant of language learners' success or failure. In the context of foreign language learning, attitude includes an individual's mindset, beliefs, and emotional reactions toward both the target language and the learning experience. A positive attitude is highlighted as a vital factor for attaining proficiency in a foreign language. Overall, the results indicate a positive attitude toward peer feedback, particularly its motivational benefits (Item 10) and its role in fostering critical reflection and mutual improvement. However, participants appear to regard

teacher feedback as more impactful than peer feedback (Item 11). These findings suggest opportunities to enhance peer feedback practices by emphasizing its motivational and reflective benefits while addressing the perceived gap in value compared to teacher feedback. On average, participants appreciate peer feedback for its role in motivating and improving writing, but they do not fully equate its effectiveness with that of teacher feedback.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of the Section 4 Items

Section 4: Additional Insights on Writing Improvements	Mean Score
14. I feel that peer feedback allows me to understand the strengths and weaknesses of my writing better.	3,66
15. Peer feedback has positively influenced my writing proficiency in terms of coherence and cohesion.	3,5

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 5 shed light on participants' perceptions of the role of peer feedback in enhancing writing proficiency. Item 14 achieved a moderately high score, indicating that participants largely view peer feedback as an effective mechanism for understanding their writing abilities, including both strengths and areas for improvement. Although Item 15 received a slightly lower score compared to Item 14, it still reflects a positive perception, suggesting that participants associate peer feedback with improvements in writing, particularly in coherence and cohesion.

Both items reveal favorable attitudes toward the benefits of peer feedback for writing development, with Item 14 slightly outperforming Item 15. The findings suggest that while peer feedback is highly valued for fostering critical self-evaluation of writing strengths and weaknesses, its impact on specific technical aspects, such as coherence and cohesion, may not be as strongly emphasized.

These results highlight the significance of peer feedback in promoting self-awareness and technical refinement in writing. To further enhance its impact, additional training or a greater focus on providing structured and detailed feedback could be beneficial, particularly for addressing coherence and cohesion. The consistent scores (3.5 and 3.6) indicate a uniform perception of peer feedback as a valuable contributor to overall writing improvement.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of the Peer Feedback Questionnaire

Section 1: Perceptions of Peer Feedback on Writing Proficiency	Mean Score
1. Peer feedback has helped me improve my grammar accuracy in writing.	3,6
2. Feedback from my peers helps me better organize my ideas in writing.	3,5
3. Peer feedback provides valuable suggestions for improving the content of my writing.	3,56
4. My peers' feedback helps me use a wider range of vocabulary in my writing.	3,6
Section 2: Experiences with Peer Feedback on Writing Proficiency	
5. Receiving feedback from my peers has improved my confidence in writing in English.	3,66
6. I often apply the feedback I receive from peers to improve my future writing assignments.	3,36
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Section 3: Attitudes Toward Peer Feedback on Writing	
9. I believe that peer feedback is an essential part of improving my writing skills.	3,66
10. Receiving peer feedback motivates me to improve my writing.	3,86
11. I find peer feedback sessions as valuable as teacher feedback sessions for improving my writing.	3,23
12. I believe that giving feedback to my peers also helps me improve my own writing.	3,66
13. Peer feedback has encouraged me to develop a more critical approach to my own writing.	3,73

Section 4: Additional Insights on Writing Improvements	
14. I feel that peer feedback allows me to understand the strengths and weaknesses of my writing better.	3,66
15. Peer feedback has positively influenced my writing proficiency in terms of coherence and cohesion.	3,5

Table 6 presents the mean scores for 15 items, ranging from 3.23 (item 11) to 3.86 (item 10). The variability in mean values reflects differences in participant responses across the items. Most scores fall within the range of 3.5–3.7, indicating moderate agreement and central tendencies across the variables. The absence of extremely high or low scores suggests balanced responses. Item 10, with the highest mean, likely represents a universally agreed-upon aspect of peer feedback, while item 11, with the lowest mean, may indicate less agreement or relevance, warranting further review to ensure clarity and alignment with the construct being measured.

The mean scores are consistent with the Cronbach's Alpha analysis, which demonstrated excellent internal consistency (0.900) for the scale. The relatively close range of mean values suggests that the items effectively measure a related construct, contributing to a reliable scale. Items emphasizing writing precision, clarity, and critical thinking development received the highest scores, underscoring key benefits of peer feedback. Conversely, the item comparing peer feedback to teacher feedback received the lowest score (3.23), suggesting participants are hesitant to equate the two forms of feedback.

Overall, participants agree that peer feedback positively impacts their writing proficiency, particularly in areas such as grammar, organization, confidence, and critical thinking. However, efforts could be directed towards enhancing participants' perceptions of peer feedback's value relative to teacher feedback, possibly through training students to provide more constructive and effective feedback.

To summarize, the descriptive statistics reveal participants' generally favorable attitudes toward peer feedback as a tool for improving writing proficiency. Survey data from 15 Likert-scale items indicate that peer feedback is particularly valued for enhancing grammar accuracy, vocabulary range, and

writing confidence. Top-rated items include the motivational benefits of peer feedback and its ability to foster critical thinking and self-awareness about writing strengths and weaknesses. Items related to writing clarity and precision also received high scores, suggesting that participants perceive peer feedback as effective in improving technical aspects of writing.

However, lower mean scores on items addressing the practical application of peer feedback in future assignments and its perceived effectiveness compared to teacher feedback indicate areas for improvement. While participants appreciate peer feedback's role in writing development, they view teacher feedback as more impactful, and the integration of peer feedback into subsequent tasks remains inconsistent.

The analysis underscores the consistent and reliable measurement of perceptions across items, supported by a high Cronbach's Alpha (0.900). Although the findings highlight the advantages of peer feedback in promoting writing proficiency, further emphasis on training students to provide structured and detailed feedback could enhance its impact, particularly in areas like coherence, cohesion, and organization. Addressing the perceived gap in effectiveness between peer and teacher feedback may also strengthen the role of peer feedback in writing instruction.

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PLAYING TO LEARN: INTEGRATING CHILDREN'S GAMES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

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1. INTRODUCTION

The role of games in education, particularly in language learning for young learners, has gained significant attention due to their ability to foster engagement, creativity, and meaningful interaction. This chapter explores the integration of games (physical classroom games) into English language teaching for young learners, emphasizing their pedagogical potential in creating a dynamic and interactive learning environment. Games are recognized as powerful tools that can motivate students, reduce anxiety, and enhance language acquisition by promoting active participation and collaboration in the classroom. The primary aim of this chapter is to provide an in-depth analysis of how games can be effectively utilized in language teaching, addressing both their benefits and the challenges associated with their implementation. It examines various types of classroom games, their alignment with language learning objectives, and strategies for incorporating them into lessons to maximize their educational impact. By highlighting real-world examples and evidence from research, the chapter aims to equip educators with practical insights and tools for fostering language development through play. Ultimately, it underscores the significance of games not only as supplementary activities but as integral components of a learner-centered approach to education.

2. WHAT IS PLAY/GAME?

Learning a language is a challenging endeavor that demands consistent effort and dedication over an extended period. Since meaningfulness and authentic language use are crucial in language acquisition, employing diverse techniques and strategies becomes essential. By incorporating creative approaches, it is possible to foster an interactive environment that can significantly enhance the process of learning a foreign language. An effective approach to promoting foreign language acquisition is the integration of language games into the learning process. To implement games successfully

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in the classroom, it is essential for educators to have a thorough understanding of their definitions, typically characterized as structured forms of play that involve rules, competition, and an element of enjoyment (Mubaslat, 2012). The term "game" refers to any language activity that involves a competitive element, either between individual students or teams (Greenall, 1990). A game is an activity that fosters enjoyment for both teachers and students. It adopts a student-centered approach and offers an engaging experience comparable to the excitement of playground activities (Zu, 2012). While it is easy to describe games as fun, they also involve adherence to rules, highlighting the need for thoughtful instructional planning and implementation. Games encompass various elements, including rules, competition, relaxation, and learning. Their primary purpose in the classroom is not only to enhance students' learning efficiency but also to make the process enjoyable (Tuan & Doan, 2010). A common thread in all these descriptions is that games incorporate various elements, including the use of rules, the promotion of cooperation, and the ability to make learning enjoyable.

3. IMPORTANCE OF PLAY IN CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Play is a fundamental aspect of childhood development, serving as a primary avenue through which children acquire essential cognitive, physical, social, and emotional skills. Engaging in play enables children to explore their environment, understand social dynamics, and develop problem-solving abilities. The American Academy of Pediatrics emphasizes that play is crucial for healthy brain development, allowing children to engage and interact with the world around them from an early age (Ginsburg et al., 2007). Furthermore, Stephen Krashen (1982) highlights that affective factors play a crucial role in second language acquisition, either enhancing or obstructing the process. Teachers are responsible for creating a supportive environment that lowers students' affective filters, allowing them to better absorb comprehensible input. The main purpose of using games in the classroom is to help create this positive and conducive atmosphere.

Teachers should also take into account the benefits of using games, such as their ability to engage students' attention, reduce stress levels, and provide opportunities for authentic communication (Mubaslat, 2012). Given that the term "young learners" typically refers to children aged approximately 5 to 12 years (Rixon, 1999), it can be inferred that games naturally align with their developmental stage and daily experiences. For children to acquire English

effectively, they need to be exposed to and hear the language from a young age. It is widely accepted that children learn languages more easily than adults, as they have fewer responsibilities and ample time to dedicate to learning. Additionally, they excel at language acquisition when exposed to it naturally over an extended period (Bakhsh, 2016).

Through play, children enhance their language skills, creativity, and social competencies. It provides opportunities for them to practice decision-making, learn to work collaboratively with others, and navigate complex social situations. Moreover, play is instrumental in helping children manage stress and build resilience, contributing to their overall emotional well-being (Ginsburg et al., 2007). Incorporating play into educational settings, particularly in English language teaching for young learners, can significantly enhance engagement and facilitate language acquisition. Play-based learning environments encourage active participation, making the learning process enjoyable and effective. By integrating children's games into language instruction, educators can create a dynamic and interactive atmosphere that supports the holistic development of young learners.

4. OVERVIEW OF USING GAMES AS A TOOL FOR TEACHING ENGLISH

Learning a language is a challenging process that can occasionally feel overwhelming, as it demands continuous effort to comprehend, use, and master the target language. Carefully selected games play a crucial role in this process by offering students a refreshing pause while simultaneously enabling them to practice and develop their language skills. It is evident that games are among the most effective instructional tools for young learners, as they naturally align with their developmental needs and daily experiences. Games, particularly educational ones, are valuable tools that teachers can employ in foreign language instruction. They are frequently utilized as brief warm-up activities or as engaging fillers to effectively utilize any remaining time at the end of a lesson.

While some English teachers view language games as time-wasters or mere tools for entertainment, they play a significant role in foreign language teaching programs, particularly for young learners, as they effectively support language acquisition (Yolageldili & Arıkan, 2011). Some educators believe

that language games are unproductive and choose to avoid using them in the classroom, as they are often perceived solely as tools for entertainment. However, games offer far more benefits to students learning English as a foreign language (or English as a second language. Alongside other strategies such as visual aids, Computer-Assisted Language Learning, drama, and role-play, games serve as an effective method for enhancing students' language proficiency (Richard-Amato, 1996).

Games should not be viewed as mere supplementary activities to fill idle moments in the classroom. Instead, they should play a central role in teaching foreign languages, integrated thoughtfully at various stages of the lesson. Integrating a simple game into a lesson allows teachers to effectively introduce new language forms and vocabulary, as young learners often struggle with understanding lengthy rules. Moreover, games should include praise and encouragement, as young learners thrive on recognition and enjoy being the center of attention (Bekiri, 2003). When carefully selected and appropriately applied, games can enhance the learning experience and serve as effective tools for reviewing material, allowing learners to recall content in an enjoyable and engaging manner. Games are highly engaging as they combine entertainment with a sense of challenge. They promote the use of meaningful and practical language in authentic contexts while fostering collaboration and teamwork. Additionally, games offer valuable opportunities to practice all language skills and support various forms of communication (Ersöz, 2000). Games have gained significant importance for both English language learners and teachers, not only because they offer enjoyment and relaxation but also because they inspire students to use the language creatively and interactively (Yolageldili & Arıkan, 2011).

Even if games only generate noise or provide entertainment, their value in the classroom remains undeniable. They motivate students, foster communicative competence, promote fluency, and contribute meaningfully to the process of second language acquisition. Their potential impact on language learning makes them an essential component of effective teaching practices (Mubaslat, 2012). Hong (2002) advises teachers using games for young learners to: (a) use brief instructions in the mother tongue for clarity with beginners, increasing English exposure later; (b) demonstrate games instead of lengthy explanations; and (c) keep games short, ending them at their peak to maintain student interest (p. 1).

5. BENEFITS OF GAMES IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Teaching young learners poses greater challenges compared to teaching teenagers or adults due to their short attention spans. Since children are naturally drawn to fun and play, educators should adopt teaching methods that align with their interests. Incorporating games into lessons is an effective strategy to maintain engagement and prevent boredom in the classroom. Games play a vital role in foreign language instruction, benefiting both students and teachers by enhancing the learning experience. Moreover, when used strategically, especially for teaching vocabulary, games can help achieve educational objectives effectively (Bakhsh, 2016). When games are integrated into the learning process, the positive outcomes are evident. Students show increased motivation to learn and achieve higher test scores. Similarly, some researchers (Chan & Lin, 2000; Jiang, 2008; Kuo, 2008; Robinson, 1960; Zheng, 2008) argue that engaging in games within a relaxed environment can boost students' motivation and confidence, particularly when they successfully attain their learning objectives.

Another benefit of using games in language learning is their ability to reduce students' anxiety. In language classes, learners often feel pressured to master an unfamiliar target language and may become overly anxious about being criticized or punished for making mistakes (Yolageldili & Arıkan, 2011). Games help alleviate this stress by fostering a supportive environment that reduces fear of criticism and punishment. They also promote positive emotions and build self-confidence, allowing learners to practice the target language freely and without fear (Crookal, 1990, p.112). Games can reduce students' anxiety, help them feel at ease, and foster a greater desire to learn. Engaging in games allows students to relax and enjoy the learning process. As they focus on effective communication during gameplay, they become less concerned about making mistakes or constantly correcting themselves. This relaxed environment enables them to enhance their fluency and develop a more natural speaking style.

Furthermore, playing games helps sustain students' attention more effectively, as the enjoyment derived from games fulfills an innate tendency for attentiveness in humans (Chen, 2007; Deesri, 2002). A physically engaging and interactive game environment can provide children learning English with an enjoyable and stimulating learning experience while also boosting their

motivation. Kuo (2008) highlights that games and game-like activities have consistently been a popular tool in English classes to engage and energize disinterested students. When incorporated into language lessons, games promote the development of higher-order thinking and learning skills, which are crucial for preparing learners to excel as future professionals (Rahman & Bakar, 2018). As noted by Jacobs and Kline Liu (1996), many games can be played in pairs or small groups, offering students opportunities to develop interpersonal skills such as politely disagreeing and seeking assistance. Most games require learners to participate in groups, ensuring everyone takes a turn and fostering active involvement rather than allowing a few individuals to dominate the activity. During gameplay, students naturally strive to win, whether for themselves or their team, displaying strong competitive energy. This desire to take turns, score points, and succeed drives their engagement in classroom activities. When working in pairs or groups, learners are more inclined to ask questions, communicate, and collaborate with their peers, thinking creatively about how to use English effectively to reach their objectives. The competitive aspect of games provides an authentic and enjoyable context for students to work together and practice communicating in English extensively (Tuan & Doan, 2010).

Another benefit of using games in the classroom is their potential to enhance students' language proficiency. Games create opportunities for students to use the language purposefully in structured scenarios. Hadfield (1990) highlights that games offer the same focused practice as traditional drills while also fostering authentic communication, even within predefined boundaries, serving as a bridge between classroom activities and real-world language use. Similar to conventional methods, games allow students to practice and reinforce grammatical rules and language functions effectively. Language games, as part of the task-based language teaching approach, can equip language learners with the ability to apply grammatical structures in practical, real-world communication scenarios (Willis & Willis, 2013). Language learners might show greater interest in learning specific grammar concepts through authentic language games that incorporate a variety of tasks linked to real-life contexts (Yaccob & Yunus, 2019). In addition to enjoying themselves, students are free from concerns about making mistakes or facing criticism. They also gain an opportunity to learn and apply grammatical rules. As a result, their learning becomes subconscious—they acquire knowledge without being aware of the process. This shift allows students to move away from focusing on the mechanics of the language and

instead use it in a spontaneous and natural way within the classroom (Schultz & Fisher, 1988). Thus, while games enhance learners' proficiency in practicing grammar through communication, they provide students with opportunities to develop their language skills by using the language in purposeful, context-driven situations (Deesri, 2002).

Likewise, playing games has been recognized as an effective approach to enhancing children's vocabulary acquisition in a manner that mirrors the natural learning process observed during play (Deng, 2006). Using games to teach vocabulary has become essential for English language learners as it maintains their enthusiasm and interest in learning while fostering confident and creative language use (Bakhsh, 2016). It is important to remember that language learning is a demanding process that requires continuous effort, particularly for young learners. Games help channel their energy into language learning by offering engaging and meaningful contexts (Wright, Betteridge, & Buckby, 1984). Moreover, to advance in a game, learners need to actively use the language through interaction with others, which creates opportunities to enhance their fluency and proficiency (Chambers & Yunus, 2017).

In conclusion, games can offer a substantial amount of knowledge input while also fostering increased communication and collaboration among students. They are highly effective in enhancing students' communicative skills, as they involve an active and dynamic process of interaction. Instead of merely serving as passive recipients of knowledge, students engage as thoughtful, emotional individuals and communicators, striving to express their ideas, concepts, thoughts, emotions, and feelings, drawing from their own life experiences to convey meaning in real-world contexts (Zu, 2012). Learners can reduce anxiety, boost self-confidence, and exhibit positive emotions and behaviors by engaging in interactive use of the target language without fear (Adeng & Shah, 2012). Through playing games, ESL learners engage in experimentation, exploration, and collaboration (Mubaslat, 2011/2012). They enhance their language abilities by interacting with peers and learning from their errors (Yaccob & Yunus, 2019).

6. TYPES OF CLASSROOM GAMES USED IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

The following categories adapted from some researchers (Carrier, 1980; Ellis, 1986; Hadfield, 1990; Harmer, 2008; Kallsen, 1987 etc.) outline various types of classroom games commonly used in language teaching:

Sorting, Ordering, or Arranging Games: These activities require students to organize items into a specific sequence. For instance, students may be given cards with months written on them and asked to arrange the months in chronological order.

Information Gap Games: These activities are a key component of communicative language teaching. Such activities involve tasks where the lack of information on one or both sides creates a communicative need, prompting learners to engage in meaningful exchanges to bridge the gap. Activities reflect real-world communication scenarios such as giving directions or sharing experiences. Describing and reconstructing, role-based interactions, spot the difference, and story reconstruction are some examples of information gap games.

Guessing Games: A subset of information gap games, these involve one participant providing non-verbal clues for others to interpret. For example, a student might use gestures to represent a word on a hidden flashcard, while classmates try to guess the word. Guessing games are effective tools for encouraging students to practice logical reasoning and develop their questioning skills.

Searching Games: These are another variation of information exchange games where players actively seek and share information. For example, students may receive clues to identify a "criminal" and must ask questions and respond to their peers to solve the mystery.

Picture Games: Picture games encompass various activities, such as, comparing and contrasting images, identifying differences or similarities, exploring potential relationships between pictures, describing key details to enable others to recognize or replicate them and developing a story based on a provided image. These games typically encourage learners to use their language

skills freely while simultaneously offering opportunities to practice speaking and listening.

Matching Games: As the name suggests, these games require participants to pair related items, such as matching words to pictures or cards with their corresponding partners.

Labeling Games: As a specialized type of matching game, these activities involve pairing labels with images.

Exchanging Games: Typically involving cards, these games require students to trade items, objectives, or ideas.

Board Games: Popular examples like Scrabble fall into this category, where students engage in activities centered on structured game boards.

Miming Games: Mime activities can be performed in pairs, groups, or even as a whole class. One group acts out the mime while the other group attempts to identify the object, action, or person being depicted. These activities create meaningful language-learning opportunities by fostering genuine curiosity and encouraging real communication. Miming helps students develop observation and improvisation skills while highlighting the significance of gestures and facial expressions in effective communication.

Role-Playing Games: These games involve students acting out roles or scenarios, often to practice specific dialogues or explore contexts outside their real-life experiences. A readily available source for role-playing is the text itself, which can serve as material for the activity. After studying the text, students can be invited to perform it. This approach not only enhances their overall oral skills but also facilitates a deeper and more accessible understanding of the material. Role-playing activities are highly beneficial for promoting unstructured dialogue and creating a sense of improvisation within the language learning environment.

Sound Games: Sound effects can evoke vivid impressions of people, places, and actions in the listener's mind, requiring active engagement and imagination. This naturally results in diverse interpretations, encouraging students to share perspectives, exchange opinions, and express ideas. Such games stimulate students' creativity and critical thinking while providing

opportunities to practice listening and speaking skills. Activities might include guessing the object represented by the sound, crafting dialogues, or creating a story.

Debates: This activity involves assigning a topic to two opposing groups: one in favor of the idea and the other against it. Both sides present arguments supported by evidence to defend their perspectives. The purpose is to encourage students to actively participate, ignite their curiosity, and inspire healthy competition. Debates challenge students to evaluate their beliefs and priorities, while also sharpening their speaking skills and ability to articulate thoughts effectively.

7. INTERACTIVE GAME EXAMPLES FOR TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS

7.1. Hot Potatoes

The Hot Potatoes game is a dynamic classroom activity designed to enhance student engagement and foster interactive learning. It derives its name from the concept of quickly passing an object, much like handling a "hot" item. This game can be tailored to various subjects, making it a versatile tool for reinforcing educational content. The primary aim of this game is to involve students actively in the learning process, making it enjoyable while focusing on specific learning objectives such as vocabulary acquisition, grammar practice, or problem-solving.

How to Play

- Select an object to act as the "hot potato," such as a soft ball, stuffed toy, or any lightweight item that can be easily passed.

- Prepare a set of tasks or questions related to the lesson, which might include filling in the blanks, defining terms, or solving problems.

- Arrange the students in a circle or a format that facilitates the passing of the object.

- Play music or use a timer to add an element of suspense and excitement.

- While the music plays, students pass the "hot potato" around. When

the music stops, the student holding the item answers a question or completes a task provided by the instructor.

- Continue the activity for a predetermined number of rounds or until the learning objectives are achieved.

- Recognize or reward participants to boost motivation and celebrate effort.

Game Variations

- Quick Response Challenge: Set a short time limit for the student to respond, adding urgency to the task.

- Team Play: Organize students into teams, awarding points for correct answers to foster a spirit of friendly competition.

- Multi-Level Tasks: Incorporate questions of varying difficulty levels to accommodate diverse learning needs.

- Thematic Adaptation: Customize the questions to align with specific topics, such as science, history, or language learning.

Benefits for Learning

- **Active Participation:** The game keeps students engaged and involved throughout the lesson.

- **Knowledge Retention:** It reinforces lesson content in an enjoyable, pressure-free manner.

- **Collaboration Skills:** It promotes teamwork and cooperative learning in group settings.

- **Critical Thinking:** It encourages quick decision-making under time constraints.

- **Language Proficiency:** It provides a platform for learners to practice the target language in a lively, interactive context.

This game is easily adaptable for diverse age groups, class sizes, and subject areas. For younger learners, the focus can be on simpler questions and playful interactions. For older students, the game can involve more complex tasks, challenging their problem-solving and analytical skills. The Hot Potatoes game offers a creative and effective approach to making learning interactive and enjoyable. By encouraging active participation and fostering a positive classroom atmosphere, it contributes significantly to achieving educational outcomes while keeping students motivated.

7.2. Pictionary Game

Pictionary game is a fun and engaging activity that uses drawing and guessing to help children learn and practice new vocabulary. It creates a playful and creative environment where young learners can develop their language skills while having fun with their peers. The main goals of Pictionary are to encourage communication and teamwork in a relaxed setting and help children associate words with visual representations, making it easier to remember them.

How to Play

- One student from a group picks a word from a prepared list or a set of cards (without showing it to others).

- The student draws a picture representing the word while avoiding any letters, numbers, or spoken clues.

- The rest of the group guesses the word based on the drawing within a set time limit (e.g., 1–2 minutes).

- If the team guesses correctly, they earn a point. If not, the teacher can provide hints or move to the next group.

Game Variations

- Thematic Pictionary: You can use themes like "Animals," "Colors," "Toys," or "Food" to make the game relatable and engaging.

- Teacher as a Drawer: The teacher draws while the whole class guesses to model the activity before students take turns.

- Guess and Act: After guessing the word, students can act it out to reinforce understanding and add movement to the activity.

- Group Drawing: You can allow two or more students to draw together to make the task easier and promote teamwork.

- Interactive Pictionary: You can let the students use interactive whiteboards or tablets to draw, adding a tech-savvy twist to the game.

Benefits for Learning

- Makes Vocabulary Fun: Children learn new words in a playful, enjoyable way that keeps them excited about language learning.

- Builds Confidence: The game creates a relaxed atmosphere where children feel safe to participate without fear of making mistakes.

- Encourages Creativity: Drawing stimulates imagination and helps children think of creative ways to express ideas.

- Promotes Collaboration: Working in teams teaches young learners to share ideas and cooperate with their classmates.

- Improves Focus: The time limit and guessing challenge keep children engaged and attentive.

Pictionary is an excellent way to make language learning fun, interactive, and engaging. By combining drawing with guessing, it helps children learn new words, express themselves creatively, and build confidence in using the language. This activity transforms the classroom into a lively, supportive space where learning feels like play.

7.3. Story Cubes Game

Story Cubes is another interactive game that uses picture dice to spark imagination and storytelling. It helps children develop language skills in a fun and creative way while keeping them actively engaged. This game is perfect for young learners as it encourages them to use their vocabulary, form sentences, and share ideas in a relaxed and playful environment.

How to Play

- Roll the cubes: A student or group rolls the dice, revealing a set of pictures.

- Interpret the pictures: Students use the images to create a simple story by linking the pictures together.

- Tell the story: The student or group shares their story with the class or their team, using the target language to describe what is happening in their story.

- Celebrate creativity: Students should be appreciated to encourage them to keep going, regardless of mistakes.

Game Variations

- **Simple Stories:** Younger or beginner learners can focus on short, simple sentences (e.g., "This is a cat. It is playing with a ball.").

- **Collaborative Storytelling:** Each student adds one sentence to the story, taking turns to continue the narrative.

- **Act It Out:** After creating a story, students can act it out to make the activity more dynamic and engaging.

- **Describe and Draw:** Students can draw their story on a paper after rolling the cubes and then explain their drawing to the class.

Benefits for learning

- Makes Language Fun: The playful nature of the game helps students associate learning with enjoyment.

- Encourages Creativity: Students use their imagination to create unique stories, sparking curiosity and innovation.

- Reinforces Vocabulary: The pictures provide visual cues, helping students remember and use words in context.

- Builds Confidence: The supportive, low-pressure environment allows

students to express themselves freely without fear of making mistakes.

- Improves Communication: Sharing stories helps students practice speaking and listening in the target language.

- Promotes Collaboration: When played in groups, students learn to work together and share ideas.

7.4. Simon Says Game

Simon Says is a classic, fun, and interactive game that is ideal for young learners. It helps children improve their listening and comprehension skills while practicing vocabulary and simple commands in the target language. The game's playful nature makes it highly engaging, and its simple rules make it easy to implement in any classroom. The primary objectives of Simon Says are to enhance listening and attention skills. practice vocabulary related to actions, body parts, or directions and encourage movement and physical activity in a learning context.

How to Play

- Gather students in a space where they can move around freely.

- Explain the rules in simple language and demonstrate the actions.

- One player, usually the teacher, acts as "Simon" and gives commands beginning with "Simon says." For example, "Simon says, touch your head."

- Students should only follow the command if it begins with "Simon says." If a command is given without "Simon says" (e.g., "Touch your nose"), students should remain still.

- If a student follows a command that doesn't include "Simon says," they are out for that round or can continue playing for practice without elimination.

- Use vocabulary that matches the students' level, such as body parts, actions, and directions.

- Gradually increase the complexity of commands as the game progresses.

Game Variations

- Theme-Based Commands: You may focus on specific vocabulary, such as animals ("Simon says, walk like a cat") or weather ("Simon says, pretend it's raining").

- Student as Simon: You can allow students to take turns being "Simon" to practice giving commands in the target language.

- Timed Rounds: You can use a timer to create rounds, awarding small rewards or applause to students who follow all the commands correctly.

- Silent Simon: You can add a challenge by introducing non-verbal commands where "Simon" demonstrates actions without speaking.

Benefits for Learning

- **Improves Listening Skills:** Students practice careful listening to distinguish valid commands from invalid ones.

- **Reinforces Vocabulary:** Repetition of action words and phrases helps children remember and use new vocabulary.

- **Encourages Physical Activity:** The game involves movement, keeping young learners energized and engaged.

- **Builds Focus and Attention:** Students must concentrate and think critically to follow the correct commands.

- **Boosts Confidence:** A supportive, playful environment encourages children to participate without fear of making mistakes.

Simon Says is an excellent game for young learners that combines language practice with movement and fun. By following commands, children improve their listening, vocabulary, and comprehension skills in an active and enjoyable way. This game is an effective and versatile tool for creating an engaging and positive learning environment.

7.5. Bull's Eye Game

Bull's Eye is another interactive game that engages young learners in practicing vocabulary, numbers, or other language-related skills through a fun target-throwing activity. This game combines physical movement with language learning, making it an appropriate choice for energetic classrooms and young learners who benefit from hands-on, kinesthetic activities.

How to Play

- Create a "bull's eye" target using a large piece of paper, a board, or a soft mat. Divide it into sections and label each section with numbers, words, pictures, or phrases based on the lesson's focus.

- Prepare soft items for throwing, such as bean bags, soft balls, or crumpled paper.

- Explain the game to the students and demonstrate how to throw the bean bags or balls onto the target.

- Divide the class into small teams or allow individual turns, depending on the class size and dynamics.

- On a student's turn, they throw the object at the bull's eye and perform a task based on where it lands.

Task Examples:

- Vocabulary Practice: If the object lands on a section labeled with a word, the student says the word, uses it in a sentence, or identifies its meaning.

- Numbers: Students can say the number on the section where the object lands or perform a task like adding two numbers together.

- Colors or Pictures: Students can name the color or object on the section and describe it using simple sentences (e.g., "This is red," or "This is a cat.").

- Questions and Answers: Students can answer a question written on the section or follow a command related to it.

Game Variations

- **Theme-Based Targets:** You can customize the bull's eye with seasonal or lesson-specific themes, such as animals, food, or transportation.

- **Multi-Layer Tasks:** You can add tasks that increase in difficulty depending on the proximity to the center of the bull's eye.

- **Movement Integration:** You can combine the game with actions, such as hopping to the target after completing a task.

Benefits for Learning

- Reinforces Language Skills: The game integrates vocabulary, numbers, and other concepts into an interactive activity that aids retention.

- Promotes Active Learning: The physical component keeps young learners engaged and helps channel their energy productively.

- Encourages Participation: The fun, non-threatening format motivates even shy or hesitant students to join in.

- Builds Confidence: The combination of movement and learning reduces pressure, allowing students to practice language skills freely.

- Enhances Focus and Coordination: Target throwing improves hand-eye coordination and helps students develop concentration.

The Bull's Eye game represents a dynamic approach to language instruction, particularly for young learners. By integrating physical activity with targeted language tasks, it creates a stimulating and enjoyable learning environment. This game not only enhances linguistic competencies but also promotes confidence, social interaction, and motor skill development. Its adaptability to various lesson themes and skill levels makes it a valuable tool for early language education.

7.6. Round Robin Game

The Round Robin game is an interactive and cooperative classroom activity designed to enhance language acquisition among young learners. By emphasizing teamwork, creativity, and turn-taking, it serves as an effective method for practicing vocabulary, grammar, sentence construction, and storytelling. The game's collaborative nature aligns with communicative language teaching principles, fostering active engagement and participation in a low-pressure learning environment. The primary aim of the Round Robin game is to develop linguistic skills through a structured yet flexible activity that encourages learners to build on one another's contributions. This collaborative approach promotes vocabulary retention, sentence formation, and creativity while improving listening and communication abilities.

How to Play

- Arrange students in a circle or small groups to facilitate interaction.

- Define the language objective, such as vocabulary practice, storytelling, or sentence building, ensuring alignment with the lesson's goals.

- The teacher or a student begins by providing the first word, phrase, or sentence related to the chosen objective.

- Each participant sequentially adds a word, phrase, or sentence to extend the task.

- Students name items within a specific category (e.g., animals or fruits).

- Each student contributes a sentence to create a collective narrative.

- Learners must listen attentively to their peers to ensure continuity and coherence in their contributions.

Game Variations

- Themed Focus: Topics such as seasons, holidays, or classroom vocabulary can guide learners' responses.

- Timed Contributions: A time limit for each turn enhances the game's dynamism and focus.

- Visual Aids: Flashcards or pictures provide prompts for learners' responses.

- Physical Cues: Passing an object, such as a ball, can indicate whose turn it is, incorporating movement into the activity.

Benefits for Learning

- Language Skill Development: The activity facilitates practice in vocabulary, grammar, and sentence construction through contextual application.

- Active Listening and Engagement: Students must listen attentively to build upon their peers' contributions, promoting focus and comprehension.

- Collaborative Learning: The game encourages teamwork and social interaction, aligning with cooperative learning strategies.

- Creativity and Imagination: Open-ended tasks, such as storytelling, allow learners to explore language use creatively.

- Confidence Building: The supportive group setting reduces performance anxiety, encouraging even hesitant learners to participate.

- Adaptability: The activity can be tailored to different proficiency levels by adjusting the complexity of tasks or vocabulary used.

The Round Robin game aligns with communicative language teaching by promoting meaningful interaction and contextualized language use. It fosters active participation, particularly among young learners who thrive in interactive and playful environments. Furthermore, its adaptability to various linguistic goals makes it a versatile tool for language educators.

7.7. Scattergories Game

Scattergories is a creative and interactive word game that is both educational and entertaining for young learners. This activity challenges students to think quickly and recall vocabulary, promoting language development and critical thinking. The game can be easily adapted to suit different age groups, language levels, and learning objectives, making it a versatile tool for the classroom. The primary aim of Scattergories in language learning is to enhance vocabulary acquisition, spelling, and pronunciation while promoting cognitive skills such as memory recall and categorization. Additionally, the game fosters teamwork and social interaction, supporting holistic learner development.

How to Play

- Use a whiteboard or pepare charts for categories and letters.

- Prepare category lists (e.g., animals, food, colors, or classroom objects).

- Prepare a spinner to choose letters.

- Divide the class into small groups or pairs to encourage teamwork.

- Display or distribute a list of categories, ensuring they align with the learners' vocabulary knowledge and lesson themes.

- Draw a letter randomly from the prepared set (e.g., "B").

- Encourage groups or pairs brainstorm words that fit the categories and start with the chosen letter. For example: If the letter is "B" and the categories are "animals" and "food," answers could be "bear" and "banana."

- Set a time limit (e.g., 2–3 minutes) for groups to come up with as many words as possible.

- After time is up, each group shares their answers. Unique words (not duplicated by other teams) earn points.

- Award points for each valid word. Extra points can be given for creativity or using more complex vocabulary.

Game Variations

- **Picture Scattergories:** For younger learners, you can use pictures instead of written categories. Display images, and students name items starting with the chosen letter.

- **Team Play with Assistance:** A teacher or advanced student can assist each group, especially with younger or less confident learners.

- **Movement Integration:** The game can be combined with movement by having students run to place their answers on a board or retrieve picture cards that match the categories.

- **Theme-Based Play:** You can use themes such as holidays, seasons, or favorite animals to make the game more engaging and relatable.

- **Fewer Categories:** The game can be simplified by reducing the number of categories or focusing on a single topic to avoid overwhelming young learners.

Benefits for Learning

- **Vocabulary Development:** It encourages students to recall and apply vocabulary in a meaningful context.

- **Critical Thinking:** It promotes quick decision-making and categorization skills.

- **Spelling and Pronunciation Practice:** It reinforces correct spelling and pronunciation as students share their answers.

- **Collaboration:** It builds teamwork and communication skills as students work together to brainstorm words.

- **Engagement and Motivation:** The competitive yet friendly nature of the game keeps learners motivated and excited to participate.

Scattergories is a practical and versatile tool for language educators seeking to enhance vocabulary retention, cognitive development, and social

skills in young learners. Its combination of linguistic and collaborative elements fosters an interactive and enjoyable classroom environment, supporting holistic language acquisition. By integrating Scattergories into language instruction, educators can create meaningful and engaging learning experiences tailored to the developmental needs of young learners.

8. KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR USING GAMES

It is crucial for teachers to recognize their responsibilities when using games in the classroom. Since identifying a game that addresses all learners' needs can be challenging, careful planning and preparation are vital. While games are enjoyable, they require thorough preparation and organization. Teachers should select or create a suitable game, ensure necessary materials are available, and prepare tools like cards, objects, or an overhead projector if needed. Clear handwriting is essential for students to take instructions seriously. Teachers must also plan the game's flow, student roles, and instructions, while anticipating potential logistical or linguistic challenges to address them effectively (Zu, 2012). Furthermore, teachers should plan how to organize students and the classroom to ensure games start quickly and smoothly. Pair or group work is recommended to maximize participation and language practice. While students engage in the activity, teachers should monitor groups, offering support, corrections, or encouragement to less active participants. Games should be stopped or transitioned before students lose interest to maintain focus and enthusiasm (Zu, 2012).

Teachers should carefully select games that align with their students' language proficiency (Carrier, 1980). The chosen game should suit the objectives of the lesson and the class content. Additionally, educators need to consider the characteristics of their students, such as their age, personality—whether they are serious or playful—and their level of motivation to learn. It is also important to determine the appropriate timing for incorporating the game into the lesson. Games should take up a small portion of teaching time, tailored to the lesson's content. They can effectively open or close a lesson, provide a break, ease tension after a test, or be used whenever suitable, ensuring they offer both enjoyment and valuable practice (Zu, 2012).

McCallum (1980) advises teachers to prepare thoroughly before introducing a game in the classroom. This includes ensuring that any necessary

materials or equipment—often unavailable in the classroom—are ready. Teachers must fully understand the gameplay before explaining it to students and should be ready to adapt the game to the class's specific needs, especially when working with children. When explaining the rules, the instructions should be simple and straightforward. For young learners, using the mother tongue may be necessary to ensure clarity, as a lack of understanding would defeat the game's educational purpose. Demonstrating the game can also help young learners grasp the rules more effectively. Additionally, teachers are encouraged to avoid interrupting the game to correct young learners' mistakes.

9. CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS IN IMPLEMENTING GAMES

Integrating physical games into early childhood education is recognized for enhancing self-regulation, physical development, and academic skills (Gerde et al., 2023). However, educators face several challenges in effectively incorporating these activities.

1. Time Constraints: The increasing focus on academic instruction often limits opportunities for physical activities in early childhood settings (Mavilidi & Vazou, 2021). Teachers can incorporate movement into lessons by designing activities that combine physical movement with academic tasks, such as using energetic play to support self-regulation and early academic skills (Gerde et al., 2023).

2. Classroom Management: Integrating physical games can introduce complexities in classroom management, including increased noise levels and potential behavioral issues. Teachers may find it challenging to maintain control and ensure that all students are engaged appropriately during these activities (Martyn, 2021). To overcome barriers related to teacher preparedness and perception, professional development programs should emphasize the educational value of physical games and equip educators with practical strategies for implementation. Training workshops can demonstrate how physical games align with learning objectives while providing classroom management techniques tailored for active learning environments (Lynch, 2015). Moreover, fostering a growth mindset among educators can help them view physical games not as extracurricular activities but as integral tools for cognitive, physical, and social development (Martyn, 2021).

3. Resource Limitations: A lack of appropriate materials, space, and training can hinder the effective implementation of physical games, especially in under-resourced educational settings (Gerde et al., 2023). The successful implementation of physical games often requires adequate space, materials, and time—resources that may be limited in educational settings. Constraints such as insufficient physical space and tight schedules can impede the effective incorporation of these activities (Alhassan et al., 2012). Providing adequate resources, including physical space, materials, and time, is critical for the successful implementation of physical games. Schools and policymakers may invest in child-friendly environments, such as open spaces and playgrounds, that support active play (Martyn, 2021).

4. Instructional Challenges: Designing physical games that align with educational objectives while engaging young learners requires careful planning and creativity, posing a significant challenge for educators (Gerde et al., 2023). Encouraging teachers to work together to share ideas and develop integrated lesson plans can help in designing physical games that meet educational goals and engage students (Gerde et al., 2023).

5. Curricular Constraints: The rigidity of standardized curricula might limit the incorporation of physical games, as educators may feel compelled to prioritize traditional academic content over play-based learning. This pressure can result in the marginalization of physical activities, despite their recognized benefits for young learners (Lynch, 2015). Embedding physical games into the formal curriculum ensures that they are prioritized alongside academic instruction. Flexible curricular frameworks that incorporate play-based learning can help educators balance physical activity with academic goals (Pyle et al., 2017).

By addressing these challenges through strategic solutions, educators can effectively integrate physical games into early childhood classrooms, thereby enhancing learning outcomes and supporting holistic child development.

10. CONCLUSION

Incorporating games into young learner classrooms offers an innovative and dynamic approach to fostering language acquisition and holistic development. As outlined in this chapter, games serve as an effective medium

for enhancing linguistic, cognitive, and social skills, providing a platform for meaningful interaction, creativity, and collaboration. By aligning with young learners' natural affinity for play, games promote active participation and create an enjoyable learning environment. Furthermore, the adaptability of games allows educators to integrate them seamlessly into various lesson stages, addressing diverse pedagogical goals while maintaining student engagement.

Despite their many advantages, implementing games in language teaching requires careful planning, resource allocation, and teacher training to overcome potential challenges such as classroom management, time constraints, and curricular limitations. With strategic preparation and institutional support, games can become an integral part of language instruction, inspiring both learners and educators. Ultimately, the use of games not only enriches the classroom experience but also contributes significantly to young learners' educational journey, fostering a lifelong enthusiasm for language learning and communication.

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EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS OF USING WHATSAPP IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING CONTEXT

Hatice OKYAR[1]

1. INTRODUCTION

With technological advancements, many users flock to digital platforms to learn foreign languages, and mobile devices (e.g., smartphones, tablet PCs), as an important part of these platforms, have become an influential and integral component of the L2 learning process (Hasan et al., 2022; Tragant et al., 2022). The repercussions of the remarkable development of mobile devices have been reflected in all areas of education and have paved the way for the emergence of the term Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) in the field of language education (Aliakbari & Mardani, 2022). MALL is simply defined as "the use of mobile devices to support language learning" (Kukulska-Hulme, & Shield, 2008, p. 273). MALL, unlike traditional classroom teaching methods, can make learning more interactive and interesting (Elaish et al., 2019) and provide alternative and complementary learning practices that support classroom-based learning (Awada, 2016; Cheon et al., 2012). Researchers like Godwin-Jones (2018) and Cheon et al. (2012) state that thanks to mobile devices, students can access various language-related online materials more easily and receive more language input. Besides, the easy portability of mobile devices makes language learning possible anywhere, regardless of time and place (Avci & Adiguzel, 2017; Kukulska-Hulme, 2009; Setyowati, 2019; Yang, 2013).

The development and proliferation of mobile technologies have brought along mobile applications that are compatible with these technologies and can be used in language education (Yang, 2013). With its rich user base, WhatsApp stands out as one of these popular mobile applications for L2 learners (Alberth et al., 2020; Benlaghrissi & Ouahidi, 2024; Tragant et al., 2022). WhatsApp, as an instant messaging technology, has the following basic features: a) It can offer its users the opportunity to communicate via both voice and video calls, and text messages, as well as sending and receiving various files such as videos, audio files, and images (Alberth et al., 2020; Albogami & Algethami, 2022; Janfeshan et al., 2023; Tragant et al., 2022); b) A class communication group

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can be created on WhatsApp where students and teachers can join and share and exchange ideas (Alberth et al., 2020; Benlaghrissi, & Ouahidi, 2024; Bensalem, 2018; Janfeshan et al., 2023; Setyowati, 2019). Thanks to its widespread use and multiple functions, the question of how WhatsApp can be used in the L2 learning process has been a matter of curiosity for researchers (Hasan et al., 2022).Various research studies (e.g. Abdullah & Yamat, 2022; Alberth et al., 2020; Budianto & Yudhi, 2021; Dewi, 2019; Suarez-Lantaron et al., 2022) have demostrated that WhatsApp can be used as an effective educational tool in L2 learning contexts. Considering this and the popularity of WhatsApp as a mobile tool, this review aims to provide deeper insights into the advantages and opportunities that WhatsApp offers to the process of learning English as a foreign language (EFL) by drawing on numerous important studies on the integration and use of WhatsApp in the EFL settings. Based on the reviewed literature, the study determined the following positive features of WhatsApp in the EFL learning contexts and explained each of them under two main headings from a comprehensive perspective in the next sections of the paper:

- Enhancing language skills

- Improving vocabulary and grammar knowledge

- Contributing to overall language learning success

- Providing authentic communication

- Instant feedback opportunity

- Supporting out-of-class learning

- Fostering autonomy

- Developing positive attitudes toward EFL learning

- Enjoyment of the learning process

- Increasing student motivation

- Reducing anxiety

- Improving social skills

- Building self-confidence in language use

2. ACADEMIC BENEFITS

2.1. Enhancing Language Skills

WhatsApp, with its multifunctional features, can make positive contributions to the development of four basic language skills. These contributions are explained one by one below.

2.1.1. Writing Skill

Students can improve their English writing skills by using the WhatsApp text-messaging system during the EFL learning process. That is to say, students can gain practice in writing skills by writing and encountering different sentence structures repeatedly on WhatsApp. Furthermore, if they are provided with constructive feedback by their teachers and peers to the various texts they write on WhatsApp, they can realize and correct their mistakes and further enhance their writing skills. In addition, since the texts are recorded on WhastApp, students can analyze their own texts afterwards and can find the opportunity to improve the aspects of writing skills they are lacking.

Examining previous studies to better understand these potential positive contributions will help us gain more detailed insight into the impact of WhatsApp on writing skills. For example, Benlaghrissi and Ouahidi (2024) conducted a study with Moroccan EFL learners to explore the effectiveness of WhatsApp on their English writing abilities. Students in the experimental group interacted with each other via WhatsApp on their writing assignments for a semester, providing comments, feedback, and support to each other. The control group continued their writing education using the conventional method. The WhatsApp group demonstrated superior performance compared to the control group in writing ability, including subskills such as developing content and ideas, paraphrasing sentences appropriately, varied word usage, and language accuracy. In a different study, Alsaleem (2013) explored the effectiveness of WhatsApp electronic journaling on univesity-level Saudi EFL learners' writing skills and found that WhatsApp effectively developed learners' writing skills. Another study that used WhatsApp as a medium to enhance writing skills was undertaken by Ebadi and Bashir (2021), who found that integrating WhatsApp into the dynamic assessment process was beneficial for enhancing EFL learners' writing. In another study on WhatsApp's impacts on learners' writing ability, Alouch et

al. (2021) trained students to use WhatsApp interactively and collaboratively during their writing processes, such as creative thinking, generating and sharing ideas, and reviewing and polishing texts. In this study, learners were expected to send their texts to a WhatsApp group and afterward, they were provided with instructor feedback. The results of the implementation process showed that utilizing WhatsApp as a supplementary tool had the potential to enhance EFL learners' writing. In addition to these studies, Awada's study (2016) found that WhatsApp was an effective tool in developing EFL learners' ability to write critique essays. Grounded on the results of these various studies, it can be suggested that WhatsApp should be integrated into the learning process as an application that supports the EFL writing process.

2.1.2. Speaking Skill

EFL learners can improve their speaking skills and practice their foreign language through voice messages and video calls via WhatsApp. For example, learners can analyze their pronunciation and speaking competences by recording their voices through voice messages, and enhance their speaking skills if they receive feedback from their teachers or native speakers of English. A wealth of studies has indicated that WhatsApp makes a positive contribution to improving speaking skills. To give an example, Albogami and Algethami (2022) investigated the potential of WhatsApp to improve speaking skills. In their study, students submitted their opinions via English voice messages on the topics forwarded to the WhatsApp group by the researcher for 9 weeks. The study found that WhatsApp was an important tool for improving EFL speaking skills and encouraging learners to speak the target language. Similarly, Aliakbari and Mardani's study (2022) also found that conducting online classes through WhatsApp had a positive impact on developing EFL learners' speaking skills. Andujar-Vaca and Cruz-Martinez (2017) explored the role of WhatsApp in developing Spanish EFL learners' speaking skills. The experimental group students in the study communicated with each other daily via WhatsApp for 6 months. The results demonstrated that WhatsApp provided students with the opportunity to communicate effectively, negotiate meaning, and receive instant feedback, and so it enhanced learners' speaking proficiency. In another study, Kartal (2024) investigated the role of WhatsApp in improving the pronunciation and speaking skills of university-level EFL students in Turkiye. In the study, each student recorded their voices while doing various activities (e.g., singing English songs, speed reading English texts) and then sent these recordings to

four other classmates in the WhatsApp group for evaluation. They also received feedback from their peers and instructors on their pronunciation. Students' opinions about the application were collected using qualitative data tools, and it was found that WhatsApp made a positive contribution to students' speaking skills and pronunciation. In another study, Phetsut and Waemusa (2022) explored whether integrating WhatsApp into the EFL learning context would be effective in improving the speaking accuracy of Grade 11 EFL learners in Thailand, and found that WhatsApp had a positive impact on enhancing the oral accuracy of learners. Sasabone et al. (2022) conducted a classroom action research study to find out the effects of WhatsApp on developing the speaking skills of EFL learners in English for specific purposes classes and identified that using WhatsApp had positive effects on improving speaking skills. Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2022) investigated whether incorporating Duolingo and WhatsApp into the EFL context could improve EFL learners' speaking fluency and correctness. The study was conducted with three groups: two experimental groups (Duolingo group and WhatsApp gorup) and one control group (traditional method group). The results indicated that students who were taught English conversational exercises via WhatsApp or Duolingo achieved higher outcomes compared to the control group. It was also noted that both mobile applications had similar impacts on improving speaking skills.

2.1.3. Reading Skill

Through WhatsApp, students can be exposed to different types of written content in the target language, such as chat messages, articles, and information notes. In reading groups created via WhatsApp, students can discuss different reading passages they read with their peers and teachers, and so they can improve their reading comprehension skills. The effect of WhatsApp on improving reading comprehension skills in EFL has been the subject of various studies. For example, Khalaf (2017) conducted a research study with grade 10 EFL students in Jordan to determine the effects of WhatsApp and e-mail integrated instructions on students' scanning and skimming reading skills. In the study with a quasi-experimental design, 4 groups were created: a) an e-mail group (experimental); b) a WhatsApp group (experimental); c) both an e-mail and WhatsApp group (experimental); and d) a control group (conventional method). The students in the groups were exposed to reading comprehension texts using various scanning and skimming techniques. Reading post-test outcomes highlighted that the WhatsApp only group demostrated superior performance

to the other groups, and the success ranking was as follows: WhatsApp group, combination of e-mail and WhatsApp group, and e-mail group. In another study, Tumen Akyildiz and Celik (2022) aimed to identify the outcomes of sharing reading tasks via the WhatsApp platform on secondary school EFL students' reading achievement in Turkiye. While the experimental group students completed reading activities on WhatsApp and sent their answers to their teacher via WhatsApp again, the control group students carried out their reading tasks in the traditional classroom setting. The results of the study revealed that the experimental group experienced better improvement than the control group. All these studies show that WhatsApp can be useful for boosting reading skills through effective planning and task design.

2.1.4. Listening Skill

Voice messages and audio files, various listening texts (e.g., short stories, daily conversations, songs), and videos shared via WhatsApp in the target language can help EFL learners develop their listening skills. In addition, dialogues with native speakers of the target language or with instructors can also contribute to the enhancement of listening skills. In relation to this issue, Fauzi and Angkasawati (2019) conducted research with EFL students to determine how providing students with listening logs via WhatsApp would affect their listening comprehension skills. The findings suggested that the implementation with WhatsApp proved to be beneficial in enhancing students' listening skills. Similarly, in their study Andujar and Hussein (2019) found the positive effects of utilizing WhatsApp on the listening skills of EFL students who participated in voice chat-based conversations on WhatsApp for a semester. Likewise, Yuniarti (2020) found that integrating WhatsApp into the listening process using videos, audio files, and speech recordings can develop EFL students' listening skills in English. As evidenced by the results of previous studies, it can be concluded that WhatsApp is a platform that can support students' understanding of English listening texts.

2.2. Improving Vocabulary and Grammar Knowledge

As shown in many studies, the various opportunities offered by WhatsApp as an instant messaging application can contribute significantly to the vocabulary learning process of students learning EFL. In WhatsApp groups, students can share and exchange ideas with each other about the meaning of

words, the use of words in a variety of contexts, synonyms and antonyms, collocations and the grammatical functions of target words. Numerous studies have investigated the integration of WhatsApp in vocabulary learning processes. For instance, Bensalem (2018) conducted an experimental research study with Arab EFL learners to determine the effects of WhatsApp on vocabulary learning. There were two groups in the study: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group found the meaning of the words in a dictionary, made sentences, and shared them on the WhatsApp group, while the control group fulfilled their homework through the traditional paper-and-pencil method. The tests applied in this study showed that the WhatsApp group achieved better results. In a similar investigation, Janfeshan et al. (2023) investigated the impact of blending WhatsApp into the vocabulary learning process of Iranian EFL learners. In the experimental group, the teacher created a WhatsApp chat group where the students shared the explanation, pronunciation, and usage of the target words in sentences. The teacher also asked the students to create sentences with the same words, send them to the group, and give feedback to each other. The control group continued their education with the traditional method. As a result of the study, it was found that the group that received vocabulary training through a WhatsApp chat group was more successful than the other group. Additionally, in Hasan et al.'s (2022) research study carried out with Bangladeshi EFL students, the students in the experimental group learned new words through WhatsApp, while the control group learned new vocabulary through a conventional face-to-face approach. In the experimental group, vocabulary learning via WhatsApp was enriched with various activities, such as using the target words in context, experimenting with antonyms and synonyms, sharing pronunciation hints and images related to new words, and using words in sentences and sharing them in WhatsApp stories. The results of the study showed a clear advantage for the experimental group over the control group in terms of vocabulary learning. In another research study conducted with Saudi EFL learners, Khan et al. (2024) investigated learners' thoughts about practicing words via WhatsApp to enhance their use of vocabulary in speaking. The participants reported that applying WhatsApp to EFL learning had a positive contribution to the development of vocabulary usage, retention and speaking proficiency. In the study of Pazhakh and Alekasir (2017), the following 3 groups were created to teach English idioms to Iranian EFL students: WhatsApp-based experimental group, SMS-based experimental group, and traditional method-based control group. While the WhatsApp group received idiom instruction

through textual and audiovisual methods, the SMS-based group only received textual instruction, and the control group continued their idiom learning through conventional classroom methods. The findings of the investigation showed that the WhatsApp group demonstrated superior performance compared to the other groups. Cetinkaya and Sutcu (2018) explored the influence of WhatsApp and Facebook on grade 9 students' English vocabulary knowledge. To that end, they formed three groups: WhatsApp group, Facebook group and a control group. The information messages sent to the groups covered the English definition of words, their Turkish equivalents, and an example sentence in which the target word was used. The study's findings uncovered that the use of WhatsApp as a medium of vocabulary instruction yielded better results when compared to other mediums of instruction, i.e. Facebook and traditional methods. Taking into account the findings of these studies, it is possible to say that WhatsApp has a positive impact on EFL vocabulary learning.

In addition to vocabulary, WhatsApp can also be used as a means to improve students' knowledge of English grammar. Through WhatsApp messages, students can have the opportunity to see a variety of grammatical structures (e.g., modals, conditionals, relative clauses, passive voice, reported speech, etc.) in the target language and use them to express their thoughts efficiently. They can also use WhatsApp to get feedback from their teachers or native English speakers for their grammatical mistakes. They can have the chance to use grammatical structures in a more natural environment through text and voice messages; thus, this may lead to a more permanent retention of the grammatical structures learned. The potential effects of WhatsApp on grammar knowledge have been investigated in various studies. For example, in their research study, Khan et al. (2022) compared the grammar achievement of two groups of Saudi EFL students: one who practiced grammar on WhatsApp and the other one who practiced grammar on the interface on the classroom blackboard. While one of the groups received feedback through WhatsApp, the other group received feedback through the blackboard interface. The findings of this study revealed that students who practiced grammar over WhatsApp showed considerable progress in their use of correct grammar. Additionally, Contreras Jordan et al. (2021) found in their study that integrating WhatsApp into the EFL learning process improved learners' both grammar and vocabulary knowledge. Considering all this evidence, WhatsApp appears to enhance English vocabulary and grammar knowledge.

2.3. Contributing to Overall Language Learning Success

As an instant messaging application, WhatsApp can provide students with more listening, writing, reading, and speaking opportunities in their target language, enabling them to develop all their target language skills. Visual, written, audio, and multimedia materials shared via WhatsApp can provide students with more engagement with the target language and contribute positively to their general language learning achievement. In Ninsiana et al.'s study (2022) with high school students in Iran, while one group of students received English instruction through WhatsApp, the other group learned English in the classroom through the traditional method. The findings of the achievement tests revealed that the WhatsApp group outperformed the traditional instruction group. In other words, learning English through WhatsApp contributed positively to the overall academic success of the EFL students. In Dewi's (2019) study, EFL students' thoughts about using WhatsApp as a learning medium to improve EFL learning were investigated, and it was found that most of the students stated that utilizing WhatsApp contributed to their language learning success. Similarly, research by Alghamdy (2019) and Ali and Bin-Hady (2019) revealed that leveraging WhatsApp in EFL learning improved general language learning performance. Overall, these studies suggest that WhatsApp is an effective tool for enhancing EFL achievement.

2.4. Providing Authentic Communication

Engaging in conversations via WhatsApp can allow students to encounter more authentic and natural examples in the foreign language and can be effective for giving students the opportunity to have more authentic interaction in the target language. This is exemplified in the work undertaken by Avci and Adiguzel (2017), which was carried out with university-level EFL students in Turkiye to evaluate the effects of WhatsApp on their English language competence. As a result of the study, it was found that students had the opportunity to establish real, meaningful and authentic communications with WhatsApp, which had a positive impact on the development of students' language skills.

2.5. Instant Feedback Opportunity

Through WhatsApp, students can receive real-time feedback from their instructors and peers to their written and verbal messages. Thus, learners can immediately find opportunities to correct their language-related (e.g., grammar, vocabulary choice, pronunciation, sentence structure and meaning) mistakes based on both verbal and written feedback. The constructive feedback that learners receive can encourage them to learn the target language more effectively. For example, Rassaei's study (2024) revealed that providing feedback (i.e. recasts) to target grammar structures using WhatsApp had a positive impact on learners' English. Additionally, Khan et al. (2022) found in their study that instant teacher feedback provided via WhatsApp exerted a beneficial impact on EFL learners' grammar knowledge.

2.6. Supporting Out-of-Class Learning

According to Godwin-Jones (2018), one of the favorable aspects of using mobile technology in language learning is that it enables continuous learning beyond the classroom. Used by millions of people, WhatsApp can offer students a continuous communication experience with their peers outside of school, taking the use of foreign languages beyond the formal classroom environment (Tragant et al., 2022). WhatsApp can present students with the opportunity to practice language in a more flexible and organized manner, regardless of time and place. Also, WhatsApp can help students improve their target language by enabling learning after class time, communication, and sharing instant documents, videos, and similar files. Considering how important it is to be exposed to the language and receive a lot of language input during the language learning process (see also Gass & Mackey, 2007), students can be provided with opportunities to engage and experiment with the foreign language many times outside of school by using the features offered by WhatsApp.

2.7. Fostering Autonomy

WhatsApp can play a supporting role in the language learning process by encouraging students to embrace responsibility for their own learning and to self-direct their learning process. That is to say, WhatsApp can contribute positively to the process of students acquiring autonomous learning habits, as it offers students the chance to continue learning beyond the structured

classroom environments and to advance at their own pace without time and space dependence. Through this interactive and flexible platform, students can manage their learning independently. Additionally, since it is generally easy to access numerous educational materials and resources via WhatsApp sharing, this can also help students develop autonomy in their learning over time. In their study, Janfeshan et al. (2023) emphasized that the use of WhatsApp in the language learning process had a positive contribution to students' autonomous learning process. Similarly, Hazaea and Alzubi's study (2018) investigated the effects of using WhatsApp for reading purposes on EFL learners' autonomy levels. The researchers identified that the WhatsApp mobile application played a significant and positive role in contributing to the autonomy level of EFL students with respect to selecting reading material as well as determining where and when to read target reading texts.

3. AFFECTIVE BENEFITS

3.1. Developing Positive Attitudes toward EFL Learning

Communicating in a foreign language via WhatsApp, which involves understanding messages, responding to them, and getting instant feedback, as well as engaging in cooperation and social interactions, can help students develop a positive attitude toward EFL learning, as it helps students use the language meaningfully. Also, being able to communicate more freely than in a formal classroom environment can contribute to the development of a positive attitude. It has been confirmed in many studies that the use of WhatsApp in the English language learning process creates positive attitudes in students. For example, in the studies of Ali and Bin-Hady (2019) and Ninsiana et al. (2022), students stated that WhatsApp made a positive contribution to their English learning process, and that they had positive perceptions about its use for learning purposes. In addition, two studies with experimental designs, namely Bensalem (2018) and Hasan et al. (2022), comparing students' learning of new words via WhatsApp and the traditional method, revealed that students had positive attitudes toward learning new words with the help of WhatsApp. Furthermore, Mistar and Embi (2016), in their survey-based research, examined the opinions of EFL students in Malaysia about the use of WhatsApp in the process of learning English. The findings indicated that students had a high degree of positive attitudes toward the use of WhatsApp for language learning purposes. Similarly, in their research, Tumen Akyildiz and Celik (2022) identified that students had positive attitudes

and views towards using WhatsApp to improve their reading skills. As these studies show, learners generally have a positive view of the use of WhatsApp when developing various language skills.

3.2. Enjoyment of the Learning Process

WhatsApp can make learning enjoyable as it gives students the opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences within the group and can create a social and collaborative L2 learning environment. In addition, gamified learning materials and activities, competitions, quizzes, and multimedia content shared on WhatsApp groups can help EFL students enjoy the learning process and make learning more engaging. In some studies, it has been confirmed that WhatsApp makes learning fun. For example, in Almekhlafy and Alzubi's (2016) research, EFL learners communicated with native speakers through WhatsApp and they stated that using the target language via WhatsApp was an enjoyable experience for them. Also, Abdullah and Yamat (2022) and Albogami and Algethami (2022) found in their studies that learners reported that they enjoyed using WhatsApp voice messaging while speaking in English. Additionally, in the study by Alenezi and Bensalem (2022), students stated that learning target words via WhatsApp was a fun experience. Based on these findings, it is possible to say that combining the rich features of WhatsApp with the content of L2 activities can help students enjoy the learning process more.

3.3. Increasing Student Motivation

WhatsApp can stimulate motivation in learners to learn a foreign language as they can have the opportunity to communicate with their teachers, native speakers, and other language learners through instant text- and voice-messaging. In addition, collaborative work within WhatsApp groups can boost students' motivation to learn the target language. This sense of cooperative learning created with the help of WhatsApp can both support social learning and make learners feel more motivated. There are many studies showing that WhatsApp enhances student motivation. For example, in Ali and Bin-Hady's (2019) study, EFL learners stated that they liked learning via WhatsApp and participating in group conversations on this platform, which motivated them to learn and use the target language. Similarly, Alghamdy's (2019) research showed that being in a WhatsApp group to learn English was effective in motivating learners. Also, Awada (2016) and Allagui (2014) found in their studies that

using WhatsApp as a mobile learning platform increased students' motivation to learn writing skills. Moreover, Aliakbari and Mardani's (2022) study indicated that mobile-assisted language learning through WhatsApp positively influenced EFL learners' motivation. Taken together, these studies support the belief that WhatsApp has the potential to positively impact learner motivation.

3.4. Reducing Anxiety

WhatsApp can serve a crucial function in reducing learners' anxiety during the language learning process. Students, especially those with high social anxiety and those who avoid face-to-face interaction, can communicate via WhatsApp without fear of making mistakes. As learners generally express themselves through written messages, they may have enough time to think about their intended sentences. This can be considered a factor that alleviates learners' anxiety. In addition, since real-time communication is established through WhatsApp, the opportunity to receive immediate feedback can play a vital part in reducing students' anxiety. Furthermore, the friendly atmosphere created in WhatsApp groups may help anxious students express themselves more comfortably and feel less stressed.

The anxiety-reducing role of WhatsApp in the language learning process has also been supported by the findings of some previous studies. For instance, the study conducted by Han and Keskin (2016) found that students' communication via WhatsApp reduced their English speaking anxiety. In a study by Shamsi et al. (2019), EFL learners received feedback on their speaking task performances (e.g. fluency, pronunciation, use of grammar, vocabulary) through WhatsApp. Outcomes of this study demonstrated that integrating WhatsApp was helpful in alleviating learners' speaking anxiety. Also, Ali and Bin-Hady's (2019) study showed that many students reported feeling more confident and less afraid of making mistakes and not feeling nervous when communicating via WhatsApp. In a similar vein, Albogami and Algethami (2022) highlighted in their studies that communicating with peers through WhatsApp groups effectively reduced students' speaking anxiety. Considering all of this evidence from previous research, it can be concluded that WhatsApp can provide EFL learners with a learning atmosphere free of stress and anxiety (see Janfeshan et al., 2023).

3.5. Improving Social Skills

In the WhatsApp-supported language learning process, students can communicate and collaborate with many peers in a foreign language, both one-on-one, and in established groups, and carry out joint studies such as projects (see Avci & Adiguzel, 2017). In this way, students can have the opportunity to develop both their foreign language and social skills. Furthermore, WhatsApp can enable effective communication not only between students but also between teachers and their students, both socially and educationally, in and out of the classroom (Alouch et al., 2021). In a study conducted by Alghamdy (2019), it was found that benefiting from WhatsApp as a mobile learning tool improved learners' social skills (e.g. respecting and accepting different points of view and being able to express their own beliefs and thoughts with confidence in the target language).

3.6. Building Self-Confidence in Language Use

Thanks to the voice and written communication opportunities offered by WhatsApp, students' fear of committing errors can be reduced, and their self-confidence and belief in using a foreign language can increase. Regarding this, the studies conducted by Albogami and Algethami (2022), Abdullah and Yamat (2022), and Alghamdy (2019) found that using WhatsApp voice messages had positive effects on building students' English-speaking confidence. The reason students feel more confident can be explained by the fact that they can have more opportunities to communicate with their friends in the target language via WhatsApp, and WhatsApp chat groups can offer a more friendly atmosphere compared to the formal classroom environment.

4. CONCLUSION

This extensive review aimed to understand the benefits of integrating the popular messaging app WhatsApp into EFL learning contexts, based on several important theoretical and empirical studies. In light of the findings of previous research, the review determined that WhatsApp can make many positive contributions to the EFL learning process both inside and outside of school, and it can be used as an educational instrument to support the learning journey in various EFL education contexts. Also, the study identified that WhatsApp has the potential to offer multiple opportunities to the EFL learning process such

as developing language skills (e.g. reading, listening) and language domains (e.g. grammar, vocabulary), having positive impacts on general language achievement, providing learners with authentic and meaningful communication and instant feedback, and allowing students to study the target language both in and out of the classroom. Moreover, considering the reviewed literature, it is possible to say that the WhatsApp-supported learning process not only helps students develop a positive attitude towards the language learning process and use the language more confidently, but also helps them enjoy the EFL learning journey, increase their motivation, and reduce their anxiety. Besides, it can contribute to students' active participation in the learning process both in and outside school and taking responsibility for their own learning.

One of the important points here is that because each application may have some limitations, it is of great importance to plan teaching in a way that the app can be used in the most effective manner. Therefore, before using WhatsApp in the language teaching process, teachers should be fully informed about how to use it effectively and guide students in its proper use. For example, if WhatsApp is to be used to improve a language skill (e.g., reading) or language area (e.g., grammar, pronunciation), conducting a pilot study beforehand can allow the application to be used more effectively and efficiently. Moreover, in order to achieve more successful results, it is recommended to ensure that group meetings and voice and text messages on the platform take place at appropriate time intervals. Furthermore, planning each step in line with the objectives before starting the WhatsApp-assisted language learning process will help students benefit from the application to the fullest extent. In conclusion, this literature review focused on the benefits of WhatsApp and has shown that WhatsApp can be utilized as a beneficial supportive tool in the EFL learning process with proper planning and careful implementation. The insights gained from this study add to the growing body of research that highlights the benefits of using mobile tools in foreign language education.

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