

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the study, including the research background, research questions, research purposes, research significance, research scope, conceptual framework, and previous studies. Each section is presented in sequence to build a clear rationale for the research, starting from the problem that motivates the study and ending with a review of related studies that situate this research within the existing body of knowledge. This chapter therefore serves as the foundation for the discussion of the research methodology in Chapter III, which explains how the study was carried out to answer the research questions outlined in this chapter.

A Research Background

Grammar is a fundamental aspect of learning the English language; however, it remains a recurring problem among junior high school students. According to Silaban and Manurung (2025), junior high school students in the Indonesian context frequently experience difficulties in mastering grammar, particularly in the use of tenses, verb forms, and sentence structures, which in turn affects their ability to understand and communicate with one another. Over time, these recurring errors can make it harder for students to communicate clearly. Ur (2012) further argued that the main challenge in teaching grammar lies not in transmitting the rules themselves, but in converting that rule-based knowledge into accurate, spontaneous use during real communication. A similar point is made by Nikouee and Oba (2025), who found that grammar practice works better when learners are pushed to apply a structure under real communicative pressure rather than just drilling the rule on its own.

Within this broader issue of grammar mastery, grammar accuracy specifically refers to the correct and consistent use of grammatical forms in communication, which involves rule memorisation as well as the ability to apply those rules appropriately in context (Ellis, 2006; Larsen-Freeman, 2003). A comparable definition is used in more recent work as well; Taye (2025), for instance, describes

accuracy as the correct, consistent, and context-appropriate use of linguistic forms, underlining that accuracy is not just about avoiding mistakes but about producing language that communicates clearly and reliably. Grammar accuracy is considered a key indicator of language proficiency in EFL learning, as errors in tense, verb form, and sentence structure can obscure meaning and affect how well a message is understood. At the junior high school level, this issue is particularly relevant, as students are first introduced to systematic grammar instruction, including tenses such as the Simple Past Tense, which requires the accurate use of different verb forms and sentence patterns. However, difficulties with grammar accuracy at this level appear to remain relatively underexplored through classroom-based intervention, which points to a need for research examining strategies specifically designed to improve grammar accuracy among junior high school students.

This issue also appears at SMP Al-Isma'iliyah, the site chosen for this study. During a preliminary visit to submit the research permission letter, the researcher had an informal conversation with the English teacher, who mentioned that eighth-grade students generally struggle with grammar. Grammar was mostly taught through memorisation, such as having students memorise lists of regular and irregular verbs, rather than through activities where they could actually practise using the forms. The teacher also noted that students' motivation and interest during grammar lessons tended to be average, not particularly high or low. This situation reflects a broader pattern found in grammar learning, where students' difficulties are shaped by several interacting factors.

Students' grammatical errors can be influenced by a range of factors. Internally, individual differences such as students' prior language proficiency, working memory, and motivation to learn have been shown to affect how well learners acquire and apply grammatical rules (Gass et al., 2020). This is consistent with Chen et al. (2022), who found that cognitive factors such as working memory and attentional control were significant predictors of how quickly learners picked up new grammatical patterns, especially in the early stages of learning. Externally, the repetition of grammatical errors can also be shaped by the teaching strategies implemented in the classroom, as instructional approaches that rely heavily on rote

memorisation and repetitive drilling tend to be less effective in helping students internalise grammar rules. This means classroom-based strategies are one of the factors that can realistically be adjusted to help reduce students' grammatical errors.

One instructional strategy that has gained increasing attention is gamification, which refers to the incorporation of game-like elements and principles into non-game learning contexts (Saleem et al., 2022). Gamification typically involves elements such as points, challenges, competition, and immediate feedback, which are used to stimulate student motivation and engagement (Deterding et al., 2011; Sailer & Homner, 2020). Kapp (2012) further explains that gamification is not merely about playing games in the classroom, but about using game elements purposefully to increase student engagement and encourage perseverance in mastering difficult subjects such as grammar. More recent evidence points in the same direction: Al-Khresheh (2025), in a systematic review of gamification research, found that gamified activities can strengthen learners' concentration and memory retention while keeping their motivation up over the course of instruction, and Zhang and Hasim (2023) reported comparable gains in language skills and attitude across a wide range of EFL/ESL classroom settings. In the present study, gamification was implemented through a combination of team-based physical activities, such as group quizzes and worksheet-based challenges, and Wayground, a digital gamified quiz platform used in its Paper Mode to accommodate the classroom's limited access to individual student devices.

In the context of gamification, the Group-to-Individual learning model offers a structured approach that is likely to support student learning, as it allows students to build understanding collaboratively before being required to apply that understanding independently (Slavin, 1995). In this model, students first work in groups and then apply their knowledge individually. Bećirović et al. (2022) reported a comparable pattern more recently, finding that individual accountability and promotive interaction, two core components of cooperative learning, were significant predictors of both motivation and achievement among EFL high-school learners. According to Vygotsky (1978), group learning tends to create social interaction between students, which may make learning more effective as students

move toward independent mastery. This is also in line with Storch (2013), who found a significant increase in students' attention to grammatical form during collaborative learning, a finding echoed by Allami et al. (2025), who showed that learners who collaborated before writing independently produced noticeably more accurate grammar than those who did not.

Several studies have found that both gamification and the Group-to-Individual learning model tend to have a positive impact on student motivation and academic performance. Abdalbaki et al. (2025) found a significant increase in grammar scores and higher motivation in classes that used gamified learning compared with classes that used conventional instruction. Similarly, Sun et al. (2025) demonstrated the effectiveness of moving from group-based to individual learning in encouraging learning transfer, showing that the effectiveness of interaction during group activities in a game-based learning environment is a strong indicator of individual learning success. However, no prior research appears to have investigated the simultaneous application of gamification and the Group-to-Individual model as an intervention to improve grammatical accuracy.

Therefore, the current study aims to fill this gap by investigating the effect of Group-to-Individual Gamified Learning on the grammatical accuracy of students. The methodology of the study is quantitative, involving the use of a pre-experimental design with a One-Group Pretest-Posttest design model. The expected outcomes will help add new information related to the effectiveness of Group-to-Individual Gamified Learning in enhancing grammatical accuracy in students and guide the creation of efficient, innovative pedagogical strategies.

B Research Questions

Based on the research background above, this study addresses the following three research questions:

1. How is the level of grammar accuracy in using the Simple Past Tense of eighth-grade students at SMP Al-Isma'iliyah before the implementation of the Group-to-Individual Gamified Learning strategy?

2. How is the level of grammar accuracy in using the Simple Past Tense of eighth-grade students at SMP Al-Isma'iliyah after the implementation of the Group-to-Individual Gamified Learning strategy?
3. How significant is the improvement in grammar accuracy in using the Simple Past Tense of eighth-grade students at SMP Al-Isma'iliyah after the implementation of the Group-to-Individual Gamified Learning strategy?

C Research Purposes

In line with the research questions above, this study aims to achieve the following three purposes:

1. To measure the grammar accuracy in using the Simple Past Tense of eighth-grade students at SMP Al-Isma'iliyah before the implementation of the Group-to-Individual Gamified Learning strategy.
2. To measure the grammar accuracy in using the Simple Past Tense of eighth-grade students at SMP Al-Isma'iliyah after the implementation of the Group-to-Individual Gamified Learning strategy.
3. To determine the significant improvement in grammar accuracy in using the Simple Past Tense of eighth-grade students at SMP Al-Isma'iliyah after the implementation of the Group-to-Individual Gamified Learning strategy.

D Research Significances

1. Theoretical Significance

This study is expected to contribute to the development of learning theory, particularly in the areas of gamified learning and grammar instruction in the EFL setting, by presenting empirical evidence on the effect of Group-to-Individual Gamified Learning on students' grammatical accuracy. Specifically, the findings may help clarify how combining group-based gamified activities with individual assessment relates to students' ability to use grammatical structures accurately, an area that has not been widely examined together in previous studies. In this way, the study is expected to add to the existing body of knowledge on gamification and grammar teaching in the EFL context, particularly at the junior high school level.

2. Practical Significance

The findings of this study are expected to provide English teachers with a practical, ready-to-use instructional option for teaching grammar, in the form of game-based activities that combine group collaboration with individual accountability, particularly for teaching tenses such as the Simple Past Tense. Teachers may use this strategy as an alternative to more conventional grammar teaching techniques, especially in classes where students tend to lose interest during repetitive grammar drills. This strategy is also relatively easy to apply, since it does not require resources beyond basic gamified activities and a group-to-individual task structure.

3. Pedagogical Significance

Beyond its immediate classroom application, this study may also inform the broader design of grammar instruction by illustrating how game elements, cooperative learning, and individual practice can be systematically integrated into a single instructional sequence, offering a reference point for future curriculum or lesson design in EFL grammar teaching. This may be useful for teachers or lesson designers who want to balance collaborative and independent learning within one teaching sequence. It may also serve as a starting point for future research exploring similar instructional models for other grammatical structures or language skills.

E Research Scope

This study is limited in scope, as it focuses specifically on assessing how the Group-to-Individual Gamified Learning intervention affects the grammatical accuracy of junior high school students. The participants were eighth-grade students of SMP Al-Isma'iliyah, consisting of 25 students. In terms of grammatical coverage, the study was limited to the grammatical structure taught to eighth-grade students at the time of the research, namely the Simple Past Tense.

The study employed a quantitative approach, using a pre-experimental design with a one-group pretest-posttest model to measure students' improvement. The test consisted of 25 multiple-choice questions adapted from GoGetter 2 (Pearson Education Limited, 2017; 2018). Other English language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, were not investigated in this study, as the research

focused solely on grammatical accuracy as an academic outcome measured through students' pre-test and post-test scores.

F Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework explains how Group-to-Individual Gamified Learning is expected to improve students' grammatical accuracy, as illustrated in the schematic graph below:

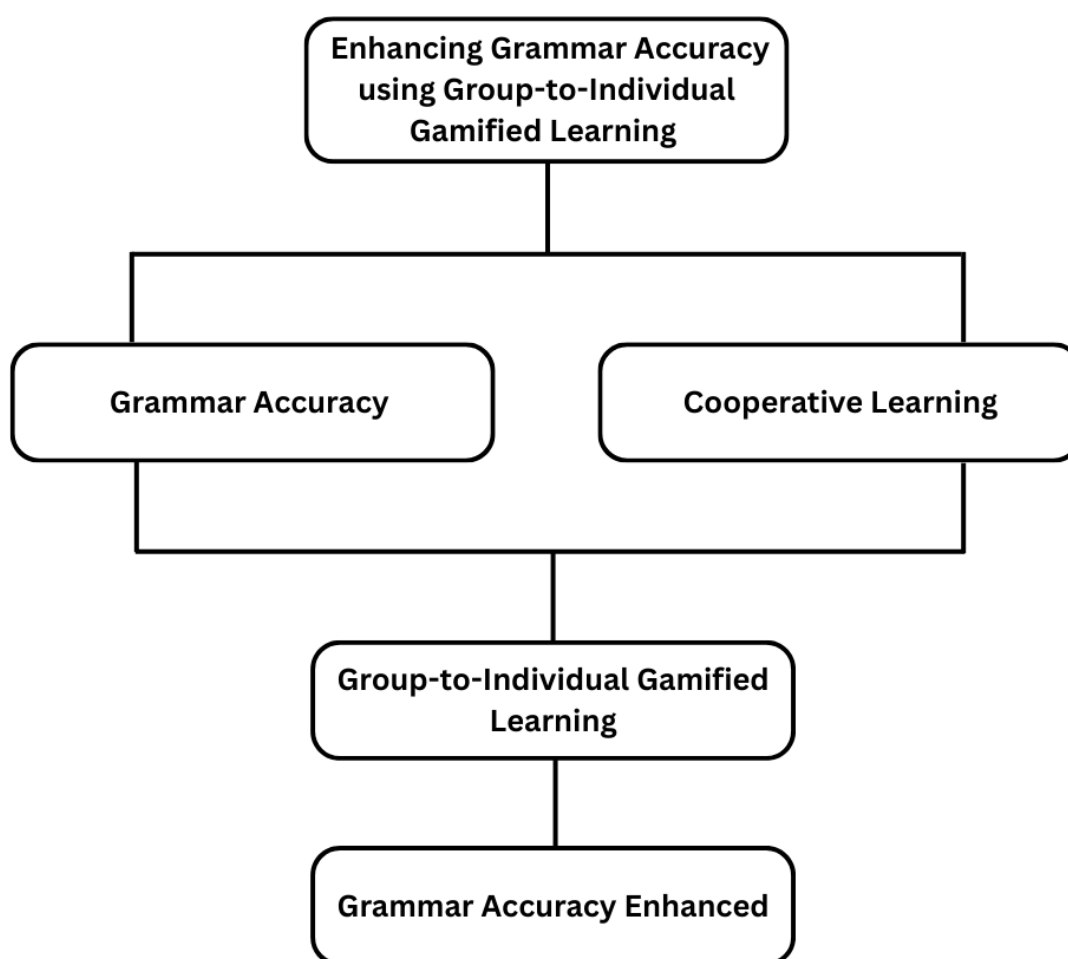


Figure 1. 1 The Conceptual Framework

Overall, learning is understood to be an active process whereby learners build knowledge by engaging with each other, by experience, and by reflection. Constructivist learning theory stresses that students learn better when they actively participate in the learning process, and that social interaction helps them develop cognitively (Vygotsky, 1978). Such a view attests to the significance of interactive and student-centred learning settings.

Grammar accuracy is an essential element of language proficiency in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Not only rule memorisation but also repetitive practice, meaningful use, and feedback are factors in grammar accuracy development (Ellis, 2006; Larsen-Freeman, 2003). Therefore, grammar learning ought to give learners the appropriate opportunity to practise grammatical structures in a motivating and meaningful setting.

Cooperative learning is also significant in promoting learning through peer interaction. Through collaboration, sharing, and giving feedback to each other, students gain a greater understanding of learning materials (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Slavin, 1995). Nonetheless, cooperative learning should be carefully balanced with individual responsibility to help ensure that every student achieves their own learning outcomes.

Gamified learning is one of the instructional methods that encourages active learning. Gamification incorporates game-based features such as points, challenges, and feedback into the learning process to make students more motivated and engaged (Deterding et al., 2011; Saleem et al., 2022). Previous studies have pointed out that gamified learning has the potential to positively affect student engagement and learning, including language learning (Sailer & Homner, 2020).

On these grounds, the Group-to-Individual Gamified Learning model was implemented in this study. The model sets up tasks in which students first participate in group activities to study and rehearse grammar as a team, before later completing individual tasks or quizzes to demonstrate their comprehension and mastery. This sequence is expected to foster motivation, active participation, peer socialisation, and individual responsibility (Slavin, 1995).

These learning processes, namely motivation, active engagement, peer interaction, meaningful practice, and individual accountability, are expected to contribute to improved learning outcomes. Through these mechanisms, students are expected to develop the ability to use grammatical structures, particularly the Simple Past Tense, more accurately. This framework serves as the basis for the present research, which proposes that the application of Group-to-Individual Gamified Learning may lead to a meaningful improvement in students' grammar

accuracy. This improvement was statistically measured using students' grammar test scores before and after the treatment (pre-test and post-test).

G Research Hypothesis

A hypothesis serves as a tentative answer to a research problem that still needs to be verified through empirical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In line with the third research question of this study, concerning the significance of the improvement in students' grammar accuracy, the following hypotheses were formulated:

4. Null Hypothesis (H_0) = There is no significant difference in students' grammar accuracy scores before and after being taught using Group-to-Individual Gamified Learning.
5. Alternative Hypothesis (H_1) = There is a significant difference in students' grammar accuracy scores before and after being taught using Group-to-Individual Gamified Learning.

H Previous Research

The application of gamification and game-based learning in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, and especially in enhancing the grammar performance of the students, has been examined in a growing body of research. Overall, existing research provides empirical evidence suggesting that gamified learning settings may help improve the motivation, interest, and grammar acquisition of students. The following section reviews several relevant studies conducted in recent years, focusing on how gamification and group-to-individual learning approaches have been applied in EFL grammar instruction.

Ramadhanti and Pratiwi (2025) conducted a quantitative study to investigate the application of scrambled games as a gamification method to enhance the mastery of English grammar among learners in secondary schools. Using a pre-test/post-test design, the researchers found that the grammar performance of the students showed a significant improvement following the application of gamified activities. The results showed that game features provided a more pleasant learning environment, active engagement, and helped students to better internalise grammar rules. On the same note, Abdulbaki et al. (2025) explored the efficacy of gamified learning

conditions among EFL students of secondary school in Jordan. Based on an experimental design, the study revealed that students who were in the gamified learning condition were significantly better in grammar scores than students who were in the conventional instruction condition, as well as exhibited greater motivation and sustained attention.

In a related study, Zuhri et al. (2025) discussed the application of learning through digital games to facilitate grammar instruction in EFL classrooms. Their research focused on the impact of such elements of the game as points, challenges, and feedback that boost student motivation and grammar comprehension. The results indicated that the students were more engaged and interested in the practice of grammar, which means that gamified learning is able to transform the teacher-centred grammar learning method into an interactive and student-centred one. In line with these results, Nurhalyza and Agustina (2025) studied the perceptions of grammar learning in students using Quizizz, a digital learning platform that is gamified. Using a qualitative method, the research found that students found learning grammar through gamification more interesting, pleasant and beneficial compared to traditional exercises. Competitive factors and immediate feedback were said to alleviate anxiety and lead to improved grammar comprehension.

Other researchers have also investigated gamification concerning learning transfer and collaborative learning. Rayhan et al. (2025) explored the application of gamified learning in enhancing writing skills in EFL learners in terms of grammar and vocabulary accuracy, using a quasi-experimental research design. Despite the lack of statistical significance of the difference in means between experimental and control groups, the results showed that grammatical accuracy means in the gamified group were higher, and students showed more interest in the gamified group. In addition, Sun et al. (2025) also addressed the connection between collaborative problem-solving and learning transfer between groups and individuals in a game-based learning setting. The research determined that successful interaction in group activities was a strong indicator of individual learning outcomes, meaning that the progression of instruction from group to individual assessment can be effective in promoting transfer of learning.

Research on the Indonesian EFL setting between 2023 and 2025 tended to record a positive impact of gamification and game-based learning on the students in their mastery of grammar and their interest in learning, especially at the junior high school level. These studies emphasised that game-related aspects, including points, challenges, competition, and prompt feedback, can be used to lower anxiety in students learning grammar and enhance grammatical accuracy. These studies also stressed that cooperative learning combined with individual accountability can help avoid passive involvement and enhance the depth of grammatical knowledge, which corresponds to the principles of cooperative learning of positive interdependence and individual responsibility.

Although the prior studies have had positive results, the majority of the studies have been oriented towards either completely collaborative gamified learning or individual gamified activities. There is also little research that specifically investigated the teaching sequence from a group-based gamification task to a one-on-one grammar test, especially among junior high school learners. Thus, the current research fills this research gap as it examines the impact of Group-to-Individual Gamified Learning, the combination of cooperative and individual assessment, on the grammar accuracy of the students. Focusing on collaborative and individual learning processes, the present work makes an original contribution to the EFL gamification research.