



UTILIZING BOARD GAMES AS MEDIA TO ENHANCE THIRD-GRADE STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF PREPOSITION OF PLACE IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN MALANG

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of board games as a learning medium to improve third-grade students' understanding of English prepositions of place. English, as an international language, plays a crucial role in global communication. Grammar instruction is introduced as early as elementary school; however, many students struggle with distinguishing grammatical components, particularly in prepositions of place. Traditional teaching methods often fail to support students in differentiating these concepts effectively. To address this issue, this study examines the use of board games as a learning medium to enhance students' understanding of grammar. Board games provide an interactive and engaging approach by incorporating game elements into the learning process. Using a one-group pretest – posttest classroom action research design with 27 participants at a public elementary school in Malang. The findings reveal a significant improvement in students' grammar mastery, as indicated by an increase in the average score from 70.2 (pre-test) to 87.1 (post-test) in the first cycle. Observations further demonstrate that board games enhance student engagement, foster a more enjoyable learning environment, and improve comprehension. These results suggest that incorporating board games into grammar instruction can be an effective strategy for young learners.

Keywords: Board Games, Preposition of Place, Learning Media, Elementary Education, English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

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INTRODUCTION | مقدمة

English is an international language used as a means of communication across different countries, making it essential for individuals to learn in order to facilitate global interactions (Faridatunnisa, 2020). In Indonesia, English is a foreign language in Indonesia rather, it is considered a foreign language, distinct from Bahasa Indonesia in terms of grammar and vocabulary. Situmorang (2020) explained that although English is a foreign language, it is still taught in Indonesia starting from elementary school. However, not all schools implement English as a formal subject. Some schools offer it as an extracurricular activity, while others do not include English in their curriculum due to a lack of institutional readiness. This is further reinforced by Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024, which states that English is not yet a mandatory subject at the elementary level until the academic year 2026/2027. Consequently, schools that lack the necessary infrastructure or qualified English teachers are not required to

implement English instruction (Andina et al., 2023).

At the primary school level, grammar instruction is not heavily emphasized; however, it should be introduced gradually. Grammar has long been regarded as a crucial aspect of English language learning (Arjan et al., 2013). Mastery of grammar is essential as it enables students to construct sentences correctly, whether in written or spoken form, thereby improving their overall language proficiency (Etisa, 2017). English learning materials should be contextualized and exemplified in real-life situations, including topics such as narrative texts, procedural texts, and place prepositions. Place prepositions, in particular, are often perceived as relatively simple yet can be confusing for learners. Arjan et al. (2013) highlighted that prepositions are among the most challenging aspects of second-language acquisition. A preposition functions as a linking word that connects nouns or pronouns to other elements in a sentence. Despite their importance, many students struggle to understand and differentiate between various prepositions of place, often failing to select the appropriate one based on context (Nurjanah, 2016).

At the elementary school level, students are introduced to different types of prepositions, including: (1) Prepositions of Place, which describe the location of objects or people, such as "in," "on," "under," "between," "behind," "beside," "in front of," and "near" (Oblaqulova, 2024); (2) Prepositions of Direction, which indicate movement, such as "to," "from," "by," "toward," "on," "against," and "through"; and (3) Prepositions of Time, which establish temporal relationships, such as "at," "on," "after," "before," "since," "from," "during," and "until" (Situmorang, 2020). While these prepositions are introduced progressively across different grade levels, many students continue to struggle with distinguishing between them, particularly when presented with visual representations in textbooks. Research by Fajriani & Ardian (2012) suggests that students' difficulties in learning prepositions are partly due to the limited variety of teaching methods used by educators. Given that teachers play a crucial role in facilitating the learning process, they must explore innovative teaching strategies to enhance student understanding.

One effective approach is the integration of learning media, which serves as a tool to facilitate knowledge transfer between teachers and students while also increasing engagement and motivation (Ardiel et al., 2023). Learning media should align with instructional objectives and subject matter to ensure that students not only enjoy the learning process but also effectively grasp the concepts being taught. Nurjanah (2016) emphasized that instructional media play a vital role in English language teaching by introducing new learning concepts. Both technology-based and non-technology-based media can be utilized in the classroom, with examples of the latter including flashcards, flannel boards, and board games.

Board games, in particular, offer an interactive and engaging way to enhance students' understanding of prepositions. They involve the use of physical boards as instructional tools, where players move pieces according to predefined rules. Rajkovic et al. (2019) noted that board games can foster student engagement, social interaction, and deeper comprehension of subject matter. Additionally, board games provide an opportunity for students to collaborate and practice their language skills in a more relaxed and enjoyable environment (Christian & Prasida, 2018). In the context of preposition learning, Hasaban & Said (2024) found that board games can effectively help students internalize prepositional phrases by encouraging hands-on participation.

The advantages of using board games as a teaching tool include facilitating two-way communication between teachers and students, reinforcing students' comprehension and

language skills, and promoting an engaging learning experience without reliance on digital devices (Christian & Prasida, 2018). In this study, the board game activity will involve students working in groups, where each group will analyze and place prepositions on a board according to the given context. Through this interactive method, students are expected to develop a stronger understanding of place prepositions and overcome the common challenges associated with learning them.

Previous studies have explored the use of board games in educational settings. Rajkovic et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative study on the use of board games in history education, concluding that they enhance student participation and foster a more dynamic learning experience. Similarly, Fahira et al. (2024) employed a quasi-experimental design to examine the impact of board games on vocabulary acquisition, finding that board game-based instruction significantly improved vocabulary retention compared to traditional methods. While board games have been applied in various learning contexts, their use in teaching prepositions of place remains underexplored. Faez & Said (2024) investigated the effectiveness of board games in teaching prepositions of direction, demonstrating their success in improving students' mastery of directional prepositions. However, research on the application of board games for teaching prepositions of place is still limited. This study aims to fill that gap by examining the use of board games as an instructional medium to enhance elementary students' understanding of place prepositions. The study was conducted at a public elementary school in Malang where English is taught as a local content subject.

METHOD | منهج

Participants

This research was conducted in one of the state schools in the city of Malang. The participants in this research were third-grade students, a total of twenty-seven students, ten female students and seventeen male students, for the 2024/2025 academic year.

Research Design

In this research, a mixed method was used, using classroom action research (CAR). Burns (2015) said that action research can be seen from actions that produce, inform and build theory. In action research, not only theory is developed, but practice in the classroom is needed because that way, learning will be more meaningful. The application of the classroom action research method requires a cycle consisting of planning, action, observation and reflection. Action research is carried out to solve problems in the learning process. If the problem has not been resolved in one cycle, it must be continued to the next cycle, namely the second cycle, and continued until the problem is resolved. The instruments used in this research are pre-test and post-test, as well as observation. In the instrument, researchers will take data from how students are taught and then whether the use of board media is suitable as a learning medium and whether it can increase student interest. In this study, the pre-test and post-test instruments were used, both consisting of two types of questions, namely multiple choice questions and fill the blank questions. A 10-item written test consisting of multiple choice and fill in the blank questions was developed to assess students' understanding of prepositions of place. The board game session lasted 90 minutes and was integrated into the regular English lesson. During the initial session, students engaged in a review of prepositions, followed by a board game activity

that involved constructing sentences based on visual stimuli (e.g., “The pencil is on the table”). In the subsequent session, students collaborated in groups, taking turns posing and responding to preposition-based inquiries, with the objective of accumulating points for accurate responses. Students played in small groups of 4-5, following teacher instructions and completing tasks related to spatial vocabulary. The research received permission from the school principal and parental consent was obtained prior to data collection. During the observation, researchers meticulously documented student engagement and participation levels. Initially, a few students seated at the back exhibited diminished attentiveness. However, implementing grouping strategies effectively enhanced their involvement. Subsequently, in the reflection phase, post-test results were meticulously analyzed to ascertain the extent of improvement and determine the necessity of additional cycles.

RESULT نتائج

Cycle 1

Before the first cycle was carried out, the researchers provided a pre-test, which participants had to complete first. The pre-test was carried out to determine students' abilities before using board games as media. The pre-test provides twenty questions consisting of fifteen multiple-choice questions and five fill-the-blank questions. The results of the pre-test can be seen in Table 1 below:

Table 1. The result of the Pre-Test

No	Name	Pre-Test	Ministry of Health = 75	
			Complete	Incomplete
1	AAR	46		V
2	AASP	80	V	
3	ABA	78		
4	ABAO	68		V
5	AGZ	52		V
6	AIPU	56		V
7	AKP	72		V
8	ASA	66		V
9	ATA	80	V	
10	CAR	66		V
11	CFA	72		V
12	DPL	52		V
13	EFP	86	V	
14	HDA	74		V
15	ITA	72		V
16	IZM	42		V
17	KAS	64		V
18	KIM	52		V
19	KSQ	92	V	
20	MAF	92	V	
21	MAYT	78		V
22	MSK	78		V
23	MZA	52		V
24	NZA	72		V
25	RRR	86	V	
26	SAE	74		V
27	SRAM	94	V	
Total		1896	7	20
Mean		70,2	26%	74%

It can be seen from the table above that the pre-test scores obtained by students are still

very many who get scores below the KKM, even though the average score obtained is 70.2, which is still below the passing grade or KKM, namely 75. with the statement that students who get scores above passing grade only seven students (26%). Frequency analysis can be seen in Table 2 below:

Table 2. The Analyses of Students Achievement of Pre-Test

Category	Value Range	Frequency	Percentage
Very Good	93-100	1	4%
Good	84-92	4	15%
Sufficient	75-83	5	18%
Poor	0-74	17	63%
		27	100%

From the analysis values above, it can be seen that the frequency of students who got a "poor" score was the highest with a percentage of 63%, namely 17 students, but only one student got a score in the "outstanding" category. Meanwhile, for students who got the frequency of the "good" category, there were four students with a percentage of 15% and finally five students in the "sufficient" category with a percentage of 18%. It can be concluded that learning to use board games can improve students' ability to learn the prepositions of place.

Planning

After carrying out a pre-test to determine students' abilities in learning the preposition of place, after getting results, the researchers could conclude that varied learning was needed in order to help students increase their interest. Apart from that, it could also increase their abilities and knowledge. So, researchers will prepare media that can be used in classroom action, namely board games. Before applying it in class, the researchers made the media using cardboard, glue, printed images, scissors and clear duct tape. The researchers created media by adapting the material being taught, namely about items in the classroom, so the researcher prepared a board game with pictures of tables, chairs, erasers, pencils, bags, rulers and books. Apart from preparing the learning media that will be used, the researchers also prepared observation instruments that will be used when observing in the classroom.

Action

The application of board games is carried out in class, with a duration of 2 meetings and a time of 2 x 45 minutes. The application of this board game is carried out in several ways. At the first meeting, the researchers will explain the meaning of the preposition words that will be studied. After the students have memorised and known the preposition words being studied, the researchers will carry out the learning using board games. The researchers attached the board games to the whiteboard according to the picture. Then, the students answered together with the sentence "One bag is on the table" after changing the picture on the board several times. The researchers changed the strategy by calling students randomly to answer the question. Then, at the second meeting, learning using board games was still carried out, but the students were divided into three groups. Each group prepared a question where they took turns coming forward by attaching the board image to the blackboard, and the other group answered. Each group that answers the questions will be given points. The purpose of this learning is that apart from increasing students' understanding, it can build students' ability to work together in solving

problems, especially on the questions given.

Observation

In learning using board games as learning media, researchers saw and observed students in the learning process. From the results of the observations made by the researchers, it can be seen that at the first meeting, the students were already focused on the material and media. Evidence of this was the enthusiasm of the students in answering the questions given. Apart from that, when using board games as learning media, they showed pleasant expressions because they had never studied using this media before. However, there were still some students who lacked focus because they sat at the back, and they felt that they were not visible to the researchers. At the second meeting, the researcher invited students to form groups so that several students who were at the table at the back of the previous meeting would be combined and rolled with several other students. By changing seats and being in groups, students are more active in participating with other friends in the learning process using board games.

Reflecting

The last step of this research is reflection. The researchers carried out several series in this research, starting from the pre-test, preparing everything related to the research, such as learning media and research instruments, then continued with application in class for two meetings and observing how the students in the class were doing in the learning process, the researcher finished by reflecting. Reflecting on this will determine whether the learning process carried out is in accordance with the objectives of this research or needs to be continued in the second cycle. In the classroom action research method, when the process is carried out, the results are still less than optimal, and the research must be continued to the next cycle until the desired results meet the criteria.

In this reflection, students did the post-test with the same number of questions as the pre-test. The results of this post-test were seen after the application of the board game as media in the classroom, which was carried out in the first cycle. The results of the post-test can be seen in Table 3 below:

Table 3. The result of the Post-Test

No	Name	Post-Test	Ministry of Health = 75	
			Complete	Incomplete
1	AAR	76	V	
2	AASP	80	V	
3	ABA	92	V	
4	ABAO	94	V	
5	AGZ	84	V	
6	AIPU	80	V	
7	AKP	86	V	
8	ASA	82	V	
9	ATA	100	V	
10	CAR	80	V	
11	CFA	86	V	
12	DPL	80	V	
13	EFP	92	V	
14	HDA	88	V	
15	ITA	86	V	
16	IZM	80	V	
17	KAS	80	V	
18	KIM	86	V	
19	KSQ	100	V	
20	MAF	100	V	

21	MAYT	86	V	
22	MSK	92	V	
23	MZA	82	V	
24	NZA	80	V	
25	RRR	92	V	
26	SAE	88	V	
27	SRAM	100	V	
Total		2352	27	0
Mean		87,1	100%	0%

From the results of the post-test above in the first cycle, it can be seen that all students got a score above the KKM, namely 75. The post-test score obtained was a total of 2352 with an average of 87.1, where the average score increased from 70.2 to 87. ,1. and there are no students who get a score below KKM. Analysis of the frequency of student grades can be seen in the following table:

Table 4. The Analyses of Students Achievement of Pre-Test

Category	Value Range	Frequency	Percentage
Very Good	93-100	5	19%
Good	84-92	12	44%
Sufficient	75-83	10	37%
Poor	0-74	0	0%
		27	100%

In the previous explanation, it was stated that all students' post-test scores had increased from before, and no students got scores below the KKM. The frequency of student scores in the "very good" category was five students with a percentage of 19% and 12 students with a percentage of 44% in the "good" category. In comparison, 10 students got the "sufficient" category with a percentage of 37%. From the results of the pre-test and post-test, it can be seen that there has been an increase in the average student score from 70.2 to 87.1. So, learning to use board games as media in the preposition of place was successful, and there was no need to continue to the next cycle.

DISCUSSION | مناقشة

In accordance with the results explained, learning was carried out using board games as learning media in this research. The research was carried out in 1 cycle without continuing to the next cycle. The results provided showed a significant increase in pre-test and post-test scores, with average results above the KKM with scores from 70.2 to 87.1. Even for students who got scores above passing grades, there was an increase in the pre-test from only seven students to 27 students, with an initial percentage of 26% to 100%. This is in accordance with the results explained in Fajriani & Ardian (2012) research, which showed that there was an increase in grades and a successful research process in elementary school students, but only in different classes. From the existing results, learning prepositions of place material using board games is effective and can be a reference for teachers and researchers in conducting learning. Learning using this board game has also been carried out in Faez & Said (2024) research but with a different focus. This research was conducted to learn the preposition of place, but in previous research, the focus was on the preposition of direction. Although no formal statistical test was conducted, the substantial increase in mean scores and complete mastery by all students suggest a strong positive effect of the intervention

Based on the results of the observations, researchers can conclude that learning to use media can make students more enthusiastic and attract students' interest. They feel that when studying using the traditional method, they are more bored because they usually tend to use the lecture method. When teachers conduct learning using learning media, they will be more interested and more active in participating. These results are confirmed by research by Christian & Prasida (2018), which explains that using learning media can be an alternative. Because the more innovative the teacher is in learning, the more interested the students will be in learning. As the results explained previously, when they are given assignments in groups, they will be more able to participate in learning well by trying to solve problems, namely questions.

This board game is not only for learning English, especially in certain materials, but it suggests potential applicability in other contexts, such as in Christian and Prasida's (2018) research about waste sorting then in Rajkovic et al. (2019) research as an educational medium for learning history, or in Fahira et al. (2024) research for learning vocabulary, and so on.

The findings of this study indicate that students in the elementary school level still face difficulties in understanding the use of prepositions of place in English. While they have been introduced to basic prepositions such as "on," "in," and "under" in early grades, their comprehension of more complex prepositions like "between," "beside," and "behind" remains limited. The study also reveals that traditional teaching methods are insufficient in helping students distinguish between prepositions when presented in pictorial contexts. The implementation of board games as a learning medium has shown potential in enhancing student engagement and comprehension of prepositions of place.

The difficulties encountered by students in understanding prepositions of place can be attributed to the abstract nature of prepositions and the lack of diverse teaching methods. Traditional methods primarily focus on direct instruction and textbook-based exercises, which may not effectively cater to young learners' cognitive development. As a result, students struggle to apply prepositions accurately when faced with images or real-life scenarios. Board games provide an interactive and engaging learning experience that allows students to internalize the use of prepositions through hands-on activities and peer interaction, fostering a deeper understanding of spatial relationships.

The findings of this study highlight the significance of using engaging teaching strategies to enhance students' grasp of prepositions of place. The persistent challenges faced by students suggest that grammar instruction should be more interactive and contextualized rather than relying solely on rote memorization. The effectiveness of board games in this study implies that learning prepositions can be more meaningful when students actively participate in constructing knowledge through experiential learning. This aligns with constructivist learning theories, which emphasize the importance of hands-on experiences in language acquisition.

The results of this study are consistent with previous research indicating that prepositions are among the most challenging aspects of second language acquisition (Arjan et al., 2013; Nurjanah, 2016). Prior studies have also shown that board games enhance student motivation and comprehension in various language learning contexts (Christian & Prasida, 2018; Hasaban & Said, 2024). However, while previous studies focused on board games for vocabulary development and direction prepositions, this study extends their application to the learning of prepositions of place, demonstrating their effectiveness in this specific grammatical area.



Figure 1. The Implementation Cycle of Classroom Action Research Using Board Games as Learning Media

This study employed a one-group design without a control group, limiting causal inference. Future studies should use randomized controlled trials to confirm these findings. Theoretically, this study reinforces the role of interactive learning tools in second language acquisition, particularly in grammar instruction. Methodologically, it suggests that incorporating board games into classroom activities can serve as an effective pedagogical approach to improving students' understanding of prepositions. Practically, educators should consider integrating board games and other interactive methods to address students' difficulties in learning grammar. Future research could explore the long-term effects of board game-based learning on students' retention of prepositions and expand its application to other grammatical structures.

CONCLUSSION | خاتمة

From the analysis of the results, it turns out that the use of board games in learning prepositions of place significantly improves students' achievement. The average pre-test score in cycle 1 was 70.2, while the post-test score in cycle 2 increased to 87.1. Notably, all students achieved scores above the minimum mastery criterion (KKM), set at 75. This finding challenges the assumption that traditional methods are more effective in teaching spatial relationships, demonstrating that interactive and engaging activities can yield better learning outcomes.

The results indicate that board games play a crucial role in enhancing student engagement and motivation. The interactive nature of these games facilitates a more enjoyable learning experience, allowing students to internalize prepositions of place more effectively. This aligns with the notion that gamification in education fosters active learning, reinforcing students'

conceptual understanding through hands-on experience.

In interpreting these findings, the improvement in student scores can be attributed to the collaborative and experiential learning aspects of board games. Unlike conventional approaches that rely on rote memorization, board games provide a contextualized learning environment, making abstract concepts more tangible. This result reinforces Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, which emphasizes the role of interaction in cognitive development.

When compared to previous studies, this research confirms earlier findings that gamification enhances language acquisition. However, this study contributes further by demonstrating that board games are particularly effective in teaching spatial prepositions, an area often overlooked in prior research. These results suggest that board games should be considered as a viable alternative to traditional instructional methods, particularly in teaching grammar-focused materials. These findings support the integration of game-based learning into primary English classrooms, particularly for teaching abstract grammatical concepts. Future research should explore the long-term retention of knowledge and transferability to other language components.

The theoretical implications of this study emphasize the integration of gamified learning in language instruction, while the practical implications suggest that educators should incorporate board games into their teaching strategies to foster engagement and improve comprehension. Future research could explore the effectiveness of board games in teaching other linguistic elements or apply them in diverse learning contexts to validate these findings further.

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