

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides information about the background of the study, research question, objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitations of the study and definition of key terms.

A. Background of the Study

English as an international language plays a very strategic role in various aspects of life, particularly in education, global communication, and the development of science and technology. Arif et al. emphasized that grammar is a fundamental component in language learning because it functions as a system of rules that regulates how meaning is constructed and conveyed accurately in communication.¹ Furthermore, Ur explains that grammar not only functions as a set of linguistic rules, but also as a tool for building effective and meaningful communication in real contexts.² Thus, mastery of grammar is an inseparable aspect of overall language ability, because without an adequate understanding of grammar, students will have difficulty conveying ideas clearly, systematically, and understandably to their interlocutors.

¹ Nely- Arif et al., "The Role of Grammar in Learning-Teaching English: EFL Learners' Belief," *Modality Journal: International Journal of Linguistics and Literature* 4, no. 1 (June 2024): 13–31, <https://doi.org/10.30983/mj.v4i1.8004>.

² Penny Ur, *A Course in Language Teaching: Practice and Theory*, 1. publ., 19. print, Cambridge Teacher Training and Development (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

However, in the practice of learning English as a foreign language (EFL), grammar is often one of the most difficult aspects for students to understand. Prasetyaningrum et al. showed that students' difficulties in understanding grammar are not only caused by the complexity of the material, but also by the lack of effective learning strategies and minimal active involvement in the learning process.³ This is reinforced by the findings of Ismail et al. who stated that passive grammar learning tends to produce shallow and short-lasting understanding.⁴ This condition shows that the learning approach used plays a very important role in determining students' success in understanding grammar, so innovation in more interactive and student-centered learning methods is needed.

Furthermore, the complexity of English grammar structures is a major factor contributing to students' low mastery levels. Azar and Hagen explain that various grammar structures, such as tenses and degrees of comparison, require systematic understanding and continuous practice.⁵ Meanwhile, Murphy emphasizes that contextual and repeated practice is key to strengthening students' grammar understanding.⁶ This demonstrates that effective grammar learning

³ Ari Prasetyaningrum et al., "Grammar Learning Strategies Applied by English Foreign Language Students," *Jo-ELT (Journal of English Language Teaching) Fakultas Pendidikan Bahasa & Seni Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris IKIP* 10, no. 1 (June 2023): 26, <https://doi.org/10.33394/jo-elt.v10i1.7168>.

⁴ Ismail Ismail and Dedi Dedi, "Grammar Learning Strategies Practice: An Investigation of Strategies-Based Instruction Effect on Grammatical Competence," *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* 4, no. 3 (September 2021): 260–65, <https://doi.org/10.34050/elsjish.v4i3.17784>.

⁵ Betty Schramper Azar and Stacy A. Hagen, *Understanding and Using English Grammar*, Fifth edition (Hoboken, NJ: Pearson Education, 2017).

⁶ Raymond Murphy, *English Grammar in Use: A Self-Study Reference and Practice Book for Intermediate Learners of English, with Answers*, Fifth edition, The World's Best-Selling Grammar Book

depends not only on delivering theory but also on providing students with opportunities to practice the material in various contexts. Therefore, a learning approach that focuses solely on explaining rules without adequate practice will struggle to produce in-depth understanding.

One of the grammar materials that students often find difficult is degree of comparison. Degree of comparison is an important part of grammar because it is used to compare people, things, and situations. Students need to understand positive degree, comparative degree, and superlative degree in order to use English correctly in both spoken and written communication. However, many students still struggle to identify and apply these forms accurately. They often make mistakes in sentence structure, adjective forms, and comparative expressions. Therefore, an effective teaching strategy is needed to help students understand this material more easily.

As technology advances, innovation in learning is becoming increasingly important to improve the quality of education. Clark et al. demonstrated that the use of technology in learning can increase student engagement and create a more interactive and enjoyable learning experience.⁷ Furthermore, Karakoc et al. demonstrated that the use of games in learning has a positive impact on student

(Cambridge New York, NY Port Melbourne, VIC New Delhi Singapore: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

⁷ Douglas B. Clark, Emily E. Tanner-Smith, and Stephen S. Killingsworth, "Digital Games, Design, and Learning: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *Review of Educational Research* 86, no. 1 (March 2016): 79–122, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654315582065>.

learning outcomes, particularly in increasing their motivation and active participation.⁸ This demonstrates that integrating technology into learning not only provides variety in teaching methods but can also improve overall learning effectiveness.

In the context of English language learning, particularly grammar, the use of game-based learning is becoming an increasingly popular approach. Fauzi et al. showed that learning grammar through games can increase students' interest in learning and help them understand the material more easily and enjoyably.⁹ Furthermore, the concept of gamification also makes a significant contribution to creating more engaging learning. Deterding et al. explained that gamification involves the application of game elements in a learning context to increase user engagement.¹⁰ This is reinforced by Hamari et al., who showed that gamification has great potential in increasing students' learning motivation.¹¹

The effectiveness of gamification is also supported by several previous studies. Hung showed that the use of digital devices can significantly increase

⁸ Berna Karakoç et al., "The Effect of Game-Based Learning on Student Achievement: A Meta-Analysis Study," *Technology, Knowledge and Learning* 27, no. 1 (March 2022): 207–22, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10758-020-09471-5>.

⁹ Khalif Rahma Riesty Fauzi, Hidayatul Munawaroh, and Sulistyaningsih, "Improving Students' English Grammar Through Incorporating Games," *ETERNAL (English Teaching Journal)* 15, no. 1 (February 2024): 35–50, <https://doi.org/10.26877/eternal.v15i1.322>.

¹⁰ Sebastian Deterding et al., "From Game Design Elements to Gamefulness: Defining 'Gamification,'" *Proceedings of the 15th International Academic MindTrek Conference: Envisioning Future Media Environments*, September 28, 2011, 9–15, <https://doi.org/10.1145/2181037.2181040>.

¹¹ Juho Hamari, Jonna Koivisto, and Harri Sarsa, "Does Gamification Work? -- A Literature Review of Empirical Studies on Gamification," *2014 47th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, January 2014, 3025–34, <https://doi.org/10.1109/HICSS.2014.377>.

student participation.¹² Meanwhile, Su et al. showed that gamification-based learning systems can improve student motivation and learning outcomes.¹³ Peterson et al. also found that game-based learning media can help students understand the material more deeply and increase their engagement in the learning process.¹⁴ In addition, Hashim et al. explained that gamified learning significantly improves ESL learners' grammar understanding because students become more motivated and actively participate in classroom activities.¹⁵ Cheng et al. also found that gamification has a positive effect on EFL learning outcomes through a quasi-experimental study.¹⁶

Furthermore, Chan and Lo explained that gamification enhances EFL and ESL instruction by creating more enjoyable and meaningful learning experiences for students.¹⁷ This is strengthened by Zhang and Hashim who stated that

¹² Hsiu-Ting Hung, "Clickers in the Flipped Classroom: Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) to Promote Student Learning," *Interactive Learning Environments* 25, no. 8 (November 2017): 983–95, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2016.1240090>.

¹³ C-H. Su and C-H. Cheng, "A Mobile Gamification Learning System for Improving the Learning Motivation and Achievements," *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning* 31, no. 3 (June 2015): 268–86, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcal.12088>.

¹⁴ Mark Peterson et al., "A Review of Research on the Application of Digital Games in Foreign Language Education:," in *Research Anthology on Developments in Gamification and Game-Based Learning*, ed. Information Resources Management Association (IGI Global, 2022), 1948–71, <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-3710-0.ch094>.

¹⁵ Harwati Hashim, Karmila Rafiqah M. Rafiq, and Melor Md Yunus, "Improving ESL Learners' Grammar with Gamified-Learning," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, ahead of print, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3431736>.

¹⁶ Jing Cheng, Chen Lu, and Qiaoling Xiao, "Effects of Gamification on EFL Learning: A Quasi-Experimental Study of Reading Proficiency and Language Enjoyment among Chinese Undergraduates," *Frontiers in Psychology* 16 (March 2025): 1448916, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1448916>.

¹⁷ Sumie Chan and Noble Lo, "Enhancing EFL/ESL Instruction through Gamification: A Comprehensive Review of Empirical Evidence," *Frontiers in Education* 9 (August 2024): 1395155, <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2024.1395155>.

gamification in EFL and ESL instruction provides significant benefits in terms of motivation, participation, and academic achievement.¹⁸ These findings indicate that technology functions not only as a learning tool but also as a means to create a more interactive, effective, and student-centered learning experience.

One game-based learning medium that can be used is Educaplay. Educaplay is an online educational platform that provides various interactive learning activities such as quizzes, matching exercises, fill-in-the-blank tasks, crossword puzzles, and other game-based activities. This platform allows teachers to create interesting and enjoyable learning experiences while maintaining clear learning objectives. Educaplay also provides immediate feedback, which helps students identify their mistakes and improve their understanding directly.

Ningrum et al. showed that the use of Educaplay can increase student engagement through various systematically designed interactive activities.¹⁹ These activities are not only exercises, but also provide varied learning experiences, such as quizzes, matching, and challenge-based games that can stimulate students' intrinsic motivation. In addition, Educaplay helps teachers deliver grammar material in a more interesting and practical way, especially for students who often

¹⁸ Songcun Zhang and Zuwati Hasim, "Gamification in EFL/ESL Instruction: A Systematic Review of Empirical Research," *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (January 2023): 1030790, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1030790>.

¹⁹ Dyah Ayu Kusuma Ningrum et al., "Developing the Educaplay Grammar Assessment for Tenth Graders of Senior High School in Kediri," *Jurnal Inovasi Teknologi Pendidikan* 12, no. 1 (2025).

feel bored with conventional grammar teaching methods. Therefore, Educaplay has the potential to improve students' grammar mastery effectively.

Although various studies have demonstrated the positive potential of using Educaplay and game-based learning in English teaching, most of those studies mainly focused on students' motivation, vocabulary achievement, and general learning outcomes rather than specifically examining grammar mastery in a measurable way. Dewi et al. found that Educaplay significantly improved students' general English learning outcomes and classroom participation.²⁰ However, their study focused on overall English achievement at the elementary school level and did not specifically investigate grammar mastery as the main variable.

Similarly, Ma'arif et al. emphasized that Educaplay effectively improved students' vocabulary acquisition and learning motivation.²¹ Their research mainly discussed vocabulary development rather than grammar learning, so it did not provide specific evidence regarding students' mastery of grammatical structures such as degree of comparison. In addition, Lin et al. found that game-based learning improved students' grammar performance and engagement.²² However,

²⁰ Sutra Dewi, Abdul Rahman, and Rahmawati Patta, *The Effect of Using Educaplay Media on English Learning Outcomes of Grade 5th Elementary School Students*, 13, no. 2 (2025).

²¹ Mohammad Imam Ma'arif, Berliana Ramadhania, and Daning Hentasmaka, *Investigating Educaplay as a Game-Based Learning in Teaching English Vocabulary to Young Learners*, n.d.

²² Chi-Jen Lin et al., "Facilitating EFL Students' English Grammar Learning Performance and Behaviors: A Contextual Gaming Approach," *Computers & Education* 152 (July 2020): 103876, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2020.103876>.

their study focused on general grammar learning in a broader EFL context and did not specifically examine the use of Educaplay as the instructional media, especially for junior high school students in Indonesian Islamic schools such as MTsN 1 Tulungagung.

These previous studies indicate that there is still a research gap concerning the specific effect of Educaplay on students' grammar mastery, particularly in degree of comparison material at the junior high school level. Most previous studies have not specifically focused on grammar mastery as the primary learning outcome, nor have they examined the implementation of Educaplay in the context of eighth-grade students at MTsN 1 Tulungagung. Therefore, this study is conducted to fill that gap by investigating whether Educaplay significantly affects students' grammar mastery, especially in learning degree of comparison.

In this context, Educaplay has the potential to provide a learning experience that is both engaging and effective in supporting students' grammar mastery, especially in helping them understand and apply grammatical forms accurately. Therefore, this study is conducted to examine more specifically the effect of Educaplay on students' grammar mastery at MTsN 1 Tulungagung. The results of this study are expected to provide empirical evidence regarding the effect of game-based learning media on students' grammar learning outcomes.

B. Research Question

The following research topic is intended to be addressed by this study in accordance with the context and problems noted: Is there a significant effect of using Educaplay on students' grammar mastery at MTsN 1 Tulungagung?

C. Objectives of The Study

This study aims to achieve the following objectives: To find out whether there is a significant effect of using Educaplay on students' grammar mastery at MTsN 1 Tulungagung.

D. Significance of The Study

This research is expected to provide beneficial contributions to various parties, both theoretically and practically. The benefits of this research can be explained as follows:

1. For Readers

This research is expected to provide readers with a better understanding of the importance of technology-based learning media in English learning, especially the use of Educaplay to support students' grammar mastery. Helps readers understand the effectiveness of Educaplay as a digital learning medium in improving grammar mastery.

2. For English Teachers

This research is expected to become a reference for English teachers in creating more innovative and interactive learning methods. The results of

this study may help teachers use Educaplay as an alternative medium to improve students' grammar mastery and engagement in learning.

3. For future researchers

This research is expected to be a reference for future researchers who are interested in technology-based learning media in English education. It may also support further studies related to digital learning media in different language skills and educational contexts.

E. Scope and Limitation of The Study

This research focuses on the use of game-based learning media, Educaplay, in English language learning. Specifically, this study examines the effect of Educaplay on students' grammar mastery. To ensure a more focused study, the grammar material studied is limited to degree of comparison, thus not encompassing all aspects of English grammar. The subjects of this study were eighth-grade students at MTsN 1 Tulungagung, so the results represent the conditions and characteristics of students in that context. Furthermore, this study positions Educaplay as the primary learning medium without comparing it to other digital learning media.

Furthermore, this study has several limitations that should be considered. First, this study focuses only on one aspect of grammar, namely degrees of comparison, so the results cannot be generalized to all grammar materials in English. Second, the number of respondents in this study is limited, so the research findings may not fully represent the broader population. Third,

this study only examines the effect of using Educaplay as a learning medium without thoroughly considering other factors that may influence student learning outcomes. Fourth, this research was conducted over a relatively limited timeframe, so it cannot yet describe the long-term impact of Educaplay use on students' grammar mastery. Therefore, these limitations are expected to help maintain the research's focus and provide a clear understanding of the scope of the study.

F. Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misinterpretation in this research, the researcher defines the main terms used in this study as follows:

1. Educaplay

Educaplay is a digital-based learning medium that provides various interactive activities in the form of games, such as quizzes, matching games, fill in the blanks, and others which are used to increase student engagement in the learning process. In this study, Educaplay is used as the primary medium to help students understand grammar, specifically degree of comparison.

2. Grammar Mastery

Grammar mastery is the ability of students to understand and use grammatical rules correctly in English. In this research, grammar mastery focuses on the use of degree of comparison, including positive, comparative, and superlative forms in sentences.

3. Degree of Comparison

Degree of comparison is a part of grammar used to compare two or more objects, consisting of three main forms: the positive degree, the comparative degree, and the superlative degree. In this study, degree of comparison is not only understood as a rule concept, but also as students' ability to use comparative forms appropriately in sentences.