

# EDUTAINMENT GAMES FOR ISLAMIC AND SDGS-ORIENTED ENGLISH LEARNING: A CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW ON WRITING DEVELOPMENT AND GRAMMAR MASTERY

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## ABSTRACT

The increasing demand for engaging, contextualized, and values-oriented English language teaching has strengthened scholarly interest in edutainment games in EFL contexts. Beyond functioning as motivational tools, educational games are increasingly viewed as pedagogical mediators that support linguistic development, character education, and sustainability awareness. However, research on game-based grammar and writing instruction, Islamic values integration, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)-oriented learning has largely been conducted separately. This critical literature review examines how edutainment games support writing development and grammar mastery in EFL learning while integrating Islamic values and SDGs themes. Using a narrative critical review with thematic synthesis, the study analyzes scholarship published between 2021 and 2026 from Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar. The findings indicate that edutainment games improve learner motivation, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary retention, contextual language use, collaboration, and higher-order thinking. When combined with Islamic and SDGs-oriented themes, games may also promote ethical awareness, character formation, ecological consciousness, and sustainability literacy. Unlike previous reviews that mainly focus on gamification for engagement, this review proposes a tripartite conceptual framework positioning edutainment game as vehicles for simultaneous linguistic development, moral formation, and sustainability-oriented learning. The article contributes an emerging research agenda for AI-supported grammar games, serious games for values education, and integrated materials development for Global South contexts. The review concludes that the integration of edutainment, Islamic values, and SDGs themes represents a promising but still underdeveloped area in EFL scholarship that requires stronger empirical investigation.

**Keywords:** edutainment games; EFL; Islamic values; Sustainable Development Goals; gamification; grammar instruction; writing development.

## INTRODUCTION

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy has shifted from teacher-centered instruction toward learner-centered and interactive approaches. This shift reflects growing recognition that language learning involves not only grammatical mastery but also communication, motivation, identity, and contextual meaning.

Within this development, edutainment games have emerged as an important pedagogical innovation. Educational games combine instructional content with entertainment elements such as challenge, feedback, storytelling, collaboration, and rewards. These elements create learning environments in which engagement and instruction operate simultaneously (Kapp, 2021).

Research shows that game-based learning can improve vocabulary acquisition, grammar learning, writing performance, learner autonomy, and communicative competence (Buil et al., 2021; Toda et al., 2021; Lo, 2024). Despite these developments, many EFL learners continue to experience difficulties in grammar mastery and writing development, particularly in phrase construction, sentence organization, paragraph writing, and tense usage. These

challenges are often linked to decontextualized teaching methods that rely heavily on drills and memorization.

As a response, researchers have increasingly explored game-mediated instruction as a more contextualized and meaningful approach to language learning (Blume, 2021; Zimmerman, 2023). At the same time, language education is increasingly expected to support character education and global citizenship. In Islamic educational contexts, this includes values such as honesty, cooperation, compassion, responsibility, and environmental stewardship (Djamdjuri et al., 2023). Similarly, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) encourage educators to integrate sustainability themes such as climate action, equality, responsible consumption, and quality education into classroom practices (Souza et al., 2021).

Although scholarship on game-based learning, Islamic values integration, and SDGs-oriented education has expanded, these areas are often examined separately. Few studies have critically explored how edutainment games can simultaneously support grammar instruction, writing development, moral formation, and sustainability awareness.

This creates both a conceptual and pedagogical gap in EFL research.

### **1.1 Novelty Statement**

The novelty of this review lies in its integrated conceptualization of edutainment games as pedagogical tools that simultaneously support grammar and writing development, Islamic values education, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)-oriented learning in EFL contexts. Previous studies have generally examined gamification for learner engagement, grammar instruction, or values integration separately. In contrast, this review connects these domains within a single analytical framework.

This study also contributes to the literature by emphasizing the integration of language learning with ethical formation and sustainability awareness. Rather than positioning grammar instruction as isolated rule mastery, the review reconceptualizes edutainment games as contextual learning environments where linguistic competence, moral development, and ecological consciousness interact simultaneously.

In addition, the review highlights emerging areas that remain underexplored

in current scholarship, including AI-supported grammar games, serious games for Islamic values education, sustainability-oriented writing tasks, and integrated edutainment materials for Global South educational settings. Through this perspective, the article offers a new research direction for more holistic and contextually relevant EFL pedagogy.

### **1.2 Purpose and Contribution of the Study**

This review aims to examine how edutainment games support grammar and writing instruction while integrating Islamic values and SDGs-oriented learning in EFL contexts. The study proposes a tripartite conceptual framework that positions educational games as tools for simultaneous linguistic development, ethical formation, and sustainability awareness.

Unlike previous reviews that mainly emphasize gamification for motivation or engagement, this review integrates linguistic, moral, and sustainability dimensions into a unified framework relevant to Global South educational contexts.

## **.METHODS**

This study employed a narrative critical literature review using integrative thematic synthesis. Relevant literature was collected from Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar.

The review prioritized studies published between 2021 and 2026. The inclusion criteria consisted of:

- studies on game-based learning in EFL contexts;
- research on grammar or writing instruction through gamification;
- studies discussing Islamic values in English language teaching;
- SDGs-oriented language education research;
- studies related to edutainment and educational media.

Studies not directly related to EFL learning, grammar instruction, writing development, or values integration were excluded.

The selection process involved screening titles, abstracts, and full texts to determine relevance. The selected studies were analyzed using thematic coding, focusing on:

- pedagogical functions of games;
- grammar and writing outcomes;

- Islamic and SDGs values integration;

- implementation challenges;

- emerging research gaps.

Recurring themes were then synthesized into broader conceptual categories to develop the proposed framework.

## **THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This review draws upon four major theoretical perspectives relevant to game-based grammar and writing instruction.

### **3.1 Constructivism**

Constructivist theory emphasizes that learners construct knowledge through active engagement and experience. Educational games provide interactive environments where learners develop grammar and writing skills through exploration, experimentation, and feedback rather than passive memorization.

### **3.2 Sociocultural Theory**

Drawing on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, learning is viewed as socially mediated. Collaborative games encourage peer interaction, scaffolding,

negotiation of meaning, and dialogic learning, which support both linguistic and ethical development.

### 3.3 Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory highlights autonomy, competence, and relatedness as key factors in intrinsic motivation. Game elements such as challenges, rewards, quests, and feedback can strengthen learner engagement and persistence in grammar and writing activities.

### 3.4 Game-Based Learning Theory

Game-based learning theory emphasizes repetition, immediate feedback, progressive challenge, and problem-solving. These mechanisms support grammar mastery and writing development while maintaining learner engagement.

Together, these theories position edutainment games as pedagogical mediators connecting language learning, character education, and sustainability awareness

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Edutainment Games for Grammar and Writing Development

The literature consistently shows that edutainment games support grammar mastery and writing development by creating contextualized and meaningful learning experiences. Phrase and sentence construction games, for example, allow learners to practice syntax and grammar through interactive tasks rather than isolated drills.

Studies indicate that game-mediated activities improve syntax accuracy, reduce grammatical errors, and increase learner engagement (Lo, 2024; Ebadi et al., 2021). Writing-based games

also support idea organization, paragraph coherence, and critical thinking through collaborative storytelling, problem-solving missions, and guided writing quests.

Compared to traditional instruction, games provide immediate feedback and repeated contextual practice, which strengthen both grammatical competence and communicative use of language.

### 4.2 Integration of Islamic Values and SDGs Themes

Another major finding concerns the integration of Islamic values and SDG-oriented themes into language learning activities. Islamic-themed games often

embed values such as honesty, cooperation, compassion, and responsibility within communicative tasks and role-play activities.

Similarly, SDGs-oriented games integrate sustainability themes such as environmental protection, responsible consumption, clean water, and climate action into grammar and writing exercises. These themes provide meaningful contexts for language use while promoting sustainability awareness.

However, the literature also suggests that values integration sometimes remains symbolic rather than transformative. In several studies, moral and sustainability themes appear only as supplementary content instead of being embedded into the overall pedagogical structure.

#### 4.3 Pedagogical Benefits

The reviewed studies identify several pedagogical benefits of edutainment games in EFL learning:

- increased learner motivation and engagement;
- improved grammar accuracy and vocabulary retention;
- contextualized language learning;
- enhanced collaboration and higher-order thinking;

- support for character education and sustainability literacy.

These findings suggest that edutainment games function not only as entertainment tools but also as mediators of integrated learning experiences.

#### 4.4 Challenges and Limitations

Despite these benefits, several challenges remain. Technology limitations and unequal digital access continue to affect implementation in many educational contexts. Teacher readiness also represents a major issue, particularly regarding game design, digital pedagogy, and values integration.

The literature additionally raises concerns about superficial gamification, excessive competition, reward dependency, and assessment misalignment (Klock et al., 2023). Current assessment systems often fail to capture collaborative, ethical, and contextual learning outcomes generated through games.

#### 4.5 AI and Future Directions

An emerging area of scholarship concerns AI-supported edutainment. Potential applications include adaptive grammar games, intelligent feedback systems, personalized writing tasks, and AI-generated sustainability scenarios.

Although these technologies may support differentiated learning, important

concerns remain regarding algorithmic bias, pedagogical quality, ethical use, and representation. Research on AI-supported edutainment in Islamic and SDGs-oriented EFL contexts remains limited and requires further empirical exploration.

### **INTEGRATED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This review proposes a tripartite framework integrating:

- language development;
- Islamic ethical values;
- sustainability-oriented learning.

Within this framework, edutainment games function as mediators

### **CONCLUSIONS**

This review demonstrates that edutainment games offer significant potential for supporting grammar mastery and writing development in EFL learning. Through contextualized and interactive activities, games can improve grammatical accuracy, learner engagement, collaboration, and writing performance.

The review also shows that integrating Islamic values and SDGs themes can support character formation and sustainability awareness alongside linguistic development. However, research on the simultaneous integration of grammar

connecting grammar and writing instruction with moral and ecological awareness.

Conceptually, the framework positions:

Language Learning + Ethical Values + Sustainability Themes → Integrated Edutainment Pedagogy

This perspective shifts grammar and writing instruction from isolated skill development toward meaningful social and ethical communication

learning, Islamic values, and sustainability education remains limited.

This study contributes a tripartite conceptual framework positioning edutainment game as tools for integrated linguistic, ethical, and sustainability-oriented learning. Future research should prioritize empirical studies, AI-supported educational games, and integrated materials development, particularly in Global South educational contexts.

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