

## INTEGRATING LEXICAL AND GRAMMATICAL KNOWLEDGE THROUGH CARD GAMES

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### ABSTRACT

The integration of lexical and grammatical knowledge remains a persistent challenge for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). While previous studies have explored the use of card games to enhance discrete language skills, limited qualitative attention has been given to students' internal strategies and perceived challenges when integrating vocabulary and grammar simultaneously, particularly in Islamic secondary school contexts. This qualitative case study investigates students' strategies and challenges in integrating lexical and grammatical knowledge through card game media at MTs Noor Aini Banjarmasin. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with four ninth-grade students and classroom observations conducted across three instructional sessions. Thematic analysis revealed two dominant strategies: Lexical-Led Construction, in which learners prioritize word meaning before grammatical arrangement, and Structural Patterning, in which learners employ sentence frameworks prior to lexical insertion. Major challenges included grammatical complexity, unfamiliar vocabulary, and time pressure. Peer collaboration emerged as the primary coping mechanism, facilitating scaffolding and reducing language anxiety. The findings suggest that card games function not merely as motivational tools but as pedagogical mediators that foster lexicogrammatical integration through collaborative learning. This study contributes qualitative evidence to game-based language learning and offers pedagogical implications for EFL classrooms.

**Keywords:** *Card Game Media, Lexical Knowledge, Grammatical Knowledge*

### INTRODUCTION

In contemporary English language pedagogy, effective communication is no longer viewed as the mastery of isolated

linguistic components but as the ability to integrate lexical knowledge and grammatical competence in meaningful interaction. Halliday (1978) conceptualizes



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this relationship as *lexicogrammar*, emphasizing that vocabulary and grammar operate as an inseparable system. Similarly, Larsen-Freeman (2003) argues that language learning involves not only acquiring grammatical forms but also learning how lexis and grammar interact dynamically in real communication. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, however, these two domains are often taught separately, resulting in learners who may recognize vocabulary items but struggle to construct grammatically accurate utterances spontaneously. This fragmented instructional practice frequently leads to limited communicative competence, particularly among secondary school learners.

Lexical knowledge plays a foundational role in language production, encompassing word meaning, word class, and collocational patterns (Nation, 2001). Without sufficient lexical resources, learners are unable to activate grammatical structures meaningfully. At the same time, grammatical knowledge governs how lexical items are organized into coherent messages. The inability to integrate these two components often increases learners' cognitive load, especially during spontaneous speaking tasks. Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis further explains that anxiety and pressure may inhibit language acquisition, making learners reluctant to experiment with grammatical forms when lexical retrieval itself is demanding.

From a pedagogical perspective, understanding how students integrate lexical and grammatical knowledge is crucial for improving classroom practices. Academically, such understanding contributes to the growing body of research on lexicogrammar and game-based

language learning (GBLL). Practically, it offers teachers concrete insights into how instructional media can facilitate language integration while reducing learner anxiety. Game-based learning has been shown to promote active language production, provide immediate feedback, and lower affective barriers (Gee, 2003; Plass et al., 2015). Therefore, examining students' learning processes in integrative tasks is essential for developing more effective EFL teaching strategies, especially in contexts where English exposure is limited.

Previous studies have explored the use of card games to support various English skills. Zakaria et al. (2022), employing a mixed-methods design, investigated the use of the "Jester" card game for grammar learning among university students and reported positive learner attitudes toward game-based instruction. Muslimin et al. (2022) developed an UNO-based English card game using a research and development approach and found improvements in students' descriptive writing performance at the tertiary level. Meanwhile, Depari et al. examined the effect of picture card games on elementary students' vocabulary mastery using a quasi-experimental design and demonstrated significant gains in vocabulary acquisition. Collectively, these studies suggest that card games can enhance grammar, writing, and vocabulary learning across educational levels.

Despite these contributions, existing research primarily focuses on learning outcomes or material development and tends to employ quantitative or developmental designs. Little attention has been paid to learners' internal strategies and perceived challenges when lexical and grammatical knowledge must be integrated simultaneously during gameplay.



Moreover, qualitative investigations into such processes remain scarce, particularly in Islamic secondary school contexts in Indonesia. Consequently, there is limited empirical understanding of how students cognitively and socially negotiate vocabulary and grammar integration in game-based learning environments. Drawing on Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivist theory, learning is fundamentally mediated through interaction within the Zone of Proximal Development, suggesting that peer collaboration may play a crucial role in supporting lexicogrammatical development. Addressing this gap, the present study seeks to provide qualitative insight into students' strategies and challenges, thereby contributing to both theoretical discussions on language integration and practical implementation of GBLL.

Accordingly, this study investigates the following core issues: how students integrate lexical and grammatical knowledge through card game media, what challenges they encounter during this process, and why they adopt particular coping strategies. This study was conducted by researchers from Antasari State Islamic University at MTs Noor Aini Banjarmasin. Specifically, the study examines students' use of synonym and antonym cards for lexical development, recognition of word classes, and production of spoken sentences in various tenses for grammatical practice.

The novelty of this research lies in its qualitative exploration of students' cognitive and social strategies in integrating lexical and grammatical knowledge through card games within an Indonesian Islamic educational context. Unlike previous studies that emphasize measurable achievement, this study foregrounds

learners' lived experiences, highlighting how meaning-first processing, structural patterning, and peer scaffolding emerge during gameplay. By doing so, it offers a process-oriented perspective on lexicogrammatical integration that has been largely absent from earlier investigations.

This article is organized as follows. Following this introduction, the literature review discusses theoretical perspectives on lexical-grammatical integration, game-based language learning, and social constructivism. The methodology section outlines the research design, participants, data collection procedures, and analytical framework. The findings and discussion section presents students' strategies and challenges and relates them to relevant linguistic theories. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the key insights and provides pedagogical implications and directions for future research. This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do students integrate lexical and grammatical knowledge through card game media in EFL classroom activities?
2. What linguistic and psychological challenges do students experience during the lexicogrammatical integration process?
3. What strategies do students employ to cope with these challenges, and why do they adopt such strategies?

This study offers several significant contributions. Theoretically, it enriches the literature on lexicogrammatical integration and Game-Based Language Learning by providing qualitative insights into learners' cognitive and social processes. Pedagogically, the findings inform EFL teachers about how card games can function as diagnostic and mediating tools to support vocabulary-grammar integration while reducing learners' affective barriers.



Contextually, this research contributes empirical evidence from an Indonesian Islamic secondary school setting, a context that remains underrepresented in existing EFL research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The integration of lexical and grammatical knowledge has been widely conceptualized within the framework of *lexicogrammar*, which views vocabulary and grammar as an inseparable linguistic system (Halliday, 1978). Rather than functioning as independent components, lexis and grammar interact dynamically in meaning construction. Larsen-Freeman (2003) further emphasizes that language learning involves not only acquiring grammatical rules but also developing the ability to use lexical items within appropriate grammatical patterns, a process she refers to as *grammaring*.

Lexical knowledge encompasses word meaning, word class, collocation, and morphological variation (Nation, 2001). It provides the semantic resources necessary for language production. Grammatical knowledge, on the other hand, governs syntactic and morphological structures that organize lexical items into coherent messages. Successful communication therefore depends on learners' capacity to retrieve vocabulary and simultaneously apply grammatical rules in real time. However, EFL learners often experience difficulty integrating these components, particularly during spontaneous speaking tasks, due to cognitive load and limited automatization.

From a pedagogical perspective, meaningful language use requires learning environments that promote active production and contextualized practice. Game-Based Language Learning (GBLL)

offers such environments by engaging learners in goal-oriented activities that require language use for problem-solving and interaction (Gee, 2003; Plass et al., 2015). GBLL facilitates immediate feedback and lowers affective barriers, which aligns with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis suggesting that reduced anxiety enhances language acquisition. Card games, as a form of GBLL, function as manipulative media that encourage learners to construct sentences under time constraints, thereby simulating authentic communicative conditions.

This study is also informed by Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivist theory, which posits that learning occurs through social interaction within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In collaborative tasks such as card games, peer scaffolding enables learners to perform beyond their individual capabilities. Through dialogue and shared problem-solving, students co-construct lexical meanings and grammatical forms, gradually internalizing these linguistic resources.

A growing body of research has examined the pedagogical potential of card games in EFL contexts. Zakaria et al. (2022) employed a mixed-methods design to investigate grammar learning through the "Jester" card game among university students and reported positive learner engagement and attitudes. Muslimin et al. (2022) developed an UNO-based English card game using a research and development approach and demonstrated improvements in students' descriptive writing performance at the tertiary level. Meanwhile, Depari et al. utilized a quasi-experimental design to examine the effects of picture card games on elementary students' vocabulary mastery, finding significant gains in lexical acquisition.



Although these studies provide evidence that card games can enhance specific language skills such as grammar, writing, and vocabulary, they primarily focus on learning outcomes and instructional product development. Moreover, most adopt quantitative or developmental methodologies, offering limited insight into learners' cognitive strategies and affective experiences during gameplay.

Despite increasing interest in game-based instruction, there remains a notable lack of qualitative research exploring how students integrate lexical and grammatical knowledge simultaneously during card game activities. Existing studies tend to treat vocabulary and grammar as separate learning targets and rarely examine learners' internal strategies or perceived challenges. Furthermore, empirical evidence from Islamic secondary school contexts in Indonesia is scarce. Consequently, little is known about how EFL learners cognitively and socially negotiate lexicogrammatical integration in collaborative game-based environments.

Guided by lexicogrammar theory, GBLL principles, and Social Constructivism, this study conceptualizes lexical-grammatical integration as a socially mediated process. Students are viewed as actively constructing meaning by retrieving lexical items, applying grammatical patterns, and negotiating understanding through peer interaction. Analytical attention is directed toward three interconnected dimensions: (1) students' integration strategies, (2) linguistic and psychological challenges, and (3) social coping mechanisms, particularly peer scaffolding.

Building on these theoretical perspectives and empirical findings, the

present study adopts a qualitative case study approach to explore students' strategies and challenges in integrating lexical and grammatical knowledge through card game media at MTs Noor Aini Banjarmasin. By foregrounding learners' experiences rather than solely measuring outcomes, this research contributes a process-oriented understanding of lexicogrammatical development in an Indonesian Islamic EFL context. The study seeks to extend existing GBLL literature by illuminating how meaning-first processing, structural patterning, and collaborative learning emerge during gameplay, thereby offering pedagogical insights for integrating vocabulary and grammar in secondary EFL classrooms.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of students' strategies and challenges in integrating lexical and grammatical knowledge through card game media. A case study approach was selected because it allows for detailed exploration of participants' experiences within their natural classroom setting and provides rich contextualized data on learning processes rather than solely focusing on outcomes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The "case" in this study refers to one group of ninth-grade students at MTs Noor Aini Banjarmasin engaged in card game-based English learning activities.

The participants consisted of four ninth-grade students drawn from classes 9A, 9B, and 9C at MTs Noor Aini Banjarmasin. Purposive sampling was employed to select students who actively participated in the card game sessions and demonstrated varying levels of English proficiency. This sampling strategy was



used to capture diverse perspectives on lexical–grammatical integration. To ensure ethical considerations, all participants provided informed consent, and pseudonyms were used to protect their identities.

Data were collected over three classroom sessions using two complementary techniques: semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. Semi-structured interviews served as the primary data source. An interview guide was used to ensure consistency across participants while allowing flexibility for probing and follow-up questions. The interviews explored students' learning strategies, perceived challenges, and emotional responses during the card game activities. Each interview lasted approximately 15–20 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' permission before being transcribed verbatim for analysis. Classroom observations were conducted concurrently with the card game sessions to capture students' real-time interactions, language use, and moments of difficulty. The researcher focused on behavioral patterns, peer collaboration, and instances of lexical–grammatical negotiation. Observation field notes were used to triangulate interview data and strengthen the credibility of findings. To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed. Data triangulation was achieved by combining interview and observation data. Member checking was conducted by confirming key interpretations with participants, while peer debriefing was used to minimize researcher bias. These procedures contributed to the credibility and dependability of the qualitative findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This study employed thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) to systematically interpret the qualitative data. Thematic analysis was selected because it enables the identification of recurring patterns across participants' experiences while maintaining sensitivity to contextual meaning. The analysis followed six interconnected phases.

First, familiarization with the data was conducted through repeated reading of interview transcripts and observation notes to gain an overall understanding of students' responses and classroom behaviors. Second, data transcription involved converting audio-recorded interviews from the four participants (coded as Y, F, N, and M) into written form.

Third, initial coding was carried out inductively by identifying meaningful units related to students' strategies, perceived challenges, and coping behaviors. Codes such as *meaning-first processing*, *sentence pattern recall*, *grammar confusion*, *vocabulary uncertainty*, and *peer assistance* were generated directly from the data.

Fourth, categorization was conducted by clustering related codes into broader sub-themes, including Cognitive Integration Strategies, Linguistic Challenges, Psychological Barriers, and Social Coping Mechanisms. Fifth, these sub-themes were further synthesized into overarching themes that reflected students' approaches to lexical–grammatical integration and their responses to learning difficulties.

Finally, thematic interpretation was undertaken by examining relationships among themes and connecting them to the research questions and theoretical frameworks. Throughout this process, interview data were triangulated with



classroom observation notes to enhance analytical rigor. Member checking was conducted to confirm key interpretations with participants, and peer debriefing was used to reduce researcher bias.

The resulting themes form the basis of the findings presented in the following sections, which describe students' integration strategies, challenges encountered during card game activities, and the social mechanisms that supported their learning.

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this study was to explore students' strategies and challenges in integrating lexical and grammatical knowledge through card game media, as well as to understand the coping mechanisms they employ during this process. By examining learners' experiences in a collaborative game-based environment, this research sought to provide qualitative insight into lexicogrammatical integration within an Indonesian Islamic EFL context. The findings contribute to the growing body of literature on Game-Based Language Learning (GBLL) by foregrounding learners' cognitive and social processes rather than focusing solely on measurable learning outcomes.

Overall, the results reveal three interconnected dimensions: students' integration strategies, the linguistic and psychological challenges they encounter, and the social mechanisms that support their learning. These dimensions collectively illustrate how card game activities function as pedagogical mediators that encourage active language production while simultaneously exposing areas of linguistic difficulty.

### Students' Strategies in Lexical-Grammatical Integration

Two primary strategies emerged from the data. Three out of four participants adopted a Lexical-Led Construction or "meaning-first" strategy, in which they prioritized identifying word meaning and word class before attempting grammatical assembly. Participants Y and N explicitly stated that understanding the "meaning" or determining whether a word functioned as a noun, verb, or adjective was a prerequisite for sentence construction. Similarly, F reported using this approach to ensure that the resulting sentence was "well-ordered." This finding suggests that for most learners, lexical access serves as the entry point to grammatical processing. In other words, vocabulary knowledge operates as the foundation upon which syntactic structures are built.

This pattern aligns with Nation's (2001) assertion that lexical knowledge provides essential semantic resources for language production. Without secure access to word meaning and category, learners struggle to activate grammatical rules meaningfully. From a cognitive perspective, the meaning-first strategy reflects learners' attempts to reduce processing load by establishing semantic clarity before addressing syntactic organization. This also resonates with Halliday's (1978) concept of lexicogrammar, which emphasizes that vocabulary and grammar are not independent systems but mutually dependent components of meaning-making.

In contrast, a Structural Patterning or "framework" strategy was observed in participant M, who approached sentence construction by recalling syntactic templates such as "Noun + Verb + Adjective" before inserting lexical items.



Rather than beginning with word meaning, M relied on familiar sentence patterns as scaffolds for integrating vocabulary. This strategy appears to reflect a higher level of grammatical confidence or pattern recognition ability, enabling the learner to use structural knowledge as an organizing framework. Larsen-Freeman (2003) refers to this process as “grammaring,” whereby learners actively shape language through dynamic use of grammatical resources. The presence of this strategy suggests that students with stronger structural awareness may approach integration from a form-oriented perspective, whereas less confident learners tend to rely on meaning as their primary anchor.

### **Linguistic and Psychological Challenges**

Despite these strategic differences, all participants identified grammar as the most challenging aspect of the card game activities. The difficulty lay not merely in knowing grammatical rules but in applying them spontaneously under time constraints. Participants F and M described English grammar as “difficult to understand” and “hard to habitualize,” highlighting the gap between declarative knowledge and procedural ability. The transition from a static lexical item on a card to a dynamically constructed sentence imposed a substantial cognitive load, requiring learners to coordinate multiple linguistic processes simultaneously.

In addition to grammatical complexity, lexical gaps emerged as a significant barrier. Participants Y and N reported that encountering “rare” or unfamiliar words caused the entire sentence-building process to halt. This finding reinforces the role of lexical knowledge as the “fuel” for grammatical integration: without sufficient vocabulary,

grammatical processing cannot proceed. From the perspective of Krashen’s (1982) Input Hypothesis, this difficulty can be explained by the notion of comprehensible input ( $i + 1$ ). When lexical items exceed learners’ current proficiency level, input becomes incomprehensible, disrupting integration. In such cases, the linguistic demand shifts from manageable challenge to cognitive overload, preventing meaningful language construction.

Psychological factors also influenced learners’ performance. Three of the four participants reported feeling “tertekan” (pressured) by the time limits imposed during gameplay, which led to confusion and fear of making mistakes. Interestingly, participant M did not experience this pressure to the same extent, attributing his comfort to teamwork. This contrast highlights the complex interaction between affective variables and learning contexts. While time pressure initially heightened anxiety for some students, collaborative dynamics appeared to mitigate its negative impact.

### **Collaboration as a Coping Mechanism**

A central finding of this study is that social collaboration functioned as the primary bridge between lexical and grammatical knowledge. When faced with difficulty, all participants employed an inquiry strategy, choosing to ask peers or the teacher rather than guessing. This preference for collective problem-solving reflects a risk-avoidance orientation, as students sought “100% accuracy” through shared understanding. Importantly, the card game environment fostered a sense of safety that encouraged learners to seek assistance without fear of judgment.

This reliance on peer support directly corresponds to Vygotsky’s (1978)



concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Participants N and F acknowledged that they were unable to construct sentences independently but succeeded through group discussion. In this socially shared ZPD, learners' actual developmental level—often limited to isolated lexical knowledge—was extended toward their potential developmental level through peer scaffolding. More capable peers acted as “more knowledgeable others,” enabling individuals to bridge the gap between knowing a word and using it grammatically in context.

Furthermore, the collaborative nature of the card game appeared to transform stress into productive engagement. Although learners initially experienced pressure, many also reported feeling “comfortable” and “motivated.” This dual experience supports Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which posits that low anxiety and high motivation facilitate language acquisition. By shifting attention from formal evaluation to gameplay, the card game reduced affective barriers, allowing incidental learning to occur, such as M's spontaneous acquisition of the word “authentic.”

The findings also strongly support Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis. During gameplay, students were required to produce sentences under time constraints, forcing them to confront gaps in their linguistic knowledge. When learners struggled to express ideas grammatically, they became aware of these “holes” and were prompted to reprocess language forms. This process of pushed output represents a critical moment of language development, as learners move beyond passive reception toward active construction of meaning.

### **Educational Implications**

The results of this study carry important pedagogical implications. First, card games can serve as effective mediating tools for lexicogrammatical integration by creating opportunities for meaningful output, peer scaffolding, and affective engagement. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate structured game-based activities that require students to simultaneously retrieve vocabulary and apply grammatical rules. Second, providing a vocabulary bank prior to gameplay may help ensure that lexical input remains within learners'  $i + 1$  range, reducing cognitive overload and supporting smoother integration. Third, flexible time allocation during initial implementation stages may alleviate anxiety and allow students to develop confidence before increasing task complexity.

Moreover, the findings suggest that collaborative learning should be intentionally designed into EFL instruction. Rather than viewing peer assistance as dependency, teachers can frame it as a productive learning resource that facilitates movement within the ZPD. By doing so, classrooms can become communities of practice where learners co-construct linguistic knowledge.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The small sample size of four participants limits the generalizability of findings, and the focus on a single institutional context may affect external validity. Additionally, data were collected over a relatively short period, which restricts insights into long-term language development. The qualitative nature of the study also precludes claims



about causal relationships between card game use and proficiency gains.

Future research may address these limitations by employing mixed-methods or experimental designs to examine the longitudinal effects of card game interventions on grammatical accuracy and lexical retention. Comparative studies across different educational contexts could further illuminate how cultural and institutional factors shape learners' strategies. Additionally, exploring teachers' perspectives on implementing game-based integration activities would provide a more comprehensive understanding of classroom dynamics.

In summary, this study demonstrates that students integrate lexical and grammatical knowledge through meaning-first and structure-first strategies, while facing challenges related to grammatical complexity, unfamiliar vocabulary, and time pressure. Peer collaboration emerged as the central coping mechanism, enabling learners to negotiate meaning and form within a socially shared learning space. By situating these findings within established linguistic theories, the study highlights the role of card games as pedagogical mediators that reduce affective barriers, promote scaffolding, and stimulate productive output. These insights underscore the potential of game-based approaches to support lexicogrammatical development in EFL classrooms, particularly within Indonesian Islamic secondary school contexts.

## CONCLUSION

This qualitative case study set out to explore how ninth-grade students at MTs Noor Aini Banjarmasin integrate lexical and grammatical knowledge through card game media, what challenges they experience

during this process, and why they employ particular coping strategies. The findings show that students do not integrate vocabulary and grammar in a single uniform way; instead, they rely on identifiable strategic pathways shaped by their linguistic confidence and the demands of real-time production.

With regard to the first objective, the study found two dominant integration strategies. Most participants adopted a lexical-led or "meaning-first" approach, in which they first clarified word meaning and word class before attempting sentence construction. A smaller number of learners demonstrated a structural patterning or "framework" approach by recalling sentence templates (e.g., "Noun + Verb + Adjective") and then inserting lexical items into the structure. These strategies indicate that learners' integration processes are adaptive rather than fixed: some prioritize semantic access to manage uncertainty, while others depend on syntactic routines to organize output.

In relation to the second objective, students experienced three main challenges while integrating lexical and grammatical knowledge in the game-based tasks. The most persistent difficulty was applying grammar spontaneously, especially when learners needed to transform lexical input into a well-formed sentence within limited time. Lexical gaps also emerged as barriers, as unfamiliar words disrupted the construction process and temporarily stopped sentence formation. In addition, time pressure created anxiety and increased hesitation for most participants, although the intensity of this pressure varied across learners.

Addressing the third objective, the study shows that peer collaboration served as the primary coping mechanism and the



most consistent bridge between lexical and grammatical knowledge. When encountering difficulty, participants preferred asking peers or the teacher rather than guessing, suggesting that learners valued accuracy and felt safer negotiating meaning and form through social support. In practice, collaboration enabled learners to clarify vocabulary, confirm grammatical patterns, and reduce emotional pressure, thereby sustaining their engagement in the task.

The contribution of this study to existing knowledge lies in its process-oriented account of lexicogrammatical integration in a game-based environment. Rather than treating vocabulary and grammar as separate learning outcomes, this research highlights how students coordinate them moment-by-moment through meaning-first and structure-first pathways, and how social interaction becomes an integral part of integration. The uniqueness of the study is its focus on learners' lived experiences and coping behaviors in an Indonesian Islamic junior high school context, offering qualitative evidence of how card games mediate not only motivation but also strategic language use and peer-supported learning.

Practically, the findings suggest several pedagogical recommendations. Teachers may use card games as diagnostic tools to observe students' integration strategies and pinpoint where breakdowns occur (lexical access, grammatical formulation, or time-related anxiety). To support smoother integration, teachers can provide a vocabulary bank or preview key lexical items before gameplay, especially when tasks include low-frequency words. Teachers can also implement staged timing—allowing more time in early sessions and gradually increasing pace—to

build confidence and encourage more fluent sentence production. Importantly, collaborative structures should be intentionally planned (e.g., role assignment, peer-check routines, or rotating support roles) so that scaffolding becomes a systematic resource rather than incidental help.

For future research, several directions remain open. Subsequent studies can examine how these strategies develop over a longer period and whether repeated card game cycles lead to more automatised lexicogrammatical integration. Further qualitative work may compare learners of different proficiency levels to explore how strategy choice shifts with greater grammatical control. Researchers may also investigate the role of task design (card types, prompt complexity, and time rules) in shaping integration patterns and learners' emotional responses. Finally, exploring teachers' perspectives and instructional decision-making would extend understanding of how game-based integration can be implemented sustainably in real classrooms.

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